

Symposium | Trauma : [Symposium 46] The Path to Recovery: Trauma's Impact on mental health and Therapeutic Interventions

📅 Fri. Sep 26, 2025 2:50 PM - 4:20 PM JST | Fri. Sep 26, 2025 5:50 AM - 7:20 AM UTC 🏢 Session Room 5
(Conference Room A)

[Symposium 46] The Path to Recovery: Trauma's Impact on mental health and Therapeutic Interventions

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[SY-46-04] Impact of Bullying on Children and Adolescents: Trauma or Life Lessons?

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Keywords : Bullying、Clinical depression、Thai cultural norms、Generational vulnerabilities、Respect for diversity

Bullying among children in Thailand is a serious growing issue, with the country ranking second globally after Japan. In 2018 the Department of Mental Health estimated 600,000 pupils—about 40% of students—had suffered bullying. A 2021 nationwide survey of 1,000 students aged 10-15 showed 92% had endured physical or psychological abuse; 35% were targeted at least twice a semester and 25% three-to-four times weekly.

Common bullying takes various forms: 62% reported head slaps, 43% ridicule of parents' names, 42% derogatory nicknames, and almost 30% online harassment. Consequences were stress (26%), concentration problems (18%), disengagement from school (16%), social withdrawal (15%) and clinical depression (13%). Sibling bullying is also common and linked to female gender, peer bullying, domestic violence, and depression.

Verbal bullying, deeply rooted and long accepted in Thai cultural norms such as teasing about appearance and gossip, is the most prevalent and often escalates to cyberbullying, social exclusion, and physical attacks. These bullying forms are positively correlated and still dismissed or frequently minimized as “just kidding”.

In my clinical experience, it is vital to recognize the delicate distinction between bullying and constructive feedback, and acknowledge generational vulnerabilities. Building life skills and a growth mindset enable children and society view adversity as invaluable life lessons to thrive and grow. Meanwhile, malicious behaviors must be promptly reported.

Thailand has 14 million people under 18 (20 % of the population) but only 312 child and adolescent psychiatrists—roughly 2.3 per 100,000 children—severely limiting specialist care. To combat bullying effectively, society must foster respect for diversity, while schools, communities, and government collaborate preventive policies and provide support strategies. Expanding mental health resources and training more professionals is also essential for the needs of youth.