Bullied LGBT Youth At Risk of Suicide and HIV

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Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth who endure bullying or violence in middle or high school are more likely to experience physical and mental health problems, including depression, suicide attempts and HIV infection, according to a study published in the American School Health Association's Journal of School Health and reported by ScienceDaily.

For the study, scientists studied survey data from 245 LGBT young adults ages 21 to 25. The surveys covered adolescents' school victimization experiences and post-academic health issues.

The researchers found that when compared with peers who reported few instances of school victimization, LGBT young adults who suffered high levels of bullying or violence were:

- Almost six times more likely to report one or more suicide attempts
- Nearly six times more likely to report a suicide attempt requiring medical care
- Almost three times more likely to report clinical depression
- More than two times as likely to report having been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease
- Close to four times as likely to report risk factors for HIV infection

Meanwhile, LGBT youth who reported they'd faced few instances of being victimized in school during adolescence cited higher levels of self-esteem, life satisfaction and social integration than those who'd suffered high levels of school victimization.

In addition, transgender, gay and bisexual males surveyed reported higher levels of school victimization than their lesbian and female bisexual counterparts.

"We now have evidence of the lasting personal and social cost of failing to make our schools safe for all students," said lead study author Stephen T. Russell, PhD, of the University of Arizona. "Prior studies have shown that school victimization of LGBT adolescents affects their health and mental health. In our study we see the effects of school victimization up to a decade later or more. It is clear that there are public health costs to LGBT-based bullying over the long-term."

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