

Bullying Experiences among Disabled Children and Young People in England

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ESRC Festival of Social Science

Bullying Experience and Effects: UK Evidence

Background

Full paper

Chatzitheochari, S; Parsons, S; Platt, L (2015)
“Doubly Disadvantaged? Bullying Experiences
among Disabled Children and Young People in
England” *Sociology*. Online First/Open Access

Background (cont'd)

ESRC Secondary Analysis Initiative

Trajectories and Transitions of Disabled Children and Young People

PI Lucinda Platt (LSE), with Helena Jelcic (NCB), Becky Fauth (NCB), Sam Parsons (IOE UCL) & Stella Chatzitheochari (Warwick) & colleagues from The Council for Disabled Children (Philippa Stobbs, Lucia Winters, Cathy Street)

Aims

1. Measure childhood disability
2. Explore relationship of disability with socio-economic disadvantage
3. Analyze trajectories of cognitive ability and educational transitions of disabled children and adolescents

Motivation

- Adverse psychosocial outcomes of childhood disability and chronic illness well-documented
- Bullying: detrimental long-term consequences
- Potential role in the reproduction of disadvantage among disabled children?
- First task – to establish whether bullying risk is indeed higher for disabled children and adolescents

Childhood disability and bullying

- School bullying involves asymmetric power relationships; weak and vulnerable populations bear the brunt of abuse (Faris and Felmlee 2014)
- Disabled children often perceived as different by their non-disabled peers, comprising easy targets in the school context
- “Othering” of disabled children through labeling of learning needs and Special Educational Needs (Holt 2004; Powell 2003)

Childhood disability and bullying (cont'd)

- Qualitative studies confirm that bullying is a common theme in the daily lives of disabled children (Connors and Stalker 2002)
- Findings not consistent & focusing on single conditions
- Quantitative evidence partial and cross-sectional, covering certain areas and ages, not examining important risk factors that vary with bullying and disability

Our aims:

1. Document the prevalence between childhood disability and school bullying among disabled children and young people
2. Investigate whether the relationship exists after taking into account the socio-economic disadvantage and other risk factors that vary with both childhood disability and bullying victimization

Datasets

- **Millennium Cohort Study (MCS)** – study following approximately 19,000 children born between 2000-2002; 6 waves of data collection. 4-wave longitudinal sample of 7,432 children in England
- **Longitudinal Sample of Young People in England (LSYPE)** – 7-wave panel study following 16,000 young people born in 1989/1990. 3-wave longitudinal sample of 12, 144 young people

Measuring Disability

- Distinction between learning needs/special educational needs and chronic limiting illness (visibility in the school context/different constructions of disability)

- **Special Educational Needs**

MCS/Age 7: 13% no statement, 4% statement

LSYPE/Age 13 or age 14 : 11% no statement, 5% statement

- **Long-standing Limiting Illness**

MCS/Ages 3, 5, or 7: 11% LSLI

LSYPE/Age 13 or Age 14: 6% LSLI

NB – All parental reports

Measuring Bullying

- Age-appropriate measures: early childhood by physical bullying, adolescence by more “strategic” forms of bullying
- Capture the repetitive nature of bullying
- **MCS/ Age 7:** how often do other children bully you?
All of the time
- **LSYPE/Age 15:** Physical Bullying – how often being made to hand over money/violence threats/actual violence
Relational Bullying – how often excluded by a group of friends/being called names (including text and emails)
Every day/ few times a week/Once or twice a week/once every two weeks

Controls

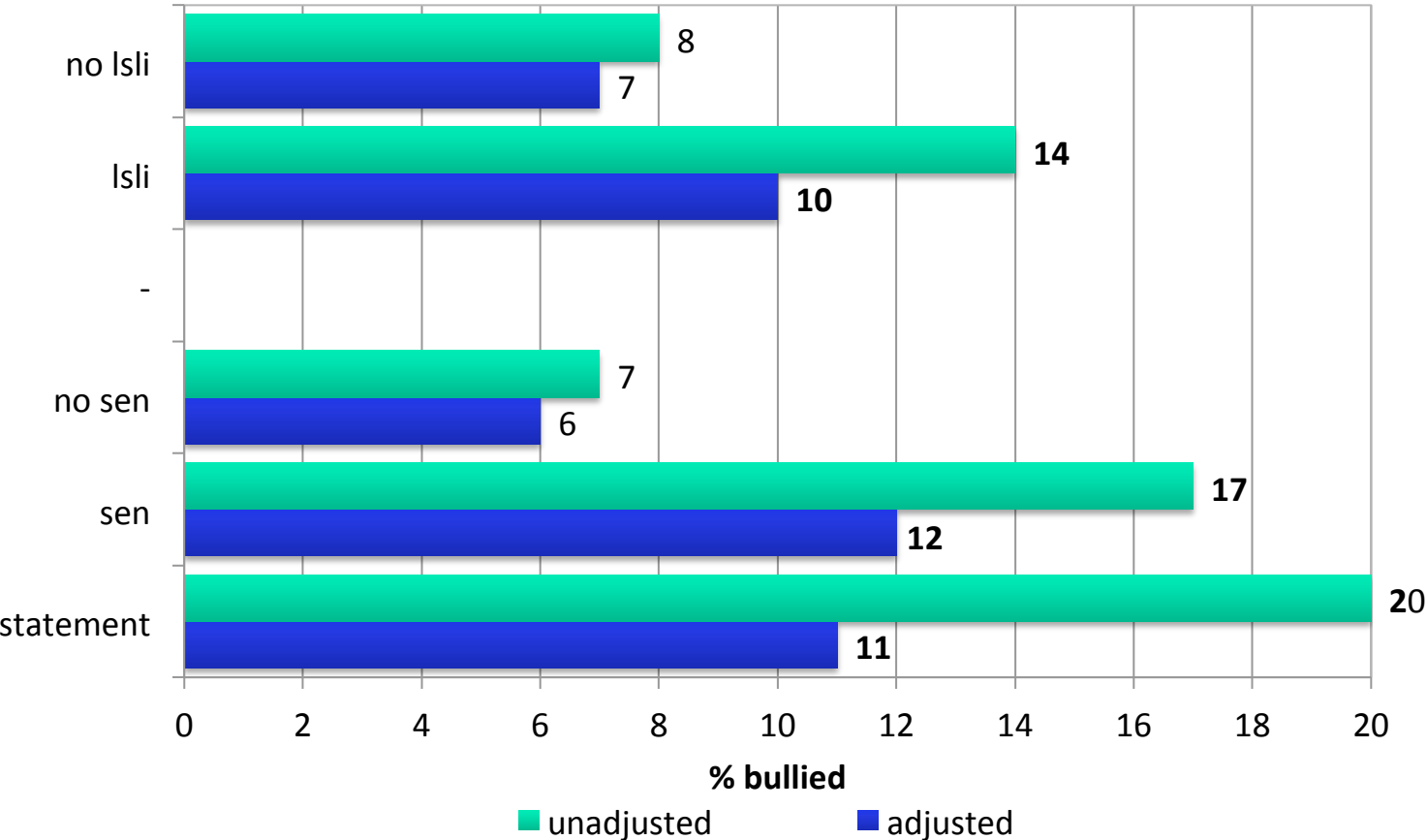
Multivariate analyses disentangle the effect of disability on the risk of being bullied from the effects of:

Age in school year, ethnicity, SES (housing, single parent family, workless household, parental educational attainment), parenting style, family size, relationship with mother, maternal health and disability, cognitive ability, and educational attainment

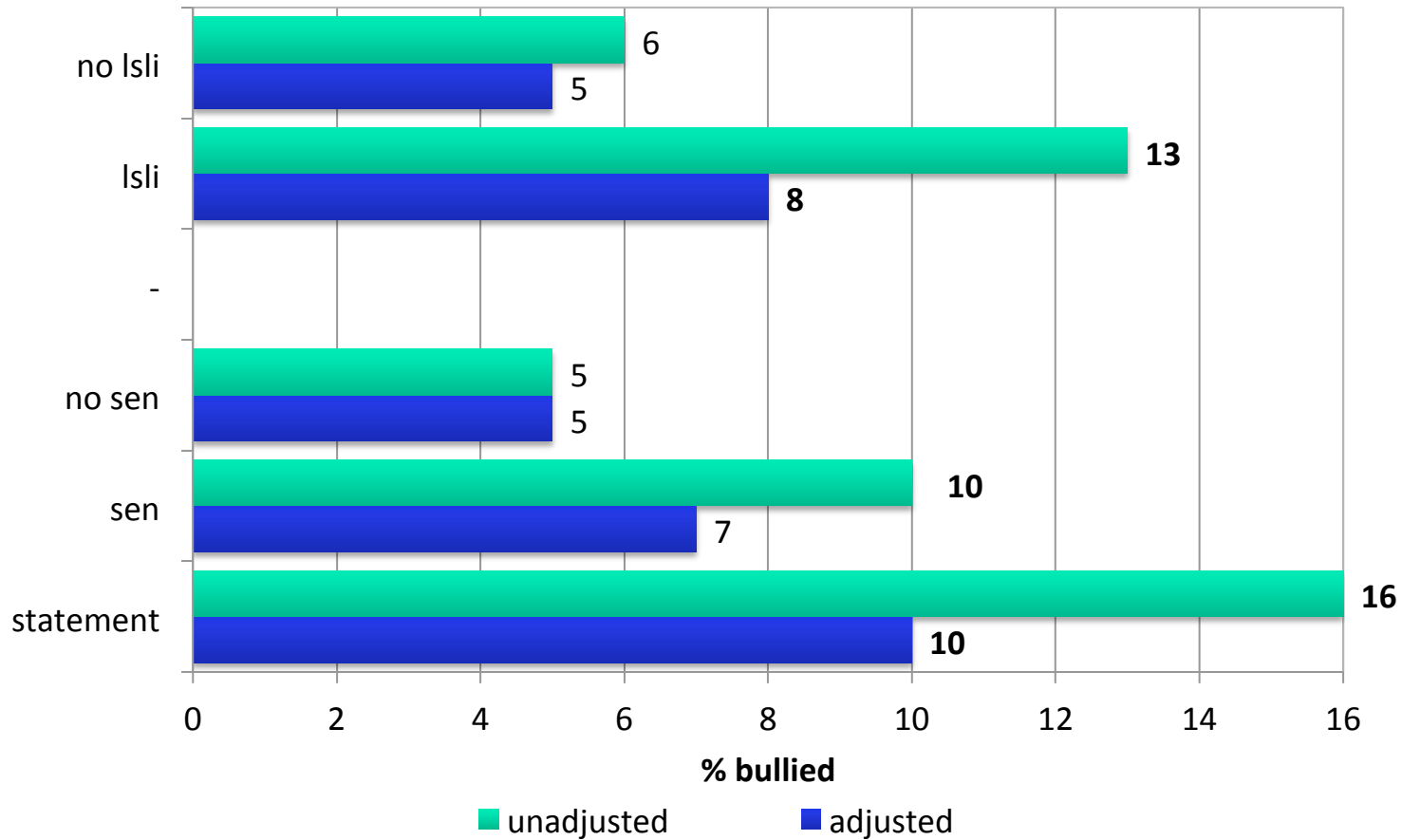
Prevalence of Bullying at ages 7 and 15

	Age 7 % “all the time”	Age 15 Physical %	Age 16 Relational %
No SEN	7	3	6
SEN	17	7	10
SEN statement	20	9	16
No LSLI	8	4	6
LSLI	14	8	13

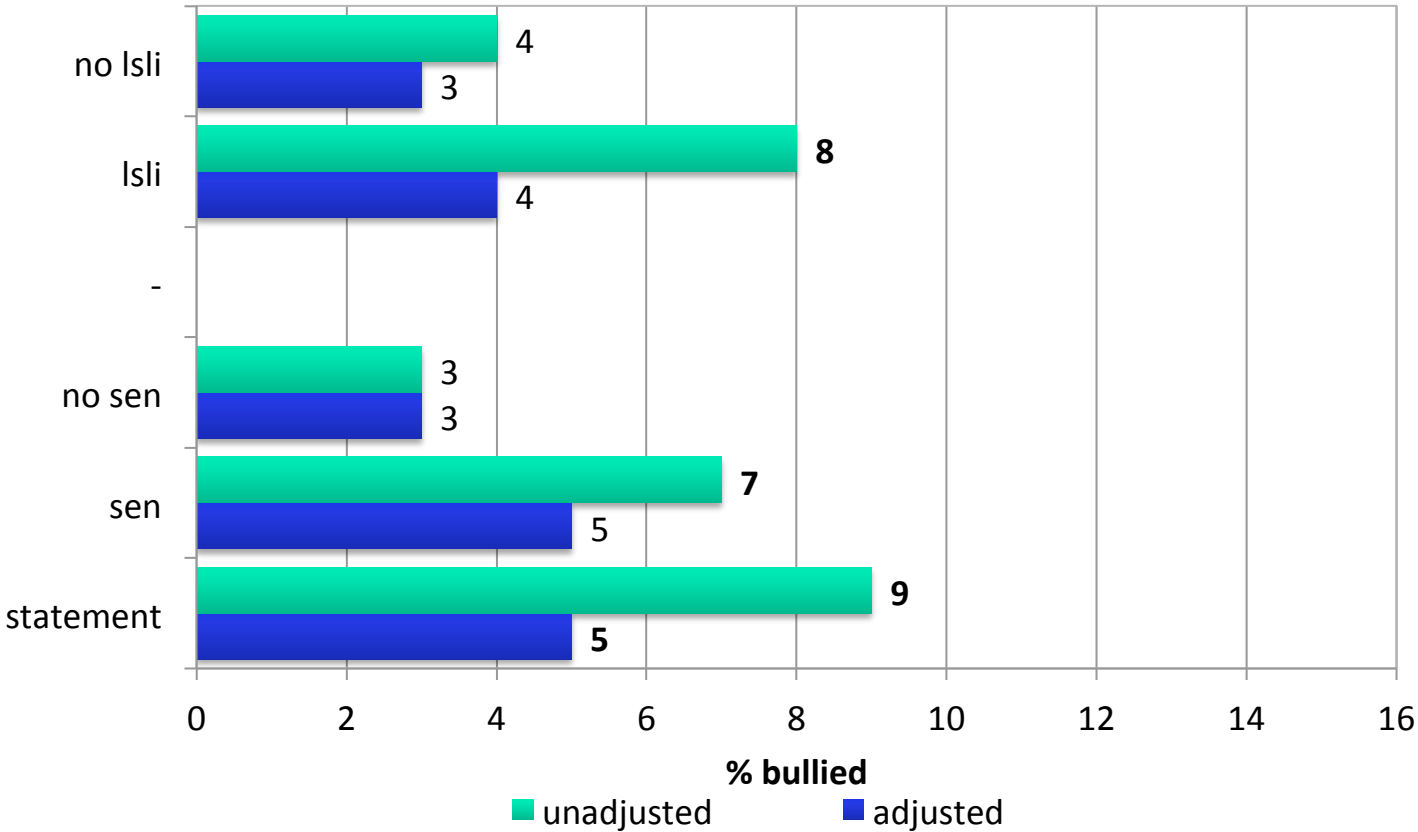
Predicted rates of bullying at age 7



Predicted rates of relational bullying at age 15



Predicted rates of physical bullying at age 15



Summary and conclusions

- “Double disadvantage” of bullying and disability at critical periods of school careers and development
- Both SEN and LSLI children significantly more likely to be bullied ‘all the time’, net of other risk factors
- During adolescence, higher risk for relational bullying and to some degree physical bullying
- Evidence of higher risk for SEN statement, “othering” of children with learning needs in the school context

Summary and conclusions (cont'd)

- School as a site of reproduction of social inequality & bullying as a potential mechanism leading to adverse psychological and educational outcomes of disabled children
- Social relational model of disability: bullying as a “barrier to being”, part of the process of “psycho-emotional disablism”, undermining disabled children’s expectations and life trajectories

Thank you for your attention

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www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/childhooddisability