REVIEW

Ethnic-Cultural Bullying Among Adolescents: Key Insights from Global Evidence

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ABSTRACT

Ethnic-cultural bullying is based on perceived differences such as country of origin, cultural background, or skin color, and is rooted in broader dynamics of discrimination and social exclusion. However, despite the growing body of literature, its visibility and understanding remain relatively limited. This narrative review examines the current state of knowledge on ethnic-cultural bullying among adolescents, focusing on its defining features, associated factors, dynamics, and consequences. In addition, it places special emphasis on two underexplored associated areas of pivotal significance: humiliation as a potential key emotional outcome and digital technologies as a contextual amplifier of its occurrence and progression. Finally, this review also discusses the implications of these insights for the development of effective interventions and policy measures. Ethnic-cultural bullying constitutes a global phenomenon that is driven by explicit racial and cultural discrimination, involving both direct aggression and subtle exclusion. Protective factors such as empathy, teacher tolerance, and inclusive peer norms can reduce the risk, while migrant status and visible ethnic markers increase vulnerability. Victims of ethnic-cultural bullying often face stigma, secondary victimization, mental health issues, increased substance use, and higher suicide risk. Humiliation is an emotion closely related to bullying dynamics, but also a culturally charged phenomenon that perpetuates intergroup divisions and stigmatization. Digital technologies potentially contribute to increased dynamics of ethnic-cultural bullying, especially among minority youth. Effective interventions against ethnic-cultural bullying must be identity-aware and grounded in scientific evidence. Ultimately, comprehensive, intersectional,

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and culturally informed approaches are necessary to address its complex social and psychological impacts.

1. Introduction

Bullying is a social dynamic often manifesting through repeated, intentional aggression under clear power imbalances, in which individuals or groups target others who are less able to defend themselves[1]. Globally, bullying is recognized as a major contributor to health problems, particularly during early youth[2–4], a vulnerable period of rapid cognitive, emotional, and social development when maltreatment can drastically impact the psychological welfare of individuals[5–7]. Indeed, multiple studies have related bullying behaviors with very negative consequences for the victims, such as somatic diseases[8], psychological disorders[9–12], disruptive behaviors[13, 14], drug consumption[15], school absenteeism[16], self-harm[17], or even suicide[18]. These serious outcomes highlight the need to promote positive parenting and teaching practices, eliminate negative communication, and engage the community to support emotional and social development, thereby reducing the long-term impact of bullying on adolescent well-being.

Ethnic identity is a complex, evolving construct characterized by ongoing exploration and commitment, reflecting the continuous development of individuals and their affirmation of cultural heritage over time[19]. Both ethnicity and low acculturation have been identified as key risk factors for bullying victimization among young populations[20–22]. Ethnic aggressions are frequently subtle, performed through verbal or behavioral indignities that convey negative racial slights toward people of color or belonging to a different culture, which occurs in everyday interactions and contributes to the perpetuation of ethnic-cultural bias and exclusion[23]. Ethnic-cultural bullying (ECB) has been conceptualized as a particular form of bullying based on perceived differences such as country of origin, cultural background, or skin color, and rooted in broader dynamics of discrimination and social exclusion[24]. Research on ECB has expanded in recent decades, driven by media attention and growing concern over stigma and inequality, with evidence highlighting the role of several influential factors in shaping ECB dynamics, including global migration, regional stereotypes, school policies, teacher attitudes, ethnic diversity, and cultural climate[25, 26]. However, despite the growing body of literature, the visibility and understanding of ECB still remain relatively limited. For instance, the emotional experience in victims of this specific type of bullying has yet to be explored, and the influence of digital technologies on ECB has received insufficient attention. Therefore, ECB constitutes a phenomenon that needs to be investigated more thoroughly in order to clarify its associated dynamics and to support the development of effective interventions that can mitigate its highly detrimental consequences.

At the global level, several studies on ECB have been conducted in large populations with varying degrees of ethnic-cultural diversity[26]. For instance, this phenomenon and closely related dynamics have been explored in Mediterranean countries such as Spain and Italy[27, 28], North American countries like Canada and the United States[29, 30], Northern European countries such as Sweden[31], Latin American countries including Brazil and Peru[24, 32], and Asian countries like Korea and China[33, 34]. Due to the important global contributions on ECB, recognizing its relevance requires additional overviews that increase the visibility of existing findings and address specific aspects related to its dynamics that have been scarcely considered. Such initiatives could facilitate conceptual clarity and the identification of meaningful directions for future research and practice. The present narrative review examines the current state of knowledge on ECB among adolescents, focusing on its defining features, associated factors, dynamics, and consequences. In addition, it places special emphasis on two underexplored associated areas of pivotal significance: humiliation as a potential key emotional outcome of ECB, and digital technologies as a contextual amplifier of its occurrence and progression. Finally, this review also discusses the implications of these insights for the development of effective interventions and policy measures.

2. Method

A non-systematic, narrative approach was adopted to address ECB among adolescents. During June 2025, literature searches were conducted in PsycINFO, PubMed, and ResearchGate databases, using various keyword combinations related to the topic. The following search terms were used: "adolescents", "aggression", "bullying", "consequences", "digital technologies", "discrimination", "ethnic bullying", "ethnic-cultural bullying", "humiliation", films", "interventions", "mental health", "peer victimization", "policies", "prevention", "racial bullying", "racism", "social media", "victimization", "video games", "violence", and "youth". No restrictions were placed on language or publication date. The search strategy was iteratively applied to optimize retrieval of conceptually relevant literature. To complement the database searches, pre-identified applicable publications were incorporated to enhance the comprehensiveness of the review. Duplicates were removed prior to screening. The selection process comprised two stages: first, screening titles and abstracts for eligibility, and second, reviewing the full texts to assess their suitability and extract information pertinent to the review. Articles or books in languages other than English or Spanish were consulted through specialized online translation tools. Inclusion criteria were guided by conceptual alignment with ECB and its health and psychosocial implications. Articles addressing ECB or related phenomena were included, whereas conference proceedings, theses, or studies offering limited contribution were excluded. In addition, studies focusing exclusively on non-adolescent populations, lacking empirical or theoretical significance, or without full-text availability were also excluded. A total of 105 articles were considered, with 25 exclusively used to contextualize the phenomenon in the introduction, and 80 forming the core of the review. The final body of literature was synthesized thematically to provide an overview of key findings and highlight relevant aspects of ECB. Given the narrative nature of the review, a formal quality assessment of the included studies was not performed.

3. Characteristics, Influential Factors, and Dynamics in ECB

ECB among adolescents is characterized by traditional bullying roles (i.e., victims, aggressors, and bystanders), but differs notably due to its explicit grounding in racial or cultural discrimination. In this respect, ECB entails explicit acts motivated by racism, xenophobia, or ethnic prejudice[35–37]. These specific ethnic-related discriminatory behaviors include both direct interpersonal physical and/or verbal violence, as well as subtler forms of exclusion (i.e., social violence), making ECB a distinct phenomenon. In addition, empirical research from Spain highlights the presence of a bully/victim subgroup within the context of ECB in which individuals simultaneously experience victimization and perpetrate ethnic-related aggression[27, 37], underscoring the interplay between ethnicity and power relations in the peer context, influenced by several factors such as self-esteem, empathy, and gender. Moreover, a study conducted in the context of the Peruvian Amazon reported that ECB victimization is associated with minority status, higher affective empathy, and lower conflict resolution skills, while bully/victim ECB subgroups tend to be older males with low self-esteem, assertiveness, and conflict resolution abilities[24].

Contextual and psychosocial factors, as well as family and school influences, substantially shape ECB dynamics. Studies conducted in Spain demonstrate that minority students experience higher rates of both face-to-face and cyber-bullying compared to majority peers, reflecting pervasive social inequalities within schools[35, 36]. Notably, perpetrators include not only majority group members but also individuals within and across minority groups, emphasizing that ECB cannot be reduced uniquely to majority dominance but must account for intra-ethnic tensions and intersectional identities. The study of psychological dimensions further facilitates the understanding of ECB. Italian research on ethnic moral disengagement reveals that individuals exhibiting reflective cognitive styles and growth-oriented values are less likely to justify discriminatory behaviors, including ECB[38]. Consequently, openness to cultural diversity and inclusive dispositions may act as protective cognitive factors by reframing ethnic differences as opportunities for development rather than threats, thus mitigating the propensity for ECB. Furthermore, violations of racial and ethnic stereotypes related to socioeconomic status, academic achievement, and sports participation can moderate bullying victimization among minority youth, suggesting important avenues for future research and policy development[39].

A recent study conducted in Italy found a positive correlation between parental prejudice and adolescent involvement in ECB. However, this association was significantly moderated by teacher tolerance toward ethnic minorities, underscoring the pivotal role of educators in promoting inclusive school environments and reducing discrimination[28]. Complementary research conducted in Sweden identifies defender profiles among adolescents who exhibit greater empathy and positive immigrant attitudes, highlighting the importance of socio-cognitive skills and pro-social classroom norms in promoting active resistance to ECB[31]. In addition, school-level racial composition emerges as another influential contextual factor. A multilevel study involving seventh graders across 24 public schools from the United States with varied ethnic demographics found that while individual protective factors mitigated both general bullying and ECB, the ethnic composition of schools significantly affected only ECB. Specifically, minority-majority schools experienced lower levels of ECB victimization than ethnically heterogeneous schools, suggesting that cohesive majority group environments may reduce the impact of ECB[30].

Recent research highlights migrant status among ethnic minorities as a consistent risk factor for increased vulnerability to bullying across multiple countries. An Italian study reported that both first- and second-generation migrant adolescents experience disproportionately higher rates of peer victimization compared to native students, reflecting broader patterns of social and economic marginalization associated with minority status[40]. Similarly, international evidence indicates that both first- and second-generation immigrant youths tend to report greater involvement in bullying, elevated problem behaviors, and reduced life satisfaction compared to their native peers[41]. Moreover, perceived cultural differences exacerbate social exclusion, intensifying social anxiety and reinforcing stigmatization processes within peer groups. Theoretical frameworks such as social identity theory help explain these dynamics by linking minority categorization and perceived difference to heightened discrimination and victimization[40].

Research in Southern Europe indicates that ethnic minority adolescents and those who deviate from traditional gender norms face heightened secondary victimization. In this regard, male peers are more frequently perpetrators, highlighting how social identity and gender norms exacerbate marginalization within peer groups[42]. Ethnic minority youth, including Asian adolescents in Spain, experience elevated victimization linked to ethnic prejudice compounded by socioeconomic disadvantages[35, 36]. In addition, among internationally adopted Chinese-origin children in Spain, bullying is more strongly associated with ethnic appearance than with adoption status, demonstrating the significance of visible ethnic markers in social exclusion[43]. Parental perceptions further reveal that families from racial-ethnic minority backgrounds, such as Asian individuals, often hold fewer positive views of school relationships, reflecting culturally mediated experiences of school climate and trust[44]. Research focusing on Chinese internal migrant children illustrates the compounded vulnerabilities arising from the intersection of child maltreatment and peer victimization. Longitudinal data demonstrate that co-occurring maltreatment and bullying predict adverse psychological outcomes, underscoring the need for integrated family-school interventions customized to culturally disadvantaged populations[45].

It should be considered that ECB prevalence and risk factors vary across sociocultural contexts and family structures. For example, ethnic minority adolescents in China experience higher bullying rates than their peers from the ethnic majority, with maternal education, family economic status, and non-nuclear family configurations serving as differential protective or risk factors depending on ethnicity[34]. In North America, ethnic diversity related to race appears to protect against victimization, while in Europe, where immigrant status is emphasized, diversity may increase risk[46]. Furthermore, research on immigrant families in Korea reveals that children's bullying experiences increase acculturative stress among immigrant mothers, especially those from Southeast Asia, highlighting culturally specific vulnerabilities and the intergenerational impact of peer victimization[33]. **Figure 1** provides a conceptual framework illustrating key aspects and processes related to ECB.
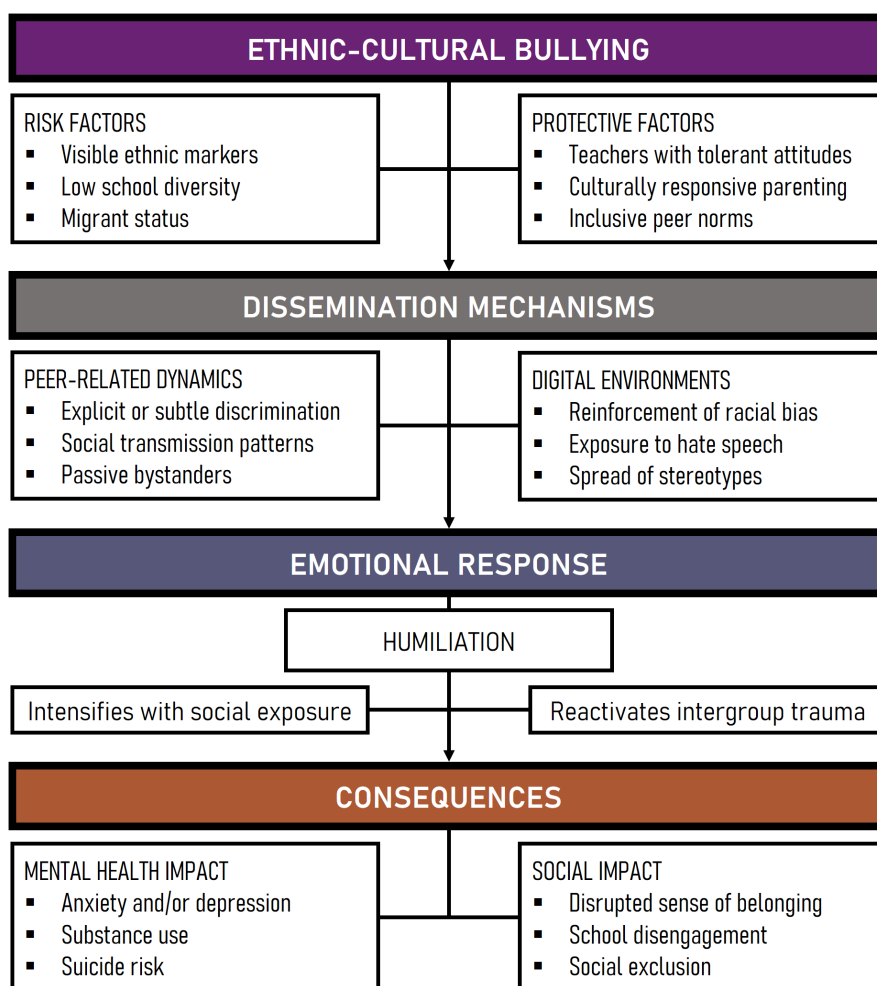
ETHNIC-CULTURAL BULLYING

RISK FACTORS
- Visible ethnic markers
- Low school diversity
- Migrant status

PROTECTIVE FACTORS
- Teachers with tolerant attitudes
- Culturally responsive parenting
- Inclusive peer norms

DISSEMINATION MECHANISMS

PEER-RELATED DYNAMICS
- Explicit or subtle discrimination
- Social transmission patterns
- Passive bystanders

DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS
- Reinforcement of racial bias
- Exposure to hate speech
- Spread of stereotypes

EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

HUMILIATION

Intensifies with social exposure

Reactivates intergroup trauma

CONSEQUENCES

MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT
- Anxiety and/or depression
- Substance use
- Suicide risk

SOCIAL IMPACT
- Disrupted sense of belonging
- School disengagement
- Social exclusion

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Illustrating Key Aspects and Processes Related to ECB.

4. Consequences of ECB

ECB results in a broad spectrum of negative outcomes that extend beyond immediate victimization, impacting mental health, academic engagement, social inclusion, and long-term socioeconomic status. In the United States, early experiences of Islamophobia among male Arab-Muslim youth correlate with persistent labor market penalties, including reduced earnings, underscoring the lasting economic consequences of ethnic discrimination encountered during adolescence[47]. Within educational settings, victims of ECB frequently endure stigmatization and social exclusion, which are often exacerbated by secondary victimization from peers. This dynamic intensifies psychological distress and undermines academic participation, while the reciprocal nature of bullying and victim roles perpetuates cycles of aggression and vulnerability[37, 42]. Furthermore, perceived social discrimination among adolescents from minority cultural groups predicts increased mistrust toward the cultural majority and leads them to lower their expectations of the opportunities and support available within the school environment[27].

Minority adolescents experiencing ECB victimization face heightened psychological challenges such as increased anxiety, depression, and diminished overall well-being[35, 48]. This discriminatory victimization also contributes to psychosomatic symptoms and reinforces social marginalization, further consolidating negative health trajectories. For instance, substance use behaviors are elevated among youth exposed to bullying. Canadian research shows that bullied adolescents, including those targeted based on ethnicity, are more than twice as likely to engage in vaping[29]. Moreover, a study conducted in Brazil reported that ECB correlates with early initiation of alcohol and tobacco use, particularly among Black females, exemplifying how intersecting aspects of ethnicity and gender may increase vulnerability[32].

Bullying exposure is strongly linked to suicidal ideation

and self-harm[48, 49]. In the United States, Hispanic and Black adolescents exposed to bullying report increased rates of suicidal thoughts[48]. Furthermore, LGBQ youth identifying as Black or Hispanic showed markedly elevated risks for suicide-related behaviors following bullying exposure, demonstrating the compounded effects of intersecting marginalized identities[50]. In this context, Tormala et al. posit that the relationship between ECB and suicide among youth of color can be categorized into three distinct areas: (i) variations in bullying and suicide rates across different ethnic groups; (ii) experiences of racial bullying and peer discrimination; and (iii) individual as well as contextual factors common in the lives of adolescents of color that influence their risk of victimization, bullying involvement, and suicidal behavior[51].

Therefore, victimized adolescents often face severe psychosocial consequences linked to ECB. Consistent with the minority stress model, chronic discrimination and peer victimization produce elevated social anxiety characterized by fear of negative evaluation, social withdrawal, and distress in novel social contexts. This cumulative burden significantly compromises emotional well-being, underscoring the enduring harm that ECB inflicts on youth[40]. Furthermore, it is important to consider how the internalization of ethnic-cultural stigmatization could potentially contribute to the development of identity fragmentation, especially during adolescence, a critical period for identity formation. This internal conflict may discourage social integration and negatively impact self-esteem. Future research should explore how these internal processes interact with external victimization to influence the trajectory of mental health outcomes and social functioning in minority youth populations.

5. The Role of Humiliation in ECB

Humiliation is a self-conscious emotion that emerges when individuals experience being unfairly devalued by others[52]. As an adaptive effect, it is rooted in the internalization of external judgments and contributes to shaping the self-concept[53, 54]. Its impact can be profound, as the threat of a devalued social identity can significantly affect psychological well-being and interpersonal functioning[55, 56].

Humiliation is a central emotional response in bullying victims[57], which is triggered when their sense of self is threatened through the demonstrative exercise of power aimed at causing harm or denigration[58, 59]. Hostility displayed by perpetrators amplifies the perceived unfairness underlying humiliation, intensifying the emotional response, while social status seems to promote the internalization of self-devaluation[60]. In this respect, humiliation can have serious and long-lasting psychological effects on victims, especially when it is publicly condoned or ignored, exacerbating the harm and contributing to long-term trauma[61].

Although not essential for the occurrence of humiliation[62], the presence of witnesses is considered a prototypical component of this specific emotion[63]. Victims report higher self-devaluation when humiliation occurs publicly[64–66], particularly if bystanders reinforce the act[67]. This can be explained by witnesses intensifying humiliation by increasing the perception of unfair devaluation experienced by the victim and facilitating internalization, especially when accompanied by hostility[62].

In the specific context of ECB, humiliation may be even more pronounced, as pre-existing group tensions charge humiliating acts with deeper significance, making them a form of cultural aggression that marks the target as "different" and intensifies their vulnerability. This humiliation is often experienced as intense outrage directed at others coupled with feelings of powerlessness, highlighting its profound emotional impact in intergroup contexts[68]. Moreover, evidence from intergroup conflicts among youth populations indicates that humiliation acts as an independent traumatic event linked to adverse mental health outcomes, regardless of exposure to other violence[69]. When historical conflicts or legacies of subjugation exist between groups, the experience of humiliation might be magnified, as the targeted populations carry collective memories of past injustices[70]. This deepens the emotional wounds inflicted by ECB, making such bullying not only an individual assault but also a reactivation of intergenerational trauma that intensifies social divisions and personal suffering. Thus, humiliation can be viewed not only as an interpersonal attack related to bullying dynamics, but also as a culturally charged phenomenon that perpetuates intergroup divisions and stigmatization, underscoring the need to address its role in ECB cases and its long-term impact on adolescent psychological and social well-being.

Building on the above, it may be hypothesized that the

experience of humiliation resulting from ECB during adolescence could not only damage self-concept but also disrupt engagement in broader civic or moral development. When humiliation is linked to group identity and occurs within a context of perceived injustice, it may undermine trust in collective norms, foster resentment toward societal structures, and hinder the adoption of inclusive values. This scenario may carry particularly concerning implications, as both bullying and associated humiliation could potentially act as precipitating factors for extreme retaliatory violence within educational settings. Such acts might, in turn, be broader in scope rather than individually targeted. Future studies could explore whether repeated exposure to culturally demeaning bullying diminishes the willingness of adolescents to identify with or contribute to wider social frameworks.

6. Impact of Digital Technologies on ECB

In the digital era, many social behaviors have shifted, allowing aggressive behavior to quickly take root in this new environment[71–73]. Exposure to hate in both digital and traditional media has serious consequences for individuals and society, reinforcing prejudice, aggression, and a broader climate of hostility[74]. Specifically, exposure to bullying-related media is positively associated with both traditional and cyberbullying perpetrations among adolescents, with the effect being stronger in those with weaker anti-bullying attitudes, highlighting the contribution of media in influencing ECB behaviors[75]. Thus, digital technologies such as social media, video games, and movies have the potential to influence adolescent interactions by introducing new forms of bullying and by increasing aggressive behaviors through the desensitization to violence[76, 77]. In addition, these platforms can facilitate the spread of discriminatory behaviors and stereotypes, potentially increasing the risk of bullying and exclusion based on culture or ethnicity[74, 77]. Adolescents, still developing their identities and moral values, may be especially susceptible to digital media influences[78, 79]. Social stigma-based cyberbullying disproportionately affects minority adolescents, with moral disengagement linked to aggression and moral emotions, alongside social and emotional competencies, influencing victimization within digital environments[80]. Although research examining cyberbullying predictors across diverse ethnic-cultural groups remains limited, findings from a large multicultural adolescent sample in Spain highlight both common and group-specific associations between cyber aggression, victimization, self-esteem, empathy, and social skills[81].

Social media platforms now play a central role in information consumption and social interaction among adolescents, shaping the spread of racial-based discrimination[82]. It has been reported that exposure to ethnic online hate speech is positively linked to ECB perpetration, with this association notably occurring among males exhibiting low to moderate tolerance toward diversity[72]. In the United States, Black and Hispanic adolescents face heightened exposure to direct and indirect online racism via social media with persistent and particular features, which is linked to increased risk of ECB and adverse mental outcomes[83]. Similarly, a study conducted by Tao & Fisher reported that offline and online ECB is linked to mental health problems among youth of color[84], with increased social media use amplifying exposure to both individual and vicarious ethnic discrimination, which in turn contributes to depressive symptoms, anxiety, and substance use. Moreover, for Black and Hispanic adolescents, social media use can support academic self-efficacy, but also indirectly undermine mental health and academic outcomes when exposure to online racial discrimination increases[85]. Thus, social media amplifies ethnic misinformation and hate speech, increasing ECB and harming mental health of youth. Mitigating this impact requires addressing platform-related factors and fostering tolerance among vulnerable adolescents.

Exposure to violent video game content may normalize aggression, desensitize adolescents to violence, and increase the risk of aggressive behavior in real-life interactions[76]. Indeed, evidence has linked playing violent video games with a higher risk of bullying among youth, both as perpetration and as victimization[76]. Based on definitions of violence and child maltreatment, exposure to racial discrimination can be considered a form of violence[86], suggesting that violent video games may also incorporate elements of racism or ethnic discrimination as part of their aggressive content. Hate speech and harassment are common in online gaming, often going unchallenged by bystanders, which may allow such behavior to persist and normalize within communities[87]. Adolescents who play video games frequently tend to be less

concerned about the impact of stereotyped images in games, viewing gaming more as a personal choice and showing less recognition of its potential harms[88], which may reduce their sensitivity to ECB. In addition, playing as a racially stereotyped character in video games can intensify stereotyping due to the "virtual threat effect", suggesting that interactive virtual environments can negatively shape perceptions of ethnic groups[89]. Consequently, violent video games can normalize aggression and reinforce racial biases, influencing the attitudes and behaviors of adolescents toward ECB. Understanding this impact is key to addressing discrimination in gaming environments.

Films represent a powerful medium capable of influencing the attitudes of viewers toward social issues, including ethnic and cultural biases, especially for young audiences. However, the impact of a single film viewing tends to be temporary and is significantly mediated by individual differences such as age, educational level, and prior experiences[90]. An analysis of 63 films revealed that behavioral and health risk portrayals are common, with Black characters more frequently depicting sex and alcohol use, while White characters more often portray violence[91]. Consistent with these findings, it has been reported that the type of film through which Black adolescents encounter risky health portrayals plays a crucial role in influencing their behavior. Notably, variations by ethnic identity were mainly observed in sexual content[92]. Without any doubt, these racial differences in media portrayals may contribute to health and behavioral disparities among adolescents. In addition, films often depict bullying as a normalized behavior, sometimes towards specific ethnic groups, making it more likely for adolescents to replicate these dynamics and perpetuate ECB. For instance, American films depicting bullying predominantly highlight physical and verbal aggression, trauma, and associated social and familial vulnerabilities, underscoring their role in shaping perceptions of bullying and its underlying dynamics, and suggesting potential links to ECB when such aggression targets group identity and belonging[93]. Thus, films can shape youth attitudes on ethnicity and racialized portrayals, and normalized bullying in films can reinforce ECB, highlighting the need for media awareness and targeted interventions.

A potential research avenue could consider that digital environments not only facilitate the expression and reinforcement of ECB but also contribute to the transformation of group distinctions. Just as social media can intensify divisions between groups by repeatedly exposing users to culturally charged content and peer attitudes that normalize or legitimize exclusionary behavior, strategies aimed at the opposite effect could also be implemented. Consequently, the process by which adolescents increasingly define themselves in opposition to others, thereby heightening intergroup polarization and potentially complicating efforts to foster intercultural understanding and empathy, could be modulated through the deliberate integration of inclusive content. Although it is evident that commercial films have progressively promoted ethnic-cultural inclusivity in recent years compared to the past, social media constitutes a more challenging context due to the active participation of a large number of users, as is also the case with online video games. Therefore, future research might focus on examining novel digital-based strategies to mitigate possible ECB dynamics both online and offline, as well as on evaluating the cumulative impact of such dynamics on youth populations.

7. Implications for Intervention and Policy on ECB

7.1. School Context

Given the distinct and harmful nature of ECB, effective interventions must be culturally sensitive, identity-aware, and grounded in socioecological frameworks. Existing school policies often inadequately recognize ECB-specific dynamics, requiring clear scientific recognition and the development and implementation of customized protocols[27, 37, 42]. Indeed, the effectiveness of school security measures in preventing bullying is ambiguous. Data from the 2017 National Crime Victimization Survey indicate that security policies do not uniformly reduce bullying victimization and that their impact varies by sex and ethnic group[94]. These findings call into question whether increased surveillance and control reliably enhance safety and inclusivity, particularly for minority students, and point to the need for refined, equitable approaches to school safety.

As previously stated, school ethnic composition influences bullying dynamics, with evidence suggesting that minority-majority or racially cohesive school environments

may reduce ECB[30]. Therefore, policies implementing school security measures require careful evaluation, as their effects vary across ethnic groups and may unintentionally marginalize vulnerable students or fail to reduce victimization equitably[94].

Prevention strategies against ECB should focus on reducing stigma, empowering marginalized groups, and mobilizing bystanders to disrupt cycles of victimization. Cultivating cultural competence is essential to addressing power imbalances and fostering inclusive, supportive school climates within increasingly diverse educational environments[37, 42]. Creating inclusive school settings that promote positive co-existence and civility is critical to decreasing marginalization and victimization of ethnic minority students[36]. Moreover, teachers may exert a significant contribution in mitigating the effects of family prejudice by fostering tolerance and inclusivity through targeted professional development[28].

7.2. Familial Context

Family dynamics play a pivotal role in moderating the impact of ECB. Authoritative parenting styles among African-American families have been shown to reduce severe violent behaviors linked to bullying involvement in both perpetrators and victims, highlighting the value of culturally customized family-based interventions[95]. In addition, culturally responsive parental socialization that supports racial-ethnic identity development and socio-emotional skill building is especially important during middle childhood, a critical developmental period[96]. Moreover, coordinated family-school interventions are essential for addressing the compounded vulnerabilities of internal migrant children who face ECB[45].

Policies must account for the socioecological context and cultural heterogeneity of affected populations. Engagement with parents from ethnic minority groups is essential to foster trust, enhance school connectedness, and ensure equitable communication and support[44]. For immigrant youth, comprehensive psychosocial supports addressing emotional and behavioral health challenges are crucial to mitigate vulnerabilities[41]. Prevention programs should encompass all bullying forms, including ECB, to reduce related adverse health behaviors[29, 35].

7.3. Mental Health and Well-Being

Mental health interventions must be sensitive to the vulnerabilities faced by youth from ethnic minorities and immigrant families, addressing the intersectionality of identity and acculturative stress[33, 50]. Promoting socio-cognitive skills, such as empathy and perspective-taking, supports the emergence of defender behaviors, which are key to reducing victimization[31]. Intervention programs should be customized to address ethnic heterogeneity, incorporating intersectional approaches sensitive to ethnicity and gender[32, 34]. Furthermore, integrating mental health support and substance use prevention within these frameworks is crucial to address the consequences derived from ECB[32, 49]. In this context, substance abuse among adolescents is of particular concern, as initial experimentation, often driven by curiosity, can develop into established habits with severe consequences[97]. In this respect, adolescent behaviors regarding substance misuse, especially with legal drugs of abuse such as alcohol, frequently test the limits of irrationality given the significant risks involved[98]. Nevertheless, beyond legal drugs of abuse, these patterns may gain even further urgency in light of current public health crises related to synthetic substances like fentanyl, whose illicit manufacturing continues to rise, disproportionately affecting marginalized youth communities and potentially leading to extremely severe outcomes such as polysubstance use and death[99].

Agency, defined as the victim's capacity to actively respond to perpetrators, constitutes a protective factor in bullying contexts involving humiliation[100]. In fact, this concept can be particularly relevant in ECB, since victim responses may modulate their emotional experience, which is likely dominated by humiliation. Fernández et al. found that active victim responses reduce the intensity of humiliation by enhancing perceived control over the situation and one's behavior[101]. These insights highlight that empowering victims to adaptively confront bullying may protect their psychological well-being[102].

7.4. Digital Environments

Although digital emotion regulation may provide short-term relief, it can intensify negative emotions over time,

highlighting the need for more supportive digital environments[103]. This underscores the importance of designing social media platforms and policies that not only allow users to manage their emotions but also actively reduce exposure to ECB. Creating safer, more empathetic online spaces can help prevent the escalation of negative feelings and mitigate the harmful effects of bullying, suggesting that interventions should focus on both emotional support and proactive moderation to foster healthier digital interactions.

Despite violent video games can contribute to the normalization of aggression and reinforce negative racial stereotypes, thereby exacerbating ECB, some interventions have employed video games as educational tools. Role-playing video games such as *Fair Play*, which simulate the experiences of racial discrimination, have demonstrated effectiveness in promoting perspective-taking and increasing bias awareness[104]. These findings suggest that video games hold potential as innovative platforms for reducing racial bias and supporting equity in various social domains.

While films can initiate attitude change, sustained interventions and repeated exposures are necessary to achieve lasting reductions in ECB. This underscores not only the importance of incorporating films into broader educational efforts but also the crucial role that families play in monitoring and guiding media consumption by adolescents. Parents must take responsibility for the content their children are exposed to, fostering critical discussions at home to mitigate potential negative influences and support the development of empathy and respect toward diverse ethnic and cultural groups.

7.5. Final Remarks

In essence, effective anti-ECB strategies must address both the interpersonal mechanisms of bullying and the broader societal context of discrimination faced by ethnic minority youth. Scientifically informed prevention programs that support migrant youth's social integration and mental health are essential. Incorporating intersectionality into practice could enable the recognition of the complex identities and experiences related to victimization, ensuring that interventions are equitable, comprehensive, and responsive to the diverse realities of affected populations[105]. Thus, cross-cultural variations emphasize the need for culturally sensitive interventions and policies to foster inclusive environments and reduce the detrimental impact of ECB worldwide.

Current school policies often overlook the specific dynamics of ECB and show uneven effectiveness, particularly for minority students. Families and teachers play a critical role in supporting effective coping and emotional well-being through culturally responsive parenting and empathy development. Furthermore, digital environments may contribute to the perpetuation of ECB, which underscores the need for media analysis, platform duty to respond, and targeted interventions to reduce harm and promote tolerance among vulnerable adolescents. In this context, innovative educational tools such as role-playing video games show promise in reducing bias and fostering more inclusive attitudes.

8. Conclusions

ECB among adolescents is driven by explicit racial and cultural discrimination, involving both direct aggression and subtle exclusion. Protective factors such as empathy, teacher tolerance, and inclusive peer norms can reduce ECB risk, while migrant status and visible ethnic markers increase vulnerability, often compounded by socio-economic disadvantages.

ECB causes long-lasting harm to adolescent mental health, academic engagement, and social inclusion. Victims face stigma, secondary victimization, increased anxiety, depression, substance use, and higher suicide risk, especially among marginalized youth. Humiliation constitutes a key self-conscious emotion in ECB, with intensified effects when witnessed or socially reinforced. This emotional response carries deeper cultural significance, often reactivating intergroup trauma and increasing victim vulnerability.

Digital media profoundly shape ECB among adolescents by normalizing aggression, spreading stereotypes, and amplifying exposure to online hate. Certain forms of social media and violent video game content contribute to increased ECB and related mental health risks, especially among minority youth. Films can also influence attitudes by reinforcing racial biases and normalizing bullying behaviors.

Effective interventions against ECB must be identity-aware and grounded in scientific evidence. Prevention should focus on reducing stigma, empowering marginalized groups, engaging families, and fostering inclusive school climates through cultural competence and bystander mobi-

lization. Victim agency has been shown to reduce humiliation and protect mental health, while safer digital environments and moderated media exposure are essential to mitigate online ECB. Ultimately, comprehensive, intersectional, and culturally informed approaches are necessary to address the complex social and psychological impacts of ECB on diverse youth populations.

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