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Research Article

Bullying and Perpetrators' Self-Esteem among Elementary Pupils

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted among 381 sixth-grade pupils in Angeles City, Philippines with the aim of understanding bullying and its possible correlation to the perpetrators' self-esteem. To achieve the purpose of the study, a quantitative-descriptive research design was used and the needed data were collected using the Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Findings suggest that bullying is indeed happening among the surveyed sixth-graders. Specifically, verbal bullying (M=11.27; 95.80%; n=365) appeared to be the predominant form of bullying. Also, revealed significant negligible positive correlation was established between verbal bullying and the perpetrators' self-esteem.

Keywords: Bullying; verbal bullying; social bullying; physical bullying; bullies; self-esteem.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is considered to be one of the serious challenges in schools that can create impact to those who bully and those being victimized. Unfortunately, little attention is given to this concern [3] because it is often regarded as part of childhood and adolescence [6]. To some people, bullying is regarded as a trivial concern. It is even assumed that bullying toughens, builds character, and prepares children in facing the real world [20]. However, it is interesting to note that over the last two decades, researches have documented that bullying is a potentially damaging form of violence among children and youth. The detrimental effects of such behavior thus became the focal point and attention of most studies [13].

According to Kartal [13], bullying is a common problem and is gradually on the rise in every society and in schools. Bullying and other types of school violence committed by perpetrators have been

disrupting stability, well-being, and safety in schools [2,3]. Once considered safe and enjoyable school environments are now being threatened because of this phenomenon. Omoteso [18] believes that despite of the many strategies to stop bullying, it still persists and the reality is that a significant number of students become the target. Various studies have documented particularly on the harm on victims' general well-being, although, the current study did not focus on victims but rather on the self-esteem of the perpetrators.

Bullying:

Bullying can be defined as the repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons. It presents an imbalance in strength or an asymmetrical power relationship [16]. It can be considered a malicious and health-endangering behavior which may be manifested physically, non-verbally, verbally, in written form,

social/relationally, and electronically that is designed to intentionally hurt either physically or psychologically. The victim of such behavior is considered a repeated target and can lead to the creation of an abusive, threatening, and hostile environment [2].

A study conducted about bullying is that of Espero and Espinosa. Their study aimed to come up students' beliefs of bullying. Notable answers were: bullying is associated with fighting someone who has not done anything wrong, forcing someone to do something against one's will, writing hurtful things about someone thru vandalism, spreading rumors about somebody and frequently compelling a classmate to do one's homework/ project.

Focusing on the characteristics of perpetrators, Olweus [16] believes that a distinctive characteristic of perpetrators is their aggression towards their peers. Perpetrators have more positive attitude toward violence and often are characterized by impulsivity and strong needs to dominate others. They manifest little empathy for their victims. Among boys, they are likely to be physically stronger than their peers in general. However, Rigby [20] contended that "stronger" does not necessarily mean more powerful physically. Other forms of strength or power that frequently provide the opportunity for bullying to occur are having more powerful personalities, being mentally tougher, more determined, and sometimes being less sensitive. Also, perpetrators may have certain skills which enable them to hurt others without being hurt themselves. These include physical fighting skills, but also well-developed verbal abilities, quickness of mind and tongue, which enable them to ridicule others to the point of humiliation. Besides such abilities, which are so easily abused, perpetrators can be more powerful than others because they have acquired status as group leaders, and can call upon others to give them support.

Self-Esteem:

According to Uslu [23], self-esteem is defined as how much value people put on themselves. It can also mean self-knowledge. High self-esteem can refer to high and positive evaluation of oneself while low self-esteem can mean the unfavorable definition of the self (p.117). Similarly, Heartherton and Wyland [11] defined self-esteem as an attitude about the self and can be related to personal beliefs regarding one's skills, abilities, social relationships, and future outcomes.

1. Objectives:

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. to determine the incidence of verbal, social and physical bullying among sixth-graders;
2. to determine the self-esteem of the perpetrators; and
3. to know whether relationship exist between bullying (verbal, social and physical) on and perpetrators self-esteem.

3. Hypothesis:

1. There is a significant relationship between bullying (verbal, social and physical) and self-esteem of the perpetrators.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

4.1 Respondents:

The respondents of this study were selected through convenience sampling. According to Gay and Airasian, a convenience sample will allow researchers to include respondents whoever happens to be available at the time of the conduct of the study and at the same time interested to participate in the study. Due to the sensitive nature of the present study, only those who were willing and who returned the signed parent consent form were included.

A total of 381 sixth-graders from public schools in the East District in the Division of Angeles City, Philippines served as respondents of the study. There were 211 females and 170 were males. The youngest among them were the 11 years old and the oldest were the 18 years old. Their mean age was 11.85. Gathering of data was done during the third quarter of the Academic Year 2014-2015.

4.2 Instruments:

Two research instruments were used to collect the needed data for the study. These are the bullying scales of Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument by Parada [19] and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale by Rosenberg [21]. The Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument is a 36-item measure with 6 subscales assessing the frequency of physical, verbal and social bullying as both the perpetrator and victim designed for early adolescent and adolescent stage aged 12-17. It uses 6-point scale format ranging from (1) never to (6) everyday. On the other hand, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a 10-item scale that measures global self-worth (self-esteem) by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. All items are answered using 4-point scale format ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (4) strongly agree.

4.3 Data Analysis:

The data collected from the accomplished questionnaires were tallied, tabulated and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 17.0). This software was utilized to efficiently and accurately analyze the gathered data. Frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, minimum values and maximum values for all the measures were utilized in the study to describe demographic and descriptive variables. Likert scales were used to interpret the descriptive ratings of the responses.

The possible relationships between bullying (verbal, social and physical) and self-esteem were analyzed the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). The strengths of relationships between the variables were interpreted using the range of values of Pearson's r given by Mercado-del

Rosario.

5. Results:
5.1 Findings:

The findings revealed in Table 1 are the descriptive statistics of the responses of the respondents on the Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument. Table 2 shows the overall descriptive

ratings of the responses of the respondents on Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the responses on Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale while the overall descriptive rating for Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is presented in Table 4. Table 5 presents the correlation between verbal, social and physical bullying and perpetrators' self-esteem.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the responses of the respondents in the Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument.

Verbal Bullying	Min	Max	Mean	SD	DR
1. Teased them by saying things to them	1	6	2.04	1.01	S
3. Made rude remarks at a student	1	6	1.64	.92	S
5. Made jokes about a student	1	6	2.09	1.29	S
7. Picked on a student by swearing at them	1	6	1.55	.91	S
10. Said things about their looks they didn't like	1	6	1.87	1.06	S
14. Made fun of a student by calling them names	1	6	2.08	1.36	S
Grand Mean 1.88 Sometimes					
Social Bullying	Min	Max	Mean	SD	DR
4. Got my friends to turn against a student	1	6	1.45	.90	N
8. Told my friends things about a student to get them into trouble	1	6	1.49	1.00	N
11. Got other students to start rumor about a student	1	6	1.53	1.07	S
13. Got other students to ignore a student	1	6	1.76	1.10	S
17. Left them out of activities or games on purpose	1	6	1.54	.94	S
18. Kept a student away from me by giving them mean looks	1	6	1.65	1.05	S
Grand Mean 1.57 Sometimes					
Physical Bullying	Min	Max	Mean	SD	DR
2. Pushed or shoved a student	1	6	1.59	.89	S
6. Crashed into a student on purpose as they walked by	1	6	1.34	.77	N
9. Got into a physical fight with a student because I didn't like them	1	6	1.46	.99	N
12. I slapped or punched a student	1	6	1.81	1.05	S
15. Threw something at a student to hit them	1	6	1.50	1.00	S
16. Threatened to physically hurt or harm a student	1	6	1.48	.92	N
Grand Mean 1.53 Sometimes					

Legend for the (DR) Descriptive Rating: 5.50-6.00 – Everyday (E), 4.50-5.49 – Several times a week (SW), 3.50-4.49 – Once a week (OW), 2.50-3.49 – Once or twice a month (OTM), 1.50-2.49 – Sometimes (S), 1.00-1.49 – Never (N)

Table 1 presents the itemized responses as regards the verbal, social and physical bullying behaviors of the respondents during the year.

The verbal bullying responses revealed the item with the highest mean rating was item no. 5 (M=2.09; SD=1.29) "Made jokes about a student" while item no. 7 (M=1.55; SD=0.91) "Picked on a student by swearing at them" had the lowest mean rating. The grand mean value (M=1.88) of the responses reported that the respondents sometimes bullied other pupils in school by verbal means.

As to social bullying, it was revealed that item no. 13 (M =1.76; SD=1.10) "Got other students to ignore a student," had the highest mean rating while

item no. 4 "Got my friends to turn against a student," had the lowest mean rating of 1.45. The grand mean value (M=1.57) of the responses showed that the respondents were sometimes involved in social bullying in school.

Regarding physical bullying, it was revealed that item no. 12 "I slapped or punched a student," had the highest mean rating (M =1.81; SD=1.05) while item no. 6 "Crashed into a student on purpose as they walked by," had the lowest mean rating (M=1.34; SD=0.77). The grand mean value (M=1.53) of the responses implied that the respondents were sometimes involved in physical bullying in schools.

Table 2: Overall descriptive statistics of the responses of the pupils on Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument.

Total Scores Bullying subscales items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Verbal Bullying	6	34	11.27	3.93
Social Bullying	6	33	9.43	3.83
Physical Bullying	6	33	9.19	3.88

Bullying subscales scoring: 6 – had never been involved in bullying, more than 6- had been involved in bullying

Table 2 summarizes the computed total scores of the responses on the verbal, social and physical bullying subscales. Based on the stated scoring of by Parada on the Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument, a total score of 6 for the subscales mean that the respondents have never been involved in bullying; hence, the pupils who scored 6 as reported in the

minimum mean rating had never committed the act of either verbal, social or physical bullying. While those who scored more than 6 as seen in the maximum mean rating were the respondents who committed acts of bullying in school. The average mean score of verbal bullying (M=11.27) registered the highest mean rating, followed by social bullying

(M=9.43) and physical bullying (M=9.19) had the lowest mean rating.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the responses of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Items	Min	Max	Mean	SD	DR
1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	4	1.77	1.022	D
2. At times I think I am no good at all. (Reverse-scored)	1	4	2.58	.869	A
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	4	1.97	.985	D
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	4	2.01	.983	D
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (Reverse-scored)	1	4	2.31	.971	D
6. I certainly feel useless at times. (Reverse-scored)	1	4	2.29	.987	D
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	1	4	1.96	1.020	D
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself. (Reverse-scored)	1	4	3.18	.994	A
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. (Reverse-scored)	1	4	2.30	1.008	D
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	4	1.99	1.103	D
Grand Mean 2.24 Disagree					

Legend for the (DR) Descriptive Rating: 3.50-4.00 – Strongly agree (SA), 2.50-3.49 – Agree (A), 1.50-2.49 – Disagree (D), 1.00-1.49 – Strongly disagree (SD)

Table 3 reveals that item no. 8 “*I wish I could have more respect for myself. (Reverse-scored),*” obtained the highest mean rating of 3.18 while item no. 1 “*On the whole, I am satisfied with myself,*” was the least agreed item mean rating of 1.77. The

findings imply that there are still areas in the lives of the respondents that they would like to improve on. The grand mean value (M=2.24) of the responses reported that the respondents disagreed in most of the statements on the scale.

Table 4: Overall descriptive statistics of the responses of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Overall Responses	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-Esteem	12	37	22.38	4.55
Descriptive Rating	low self-esteem	high self-esteem	Moderate degree	

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: below 20 - low self-esteem/ low degree, between 20-30 - within normal range/moderate degree, higher scores -high self-esteem/high degree

Table 4 summarizes the computed total scores of the self-esteem of the respondents. Based on the scoring guide of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, respondents who scored 12 as seen in the minimum mean rating had low self-esteem while those who

scored 37 as revealed in a maximum mean rating were reported to have higher self-esteem. The average mean score of 22.38 is within the normal range which indicates that the respondents in general are within the normal range

Table 5: Correlation between the self-esteem and the extent of verbal, social and physical bullying.

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Verbal bullying vs Self-Esteem	0.12	0.02	Significant negligible positive correlation
Social bullying vs Self-Esteem	0.07	0.16	Not significant; negligible positive correlation
Physical bullying vs Self-Esteem	0.04	0.50	Not significant; negligible positive correlation

Table 5 presents the significant correlation of self-esteem to any of the bullying subscales. Using the Pearson Correlation Test, it was found out that there was insignificant negligible positive correlations between social bullying (r-value 0.07; p-value 0.16) and physical bullying (r-value 0.05; p-value=0.50) on the self-esteem of the perpetrators and only verbal bullying (r-value 0.12; p-value 0.02) revealed significant negligible positive correlation.

5.2 Discussion and Conclusion:

The findings from the current study revealed that the grand mean value of the responses on verbal bullying, social bullying and physical bullying that the respondents were sometimes participants of bullying through verbal, social and physical means. Verbal bullying had the highest mean rating and the most predominant form of bullying. In relation to

this observation, Darmawan also found out that not all forms of bullying are equally common. Significant number of bullying cases were only found in teasing and calling names rather than by physical bullying. Additionally, the research conducted by Kartal observed similar findings. More than half of the total respondents involved in the study reported to have experienced bullying and the most frequent type of which was verbal bullying. Also, Davis [5] found that physical and verbal bullying were the most predominant forms of bullying as reported by school administrators (p.32). In contrast, the study conducted by Omoteso [18] found that social bullying revealed to have the highest frequency of bullying act, followed by verbal bullying and physical bullying having the lowest frequency.

Focusing on self-esteem, the findings of this showed that the respondents disagreed with most of

the statements on the self-esteem scale. This only implies that there are still areas in their lives that they would like to improve on. However, the reported average mean score of the responses was within the normal range, thus the respondents had moderate degree of self-esteem. The findings of Darney, Howcroft and Stroud found similar results. The overall self-esteem of the respondents in their study, majority of which belong to the bully-victim category also had average level of self-esteem. Also, in the study of Graham, Bellmore and Mize, which was also conducted among sixth-graders, it was revealed that adolescents with reputations as bullies appeared to have the fewest psychological adjustment difficulties. Their self-views were just as positive as those of their socially adjusted classmates and they were considered to be the least anxious. Similarly, Omoteso, found that those who bully others were happy and they were happy doing so.

The correlation of self-esteem to any of the bullying subscales found out that there was insignificant negligible positive correlation between social bullying and physical bullying on the self-esteem of the perpetrators and only verbal bullying revealed significant negligible positive correlation. Verbal bullying, which appeared to be the most predominant bullying act committed by the perpetrators was also found to be significantly correlated with self-esteem. The findings imply that even if there was a weak correlation between verbal bullying and self-esteem, it can be noted that the *r*-value is positive which suggests that those who committed bullying by verbal means have comparatively higher self-esteem. The research of Juvonen Graham and Schuster also found out that perpetrators manifest the fewest number of adjustment problems. Specifically, perpetrators are psychologically stronger than classmates not involved in bullying, and they enjoy high social status among their classmates although it must be noted that classmates tend to avoid their company. Similarly, Darney, Howcroft and Stroud found evidences from the gathered literature that a relationship exists between bullying at school and self-esteem and confirmed that a definite albeit small relationship exists between bullying and overall self-esteem. On the other hand and in contrast with the results of this study, the findings of Estevez, Murgui and Musitu revealed that adolescents not involved in any act of bullying showed general better psychological adjustment, they had higher levels of self-esteem and satisfaction with life, and lower levels of depressive symptomatology, perceived stress and feeling of loneliness. However, it was worth-noting that their scores were similar to those of aggressors with respect to self-esteem. In relation, Uba, Yaacob, Juhari and Talib revealed a negative and a small correlation between self-esteem and bullying, high levels of bullying is associated with

low self-esteem.

5.3 Recommendations:

Based on the major findings, it is recommended that the Division of Angeles City in the Philippines, provide each school with standardized questionnaires/ assessment tools on bullying to determine the prevalence of the problem and to identify the perpetrators in schools.

According to Elinoff, Chafouleas and Sassu [3] relational aggression are more covert and subtle than physical assaults and may be less recognizable in schools, being not easily identified the behavior might not be properly address in the school setting.

Different forms of bullying and different factors that cause the delinquent behavior should also be identified so that it would be easier for the school heads to provide appropriate interventions and counseling programs for pupils who were reported as bullies. Clear policies on bullying in schools, or standard policy on a division or regional level, which can serve as a guide when dealing with problems on bullying and victimization must be formulated and be strictly implemented. The school must also plan school-based bullying awareness campaign through orientations and seminars among parents, teachers and pupils for them to know when and how to intervene in bullying incidents.

The current study may be replicated to see whether similar findings can be obtained. Since this study was conducted only in selected schools in the Division of Angeles City in the Philippines, further research needs to be carried out with larger samples, from a wider variety of population to compare the results.

Authors' Contribution:

Mr. Alfredo F. Manlapaz Jr, authored the current study and Dr. Glenn M. Calaguas, thesis adviser, guided the main author in the conceptualization and editing of the manuscript.

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