

Innovations

Community Involvement in School Bullying Prevention; Elementary Teachers Perception

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Abstract

In elementary schools, teachers are frequently confronted with an increasing number of unpleasant bullying behaviors, which result in a loss of valuable classroom instruction time. Moreover, academic achievement is negatively impacted for victims of bullying when compared to non-bullied pupils. The prevention of bullying is achievable through the collaborative efforts of the entire community, including school-wide and community-based involvement. This study aimed to investigate teachers' perspectives on community involvement in school bullying prevention, with the ultimate goal of reducing the prevalence of school bullying. The researcher utilized a survey questionnaire to gather quantitative and qualitative data. The study was conducted in the Division of Baguio City. Elementary teachers firmly believe that schools take a proactive stance in the fight against bullying. They strongly advocate for the formation of active partnership with parents, barangay officials, and faith-based organization. Moreover, comprehensive and coordinated community activities have the greatest impact on preventing and reducing bullying. A passive community fosters the growth of bullying, whereas active participation from potential community partners, such as barangay officials, faith-based organizations, and parents, maximizes the community's potential for creating an inclusive environment for all students to thrive in and a safe learning environment free from bullying.

Keywords: *Bullying, Barangay Officials, Faith-based Organizations, Parents, Elementary Teachers Perception.*

Introduction:

Bullying has gained recognition as a global concern that impacts schools of all types, including public and private institutions of varying sizes (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaída, 2008; Lipson, 2001). Elementary school educators are frequently faced with a growing number of disruptive bullying incidents, which may include physical, emotional, and verbal forms of aggression. Such behavior poses a threat to the culture, climate, and overall learning environment of schools, as it has the potential to undermine the safe haven that teachers and administrators strive to establish and maintain for all students.

According to observational research conducted by Craig et al. (2000), it has been found that only a mere 15-18% of bullying instances are intercepted by teachers, despite their belief that they intervene in such situations. This can be attributed to the reluctance of students to

report bullying practices to teachers, as they fear that the teacher may not take any action or worsen the situation (Rigby & Bagshaw, 2003; Rigby & Barnes, 2002). Therefore, education stakeholders must play an active role in addressing and combating bullying. As highlighted by various researchers such as Olweus (1993), Pepler et al. (1999), and Sugai & Homer (2002), increased adult knowledge and intervention are crucial in addressing the evolving dynamics of bullying in schools.

It is imperative, therefore, that practitioners should implement effective anti-bullying programs in their schools to protect students from bullying and its potential negative outcomes. From the perspective of international human rights law, the right to be safe at school and not be subjected to the aggression and victimization associated with bullying should be afforded to all children (Olweus and Limber 2010; Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989; Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948). All community stakeholders, education leaders, and international associations should be on the front line in crafting plans to eradicate bullying in the school

Bullying is a hostile behavior that is a real concern, particularly in schools. Because the person being bullied has less physical strength and psychological resilience than the bully, he or she is unable to defend himself or herself (Ghani, Awang, Ahmad, Jahal, & Bakar, 2020). This has a negative impact on students' health, well-being, and learning. Students may feel helpless, frustrated, and nervous as a result.

Being bullied can have an impact on how a student perceives himself, his friends, school, and his or her future. Furthermore, bullied students are more likely to suffer from depression, long-term low self-esteem, shyness, loneliness, physical illnesses, and threats or attempts at self-harm. Some students miss school, have lower grade point averages, or even drop out entirely. To avoid such consequences, bullying is most effectively addressed by preventing it from occurring in the first place.

While school administration and faculty play a crucial role in addressing bullying and safeguarding students, their efforts alone may not suffice. They possess the capacity to motivate others and foster an environment of dignity and inclusivity. However, a principal cannot tackle this issue single-handedly. Students are more likely to feel secure when the community collaborates to mitigate bullying. As the adage goes, it takes a village to raise a child, and it takes an entire community to shield a child from bullying.

The prevention of bullying is achievable, particularly through the consolidation of a community's influence. The implementation of community-wide strategies can facilitate the identification and protection of bullied children, the modification of bullying children's conduct, and the alteration of the attitudes of both adults and youth who condone bullying behaviors within peer groups, schools, and communities.

The prompt and consistent response of adults to instances of bullying behavior conveys the message that such conduct is unacceptable, thereby contributing to the gradual reduction of bullying behavior. Adults can take simple measures to prevent bullying and ensure the safety of children.

Other stakeholders should also participate such as faith-based organizations, youth sports, recreation groups, and businesses all have a role to play in bullying prevention.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine elementary school teachers' perceptions of community involvement in school bullying prevention. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions based on the perceptions of elementary teachers:

1. What bullying category has a greater prevalence in the elementary school?
2. What is the level of involvement of the following potential community partners in school bullying prevention?
 - a. parents
 - b. barangay officials
 - c. faith-based organizations
3. What are the roles of the potential community partners in school bullying prevention?
4. How to effectively partner with the community to prevent bullying in school?

Methodology

The current study employed a mixed-method research approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative method was utilized to ascertain the prevalence of various bullying categories, community perceptions regarding involvement in school bullying prevention, and the perceived role of the community in preventing bullying in schools. On the other hand, the qualitative method was employed to identify the perceived actions that schools must undertake to effectively collaborate with parents, barangay officials, and faith-based organizations in preventing bullying in schools.

This study consisted of a sample of 53 participants who were K-6 teachers and had been employed within the same district. Of the total sample, 15 teachers were affiliated with private schools, while the remaining 38 were employed in public schools.

A questionnaire was utilized to gather quantitative data and the same was used to gather qualitative data in the form of a question. The questionnaire was created by the researcher based on literature reviews. The questionnaire was evaluated and validated by four experts in the field.

The study's data collection process was initiated through a formal request. The researcher received endorsement from the dean of the College of Teacher Education to seek approval from the Schools Division Superintendent. Additionally, prior to administering the survey questionnaire, the researcher sought approval from the school Principals. The respondents were provided with comprehensive information regarding the study's objectives and the extent of their participation. Furthermore, they voluntarily consented to participate in the study, with the assurance that their identity would remain confidential and that the provisions of data privacy would be strictly observed.

The participants' responses were tallied using Microsoft excel. The average numerical ranking of the respondents per type of bullying was computed to determine the rank per bullying incident. The cumulative order of ranking was the first being the most common bullying category and the sixth as the least. Frequency and percentages were used to organize and present the data to determine the level of involvement of parents, barangay officials, and faith-based organizations in bullying prevention school initiatives at the elementary level. The same method was used to determine the perceived community role of parents, barangay officials, and faith-based organizations in preventing bullying in schools. Finally, thematic analysis was used to determine the perceived actions that parents, barangay officials, and faith-based organizations must take to prevent bullying in schools. The researcher determined themes that are common among respondents and disregarded those that were only identified once.

IV. Results and Discussions

A total of fifty-three respondents participated comprising thirty-eight teachers from public schools and fifteen from private schools.

Perceptions of Community Involvement in School Bullying Prevention

Table 1 shows the data on the perceived ranking of bullying incidents in order of prevalence among pupils. In general, teachers perceived physical bullying as the most prevalent incident, while gender-based bullying is perceived as the least frequent occurrence. The finding is consistent with recent data presented to the Senate's Committee on Basic Education by Department of Education Assistant Secretary Dexter Galban (2023), which reported that 56.79% of bullying incidents in schools take the form of physical bullying.

Table 1. Perceived Ranking of Bullying Incidents in Order of Prevalence by Selected Elementary teachers

Bullying Incident	Qualitative Description	Rank
<i>Physical</i>	Any unwanted physical contact between the bully and the victim like punching, pushing, shoving, kicking, slapping, tickling, headlocks, inflicting school pranks, teasing, fighting, and the use of available objects as weapons.	1 st
<i>Verbal</i>	Any slanderous statement or accusation that causes the victim undue emotional distress like directing foul language or profanity at the target, name-calling, tormenting, and commenting negatively on the victim's looks, clothes, and body.	2 nd
<i>Emotional</i>	Any act that causes damage to a victim's psyche and/or emotional well-being.	3 rd
<i>"Social bullying"</i>	Refers to any deliberate, repetitive, and aggressive social behavior intended to hurt others or to belittle another individual or group.	4 th
<i>"Cyberbullying"</i>	Bullying done through the use of technology or any electronic means.	5 th
<i>"Gender-based bullying"</i>	Refers to any act that humiliates or excludes a person based on perceived or actual sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).	6 th

According to Phillips and Cornell (2012), bullying can be categorized into three distinct forms: physical, verbal, and social. The underlying motivation behind all forms of bullying is to cause harm. Physical bullying, for instance, entails the repeated perpetration of acts such as hitting, kicking, or shoving. This finding is concerning, as physical bullying can have a significant impact on various aspects of a student's life, including their mental health, physical confidence, and academic performance. Furthermore, it has been observed that the current DepEd data on bullying incidents in schools is underestimated. Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, believes that the underreporting of data is due to students being more likely to tell the truth in a survey than to report it to their school. Physical bullying is also the most prevalent form of bullying due to the increased exposure to in-person classes. When students engage in interpersonal interactions, it can foster growth and learning. However, there are instances where such interactions may lead to misunderstandings that could escalate into physical confrontations. It is important to note that physical bullying is not the only form of bullying that exists in schools.

According to data, incidents of "gender-based bullying" are the least reported. This type of bullying can manifest in various forms, both in-person and online. For instance, cancel culture, as described by Asec. Galban (2023), is a form of bullying that is easily observed online. The

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2023) defines cancel culture as a means of expressing disapproval and exerting social pressure. Gender-based bullying falls under this category because it diminishes the gender identity of the student by expressing disapproval and exerting social pressure. Such a climate of fear and intolerance should not be present in schools. To address this issue, DepEd has initiated an intervention, as stated by Galban (2023), which includes online and phone reporting systems for cyberbullying and gender bullying. This approach aims to provide learners with a safe and confidential platform to share their experiences, thereby enabling better handling of bullying cases.

Table 2. Qualitative Description and Quantitative Value of Level of Involvement

Level of Involvement	Qualitative Description	Quantitative Value
Informative Participation	Informed about the school-wide anti-bullying initiative of the school.	1
Preparatory and Planning Participation	Gives ideas and feedback about the school-wide anti-bullying initiative of the school.	2
Decision-making Participation	Provide tools and make decisions about the school-wide anti-bullying initiative of the school.	3

Table 3. Perceived Level of Parents' Involvement in Bullying Prevention Initiatives

Level of Involvement	Quantitative Value (%)			
	1	2	3	No Response
Creation of templates/forms, such as an intake sheet, a pledge of good behavior, a notice to parents, a call slip, an admission slip, or a referral slip, to record and resolve bullying problems.	50.94	22.64	15.09	11.32
Organization of seminars/conferences on responsible parenting and spiritual development.	41.51	28.30	18.87	11.32
Organization of conference/symposium on bullying prevention and awareness.	37.74	26.42	24.53	11.32
Information dissemination through a small book entitled "Be a Friend, Not a Bully".	49.06	15.09	24.53	11.32
Formulation and deliberation of the Child Protection Policy School Manual policies.	43.40	24.53	22.64	11.32

Generally, the result implies that teachers perceive parents' level of involvement in bullying prevention as informative participation level.

According to a recent study conducted by Stives et al. (2021), parents continue to express concern regarding the problematic nature of bullying. Despite efforts to encourage children to report instances of bullying to adults, these efforts have not proven entirely effective. As a result, parents' involvement in addressing bullying remains primarily informative, as they believe it is challenging to motivate children to report such incidents. However, the study highlights that parents are deeply committed to addressing and preventing all forms of bullying, both within and outside of school settings. The findings of Stives et al. (2021) suggest that learners may feel apprehensive about reporting instances of bullying. Therefore, it is crucial for parents to initiate conversations and provide counseling to their children, as they are the primary caregivers and confidants of their children. As significant stakeholders in education, parents should take an active role in controlling bullying in schools by organizing seminars, symposia, and conferences to gain insight into how to effectively address bullying, particularly when their own children are involved. Furthermore, including parents in a school-based conference day focusing on anti-bullying measures is a key component of many bullying prevention projects, including those created by Olweus, Limber, and Mihalic in 1999.

Table 4. Perceived Level of Barangay Officials' Involvement in Bullying Prevention Initiatives

Level of Involvement	Quantitative Value (%)			
	1	2	3	No Response
Creation of templates/forms, such as an intake sheet, a pledge of good behavior, a notice to parents, a call slip, an admission slip, or a referral slip, to record and resolve bullying problems.	22.64	52.83	11.32	13.21
Organization of seminars/conferences on responsible parenting and spiritual development.	35.85	35.85	13.21	15.09
Organization of conference/symposium on bullying prevention and awareness.	39.62	32.08	15.09	13.21
Information dissemination through a small book entitled "Be a Friend, Not a Bully".	30.19	35.85	18.87	15.09
Formulation and deliberation of the Child Protection Policy School Manual policies.	26.42	39.63	20.75	13.21

Generally, the result implies that teachers perceive barangay officials' level of involvement in bullying prevention as preparatory and planning participation level.

As per the Local Government Code of the Philippines Book III, 1991, it is incumbent upon the Local Government, of which the Barangay is a constituent part, to promote and facilitate activities aimed at safeguarding and fostering the holistic development of children. In order to ensure the protection of children, who are particularly vulnerable and sensitive, it is imperative that Barangay officials not only participate but also take the lead in devising various initiatives and programs to shield learners from all forms of bullying. Given that they are part of the government and have been duly elected, teachers regard them as the primary drivers of the planning process, as they bear the responsibility of securing and safeguarding the lives of their constituents.

Memorandum Circular 2023-39 of the Department of the Interior and Local Government aims to institutionalize the Seal of Good Governance as an award given to local governments as a part in upholding its commitment in bringing about people-oriented reforms that will enable the local government units to foster a culture of good governance amid the challenges in the local government landscape. An indicator for the award is incidence of bullying under the data source of sustainable action. This implies that bullying is one of the problems under sustainable education that barangay officials must address and take lead to reflect good governance.

Table 5. Perceived Level of Faith-Based Organizations Involvement in Bullying Prevention Initiatives

Level of Involvement	Quantitative Value (%)			
	1	2	3	No Response
Creation of templates/forms, such as an intake sheet, a pledge of good behavior, a notice to parents, a call slip, an admission slip, or a referral slip, to record and resolve bullying problems.	15.09	37.74	43.40	3.77
Organization of seminars/conferences on responsible parenting and spiritual development.	22.64	37.74	37.74	1.89
Organization of conference/symposium on bullying prevention and awareness.	13.21	39.62	45.28	1.89
Information dissemination through a small book entitled "Be a Friend, Not a Bully".	20.75	33.96	38.85	9.43
Formulation and deliberation of the Child Protection Policy School Manual policies.	18.87	32.08	43.40	5.66

Generally, the result implies that teachers perceive faith-based organization level of involvement in bullying prevention as decision-making participation level.

Faith-based organizations play a significant role in education as they are integral members of the community, contributing to communal faith and religious upbringing. This is particularly relevant in the Philippines, where Christianity is the dominant religion and faith is an essential aspect of daily life. In the context of bullying, faith-based organizations have a responsibility to initiate and facilitate anti-bullying programs that are grounded in faith-based principles,

promoting sensitivity and respect among learners. One such program is The Protectors Faith Based Anti-Bullying Program (2023), which aims to foster character development through its "Courage Training" module, promoting spiritual growth and strength. By prioritizing ethical behavior and promoting goodness as the norm, learners can develop into responsible and compassionate individuals.

Table 6. Perceived Parents' Roles to Prevent Bullying in School

Role	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Parents should discuss bullying with their children. Parents help children understand what it is, why it's dangerous, and how to deal with it.	100.00	0.00
Parents should encourage their children to speak up if they are bullied or see someone else being bullied.	100.00	0.00
Parents should learn about their children's school's bullying prevention policies and practices and convey your support.	98.11	1.89
Parents should encourage their children to pursue their passions to both deliver and shield them from bullying.	98.11	1.89

Table 7. Perceived Barangay Officials' Roles to Prevent Bullying in School

Role	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Barangay officials should become familiar with steps to address bullying within the school.	100.00	0.00
Barangay officials assess the extent of bullying in the community.	100.00	0.00
Barangay officials should educate the community about bullying issues.	100.00	0.00
Barangay officials should create anti-bullying policies.	94.34	5.66
Barangay officials should implement comprehensive bullying prevention strategies.	100.00	0.00
Barangay officials should allot funds for anti-bullying training of key community members.	96.23	3.77

In general, the consensus among educators is that parents play a crucial role in preventing bullying within schools.

It is widely agreed that parents should engage in open discussions with their children about the nature of bullying, its potential dangers, and effective strategies for dealing with it. As such, parents are expected to take an active role in guiding and counseling their children, and to

participate in efforts to address bullying within the school community. According to Divecha (2019), parents can help prevent bullying by fostering their children's emotional and interpersonal skills, promoting positive peer relationships, and advocating for swift action in cases where bullying does occur.

Teachers consider barangay officials as primary planners in addressing bullying within the community. They should be the ones creating different policies and guidelines and involving different sectors of the barangay as a united approach. A way of doing so is having anti-bullying campaigns in the barangay development plan. This plan is headed by the barangay development council composed of barangay officials and different local executives. Under the barangay development plan, barangay officials can craft comprehensive ordinances in bullying prevention to effectively eliminate it in the community.

Table 8. Perceived Faith-Based Organizations' Roles to Prevent Bullying in School

Role	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Faith-based organizations should tell stories from readings and religious histories that inspire people of faith to love others, seek peace, and defend those in need.	100.00	0.00
Faith-based organizations should implement effective bullying prevention initiatives in their organizations and settings, such as childcare facilities.	98.11	1.89
Faith-based organizations should involve students in initiatives to increase awareness about bullying and its consequences.	98.11	1.89
Faith-based organizations should invite members of faith groups to serve as mentors and supporters to children who are involved in or affected by bullying.	98.11	1.89
Faith-based organizations should adapt sacred text and scriptural themes to teach students to demonstrate compassion and concern for one another.	98.11	1.89

Generally, most teachers agree in the different faith-based organizations' roles in preventing bullying in school.

Most teachers agree that faith-based organizations must lead in character development of learners. This can be through different lectures that are aligned to the religious beliefs of the learners. In this way, they can get a deeper sense of their worth and respect each other. Faith-based organizations can also lead in establishing learning camps as breathers to give break to the learners for them to reconnect with the divine providence.

Actions that Schools Must Do to Partner with Parents, Barangay Officials, and Faith-Based Organizations

Themes	Frequency	Sample Responses
Faithfully implement the policies through seminars/trainings	17	The school should be the first to initiate programs on bullying, and should communicate and coordinate with parents, barangay officials, and faith-based organizations to prevent bullying in school, and likewise with the parents, barangay officials, and faith-based organizations.
Involvement during general assembly, conferences, and meetings	8	Involve them during general assembly. Maybe the school can invite speakers who will be sharing experiences or educate the community about bullying issues.
Schools must be first to initiate, communicate, and coordinate to stakeholders through partnership	6	School should sustain the partnership among the different partners.
Conduct contests	2	Conduct poster-making/singing contest/essay writing contest in all grade-level in school and at the same time in their respective barangays.

Teachers believe that schools must take an active part in addressing bullying by creating various partnerships with stakeholders and members of the community.

Faithfully Implement the Policies through Seminars/Trainings

Most teachers determined that schools must implement existing school policies regarding bullying faithfully by conducting seminars and trainings. The school may invite experts in the field and guidance counsellors to their speakers in the event.

An existing school policy that teachers are referring to is DepEd Order No. 40 s. 2012 entitled as the DepEd Child Protection Policy. The policy under section eleven mandates that all public and private elementary and secondary schools shall build the capacities of school personnel, pupils, students and learners, parents and guardians to understand and deal with child abuse, exploitation, violence and discrimination cases, bullying and peer violence by conducting sessions, trainings and seminars on positive peer relationships and enhancement of social and emotional competence.

This implies that the implementation of DepEd Order No. 40 s. 2012 must always be observed all year-round. School heads must lead in conducting trainings and seminars specially during In-Service Trainings (INSET) which is an avenue to discuss relevant ideas in understanding and dealing with bullying inside and outside of the school.

Conduct Contests

Teachers value the importance of contests not only because of the prize at hand but also because of the learning experiences that contests provide. These contests involve learners as participants and the school as an organizing committee to implement the contest within the barangay to spread awareness on bullying.

A study by Kapur (2020) identified that contestants are required to focus to two important aspects, i.e. socialization and generating awareness in terms of measures of coping with problems and challenges. This is the greater sense of purpose that contests foster, an environment where anti-bullying campaigns are initiated to create an atmosphere that is warm and welcoming to learners.

This indicates that schools must organize various contests that spread awareness on the different types of bullying and how it should be properly addressed. This can be done through partnership with the barangay and faith-based organizations to have a unified approach against bullying.

It is synthesized that schools must faithfully implement anti-bullying policies through seminars and trainings in partnership with the barangay and faith-based organizations.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following were derived conclusions of this study:

1. Teachers perceive that physical bullying is the most prevalent and gender-based bullying is the least prevent in the elementary school.
2. Teachers perceive parents' level of involvement in bullying prevention as informative participation level, barangay officials as preparatory and planning participation level, and faith-based organization as decision-making participation level.
3. Teachers agree to most roles of the parents, barangay officials, and faith-based organizations as an active participant in bullying prevention
4. For schools to effectively partner with community members, they must faithfully implement anti-bullying policies through seminars and trainings in partnership with the barangay and faith-based organizations.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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