

BULLYING AND SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Introduction

Bullying is prevalent in schools worldwide. Foreign and local reports indicate cases of school crimes brought about by the occurrence of bullying within the school premise. World Health Organization's Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (Craig & Harel, 2004 as cited in James, 2010) found out that a survey of 35 countries indicate an average incidence rates of 11 percent for both victims and bullies. There were about 2.7 million students being bullied each year by about 2.1 students taking on the role of the bully. According to the same WHO report, one (1) out of seven (7) students in kindergarten through 12th grade have participated in the bullying incidents either as a bully or as a victim. Accordingly, over half or about 56 percent, of all students have witnesses a bullying crime inside the school (Bullying Statistics, 2010). In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) reported the following statistical data based on the baseline study on violence against children in public schools. Findings have shown that 78.36% in high school in urban areas suffered verbal abuse; while 37.57% in high school in rural areas experienced physical abuse; on the other hand 43.71% in high school in urban areas experienced verbal sexual abuse and 17.71% of high school students experienced inappropriate touching committed by peers. Reported cases of bullying for SY 2012-2013 revealed a total of 1,165 cases (DepEd, 2012).

International and local groups especially educators and helping professionals were alarmed by this issue and thus, preventive measures have been made. Anti-bullying campaign was established including advocacy on understanding the dynamics of bullying. On September 12, 2013, Republic Act No. 10627 also known as the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 was legislated. This initiative connotes a more serious attention towards the issue of school bullying. Therefore, schools should recognize factors and measures that can be adapted to prevent and resolve the occurrences of school bullying.

One of these factors is school connectedness which was found to be one of the strongest protective factors for both boys and girls to decrease violence, and risk of unintentional injury (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). School connectedness refers to students' feelings and beliefs that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals (Blum, 2005). Researches of Schaps, Knopf, Hanson and Muller

(as cited by Unser, 2012) stated that connectedness, belongingness, and community all refer to students' sense of being in close, respectful relationships with peers and adults at school. These terms are used interchangeably since they all refer to students' sense of being in close, respectful relationships with peers and adults in school.

In fact, study has shown that adolescents with lower perceptions of school connectedness were more likely to engage in various risk behavior. It supports the claim of literature that a lack of school connectedness can act as a risk factor for adolescent involvement in clustering of risk behaviors (Govender et al., 2013). Likewise, the study of Unser (2012) has claims that there was a substantial amount of research relating to the importance of this sense of school belonging or connectedness among adolescents. Although the terms used as descriptors vary, the research consensus is that students who see their school as a place where they belong to a community do better in a number of documented areas.

The present study is a descriptive research which aimed to describe the frequency and forms of bullying incidences and level of school connectedness. These two factors are considered as bases for developing an anti-bullying program suited for high school students.

Theoretical Background

In the literature review, bullying behavior can be defined as aggressive act that is repeated overtime or has a potential to be repeated in the future with an intent to harm the other person who is perceived to be weak and more vulnerable in either physical, emotional or psychological aspect and leaving that person with a severe damage or impact that hinders him/her to perform his/her daily activities (Penetrante, 2009; Myers, 2005). In a National Study of bullying by the National Education Association (NEA), results have shown that approximately 43 percent of NEA members perceived bullying to be a moderate or major problem in school. Half of the survey respondents (62%) claimed that they witnessed two or three incidents of bullying within the last month. In the same study, they also found out that verbal (59%), social/relational (50%), and physical (39%) forms of bullying are greater concerns in school compared to cyber bullying (17%) (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & O'Brennan, 2009). In addition, a study (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009) on school bullying among adolescents in the United States indicated that 20.8 percent of the respondents reported being perpetrators or victims of physical bullying in the past two months.

The study of Plan Philippines (2009) which suggest that verbal and relational abuse like teasing, demeaning and ignoring classmates were identified as forms of bullying while physical and emotional abuse were attributed as violence or aggression. The understanding of students that

verbal and relational abuses were form of bullying can be explained by the findings of various researches confirming verbal bullying as the predominantly observed form of bullying. Foreign and local studies have comparable findings in terms of the prevalence of different forms of bullying as derived from the percentages of responses in the survey conducted. Verbal is the most common form of bullying, followed by social or relational bullying, then physical bullying and lastly, the cyber-bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Villazor, 2010; Wang et al., 2009; Bayhon, 2001; & Plan Philippines, 2009).

It appears that there is a consensus in the previous literature that bullying incidences are high and that verbal bullying is the most common form of bullying. However, the unique experiences of different respondents in a culture or community may vary, depending on the frequency and forms of bullying incidences. The present study aims to investigate this context by looking into the level of school connectedness among the students, which may serve as a protective factor to buffer the incidences of bullying. Students who feel connected to their school were less likely to skip school or be involved in fighting, bullying, and vandalism (Schapps, 2003). These students will most likely succeed and be able to overcome conflict in school. They can take part in responding appropriately to the bullying incidences and other violence happening inside the school. By exploring how high school students in one institution describe and define the dynamics of bullying is the gap that is being bridged by this study. The relationship between bullying and school connectedness will be the determining factor in coming up with an anti-bullying program.

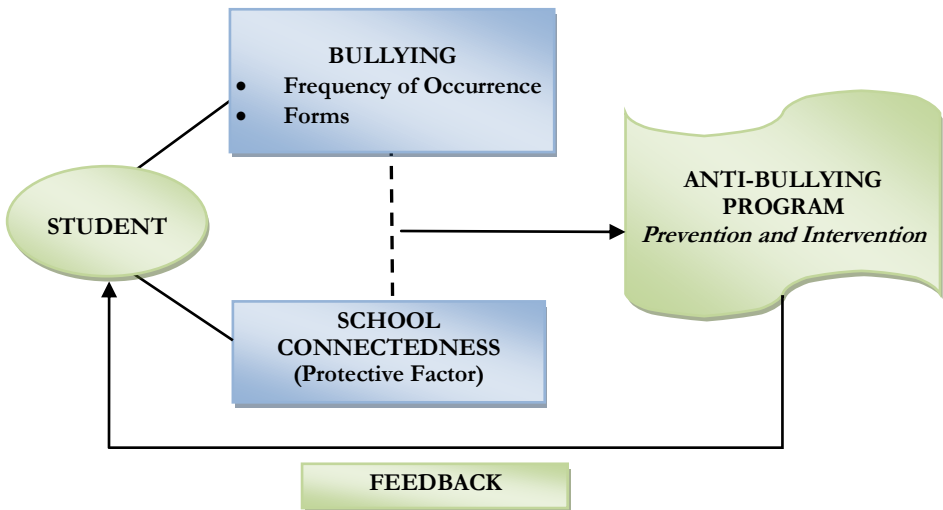


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The social cognitive theory (SCT) explains how people acquire and maintain certain behavioral patterns while control theory explains how individual's social bonds affect behavior. On the other hand, control theory suggests that the person who are more attached in society believe in the values of conventional society, and invest in and are involved in conventional lines of activity. Behavior is less likely to deviate from what is acceptable (Chriss, 2007). The present research hypothesizes that when external factors like school connectedness are well defined and when students perceive these environmental factors as preventive in nature, then the incidences of bullying behavior will less likely to occur. The present study measured bullying in terms of frequency of occurrence and its forms and the level of school connectedness among the respondents. The tendency of students to initiate and engage in bullying behaviors are affected by how they understood the act through the process of cognition and this process is affected by how the person perceived his experiences in the school environment. The constructed reality by this interaction becomes the basis of students' perception in terms of the incidences of bullying. Furthermore, the interaction of two factors also formed social bonds that develop the general feeling of school connectedness of the person which enables his behavior not to deviate from what is socially acceptable. These two variables will gauge the degree of harmonious relations among students in a school, and this will characterize the formulation of the anti-bullying program, by harnessing and strengthening relations among students, and engaging them in ways to further prevent incidences of bullying.

Methodology

This study utilized the mixed method of research to describe incidences of bullying and level of school connectedness among high school students. The research was conducted in a private, Catholic high school. It was chosen as the setting of the study since it satisfies the set criteria: there were some reported cases of bullying incidences despite the strict policy and rigid safety and security measures; and students were diversely grouped in each class having students coming from both public and private elementary schools in different towns of the province.

The school has a three story building—located on the ground floor are the faculty room, principal's office and classrooms. The library, school clinic, other classrooms, and another faculty room are located on the second floor. Guidance office is located on the third floor together with other classrooms for the higher year. This kind of arrangement helps the teachers to monitor students in each floor during and after class hours.

Classrooms and laboratories were designed with two doors and are mostly closed since these are fully air-conditioned. These facilities were among the areas in which student and teacher interaction were common. Student lounge at the ground floor is the area in which student to student interaction mostly happened. Canteens were located adjacent to the building leading to the gymnasium while the rest rooms were spread out in different floors near the end side of the building before the stairs going down. Restrooms were ventilated and with enough lighting. There were security guards roaming around the building throughout the day.

The respondents were students in Grade 7 to fourth year high school of S.Y. 2013-2014. Two hundred sixty seven (267) students participated in the study. Respondents were selected through stratified random sampling. Students' responses from the survey questionnaire as well as from the focus group discussion (FGD) were the primary sources of data in describing the incidences of bullying and level of school connectedness. Secondary data included records like the implementing rules and regulations of the RA No. 10627 and other documents pertinent in the present study.

The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire by Dan Olweus (1996) was the instrument used to measure the incidences of bullying among high school students. The questionnaire consists of 40 questions with corresponding choices of answers but the researcher utilized selected items that may answer the research questions. Items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 12a, 12b, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 32a, and 32b were among the items extracted from the instrument and utilized to identify the incidences and forms of bullying. It has been shown that at an individual level with individual subjects as the unit of analysis, combinations of items for being victimized or bullying others yielded internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) of .80 (Olweus, 2006).

The second tool used to measure school connectedness was the five item statements constructed by Blum (2002) and his co-authors. The statements includes: "I feel close to people at this school," "I feel like I am part of this school," "I am happy to be at this school," "The teachers at this school treat students fairly," and "I feel safe in my school." Respondents were asked to rate these statements using the Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Lastly, the researcher constructed six (6) questions that were used during the FGD. The two items focused on the perception of students regarding relationship with classmates, and the school in general; while three questions for victims, bullies and bystanders were formulated to substantiate responses in the survey questionnaire; and one question focused on their proposed measures in addressing bullying incidences in school.

In the FGD, the respondents were grouped according to their responses on the survey questionnaire. They were categorized as bullies,

victims, bully-victims and bystanders, depending on the nature of their responses. The FGD tackled questions that represent the statement of the problem. The responses in the FGD were organized and coded based on themes relevant to the interview questions. Resulting themes that emerged from the FGD were integrated in the analysis of the results gathered from the survey instruments.

Frequency and percentage were used to organize data pertaining to the incidences of bullying, as reported in the Olweus bullying questionnaire. Frequency count and weighted mean were used to analyze the level of school connectedness indicated by respondents in the survey questionnaire. Results were interpreted based on a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 as the highest and 1 as the lowest. Thematic analysis was employed in analyzing the result of the focus group discussions. Responses from each question were categorized according to the types of respondents, as to victim, bully or bystanders and according to the types of responses per questions.

Results

1. Incidences of bullying

Seventy one (71) students out of 267 reported having been bullied in school in the past six months. Fifty-seven (57) students or 21% of the respondents have been bullied either twice or three times a month or at least once a week. In addition, 34 students or 12% admitted to taking part in bullying other students. This is validated by results from the FGD, in which 15 respondents answered items in the instrument that refers to both experiences as victims of bullying, and as bullies themselves. These respondents represent 21% of the victims, and 44% of bullies. The overlap refers to a type of bullying involvement called the bully-victim type, which refers to those who both experience being a victim of bullying, and being a bully themselves. The group of bully-victims revealed that their experiences as victim prompted them to retaliate and become bullies themselves.

Table 1 shows the reported incidences in which bullying were commonly initiated inside the school premises. Classrooms were among the frequently observed area of bullying incidences, in which bullying occurs whether the teacher is in the classroom ($f=45$) or not ($f=92$), with a combined percentage of 51% as reported by respondents.

FGD results confirm this, in which 35 responses indicated that bullying occurs in classrooms when the teacher is not present. This was agreed upon by both bully, victims or bully-victims. Bullies said that they commonly initiated bullying without the presence of teachers because they feared that if they were caught by the teacher they will be reprimanded and immediately be sent to the guidance office. In contrast, some of the victims

and bully-victims believed that bullying were also done even with the presence of teaches. They consider this event to happen because of the inability of the teachers to distinguish bullying act from healthy and playful teasing. More so, bullies did not report any incident of bullying happened in the classroom with the presence of the teacher.

Table 1
Bullying incidences in different places at school

<i>Place</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Playground/athletic field (During recess or break times)	15	6%
Hallways/stairwells	23	9%
In the class (when the teacher was in the room)	45	17%
In the class (when the teacher was not in the room)	92	34%
Bathroom	9	3%
Gym, gym locker room/shower	2	1%
Lunch room	2	1%
On the way to and from school	6	2%
On the school bus	1	0%
No answer/response	72	27%
N =	267	

Respondents reported that most bullies come from their own classes, as indicated by 98 or 37% of respondents. Ten percent of respondents pointed out that bullies also from different class but in the same grade and year level. In addition, 16% reported that bullying incidences are perpetuated by both males and females, while 14% reported that victims were bullied by several boys while only 5% were bullied by several girls.

Table 2 and Table 3 show the reported incidences of bullying according to its forms. The verbal form of bullying, specifically name calling or teasing, has the highest number of reported incidences. The reported incidences of name calling or teasing among victims, i.e., responses of being bullied, range from 7% (for several times a week) to 11% (for 2-3 times a month). Likewise, the reported incidences of name calling or teasing among bullies, i.e., responses of taking part in bullying, range from 4% (once a week) to 5% (several times a week or a month).

Victims reported 2% to 8% incidences of relational bullying, specifically telling lies or spreading rumors, occurring either 2 or 3 times a month to several times a week. Among victims, relational bullying appears to be the second most reported incidences.

Table 2
 Frequency of responses of being bullied at school
 along the four identified forms

Forms	Description	No Answer	Haven't Bullied	Once or Twice	2 or 3 Times a Month	Once a Week	Several Times a Week	Total
VERBAL	Calling of mean names, making fun of, or teasing in hurtful way	10	90	97	29	23	18	267
		4%	34%	36%	11%	9%	7%	
	Mean names or comments about race or color	10	161	69	13	6	8	267
		4%	60%	26%	5%	2%	3%	
	Mean names or comments or gestures with sexual meaning	11	166	56	13	10	11	267
		4%	62%	21%	5%	4%	4%	
PHYSICAL	Hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors	11	164	58	12	12	10	267
		4%	61%	22%	4%	4%	4%	
	Money or things was taken away or damaged	13	193	51	5	3	2	267
		5%	72%	19%	2%	1%	1%	
RELATIONAL	Left out of things on purpose, excluded from group of friends, or completely ignored	11	149	73	15	9	10	267
		4%	56%	27%	6%	3%	4%	
	Total lies or spread rumors and make others dislike the person	14	129	88	21	9	6	267
		5%	48%	33%	8%	3%	2%	
CYBER	Hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on mobile phone or over the internet	13	169	73	5	4	3	267
		5%	63%	27%	2%	1%	1%	

On the other hand, Table 2 and Table 3 show that physical bullying has the lowest report of incidences, particularly for money or things taken away or damaged, with only 0% to 2% of victims and bullies reporting such incidences occurring either 2 or 3 times a month to several times a week. Likewise, cyberbullying also has the lowest report of incidences for both

victims and bullies, ranging from 0% to 2% occurring either 2 or 3 times a month to several times a week.

Table 3
Frequency of responses of taking part in bullying at school along the four identified forms

Forms	Description	No Answer	Haven't Bullied	Once or Twice	2 or 3 Times a Month	Once a Week	Several Times a Week	Total
VERBAL	Calling of mean names, making fun of, or teasing in hurtful way	19	111	101	13	10	13	267
		7%	42%	38%	5%	4%	5%	
	Mean names or comments about race or color	23	158	61	11	7	7	267
		9%	59%	23%	4%	3%	3%	
	Mean names or comments or gestures with sexual meaning	23	199	34	1	6	4	267
		9%	75%	13%	0%	2%	1%	
PHYSICAL	Hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors	23	193	34	9	4	4	267
		9%	72%	13%	3%	1%	1%	
	Money or things was taken away or damaged	24	224	16	2	0	1	267
		9%	84%	6%	1%	0%	0%	
RELATIONAL	Left out of things on purpose, excluded from group of friends, or completely ignored	20	179	48	7	7	6	267
		7%	67%	18%	3%	3%	2%	
	Total lies or spread rumors and make others dislike the person	24	203	29	4	3	4	267
		9%	76%	11%	1%	1%	1%	
CYBER	Hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on mobile phone or over the internet	27	197	37	4	2	0	267
		10%	74%	14%	1%	1%	0%	

Survey data were supported by results of the FGD, which revealed similar findings, wherein verbal bullying was the predominant form of bullying. It reported incidences like teasing and name calling pertaining to physical attributes, providing nicknames or “*bansag*,” or teasing related to one’s gender, “*Sinasabihan ng bakla kabit hindi naman totoo*” [Being called as a homo even when it is not true] and religious practice, “*Yung sign of the cross di po namin alam tapos sinasabihan kami kailangan daw naming gawin...*” [We do not know the Sign of the Cross, and they would tell us that we must do it] were also reported among cases of bullying. Interestingly, laughing at others was perceived by the bully and bully-victim as form of bullying, “*Nakikisabay sa pagtama*” [Joining in laughter]. On the other hand, cyber-bullying was least reported incident of bullying, delivered through social media and text messages.

2. Level of School Connectedness

Table 4 shows the items related to school connectedness, and the corresponding mean ratings and interpretation. Respondents reported having a high level of school connectedness, with an overall mean rating of 3.75. Most of the items in the survey also derived parallel mean ratings, ranging from 3.60 to 3.99, denoting a high level of school connectedness. The item, “*I am happy to be at this school*,” obtained the highest overall mean rating of 3.99, while the item, “*The teachers at this school treated students fairly*,” obtained the lowest overall mean rating of 3.60.

Table 4
Level of school connectedness among high school students

Factors	Mean	Interpretation
I feel close to people at this school	3.64	High feeling of connectedness
I feel like I am part of this school	3.74	High feeling of connectedness
I am happy to be at this school	3.99	High feeling of connectedness
The teachers at this school treated students fairly	3.60	High feeling of connectedness
I feel safe in my school	3.76	High feeling of connectedness
Overall Mean	3.75	High feeling of connectedness

FGD results reveal that despite bullying incidences among students, majority of the victims ($f=14$) and bullies ($f=12$) have positive perceptions about the school, particularly when it comes to order and safety, and to

having a conducive learning atmosphere. Some of the respondents have neutral feelings about the school, since they recognize positive and negative elements were present. Only two students appear to have negative feelings, and reported wanting to transfer to another school.

The findings on school connectedness suggest that students have positive feelings about school, despite incidences of bullying behavior. It is a good indicator in enhancing positive behaviors among students, and in preventing incidences of bullying behaviors. It also suggests that teachers may need to enhance their role in fostering a caring and disciplined atmosphere, so as to prevent incidences of bullying, particularly in the classrooms. Results indicate that the Guidance office can harness students' strong feelings of connectedness towards the school, by mobilizing students, and involving them in implementing effective measures for an anti-bullying prevention program.

3. Recommended measures to combat bullying

Respondents were asked to provide suggested measures to combat bullying incidences during the FGD. Most of the interventions recommended are to address the concerns of victims, bully-victims, bullies, and bystanders. The respondents suggested personality development activities that touch on topics such as developing self-esteem, boosting self-confidence, enhancing sensitivity and self-control, and enriching coping skills. These suggestions were made to encourage victims to be assertive of their rights as a student, in promoting a healthy and peaceful school environment. Training for teachers, other school personnel, and students were also suggested. The training themes for teachers shall focus on becoming proactive in detecting and responding to bullying incidences, while training topics for students shall emphasize ways on how to take initiative and mediate during bullying incidences. Involvement of authorities in proving appropriate actions in bullying incidences and establishing support system were perceived by bully-victims as some of the possible strategies to address bullying in school. These results appear to parallel the Olweus universal intervention programs (Olweus, n.d.), which employs a more proactive strategy in addressing the child's environment.

Although counseling program was always been part of any educational institutions, respondents believed that counseling intervention for bullies and victims was still a good measure in addressing bullying incidences. This result would mean that aside from the established counseling services given to the students, a more innovative and responsive counseling program specifically designed for students involved in bullying incidences should be formulated.

Discussion

Results were able to provide insights on the frequency and forms of bullying. For one, several of the respondents reported to being bully-victims, those who both experience being a victim of bullying, and being a bully themselves. This finding is consistent with the theoretical framework of the study, in which bullying behavior is a social process that is highly influenced by how students perceived themselves in relation to the behavior of others. Interestingly, results revealed that classrooms are the most common places where bullying incidences tend to occur, and that bullies often come from peers in their own classes. This scenario can be attributed to the fact that classrooms are the commonly used facilities for the interaction among students and teachers.

Moreover, the result indicates that the presence of a teacher inside the classrooms appear to decrease the reported incidences of bullying. This is consistent with the findings of Bradshaw et al., (2009), which reveal that school connectedness increases the likelihood of teachers intervening in the incidences of bullying. The finding suggests that classroom management strategies for teachers must include learning how to respond to and distinguish bullying behavior from playful teasing.

In contrast, the very low turnout of bullying incidences in lunchroom, gym, playground, and the like, can be attributed to the school setting, in which classrooms appear to be a breeding ground for interacting with students, which can lead to verbal name-calling and teasing (“*kantsawan*”). In addition, the safety measures employed by the school, such as the presence of roaming security personnel, may have limited the number of bullying incidences. Findings confirm the results of previous research studies, which showed that verbal bullying was the common form of bullying, although the present findings is lesser by about 50% compared to the previous research (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Villazor, 2010; Wang, 2009; Bayhon, 2001; & Plan Philippines, 2008) in terms of percentage of responses since the study have smaller sample size. This can be attributed to the following factors: a) verbal bullying is the easiest way in harming other students, b) it can be stopped immediately when authorities in school like teacher is approaching; and c) one of the most difficult forms of bullying to be distinguished since there is a thin line between verbal bullying and playful teasing. Data also supports the finding of Wang et al., (2009) which revealed that physical and cyber forms of bullying were among the least number of reported cases. The latter finding can be explained by the fact that it was difficult to quantify and identify cyber-bullying. The repetitive component in considering an act as bullying (Penetrante, 2009) has unclear limitations in cases of cyber bullying. For instance, pictures or messages was posted only once in social media but able to reach a quite

number of users resulting to a severe damage to the person or to the victim. This scenario may not be considered as bullying since it happened only once, but the effect to the person was severe. Therefore, clearer criteria to distinguish cyberbullying can help students to report the forms of cyberbullying correctly.

On the other hand, the results do not appear to echo previous findings or literature in terms of the number of bullying incidences. Instead, only very minimal incidences of bullying were reported for both victims and bullies. In addition, the study showed that students have a high level of connectedness with the school. Unlike previous studies and literature, the present study revealed that there could be a working relationship between school connectedness and the occurrence of bullying incidences. The results also showed that this relationship can be attributed to factors that the school has satisfactorily met the expectations of students in terms of: safety and security measures; instructions and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities were concerned. These were also supported by the study of Blum (2005) which indicates that students feel connected to the school when they like the school, feel that they belong, believe teachers care about them and their learning, believe that education matters, have friends at school, believe that discipline is fair, and have opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities in school environment. Thus, a high level of school connectedness would result to a lesser involvement in adverse behaviors, such as bullying (Jose et al., 2012; Dixon, 2007; Schapps, 2005). This is a good indicator in terms of improving school climate as a means to enhance positive behaviors and discourage negative behaviors such as bullying acts. Protective factors within the school climate can be harnessed for the implementation of an effective anti-bullying program.

Implications and Recommendations

Bullying is problem that most students will encounter in their lives. Although most literature focused more on bullying occurrences at the elementary and high school level, studies also show that bullying continues until college and even in the workplace. With the ASEAN Economic Integration opening borders for increased cultural awareness and integration between and among Southeast Asian countries, a multicultural classroom setting, with different gender, personalities and ethnicity, can serve as a breeding ground for prejudice, and may lead to bullying acts. Thus, it can be concluded that a school setting with a high level of school connectedness nurtures values such as trust, respect, fairness and responsibility, and this ensures that students are in a safe school environment, which can mitigate adverse behaviors such as bullying. These values are seen necessary to recognize and respect individual differences

which are the key element of a healthy and harmonious relationship in school. The comprehensive anti-bullying program must be designed to encourage every student to grow as a person with trust, respect, sensitivity and responsibility. The main feature of this program is the promotion and strengthening of Filipino values. Modeling of values through student's interactions as well as integration of these values through CAPeers (Capable and Assertive Peers) and classroom discussions is some highlights of the program. Immediate intervention plan, like counseling together with behavior modification plan and integrative individual planning are measures to supervise and monitor the coping and adjustment progress of students involve in bullying incident. Student empowerment through shared responsibility in promoting positive school environment is the mechanism employed by the researcher within the program to attain and sustain the desired goals. Upon the implementation of the proposed program students are continuously expected to treat each other with high respect to become sensitive but assertive enough in responding to individual differences and to become proactive in dealing and preventing bullying incidences.

Limitations to the study include the research design, which is mainly cross-sectional and limits investigating a direct causal relationship between bullying and school connectedness. In addition, although the study covered a wide range of ages (Grade 7 to fourth year high school level), the smaller sample size might factor in the results generated by the study. Also, because bullying is a negative behavior, respondents might be inclined towards the social desirability bias, and may tend to report more positive and favorable responses.

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