

Campus Bullying In The Senior High School: A Qualitative Case Study

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the campus bullying experiences of senior high school students in a certain secondary school at Davao City, Philippines. Three senior high school students who experienced bullying in the campus were chosen through purposive sampling. In-depth interview, observation and field notes were utilized in the gathering of data. The study ensured that ethical considerations were observed during its conduct. It highly followed the components of trustworthiness namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to ensure the validity of the qualitative data. Based on the narratives and thematic analysis, study revealed that victims of bullying experienced name-calling or verbal abuse, physical bullying, and social discrimination. Passivity, optimism and perseverance, and peer-support system help students cope with the adverse and traumatic experiences of bullying. Along with the insights and realizations, the study emphasized that campus bullying leads to emotional distress and low self-esteem, bullies should be sensitive to others' emotions, and bullying should be minimized, if not avoided, in the school. Hence, a call to address such predicament is highly encouraged in order to create a learning environment where students are safe and protected from any form of abuse.

Keywords: campus bullying, public senior high schools, qualitative case study, Philippines

INTRODUCTION:

School as a learning environment is not exempted with bullying. Students have experienced physical and verbal forms of bullying even inside the campus which greatly affect their morale as an individual, their motivation, and passion for learning. In the senior high school level, campus bullying is still very rampant despite the expectation that at this stage, students are already mature enough in terms of their attitudes and behaviors towards people around them. Philippine Republic Act No. 10627 otherwise known as Anti-bullying Act of 2013 defines bullying as "any slanderous act or statement of accusation that causes the victim emotional distress like directing foul language or profanity at the target, name-calling, tormenting and commenting negatively on victim's looks, clothes, and body". Bullying has become a pervasive problem in the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, nearly a third of all students aged 12 - 18 reported having been bullied at school in 2007, some almost daily. Fifty-six percent of students have personally witnessed some type of bullying at school. In the school year 2008–2009, students ages, 28.0 percent of students ages 12 through 18, reported they were bullied at school, and 6.0 percent, reported they were cyber-bullied anywhere whether on or off school property (Siddiqui, 2018). In the Philippines, a survey conducted revealed that bullying or abuse is experienced by one in two Filipino school children. This was backed up with an Australian newspaper stating that 50 percent of Filipino students are being bullied in school. Also, the students in the Philippines had led the record of different types of bullying which include being made fun of or being called names, left out of activities by others and made to do things the student did not want to (Ancho & Park, 2013). Davao City Health Office also reported that bullying in school is a major concern since it exists in almost every school there is in Davao City. This unwanted act is prevalent not only in private educational institutions but also in public schools. The Office encouraged the Department of Education to also look into their backyards and do what is necessary (Sumalinog, 2015). In the school where the researcher is assigned, report of bullying incidence is very evident and alarming because of its high frequency. Every week, a lot of cases are settled in the office of prefect of discipline and

guidance office. Worst cases are brought to the principal's office. I find it disturbing on the part of the adviser and the concerned subject teacher every time that there are problems with bullying which needed to be settled. Thus, this study was conducted in order to have a deeper understanding about the experiences of students about bullying in the school and that somehow it will soon be addressed. Besides, there is no existing study conducted in the Cluster 6 Tugbok Secondary Schools, Davao City.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the campus bullying experiences of senior high school students, their problems encountered, their emotional struggles, their coping strategies and even their insights and realizations that would be useful in making interventions in the future.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the campus bullying experiences of senior high school students?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of bullied senior high school students?
3. What are the realizations and insights the students learned?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study explored the different experiences of bullying in the campus including its effects and consequences to victims, their coping mechanisms and insights learned. The experiences of the participants may serve as lessons to all students, teachers, parents and the entire community in order to be aware of the negative effects of bullying to both the victims and bullies. Through this study, preventive measures could be possibly discovered which may minimize, if not eliminate, bullying inside the school premises. Findings of this research could lead to a better understanding of campus bullying that would encourage school administrators, guidance counselors, teacher-advisers and subject teachers formulate policies in addressing the said problem. Once bullying is carefully dealt with, students may be motivated to learn and eventually academic standings would be improved.

DELIMITATION AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This qualitative inquiry is delimited only to the identified three students who are frequently reported, noted, and observed as victims of bullying at Optaciano Hilay National High, Manambulan, Tugbok District, Davao City. These participants were officially enrolled in the senior high school for the School Year 2017 – 2018. Bullies were not included in this study. One of the weaknesses of this study was the limited number of participants in which their shared experiences may not truly represent the reality that of the majority of the population in the entire City of Davao. Besides, since it utilized qualitative method, this cannot make generalization or general conclusion about campus bullying. However, the researcher made sure that trustworthiness and credibility of the participants were dealt with utmost safeguard.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Presented in the succeeding paragraphs are the significant literatures, related readings, and previous studies about campus bullying which gave wider understanding and perspective about this phenomenon. Schools are considered to be one of the safest places where children are seen on a daily basis and are under the supervision of teachers who are trained and equipped caregivers. Children are victims of all forms of abuse, punishment, neglect, discrimination, and ill-treatment within the school setting. Though there are various policies and programs at the international and national levels, addressing child protection has been a serious challenge for every community. Children need to be protected and any acts that hamper their well-being and safety need to be curbed (Thomas, Jose, & Kumar, 2018). In the study of Banzon-Librojo, Garabiles, and Alampay (2017), the experiences of harsh teacher discipline predicted higher bullying victimization and students' negative perception of teacher support. The findings suggest that school discipline strategies may have repercussions on students' behaviors and relationships, highlighting the teacher's role in modeling and setting norms for acceptable behaviors. Likewise, Andreou (2001) emphasized that both bullying and victimization are associated with self-evaluations in diverse domains and emotional coping strategies in conflictual peer interactions. Bully/victims are a distinct group in terms of low levels of social acceptance and problem-solving ability. Evidence exists of considerable problems with bullying and bullied children in secondary schools. In the largest survey in the United Kingdom to date, ten percent of pupils reported that they had been bullied "sometimes or more often" during that term, with four percent reporting being bullied "at least once a week." The impact of the introduction of policies on bullying throughout a school seems to be limited. The most common type of bullying is general name-calling, followed by being hit, threatened, or having rumors spread about one. Bullying is thought to be more prevalent among boys and the youngest pupils in a school. We are unaware of any study that has examined the mental health problems of children who are being bullied. We assessed self-reported anxiety, depression, and self-esteem in bullied children and those who were not bullied and in bullies and those who were not bullies (Salmon, James & Smith, 1998). Seeking help was the most recommended, with significant national

differences notably for social exclusion. Victims were thought not to seek help for several reasons, again varying by nationality (Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006). In the study of Naylor & Cowie (1999), teachers' and pupils' perceptions and experiences of peer support systems in challenging bullying in U.K. (mainly English) secondary schools and colleges have been found to be effective in reducing the negative effects of bullying for victims. Collectively, the respondents also perceived many important benefits to users of these systems, to peer supporters and to the school as a whole, including helping to create a socio-emotional climate of "care". The respondents also perceived problems with these systems and, importantly, how they have been overcome and might be further improved. It has been suggested that the mental health of school children can be undermined by repeated bullying at school and further exacerbated by having inadequate social support. To evaluate this claim, the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) was administered anonymously to 845 adolescent schoolchildren attending coeducational secondary schools in South Australia, together with measures of the extent to which each reported being bullied at school and the social support available to them. Multiple regression analyses indicated that for both sexes frequent peer victimization and low social support contributed significantly and independently to relatively poor mental health (Rigby, 2000). Whitted and Dupper (2005) emphasized that reducing violence in schools is a major concern of educators, parents, and legislators. Violence manifests itself in numerous ways, and there is growing evidence that low-level or underlying forms of violence have a profound effect on the learning environment of the school. Bullying is the most prevalent form of low-level violence in schools today and, if left unchecked, can lead to more serious forms of violence. Consequently, an essential aspect of school violence prevention is the identification and implementation of interventions and strategies designed to prevent or reduce bullying in schools.

METHOD

This qualitative inquiry used a case study approach in order to have in-depth information about the informants. It offers a reflective mode of inquiry that seeks to understand the campus bullying experiences of senior high school students. According to Creswell (2008) that case study research involves the study of a case within real-life, contemporary context or setting. This type of qualitative study has various advantages which made the inquirer chose this design. A qualitative case study can be composed to illustrate a unique case that is unusual interest in and of itself and needs to be described and detailed. A hallmark of this design is that it presents an in-depth understanding of the case. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify the three participants of this study who are frequently bullied senior high school students at Optaciano Hilay National High School, Manambulan, Tugbok, Davao City. Approvals from the school principal and parental consent were secured before the conduct of this study. The researcher collected the data from comprehensive interviews, observations, documents and audio recorded materials. Semi-structured interview was used in gathering the data wherein responses were

recorded, transcribed, translated and underwent thematic analysis. Participation in this study was dealt with utmost confidentiality and high ethical consideration.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

The researcher highly considered trustworthiness of qualitative data. DeVault (2016) emphasized that the concepts of validity and reliability are relatively foreign to the field of qualitative research. Instead of focusing on reliability and validity, qualitative researchers substitute data with trustworthiness. Specifically, this study followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness which consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined credibility as confidence in the 'truth' of the findings prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member-checking. In this study, the researcher consulted mentors to do peer debriefing by listening, prompting, and recording the insights through the entire conduct of the study. Also, persistent observations to the participants through face-to-face interview were conducted and responses were verified by the participants to ensure its truthfulness. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) defined transferability as the researcher's belief that everything is context-bound. This was achieved in this study where sufficient details and rich descriptions of the experiences of students were ensured through in-depth interview and come up with similarities between situations which can be transferred into another context with enough detail and precision. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) explained that dependability is met by establishing audit trail. In this study, field notes, transcripts, translations, and audio tapes of all in-depth interviews from each participant were kept in the archival envelope where properly labelled and available in case of audit and retrieval. To ensure confirmability, the researcher made sure that findings were the results of the experiences and ideas of the participants. Triangulation was conducted to classmates and subject teachers in order to avoid biases. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) that confirmability is referred to neutrality or

objectivity of the data collected which can be achieved by applying triangulation.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study highly embraced and practiced high ethical considerations. The anonymity of the participants was strictly observed through the use of identifier or pseudonym. The purpose of the study, its procedures, and outcomes were clearly explained to the participants. It was emphasized that participation in this study is purely voluntary and no monetary compensation involved. Permission from the school principal was also secured. Parental consent allowing the participants to be part of this research was also required. An informed consent was signed by the participants of the study. All information and data collected were original, properly transcribed, verified by the participants, underwent peer debriefing, and no making up of data or alterations of results. Appropriate words were carefully used in translating the interview responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This qualitative case study gave premium in exploring the lived experiences of bullied students in the public senior high school. The meaning of their experiences emerged after transcripts and narratives were transcribed. Developed core ideas were presented in the preceding sections with its corresponding major themes. The three participants of the study were given ample time to answer the questions that I asked to them. The in-depth interview lasted about one hour which was enough to saturate the essentialities of campus bullied students.

Campus Bullying Experiences of Senior High School Students

The shared experiences of campus bullied students are encapsulated into essential themes and thematic statements as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Campus Bullying Experiences

Essential Themes	Thematic Statements
Name-Calling or Verbal Abuse	They would call me "kapayas".
	I was called "horse", "bat", "monkey" and "monster".
	They told me that I am ugly, bald and dull.
	Sometimes, I heard discouraging remarks from my classmates like I am not good and my brain is empty.
Physical Bullying	They had thrown away my bag with my valuables inside into the tab of water.
	There was an instance that my food was taken from me.
	My school books were stolen and sometimes thrown away into the garbage bin or up in the broken ceiling of our classroom.
	My schoolbag was stolen from me.
	My classmate quickly remove my hat and hit my head
	Sometimes, they would push me without any reason.
Social Discrimination	Nobody wanted me to be part of the group activity.
	I feel discriminated in the classroom.
	They ignored me with their conversations.
	When I answer in class discussions, my classmates laughed at me.

Name-calling or Verbal Abuse. It is when someone, who is a bully, uses insulting or demeaning language to mock, embarrass or insult another person (Robichaud, 2017). The participants experienced teasing and name-calling which causes them distress and undermines their feelings of security. Marcia (2016) supported this by emphasizing that the every time someone is verbally abused, whether occasionally or regularly, it chips away at their confidence and diminishes their spirit. Verbal abuse can take place anywhere from the playground to the workplace, home to the street and nobody is immune from encountering it. Shetgiri (2013) cited physical bullying and verbal bullying as direct forms and relational bullying as an indirect mode. Physical bullying may include hitting, pushing, kicking, choking, and forcefully taking something from the victim. Verbal bullying includes name-calling, threatening, taunting, malicious teasing, and psychological intimidation using words and the like. Besides, stealing, destroying things of others and making faces or offensive actions are other forms of bullying. The relational type of bullying includes gossiping, slandering, sabotage, and convincing peers to exclude victims (Ferguson, Miguel, Kilburn & Sanchez, 2007).

Physical Bullying. This type of bullying may take many forms: hitting, pushing, tripping, slapping, spitting, stealing or destroying possessions, including books, clothing, or lunch money. Besides, physical bullying is a serious problem, affecting not only the bully and the victim, but also

the other students who witness the bullying. Parents, teachers, and other concerned adults and young people should be aware of what a physical bully is and some of the ways to handle it (Bullying Statistics, 2018).

Social Discrimination. This happens when students felt discriminated during class group activities, making of projects and performance tasks to be done collaboratively. Bittencourt, Ganzo de Castro, Alves, Palazzo, Monteiro, Vieira, and Freddo (2009) highlighted that in the school environment, discrimination can involve teachers, employees, family members and students, all of whom can be discriminatory agents. When this occurs among students, the discriminated adolescent is not the only victim; the aggressor is also a victim, often feeling insecure and having social relationship problems. In addition to the aggressor and the victim, there are the witnesses to this situation, who remain silent as they are afraid to become the next victim and, for this reason, also turn into aggressors at times.

Coping Mechanisms of Bullied Senior High School Students

In spite of the campus bullying experiences encountered by the participants, they were able to stand and believe in themselves that they can cope with their trials and difficulties. Presented in Table 2 are the coping mechanisms of bullied students.

Table 2 Coping Mechanisms

Essential Themes	Thematic Statements
Passivity	I just ignore them.
	I don't care about what they call about me.
	I let it in one ear and out in the other.
	I restrain myself even if people call me ugly and dull.
Optimism and Perseverance	I told myself to make the experience an inspiration/motivation
	I just continue my schooling despite hurtful experiences of bullying.
	I motivate myself to finish my senior high school even if at times I feel discouraged.
	I just considered bullying as a mere challenge that I can surpass.
Peer-support System	I felt accepted by my real classmates and friends.
	My teacher supported with me every time I am bullied.
	My close friends advised to me to fight and not be carried away by my bully classmates.
	My parents keep on telling me to ignore those bully students.
	My class adviser and subject teachers keep on reminding my classmates to avoid bullying.

Passivity. Victims of bullying preferred to ignore bullies, negative remarks and insensitive words. Bullying Statistics (2017) shared an advice to cope with bullying by ignoring the bully: This is difficult, but if you can shrug off insults and provide no reaction, there is a chance that eventually the bully will move on to someone who provides a more interesting and responsive target. Remain civil: Do not resort to rudeness yourself. Many bullies lose interest if you do not sink to their level. Also, if you act rudely and aggressively yourself, you may invite a physical confrontation, which could add physical hurts to the emotional.

Optimism and Perseverance. Being positive and persistent in life, participants were able to cope with bullying. Gordon (2017) stated that positive thinking impacts a person's ability to cope with bullying. Instead of dwelling

on the negative aspects and messages from bullying, optimistic people tend to cope with the situation in much more productive and positive ways.

Peer-support System. Victims were able to cope bullying with the support of close friends, advice from parents and teachers. Smith, Ananiadou, & Cowie (2003) clearly said that peer-support system helps reduce school bullying. This method includes: cooperative group work in the classroom; circle time in which the class addresses relationship issues, including anger, fighting, and bullying; circle of friends who provide support team of peers to work with a vulnerable student; befriending, in which a student or students are assigned to "be with" or "befriend" a peer; Schoolwatch, a program in which students elect a committee of peers who propose and implement anti-bullying activities. Furthermore, Cowie (2011) emphasized that the adoption of peer support

within a school can create opportunities for students to be proactive in challenging bullying when they observe it. Peer support can play a part in this process by monitoring social interaction during break times to support individuals who are being targeted and to be vigilant in reporting abusive behavior. Peer support schemes take account of the power of emotionally sensitive individuals to use their own and others' emotional states to prevent problems and find solutions to bullying and abuse. Likewise, some schools sought to promote peer support as a proactive approach to countering bullying. Arguably students who are supported by others are less likely to be bullied. Buddy programs were therefore employed in some schools in which older students were linked with younger, more vulnerable students to

whom they offered support. Peer mediation was also encouraged in some schools. As a proactive measure it provides an opportunity for students to be assisted in resolving minor problems or conflicts before they escalated into more serious affairs involving bullying. Peer mediation was supported by 15 of the 26 schools, but of these only 7 indicated that they provided special training (Rigby & Johnson, 2016).

Realizations and Insights

At the outset, participants of the study shared their realizations and insights about their experiences on bullying in the school.

Table 3 Realizations and Insights

Essential Themes	Thematic Statements
Campus bullying leads to emotional distress and low self-esteem.	Low confidence strikes me because of bullying.
	I feel emotionally hurt whenever they tease me.
	I can no longer actively participate in the class because I am afraid to be bullied.
Bullies should be sensitive to others' emotions.	Bully students should realize that to be a victim of bullying is not a joke.
	It is not easy to be bullied because it really hurts deep inside.
	Being a victim of bullying, we also have feelings because we are human too.
Bullying should be minimized, if not avoided, in the school.	Bullying is no good.
	In school, bullying should be minimized if not avoided.
	Bullying cases should never be ignored no matter how simple the case may be.

Campus bullying leads to emotional distress and low self-esteem. Victims suffered emotional distress and low confidence in one self every time they are bullied. As a result, bullied students showed low involvement in school and community activities.

Bullies should be sensitive to others' emotions. This was an appeal by the participants to bully classmates and schoolmates. They are humans with feelings and emotions too.

Bullying should be minimized, if not avoided, in the school. Schools need to address these problems and take any instance of bullying seriously. Addressing and preventing bullying requires the participation of all major school constituencies, school leaders, teachers, parents, and students. By taking organized school-wide measures and providing individuals with the strategies to counteract bullying schools can reduce the instances of bullying and be better prepared to address it when it happens.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This study implies the strict implementation of Republic Act No. 10627 otherwise known as the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 in secondary schools. A re-orientation of the implementing rules and guidelines may be needed in order that the students, parents, teachers and the entire community would be aware of their important role in addressing the problem on campus bullying. Besides, a school may have a peer counselor's organization or club that would help victims cope with their emotional distress caused by bullying.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research about campus bullying may have better results when the participants may be escalated into a bigger number to generate substantive patterns, similarities and differences. More in-depth and longitudinal study is recommended to enrich the body of knowledge and for the development of theoretical models of campus bullying. Moreover, the researcher may include not only the victims of bullying but also those bullies in the school of basic education, junior high school and senior high school.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Campus bullying is prevalent in every school, specifically, inside the classroom. Teachers and students can be both victims and bullies; hence, it is a serious problem to address on. Classroom as a learning environment is not exempted from bullying, in fact, simple cases of it happen in the classroom. Bullying, if ignored, may create emotional and psychological effects on the part of the students. Hence, there is a big challenge on making a concrete intervention program which may help address problems on campus bullying.

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