

Impacts of Bullying on students

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Abstract-This research was carried out in one of the primary schools in Tsirang involving 30 students, 15 boys and 15 girls, from Classes IV-VI. Participants were aged between 11 and 15 years of age, mean age of 13 years. Besides the quantitative, the study uses qualitative data from a focus group discussion (FGD), attended by 15 students, seven girls and eight boys, whose ages range from 11 to 16 years. A total of 45 students contributed to this study. This study aimed to review, understand and analyze the literature about bullying behaviours of school children and to find out the effect of bullying on students and gauge how that would affect their interest in coming to school every day. It was also to find out how bullying can sometimes lead to low self-esteem and underperformance academically at school and to identify what educators can do to create a bully-free school.

Keywords-Impacts, Bullying, Effect, Behavior, Self-Esteem, Intervention.

I. INTRODUCTION

School bullying is perceived as an important social problem throughout the world. Bullying occurs when someone uses their strength or authority to harm someone who is weaker. Bullying is aggressive behaviour that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength. An imbalance of violence can occur if children are raised in non-accepting homes.

Their peers would appear either superior or inferior to them regarding how they look, their customs or socioeconomic statuses.

Sometimes bullying involves direct attacks such as hitting, name-calling, teasing or taunting, pushing or shoving. It is understood from personal experiences that direct physical bullying increases in elementary or primary school, peaks in middle school and declines at the high school level.

The reason could be that as the person gets matured and wiser, they understand the effects of bullying in one and other's life. Bullies can be of any age, gender, or shape or size, and they can be found in a variety of settings.

The majority of bullies do so because they are having issues at home or have poor self-esteem. Rigby (2007) points out that "Some people regard bullying as a trivial problem, either because it seems to affect so few, or because its effects are seen as quite short term and readily shrugged off" (p.48). Often parents and teachers regard bullying among children as a normal part of growing up, which is harmful in the longer run.

Bullying can lead children and teenagers to feel tense and afraid. If other children try to stop it, they may become the

next target. Bullying may cause children to avoid going to school.

Bullied teens may feel compelled to take dramatic steps or respond violently in severe situations, such as carrying a weapon to school for self-defense or retribution, which leads to disciplinary issues. Others even consider suicide. And the effects of bullying last a lifetime.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Bullying in different forms is prevalent in all schools throughout the world. It brings about many lasting impacts on those who are bullied at school. Bullying affects several school-going children of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, and all demographic areas.

Therefore, it is essential to develop a deeper understanding of the effect of bullying on students and gauge how that affects their interest in coming to school every day. It is also crucial to understand how bullying can sometimes lead to low self-esteem and underperformance academically at school and find out what it takes for the educators to create a bullying-free school.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to evaluate, comprehend, and analyze the literature on bullying behaviours in schoolchildren to determine the impact of bullying on students and their motivation to attend school each day.

Additionally, this research will examine how bullying can sometimes result in low self-esteem and academic

underperformance at school and what educators can do to promote a safe school atmosphere free of bullying events.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

A student is being bullied when he or she is “exposed, repeatedly and over time,” to abuse or harassment by one or more other students (Olweus, 1996). People view bullying in different ways. But is an act meant to hurt or inflict pain in others that will last throughout their life. Tattum (as cited in Smith, Pepler, and Rigby, 2004), there is no universally agreed definition of bullying. Some authorities have viewed bullying as essentially the desire to hurt or put someone under pressure.

M. Field (2007) defines bullying as “a symptom of a dysfunctional social system” (p.20). Roland (as cited in Darmawan, 2010) defines bullying as “long standing violence, physical or psychological, perpetrated by an individual or group directed against an individual who cannot defend himself or herself”.

Conn (2004) suggests that bullying is not a legal term. **Rigby (2012)** maintains that bullying is an act of hostility, but it is aggression in a specific context. It can only occur when there is an imbalance of power between individuals; that is, when the one or individuals behaving aggressively are more powerful than the individual or individuals being targeted. Naturally, power disparity may manifest itself in a variety of ways. (p.15).

The majority of bullying occurs as a result of a variety of circumstances at home, school, and within the peer group. Bullying occurs more often and is more severe when a child in the family has insufficient adult supervision. According to studies, bullies often come from families where physical punishment is employed, children are trained to hit back violently to resolve conflicts, and parental engagement and warmth are missing (Cohn & Canter, 2003).

According to M. Field (2007), many children will arrive at school each day feeling scared, frustrated, powerless, and sad. The impact of bullying rebounds on the bully, who also suffers. Victims of bullying suffer consequences beyond embarrassment. It is logical to assume that victims would be fearful and anxious in the environment where the bullying occurred. Bullying has the potential to have long-term intellectual, physical, and emotional repercussions for bullies, their victims, and onlookers.

Bullying in schools has a detrimental effect on students' ability to study in a safe and secure atmosphere where they are treated with respect (Shellard & Turner, 2004). Bullies also face adverse repercussions. When they reach high school, they are frequently less popular, have few friends, and are more prone to criminal behaviour. Bullying behaviour has also been related to other kinds of antisocial

conduct, including vandalism, theft, skipping and leaving school, fighting, and substance abuse (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2001).

According to McCartney (2005), bullied students don't tell teachers or school administrators because they do not believe adults could do anything about it. They fear being laughed at or not believed; fear it will only get worse if they inform. Parents should “keep an eye out” for bullying and punish bullies, not just lecture them.

When harmful or violent behavior toward an individual or a group appears to be unprovoked, purposeful, and frequently repeated, bullying becomes a worry for individuals (Education, 2003). Bullying is not only a problem of school-going children but is one that spans all ages. It is a complex social issue requiring our determination, leadership and courage to address it. However, it is a difficult challenge, and people should not ignore it.

V. FACTORS THAT MAKE A PERSON A BULLY

A person normally becomes a bully when there is imbalance of power or strength between people. Darmawan (2010) points out that “to determine the exact causes of bullying among children and young people is not an easy task because this is likely to be the outcome of more complex social factors rather than simply the cause of one event” (p.17).

A person becomes a bully because he or she has strong needs for power and dominance. A bully finds satisfaction in causing injury and suffering to other students and is often rewarded in some ways for their behavior with material or psychological rewards. Some students pointed out that lack of warmth at home, too much or too little discipline and physical punishment may contribute to bullying.

VI. STUDY METHOD

A representative sample of 30 students (15 males and 15 girls) ranging in age from 10-15 years was used in this study. These pupils are from a variety of communities and ethnic groups. The 16 pupils were Lhotsampa (Southern Bhutanese) and 14 Sharchops or Tshangla (Eastern Bhutanese resettled in Tsirang Dzongkhag). The participants were picked at random from three classes: ten students from class IV, ten students from class V, and ten students from class VI, each with five girls and five boys.

They were provided with questionnaire which was divided into four parts:

- Bullied point of view
- Bully's point of view

- Observer's point of view
- Respondents' general sentiments to bullying

The research examines respondents' experiences with various kinds of bullying that they perpetrated, experienced, or observed in a variety of settings, as well as their overall attitudes about an act of bullying.

Besides the questionnaire, the study uses qualitative data from a focus group discussion (FGD), in which 15 students attended an interview. Seven girls and eight boys, whose ages range from 11 to 16 years, participated at the FGD. A total of 45 students contributed to this study.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS

1. Impacts of bullying on the bullied

Bullying behaviors would continue to have a negative effect upon the victims of bullies.

A target or victim of school bullying can be expected to experience a variety of emotions: fear, anxiety, anger, frustration, helplessness, humiliation, loneliness, and feelings of isolation and persecution. These emotions can be detected by the student's sudden or ongoing illness, mood swings, withdrawal, in-ability to concentrate, loss of interest in school, argumentativeness, increased involvement in fights, change in friends and social groups, avoidance of lunch and recess areas, display of suspicious bruises and scratches, and frequent loss of money or property (Education, 2003, p.10).

The students deserve to feel safe at school, but when they are bullied frequently, the experience of vulnerability and impact can last throughout their lives.

According to the survey, almost 100% of the respondents feel that they are bullied one way or another, while 63% of the students maintain they are bullied daily. This is a serious concern since bullying can happen without the knowledge of teachers and parents. 73% of the respondents report that they are bullied at school and bullying happens explicitly inside the school compound (73%), classroom (70%) and playground (73%).

The common form of bullying involves 'calling names' (47) and it is mostly older students who bully the younger lots. 60% of respondents report that they felt 'sad' after being bullied while 30% of the students maintain that they 'hate going to school' due to bullying.

Another matter of great concern is that more than half (57%) of the respondents report that they were unable to protect themselves from being bullies, while 33% report that they have 'ignored' the act. Only 10% of the students

inform adults about a bullying incident. Regarding actions taken by the school authority, 43% of the respondents feel that the school and the teachers 'did not know' they were being bullied. More than half (57%) of the respondents report that they do not inform their parents.

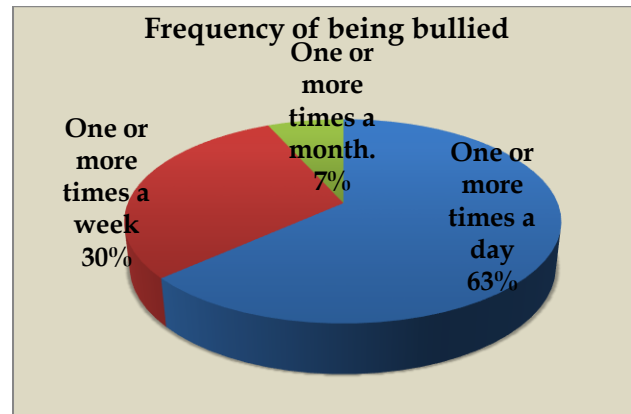


Fig 1. Frequency of being bullied.

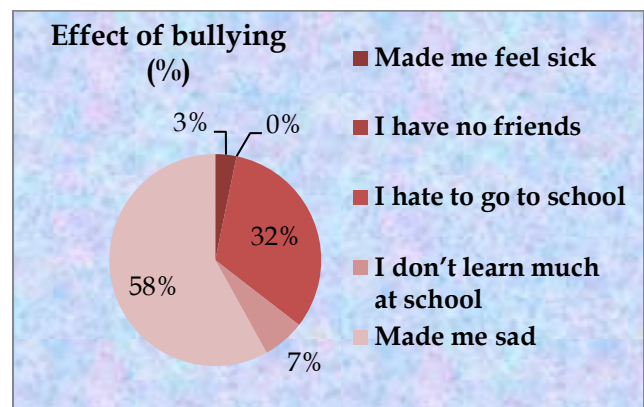


Fig 2. Effect of Bullying (%).

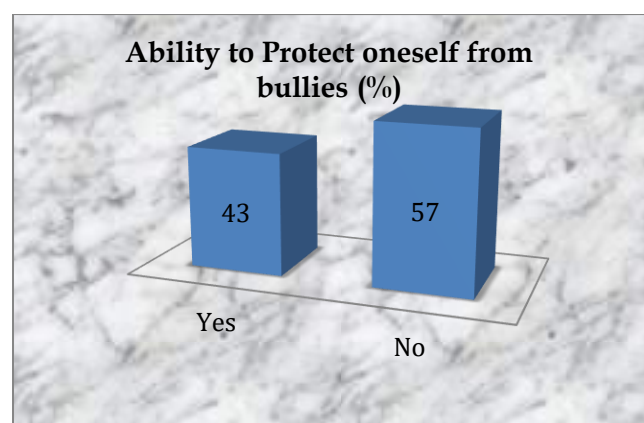


Fig 3. Ability to protect oneself from bullies (%).

The FGD reveals that those being bullied suffer from depression, low self-esteem, health issues, poor grades, and even suicidal thoughts cross them. Students, who were bullied, face more incredible difficulty in making friends and poor relationships with their classmates. They also report feeling lonely.

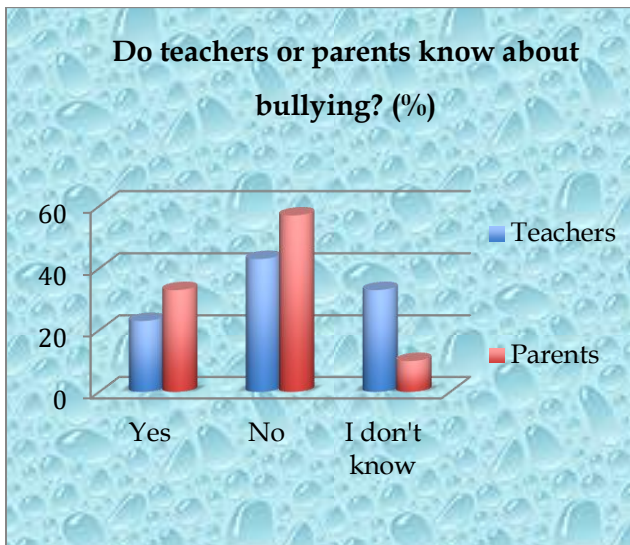


Fig 4. Do teachers or parents know about Bullying (%) ?

2. Impacts of bullying on the observers:

Students who see bullying happen also feel that they are in an unsafe environment. Effects may include feeling fearful, powerless to act, guilty for not acting, and tempted to participate in the bullying.

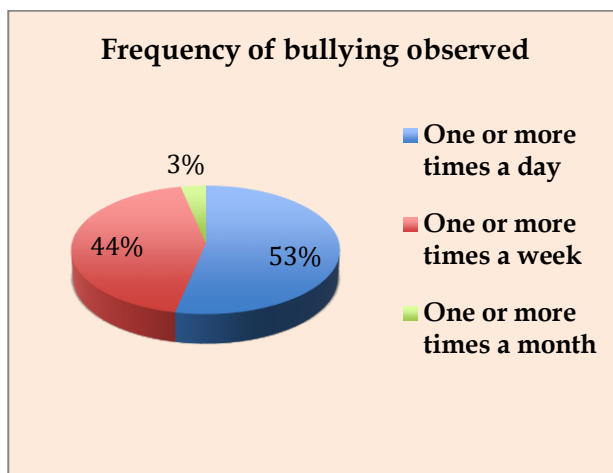


Fig 5. Frequency of bullying observed.

According to California Department of Education (2003), a student who has been the victim of bullying and those who witness an instance of bullying often hesitate or fail to report it to authorities. Students withhold information out of fear of being labeled as tattletales by their classmates, parents, or instructors.

According to the study, 100% of respondents had seen a person or a friend being bullied at school. The frequency of seeing someone being bullied every day (53%) is worrying. This goes to indicate that some form of bullying happens daily. 87% of the respondents also report that they have seen bullying occur at school (87%) and, more specifically, in the classroom (63%), playground (87%) and on the way to school (73%).

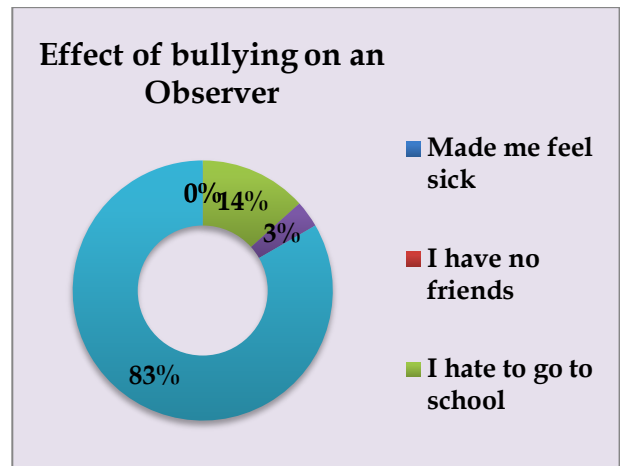


Fig 6. Effect of bullying on an Observer.

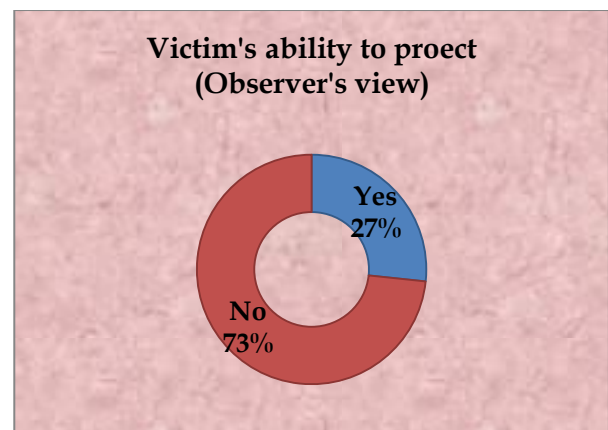


Fig 7. Victim's ability to protect (Observer's view).

Additionally, observers say that the most common type of bullying they have seen is 'name calling' (27%) and that older kids (73%) are often the ones that harass the younger ones. Furthermore, students bully their classmates (67 percent). 25 respondents (83 percent) report feeling 'sad' after seeing an act of bullying, but only 13% of observers express disliking to go to school after witnessing bullying. This suggests that bullies and bullied kids despise school and education more than onlookers do. Furthermore, 73% of respondents said that kids were unable to defend themselves against bullying.

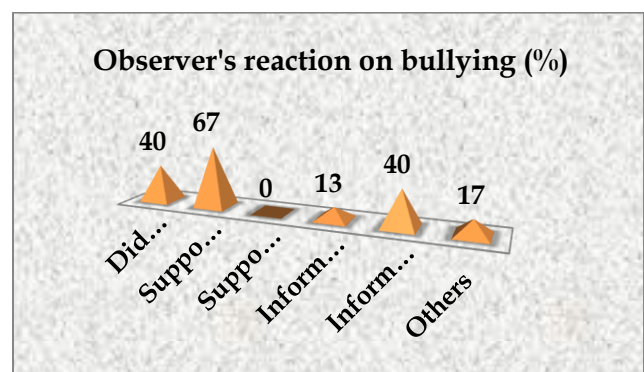


Fig 8. Observer's reaction on bullying (%).

3. Impacts of bullying on the bullies:

Bullies feel threatened or worry that the school or teachers would discipline them if they are caught. As a consequence, people find themselves missing lessons or failing to attend school. Additionally, they acquire a profound dislike for the school. The majority of respondents to the FGD express how it makes them feel sick and unhappy. Bullies often engage in fights, theft and vandalism, drinking and smoking, all of which contribute to poor academic performance, a bad perception of the school environment, and sometimes bring weapons to school, risking the lives of many innocent children.

According to the research, about 27% of respondents who bully others express a dislike for school. While it may seem that bullies take pleasure in bullying others at first glance, the study shows that this is not the case. 63 percent of bullies cite the 'how he/she speaks' as the primary reason for bullying someone, and curiously, more than half (57 percent) of those who have bullied others report feeling 'sad' after doing so.

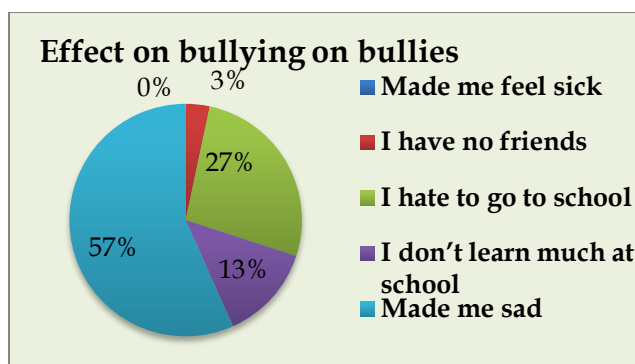


Fig 9. Effect on bullying on bullies.

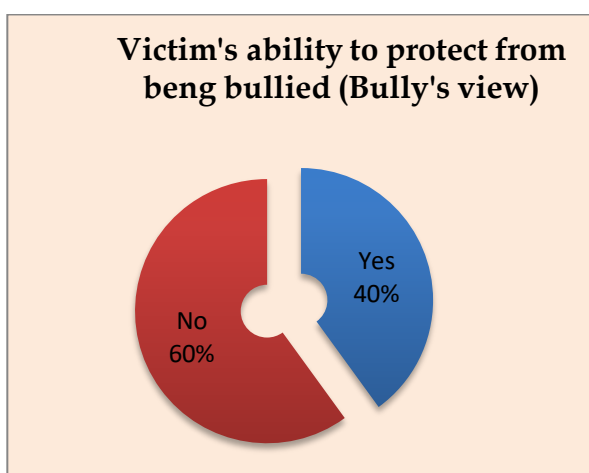


Fig 10. Victim's ability to protect from beng bullied (Bully's view).

4. General Sentiments on bullying:

The study reveals that students certainly do not enjoy being bullied, being a bully, or seeing someone being bullied at all. 93% of respondents report that they 'hate'

bullies and 97% maintain that they would not want to be friends with bullies. 93% of the students surveyed report that bullies must be 'punished' and 60% of the respondents 'hate to go to school' because of bullying at school.

18 students (60%) of the students surveyed report that they are 'afraid of bullies at school' and 73% of the respondents say they feel sorry for those bullied. And finally, 100% of the students feel that the school authority must be worried about bullying trends in the school.

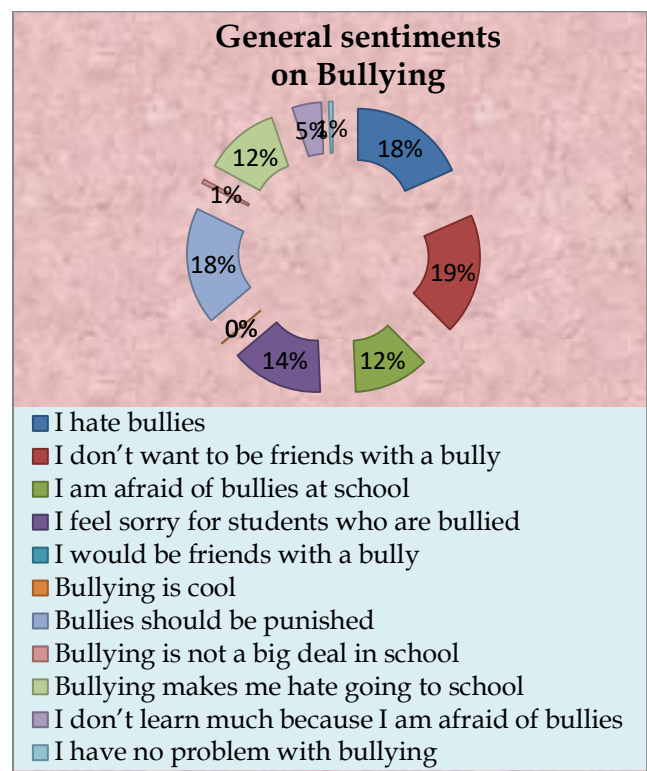


Fig 11. General sentimentson Bullying

VIII. KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Bullying takes place in a variety of hostile acts that are carried out repeatedly over time. The acts may be a real or perceived imbalance of power among the youths. Bullying may be a physical form like hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, verbal form like taunting, malicious teasing, name-calling, threatening, or psychological like spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, or promoting social exclusion, extortion, or intimidation (Education, 2003, p.7). Most students do not report bullying to schoolteachers or parents/adults.

The study reveals many essential facts on bullying at school. All students surveyed or gathered for FGD point out that they see incidences of bullying at school daily and that it happens in the school, classroom, playground, and on the way to school or home. The bullying happens mostly at school and on the way home from school.

Most victims and observers do not inform the teachers and parents what they experience and see. The most common form of bullying involves 'name calling' or making fun of others. Almost everyone reports hating to go to school in fear of bullies or being a bully or seeing an act of bullying happen.

The study shows that students feel terrified of going to school after they are bullied or having seen an incident of a student being bullied at school or on the way. Even students who bully others say they 'hate' to go to school since other students hate them and would not befriend them. This might only make a bully want to bully more in the act of frustrations and revenge. The fact that most students, who are bullied or bully others, hate going to school may seriously affect their academic performance. Feeling 'lonely' and 'sad' also has an adverse effect on their mood to study.

Most students do not inform teachers or their parents that the older students at school bully them. This shows that bullying happens without the knowledge of the teachers and parents. The impact of bullying and the hatred to go to school is most evident in those who bully and those bullied at school. The students, who see bullying happen at school or on the way home, are more likely to go to school undisturbed, although they report that it makes them sad to see someone getting bullied and feel sorry for the victims.

It is mostly older students who bully their younger peers, which is why most victims are unable to protect themselves. Students also feel that teachers are unaware of incidents of bullying at school. The victims report suffering from depression, lower self-esteem, and poor grades. Some victims even report that suicidal thoughts cross them often. This is a concerning issue where timely intervention from the relevant authorities or stakeholders is necessary.

The study also reveals that students who see bullying happen also feel that they are in an unsafe environment. Almost everyone in the survey points out that they have witnessed someone being bullied daily. The study reveals that students certainly do not enjoy being bullied, being a bully, or seeing someone being bullied at all.

IX. INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

It is first important to acknowledge and ascertain bullying is an issue at school. And once it is being done, it is important to find out how to solve this issue or intervene. One obstacle to fight this issue is a lack of common ground on defining it, a necessary step in solving the problem. Set up explicit anti-bullying measures.

A school's anti-bullying policy will assist in guaranteeing that occurrences are handled consistently. Studies show that schools with clear regulations and fair disciplinary

procedures have less violence (Cohn & Canter, 2003). Garrity et al. (1996) found that the key to anti-bullying programs' effectiveness is to change the balance of power away from bullies and toward the silent majority of students. The silent majority must have the capacity to act on behalf of victims. Bullies must be addressed and made undoubtedly aware that their behaviour will not be allowed.

Conflict, such as a disagreement or perceived opposing interests between two or more people, is an inevitable part of our social setting. Parents and teachers expect their children to develop a critical skill of resolving conflict constructively. The parents and teachers can help children learn how to resolve conflict successfully. Most children need to learn conflict resolution skills on their own through their personal experiences.

But it is also critical for the school to come up with measures to mitigate the issue.

The following are some preventive measures that a school can adopt:

- Plan and implement anti-bullying initiatives and activities.
- Create awareness about bullying and its impacts on their children and how they can be a part of the solution.
- Plan meaningful, engaging activities for students in the school.
- Design and implement a zero-tolerance bullying policy in the school.
- Create a BULLY FREE ZONE in the school.
- Institute a confidential bullying-reporting network system like installing a complaint box for the observers to report.
- Design schoolwide and classroom activities to build students' self-esteem, such as showcasing unique talents, hobbies, interests and abilities through essays or articles.
- Create awareness to the parents and other stakeholders, and keep them on board.
- Invite law-enforcement authorities, such as police officers and court officials, to educate children about the legal implications of bullying.

X. LIMITATIONS

- The survey could not be conducted with teachers and the parents due to the time and resources limitation.
- Since the participants were from primary school, it took too long to complete the survey.
- The numbers of questions were more and could not get the precise results of the study.
- Some respondents filled the questionnaires for formality which brought more confusion for data analysis and findings.

- It was a challenging task without prior knowledge and research skills however, the researcher learned many things.
- It was an enriching experience to conduct this study, and future researchers may further learn about bullying trends at different school levels in Bhutan.

XI. CONCLUSION

Bullying is aggressive and intentional behavior and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Sometimes bullying involves direct attacks such as hitting, name-calling, teasing or taunting, pushing or shoving. Bullies come at any age, any gender, and any shapes or sizes in different places.

The reason that most people bully is because they undergo problems at home or have low self-esteem. Often parents and teachers regard bullying among kids as a normal part of growing up, which is harmful in the long run. Due to bullying, many children will go to school every day feeling scared, frustrated, powerless, and sad.

Bullying can lead children and teenagers to feel tense and afraid. If children try to stop it, they may become the next target. Bullying in different forms is prevalent in all schools. It brings about many lasting impacts on those who are bullied at school. Bullying affects several school-going children of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, and all demographic areas.

The present research shows that bullying is widespread and occurs every day at school. It is primarily the older students that bully their young peers. Those who are bullied and those who bully do not feel like coming to school. And this is likely to lead to underperformance in schools.

Therefore, it is essential to come up with effective ways to reduce bullying at school. The preventative methods may include coming up with plans and initiatives to avoid bullying, raising awareness among the parents or coming up with a zero-tolerance policy at school that prohibits bullying of all kinds.

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