

EXPLORING THE ONTOLOGY OF SCHOOL BULLYING: EXPERIENCES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

School bullying poses significant challenges for educators and students worldwide. This qualitative study, conducted in Rawalakot (Azad Jammu and Kashmir), investigates the characteristics and prevalence of bullying in both private and public elementary schools. The goal is to examine bullying across multiple educational institutions. This involves examining teachers' and students' views on bullying, how they cope with it, and what preventive and remedial actions they recommend for their schools. This study employs an exploratory qualitative approach to examine school bullying through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Theory. Purposive sampling was applied to select participants who consented to participate. Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted with educators (three from public schools and three from private schools) and six with students (three from each), using interview guides that aligned with the research questions.

Findings indicate that verbal and racial bullying are prevalent in schools, with racial bullying more common in public schools. These behaviors hurt students' mental health, academic performance, and social integration. Notably, many participants were unfamiliar with the term "bullying," highlighting a lack of awareness. This study provides unique insights into local school dynamics, emphasizing the importance of targeted interventions.

Keywords: School Bullying, Bullying Coping Strategies, Cultural and Social Influences, Elementary School

INTRODUCTION

School bullying is a widespread issue that affects students' well-being and their academic performance. Bullying is a serious problem in Pakistan, particularly in less developed areas such as Rawalakot (AJK), carrying serious challenges for students' mental health. This study investigates bullying in elementary schools in Rawalakot, encompassing both public and private institutions. Using Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Theory, we investigate how students and educators perceive bullying, the coping techniques employed, and potential solutions to mitigate its impacts. Our findings underscore the importance of understanding local dynamics and

developing tailored anti-bullying programs to foster safe and inclusive learning environments.

The school environment is crucial in determining students' educational experiences and overall well-being, particularly regarding child development. Young people encounter social and emotional challenges that can significantly impact their lives and academic performance as they embark on their educational journey. This study examines the complex issue of school bullying in Rawalakot, Azad Kashmir, to gain a deeper understanding of its prevalence, manifestations, and the coping strategies employed by students and educators in both government and private elementary schools.

The ontology of bullying is a formal framework that identifies and organizes the key ideas, connections, and characteristics associated with the phenomenon of bullying, including its various forms, contributing factors, causes, effects, and mitigation strategies.

Historically, school bullying has been a recurring theme in Western literature for over 150 years (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). Bullying, in all of its manifestations, has been recognized as a significant global phenomenon in educational environments and operationally defined in this study as any deliberate and recurrent acts of aggression, whether they be verbal, physical, or digital, that are aimed at a student or group of students and cause injury or distress. It includes actions where someone tries to hurt or make someone uncomfortable by using mean-spirited words or physical contact or excluding them from a group (Volk et al., 2017; Swearer et al., 2010).

Bullying can happen anywhere, but classrooms, corridors, playgrounds, cafeterias, school buses, toilets, and online spaces are just a few of the venues where bullying in schools can take place. Schools must comprehensively address and prevent bullying, as students may experience physical, verbal, or social bullying in any of these settings. Clear rules and interventions are essential to ensure that students can study and engage in safe and inclusive environments, whether in school or online. Most of the time, bullying occurs in areas of schools where teachers may not be present, including the playground, DS, or the lunchroom (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Sayer et al., 2011).

Furthermore, another complicating factor that makes it challenging to identify potential bullying in an educational setting early on is the silence maintained by both victims and witnesses. They often remain quiet due to the fear they experience (Takizawa et al., 2014). The childhood period plays a crucial role in the early development of young children as they begin to interact with their social surroundings, shaping their personalities. These interactions with peers take various forms, including cooperation, competition, and forming friendships, which help enhance their understanding of social values and shape their future social roles. In addition to having an impact on the victims, it fosters a hostile climate that can degrade education as a whole. In light of these issues, it is crucial to investigate practical

preventative and remedial measures for bullying in educational settings. A study indicated that genetic factors can make some children more susceptible to becoming a bully, a victim, or both (Veldkamp et al., 2019).

In order to prevent bullying, coping mechanisms are the methods and techniques used to deal with stress, hardship, or issues relating to bullying. The ability to tolerate, adapt to, and recover from hardships, including the consequences of bullying, is known as resilience. When the emotional impact of bullying was reported as particularly severe, school interventions tended to be less effective. Additionally, students who were frequently bullied in groups rather than as individuals experienced less favorable outcomes (Rigby, 2020). Bullied adolescents used different coping strategies compared to non-bullied ones. They employed helpful and unproductive strategies, such as self-distraction, denial, seeking emotional support, avoiding problems, venting, and humor, accepting the circumstance, and blaming themselves. They were likelier to use these strategies than those who were not bullied (Khan & Bhutto, 2020). Bully victims, particularly males, are more likely to externalize their emotions, blame others, ruminate, and catastrophize (Nixon et al., 2020). Effective treatments and coping mechanisms are essential for assisting adolescents in managing the adverse consequences of bullying.

Coping tactics, such as seeking emotional support or employing humor, may offer temporary comfort but often fail to address the underlying difficulties or long-term repercussions of bullying. Adaptive coping mechanisms, such as problem-solving and seeking professional assistance, are more likely to enhance resilience and support emotional well-being. To adequately assist children, educational institutions must establish comprehensive anti-bullying initiatives that emphasize both prevention and the provision of coping skill training and mental health resources. Furthermore, fostering a supportive educational environment that encourages children to address bullying and seek help openly is crucial. Interventions must be customized to meet specific requirements, considering the intensity of bullying and its emotional repercussions on pupils, to ensure lasting positive results.

Statement of Problem

In numerous impoverished areas of Pakistan, especially in northern regions like Rawalakot AJK, there is a pressing need to enhance awareness regarding issues such as bullying, which are linked to children's mental health and may lack sufficient intervention. This constrains our capacity to formulate effective interventions for preventing and resolving bullying in these schools. Teachers or educators play a vital role in preventing bullying, but they need to know how they perceive bullying and the strategies they use to address it (Luca et al., 2019). This research helped identify areas where educators require additional support and training. So, in Pakistani schools, particularly in regions like Rawalakot and AJK, understanding and addressing school bullying requires a comprehensive exploration, and this is a valuable contribution to the research.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze students' experiences with bullying and their coping strategies in government and private schools, addressing various forms of bullying.

Research Questions

2. How do students and teachers conceptualize bullying at the elementary level in government and private schools of Rawalakot City?

Significance of the Study

This study makes significant contributions to understanding bullying in Pakistan's less-developed regions, particularly in Rawalakot (AJK). By examining the unique dynamics of bullying in this environment, the study offers insights that can inform anti-bullying policies and initiatives tailored to local needs. The findings will help educators and policymakers develop evidence-based solutions to create safer and more inclusive learning environments, enhancing children's well-being and academic achievement. The study's emphasis on cultural sensitivity and community engagement offers a model for addressing bullying in similar settings worldwide. This study contributes to the understanding of creating and maintaining a learning environment that fosters security and encourages inclusivity and promotes awareness of bullying and its prevention, ultimately making students feel included and appreciated in inclusive schools. This research provides recommendations for fostering inclusion and diversity in educational

settings. This research suggests that enhancing students' performance can be achieved by addressing and eliminating bullying, which can also impact academic progress. It is crucial to reduce bullying and foster a more compassionate and just society, as the beliefs and abilities learned in school significantly impact adult behavior and society.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bullying is an increasingly common issue that has profound psychological, emotional, and academic effects on individuals all around the world. Bullying, which is rooted in historical power inequalities and has evolved with technology improvements, necessitates a thorough study of its manifestations and consequences. This literature review examines the diverse nature of bullying, encompassing its historical origins, various forms, current trends, conceptualizations, and prevalence, focusing on the Pakistani context. It emphasizes the cultural, economic, and institutional elements that contribute to bullying in Pakistan, as well as the importance of culturally sensitive interventions and comprehensive policy initiatives.

Bullying is a significant social problem that affects individuals across various settings, particularly in schools. It is characterized by repeated aggressive behavior intended to harm or intimidate others, often taking advantage of power imbalances. People do not take it seriously. Most countries did not have legislation requiring school districts to create anti-bullying policies before 1999 (Cornell & Limber, 2015). In the early development of young children, they begin to engage with their social surroundings, which shapes their personalities. These interactions with peers take various forms, including cooperation, competition, and forming friendships, which help enhance their understanding of social values and shape their future social roles. A child who acts as a bully today may shift to the role of a bully victim later (Snow, 2014).

While bullying is a global issue, its manifestations and impacts are shaped by cultural, social, and institutional contexts. In Pakistan, factors such as inadequate teacher training, lack of anti-bullying policies, and socioeconomic disparities exacerbate the problem, leading to significant psychological and academic challenges for students. Addressing bullying requires understanding the underlying

socioeconomic status (SES) and the systemic factors perpetuating it, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive interventions and comprehensive policy measures (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Conceptualization of Bullying

A lack of a clear and consistent definition of bullying might result in different interpretations of bullying behaviours. This ambiguity often leads to varying interpretations of bullying behaviors. For some, bullying may be solely linked to physical aggression, while others may include verbal abuse or social exclusion as forms of bullying. This lack of consensus is further complicated by the perception that bullying is "kids being kids" or "just teasing," downplaying its harmful effects. In many cases, individuals may not recognize the subtle or indirect forms of bullying, such as relational aggression or cyberbullying, as profound or impactful. Moreover, the role of power dynamics in bullying is often overlooked, with some people failing to identify that bullying involves an imbalance of power, where the victim is unable to defend themselves effectively. Consequently, the conceptualization of bullying can vary significantly between individuals, communities, and even educational institutions, highlighting the need for a more standardized and comprehensive understanding of bullying to prevent and address it effectively.

Bullying victims often develop a negative self-concept, leading to depression, anxiety, and diminished self-esteem. They may perceive their lives as failures, feeling ashamed, weak, and unattractive. This creates a vicious cycle where low self-esteem makes them more susceptible to bullying, further damaging their mental health and possibly leading to suicidal thoughts or self-harm. Additionally, some victims may not even recognize that they are being bullied due to a lack of clear conceptualization of what bullying truly is. They may not identify certain behaviors as bullying, which can delay intervention and support. Research links bullying to low self-esteem, reduced life satisfaction, fewer friendships, loneliness, and psychosomatic distress. In contrast, a positive self-concept, reflecting a healthy sense of competence and self-worth, acts as a protective factor, reducing the impact of bullying and buffering against

depressive symptoms (Shemesh & Heiman, 2021).

Prevalence of Bullying

Estimating the prevalence of bullying is challenging due to inconsistent definitions, varying guidelines to determine bullies and victims, and imprecise data-gathering methods (Swearer et al., 2010). A research study by Swearer et al. (2010) identified three significant problems with estimating the prevalence of bullying in schools. First, some define bullying differently or do not describe it at all. Second, according to the frequency with which someone acts cruelly, there are varied guidelines for identifying a bully, a victim, or a witness. Third, many resources they employ to investigate bullying are unreliable or of poor quality. Whether you poll children, their friends, instructors, or parents, the rates of bullying vary. The Health Behaviour School Checklist (HBSC) data revealed that bullying rates differ significantly across European nations and that boys are often more involved than girls. Unfortunately, bullying is prevalent all around the world, including in Pakistan and other countries. Bullying in schools is a widespread, gravely alarming problem with far-reaching effects on children's development and well-being. In addition to having an impact on the victims, it fosters a hostile climate that can degrade education as a whole. Bullying has negative after-school impacts that have a long-term influence on the mental, emotional, and social well-being of people who have been bullied. Victims often experience anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, and even thoughts of suicide. It can also lead to lower academic achievement, disconnection, and early school leaving, which can be linked to adverse outcomes in adulthood. In light of these issues, it is crucial to investigate practical preventative and remedial measures for bullying in educational settings.

Bullying in Pakistan

Bullying is a growing problem in Pakistan due to community violence, and some instructors may not be able to handle it. This may result from a lack of knowledge about bullying behaviors, an excessive workload, and the inattentiveness of school administrators and education authorities to these matters Shamsi et al., (2019). Bullying has received much attention in Pakistan in recent

years. It is believed to start at the grassroots level, which is the most fundamental level. For example, at home, relatives, cousins, and friends sometimes generate nicknames for children with disabilities, even though teachers also participate in this by calling their students "chottu," "motu," and "lambu." Sometimes, students get offended, but teachers do not notice at all. Lack of moral and ethical education and the lack of moral values lead to severe mental health issues. We need to organize everything from the classroom to the workplace. To reduce bullying, moral education is required at the grassroots level (Jibran, 2016).

Pakistani students had elevated levels of depression, anxiety, and daily stressors and diminished social support and subjective well-being compared to their German and Chinese counterparts. Cultural considerations and socioeconomic constraints may also contribute to these disparities (Bibi et al., 2019). According to Tariq et al. (2018), a survey conducted in Lahore found that 44% of pupils reported experiencing bullying at some point. The survey also showed that the most typical type of bullying reported was verbal abuse. Another study conducted in Lahore indicated that a greater incidence of bullying was observed in public schools (54%) compared to private schools (46%) (Salman et al., 2021). A study conducted in Karachi from ten schools in Jamshed town where five public and five private schools were selected showed the results that of the 153 instructors, over half ($n = 82$, 53.6%) did not know enough about bullying in schools, which means that the majority of instructors lacked sufficient understanding regarding bullying in schools (Shamsi et al., 2019). Particularly noteworthy were instructors' attitudes toward bullying incidents and the extent of their monitoring of classroom activities. Cross-sectional research conducted on 7,343 teenagers aged 15-16 from 56 schools in Oslo, they reported improved grades due to the instructors' encouragement and decreased bullying (Abbas et al., 2014).

A significant disparity was identified between rural and urban educators concerning their convictions about administering punishment to kids for bullying. Unexpectedly, educators from urban institutions were more likely to favor punitive measures than their counterparts in rural institutions. In Pakistan, significant disparities exist. In rural regions, educational systems are hindered by feudalism, which is also a primary

barrier to the advancement and accessibility of education in these areas (Siddiqui et al., 2023).

A study conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) found that bullying is widely seen as a societal issue, with bullies often perceived as individuals unable to control their actions, sometimes characterized as maladjusted. Physical bullying is considered harmful, typically causing visible damage, while verbal bullying is seen as more complex to detect and more common when adults are absent. Verbal bullying is often linked to issues like religious beliefs and is challenging to address due to denial by the perpetrators. Social bullying, however, is regarded as the most harmful form, leading to isolation and psychological distress for victims. The research highlights the pervasive nature of bullying in secondary schools and its damaging effects on students, particularly those subjected to verbal and social bullying (Shah & Khan, 2021).

Another study conducted in Islamabad examines the impact of workplace bullying on work engagement, highlighting the role of psychological distress and emotional exhaustion. It emphasizes the adverse effects of bullying on teachers in the educational sector, a crucial area for a country's development. The study found that workplace bullying leads to emotional exhaustion, psychological distress, and reduced work engagement among teachers. It also identified a significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and psychological distress, which further hampers work engagement. The study suggests that while social stressors like bullying are challenging to eliminate, strategies can be developed to address them. Additionally, emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between psychological distress and work engagement, enabling teachers to cope more effectively with the effects of bullying (Hameed et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study, conducted in Rawalakot City, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), examines the impact of the school environment on students' ability to cope with bullying. This study employs an exploratory research methodology, prioritizing participant viewpoints through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and focus group discussions in both public and private primary schools. Data analysis reveals patterns,

themes, and connections related to bullying actions and systemic factors, as outlined by Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Model, enabling context-specific solutions.

Research Design

This study employed an exploratory research design to gain insight into how the school environment affects children's resilience and coping strategies when bullied in Rawalakot. An exploratory strategy was best suited for examining this relatively unexplored subject in its unique socio-cultural context. The approach allowed for flexibility in data gathering by utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observations, and focus group discussions to uncover patterns and themes. Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Model guided the inquiry into the systemic implications of bullying, allowing for context-specific solutions.

An exploratory design is particularly suitable for this study, as it aims to comprehend a relatively under-explored and complex issue of bullying in Pakistani schools within its distinct socio-cultural context. The study aims to investigate students' and teachers' experiences, perceptions, and coping methods; thus, an exploratory design facilitates flexibility and adaptability in collecting insights. It helps reveal patterns, themes, and connections that may not have been previously recognized. This method is also optimal for elucidating the intricate dynamics of bullying actions and their systemic influences, according to Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Model. The open-ended design facilitates an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon, allowing for further research and context-specific solutions.

Instrumentation

This study's data was collected using three core instruments: in-depth interviews, participant observations, and focus group discussions. These instruments were chosen to provide a thorough understanding of kids' and teachers' experiences, perceptions, and coping methods with bullying.

In-depth Interviews

Interviewing is a widely used method in qualitative study. It is now widely acknowledged that conducting interviews is an essential technique for gathering data, and a significant increase in their use in educational research has

occurred throughout the 1980s. Researchers conduct in-depth, unstructured interviews to gather information that contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the interviewee's perspective or situation. They can also use these interviews to identify pertinent topics for more study. This type of interview involves asking informant's open-ended questions and probing when necessary to gather information that the researcher believes would be beneficial. In-depth interviewing is also known as qualitative, as it frequently incorporates qualitative data (Roller, 2020). Those who conduct in-depth interviews often believe that information is co-produced, a joint effort involving participants, the researcher, and other elements of their encounter, rather than something "discovered" by the researcher (Osborne et al., 2021).

Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted with educators and students from diverse backgrounds to explore the ontology of school bullying and the participants' experiences and coping strategies. Open-ended interview questions were used to elicit detailed replies, guided by a thorough literature study and Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Model. Separate interview questions were created for students to discuss their personal experiences and for teachers to share their observations and interventions. The interview guide was pilot-tested, refined for clarity and cultural sensitivity, and then evaluated by specialists to verify its validity.

Participant Observation

Participant observation has been a defining feature of research in sociology and anthropology for many years. Recently, the number of qualitative studies in education that use participant observation as a data collection method has increased (Kawulich, 2005). According to Ciesielska, Bostrom, and Ohlander (2018), observation is characterized as the organized description of behavior, events, and artifacts within the selected social environment for examination.

Researchers can benefit from observational approaches in many different ways. They provide researchers with tools to assess participants' communication styles, look for nonverbal expressions of emotion, ascertain who interacts with whom, and measure the amount of time spent on different activities (Uwamusi &

Ajisebiyawo, 2023). Participant observation is a valuable and effective method for gaining insight into various aspects of participants' experiences. For this study, Participant observation in public and private schools primarily involved actively monitoring and assessing the teaching and learning process, emphasizing student involvement, teacher interaction, and classroom dynamics. Monitoring included student interactions, discreet observation of instructors in the staff room, and examining how teachers collaborated to combat bullying. The researcher visited four public and private schools and took thorough field notes to enhance the data further. This strategy sought to capture behaviors, relationships, and surroundings that could not be fully documented through interviews or focus groups. A planned process provided consistency, and data was cross-checked with various sources for triangulation.

The primary objective of participant observation was to record behaviors, relationships, and settings that could not be comprehensively recorded through interviews or focus groups. Observations were conducted according to a planned methodology to maintain consistency and concentrate on essential aspects such as classroom dynamics, peer interactions, and teacher interventions. To corroborate the observations, comprehensive field notes were recorded and cross-verified with data from interviews and focus groups to ensure triangulation. Furthermore, observational data were regularly disseminated to colleagues and experts to validate their precision and pertinence to the research aims.

Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion is a technique where the researcher brings together a group of participants to discuss their personal experiences, beliefs, and attitudes through moderated interaction (Yulianti & Sulistyawati, 2021). Focus groups are beneficial in reflecting the social reality of a cultural group because they provide members with direct access to the words and ideas that shape their lives (Hughes & DuMon, 2004). (Onwuegbuzie, et al., 2009) Organizing the material collected from focus groups is a task of analysis that can be both challenging, laborious, and creative. The goal is to extract, clarify, and illuminate meaning from the collected data, a multi-step process.

The researcher conducted four focus groups with public and private primary school teachers to ensure diverse representation. Participants were selected from a government school, an elite private school, and a regular private school to represent a range of perspectives. Open-ended questions sparked debate regarding bullying experiences, attitudes, and potential solutions. The researcher created a pleasant setting to stimulate the sharing of insights. Experts reviewed the focus group guide to ensure it was clear and culturally appropriate. The discussions were recorded, transcribed, and examined for themes. The focus group guide underwent a professional review and approval to ensure clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness. Discussions were recorded and transcribed for theme analysis.

Population, Sampling, and Locale of the Study

The population of this study consisted of elementary-level students and educators from four schools in Rawalakot City, Azad Kashmir: two government schools and two private schools (one excellent and one ordinary), based on my firsthand knowledge of the community where I was born and raised. This resulted in a more diverse depiction of educational environments. Purposive sampling was employed to select schools and individuals with relevant experience and expertise that aligned with the study's focus on elementary-level students and educators from elite, public, and ordinary private schools, based on community knowledge, to analyze qualitative differences.

Bilal (2019) provides an explanation of the private school structure in a new category based on qualitative distinctions. In this case, the categories include top schools in the city, comprising both public (government and state-influenced government schools) and private (city elite schools, locality elite schools, and ordinary private schools). Using a purposive sampling technique, I selected participants with personal experience and knowledge relevant to the study's goals, ensuring that the data collected accurately represented the particular setting and subject under investigation.

Pilot Testing

Pilot testing with three teachers and three students assessed the effectiveness of the research instruments. This feedback identified instances where questions may be reworded for enhanced

clarity or modified to ensure cultural sensitivity and conformity with the study's goals. Informed by these observations, slight modifications were implemented to enhance the coherence and clarity of the instruments, assuring their effectiveness in eliciting meaningful and accurate responses throughout the comprehensive study.

Participant Selection and Demographics

Purposive sampling was employed to identify participants, focusing on students and educators from government and private schools (elite and ordinary) in Rawalakot, Azad Kashmir. Schools were classed according to **socioeconomic status and resources**.

Table 1 outlines the demographics of the participants.

Sr.No	Instruments	Category	Number	Gender (M/F)	Age Range	School Type
1	In-depth Interviews	Principal/vice principal	6	3M/3F	30-50 years	Government, Private
		Students	6	3M/3F	10-14 years	Government, Private
2	Focus Group Discussion	Teachers	4 (1 Focus Group from each school)	8M/28F	30-50 years	Government, Private
3	Participant Observation	Students/Teachers	All grades from class (5-8)	M/F	10-14 years	Government, Private

The following table summarizes the demographic information of the participants:

Table 1: Demographic Data

Procedure

The researcher initiated the data collection process by establishing connections with students and educators, enabling enriched data collection. Typical characteristics of this methodology include the researcher's commitment to developing relationships based on mutual respect, trust, and consent. It also entails the cooperative creation of knowledge and a sharp awareness of power relations (Gubrium et al., 2012).

A consent letter was carefully drafted, outlining the study's purpose, objectives, and ethical considerations, and was submitted for approval to the university's Dean of Faculty to ensure alignment with institutional guidelines. Once approved, the letter was used to approach schools formally, where principals were briefed on the study and its significance. Their consent was obtained through signed agreements, ensuring their willingness to participate and support the research. Before recording interviews and focus group discussions, participants were informed about the study's objectives, their rights, and the confidentiality of their data. Recorded data were transcribed and refined. To ensure credibility,

participants were provided with summaries of their responses to confirm accuracy and consistency, allowing them to validate whether their views were accurately represented. This process ensured transparency and enhanced the reliability of the data collected.

Data Analysis

The researcher conducted participant observation and twelve in-depth interviews across elementary-level public and private schools, providing a comprehensive view of the sectors and four focus group discussions. To conduct an efficient focus group, the researcher ensured diverse representation by selecting participants from a government school, an elite private school, and an ordinary private school. Various sites, such as classrooms, playgrounds, cafeterias, and staff rooms, were visited to ensure a well-rounded perspective.

The gathered data underwent rigorous analysis to gain a thorough understanding of the research issue. This procedure involved organizing the numerous data sources and observational notes, transcribing interviews, and coding to ensure the

accurate portrayal of participants' responses. The credibility of the data was ensured by emailing the refined transcripts to the study participants for review. They were asked to respond about the meaning of the text as they had understood it. For the in-depth interview, some respondents, including Ms. Shamim and Ms. Hina, suggested specific changes to the vocabulary sentence structure, such as adding or deleting specific sentences. The focus group transcripts were disseminated to participants to verify the accuracy and consistency of their intended responses. They were solicited to evaluate the material and provide input, resulting in recommendations for rephrasing, clarifying terminology, and refining sentence structures to enhance coherence.

The qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis to find recurrent themes, emerging concepts, and patterns. By methodically analyzing and organizing the data, the researcher created a coherent narrative highlighting the impact of the

school environment on students' coping strategies and resilience in the face of bullying. This allowed us to derive significant insights from the data. This careful analysis will enhance our understanding of the subject matter by allowing us to examine the research findings in greater depth.

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of In-depth Interview Data Gathered from Principals'

The researcher obtained a support letter from the university for data gathering and personally visited the selected schools. After obtaining permission from the heads of the institutions, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with six respondents, including principals and vice-principals from both government and private schools.

S. No.		Frequency
1	Number of Schools	04 (Public & Private)
2	Male Principals	02 (one from each type of school)
3	Female Principals	04 (two from each type of school)
4	Total	06

Table 2: Demographic Data

Analysis of Principals' Conceptualization of Bullying

Bullying is defined by four principals (P1, P3, P4, and P6) as a combination of verbal, physical, and psychological aggression in which children frequently target their peers in an attempt to establish dominance. On the other hand, two principals (P2, P5) viewed such behavior as a regular part of childhood, often seen as a form of teasing for self-satisfaction, and considered it a natural process. One of the participants expressed their understanding of bullying in the following lines (P1).

Here is Principal Shamim's perspective on bullying in schools.

"بلٹنگ اصل میں یہ بچوں کا ایک رویہ ہوتا ہے ہٹ کرنا نفسیاتی طور پر برے برے نام رکھنا دوسروں کو تارچر کرنا یہ بیٹھتے ہیں بیسکلی بچوں کے کہ وہ کیسے دوسروں کو ہٹ کر سکتے ہیں دوسروں کو ایڑا کیسے پہنچا سکتے ہیں اور کس طرح دوسروں سے اپنے آپ کو بہتر شو کر سکتے ہیں کہ ہم زیادہ بہتر ہیں تو اس قسم کا کمپینیشن ہوتا ہے بچوں کے نزدیک کے وہ بچہ اچھا نہیں ہے میں اچھا ہوں"

Translation

Bullying is essentially a behavior where children physically or mentally hurt others, calling them names or torturing them. It is a habit where they try to show they are better than others. It is a form of competition where they believe that the other child is inferior and they are superior.

She asserted that children engage in bullying anytime they have an opportunity, particularly to exert control, and also mentioned that:

"دیکھیں جو بچہ تارچر ہو رہا ہے وہ تو ظاہر ہے اس کے دماغ میں طرح طرح کے وسوسے آتے ہیں کہ میرے اندر طاقت آئے تو میں اس کو تباہ کر دوں مار دوں فلاں کروں اس کے لیے وہ اپنی سی کوشش کرے گا کہ میں کیسے اس کو ہٹ کروں وہ ہاتھ بھی استعمال کرے گا وہ پاؤں بھی استعمال کرے گا وہ نام بھی

رکھ سکتا ہے برے القابات رکھ سکتا ہے اسے گالیاں دے سکتا ہے تو یہ رویہ بیسکلی ہونا ہی نہیں چاہیے اگر ایک بچے کے اندر یہ چیز ہے تو اسے ہٹھا کے سمجھانا چاہیے کہ وہ اس سے اس کی شخصیت تباہ ہو جاتی ہے اور جب شخصیت تباہ ہو جاتی ہے تو پھر باقی بچتا کیا ہے پھر وہ بچہ معاشرے کا ایک بے کار سا بن کر رہ جاتا ہے اگر وہ ایسی بیٹھ کو کنٹرول نہیں کرے گا یا ٹیچر کنٹرول نہیں کرے گی تو وہ معاشرے میں اسی طرح اس کا کوئی مقام نہیں رہے گا یہ بہت بری بیماری ہے جہاں تک ہو سکے بچوں کو اس سے بچانا چاہیے۔"

Translation

The child who is bullied feels immense mental distress and may develop feelings of anger and revenge. They may try to retaliate in various ways, which can be detrimental to their personality. If a child continues to bully or be bullied without intervention, they may become a burden to society, lose self-esteem, and become an outcast. It is a very destructive behavior that needs to be curbed early

Types of Bullying in School

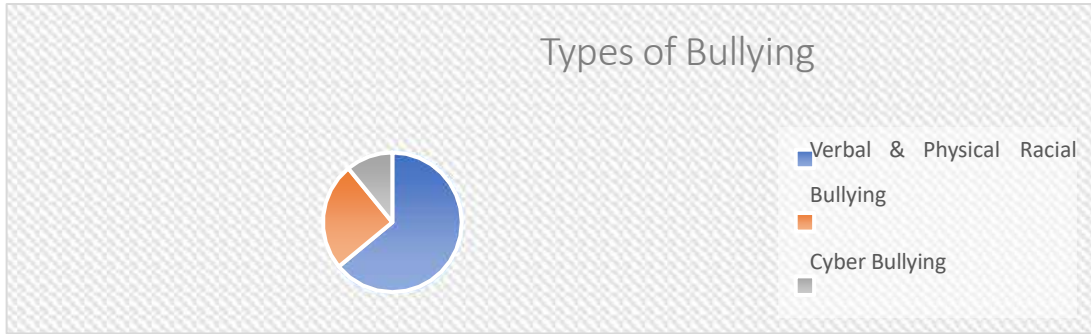


Figure 2: Representation of Types of Bullying in Schools

The participants (P3, P4, and P6) from private institutions recognized that physical and verbal bullying are the predominant kinds of bullying in their schools. They refuted the notion that cyberbullying is widespread, implying that it is infrequent in their surroundings. Conversely, participants (P1, P2, and P5) from public schools observed that although physical and verbal bullying exists, racial bullying is notably pronounced, particularly in government institutions. Participant P1 stated that Cyberbullying occurs less frequently in public schools due to the inability of several children to get the requisite technology for such conduct.

The respondent P5 stated that:

"دیکھیں یہ بعض اوقات اس کا ساری زندگی کے لیے نام بڑ جاتا ہے کوئی کسی کو کسی نام سے کوئی پکارے ایک اصل نام ہوتا ہے اور ایک اس کو وہ دوسرے نام سے پکار دے" چھوٹو" فلاں اس طرح سے تو وہ شاید زندگی بھر اس کا نکی نام بن جائے اس کا دل پر تو اثر پڑتا ہے"

Translation

A child's chosen nickname can become that person's lifelong identity. Sometimes, their friends will still use that nickname as adults, which helps people remember the name and its meaning. This will hurt them.

Another respondent P4 stated that:

"موسٹلی یہی ہوا ہے کہ بچے جو ہیں نا ایک دوسرے کو آن دا بیسس آف ہائیٹ تنگ کر رہے ہوتے ہیں ٹھیک ہے کہ کسی کا قد چھوٹا ہے تو انہوں

on.

Another respondent from Government Boys High School, Khalid Razzaq stated that:

بچوں کی عادت ہوتی ہے ایک دوسرے کو تنگ کرنا یہ تو سب بچے ہی کرتے ہیں اس لیے تو انہیں بچے کہا جاتا ہے

Translation

Children often have a habit of teasing each other; this is a typical behavior among all kids, which is why they are called kids.

نے ان کا برابر کوئی نام رکھا ہوا ہے اگر کوئی موٹا ہے تو اس کو وہ اس طرح سے بلا رہے ہوتے ہیں تو یہی ہوتا ہے"

Translation

Mostly, what happens is that children tend to tease each other based on height. If someone is shorter, they are given a specific name, and if someone is overweight, they are called in a certain way. This is what usually happens.

Another respondent from public school P2 stated that:

نود فون کر کے بولتے ہیں کے فلاں بچہ نیچی زات کا ہے اس کے ساتھ ہمارے بچے کو نا بٹھانا"

Translation

Sometimes, parents themselves call and say that a particular child belongs to a lower caste and their child should not sit with them.

Principals' Observation of Bullying Practices

Respondents (P1, P2, P4, P5, and P6) from public and private schools shared their experiences with school bullying, stating that they had witnessed numerous instances of such behavior in their respective institutions. In contrast, a principal from a private elite school (P3) denied noticing any bullying occurrences at her school while acknowledging that such incidents may occur at other schools. The respondent P3 stated that:

"ہمارے سکول میں ہائیٹنگ کا ایس سچ تو ویسے نہیں ہے لیکن باہر بچے ایک دوسرے کو برے برے ناموں سے پکارتے ہیں اور اس بیسس پہ ان کے ساتھ جھگڑے وغیرہ کرتے ہیں تو یہ تو موسٹلی سکولز میں

سیون، ایٹ کلاس کے بچے بہت زیادہ ایک دوسرے کو بلی کرتے ہیں"

Translation

In our school, there is not much bullying as such. However, outside, kids often call each other nasty names, which can lead to fights. This is common in most schools, especially among children in grades 7 and 8. They bully each other a lot.

Another respondent (P5) shared his experience of witnessing verbal bullying in school. He stated that:

"وہ ایسا ہوا کہ ایک سکول تھا اس وقت میں پڑھا رہا تھا تو وہاں پر چھوٹے بچے تھے اس کا نام تھا جبران تو وہ اس کو بولا کہ کہتے او جو جبو وہ میرے پاس آیا کہنے لگا سر میرا نام جبران ہے اور یہ مجھے جو جبو کہے پکارتے ہیں"

Translation

"The incident occurred at a school where I was employed as a teacher at that particular moment. Among the attendees were several young children, one of whom went by the name Jibran. He was given the nickname "Jabo Jabo." He approached me and introduced himself, stating, "Sir, I am Jibran, and I am often referred to as Jabo Jabo."

Another respondent (P1) from a government school shared her experience of bullying in her school where parents used to bully teachers.

"تو ہاں میرے ادارے میں ایک واقعہ ایسا ہوا کہ بچیاں ایک دوسرے کو بلی کر رہی تھیں تو ان کی جو ٹیچر تھی کلاس ٹیچر انہوں نے کہا کہ میں بہت اپ لوگوں کو سمجھا چکی ہوں اب میں میم کے پاس لے کے جا رہی ہوں تو اگے اگے ٹیچر تھی تو بیچھے سے بچی بھاگ گئی بھاگ کے تو کہیں چلی گئی تو جب پتہ کیا گھر بھی

اس بچی کا نزدیک تھا لیکن چونکہ پہاڑی علاقہ تھا تو اونچے نیچے جگہیں اور درخت تھے بچی کا پتہ کیا کہ وہ گھر پہنچ گئی کہ نہیں تو گھر والوں نے وہ شور مچایا وہ بلی کرتے ہوئے ادارے پر اٹیک کر گئے سٹاف کو اتنا گالیاں دی ہر وہ طریقہ اپنایا جس سے ہم لوگ تنگ ہو اہل مہلہ کو بھی اکٹھا کر کے تو ایک محاذ بنا لیا تھا

تو ایسی سچویشن میں مجھے مناسب یہ لگا کہ میں پولیس کو انوالو کر لیتی ہوں۔ ان کے شور کی وجہ سے وہ اتنا شور مچا کہ وہ کہہ رہے تھے کہ یہاں ٹیچر بچیوں کو مارتے بھی ہیں اور انہیں بیچتی بھی ہیں طرح طرح کی بلیمنگ بھی کی"

Translation

There was an occurrence at my school involving the mutual harassment of sure female students. The instructor informed the students that she had provided them with multiple explanations, but she now intended to escalate the matter to the principal. While the teacher was leading, one of the girls abruptly departed and vanished. Due to the presence of hills, uneven terrain, and trees in the region, her home, although nearby, still required inspection. Upon discovering the information, we promptly contacted her relatives. Their response was characterized by vociferous clamor, aggressive assault on the institution, verbal mistreatment of the staff, and the mobilization of the entire neighborhood against us. Given the chaotic circumstances, I deemed it necessary to engage the police. They were creating a significant disturbance, alleging that the teachers were physically assaulting and trafficking the girls, and making many unfounded claims.

Effects of Bullying Behavior on School Environment

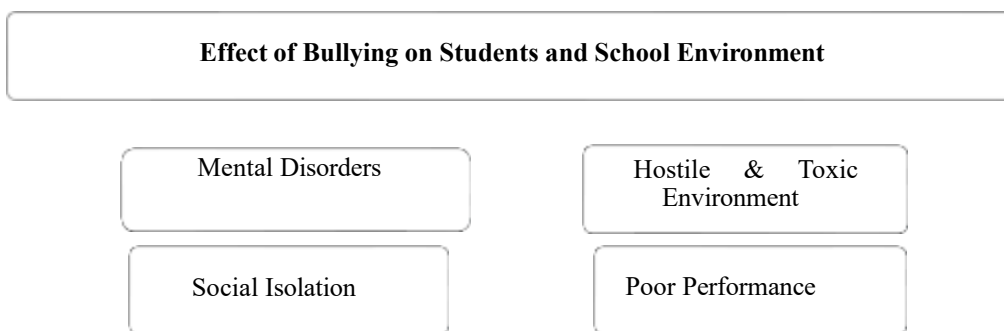


Figure 3: Analysis of Effect of Bullying on Students and the School Environment

The following reasons emerged when they were asked about the effect of bullying on students. The participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6) from both public and private educational institutions provided their insights regarding the impact of bullying on students and the academic

atmosphere. They asserted that bullying results in a detrimental school environment characterized by fear, anxiety, and diminished academic performance among children. They explained that bullying undermines the entire learning environment, hindering both victims and spectators from feeling secure and involved in

school activities. The educator from a private elite school (P3) asserted that she controlled bullying in her institution and also stated that:

"یہ بہت غلط بات ہے کہ بچے کو کسی غلط نام سے پکارا جائے اور پہلی بات تو یہ کہ بچے کو اس کو پورے نام سے پکارنا چاہیے تو اگر ایسا ہو تو پھر اسے یہ کہ سکول ایٹموسفیر بھی خراب ہوتا ہے بچے کی پرسنٹی پر بھی فرق پڑتا ہے اور ایک پورا سکول کا ماحول ہی ڈسٹرب ہو جاتا ہے"

Translation

It is very wrong to call a child by an incorrect name. Firstly, a child should be called by their full name, and if bullying happens, it disturbs the school atmosphere, affects the child's personality, and disrupts the entire school environment.

Another respondent P6 from private institution mentioned that

"بچے اکثر رنگ اور شکل سے ایک دوسرے کو بلی کرتے ہیں تو ایک بچی ہمیشہ سکول میں میک اپ کر کے آتی ہے اور اس کو منع کرو تو ربتی ہے اس کو شادب لگتا ہے کہ اس کا رنگ کالا ہے اور اس کا اثر اس نے دماغ میں لیا ہے۔"

Translation

"Children often bully each other based on color and appearance. There is a girl who always comes to school wearing makeup, and if she is asked to stop, she insists on continuing to wear it. She might feel that her skin is dark, and this thought has had a profound impact on her mental well-being.

Coping Strategies to Overcome Bullying Practices

The participants identified several strategies for managing bullying and knew how to cope with such situations. Participants (P1, P2, P3, P5, and P6) indicated that students typically place their trust in them and disclose concerns when encountering such problems. Nevertheless, respondent P4 indicated that she had not experienced any students requesting assistance for this issue but affirmed that she would undoubtedly provide support if contacted. According to the respondent (P1):

"کوہنگ بلی کی اصل میں وہ سٹریٹجی ہوتی ہے جس کے مطابق ہم ایسے بچوں کو ڈیل کرتے ہیں یا ایسے بچوں کو طریقے بتاتے ہیں کہ وہ انہیں کیسے اس سجویشن سے نکلنا چاہیے اور ہم وہ طریقے استعمال کرتے ہیں جس میں بچے بلی جو بعض دفعہ بچہ ہو رہا ہوتا ہے اس کے لیے بھی ہمدردی کی ضرورت ہوتی ہے جو بلی کر رہے ہوتے ہیں ان کے لیے بھی ظاہر ہے کوئی طریقہ کار اپنانا پڑتا ہے"

Translation

Coping is a fundamental approach we employ to manage children or instruct them on how to navigate various circumstances. We utilize techniques that frequently incorporate empathy, not only towards the child who is being subjected

to bullying but also towards the youngster who is engaging in the bullying behavior, as they also necessitate some intervention.

Another participant (P2) stated as follows:

"دوسرے بچے پھر ہمیں بتاتے ہیں نا خود ہی بچے ہم پوچھتے ہیں جا کے بچہ نہیں بولتا تو ہم کوشش کرتے ہیں بچہ بولے فٹ آف ال کوشش کرتے ہیں بچہ خود بتائے اگر نہیں بولتا تو پھر دوسرے بچے دیکھ رہے ہوتے ہیں ظاہر ہے اکثریت ہمیں بتاتے ہیں"

Translation

Subsequently, other children provide us with the information directly. If a child is nonverbal, we make efforts to encourage their verbal communication. Initially, we aim to motivate the youngster to disclose the details of the incident. If the individuals in question do not communicate verbally, we rely on other students who witness the actions to provide us with information.

The respondent (P3) stated that:

"اور ایک تو یہ ہے کہ ہم نے اس کو اوپنی بھی جو ہے ڈسکس نہیں کیا ہم نے ایسے بچوں کو جو کر رہے ہیں ایسا ان کو الگ بلا کے ان کی کونسلنگ کی ہے پھر اس کے بیٹے ایڈیکشن بتائیں تو پھر مطلب ایک ریسپیکٹ کے پہلو کو سامنے رکھتے ہوئے مارل لیکچرز ہم نے کنڈکٹ کرانیں تاکہ یہ اس چیز سے نکلا جائے بچوں کو سمجھایا جائے کہ یہ بہت غلط بات ہوگی"

Translation

We have not addressed it openly. Instead, we counselled the students individually. We discussed the harmful implications of their actions and provided moral guidance to help them overcome this behavior. The goal was to help students understand that bullying is wrong.

The respondent (P6) stated that:

"رولز تو ہمارے بنے ہوئے ہیں اس میں جرمانہ یہ ہے کہ نہیں کرتے یہ شرعی طور پہ یہ درست چیز نہیں ہے تو اس لیے ہم جرمانہ نہیں کرتے اس میں ہم نے جو چیز کی ہوی ہے کہ ہم ان بچوں کو بلاتے ہیں اور ان کو ہم سمجھاتے ہیں"

Translation

We have laws, and bullying is forbidden from an Islamic perspective. No fines are imposed. We call in the students and explain things to them. Education is our priority.

The respondents (P1, P4, P5, and P6) reported encountering difficult situations on several occasions. Conversely, respondent (P3) stated that she had not observed any instances of bullying at her school. Respondent (P2) indicated that she had not experienced similar instances in the last year, having been appointed only a year prior. The respondent (P1) stated that:

میرے سکول میں ایک بچہ بہت زہین تھا لیکن ہمیشہ سکول دیر سے آتا تھا اور ہر وقت پریشان رہتا تھا جب میں نے بچے سے پوچھا کہ وہ دیر سے کیوں آتا ہے اور اس کے کپڑے گندے کیوں ہوتے ہیں تو وہ رونے لگا لیکن کچھ بتا

نہیں رہا تھا میں نے اپنی طرف سے پتا کروایا تو پتا چلا وہ اپنی دادی کے ساتھ رہتا ہے اور یتیم ہے گھر کے کام بھی خود کرتا ہے بہن بھائیوں کو سنبھالتا ہے اور سکول میں بچے اس کا حلیہ دیکھ کر اس سے ہنستے ہیں"

Translation

A talented student in my school was frequently late and appeared to be upset. He cried but did not answer when I questioned him about why he was late and why his clothes were soiled. I investigated and found that he is an orphan living with his grandma. He takes care of his siblings, does all the housework, and is teased at school for his appearance.

Another respondent (P5) shared his experience that:

"میں نے ایک بچے کو سمجھایا جو زیادہ تر دوسرے بچوں کو تنگ کرتا تھا ہر وقت شرارتیں کرتا تھا جب اس سے وجہ پوچھی تو پتا چلا اس کے گھر کا ماحول پرسکون نہیں ہے تبھی وہ اپنا غصہ دوسرے بچوں سے نکالتا ہے تب میں نے اس کے والدین کو بلا کر سمجھایا کہ بچوں کے سامنے گھر کے ماحول کو ٹھیک رکھیں"

Translation

I counseled a child who often troubled other students and was always mischievous. When I asked him for a reason, I found out that his home environment was not peaceful, which is why he took out his frustration on other children. So, I called his parents and told them to keep things calm and positive at home for their child.

Another respondent (P6) shares that:

"میری ایٹ کلاس کے بچے بہت شرارتی ہیں لڑکے لڑکیاں دونوں لیکن ایک بچہ تھا جو چھوٹے بچوں کو ڈراتا تھا اور انہیں مارتا تھا جب مجھے پتا چلا تو میں نے اس کی بہت پٹائی کی اب وہ پہلے سے کم شرارت کرتا ہے لیکن مجھ سے ڈرتا ہے اس لیے اپنے اوپر کنٹرول کرتا ہے"

Translation

Both the boys and girls in 8th grade are very naughty but there was one boy who hit and scared the little kids. I gave him a harsh punishment when I discovered the truth. He is not as naughty as he used to be, but he mostly behaves because he is afraid of me.

Another respondent, P4, shared her experience when she used to teach students:

"میں صرف یہی کر سکتی ہوں اس ٹائم کے بچوں کو تھرو مارل لیکچر ان کو بتا سکتی ہوں اگر کسی ٹائم میں کوئی بچہ نہ سنے زیادہ بانبر ہو جاتے ہیں بچے ابھی میری نائن کلاس میں ہوا تھا کہ وہاں بھی بچے بہت زیادہ بڑے تھے اور وہ ایک دوسرے سے بہت زیادہ لڑنا شروع ہو گئے تھے تو پھر میں نے میم کو بلا دیا تھا مینم پھر کلاس میں آئی تھی میم نے ان کو ڈانٹا بھی پھر ان کے گھر میں کال بھی کی اس طرح ان کو کنٹرول کیا"

Translation

Currently, all I can do is impart moral lessons and

knowledge to children. This is similar to what happens when a child is not paying attention or is too hyperactive. I witnessed this phenomenon with my ninth-grade class, where the students had matured and were often fighting among themselves. Following that, I called the head of school, and then she went to the classroom. She scolded them and then called their parents. In this way, the situation gets under control.

All the respondents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6) agreed that counselling is the most effective strategy for addressing bullying. They emphasized the importance of building a strong bond with students so they feel comfortable sharing their problems. Additionally, respondent (P1) highlighted that teachers should understand the mental state of their students and handle situations accordingly.

According to the respondent (P6):

"پہلے تو خود ڈر جاتی ہوں بہت زیادہ اگر بچے زیادہ بانبر ہو جائیں اور زیادہ لڑنے لگیں تو پھر ہم لوگ یہی کرتے ہیں کہ بس ان کو کسی طریقے سے سمجھاتے ہیں۔ لیکن بعض اوقات بچے سمجھ جاتے ہیں اور بعض اوقات نہیں سمجھتے پھر ان کے پیرنٹس سے بتانا پڑتا ہے ہم پھر ان کے پیرنٹس سے بات کرتے ہیں"

Translation

My original feelings of fear intensify when the kids become too active and start fighting more frequently. We then attempt to make it easier for them to understand in several ways. Sometimes, children understand, and sometimes, they do not. So, we must tell their parents. Talking with their parents is something we do.

Another respondent (P1) stated that:

"دیکھتے سکول کا انوارمنٹ یا گھر کا ماحول یا کچھ بھی چیزیں بعد میں اتنی ہیں پہلے تو بچے کی اپنی شخصیت ہوتی ہے تو بچی کی شخصیت کا تعلق اس کے آداب سے گفتگو سے اٹھنے بیٹھنے کے طریقے سے جج کیا جاتا ہے اب اگر بیمار معاشرے سے بچہ اٹھ کر آتا ہے پیچھے سے بھی اس کا یہی بیک گراؤنڈ ہے تو آگے ادارے میں آ کر تو ہمارا کام ہوتا ہے کہ ہم ان کو شعور دیں اٹھنے بیٹھنے کا طریقہ بتائیں دوسروں سے کلام کرنے کا طریقہ سکھائیں اور اگر وہ بدتمیز ہے یا غلط بولتا ہے یا بچوں کو ہٹ کرتا ہے یا منٹلی ٹارچر کرتا ہے تو پھر ہمیں نرمی سے پیار سے بچوں کو سکھانا پڑتا ہے کہ دوسروں کو تکلیف نہیں دینے"

Translation:

The environment at school or home is secondary; first comes the child's personality, judged by manners, speech, and behavior. If a child comes from a troubled background, it is our responsibility to teach them civility and proper behavior. If a child is disruptive, we need to teach them that causing harm is wrong and displeases

God. Young children typically understand and improve when guided in an appropriate manner.

Students' Trust in Principal/Educator:

According to the respondents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6), students generally feel comfortable sharing their concerns with them. However, P1 mentioned that some students may feel shy or reluctant to open up. In such cases, if she senses that an issue needs attention, she tries to identify the problem in her own way. P6 stated that while he is friendly with students below the elementary level, he sets certain boundaries for elementary-level students, believing they need to be disciplined due to their tendency to cause disruptions. Despite this, he enjoys helping students who genuinely face difficulties.

According to the respondent P3:

"ہمارے سکول میں بلینگ کے واقعات نا ہونے کے برابر ہیں لیکن بچوں کے ساتھ ایک لمیٹ تک ہمارا دوستانہ رویہ ہے اس لیے وہ اپنے مسائل ڈسکس کرتے ہیں"

Translation

There is almost no bullying at our school, but we maintain a good relationship with students to a certain extent, which makes them more likely to approach us about their problems.

The respondent P6 stated that:

چھوٹے بچے جو ابھی نرسری پریپ کے ہوتے ہیں وہ پیار سے سمجھ جاتے ہیں لیکن تھوڑے بڑے بچے سختی کے علاوہ نہیں مانتے اس لیے ان کو ڈرا کے رکھنا ہوتا ہے لیکن بچوں کی بہتری کے لیے اگر کبھی نرمی بھی کرنی پڑے تو کرتا ہوں"

Translation

Children in nursery and prep understand when you are kind, but older children do not listen when you are not strict, so you have to keep a close eye on them. However, I am also willing to be lenient if it is for the kids' good.

Encourage Students and Boost Their Confidence:

Respondent P1 indicated that she utilizes formal reporting systems, including a designated box for students to submit anonymous letters expressing their concerns. Conversely, respondents P2 and P3 highlighted their strong relationship with students, which fosters open communication. Respondents P4 and P5 emphasized their habit of continuously commending and valuing students to enhance their confidence. Respondent P6 articulated that although he endeavors to be accommodating when warranted, upholding discipline

occasionally necessitates rigidity. Furthermore, when he observes a student's deficiency in confidence, he deliberately endeavors to provide personalized advice. He also stated that:

"کچھ بچے اٹنشن لینے کے لیے ایکٹ بھی کرتے ہیں اور بعد اوقات بہانے بناتے ہیں لیکن جب مجھے لگے کیوں کے بچوں کے انداز سے پتا چل جاتا ہے کہ وہ جھوٹ بول رہے ہیں یا سچ میں اپنی طرف سے تسلی کرنے کے بعد اگر سمجھوں کہ بچہ واقعی مشکل میں ہے تو پھر میں ہر ممکن مدد کرتا ہوں اور حوصلہ افزائی کرتا ہوں"

Translation

Some kids act out to get attention or to make an excuse. However, their actions often reveal whether they are being truthful or genuinely struggling. I review the case, and if I believe the child is truly struggling, I do everything possible to help and encourage them.

The principal and headmistresses emphasized that the school takes bullying incidents seriously and adheres to a systematic protocol for addressing them. Respondent P1 indicated that the school predominantly employs verbal warnings and counselling sessions to ensure students comprehend the repercussions of their behavior. Respondent P2 indicated educators are encouraged to facilitate conflict resolution and guide students toward improved conduct. However, formal disciplinary measures are contingent upon the severity of the occurrence. Respondent P3 indicated that instances of bullying are escalated to higher authorities when needed, and suitable measures are used to address them. Respondents P4 and P5 stated that they promptly address bullying and implement the necessary measures to ensure a secure student environment. Respondent P6 noted that although the school has established reporting channels, certain instances remain unreported due to students' reluctance to come forward; hence, they actively foster trust and motivate students to voice their concerns. According to respondent (P1):

میں اس طرح کے معاملات کو تحمل مزاجی سے حل کرنے کی کوشش کرتی ہوں ادارے کی ساکھ کو بچانے اور بچوں کی اچھی تربیت کرنے کے لیے جو بہتر حکمت عملی لگے میں اس کو اپنانے کی کوشش کرتی ہوں کیونکہ اس طرح کے واقعات تقریباً روز ہی دیکھنے کو ملتے ہیں۔"

Translation

I try to be patient with these kinds of problems so that I can protect the school's reputation and ensure that the students are adequately educated. I use whatever method seems to work best, as these issues occur almost every day.

Suggestions to Prevent Bullying:

Suggestions to overcome bullying are as under



Figure 4: Analysis of Bullying Prevention Techniques in Schools

Respondents P1 and P2 suggested that frequent workshops and training sessions should be implemented for both educators and students to enhance awareness of bullying and promote inclusivity in classroom activities. Respondent P3 indicated that, in addition to training, there is a need to promote emotional support, and establishing anonymous reporting systems can enhance students' sense of security in voicing their concerns. Respondent P4 asserted that incorporating moral and ethical education into the curriculum is vital for promoting positive behavior and deterring bullying. Respondent P5 asserted that parental engagement and cooperation between educational institutions and families can strengthen positive values within the home environment. Respondent P6 asserted that instructing students on the responsible use of mobile phones and social media, in conjunction with encouraging outside activities, can foster positive engagement and mitigate tensions. According to the respondent (P1):

"میں چاہتی ہوں کہ اگر ہمارے سٹاف کو ورکشاپس کروائی جائیں مختلف سبجیکٹس کے حوالے سے کیونکہ بلیننگ ایک ایسا غلط رویہ ہے جو ہمارے معاشرے میں پروان چڑھ رہا ہے جس سے نہ صرف بچے متاثر ہوتے ہیں بلکہ ہر دوسرا گھر متاثر ہوتا ہے اور بعض دفعہ بچوں کے رویے کی وجہ سے وہ والدین بھی شرمندہ ہوتے ہیں کہ ہمارے بچے بد تعیز ہیں بات نہیں سنتے یہ ہے وہ ہے تو ایسی سچویشن کے لیے سائیکھٹرسٹ کا بندوبست

کرنا چاہیے کوئی ورکشاپس ہونے چاہیے جو نفسیاتی طور پر بچوں کو مانیٹر کریں اور پھر ان کے سوچ کے پیچھے جا کے انہیں کوئی ٹریننگ دیں کیونکہ ایسا رویہ اختیار کرنے سے ان کی شخصیت اس طرح سے متاثر ہوتی ہے اور انہیں پھر وہ عزت نہیں مل سکتی جو ایک شریف بچے کی ہوتی ہے تو جب ان کو بتایا جائے گا کہ اگے اپ نے معزز شہری بننا ہے تو پھر شاید وہ اس بات پر رک جائیں"

Translation

I want to hold workshops for our team on various topics to counter society's rising negative behavior. Children and all homes are affected by this issue. Sometimes, children's behavior is so disturbing that parents feel humiliated, thinking their kids are disrespectful and unresponsive. Make arrangements for psychiatrists in such cases. Workshops should assess children's mental health and train them to recognize and understand their attitudes. They should be warned that such behavior will harm their reputation and that they will not be respected as well-behaved children. Instructing them to become decent citizens may deter such behavior.

Another respondent P2 stated that:

"ورک شاپس ہونی چاہیے ٹیچر خود بھی سیکھتی ہیں اور بچوں کو بھی آ کے سکھاتی ہیں یہ ہے کہ زیادہ ٹائم نہیں ہونی چاہیے کہ پھر ہماری تدریس ڈسٹرب ہو تو ویک کی ہو، 15 ڈیز کی ہو لیکن ایک منٹ کی جب ٹیچرز چلی جاتی ہیں تو پھر پیچھے سے کلاس ڈسٹرب ہو جاتی ہے، تدریس متاثر ہو جاتی ہے پھر ظاہر ہے اس ٹیچر کا کام کون کرے پھر"

Translation

Workshops are required to be arranged, providing teachers with the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills that they can then impart to their students. These seminars should be kept brief to prevent any interference with our instruction. A period of one week or 15 days is considered reasonable. However, when teachers are absent for one month, it significantly interrupts the class flow, hinders the teaching process, and, naturally, no one else can fulfill the teacher's responsibilities during their absence.

Another respondent P3 states that:

"دیکھیں ٹیچرز کے لیے بھی ورکشاپ کنڈکٹ کرائی جائیں اور اوپرنس دی جائے میرے خیال سے ہر ٹیچر کو بچوں کی سائیکالوجی سمجھنے کے لیے ٹریننگ ضروری دینی چاہیے کیونکہ یہ ان کا صبح شام کا کام ہے بچوں کے ساتھ ٹیلنگ"

Translation

There should also be workshops for teachers, and more people should be aware of this problem. I believe it is essential for all teachers to understand child psychology as they interact with children daily.

Respondent P5 stated that:

"ٹیچرز سن لیتی ہیں ورکشاپ لیتی ہیں عمل بھی کرتی ہیں ساری چیز کرتی ہیں لیکن جو چیز گھر سے جڑ پکڑتی ہے اس کو کیسے ختم کریں"

Translation

Teachers actively engage in listening, participating in workshops, and applying the knowledge they acquire. However, how can we effectively eradicate the problems that originate from the domestic setting?

Another respondent P6 stated that:

"دیکھیں آج کل ٹیکنالوجی کا دور ہے سب سے زیادہ خرابی کی وجہ موبائل فون ہے یہ استاد اور والدین کا کام ہے کہ بچوں کو اس کا مثبت استعمال سیکھائیں تاکہ بچہ کچھ اچھا سیکھے اسی طریقے سے بچوں کو غلط حرکتوں سے روکا جا سکتا ہے"

Translation

Look, we live in the age of technology, and cell phones are the biggest threat to safety. Teachers and parents should demonstrate to kids how to use it beneficially, allowing them to learn something useful. This way, kids can be kept from doing bad things.

Support Groups or Counselling Services: Respondents P1, P2, and P5 advocate for the provision of counselling services for students and the recruitment of a qualified psychologist, similar to the employment of instructors, to enhance student assistance. Conversely, responders P3, P4, and P6 recognized the significance of employing a counsellor but contended that a proficient instructor could perform the same function as a psychologist. According to respondent P1:

ایک سائیکالوجسٹ نفسیات پڑھ کے آیا ہوتا ہے وہ بہتر طریقے سے بچوں کو سمجھا سکتا ہے اور ٹیچرز بھی اگر ٹرین بوں گی تو اس مسئلے کو کنٹرول کیا جا سکتا ہے، آج کل ہر انسان کو ہی کائونسلنگ کی ضرورت ہے"

Translation

A psychologist has studied psychology and can better understand kids, but teachers can also handle this problem if they are well-trained. Everyone needs counselling these days.

Reporting Bullying Incidents: Respondents E1, E2, and E5 strongly advocate for the provision of multiple anonymous reporting mechanisms, including a Dropbox for written submissions. Conversely, responses E3 and E4 propose that educational institutions create online forums for students to express their issues anonymously, with school-affiliated online groups functioning as a supportive environment. Respondent E6 underscores the necessity for each institution to formulate and execute thorough anti-bullying measures. E6 recommends establishing an anonymous submission box for students to express their opinions, enabling authorities to examine report trends and identify individuals who are engaged and efficiently address the issue. According to the respondent E4 stated that:

آج کل کا ہر بچہ سوشل میڈیا کا استعمال جانتا ہے اور یہ اچھا بھی ہے کیونکہ دور دن با دن مزید ترقی کر رہا ہے اس کا ایک فائدہ یہ بھی ہے کہ بچے اپنے حق کے لیے آواز اٹھا سکتے ہیں، سکولز کو چاہیے کہ سوشل میڈیا ہے بھی بچوں کے مسائل حل کریں اور سکول کا گروپ بنائیں جہاں سکول کا سارا عملہ بھی ایڈ ہو۔

Translation

Currently, every child is proficient in utilizing social media, which is advantageous as the world continues to progress. A key advantage is that children can advocate for their rights. Schools should address children's concerns about social media by establishing a school-wide organization that encompasses the entire staff.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal a multidimensional understanding of bullying among students that are indicted by principals and other educators from both public and private elementary schools. Most respondents conceptualized bullying as a combination of verbal, physical, and psychological aggression, with a few viewing it as a typical aspect of childhood behavior. This divergence in perception reflects broader cultural and contextual influences in how educators interpret students' aggressive behavior. Principals from

public schools highlighted racial bullying and socio-economic discrimination, while private school principals focused more on verbal and appearance-based teasing. These distinctions suggest that bullying manifestations are context-dependent and influenced by the school environment, community norms, and students' socio-cultural backgrounds, echoing earlier findings by Espelage and Swearer (2011) and more recent studies like Kowalski et al. (2021).

The types of bullying identified in the data further validate the complex and pervasive nature of this behavior. While physical and verbal bullying were prevalent across all schools, public school principals reported additional concerns such as caste-based discrimination and parental interference, underscoring structural and societal issues. Participants recognized that bullying leads to fear, anxiety, and a reduction in students' academic performance, disrupting the overall learning environment. These consequences align with prior research highlighting the long-term psychological and educational impact of bullying (Olweus, 2013; Bradshaw, 2020). A unique observation was that bullying is not always confined to student interactions—teachers and school staff may also become targets, especially from parents, which widens the scope of school bullying and requires a more systemic approach to intervention.

Coping strategies employed by educators centered heavily on counseling, building student trust, and fostering open communication. Most principals emphasized the importance of empathy for both the victim and the bully, suggesting that behavioral problems often stem from difficult home environments or emotional neglect. The role of the teacher was highlighted as both an educator and a moral guide, reinforcing the need for educators to be trained in basic counseling and child psychology. Although there was some variation in responses, all agreed on the critical role of emotional support and student-principal relationships in mitigating bullying. These insights align with recent emphasis on socio-emotional learning and trauma-informed practices in schools (Durlak et al., 2015; Berger & Caravita, 2016).

In conclusion, the ontology of school bullying at the elementary level, as revealed through this qualitative exploration, highlights the deep-rooted, varied, and systemic nature of the issue.

Educators recognize bullying as a serious threat to students' well-being and school climate, and coping mechanisms involve a blend of informal counseling, parental involvement, moral instruction, and efforts to build student trust. However, the study also underscores gaps in formal intervention mechanisms, lack of professional counselors, and the need for structured training for educators. Thus, schools must adopt a whole-school approach, combining policy, educator training, student empowerment, and community engagement to create safe and inclusive learning spaces (Rigby, 2017; Midgett & Dumas, 2020).

Limitations of the study

This study had several limitations that, to some extent, affected its overall impact. Here are the study's limitations:

1. The study encountered many constraints. Initially, dedicating additional time to visiting different schools could have facilitated a more profound understanding of the issue, as an extended period of participant observation may uncover further insights.
2. Moreover, narrowing the scope to specific educational institutions or regions may limit the applicability of the results, thereby reducing their relevance to diverse settings.
3. Furthermore, encountering and obtaining insights from these students' parents proved difficult, potentially leading to the omission of specific perspectives.
4. Although the researcher made an effort to watch the children in the school setting, it was challenging to document their behavior outside of school or in their homes.
5. Accessing these perspectives may have been more convenient for a male researcher.

Recommendations

To mitigate bullying in educational settings effectively, a multifaceted approach that incorporates both preventive and intervention measures is necessary. Here are a few essential recommendations:

1. Educational institutions should formulate and implement targeted anti-bullying programs that address the specific bullying dynamics within their surroundings.
2. Educational institutions and authorities should develop and implement comprehensive policies

that emphasize bullying prevention and provide mental health support for students.

3. Regular training sessions should be implemented for educators and school personnel to enhance their ability to identify, prevent, and effectively manage bullying incidents.
4. Future research should investigate the long-term consequences of bullying, the influence of familial environments on student behavior, and the efficacy of various coping mechanisms.
5. Educational institutions must consistently evaluate the efficacy of anti-bullying initiatives and implement necessary modifications to ensure favorable outcomes for students' academic and social well-being.

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