

Relationship of Bullying Experiences and Self-Esteem Among Junior High School Students

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Abstract: *Bullying among teenagers is a serious matter across the globe. Incidents of bullying are considered a prevalent and ignored problem throughout the world, especially in the secondary schools which leads students in a range of negative outcomes. Bullying can also be seen in students especially to junior high school students. Thus, this quantitative study aims to determine the relationship between bullying experiences and self-esteem among junior high school students. The study employed a descriptive correlational research design with a total of 227 junior high school respondents who were selected using a stratified and systematic random sampling technique. The study used a survey questionnaire from Moneva et al. (2020). Findings revealed that junior high school students experienced bullying such as hurting the students by trying to break the relationship with friends. This indicate that students get hurt when someone are taking actions to break the bonds they shared with their friends, and results showed that bullying sometimes affects the self-esteem of the students. However, the results showed that there is no positive significant association between bullying experiences to the self-esteem of the junior high school students. The study recommends to the future researchers can undertake similar studies utilizing a qualitative research design to have a thorough understanding about bullying.*

Keywords: Bullying Experiences, Bully Students, Bullying Effects, Self-Esteem

1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying has become a global issue that has an impact on the mental and emotional health of students, including their decreased self-esteem levels. Bullying is a common incident in schools across the world, causing physical and emotional harm to students. According to the report of Kamata (2020), about 612,496 bullying incidents have been reported nationwide. It was discovered that out of 612,496 bullying cases, approximately 723 appeared critical, in which children were severely harmed both physically and emotionally and forced to miss school for extended periods. Bullying occurrences in high schools continue to rise and have become a severe issue around the world.

Furthermore, according to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), approximately 22% of children aged 13 to 18 reported being bullied in American schools in the year 2019, wherein grade 7 has the highest percentage of bullying, 28%, grade 8 has 27%, grade 9 has 19%, and grade 10 has 19%. While the prevalence of bullying investigated in the school year 2019 was higher for students enrolled in rural locations (28%) than for students enrolled in other places such as cities and towns (22%), and suburban (21%). There were no statistically significant differences between public and private school pupils who reported being bullied.

Furthermore, bullying has a major psychological impact on the victims. According to Alexander (2008), those who become bullying victims may experience depression and a loss of self-confidence. Bullying victims experienced sleep disruption, bed wetting, constant headaches, stomach problems, unhappiness, and school absenteeism (Mungala & Nabuzoka, 2020). Bullying is also one of the top causes of

premature death and serious injury (Peyton et al., 2017). According to the report of the Department of Education (DepEd), 404 students countrywide committed suicide during the Academic Year 2021-2022, while 2,147 others attempted suicide.

Meanwhile, data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2023 revealed disturbing results, naming the Philippines as the most problematic country in the world for bullying among more than 70 countries. According to data given by the Child Protection Network Foundation (CPNF), 65% or approximately 17.5 million students in the Philippines from grade 1 to grade 12 were bullied in the school year 2022-2023. Physical appearance, life status, and skin color are among the most prominent triggers for bullying.

Furthermore, according to the findings of Chiu and Vargo's (2022) study, the Western Pacific region revealed a greater frequency of bullying, particularly in the Philippines, where 64.9% of students experienced bullying. Furthermore, Sanapo (2022) discovered that roughly 40% of 340 pupils in Visayas reported being bullied by their peers.

Meanwhile, in public secondary schools such as Muertegui National High School, bullying incidents are prevalent, particularly verbal bullying. The previous findings from the study conducted by Piañar et al. (2023) stated that verbal bullying is common in grades 7 and grade 8 and affects the self-worth and self-esteem of the students in Muertegui National High School. Bullying is a source of concern not just to the learners but also to the teachers in the school as well as the parents of victims of bullying.

Moreover, despite the extensive research on the effects of bullying on adolescents, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the association of bullying and students' self-esteem. Existing studies have primarily focused on the effects of bullying on the academic performances of students

but fail to delve into the effects of bullying on students' self-esteem. Understanding the relationship of bullying to students' self-esteem is essential in developing intervention programs that will prevent bullying incidents and will cater to the students who are victims of bullying.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES AND STUDIES

2.1 Related Literatures

The term "bully" evokes a vivid, unpleasant recollection in the mind of everyone who has ever observed or experienced violence, threats, torments of suffering, or humiliating tones of taunting by someone in greater power and authority over that individual. Five hundred years ago, the word "bully" had an entirely different meaning than it has today. The word bully derives from the Dutch word 'boel,' which means brother, lover, friend, family member, or sweetheart (PBS, 2002). In the 21st century, bullying has taken on a whole different meaning. In Scandinavia, the translated phrase for bullying is "mobbing," which comes from the English word "mob," which refers to a large group of people engaging in harassment or other violence (Salmivalli, 2010). Bullying can be perpetrated by a group of individuals or by one person, a bully, and can take numerous forms directed against one person or a group (Spade, 2007).

Additionally, a study of Bermejo et al. (2020) stated that bullying is a continuous violent behavior comprising verbal insults, social rejection, psychological intimidation, and physical aggression by children towards other children, making them victims of their peers. A student gets bullied or becomes a victim when they are regularly and over time exposed to unpleasant actions by one or more of their peers. Bullying is defined in this first definition as an intentional harmful conduct that occurs under an imbalance of social power, it is repeated over time, and it includes different types of violence, such as verbal, physical, psychological violence, or other forms that have been added over time, such as cyberbullying, sexual harassment, or discrimination.

Furthermore, bullying is characterized as first intentional negative behavior, second typically occurs with some repetition and third is directed against a person who has difficulty defending himself or herself (Bermejo et al., 2020). In addition to the study of Baron et al. (2009) bullying is a centuries-old practice that involves frequent aggressiveness toward those who are unable to defend themselves against such treatment, and it is most common in schools, workplaces, and prisons. Bullying is not limited to one type of institution, bullying can be in public, private, primary or secondary, urban or rural and causes fear to students, lower school performance, and school absenteeism, as well as victim suicide. The aggressors may exhibit antisocial behaviors that are frequently repeated in various settings (Brito & Oliveira, 2013).

Moreover, bullying has three forms: physical, social, and verbal. Bullying is classified into two types: direct and indirect. The verbal form of bullying victimization is the most manipulative, exclusive, and authoritative of the three.

Bullying occurs on three levels. While the first level happens while children are young and are more prone to learn bullying from their caregivers and siblings, the second level of the bully-victim cycle occurs in adolescent settings and communities. The third phase of the cycle occurs during adulthood, when an individual assumes power at work or within the family. Though bullying has been misunderstood as a normal adolescent behavior, yet its repercussions are damaging to the bullied individual's physical, social, and psychological health. Bullying by children is a significant risk factor for poor psychological well-being. Bullying has long been a source of worry among students in schools (Mungala & Nabuzoka, 2020).

As reported by Brito and Oliveira (2013) that bullying in schools is linked to students' self-esteem levels. Self-esteem is a significant type of well-being and appraisal of the worth or importance that one gives to himself or herself, affirmed by persons who are crucial in the education of children and adolescents, particularly parents, teachers, and friends. According to Abdel and Ahmed (2016), self-esteem is an essential component of healthy growth from childhood to maturity. It can be broadly defined as an individual's total sense of self-worth or how well they feel about themselves.

In recent years, researchers studying self-esteem have been critical of its significance in growth (Neff & Vonk, 2009). Researchers claim that self-esteem is based on self-evaluations that are frequently influenced by outside factors. For example, we feel good about ourselves when others compliment us on our achievements or when we believe others like us. As a result, self-esteem is volatile and fluctuates depending on the feedback received. When our self-esteem is endangered, we may become defensive in trying to protect it.

Furthermore, self-esteem tends to diminish in early adolescence and then recover in the middle and later years of adolescence (Zhao et al., 2021). According to Peng et al. (2019), adolescents who have high self-esteem have more positive self-experiences, stronger interpersonal interactions, and better physical and mental health. As a fundamental psychological structure, self-esteem can function as an incentive for academic engagement. According to the Expectation-Value Theory of Atkinson (1964), positive self-evaluation can predict academic results such as academic engagement. The study of Sirin and Rogers (2015) discovered a substantial positive link between self-esteem and academic engagement in their study. The research data of Filippello et al. (2019) discovered that self-esteem predicts a person's level of academic engagement. Moreover, a study of Brito and Oliveira (2013) stated that teenagers' positive social connections requires a high level of self-esteem since it helps them to believe in and trust themselves. It is estimated that those who are involved in violent relationships have lower self-esteem.

Taking everything into account, understanding about bullying is important as it helps protect students' well-being, create safe environments, address root causes, promotes mental

health, and empower students to take actions against bullying. It is beneficial as it helps us understand the prevalence, nature, and impact of bullying on students well-being, especially their self-esteem. Studying bullying allows us to raise awareness about its detrimental effects on individuals and the broader school community. Furthermore, research on bullying aids in developing evidence-based policies and programs to address the issue. By examining successful interventions and evaluating their outcomes, and implement comprehensive anti-bullying measures that create safe and inclusive learning environments for all students. In summary, conducting a study about bullying in school is important because it helps us understand, prevent, and address the issue, promotes awareness and empathy, and contribute to the broader field of research and intervention.

2.2 Related Studies

Bullying has occurred since ancient times, and powerful individuals continue to use their power to control the weaker counterparts. Bullying among school-age adolescents has escalated in recent years. Despite the worrisome rise in the rate, we are still lagging in recognizing the depth of the situation and the impact victimization has on victims' psychological health. According to Swearingin et al. (2010), bullying victimization is acknowledged as a widespread and neglected problem in various schools around the world, with major consequences for both children who are bullied and those who perpetrate the bullying. According to Bullying Statistics (2010), over 160,000 youngsters do not attend school every day because they are afraid of being bullied, which interferes with their academic achievement.

Furthermore, Jamir et al. (2014) discovered that bullied students had poor academic performance, had lower self-esteem, and were more depressed. In terms of gender, bullying females exhibited lower self-esteem and were more depressed than bullied males. The study of Jamir et al. (2014) also found that as students exposed more on bullying, their self-esteem declined and they were miserable. Females made up the largest proportion of the sample, accounting to 52.1%. In terms of age distribution, middle adolescence had the highest sample distribution that has 61.2%, whereas higher secondary students made up the majority of the sample that made up to 44.8%. The results of the study showed that males were more bullied accounting to 86.1%, than females that has 81.4%, although statistical analysis revealed no significant difference.

Moreover, the relationship between bullying experiences, self-esteem and depression among secondary students have been explored by research conducted in a study of Mungala and Nabuzoka (2020) for the purpose of determining whether exposure to bullying would predict low self-esteem and depression among secondary students. The findings of the study showed the gender differences on bullying and depression of the secondary students with highest levels of bullying experiences, low self-esteem and depression among girls. An association was established between bullying and depression. Also, the researchers were able to establish an

inverse correlation between bullying and self-esteem. Bullying experiences which can be in physical, social and verbal was accounted for 15 % of variance on low self-esteem and 34% of variance on depression. Social bullying was showed as the strongest predictor of low self-esteem.

Furthermore, the study of Mungala and Nabuzoka's (2020) founded that the more bullied students were, the lower their self-esteem and the more depressed they became. In comparison to boys, girls were more sensitive to bullying due to low self-esteem and high depression levels. As a result, teenagers who are often bullied have lower self-esteem and higher levels of despair. Bullying is a reliable predictor of adolescent depression and low self-esteem.

Additionally, the influence of bullying behaviors on sense of school connectedness, motivation and self-esteem have been explored by a research conducted in the study of Skues et al. (2012), with the aim of examining how bullying by peers relates to self-esteem, school connectedness and motivation for academic success in an Australian high school. Survey questionnaires were answered by 975 students across grade 7 to grade 12. According to the findings, male students were found to be subjected to more direct types of bullying than female students. However, contrary to expectations, there were no significant variations in the reported experience of indirect forms of bullying between males and females. Furthermore, students in the lower grades of high school (junior high school students) reported being bullied more frequently than students in the upper grades (senior high school students). The findings supported predictions that students who were bullied at school had lower self-esteem, felt less connected to their peers, teachers, and school, and were less motivated to achieve well in school. The study of Skues et al. (2012) suggested that a school-based intervention programs aimed at reducing bullying behaviors. School-based intervention programs are effective in improving the health and well-being of the students. These programs contains for example, lessons, videos, presentations, and discussions which are used in classrooms or whole schools

In general, studying the relationship between bullying experiences and students' self-esteem is highly relevant since it provides valuable insights into the psychological well-being of individuals who have been bullied. Understanding how bullying impacts self-esteem helps to identify the negative consequences it can have on a person's self-image, confidence, and overall mental health. This knowledge can inform the development of targeted interventions and support systems to help students rebuild their self-esteem and resilience. Additionally, research in this area can contribute to the creation of anti-bullying policies and programs that promote a positive and inclusive school environment fostering a sense of belonging and well-being among all students.

3. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored based on Tocqueville and Shoek (2010), a Theory of Bullying stated how the bullied students are getting weak. Most of the bullied students lost their interest in school that could lead to dropping out of school. This theory also stated that jealousy is the main cause or root of bullying. Students who are bullies desire to have what someone else has. Bullying most likely happen to female because they tend to compete for the attention of males. Bully students will ensure that the bullied students will not enjoy their daily activities nor show their skills and abilities.

Another theory from William James (1890), a Theory of Personality, states that self-esteem is important to everyone because if students don't have self-esteem, they can be self-seeking. Self-seeking may lead the students desire to please or to be noticed. In addition, students become envy because of their consciousness. Students with high self-esteem can help students mold up their self-image. Self-esteem describes as our self-image whether we approve it or not. The idea of self-esteem is to define how students like their selves or value it.

The theory of bullying and theory of personality is relevant as it fulfills the objectives of this study that aims to determine the relationship of bullying to students' self-esteem. School bullying has been reported to be related with mental and emotional health of the students' involved, including a decrease in self-esteem levels. Students with low self-esteem has a hard time making friends with their classmates. The higher the self-esteem of the students the higher he or she interact with others without any problems.

4. SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS

The study focuses only on determining the relationship between bullying experiences towards students' self-esteem. Many studies were found to focus only on the effects of bullying experiences to students' academic performances. However, only a few researchers are interested in determining the association between bullying experiences and students' self-esteem. The study will employed descriptive correlational research design with stratified and systematic random sampling in selecting the respondents. The study will be conducted at Muertegui National High School from October to December 2023. The target respondents are the junior high school students enrolled in Muertegui National High School in the school year 2023-2024. The data will be gathered through adopted survey questionnaire from Moneva et al. (2020). In analyzing the data the researchers will used weighted mean and Pearson's Correlation in determining the relationship between bullying experiences towards students' self-esteem.

5. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a non-experimental design, specifically a descriptive correlational research design to determine the relationship of bullying experiences and self-esteem among junior high school students. A descriptive correlational

research design is a type of scientific investigation that aims to describe the relationship between two variables without seeking to establish causation. The study was conducted at Muertegui National High School in junior high school with a total of 227 junior high school students from grade 7 to grade 10 who are currently enrolled at Muertegui National High School in the school year 2023-2024. The respondents are selected using a stratified sampling technique to give an equal chance to all members of the population to participate in the study. The data gathered from research questions one, two, and three were statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and average weighted mean. Meanwhile, research question four was analyzed using Pearson's Correlation in determining the relationship of bullying experiences and self-esteem among junior high school students at 0.05 level of Slovin's Formula. The data gathered was process using IBM SPSS v27.

5.1 Research Questions

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and grade level?
2. What are the bullying experiences among junior high school students of Muertegui National High School?
3. What are the effects of bullying experiences to the self-esteem of junior high school students at Muertegui National High School?
4. Is there a significant relationship between bullying experiences and self-esteem among junior high school students at Muertegui National High School?

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following table presents the statistical data and analysis relative to the problem pointed out in the statement of the problem in the study. The corresponding analysis and interpretation are incorporated and presented clearly and concisely.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of the Junior High School Students in terms of Age, Sex, and Grade Level

	f	%
Age		
12-13	95	42%
14-15	114	50%
16-17	18	8%
Total	227	100%
Sex		
Male	113	50%
Female	114	50%
Total	227	100%
Grade Level		
Grade 7	57	25%
Grade 8	52	23%
Grade 9	57	25%
Grade 10	61	27%
Total	227	100%

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the junior high school students in terms of age, sex, and grade level of junior high school students in Muertegui National High School. Results showed that the majority of the junior high school students were between the ages of 14 to 15 years old (n=114, 50%). In terms of sex, the majority of the junior high school students who answered the survey questionnaire were females (n=114, 50%) and males (n=113, 50%) students. Meanwhile, for the grade level of the respondents, majority of them were grade 10 (n=61, 27%), followed by the grade 7 and grade 9 (n=57, 25%), then last is grade 8 (n=52, 23%). Therefore, a total of 227 junior high school students answered the survey questionnaire.

Table 2

Bullying Experiences of Junior High School Students

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I was teased by my face in nasty ways.	2.96	1.19	Sometimes
2. Lies and false rumors were told about me to others to hurt me.	3.11	1.11	Sometimes
3. I was hurt by someone trying to break me up my relationship with friends.	3.17	1.33	Sometimes
4. I was made to feel afraid/intimate by what someone said he/she do to me.	3.15	1.12	Sometimes
5. I was deliberately hurt physically by someone and/or by a group ganging up on me.	2.82	1.26	Sometimes
6. I was called names in nasty ways or name calling.	3.04	1.24	Sometimes
7. Someone told me he/she wouldn't like me unless I did what he/she said.	2.88	1.17	Sometimes
8. My things were deliberately damaged, destroyed, or stolen.	2.98	1.20	Sometimes
9. I was teased by the use of my parents' names.	2.84	1.32	Sometimes
10. Bullies are always looking fun at me.	2.74	1.36	Sometimes
Average Weighted Mean	2.97		Sometimes

Table 2 shows the bullying experiences of junior high school students in Muertegui National High School. Based on the survey, majority of the junior high school students experience bullying such as hurting the students by trying to break the relationship with friends (M=3.17, SD=1.33). In some cases, students might hurt someone or cause pain because they want to break the relationship with their friends or classmates. Bully students find ways in breaking the bonds of the friendship of their victims.

These finding is relevant to the study of Moneva et al. (2020), stating that the most bullying experiences experience by the junior high school was that students feel hurt or anxious when someone are trying to break their relationships of their peers or friends. This indicated that students get hurt when some are taking actions to break the bonds they shared with their friends.

Meanwhile, results revealed that few of junior high school students expresses that bullies consistently find fun in their behavior (M=2.74, SD=1.36). Most bullies get some enjoyment from making fun of them. Other times, they are looking for a laugh at another person's expense.

Overall, bullying experiences were sometimes experienced by the junior high school students in Muertegui National High School (AWM=2.97, SD=1.23). This implies that bullying is not a universal experience for all junior high school students but rather it occurs occasionally. Students are not always experiencing bullying inside their classroom however there are times it will appear to them when the bullies finds enjoyment to the students.

These findings is also relevant to the study of Moneva et al. (2020), that shows the percentage of the respondents who have been bullied. The data revealed that 21.5% of them are sometimes being bullied while there are 78.5% of them have not been bullied at all. It concludes that most of the students of Jagobiao National High school have sometimes experienced bullying.

Table 3

Effects of Bullying to the Self-Esteem of Junior High School Students

Statements	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I do not trust my strength and capabilities.	3.05	1.28	Sometimes
2. I do not give value with my ideas because it seems like meaningless.	2.94	1.16	Sometimes
3. I feel like my concern is not valuable to others.	3.12	1.14	Sometimes
4. I take negative attitude towards myself.	3.02	1.17	Sometimes
5. I feel that I don't have a number of good qualities.	3.07	1.18	Sometimes
6. I am not able to do things as well as most people.	3.09	1.09	Sometimes
7. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	2.90	1.19	Sometimes
8. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	3.11	1.25	Sometimes
9. I certainly feel useless at times.	3.16	1.16	Sometimes
10. At times I think that I am not good at all	3.26	1.29	Sometimes
Average Weighted Mean	3.17		Sometimes

Table 3 shows the effects of bullying experiences to the self-esteem of junior high school students in Muertegui National High School. The results shows that majority of the junior high school students sometimes doubt their abilities and think that they are not good at all ($M=3.26$, $SD=1.29$). This implies that some of the junior high school students feel that their actions and deeds are not good at all in anyways. Students feel anxious about how they shows actions to the others.

Additionally, according to the study of Batool (2023), stated that adolescents who are being bullied are reported to have low self-esteem and often feel depressed, lonely, and anxious that could sometimes suffer from social and mental health problems.

On the other hand, regarding the effects of bullying experiences to the self-esteem is that junior high school students occasionally feel or believed that they are a failure ($M=2.90$, $SD=1.19$). Victims of bullying may feel like failures, even if they are not. Few of the students believed that they do not belong in the group, or that they are rejected by their friends and other people. These feelings can lead to hopelessness, guilt, and in some cases, even suicidal thoughts (Gordon, 2021).

Overall results showed that bullying experiences sometimes affects the junior high school students self-esteem in Muertegui National High School ($AWM=3.17$, $SD=1.19$). This indicated that the junior high school students sometimes felt down and sometimes had their self-esteem affected due to bullying experiences they encountered.

The results above are contrary to the findings of Moneva et al. (2020), that shows the percentage of students who are affected. The data revealed that, 5% of respondents answered that their self-esteem is affected whenever they got bullied. 45% of the respondents answered that they are moderately affected when they are being bullied while 54.5% of them are not affected at all. Since there are 54.5% and 45.5% of the respondents answered that they are moderately affected and not affected. Therefore, whenever the students are being bullied in school, their self-esteem is not affected at all.

Table 4

Correlation between Bullying Experiences to the Self-Esteem of Junior High School Students

	r-value	Correlation	p-value	Decision
Bullying Experiences		Low Negative		
Self-Esteem	-.3 94	Correlation	.260	Accept the H ₀

Significant Level: 0.05

Table 4 shows the significant relationship between bullying experiences and self-esteem among junior high school students in Muertegui National High School. The Pearson product correlation was found to be low negative correlated ($r=-.394$) and statistically no significant relationship ($p=.260$). Hence, this implies that there is no significant association between bullying experiences and self-esteem among junior high school students. The findings states that bullying is not the reason on getting a lower self-esteem of junior high school

students. There are students in which their self-esteem is not affected by bullying. There may have other possible factors that affects the self-esteem of the students, however bullying is not the reason that students have lower self-esteem. This was supported by the study of Kumar and Rema (2020), stated in their present investigation that there is a no correlation found between the self-esteem and bullying experiences of the secondary school students.

7. CONCLUSION

Self-esteem is an important aspect of a student's life. It has an impact on academic success and self-confidence in the face of learning problems. Students with high self-esteem are more likely to get good grades, graduate from high school and college, and be successful in their careers. Students' self-esteem and perceived competence are required for them to take chances in their learning and to recover from failure or difficulties. Students who have low self-esteem or lack confidence doubt their potential to achieve, causing them to be hesitant to engage in learning or take appropriate academic growth risks. One of the factors of having a lower self-esteem is the perceived bullying. Bullying continues to be a concern at high school levels. In this sense, the junior high school students in Muertegui National High School have also been experiencing bullying that sometimes affects their self-esteem. Students experienced emotional pain when someone attempted to disrupt their friendship. Friendships play a significant role in one's social and emotional well-being. When friendships are disrupted, it can also trigger feelings of sadness that can affect the self-esteem of the students. In connection to the study, junior high school students in Muertegui National High School occasionally experience self-doubt about their abilities after being bullied. However, the present study indicates that there is no positive significant association between bullying experiences to the self-esteem of the junior high school students in Muertegui National High School. Bullying can happen inside the campus but it does not mean that it lowers the self-esteem of the students in Muertegui National High School. Therefore, in maintaining these positive issues, the study proposes that an effective bullying prevention program must be implemented into school curricula.

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