



BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE: AN IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

The study involved public elementary school teachers in CALABARZON and their experiences with workplace bullying and how it affects them in their professional and psychological lives. The study adopted a convergent mixed methods research approach in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of teachers in the study, which included an overview of the types of data to be collected, as well as how they would be analyzed. The abstract should be brief, concise, and should state the purpose, methods, principal results, and implications of the study.

A total of 330 teachers and key informants were included in the study phase, and the qualitative study included ten teachers who experienced bullying. Bullying was frequently found to be carried out in the form of verbal abuse, emotional humiliation, and social isolation, and it was often perpetrated by someone in authority. These experiences had a negative impact on teachers' mental health, leading to increased stress, anxiety, burnout, decreased confidence, and work engagement.

Mostly, teachers dealt with the situation in silence, by means of prayer, emotional endurance, and support from their peers. There was, however, limited policy awareness and weak institutional responses resulting in underreporting and inadequate interventions. The report concludes that there is a need for better policy implementation, more effective reporting systems, and easier access to mental health services to ensure a safer and more supportive work environment for teachers.

Keywords: Impact assessment, Mixed methods research, Convergent mixed methods design, Survey, Interviews, Focus group discussion (FGD), Key informants, Psychological impact, Emotional distress, Anxiety, Burnout, Loss of confidence, Verbal abuse, Emotional humiliation, Social exclusion, Power dynamics, Authority figures, Coping strategies, Institutional response, Policy awareness, Policy implementation gaps, Mental health support, Teacher well-being, Work engagement, Educational workplace

INTRODUCTION

Bullying has been defined in multiple ways and occurs through various means and forms. Such, it refers to deliberate negative behavior directed at another person with the intent to cause harm, leaving the victim unable to defend against the perpetrator. While school and university bullying is common, existing discourse typically centers on student-to-student incidents, cases of teachers bullying students, or students bullying teachers. Although school bullying has been widely studied, much of the attention has focused on students' rights, with less emphasis placed on teachers as potential victims of bullying.

Bullying is a global issue, and it includes workplace harassment, abusive supervision, workplace violence, workplace aggression, victimization, workplace incivility, verbal and psychological abuse, mobbing, and bullying (Jacoba et.al. 2021). Teachers, as the main proponents who experience workplace bullying, negatively affect organizational efficiency and productivity. Bullying is a problem that negatively affects individual workers and the organization where they work.

According to Curry (2018), the global status of bullying is epidemic. A 2016 survey found that as many as half of the employees experienced or have experienced bullying during their careers, and over 37 million workers face abusive conduct during their workday, and almost 29 million others witness bullying. This figure is about 66 million, which equates to three to four out of every ten workers experiencing bullying.

According to Huang (2018), the most pressing challenges in 21st-century human resource management across all industries were bullying and its effects on workers and professionals. Bullying has received growing attention locally and internationally in recent years as a difficult management problem. Working in the profession is no exception, and violence, age discrimination, physical and mental harassment (comparison) are all examples of inappropriate aggression directed at workers.

In the Philippines, there were clear legal frameworks designed to protect workers from harassment (Respicio & Co, 2024). The Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 primarily covers bullying in educational institutions but sets a precedent for how bullying should be handled generally, including in the workplace. In the Philippines, workers have a right to a workplace free from harassment and bullying. The legal frameworks guarantee that respect and dignity are maintained in the workplace by offering a way to deal with and resolve circumstances like this. Employees who encounter such difficulties are urged to file official complaints, using both internal and external channels to pursue a resolution and uphold their legal rights in the Philippines.



Ultimately, it is necessary that these people, like other school personnel, should be provided with in-service training sessions on bullying. Especially through school guidance counselors, it might be possible to inform teachers about bullying and develop their bullying intervention skills. It is a major concern among educators globally and affects teachers and the community as well. Considering that bullying teachers has serious repercussions on every facet of the teachers' overall profession, and the moral obligation to address the growing problem of bullying. This study explores the lived experiences of public teachers in the primary sector who experienced being bullied by teachers, students, parents, and others and made a complaint, with a specific focus on the management's response and the complex dynamics of power operating within the school system.

Accordingly, it is hoped that in addressing the important questions which this study raises, knowledge in respect of teachers' bullying and the practices of power within elementary schools as public sector institutions will be enhanced and developed. This doctoral dissertation aimed to help in the prevention of the occurrence of bullying by teachers in the workplace.

Statement of the Problem

In this research study, the researcher aimed to determine the teachers' bullying in elementary schools, its problems, and solutions. The researchers seek to answer the following questions.

1. What is the demographic profile of teachers in terms of:
 - a) age;
 - b) gender;
 - c) years of service;
 - d) teaching position; and
 - e) highest educational attainment?
2. What types of bullying are experienced by teachers:
 - a) physical;
 - b) verbal;
 - c) social;
 - d) electronic/cyberbullying;
 - e) religious bullying; and
 - f) gender-based bullying?
- 3) What do the teacher respondents experience as the source of bullying in terms of;
 - a) teacher-to-teacher;
 - b) supervisor-to-teacher;
 - c) teacher-to-student;
 - d) parent-to-student;
 - e) organizational culture; and
 - f) specific triggers?
- 4) What is the level of impact of bullying on teachers in terms of;
 - a) physical effects (being hit, shoved, pinched, or belongings taken)
 - b) emotional effects (sadness, stress, anxiety, shame, suicidal thoughts)
 - c) self-esteem (feelings of worthlessness, lack of pride, reduced self-respect)
 - d) teaching performance (difficulty in staying organized, reduced ability to support students)
 - e) classroom management (unfair punishment of students, withholding rewards, loss of patience)
5. Is there a significant relationship between teachers' demographic profile and the types of bullying experienced by the respondents in elementary school?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the types of bullying and their effects?
7. Is there a significant relationship between the sources of bullying and their effects?
8. What problems and solutions are perceived by teachers to address workplace bullying in elementary schools?

Research Design

A convergent mixed methods design was utilized in this study, where quantitative and qualitative data were collected, analyzed, and then integrated in the study. The quantitative data gave statistical evidence of the prevalence of bullying, and the qualitative narratives showed the emotional and professional consequences of bullying. The method of integration used was meta-inference, and



the results of the survey were compared to the results of the interview and FGD to search for convergence and divergence. In this way, the statistical validation and humanization of results were obtained from the voice of the teachers, which validates the results of the study.

Mixed methods research is said to be a valuable research method in education and workplace studies, as it is strong in both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This approach will help researchers to obtain a general numerical view, but also provide the opportunity to investigate the researcher's personal experiences in more detail, Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) explained. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2019) also noted that the merging and comparing of these different types of data would increase the validity of the results, especially where differences between the statistical findings and real life exist.

At the local level, Simbre et al. (2021) examined the implementation of teacher protection policies using mixed methods and found that incorporating survey data along with interview data was helpful in uncovering policy implementation gaps.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All sources of bullying (teachers, supervisors, students, parents, organizational culture, and specific situational triggers) were significantly associated with physical and emotional effects ($p=0.000$), which indicates increased emotional stress among teachers. Little effect on self-esteem or classroom management. Teaching performance was not significantly affected except for a weak effect of specific triggers ($p = 0.048$). These results suggest that bullying is mainly harmful to teachers' personal well-being rather than their professional competence. Berglund (2023) observed that bullying at work is strongly related to stress and burnout and that emotional strain is an inevitable consequence, regardless of whether the source is supervisory staff, colleagues, or organizational dynamics.

Supporting this, Nielsen and Einarsen (2012) found that bullying is consistently psychologically damaging, with anxiety, depression, and reduced job satisfaction, regardless of whether or not professional performance is outwardly intact.

For instance, Cruz and Villanueva (2020) observed that Filipino teachers on the local level frequently suffer from emotional exhaustion as a result of bullying by parents and administrators, yet their teaching effectiveness remains resilient.

Hoel and Cooper (2000) similarly observed that bullying from multiple sources, particularly peers and supervisors, fosters a hostile environment which erodes trust and well-being, even when professional tasks are still accomplished.

Furthermore, Santos (2021) revealed that bullied Filipino educators are prone to health problems related to stress, which supports the notion that personal wellness is more vulnerable than professional competence.

The research demonstrates that bullying in educational workplaces is a systemic problem, mainly affecting the emotional and physical health of teachers, with secondary consequences on classroom management and teaching performance.

Significant Relationship Between the Source of Bullying Experience and the Level of Effects on the Respondents

Source of Bullying	Level of Bullying Effects in the Workplace	Statistical Treatment	Computed Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Teacher-to-Teacher	Physical	Spearman's Correlation	0.340	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Supervisor-to-Teacher			0.305	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Teacher-to-Student			0.355	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Parent-to-Student			0.382	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Organizational Structure			0.302	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Specific triggers			0.273	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Source of Bullying	Level of Bullying Effects in the Workplace	Statistical Treatment	Computed Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Teacher-to-Teacher	Emotional	Spearman's Correlation	0.361	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Supervisor-to-Teacher			0.354	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant



Teacher-to-Student			0.369	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Parent-to-Student			0.406	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Organizational Structure			0.409	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Specific triggers			0.346	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Source of Bullying	Level of Bullying Effects in the Workplace	Statistical Treatment	Computed Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Teacher-to-Teacher	Self-esteem	Spearman's Correlation	-0.028	0.617	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Supervisor-to-Teacher			-0.020	0.717	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Teacher-to-Student			0.012	0.833	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Parent-to-Student			0.066	0.231	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Organizational Structure			0.003	0.962	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Specific triggers			-0.033	0.556	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Source of Bullying	Level of Bullying Effects in the Workplace	Statistical Treatment	Computed Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Teacher-to-Teacher	Teaching Performance	Spearman's Correlation	-0.107	0.053	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Supervisor-to-Teacher			-0.091	0.101	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Teacher-to-Student			-0.089	0.107	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Parent-to-Student			-0.053	0.336	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Organizational Structure			-0.087	0.116	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Specific triggers			-0.110	0.048	Reject Ho	Significant
Source of Bullying	Level of Bullying Effects in the Workplace	Statistical Treatment	Computed Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Teacher-to-Teacher	Classroom Management	Spearman's Correlation	-0.021	0.700	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Supervisor-to-Teacher			-0.018	0.743	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Teacher-to-Student			-0.068	0.219	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Parent-to-Student			-0.010	0.850	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Organizational Structure			-0.043	0.437	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Specific triggers			-0.035	0.532	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant



SUMMARY

This study explored workplace bullying among public elementary school teachers in CALABARZON utilizing a convergent mixed-methods approach including quantitative surveys, qualitative focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs). The findings revealed a mismatch between statistical reports and lived experience. Quantitative statistics generally suggested that bullying was “rare” or “occasional”. However, qualitative narratives regularly described a pattern of ongoing harassment that was emotionally taxing and suggestive of systemic organizational difficulties. This disparity highlights the need for mixed methods approaches, since quantitative metrics alone cannot reflect the depth and complexity of workplace bullying. As seen in the profile of the respondents, the majority of the teachers were in their prime working years, 30 to 49 years old, predominantly female, and with a rank of Teacher III.

Nearly half had earned a master’s degree, a sign of strong professional advancement, and many were mid-career with six to ten years of service. FGDs revealed that participants frequently took on specific roles such as ICT Coordinator, DRRM Coordinator, and School Paper Adviser, while KIIs comprised veteran educators who held leadership roles such as Head Teacher and Master Teacher II. Although these roles represented professional development, they also made teachers more visible and accountable, and thus more vulnerable to bullying. Quantitative data revealed no significant relationship between demographic profiles and bullying, while qualitative findings suggested that new teachers were more vulnerable, higher positions attracted criticism, and educational attainment produced conflicting perceptions of respect and credibility.

Types of bullying varied according to the strand of data analyzed. Religious bullying was the most frequent form of bullying reported in the surveys, followed by physical and cyberbullying. Verbal bullying was least reported. On the other hand, interviews stressed verbal abuse, social isolation, and cyberbullying as common experiences. Situational triggers included personal differences such as height comparisons, accusations of arrogance, parental criticism, and name-calling on social media. Teachers recounted incidents of intimidation, humiliation, inappropriate criticism, and abuse of authority, corroborating the existence of overt and covert forms of bullying. The study further revealed that bullying in schools is systemic, relational, and culture-based. Filipino cultural values like *hiya* (shame or embarrassment) and *pakikisama* (social harmony) led to the concealment of the bullying incidents, deterring teachers from reporting the harassment.

In contrast to other workplace settings, the study revealed that organizational and cultural factors had a stronger influence on school bullying than demographic or educational characteristics. This cultural mediation accounts for the underestimation of prevalence by quantitative surveys and the intensity of emotional distress shown by qualitative tales. These results permit the inference of numerous conclusions. First, workplace bullying among teachers in CALABARZON is not a random but a systemic phenomenon embedded in organizational culture and maintained by hierarchical structures. Second, the contradictions between the numbers and the narratives show the need for mixed-methods research in that the realities of bullying can only be fully understood by combining quantitative and qualitative data. Third, risk considerations. Visibility and responsibility subject advisers, master teachers, and coordinators to criticism and abuse. Fourth, cultural factors such as *hiya* and *pakikisama* encourage silence and tolerance, which in turn perpetuate bullying and silence complaints. Finally, workplace bullying severely impacts teacher morale, classroom discipline, and organizational integrity even when professional competence and teaching efficacy are apparently preserved. These findings result in several recommendations. Policy implementation would be needed to strengthen existing teacher protection mechanisms (grievance procedures, anti-bullying desks, and explicit disciplinary rules). Cultural sensitivity programs should aim to recontextualize *hiya* and *pakikisama* into positive ideals that encourage inclusion, eliminate gossip, and minimize hierarchical oppression. School administrators need to participate in leadership development programs to understand the nuances of bullying and to manage job overload and share responsibilities equitably. Continuous monitoring through mixed-methods approaches is recommended to document prevalence and lived experiences of instructors. Research should be done in various areas, and long-term implications of bullying should be researched. Further research should investigate more in-depth cultural issues behind workplace harassment.

In conclusion, the study shows that workplace bullying of teachers in CALABARZON is an institutional problem profoundly embedded in the organizational culture and Filipino social norms. It is too complex to be analyzed quantitatively alone, but qualitative narratives reveal the paradox between statistical underreporting and lived realities. Addressing bullying involves a holistic approach including legislative change, intervention initiatives, cultural awareness campaigns, and leadership development. Respect for teachers’ dignity and well-being can help schools create healthier, more inclusive cultures, therefore supporting organizational integrity and instructional effectiveness.

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