

Vouchsafing the Contradiction: Exploring School Principals' Perception and Practices to Manage Bullying

Malahat Siddiqui
Deputy Manager Training,
University of Management and Technology, Lahore,
malahat.siddiqui@umt.edu.pk

Dr. Yasira Waqar
Assistant Professor,
Syed Ahsan Ali and Syed Maratib Ali School of Education, LUMS, Lahore
yasira.waqar@lums.edu.pk

Dr. Yaar Muhammad,
Associate Professor,
GC Women University, Sialkot,
yaar.muhammad@gcwus.edu.pk

Abstract

This study explores the perceived effectiveness of the disciplinary approach where the bully is openly confronted for his actions by establishing negative consequences to strengthen the victim approach, where the victim is provided with a skill set backed by the research to handle various types of bullying on his own. I purposely selected and interviewed five school principals to understand their take on two intervention approaches, using a self-constructed, semi-structured interview guide. All the principals worked in five different private schools in Lahore, with a minimum of 2 years of experience as a principal and a pre-requisite of managing bullying using both intervention approaches. The data were coded and arranged in themes using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings elaborate that although principals may discourage traditional disciplinary approaches, they nevertheless regard them as highly effective in managing bullying in their schools.

Keywords: Bullying, Intervention, Anti-bullying Approaches, Perception, and Practices

Introduction

Both bullies and victims suffer from bullying and are vulnerable to severe health-related consequences, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the development of suicidal attitudes. Studies indicate that 35-40% of youth face bullying in their schools. Aggression begets bullying. Schools that choose to ignore aggression in their students are likely to have a higher tendency to develop bullying behaviours (Rigby, 1997). Bullying can take several forms, including causing physical or emotional harm or both (Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007; Rivers & Smith, 1994). Its prevention in any school culture is usually defined by intervention strategies. Also, not every form of conflict among the students is bullying and may not require intervention. School management should be able to anticipate the probability of it transforming into bullying.

Ignorance of this brings forth innumerable and often irremediable damage to bullies and victims alike. Such an incident of school violence reported in a private school in Lahore shook the entire school education spectrum to its core when a video of a planned assault on a schoolgirl went viral over the internet. The FIR lodged by the victim's father named three of her class fellows as the prime suspect. The alleged drug addicts are said to have held grudges against the victim for refusing to report their drug use (Desk, 2023, January 21st; Reporter, 2023, January 21). The case represents a significant precedent to thoroughly evaluate the effectiveness of the bullying intervention system in Pakistan. Although schools in Pakistan are not legally bound to adopt Anti-bullying programs, most schools have their intervention systems loosely based on non-punitive approaches to managing bullying (Siddiqui, Muhammad, & Naseer, 2021). Nevertheless, these erratic practices in managing bullying have proven insufficient, becoming a pitfall for a healthy school environment. Therefore, schools must be provided with evidence-based guidelines on how to effectively manage bullying incidents (Ansary et al., 2015).

Ultimately, the best approach to managing bullying will depend on a range of factors, including the nature and severity of the bullying, the needs and perspectives of the individuals involved, and the resources and support available to address the issue (Olweus & Kallestad, 2010; Olweus, 1994; Rigby, 2003). Schools, ergo, are recommended to consider a range of approaches and strategies, including both punitive and non-punitive measures, to effectively address bullying and promote a safe and supportive school environment (Garandeanu, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2014; Siddiqui, Muhammad, & Naseer, 2021).

Literature on anti-bullying programs examines available programs (Black & Jackson, 2007; Eslea & Smith, 1998), their types (Kousholt & Fisker, 2015; Olweus, 1996; Rigby, 2010a), and contextual and cultural applications (Hepburn et al., 2012; Khawar & Malik, 2016; Modecki et al., 2014), as well as their benefits and potential drawbacks (Ansary et al., 2015; Bauer, Lozano, & Rivara, 2007; Limber et al., 2004; Olweus & Kallestad, 2010). However, no single program can be benchmarked globally due to the unique cultural and geographical context in which schools experience bullying. Punitive in nature, disciplinary approaches advocate the use of sanctions in such a way that creates a ripple effect that bullying in any form, type, and shape is abominated and discouraged (Garandeanu, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2014; Olweus, 1994; Olweus, 1997; Rigby, 1997, 2010a, 2017). Studies conducted to analyse the effectiveness of such an approach reveal that it is widely used in cases of physical bullying and is based on withdrawal of privileges, warnings, detentions, and exclusion from the school that may be either temporary, short term or permanent and is significant in decreasing bullying behaviours (Siddiqui, Muhammad, & Naseer, 2021; Thompson & Smith, 2011). Nevertheless, such approaches can lead to negative consequences, such as exacerbating the school environment, encouraging discriminatory behaviour, and shifting blame. Additionally, they often overlook the root causes of bullying, resulting in ineffective solutions such as alienating and stigmatizing students who experience emotional and behavioural challenges (DeNike & Gordon, 2020).

Non-punitive approaches have been advocated and supported globally for the benefits associated with these approaches, both for the bully and the victim (Ansary et al., 2015; Khawar & Malik, 2016; Siddiqui, Muhammad, & Naseer, 2021). Strengthening the victim is a non-punitive approach to addressing bullying that focuses on supporting and empowering the victim of bullying. This approach aims to reduce victims' vulnerability to bullying and increase their resilience (Rigby, 2010b). It involves providing emotional support and empowering victims through assertiveness training, conflict resolution, and social skills training. Educating students and staff

about the impact of bullying and promoting inclusion can help to address underlying issues and create a positive school environment. Involving parents and caregivers can also play a crucial role in supporting victims and promoting a culture of empathy and kindness. Overall, this approach focuses on supporting and empowering victims of bullying, reducing their vulnerability to bullying, and creating a safe and supportive environment for all students. School administrators and counsellors rely greatly on the approach as it not only minimizes the need to intervene to correct the bullying behaviour but also promotes the self-esteem of the victim by letting him ‘fix the problem’ (Siddiqui, Muhammad, & Naseer, 2021).

Nevertheless, the approach met severe criticism for placing an overwhelming burden of managing bullying on the victim rather than addressing the prevailing underlying issues and involving the entire school community. This could create a culture where bullying is normalized, and the victim is solely responsible for managing bullying on their own (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Another criticism is that the approach may overlook the role of bystanders in bullying situations. Moreover, “strengthening the victim” requires the victim to proactively handle the bully, which, if not always but in most cases, may exacerbate the problem of bullying, overlooking the probability of the victim being transformed into a bully (National Academies of Sciences & Medicine, 2016; Siddiqui, Muhammad, & Naseer, 2021) since no one is held accountable. While promoting resilience and coping skills is beneficial, it’s essential to address the root causes of bullying and promote a culture of zero-tolerance towards bullying (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan, 2007).

Schools with enacted anti-bullying programs are greatly dependent on non-punitive approaches: strengthening the victim approach (Butt, Muhammad, & Masood, 2021; Siddiqui, Muhammad, & Naseer, 2021). Several studies conducted in the context of Pakistan concluded such approaches tend to have far-reaching benefits and clearly preferred over traditional disciplinary approaches by the practitioners (Ansary et al., 2015; Shehzadi et al., 2019; Shujja, Atta, & Shujjat, 2014) yet, an incessant hike in bullying cases vouchsafe the contradiction in beliefs and outcomes. The case reported in the private school of Lahore (Reporter, 2023, January 21), by far, bears the highest intensity among bullying cases reported in Pakistan and may lead to a reiteration of Mr. Blair’s narrative that bullies should be punished followed by the abolition of all non-punitive approaches to manage bullying in schools in UK (Garandeanu, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2014; Jackson, 2006, February 23). The current study, therefore, attempts to explore the beliefs and practices of schools’ principals regarding the two approaches: The traditional disciplinary approach and strengthening the victim approach.

Methodology

The qualitative research design of the study adopted a phenomenological approach aimed to explore the lived experiences of the private schools’ principals dealing with bullying in their schools. Phenomenological research design is particularly useful while investigating complex phenomena and experiences to develop an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Sample

The first author collected the data from the principals of five different private schools in Lahore that have active bullying cases and a defined anti-bullying system in their schools. The purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit the participants. The purposive sampling

technique involves the selection of participants who have personally experienced phenomena such as bullying (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Furthermore, all the participants of the study have at least two years of experience managing a private school, experience managing bullying cases, and an operational anti-bullying program. All participants of the study belonged to five different national stream schools managed by reputed chains of schools in Lahore. Participants were contacted through email and asked for their consent to participate in the study.

Data Collection

The first researcher herself visited the participants on mutually agreed-upon dates and times at their places of convenience and collected data through an ended semi-structured interview guide. The guide was based on certain areas and topics identified in the literature review, such as the principals' experiences of bullying, how they managed bullying cases, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of their anti-bullying program. The interview questions were designed to encourage participants to speak freely about their experiences and provide detailed responses. The data was recorded using an audio device and a mobile phone with the principals' consent. The researcher also took notes during the interviews to ensure comprehensive data collection.

Data Analysis

The interview data were transcribed verbatim and were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. This method allowed for the identification and exploration of themes and patterns in the data. The analysis involved a continuous process of data immersion, coding, and theme development. The process was iterative, and themes were refined and developed as the analysis progressed (Dibley et al., 2020). The researcher identified key themes and patterns in the data that related to the principals' experiences of bullying, their management strategies, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of their anti-bullying program.

Result

Prevalence of Bullying Behaviours in Schools

Since bullying in school harbours, a wide range of negative outcomes, including depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation, it has always been a matter of significance for school management and administrators. As identified in a previous study, a majority of private schools in Pakistan censure the use of punitive approaches to managing bully and bullying behaviours (Siddiqui, Muhammad, & Naseer, 2021). A recent case of bullying happened in a private school in Lahore; however, it serves as the castigation to prevailing anti-bullying programs and their efficacy in reducing bullying. Participant 4, while discussing the prevalence of bullying behaviours in schools, commented:

Bullying is nothing new. It's embedded in our systems. It has now only aggravated because we have become ambivalent in our practices to counter bullying. Elite schools have an alarming rate of sexual harassment cases being regularly reported that are intentionally blanketed by school management. (Participant 4)

Participants also shared that the entire landscape of managing bullying in schools often condones the detrimental effects of apathy in parents and their passive domestic environment. They argue that parents generally feel liberated of their responsibilities once their child is admitted

to the school, which, by and large, is responsible for developing bullying tendencies among students.

You see, in almost 90% of the cases, a bully is often a neglected child at home. Parents are busy living their own lives while forsaking their children's psycho-social-emotional health. Yet, they hold schools responsible for their own obscenities just because they pay the school fee. Collaboration with parents is the stepping stone to a successful bullying intervention program. You don't have the support; you cannot reduce bullying no matter how hard you try. (Participant 4)

Bullying Management Approaches Beliefs and Practices

Participant 1:

Disciplinary Approach

She is a big advocate of the traditional approach and regards it to be the most effective in terms of results. Because it empowers teachers to take action, it makes it easier for them to address bullying more effectively. However, more serious issues are directly reported to the disciplinary committee comprised of selected senior teachers and coordinators headed by the discipline in charge, which is accountable in front of the principal. The discipline committee is responsible for taking serious actions if the improvement is not observed. Identified bullies are issued with detention slips based on the severity of the regularity of the violation. In extreme cases, students may be suspended for a period of time or even rusticated. Other penalties include time out and physical punishments.

Though we advocate a controlled traditional approach towards managing bullying, we are fully aware of the intricacies of the process. My teachers, therefore, can't cross a certain limit and can not, in any case, get physical with the students. However, I, as principal, may induce physical punishments if deemed necessary only after following the protocols to do so.

Students and their families are well aware of the system, its mechanism, and the ramifications the offender may have to face. She regards the principal as solely responsible for developing a transparent system to identify bullies and suggests possible solutions. She regards her system as effective in 90% of the cases.

Strengthening the victim

She is not much in favour of strengthening the victim. In her perspective, strengthening the victim is an arduous task that seldom brings desired results. In order to handle bully on their own, victims may need a wide range of skills that are usually inborn and cannot be taught. Handling verbal bullies requires quick-wittedness and spontaneity. None of the qualities can be taught to the students. The same goes for handling physical bullies.

Training the victim to handle a bully is a very subjective matter. It takes into account a lot of things. Dealing with a bully requires victims to maintain their composure, be able to regulate their emotions and respond to retreat the bully without befalling to a similar level. These are inherent qualities and can be learned in a lifetime.

She agrees that self-defence-related activities may help the victim in some cases, but neither schools nor parents have time, resources and access to high-end self-defence activities such as martial arts, karate, etc. Also, the given skills are hardly ever used against the bully; rather, they transform a student into a bully. *“Children, especially in their primary classes, are still cognitively developing, and chances are bleak that the skills will be used for self-defence only. They might harm the bully, who, regardless of his behaviour, is still a kid.”* She thinks punishments have a greater impact as they are visible and strengthens the idea that students are held accountable for their wrongdoings and they ought to face the repercussions of their own actions. *“Punishments are vicarious and hence impactful”*.

Participant 2:

Disciplinary Approach

The participant has an alarmingly high rate of bullying in her school. She has a strength of over 1200 students, and out of every 10 students, two are involved in bullying. A dominant majority of her students belong to small business-oriented households and shopkeepers generally. Small business households are usually characterized by aggression in their dealings, she says. Their children, therefore, have a natural tendency to revert to bullying: *“Households that struggle hard to make their ends meet are usually violent. Fathers vent their frustration on children and their mothers. Students, especially boys, imitate their fathers.”* In her 12 years of principalship in that particular school, she found a disciplinary approach to be the only effective approach to control bullying.

She has established a system that is reliant on teachers to initially deduct and handle the bully through counselling. Bully, if they have a recurring behaviour, have to face rather serious consequences such as time out and suspension of recreational and co-curricular activities. Teachers are bound to document the details of bullying behaviour, its frequency, intensity and consequences served. More serious offences are reported to section heads or principals, who either issue three warnings, failure in compliance of which may lead to temporary or permanent rustication or transfer to other branches of the same schools. She explains that parents are informed at every step of the process through regular parent-principal meetings, written notes, warnings, and notices. Students are also informed of the acceptable conduct in school at the start of each academic year. Moreover, the disciplinary rules are reiterated in morning assemblies and are displayed on notice boards. Additionally, the school has complaint boxes installed in visible and accessible places so that students can be informed about bullying cases that go unnoticed by the management while maintaining their anonymity. Students are also continuously told to bring unwarranted behaviours of their fellows to the notice of their teachers the instance it happens. Teachers are discouraged from teasing, taunting, and turning to physical punishments regardless of the gravity of the offence.

Practising a disciplinary approach without caution might turn into a disaster. Therefore, we ensure that all the students and their families are informed from the beginning of their journey in our schools that they will have to bear the repercussions of uncalled-for behaviour.

Strengthening the victim

She claims to have been using strengthening the victim approach in coherence with the disciplinary approach and believes that all students should be capable of handling the bully and not just the victim. However, to her, strengthening the victim approach is but giving the confidence

to report the offence. She believes in moral lectures and Islamic stories to build confidence among the students. *“We encourage everyone to raise their voice against bullying through Islamic preachings in morning assemblies.”* Moreover, she did not seem well informed about the basic tenets of the approach and was unable to identify any skills that might come in handy to handle a bully. *‘Strengthening the victims enables victims to report the violence to their teacher or the allocated resource for the purpose’*. On a direct question, she rejected the idea of training victims to handle bullies. As an affirmation of her remarks on the disciplinary approach, she concluded that strengthening the victim has only worked in her school when the bully himself is not strong enough and engages in verbal bullying only.

Therefore, it seems that the participant believes in using a combination of both approaches, but she prioritizes the disciplinary approach over strengthening the victim approach. *‘Traditional approach, to my experience, has been effective in 99% of cases because it brings visible consequences to the offender.’* She is more confident in the effectiveness of punishments and sanctions to rectify the bully’s behaviour and prevent bullying in the school. However, she also believes that building confidence among students and enabling them to handle a bully is essential, especially in mild cases.

Participant 3:

Disciplinary Approach

The participant is against using punitive approaches to manage bullying and strongly stated that he has built his anti-bullying system in such a way that punitive approaches are neither needed nor desired. Expulsion of the student from the school, however, is used as the last resort. The principal has the sole responsibility to decide on such severe cases. Moreover, while discussing his abomination for punitive approach, he remarked that the bully is a student, too. His bullying behaviour is a reflection of his troubled background. Dealing him with aggression would rather bring in more aggression in him alongside shattering his self-confidence and turning him into a rebellious and stubborn individual. He was confident that his teachers were trained enough to avoid using a disciplinary approach at all costs.

If someone thinks aggression can be eradicated through aggression, they are clearly mistaken. Punishments are the worst-case scenario that usually pushes students to become rebellious. My whole school philosophy revolves around ‘Repel evil deeds with good ones’ (The Quran 41:34). My teachers, therefore, are equally compassionate and concerned about bully without forsaking the victim and his wellbeing.

Strengthening the victim

Contrary to the disciplinary approach, he showed great confidence in strengthening the victim approach. He regards it as a holistic approach and tends to address the root cause of the problem by working with both the bully and the victim. He believes that counselling for the bully is important to address the underlying issues that may be driving their behaviour. On the other hand, it enables victims to barricade impulsive reactions to bullying situations through self-awareness and improved self-control. *“The approach is potentially successful because it is responsive to the needs of both the bully and the victim equally”*.

While the approach may yield enduring benefits, the participants think that its implementation is a challenging task involving the careful consideration of two principles: first,

teaching victim how to avoid being identified with the mind; second, avoiding violent defence at all costs. He thinks that building self-esteem, confidence, and compassion are some factors that help in strengthening the victim. Several activities, such as self-defence activities to avoid physical harm, counselling services to recover from emotional and psychological issues, peer support groups and building an overall culture of empathy and compassion to avoid bullying from happening in the first place.

Additionally, he thinks that holding the bully accountable for his actions and addressing the needs of both the bully and the victim is pivotal for the success of the approach. He reported that he had a worrisome number of bullying cases when he first took the charge five years ago. However, the approach has been successful in reducing bullying cases up to 80%.

Given the approach is instilled in its true essence, it can cultivate the desired results. My school is a true case study. Strengthening the victim approach has evidently curtailed bullying up to 80% during my five-year tenure and, by far, is the most effective.

Participant 4

Disciplinary Approach

The participant criticized the traditional disciplinary approach for its adverse effects and strongly condemned the practice of the approach to manage bullying. *'I do not support the disciplinary approach partly because it is associated with serious mental and physical ailments and largely because it is not effective in maintaining a healthy environment.'* Yet, her bullying intervention system greatly relies on light punishments and sanctions regardless of the imposing person. She reflected that if proven guilty, the bully may be deprived of his leisure time, revoking his access to the library and recreational areas. Additionally, her teachers are authorized to inflict light punishments, such as keeping students standing up during their periods, sending offenders to the principal's office, and scolding the offender. While more serious issues may result in serious punishments such as spanking, slapping and temporarily banning him from attending classes after several warnings, offences such as physically harming someone may result in permanent suspension of enrolment of the bully from the school: *a variety of punishments from time out to even light spanking to rustication'*. However, the principal herself is the sole authority to decide on serious issues. *'While my teachers can inflict physical punishments in inevitable situations, their authority is, however, limited. I personally take on grave cases/and induce serious punishments if needed.'*

Additionally, the participant has well-defined rules known not just to students and teachers but the parents as well: *'Parents and students are informed about their standard code of conduct at the time of admission and are reiterated through circulars on a regular basis.'* However, she doesn't have any disciplinary committee that could decide on the intensity of the offence and the punishments to be given. She is overly efficacious in her own judgements and claims that she can identify the culprit by mere face reading. She, however, is unable to describe that since she is heading two branches, who is responsible for handling the situation if she is not around?

Strengthening the Victim Approach

Participant highly recommended the approach to effective management of bullying in her school. She, however, thinks that the successful implementation of the approach demands school administration either to hire a professional counsellor or provide professional training to their

teachers, followed by decreasing their workload in order for them to understand the root cause of the bullying behaviour and then reach a decision. *'...only teachers sensitized to human psychology may empathize, tailor support and efficiently communicate amidst a disaster. They, too, should be backed by a professional counsellor. It is not an ordinary job.'*

She emphasized the importance of self-confidence and high self-esteem to handle bullies and suggested activities like debates and speeches to improve the likelihood of victims handling bullies effectively. Nevertheless, she stressed that victim needs to be impulsive if bullied physically or sexually harassed. She stressed the need to train the students to become vocal about their concerns and bring their problems to the elderly notice. Despite her claims of having this approach as the key approach to managing bullying, she could not describe her practices of activities that instil the skills required to handle bullies.

Finally, she concluded that lack of physical activity, anger management issues in students, passive parenting, and lack of passion among teachers are the key promoting factors of aggression leading to the development of bullying behaviours among students. *'Excess screen time, fast food consumption, tough routine and zero physical activities builds frustration that often results in bullying...teachers and equally indifferent parents are only adding to the burden.'*

She acknowledged that she has a rapid frequency of bullying cases reported. However, she was unable to give a percentage of the decrease or increase of the bullying behaviours in her school.

Participant 5

Disciplinary Approach

The participant does not employ a disciplinary approach in his school. Nevertheless, acknowledges its partial effectiveness in extreme cases. The implementation of the approach is not a straightforward process despite being perceived as such by most of the principals and teachers. The success of the approach is greatly dependent upon the unwavering character of the practitioner, his being mindful of the intensity and its lasting impact on students' personalities, and the ability of the practitioner to set aside their personal biases and parental acceptance and societal support. Conversely, teachers' aggressive mindsets and violent punishments have rendered parents' and societal support from the approach. Also, the increasing apprehension of being berated among students and their parents has enormously added to the failure of the approach. Despite this, the participant still believes that the approach can be a game changer if applied by experienced and adequately trained teachers. However, novice teacher's inapt handling may exacerbate the situation. He, therefore, dismisses the idea of using the disciplinary approach, stating that in an attempt to fix one, we are at risk of harming the other: *'The problem lies not in its perceived disadvantages but in its flawed implementation...'* He further added that the bully, too, is a child in desperate need of being rescued from his own bullying behaviour.

Strengthening the victim

The participant, despite having great confidence in the efficacy of the approach, commented that strengthening the victim approach, if practised in isolation, will not suffice, as the bully also needs assistance and counselling. He suggested that rather than empowering the victim to deal with the situation, they should be encouraged to discuss their feelings, emotions, fear and reservations with their parents and teachers instead.

Primary students are still in the developing stages and, hence, possess a limited ability to completely analyse the situation. Students in secondary classes undergo massive hormonal changes and often struggle with their own emotions. Therefore, need elderly assistance while dealing with bullying behaviours and cannot be left on their own.

Furthermore, empowering the victims to handle the bullies on their own may subdue the chances of addressing the underlying psychological issues of the bully. He concluded that in almost all bullying cases, teachers are the primary mediators, who, in most cases, are not trained to deal with the psychological and emotional needs of the students, leaving the onus on the academic coordinator and the principal to deal with bullies, which in cases having a higher bullying rate in quite impractical.

Discussion

It is evident from the above-given data that there are significant differences in the beliefs and actions towards bullying management. Participants not only deal with bullying differently but have visible differences in what they believe is right and what they do, with the exception of one participant, Participant 3. Participants 1 and 3 showed a proactive approach to managing bullying as compared to Participants 2 and 4, who seemed to be more passive in their approach. It is noteworthy to mention that only Participant 3 showed a high level of confidence in his approach towards managing bullying and exhibited significant consistency in his beliefs and practices. On the contrary, all the rest of the participants were inconsistent in their beliefs and practices.

Participant 1 expressed strong beliefs that bullying should not be tolerated and that every effort should be made to prevent it. The participant took an active role in preventing bullying by educating students, fostering a positive and respectful school culture, and working closely with parents and staff to ensure that everyone understands the importance of addressing bullying. Participant 3 also shared a similar view, believing that bullying prevention should be a top priority for schools. The participant demonstrated a proactive approach by involving teachers, students, and their parents in creating a safe and inclusive school environment, providing resources and support for those affected by bullying, and implementing consequences for those who engage in bullying behaviours.

In contrast, Participant 2 and Participant 4 seemed to be more passive in their approach towards bullying management. Participant 2 expressed that bullying was a difficult problem to solve and seemed to rely on reactive measures, such as addressing incidents as they occur, rather than taking proactive steps to prevent them. This participant also expressed that there were limitations to what could be done by the school and that parents also have a responsibility to address bullying. Participant 4 expressed that while they believe bullying is wrong, it is ultimately the mutual responsibility of school management and families to make joint efforts to manage bullying. This participant did not provide any specific strategies or actions for addressing bullying, which suggests a lack of understanding of bullying phenomena.

Only two participants were found to be coherent and consistent in their beliefs and practices. Participant 1 openly accepted having been using the punitive approach successfully in her school, and Participant 3 strongly advocated the use of a non-punitive approach, such as strengthening the victim. Both were able to elaborate on their systems, procedures, consequences and drawbacks.

Participants 2, 4 and 5, in contrast to Participants 1 and 3, were highly inconsistent in their beliefs and practices. Participant 2 acknowledges using both approaches, yet she has an extraordinarily high number of bullying cases and hence proven to have been abortive. Similarly, Participant 4 advocated strengthening the victim approach to have been successful in her school. Contrary to her claims, her entire anti-bullying program is based on sanctions and punishments. Participant 5 firmly believed that the disciplinary approach was the only effective approach in managing bullying cases despite the apprehensions associated with it. However, he is compelled to use strengthening the victim approach in compliance with the paradigm shift regarding punitive approaches.

Conclusion

Based on this data, it is evident that there are significant differences in beliefs and practices towards bullying management among the participants. While some take a proactive approach towards prevention and intervention, others rely on reactive measures. It is also evident that with the exception of Participants 1 and 3, all the other participants have significant differences in their beliefs and practices, which may be considered as one reason for having moderately ineffective bullying management systems in their schools. While it is important for educators to take a proactive approach towards bullying management, as this approach can lead to a safer and more inclusive school environment for all students, empowering them is crucially inevitable for establishing a safe and positive school culture.

References

- Ansary, N. S., Elias, M. J., Greene, M. B., & Green, S. (2015). Guidance for schools selecting antibullying approaches: Translating evidence-based strategies to contemporary implementation realities. *Educational Researcher*, 44(1), 27-36.
- Bauer, N. S., Lozano, P., & Rivara, F. P. (2007). The effectiveness of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in public middle schools: A controlled trial. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 40(3), 266-274.
- Black, S. A., & Jackson, E. (2007). Using bullying incident density to evaluate the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme. *School psychology international*, 28(5), 623-638.
- Bradshaw, C. P., Sawyer, A. L., & O'Brennan, L. M. (2007). Bullying and peer victimization at school: Perceptual differences between students and school staff. *School Psychology Review*, 36(3), 361-382.
- Butt, S., Muhammad, Y., & Masood, S. (2021). Effectively dealing with bullying in elite schools: Principals' perceptions and practices. 6(3), 1-10.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.
- DeNike, M., & Gordon, H. (2020). Solution team: outcomes of a target-centered approach to resolving school bullying. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 24, 181-195.
- Desk, W. (2023, January 21st). Manhandling classmate: Court grants bail to four girls. *The News: National News*. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/1032803-girl-tortured-by-classmates-at-lahore-school-video-goes-viral>
- Dibley, L., Dickerson, S., Duffy, M., & Vandermause, R. (2020). *Doing hermeneutic phenomenological research: A practical guide*. Sage.
- Eslea, M., & Smith, P. K. (1998). The long-term effectiveness of anti-bullying work in primary schools. *Educational Researcher*, 40(2), 203-218.

- Garandean, C. F., Poskiparta, E., & Salmivalli, C. (2014). Tackling acute cases of school bullying in the KiVa anti-bullying program: A comparison of two approaches. *Journal of abnormal child psychology*, 42, 981-991.
- Hepburn, L., Azrael, D., Molnar, B., & Miller, M. (2012). Bullying and suicidal behaviors among urban high school youth. *Journal of adolescent health*, 51(1), 93-95.
- Jackson, N. (2006, February 23). Bullying? It's got to be punished... Tony Blair's attack on the 'No-Blame' approach to bullying—once supported by Whitehall—has angered its advocates. . *The Independent*. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/bullying-its-got-to-be-punished-467400.html>
- Jacobsen, K. E., & Bauman, S. (2007). Bullying in schools: School counselors' responses to three types of bullying incidents. *Professional School Counseling*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0701100101>
- Khawar, R., & Malik, F. (2016). Bullying behavior of Pakistani pre-adolescents: Findings based on Olweus questionnaire. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 23-43.
- Kousholt, K., & Fisker, T. B. (2015). Approaches to reduce bullying in schools – a critical analysis from the viewpoint of first- and second-order perspectives on bullying. *Children and Society*, 29, 593-603. <https://doi.org/> <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12094>
- Limber, S. P., Nation, M., Tracy, A. J., Melton, G. B., & Flerx, V. (2004). *Implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention programme in the southeastern United States*. Cambridge University Press.
- Modecki, K. L., Minchin, J., Harbaugh, A. G., Guerra, N. G., & Runions, K. C. (2014). Bullying prevalence across contexts: A meta-analysis measuring cyber and traditional bullying. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 55(5), 602-611.
- National Academies of Sciences, E., & Medicine. (2016). *Preventing bullying through science, policy, and practice*. (030944067X). Washington (DC): National Academics Press
- Olweus, & Kallestad, J. H. (2010). The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: Effects of classroom components at different grade levels. *Indirect and direct aggression*, 113-131.
- Olweus, D. (1994). Bullying at school. In *Aggressive Behavior* (pp. 97-130). Springer.
- Olweus, D. (1996). Bullying at school: Knowledge base and an effective intervention program a. *Annals of the new York Academy of Sciences*, 794(1), 265-276.
- Olweus, D. (1997). Bully/victim problems in school: Facts and intervention. *European journal of psychology of education*, 12(4), 495.
- Reporter, S. (2023, January 21). Four girls booked for 'torture' of class fellow. *DAWN: Lahore Edition*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1732782/four-girls-booked-for-torture-of-class-fellow>
- Rigby, K. (1997). What children Tell us about bullying in schools. *Children Australia*, 22(2), 28-34.
- Rigby, K. (2003). Consequences of bullying in schools. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 48(9), 583-590.
- Rigby, K. (2010a). *Bullying interventions in schools: Six basic approaches*. Aust Council for Ed Research.
- Rigby, K. (2010b). Strengthening the victim. In *Bullying Interventions in Schools: Six Basic Approaches* (pp. 46-57). ACER Press.
- Rigby, K. (2017). Addressing bullying in schools: Theory and practice.
- Rivers, I., & Smith, P. K. (1994). Types of bullying behaviour and their correlates. *Aggressive Behavior*, 20(5), 359-368.

- Shehzadi, N., Akram, B., Dawood, S., & Bushra Bibi. (2019). Bullying Behavior in Rural Area Schools of Gujrat, Pakistan:Prevalence and Gender Differences. *Pakistan Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 17(1), 25-30.
- Shujja, S., Atta, M., & Shujjat, J. M. (2014). Prevalence of bullying and victimization among sixth graders with reference to gender, socio-economic status and type of schools. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 38(2), 159-165.
- Siddiqui, M. F., Muhammad, Y., & Naseer, H. (2021). Principals' self-efficacy beliefs about managing bullying cases in secondary schools. *sjesr*, 4(1), 338-349.
- Sloan, A., & Bowe, B. (2014). Phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology: The philosophy, the methodologies, and using hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate lecturers' experiences of curriculum design. *Quality Quantity*, 48, 1291-1303.
- Thompson, F., & Smith, P. K. (2011). The use and effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies in schools. *Research Brief* 1-220.
- Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P. (2011). Effectiveness of school-based programs to reduce bullying: A systematic and meta-analytic review. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 7, 27-56.