Original Research Article

The effects of traditional bullying on the academic performance of learners at the primary level in Guyana

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This paper examines the effects of traditional bullying on the academic performance of students at the Grade Six levels in primary schools in Guyana and highlights the dynamics of gender involvement. This randomized study was conducted on 33 students (ages 9-11 years) with maladaptive behaviour at Diamond Primary School. The participants in this study were bullies, victims and bystanders, who were all students. The results indicated a significant relationship between bullying and academic performance. The study concluded that traditional bullying has been and continues to be a major problem in schools. The study recommended that school wide bully prevention programmes be conducted to mitigate this dastardly act.

Key words: Academic performance, aggression, at-risk, behaviour, bullying, cyberbullying, insecurity, intervention programmes, resilience.

INTRODUCTION

This research examines the effects of traditional bullying on the academic performance of learners at the Grade 6 level in primary schools in Guyana. Traditional bullying is nothing new and has been a phenomenon for a long time with many behavioural psychologists and researchers trying to explore aspects of this increasingly prevalent situation in schools. Research has shown that learners in the primary grades are more vulnerable to behaviours that can affect them in their daily activities. In addition, research on adolescent offending behaviour has shown that anti-social behaviour can be assessed in terms of the risk factors such as low academic ability, being bullies or exposure to abuse (Bower and Carroll, 2012). In general, the concept of bullying and exposure to abuse has been given much attention by (Beale, 2001) who argued that the extent to which bullying affects the lives of children in and out of school requires urgent intervention. This paper examines the effects of bullying on the academic performance of students at the primary levels in Guyana and aims to fill an existing gap in knowledge regarding the effects of traditional bullying on the academic performance of learners, while sensitizing teachers and parents on valuable strategies in addressing this problem.

Background to the study

Bullying is socially unacceptable within the ethos of a school and a democratic society (Hatzenbuehler and Keyes, 2013). It is one of the most common expression of violence in the peer context and is characterized by repetition and imbalance of power (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2014). In Guyana, this represents a significant problem in many schools since the tendency for aggression, attention and recognition by bullies has long been a major concern for educators. However, while there has been considerable strides by school administrators, teachers and other stakeholders to make school environments safer for children, the way bullying is conceptualized and assessed in Guyana, remains an important factor in the development of mitigation strategies.

Bullying has been and continues to be a major problem within the education system in Guyana with a number of reported deaths of primary school learners. Rigby (2002b) defines bullying as a situation where there is a consistent abuse of power between a bully and a victim. Olweus (2003) views bullying as a repetition of aggressive behaviour against someone who is unable to defend

himself/herself immediately. Bullying is a common problem in schools with the highest incidence occurring in primary and lower secondary schools. Research conducted by Murphy and Lewers (2000) has shown that this is so because there is a greater tendency for aggression, attention and recognition by students, but the amount of bullying generally decreases with age. While the severity of bullying does not decrease with age, the trauma experienced by victims highlight the dangers of bullying. It is important to note that bullies are usually from the same class or level and tend to be more aggressive towards their peers as well as adults (Beale, 2001). This can best be explained in three specific reasons. Firstly, those who bully achieve some form of satisfaction, status and acceptance from manipulating, dominating, or intimidating others (Murphy and Lewers, 2000). Secondly, they see force, aggression and violence as the best way to relate to others (Rigby, 2002a). A third reason relates to the lack of empathy on the part of bullies who generally cannot understand the feelings of their victims (Murphy and Lewers, 2000). Generally, this problem results from maladaptive and disruptive behaviour among students particularly at the primary level. It has also been an issue affecting the academic, social and psychological competence of students who are victims and bullies. In Guyana, bullying has resulted in several deaths of primary school students within the last three years, along with many cases of disruptive behaviour in schools. Children who are victims of bullying generally tend to lack friends in the class and are more likely to be cautious, quiet, sensitive and non-aggressive (Beale, 2001).

Objectives

To examine the effects of traditional bullying on the academic performance of learners at the Primary levels and to determine the extent of the problem.

Purpose of the study

The study was designed to investigate the effects of traditional bullying on the academic performance of learners at the Grade Six level in primary schools in Guyana and to develop solutions to the problem.

Significance of the study

This research will be of significance to parents, teachers, learners and support staff both in the mainstream and in special schools in Guyana. The research is expected to provide relevant empirical data on the effects of bullying and appropriate interventions necessary to mitigate its prevalence. In addition, the study will provide valuable information to the academic community, the protection services and parents in Guyana on issues relating to bullying, its effects and intervention strategies and programmes that can help in creating positive behaviour. It will also be beneficial to administrators, teachers, counsellors, welfare officers and stakeholders within the education sector. At the administrative level, education planners and policy makers will find this research as a useful source of information from which future policies and programmes on positive behaviour support in schools can be implemented. This will be done through awareness programmes such as bully prevention training, focus group discussions, posters, community engagements and lectures to the academic community, parents as well as protection services.

Theoretical considerations

There were theoretical grounds guiding our expectations that students involved in bully/victim problems would be less predisposed than others at their school to view learning in a positive light. It was expected that victims of bullying could bring to the classroom, negative feelings about other students who had been involved in the bullying act.

Feelings of antagonism, repeated victimisation and fear towards perpetrators and bystanders would seem more likely to overshadow the victims thought about their classrooms. In addition, bullies might also be expected to express negative thoughts about their classroom. This study is guided by the Social Control Theory. According to Lilly, Cullen and Ball (1995), the Social Control Theory articulates that family, school and other social institutions act as agents to reduce problem behaviour. In addition, social control theory posits that crime occurs when such bonds are weakened or are not well established (Lilly et al., 1995). Control theorists argue that without such bonds, crime is an inevitable outcome (Lilly et al., 1995).   Unlike other theories that seek to explain the reasons why people engage in deviant behaviour, control theories take the opposite approach, questioning why people refrain from offending (Akers and Sellars, 2004). As such, there is a greater possibility for involvement in deviant behaviour by all individuals within society, avoided only by those who seek to maintain familial and social bonds (Akers and Sellars, 2004). Thus, bonds are based on four principles and include attachment to the family, teachers, peers and co-workers. It also involves commitment to activities including educational or career goals (Siegel and McCormick, 2006). These four aspects of social control are thought to interact to insulate an individual from criminal involvement (Siegel and McCormick, 2006).

Review of literature

The review of literature is guided by the current research which attempts to assess the effects of traditional bullying on the academic performance of learners at the primary levels. Several studies have examined the roles in bullying which show variations in the characteristics of the bully and victim (Smith, 2004). Children who bully can be considered as ringleaders, followers or reinforcers and the role of ringleaders' deals with organising and initiating the

act, while those who are considered as followers merely join once the bullying has started (Smith, 2004). Bullying may be reinforced by students who passively act as bystanders and give encouragement to the bullies (Smith, 2004). Studies conducted by Rigby and Johnson (2004) has shown that among the bystanders, there are those who may actively or passively support the act of bullying. In addition, there are also defenders whose main role is centred on helping the victim or getting the bully to stop acts of intimidation (Beran et al., 2004)

There are several effects of bullying on individuals. First, bullying is unpredictable and individuals have neither the time nor ability to prepare because those who are involved in bullying see themselves at risk of also being bullied by others (Rigby, 2005). Second, the victims of bullying are often insecure and generally lack effective responses to acts of bullying (Olweus, 1994). One way in which this ineffective response is shown is through crying and withdrawal. Third, bullying is pre-emptive, provocative, humiliating and generates aggressive response patterns (Olweus, 1994). For the victim, the experience is often terrifying and apart from physical hurt, they endure dreadful thoughts of the next attack (Murphy and Lewers, 2000). Fourth, it is often difficult for children to escape bullying and those who experienced it often developed low self-esteem and a negative impression of themselves (Olweus1994). Bullying has long-term effects on the education of the victim who generally resort to absenteeism, due in part to the inability to concentrate, choose subjects and to avoid the bully rather than being able to develop personal interests and talents (Murphy and Lewers, 2000). Essentially, school becomes a place of misery and is avoided (Price and Dalgleish, 2010). Beale (2001) in highlighting the effects of bullying states that while victims of bullies are at risk in relation to social and academic achievement, they are also at risk of increase apprehension, loneliness, anxiety and abandonment from peers.

From a social perspective, bullying can lead to a state of demoralisation and humiliation, resulting in loss of self-confidence (Murphy and Lewers, 2000). In addition, stress symptoms, headaches, nightmares, stomach aches and anxiety appear in some victims (Smith, 2004). Rigby (2002a) argues that children who are consistently bullied suffer more depression in adulthood when compared to those who not bullied. Further, those who are bullied have a higher incidence of suicidal thoughts than others (Olweus, 2000). For the bully, aggressive behaviour is strengthened once there is a quick and easy response and this may become a normal way of relating to people (Orphinas and Horne, 2006). Studies conducted by Braithwaite, Ahmed and Morrison (2003), Olweus (1994) and Suckling and Temple (2001) have shown that many bullies have at least one conviction by early adulthood. Bullying also affect the bystander who developed fear and are afraid of reprisal especially when incidents are reported (Suckling and Temple, 2001). Suckling and Temple (2001) note that where there are higher numbers of bystanders witnessing

an incident, the less likely it is for any action to be taken and this they believe constitutes an abdication of responsibility on the part of bystanders. Above all, bullying results in isolation of the victims and in extreme circumstances, individuals are likely to commit suicide due to uncontrollable pressure (Rigby, 2003). Bullying also has long-term effects on the emotional and psychological health and well-being of young people that continues into adulthood (Patchin and Hinduja, 2006).

This long term effect is characterized by the role of gender in the perpetuation of bullying. Peckham (2007) states that there is the likelihood of boys being more involved in physical bullying, while girls are more likely participants of relational bullying such as gossip, rumour spreading or exclusion by social groups. Further, children who possess characteristics such as obesity, developmental disabilities, insecurity and anxiety are more at- risk of bullying. Boys and girls respond to bullying in similar ways. First, boys and girls who are bullied are more anxious and insecure when compared to other students (Olweus, 2003). In addition, their response range from being cautious to one of quietness and sensitivity to situations (Olweus, 2003). More importantly, there is an increase in anxiety when children are continuously harassed by their peers and this makes them more vulnerable to bullying (Olweus, 1994). In addition, there is generally an underlying level of insecurity among boys and girls who are bullied (Olweus, 1994).

This underlying level of insecurity can have prolonged effects on the psychological and social development of the victims (Wong, 2004). Boys and girls react by crying and withdrawal when bullied and those who are bullied developed a negative response towards violence and violent acts (Olweus, 2003). One example of this response is a display of passive behaviour. In supporting this view, Olweus (2003) argues that this passivity on the part of victims, make them believe that they are incapable and worthless. Boys and girls who are bullied developed negative perceptions of themselves such as failures, unattractive feelings and unpleasant disposition (Olweus, 2003). It seems likely that these negative perceptions create additional burden and dire consequences for children.

The role of gender in bullying

A major distinction in gender as it relates to bullying can be seen in the context of boys who are more open in their behaviour and likely to become involved in physical bullying. However, girls use less visible signs, are sneaky and more likely to become involved in verbal bullying and harassment such as slandering, spreading rumours, and manipulating friends (Olweus, 2003). Price and Dalgleish (2010) in a study on cyber bullying state that individuals who are bullied, particularly through cyber bullying are more likely to experience suicide, which is a common response when compared with those who may be affected by traditional bullying. Lack of confidence and low self-esteem often lead to problems with social and emotional

adjustments for children (Price and Dalgleish, 2010). A striking difference however, is that girls respond in more subtle ways than boys which includes lack of appetite and suicide (Price and Dalgleish, 2010).This type of response creates a mental burden for students and increases the risk of all forms of bullying (Debarbieux, 2003).

Both Debarbieux (2003) and Price and Dalgleish (2010) agree that lack of confidence and low self-esteem are general response of boys' and girls'. However, their theoretical orientations differ. For example, Debarbieux (2003) believes that bullying is the end product of social and emotional difficulties experienced by students. Whereas Price and Dalgleish (2010) believe that bullying stems from individual's violent past. Boys and girls who experienced bullying generally developed conditions such as loss of sleep, headaches, and appetite imbalance, though the latter is more prevalent among girls (Price and Dalgleish, 2010). These multiple emotional impacts have serious consequences for the victims, which can result in potent self-harming behaviour among those affected (Price and Dalgleish, 2010). Further, self –harming type behaviour is particularly evident among students who experienced cyber bullying. Above all, boys and girls who experienced various forms of bullying generally lacked the energy and vitality to resist their aggressors and developed abnormal feelings (Olweus, 1994).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This research took the form of a randomized control study whereby participants were randomly assigned to groups. This research tested the hypothesis that students' poor academic performance at the primary level is linked to bullying. Being a randomized experiment, the research design controlled confounding factors (those factors that would affect the accuracy or repeatability of the experiment as well as the ability to interpret the results.

Population

The population for this study consisted of sixty (60) students who have been involved in bullying. This included aggressors, victims and bystanders of various bullying acts between the ages of 10 and 11 years old. Both boys and girls from the Grade Six level formed part of the population for this study. The population for this study was chosen from students who live in low socio-economic families as well as those from high income families. This was done to record any predisposed factors such as aggression, antagonism and anxiety that may likely influence bullying behaviours.

Sample

The sample consisted of 30 children who have been involved in bullying in one way or the other, either as an aggressor, victim or bystander. Students for this study were selected by a simple randomization process and had a mean chronological age of 9.20 years (ranging from 10 to 11 years). A total of 33 potential participants were ''recruited'' from Diamond Primary school. In accordance with ethical requirements, only respondents who had parental permission for participating in this study were included and all participants were individually given the Achenbach Child Behaviour Checklist.

Instrumentation

The Achenbach Child behaviour Checklist and the Behaviour Rating Scale were used.

The Achenbach Child Behaviour Checklist

The Achenbach Child Behaviour Checklist is a parent report questionnaire in which children are rated on various behavioural and emotional problems (Merrell, 2007). It is used for evaluating maladaptive behavioural and emotional problems in children between 2-3 years and 4-18 years (Merrell, 2007). In this research, the Achenbach Child Behaviour Checklist was used to assess internalizing (anxious, depressive and over controlled) behaviours as well as externalizing (aggressive, hyperactive, non-compliant and under controlled) behaviours. The Achenbach Child Behaviour Checklist was also used to measure several sub areas including social withdrawal, somatic complaints, anxiety and depression, destructive behaviour, social problems, thought problems, bullying, attention problems, aggressive and delinquent behaviours.

Behaviour rating scales

Merrell (1994) defines behaviour-rating scales as a standardized format for the development of summative judgments about a child or adolescent's behavioural characteristics, provided by an informant (usually a parent or teacher) who knows the student/individual well. In this research, Behaviour Rating Scales were used as screening devices to obtain information and to identify individuals who may benefit from one or more detailed assessment. In addition, it was used to provide assessment to children at risk of developing severe behavioural problems and those requiring early intervention.

Validation of the Instrument

In validating the instrument, the researchers used standardized instruments that have been subjected to rigorous standards of measurement in order to ensure that the desired psychological and behavioural constructs are properly measured. The researchers conducted a pre-trial of the instruments by first testing their validity among University of Guyana students who are teachers and parents in order to obtain feedback. When this task was

Table 1. Shows the gender and age range of students involved in bullying at the Primary Level

Students Age Range	Male	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Female	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
6-7 years	15	15	50	15	15	50
8-9 years	10	10	33	10	10	33
10-11 years	05	05	17	05	05	17
Total	30	30	100	30	30	100
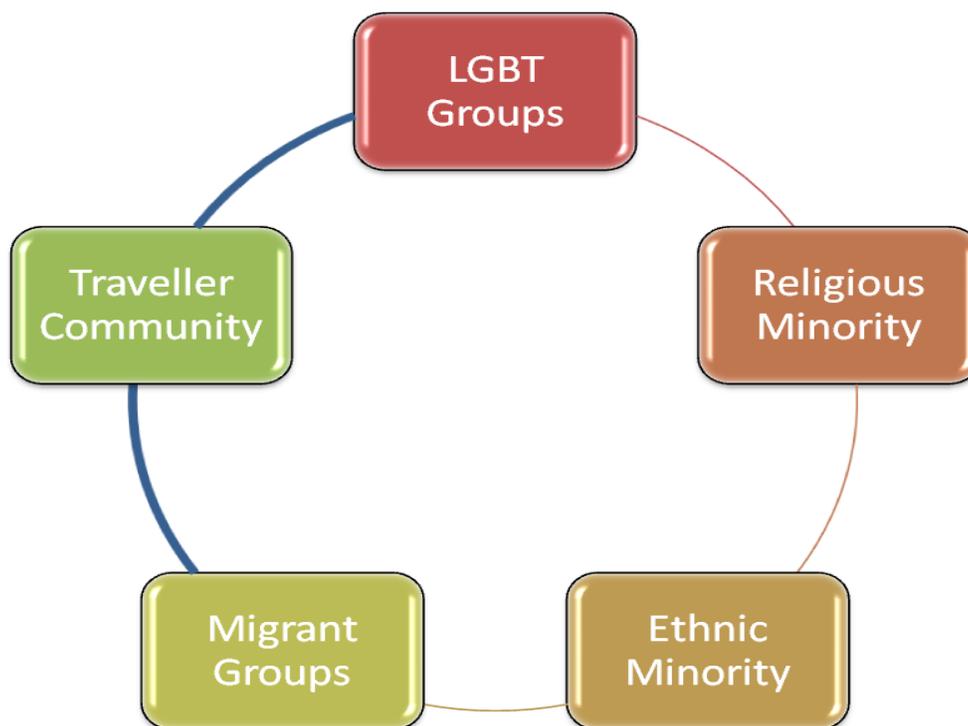
Figure 1: The Chart above represents groups that are more likely to be at –risk of bullying

completed, sampling of the population was done as part of the study.

Description of Procedures for Data Collection

The parents of all participants in this study (Children who have been involved in bullying directly or indirectly) signed the informed consent form, which explained the objective, procedure and use of results. The instruments were divided into several sections and participants were required to answer all sections. The main group of participants were divided randomly into three subgroups and each of the groups were given five questions in order of their involvement in bullying. Subgroup 1 was given questions based on their initial involvement in bullying. Subgroup 2 was given questions based on their involvement, the types of acts committed and their feelings after the bullying acts. Subgroup 3 was given questions based on their initial involvement, the victims' response to acts of bullying and their perception of themselves after the acts.

Description of Techniques for Data Analysis

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the three (3) subgroups responses was carried out. The mean values (and standard deviations) for the responses from the various groups will be illustrated on a table. In addition, several charts, tables and diagrams were developed to depict various trends in information acquired. Scores from the behaviour rating scales were compared to those of a normative sample to help determine whether the identified behaviours are within "normal" limits. In addition, information from the rating scales were used to target specific behaviours.

RESULTS

Table 1 display the gender and age range of students involved in bullying at the Primary Level. Figure 1 indicates that groups at risk of bullying are those with prone to marginalization and exclusion in society. Table 2 shows the

Table 2. showing the ethnicity of students involved in bullying

Ethnicity	No. of Respondents	Percentage
East Indians	10	33.3
Africans	16	53.3
Amerindians	02	6.7
Chinese	00	0
Portuguese	00	0
Mixed	02	6.7
Total	**30**	**100**

Table 3. Table showing the types of responses, number of persons and the percentage

Types of Responses to Bullying	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Happy	03	9.0
Sad	16	48.4
Annoyed	08	24.3
Frustrated	06	18.3
Total	33	100

ethnicity of students involved in bullying and the differences in group responses. Table 2 depicts the types of responses displayed by students. The responses obtained were very uncommon and highlight the attitudes of bullies towards victims. A closer analysis of these preliminary results is presented in the section below.

DISCUSSION

It can be seen that the percentages for both males and females were the same. However, the largest category was the 6-7 years age group. This group also comprised the largest percentage of students. Thus, the ratio between boys and girls was 50%. The smallest category represented 17% of the respondents, while 33% of the respondents represented the 8-9 years age group. The table above also shows that participation in bullying between both genders was equal. From the data, it can be seen that bullying is more common among the 6-7 age range and the lower levels in gender at the primary level.

Groups more likely to be at risk of bullying

The chart (Figure 1) above represent groups that are more likely to be at-risk of bullying. While most youth view their adolescent years in school as an exciting moment in life, they believe that schools should create safe and supportive environments for all students. This is particularly important since those who follow a different gender lifestyle are at a higher risk of being bullied. In addition, students from ethnic and religious minorities are also at a higher risk of bullying. In some cases, this is due to a lack of tolerance and appreciation for religious and ethnic diversity. In contrast, migrant and traveller groups are at a lower risk of bullying, even though this may vary.

The Table 2 above shows the ethnicity of students involved in bullying and the number of respondents. The largest category was Africans who represented 53.3% of the total population, while the smallest category was Amerindians and Mixed who both represented 6.7% of the total population. The second largest category was the East Indians who represented 33.3% of the population. It can also be seen that the number of respondents for both Africans and East Indians were higher than the other ethnic groups involved in bullying. There were two ethnic groups that had no respondents and these groups both recorded zero percent. Collectively, East Indians, Africans and Amerindians were the largest number of respondents involved in bullying at the primary level. From this group, the number of African respondents totalled 16, while the number of respondents for the East Indians and Amerindians were 10 and 2 respectively.

The Table 3 above shows the types of responses, number of persons and percentage. An analysis of the responses indicates that 48.4% of the students who participated in the study were Sad when bullied, while 24.3% were annoyed. Additionally, the table illustrates that 18.3 % were frustrated. Interestingly, 9.0 % of the respondents claimed that bullying did nothing but only made them happy. However, this category of respondents was in the minority. The number of respondents who were Sad and Annoyed outnumbered those who were Frustrated and Happy.

The pie chart (Figure 2) shows types of bullying. The four main responses were Sad, Annoyed, Frustrated and Happy. The responses were tabulated from questions that asked students about their feelings after being bullied. From the questions, many uncommon responses were given which includes being happy, feeling good and being relaxed after being bullied.   These responses generated much amusement for the researchers because many students when questioned about their feelings calmly responded
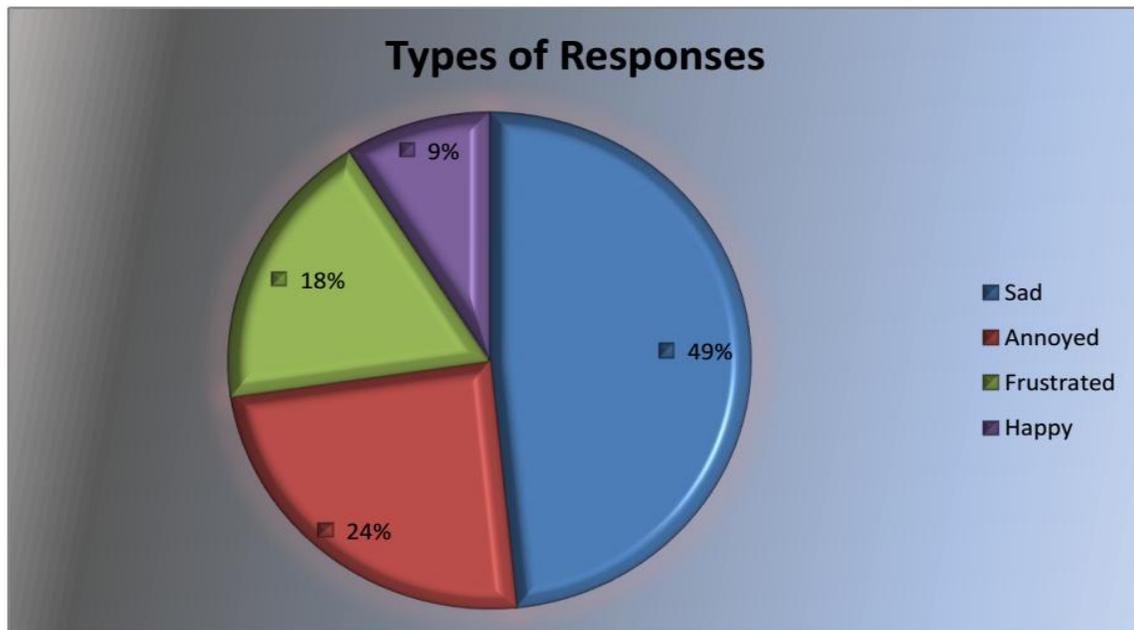
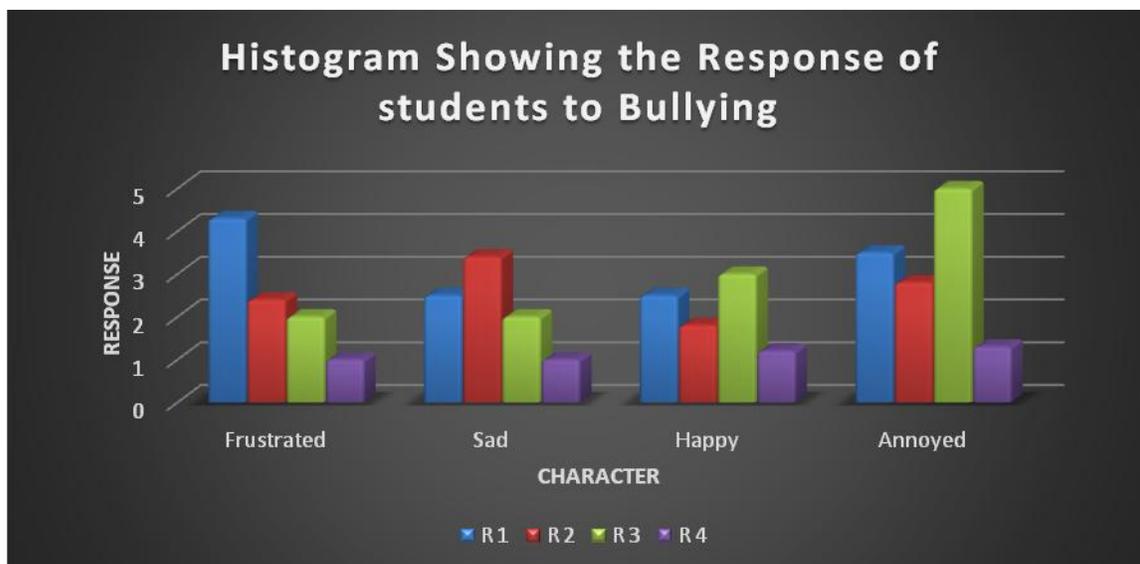**Figure 2:** Pie Chart showing the types of responses to bullying

Figure 3: Histogram showing the responses to Bullying

with the uncommon answers. However, there were a large percentage of students who had common responses about their feelings after being bullied.

The histogram (Figure 3) above also displays the types of responses to bullying. The responses were tabulated from questions, which asked students about their feelings after being bullied. It is interesting to note that there were many uncommon responses from the questions asked. Those who responded by giving uncommon answers stated that they felt happy, good and relaxed after being bullied.

Approximately 2.4% of respondents were frustrated after being bullied, while 2.8% were annoyed. Those who felt sad totalled 3.4 %, which was the highest category. Collectively, those who were frustrated, sad and annoyed constituted approximately 8.6 % of the total responses to bullying by students at the primary level.

The Table 4 above illustrates the types of bullying and the common responses displayed by students. It can be seen that those who were physically bullied responded by hitting, pulling, shoving and tripping others as a defence

Table 4. Showing the types of bullying and the common responses exhibited by students

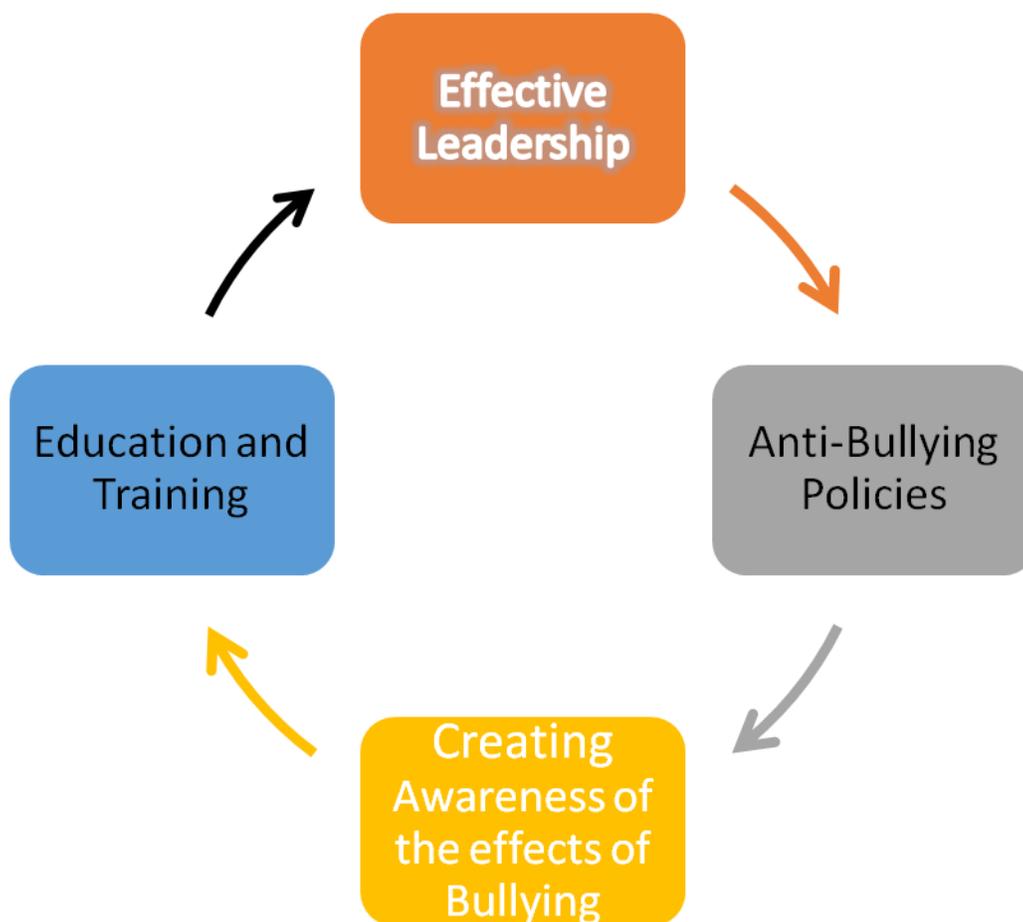| Types of Bullying	Common Responses
Physical bullying	Hitting, shoving, pulling and tripping
Verbal bullying	Crying, emotional disorder
Victimization	Fear, withdrawal
Cyber bullying	Suicide

Figure 4: Block Cycle showing the Approaches to Preventing and Tackling of Bullying

mechanism. Those who were verbally bullied responded by crying and had symptoms of emotional disorder. In addition, students who were bullied became very fearful and developed signs of withdrawal. Above all, the biggest response was suicide as a way out of the problem for those who were being bullied through cyber space. This is so because the perpetrators were often anonymous individuals who repeatedly molested their victims without consideration to the health and well- being of the victims.

Approaches in preventing and tackling bullying

Bully prevention is an important factor in creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. Therefore, schools can take several approaches to prevent bullying. These include: effective leadership, development of anti-bullying policies and procedures, creating awareness for students, teachers, parents and community members. Providing education and training for bullies and other at-risk groups will also help to mitigate the adverse effects of bullying in schools (Figure 4).

In addition, schools can implement evidence-based policies and activities designed to promote a healthy environment for all youth, including LGB students. For example, research has shown that in schools with LGB support groups (such as gay-straight alliances), LGB students were less likely to experience threats of violence, miss school because they felt unsafe, or attempt suicide than those students in schools without LGB support groups (Hatzenbuehler and Keyes, 2013). As such, schools can

encourage respect for all students and prohibit bullying, harassment, and violence against students. Further, they can identify "safe spaces", such as counsellors' offices or designated classrooms, where LGB youth can receive support from administrators, teachers, or other school staff (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2014).

FINDINGS

This study sought to investigate the effects of traditional bullying on the academic performance of students at the Grade Six level in primary schools. The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between bullying and academic performance primarily because those who were involved in bullying were more likely to perform below the required standards when compared to students not involved in bullying.

The study also revealed that bullying is a risk factor towards successful academic achievement of learners at the primary level because those involved in bullying displayed greater aggression, were more delinquent and skipped school often when compared to students who were not involved in bullying. It is also important to note that the study revealed slight deficiencies in the support systems for bullies and victims, since adequate support were not available on a regular basis. In addition, the findings indicate that there were no stress management, grief and loss or bereavement as well as trauma reduction or anti-anxiety programmes in schools and communities. These programmes can offer much needed support to students, parents and other individuals in need of help. However, the school and teachers played critical roles in mitigating the effects of bullying in the absence of parents.

Implications of the study

This study has direct implications for policy makers within the Ministry of Education, school administrators, counsellors, support staff, teachers and parents, particularly those who are victims, bullies and bystanders. It also has implications for positive school wide behaviour intervention and discipline within Guyana's primary education system. Moreover, the study highlights the need for widespread support, parental involvement and a collaborative approach between the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders. These include community leaders, members of the academic community, the police force and the protection services.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it is evident that bullying has severe effects on the academic performance of learners at the primary level. This research revealed that traditional bullying has been and continues to be a major problem due largely to the role of boys and girls. Boys played more aggressive

roles, while the roles played by girls were subtle and passive. One of the major implications of bullying is the consistent abuse of power between bullies and victims. Hence; mitigating this imbalance and consistent abuse of power will require continuous action in the form of bully prevention programmes. Further, strong action will also be required from school administrators, teachers, counsellors, parents and community leaders. In sum, a reduction in bullying can be achieved through the empowerment of both bullies and victims.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study provides recommendations for best practices on various aspects of behaviour management and mitigation of problem behaviour. The recommendations are not exhaustive but serve as a legitimate means of addressing issues relevant to bullying and academic performance at the primary levels in schools. The following should be implemented:

- The Ministry of Education should provide more training for teachers in the area of behaviour management. This training should be broad based and a shift away from the adhoc sessions conducted by the National Centre for Education Resource Development.
- School administrators should also be trained in order to equip them with relevant knowledge and skills to deal with mass disruption in their schools.
- There is urgent need for a school wide bully prevention programme. This programme will assist students with potential thoughts about bullying to control their aggression.
- Teachers should take an active role in classroom supervision of students and do more to foster goodwill and peer support among students.
- Students should be taught resiliency skills and there should be programmes set up to assist children who are struggling to cope with bullying.
- Further research including longitudinal studies should be conducted on the impact of bullying at the primary level.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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