

In-service Teachers' Attitude and Knowledge towards School Bullying: A Conceptual and Empirical Analysis

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Abstract



The study aimed to identify in-service elementary school teachers' attitudes and knowledge towards the prevalence of school bullying. The study examined whether the teachers had a clear understanding of the concept of school bullying and how this understanding affected their awareness and understanding of bullying, as well as classroom discipline and rule factors such as creating a respectful and fair environment while avoiding harsh disciplinary measures. The study also looked at classroom management factors, including authoritarian, authoritative, democratic, and laissez-faire styles. Additionally, the research explored the impact of bullying on learning and how this affected teachers' attitudes towards school bullying. The population for the current study was included all public elementary school teachers' of district Sargodha. A sample of 300 teachers' was selected from public sector of district Sargodha. A quantitative survey research design was used to collect reliable data, and the instrument's reliability was verified through Cronbach's Alpha, which was found to be 0.85. The results showed that the concept of school bullying had a significant impact on the attitudes of teachers towards bullying. The study concluded that classroom discipline and rules, classroom management, and the impact of bullying on learning all affected teachers' attitudes towards school bullying.

Keywords: School bullying, teachers, attitude, knowledge, classroom

Introduction

Bullying is a universal issue, which is defined as hurting others through physical, verbal, and emotional torture. Bullying is a special kind of violent behaviour and can be defined as a state when a student is visible again and again, to negative movements of one or more students (Olweus, 1993). Thus it is direct or indirect aggression that reoccurs intentionally to intentional direct or indirect aggression that victimize a weaker student. Research indicates that school bullying is found in many countries of the world and has significantly influenced the lives of individuals who were involved in such activities in their adult age (Rigby, 2003; Smith et al., 2003).

Dooley (2009) found that inappropriate attitudes in Australian classrooms led to bullying of students. In a national report in Australia titled "Strategies and Initiative to Provide Safe, Supportive Learning Environment" by the Ministerial Council (2002), It is necessary to provide a national approach to address bullying in Australian schools. So, these reports found that every teacher must show a dutiful attitude and careful behaviour towards bullying situations in school. Research shows that 3 out of 10 children experience bullying as victims, perpetrators, or both (Giovazolias et al., 2008). Elementary school teachers' attitudes towards school bullying are shaped by both individual and contextual factors, as stated by Craig et al. (2000). These individual factors work in tandem with contextual factors to affect teachers' attitudes towards bullying. Contextual factors encompass the characteristics of the bullying process, including the different types of bullying and teachers' understanding of the concept of bullying. Therefore, on the one hand, teachers' knowledge of school bullying is of immense importance. On the other hand, how school teachers recognize and identify bullying proceedings, and various types of tactics they use in practice to stop bullying situation, is a subjective issue of bullying phenomenon (Boulton, 2014)

Objective of the Study

The Objective were to:

1. Investigate elementary school teachers' attitude towards school bullying.
2. Measure the perception of teachers' concept about school bullying.

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Statement of Problem

The study's context is outlined in the problem statement. It seeks to ascertain the state of knowledge regarding the topic, the context of the problem that the study focuses on, the significance of the knowledge, and the specific purpose of the research. In the view of the previous studies, teachers have different attitudes towards school bullying. This research explores and measures the in-service teachers' attitudes towards school bullying at the elementary level.

Research Questions of the Study

Teachers' perspectives on bullying could be influenced by many factors (e.g. conceptual understanding, attitude, and knowledge). The following questions were addressed in the study:

- What concept of school bullying do the teachers perceive?
- What are the gender-wise differences concerning teachers' attitudes towards school bullying, and other variables such as school bullying concept for teachers, classroom management, classroom discipline and rules and impact on learning due to bullying?
- What is the impact of the school bullying concept on teachers' attitudes towards school bullying?

Theoretical Framework

There are many theories exist in the literature to describe school bullying phenomena in the class or in school. The theoretical framework of the current study was based on the theory of planned behavior. According to theory of planned behavior (TPB) given by Ajzen (2012), the human behavior is guided by intention, and the intention are influenced by attitude towards the behavior, perceived norms and perceived behavior control. To measure attitude according to theory of planned behaviors (Ajzen, 2012) as a theoretical framework to recognize and understand of individual teachers' behavior in a bullying incident. According to the theory of planned behaviors (TPB), it is conceptualize that measure of teachers' response is an interpreter of teachers' actual responses towards school bullying. So, teachers' normative belief about bullying and teachers' attitudes about responses are significant predictors of their social intentions in concern to bullying event. Therefore, teachers' perception is the key element in building his capacities to deal with bullying. The literature review is presented below to explore this important aspect in detail.

Review of Literature

The literature review provided in this report presents several research studies that propose practical solutions for school bullying problems among students. School teachers have a significant impact on their students' lives and can play an important role in recognizing, comprehending, and responding to school bullying incidents (Boulton, 1997). According to research, school educators only observe 1 out of 25 incidents of school bullying, indicating a lack of awareness of this behaviour. Some studies have found that students have reported incidents where teachers did not take sufficient steps to stop bullying (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). In one particular case, it was found that only 25% of teachers would usually interfere to stop bullying in schools, while the other 75% claimed that they would try to manage and eliminate such situations in school (Ziegler & Rosenstein-Manner, 1991). There is a lack of research on the knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of teachers regarding school bullying. To fully understand and address the issue of school bullying, it is important to consider teacher variables. These variables include the teacher's concepts about bullying, classroom discipline and rules, classroom management, and teaching experience. Previous studies have shown that teachers face challenges in accurately identifying bullies and victims due to various factors such as the nature of the bullying behaviour and the age of the students involved (Johnson & Leff, 1999). Boulton (1997) explored how teachers address school bullying and the strategies they use to prevent it. Similarly, Wiggins (2001) revealed that teachers' relational bullying phenomena were limited among students in the school.

Bullying in educational settings has long been a widespread issue. Bullying in educational settings has garnered global attention (Nansel et al., 2004; Smith et al., 2004). According to Olweus (1987) Bullying in schools "involves a person exposed, regularly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more persons," Bullying behaviour in school may be considered to represent brutality or harassment behaviour, typically repetitive, by an individual or group of persons on an individual. Bullying in schools is a severe and widespread issue that affects many pupils. Regarding the topic of bullying in schools, there are still misconceptions among educators. According to the majority of educators, bullying is a "normal growing phase of childhood" (Coloroso, 2002). Some teachers regarding school-based violence are reflected in comments such as, "Bullying is just a normal part of growing up", or sometimes "Bullying is character building". Teachers' conception of school bullying is a significant problem for indication suggests how teachers define and understand bullying, and what kind of strategies they use to intervene (Boulton, 1997). Craig et al. (2000) found that Ninety-five per cent of teachers admit bullying takes place in their class; very pathetic, twenty-five per cent report that they neglect it. Teachers must be able to recognize and identify all forms of bullying behaviour in schools, including relational bullying (such as

spreading rumours, and social isolation), cyberbullying (such as using cell phones, text messaging, email threats, and internet sites), and physical bullying (such as pushing, kicking, and hitting). However, school bullying is a serious problem for educational & social settings which influences a large portion of school-age children. Scholars have identified some significant links between bullying in the peer group and the educational environment. According to Whitney et al. (1992), children who bully others are more likely to be held accountable for "*disruptive behaviour against others*" and "*beginning of fights*." Therefore, aggressive behaviour is a particular type of bullying and can be recognized as a condition when a student is showing repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students (Olweus, 1993). Bullying does not take place in a vacuum. Instead, because people are embedded in social and environmental settings, their behaviour is compulsorily impacted by those settings. Bullying is clearly explained in the societal setting of the classroom, the school, the family, the peer group and the large community. School teachers' can have a big and large influence on the daily routine of their students. Their influence and impact include understanding, recognizing and responding to bullying behaviour incidents in classrooms and school premises (Mishna et al., 2005). However, teachers' rapid response towards bullying situations is the main and important element to cope with such incidents. Some teachers expressed that school bullying is an important and serious issue (Bauman & Rio, 2006). Therefore, teachers usually have a negative attitude towards bullies' persons and have sympathy with victims. Because it might influence how school teachers react to bullying situations, knowledge and awareness of school bullying are seen as crucial components. It is thought that awareness, recognition, and identification of bullying are crucial components of teachers' understanding of bullying in schools. Similar to this, numerous studies have discovered that teachers are largely ignorant of the bullying behaviour that kids experience, even at the elementary or secondary level (Bauman & Del Rio, 2005; Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2007; Craig et al., 2011). It is a matter of fact that some studies found that teachers have sound technical knowledge about school bullying problems as many students generally report that their teachers are greatly aware of their problems (Mishna et al., 2005; Bradshaw et al., 2013). But in some cases, it is also found that while assessing school bullying issues, school personnel even classroom teachers face a tough time in distinguishing between school bullying and peer conflict among students (Bauman & Del Rio, 2005; Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008).

However, practically every school has dealt with this problem because, according to numerous psychologists, verbal bullying is the most prevalent kind of bullying that occurs in schools (Gorsek & Cunningham, 2014). Regretfully, teachers and other staff members do not consider verbal aggression in schools to be a valid type of bullying, according to Mishna et al. (2005). As a result, some studies also discovered that there is a discrepancy in how teachers and pupils generally perceive bullying situations. However elementary school teachers accept as true that they cope more frequently than students think, like a study by Bradshaw et al. (2007) almost 84% of elementary teachers try to manage and control conflict between children in schools as compared to intervening with students (35%). However, it is also found that many students face bullying situations due to a lack of teacher intervention. With such poor cooperation from the teachers' side, the bullying behaviour of the bully gets stronger and the victim faces helplessness and isolation conditions. (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). According to Bradshaw et al. (2007) implementing intervention strategies daily can control bullying situations effectively. According to Yoon and Kerber (2003), teachers can be active players in all efforts which can help to prevent bullying situations. So teachers as "first responders" can make a difference by being much more knowledgeable and confident. Similarly, according to Twemlow et al. (2006) explored that Teachers are critical in determining the school climate. Thus their attitudes to power dynamics are extremely relevant. Teachers have to be able to understand and recognize the bullying phenomenon, then can easily prevent and intervene in bullying situations. Past research indicates that many teachers do not possess an awareness of school bullying behaviour among students.

Methodology

The nature of the current study was descriptive. The study's research design was a quantitative survey. All of the government elementary school teachers in the district of Sargodha, made up the population of the current study. However as a researcher, one of the reasons for choosing elementary schools rather than high schools was that the researcher believed the research was a case study of the Sargodha district and specifically targeted elementary school teachers. The fact that these institutions are located in the area where the researcher is doing practice and are within a 55-kilometre radius of one another is another factor in the decision to select them. This made it easier for the researcher to visit them if the need arose to hand deliver rather than post the questionnaire. Elementary schools from the tehsil Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan were selected. The study's sample consisted of 300 teachers of the public elementary schools of district Sargodha. The convenient sampling technique was employed. Then researcher designed his

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instrument. A 7-point Likert scale was adopted in the research instrument to measure the attitude of elementary school teachers towards school bullying. Various meetings were held with the experts to improve the structure of the item. Under the light of expert opinion and suggestion, some modifications were made in the questionnaire and then it came into its final version. The value of the reliability coefficient Cronbach's Alpha (α), was calculated which was 0.85.

Findings

Bullying concept for teachers

To find out the bullying concept for teachers table 1 gives the profile respondents.

TABLE: 1 *School bullying concept for teachers' profile*

Variables	Values
Knowledge about School Bullying	
Yes	59 (19.7%)
No	218 (72.7%)
Don't Know	23 (7.7%)
Bullying is a serious problem	
Yes	158 (52.7%)
No	93 (31%)
Don't Know	49 (16.3%)

It can be seen from Table 1 that in the classification of respondents related to knowledge about school bullying, 19.7% of respondents were yes, 72.7% were no and 7.7% respondents did not know. It's obvious from the table from table 1 that the grouping of respondents related to bullying is a serious problem, 52.7 % of respondents were yes, 31% were no and 16.3 % respondents did not know.

Group difference concerning Gender

The t-test was applied to study the group concerning gender. The t-test is used to calculate whether the mean score of the two groups is different from each other significantly or not. The analyzed results of the independent t-test are given below.

TABLE: 2 *Group differences concerning Gender*

Variables	Mean		Standard Deviation		df	t
	Males	Females	Males	Females		
Bullying Concept	15.04	16.52	4.01	3.48	298	-3.426**
Classroom Management	61.12	61.44	9.71	8.32	298	-0.310
Classroom discipline and rule	45.66	45.71	7.72	9.175	298	-0.058
Impact on learning due to bullying	11.60	11.76	2.32	2.29	298	-0.607

** $p < .01$

Table 2 reflected that an independent-sample t-test was used to a comparison of male and female elementary school teachers for school bullying concepts, classroom management, classroom discipline and rules and the impact of bullying on learning. It can be noticed from the table that the result regarding the concept of school bullying the female teachers' had a greater mean score ($M=16.52$, $SD=3.48$) than the mean score of male teachers ($M=15.04$, $SD=4.01$), with $df_{(298)} t = -3.426$, $p=0.001$. The results revealed that male and female elementary school teachers were significantly different from each other regarding the school bullying concept.

Similarly, the result regarding the classroom management factors reflected that the mean score of female teachers ($M=61.44$, $SD=8.32$) was greater than the mean score of male teachers ($M=61.12$, $SD=9.71$), with $df_{(298)} t = -0.310$, $p = 0.757$. The results revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female elementary teachers regarding the concept of classroom management.

Likewise, it can be seen that the result regarding the impact of bullying on learning factors reflected that the mean score of female teachers was greater ($M=11.76$, $SD=2.29$) as compared to male teachers ($M=11.60$, $SD=2.32$), with $df_{(298)} t = -0.607$, $p=0.544$. The results revealed that male and female elementary school teachers were not significantly different from each other regarding the impact of bullying on learning factors.

Correlation Matrix among teachers' attitude towards school bullying and its contributing factors.

The relationship between the teachers' perspectives on bullying in schools and the factors that lead to it was calculated (classroom management, classroom discipline and rules, and impact on learning due to school bullying).

TABLE: 3 *Correlation coefficients (Pearson's) among the teachers' attitude towards school bullying and its contributing factors*

Variables	M	SD	N	TATB	CM	CDR	IOLDB
teacher attitude towards bullying	56.23	8.01	300	1			
Classroom Management	61.26	9.10	300	.463**	1		
Classroom discipline and rule	45.68	8.39	300	.345**	.380**	1	
Impact on learning due to bullying	11.67	2.31	300	.544**	.367**	.296**	1

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ & *** $p < 0.00$

Overall impression of Table 3 demonstrates that there were significant correlations existing among the variables. Teachers' attitudes towards school bullying developed significantly with other variables. A significant positive correlation between teachers' attitudes and other variables showed that classroom management, classroom discipline and rule, and impact on learning due to bullying significantly increased the teachers' attitude towards school bullying. In addition, the significant positive correlation coefficient between classroom management, classroom discipline and rules and impact on learning due to bullying demonstrated that these perceptions are significantly interlinked. To explore the combined effect of independent variables on the prediction of the dependent variable of teachers' attitudes, a regression analysis was computed.

The linear Regression for the school bullying concept for teachers as a predictor and teachers' attitude towards bullying as the dependent variable

The linear Regression analysis was used to determine the value of the dependent variable (teachers' attitude towards bullying) from the predictor variable (School bullying concept for teachers). The SPSS software applied for linear regression revealed the following results

TABLE: 4 *Model summary presenting teachers' attitudes towards school bullying as the dependent variable.*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.219 ^a	.048	.045	7.833

Table 4 shows the model summary of the predictor variable (school bullying concept for teachers) towards the dependent variable (teachers' attitude towards school bullying). The result indicated the school bullying concept for teachers had a 4.5 % impact on teachers' attitudes towards school bullying.

TABLE: 5

The coefficient of regression line presents the school bullying concept for teachers as predictors and teachers' attitudes as dependent variables.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
1 (Constant)	49.063	1.903		15.05
School bullying concept	.457	.118	.219	

Table 5 reflects the values of the Un-Standardized and Standardized coefficients and the impact of the school bullying concept on teachers' attitudes. The result showed that the school bullying concept for teachers had an impact on teachers' attitudes towards bullying at $p \leq 0.05$. The value of the un-standardized coefficient was (.457) and the standardized coefficient was (.219)

TABLE: 6 *Regression analysis for teachers' attitude towards school bullying predicted by its contributing factors*

Variable	Predictors of Glass Ceiling Model (Full)	
	Regression coefficients (b ₁)	95% CI
Constant	2.884	14.145 to 25.329
Classroom management	.232***	.143 to .230
Impact on learning due to bullying	1.413***	1.074 to 1.751
Classroom discipline and rule	.127**	.034 to .221
R ²	.391	
F	63.236	
Δ R ²	.384	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ & *** $p < 0.005$

In Table 6, the regression model was computed with teachers' attitudes towards school bullying as the outcome variable and the variables as; classroom management bullying's effects on learning, the discipline in the classroom, and the use of rules as indicators. The regression coefficient (b₁) is given in column 1, and the regression coefficient's lower and upper range, reflecting a minimum and maximum value at 95% of the confidence interval, are shown in column as per the F-value for the previously

described model ($F(3,296) = 63.236, p < .001$), the outcome variable that the predictor variable significantly predicted was "Teachers' attitude towards school bullying". But in column 1, the predictors' regression coefficient demonstrates that "classroom management ($b = .232^{***}$)", "Impact on learning due to bullying ($b = 1.413^{***}$)" and "classroom discipline and rule ($b = .127^{**}$)" are the significant predictors of the "teachers attitude towards school bullying". In addition, the positive signs indicate that a unit increase in "Classroom management" increases teachers' attitude towards school bullying by 0.23 units. However, one unit increase in "impact on learning due to bullying" enhanced teachers' attitudes towards school bullying by 1.41 units. Whereas, one unit increase in "classroom discipline and rule" increased teachers' attitudes towards school bullying by 0.12 units. Hence proves that these variables contribute to the teachers' attitude towards school bullying. Moreover, the significant regression coefficient indicated that the "classroom management", "impact on learning due to bullying" and "classroom discipline and rule" present in the schools are the major contributors to the teachers' attitude towards school bullying in district Sargodha.

Findings

It can be seen from the results that the classification of respondents related to knowledge about school bullying, 19.7% of respondents were yes, 72.7% were no and 7.7% respondents did not know. Results also revealed that the grouping of respondents related to bullying is a serious problem, 52.7 % of respondents were yes, 31% were no and 16.3 % respondents did not know. The second research question of the study was to explore the gender-wise differences with respect to teachers' attitudes towards school bullying, and other variables such as school bullying knowledge for teachers, classroom management, classroom discipline and rule and impact on learning due to bullying. The results reflected that gender was not found significant regarding classroom management. The results reflected that the significant difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers' was not significant with respect to classroom management, classroom discipline and rules and Impact on learning due to bullying. The results reflected that the difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers' was not found significant with respect to classroom discipline and rules. Similarly, there was no significant gender difference with respect to the Impact on learning due to bullying. However, results revealed that male and female elementary school teachers were significantly different from each other regarding the school bullying concept. It was also found that data analysis of the linear regression model reflected the influences of school bullying. Knowledge for teachers. The result showed that the school bullying concept for teachers had an impact on teachers' attitudes towards bullying.

Conclusion

In this research study, it was concluded that there was no gender-wise difference among elementary school teachers regarding teachers' attitude towards school bullying, and other variables such as school bullying knowledge for teachers, classroom management, classroom discipline and rule and impact on learning due to bullying. It also infers that male and female elementary school teachers were significantly different from each other regarding the school bullying concept.

Therefore, it was concluded that the school bullying concept for teachers had an impact on teachers' attitudes towards bullying. Similarly, the result showed that the teaching experiences had an impact on teachers' attitudes towards bullying. Lastly, it was concluded that classroom discipline and rules, classroom management, and influence on learning due to bullying factors had an impact on teachers' attitudes towards school bullying.

Discussion

The current study's main goal was to examine teachers' perspectives on bullying in schools. During the review of the literature, five factors were identified which may influence the teachers' attitude towards school bullying. They included bullying concepts for teachers, classroom discipline, classroom management, impact on learning due to bullying, and individual factors (confidence level, personal belief about bullying, self-efficacy). The study's key findings were highly noteworthy in that they shed light on the main factors that significantly predict teachers' attitudes regarding bullying in schools. According to the results, the sample accurately represented the population. It was also revealed that no gender differences were found regarding teachers' attitudes towards school bullying and other study variables such as school bullying concept for teachers, classroom management, classroom discipline and rules, and impact on learning due to bullying.

The subsequent outcomes align with the conclusions of an earlier investigation carried out by Yoon and Kerber (2003). This concluded that classroom discipline and classroom management have a deep influence on the bullying climate in school. Classroom management problems may cause the students to be indulged or suffer from bullying behaviour. Bradshaw et al. (2009) depicted that bullying behaviour impacts on the learning process. Similarly, Kennedy et al. (2012), explored that teachers need more

concepts about bullying phenomena in school. Likewise bullying phenomena in school has become a serious issue (Mishna et al., 2005; Bradshaw et al., 2013).

The findings also reflected that the classification of respondents related to knowledge about school bullying, only a few teachers knew the concept of the bullying phenomena in school many teachers had no idea about bullying in school. These findings align with those of Kennedy et al. (2012), who discovered that the majority of the teachers have no idea regarding school bullying.

The findings of the research study reflected the impact of classroom discipline and rule, classroom management, and influence on learning due to bullying factors on teachers' attitudes towards school bullying. These results are consistent with those (Yoon & Kerber, 2003), which concluded that classroom discipline and classroom management has a deep influence on teachers' attitude towards school bullying in school. Bradshaw et al. (2009) revealed that the impact on learning due to bullying had an influence on teachers' attitudes towards school bullying.

Recommendations

The study explored that the school bullying concept for teachers had an impact on teachers' attitudes towards bullying. It is therefore crucial that teachers understand the concept of bullying in schools. This study explores how classroom management had an impact on teachers' attitudes towards school bullying. Thus it is suggested that teachers should manage the classroom management in the proper way to reduce bullying situations. Therefore, teachers have the responsibility to create an environment where victims of bullying are supported, and protected and where school children feel secure from bullying. The current research study found that classroom discipline and rules had an impact on teachers' attitudes towards school bullying. Thus it is suggested that teachers should develop such types of rules and regulations which provide a free bullying classroom environment. This study explores the influence of learning had an impact on teachers' attitudes towards school bullying. Thus it is suggested that teachers should develop an effective learning environment in the class and decrease the rate of bullying phenomena in the class.

Suggestions for Future Research

For the study, the sample taken included only district Sargodha schools; But, the future study may be conducted with a bigger sample size and, must also include the teachers from other districts of Punjab. It would make the study results more generalizable. The research found the impact of six variables the concept of school bullying, classroom management, classroom discipline and rule, gender discrimination and impact on learning due to bullying influence on teachers' attitude towards school bullying among elementary school teachers; future study might be conducted to see some other variables such as teachers intervention of school, negative outcomes due to school bullying, peer victimization and bullying intervention program on teachers' attitude towards school bullying. Further research can include in-service training about bullying can be offered to teachers. Anti-bullying program initiatives are thought to have a large and crucial role in the positive classroom and school climate. Thus, teacher training in bullying prevention could be a focus of future research as well as research that can involve the opinions and behaviour of high school teachers concerning bullying phenomena.

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