



BULLYING ENCOUNTERED AND THEIR PERCEIVED IMPACTS ON STUDENTS' SENSE OF SELF

Dindo V. Salamanca¹ⁱ,

Cornelio R. Rollo²

¹Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges,
Graduate School,
General Santos City,
Philippines

²PhD, Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges,
Graduate School,
General Santos City,
Philippines

Abstract:

This cross-sectional research study explores various forms of bullying experienced by students and their impacts on their sense of self at selected national high schools in Apopong District, Division of General Santos City. Three key questions are addressed: identification of encountered bullying forms, examination of their effects on students' sense of self (physical, emotional, intellectual, behavioral, social, and creative), and development of school interventions based on the findings. Data was collected from forty-five high school students through a survey questionnaire adapted from Anderson's (2007) work, with triangulation through focus group discussions. Results show verbal bullying is most prevalent, followed by emotional and physical bullying. The impact on students' sense of self varies, with physical sense moderately affected. perceived impact leads to feelings of powerlessness, inferiority, and fighting back. Recommendations include debriefing workshops to address self-esteem issues. Further research in diverse settings is advised to understand bullying prevalence and design effective interventions. The proposed "Bullying Prevention Program" empowers teachers to create secure learning environments and enhance student well-being. Continuous monitoring and evaluation ensure program efficacy.

Keywords: educational management, high school students, bullying, verbal, emotional, physical, behavioral, sense of self, cross-sectional method, prevention strategies, Philippines

ⁱ Correspondence: email giediolarodriguez@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Bullying persists as a pervasive challenge in public schools, despite concerted efforts to address the issue. Contrary to the widely held belief that schools provide a safe and secure environment, a considerable number of learners grapple with the impact of bullying. The perception of bullying as a benign ritual during the school years has undergone a transformation. It is now acknowledged as a widespread global problem with far-reaching consequences for the social and emotional well-being of children and adolescents, as noted by Hidalgo and Español (2021).

Numerous global studies have delved into the complexities of school bullying. Sanapo's (2019) research, for example, revealed that school bullying manifests in various ways—ranging from physical and verbal abuse to spreading rumors, exclusion, and rejection. It is characterized as a deliberate, ongoing effort to assert control over another person with aggressive or harmful intent. Experts assert that bullying occurs when a learner endures repeated unkind actions from one or more peers; importantly, the victim need not initiate these actions for it to qualify as bullying. Notably, bullying stands apart from other aggressive behaviors due to its inherent power imbalance and the recurring nature of these behaviors (Asio & Gadia, 2019; Cardona *et al.*, 2020; Chiu & Vargo, 2022; Gabiana, 2019; Hidalgo & Español, 2021).

Similarly, researchers also documented this trend in the Philippine educational setting. According to Hidalgo and Español (2021), bullying is a serious issue that affects both homes and schools, and teachers have a limited understanding of it. Learners frequently disagree with teachers about what behaviors constitute bullying and how to address it. Being bullied has been linked to future social and emotional problems in children, so it is critical to build consensus among teachers and learners about the forms bullying takes and their perceived impacts on learners' sense of self to design effective interventions (Asio & Gadia, 2019; Gabiana, 2019; Inocencio & Inocencio, 2021).

The researcher's first-hand observation of learners who have experienced bullying in schools highlights the urgency of understanding the issue and its effects. Bullying is not just a matter of isolated incidents; it contributes to a culture of violence and perpetuates power imbalances that allow the strong to dominate the weak. Bullying is increasingly troubling for both educators and parents due to its adverse effects on learners' social and emotional health, leading to potential long-term repercussions. It is crucial to develop and execute effective interventions to address the issue of bullying in schools. Educators can foster a secure and welcoming atmosphere, enabling learners to learn and be set free from the threat of harmful conduct (Gonzales & Madrigal, 2020).

The researcher underscores the need to fill a void in current literature regarding bullying in public schools. It is crucial to emphasize the significance of comprehending diverse forms of bullying and their potential influence on learners' self-esteem. By identifying and comprehending these different types of bullying, we can gain insight into how they affect learners and improve practices for addressing them. Therefore, it highlights the urgency of undertaking research in this area and discovering the implications for effective interventions.

The pervasive and enduring prevalence of bullying in public schools necessitates immediate research to pinpoint effective interventions that can alleviate the adverse effects on learners. Understanding the different forms of bullying and their impact on learners' sense of self is crucial to developing strategies to prevent and address this issue effectively. Effective interventions are identified and assessed for feasibility in public schools to ensure widespread and sustainable implementation. Ultimately, by prioritizing research in this area and working to develop and implement effective interventions, educators can create safer, more inclusive learning environments for all learners (Esguerra *et al.*, 2020).

2. Methodology

This research study is grounded in a robust quantitative research approach, specifically adopting a descriptive cross-sectional research design. Cross-sectional research, as outlined by Aguinaldo *et al.* (2020), involves examining the present state of a population at a specific moment in time. Instead of opting for a comprehensive census, this design selects a subset of the population, capturing vital information that is then generalized to the entire population.

In the practical application of cross-sectional research, researchers often intentionally choose components of the sample survey to draw meaningful conclusions about the broader population. This approach proves invaluable across diverse fields, enabling researchers to glean insights into the characteristics and dynamics of the population under study.

Moreover, the descriptive cross-sectional method incorporated the triangulation technique to enhance the robustness and validity of the findings, as recommended by Creswell (2018). Triangulation involves the deliberate use of multiple methods for data collection and analysis concerning the same phenomenon. By doing so, the researcher aims to cross-verify and validate results, mitigating the inherent biases associated with relying solely on a single method.

To execute this research design, data collection involved a targeted sample of respondents, carefully selected to represent the broader population accurately. The research team utilized a well-structured survey instrument designed to capture comprehensive insights into the forms of bullying experienced by learners in the selected secondary schools of Apopong District during the School Year 2016-2017.

The survey questionnaire underwent meticulous testing, including a pilot study involving twenty (20) learner respondents from other districts, to evaluate the instrument's reliability. During the primary survey phase, forty-five (45) learner participants from the selected public schools in Apopong District were included through complete enumeration, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the population under investigation.

In addition to the quantitative phase, a qualitative component was incorporated, employing in-depth interviews with five (5) selected learners. This qualitative approach

aimed to provide nuanced insights into the subjective experiences of bullying, complementing the quantitative data.

As a research initiative committed to ethical standards, the study secured informed consent from all participants, and confidentiality was rigorously maintained throughout the data collection and analysis process. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, alongside the triangulation technique, enhances the reliability and validity of the study's findings, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the forms of bullying prevalent among secondary school learners in Apopong District during the specified academic year.

3. Result and Discussion

This investigation identified respondent characteristics, focusing on age, gender, and grade level.

The learners' demographic reveals that 67% fall within the 15-16 age range, with 20% aged 13-14, 13% aged 17-18, and none in the 19-20 bracket. Among respondents, 58% are female learners, while 42% are male. Distribution by grade level shows 69% at Grade 10, 20% at Grade 9, 11% at Grade 8, and none at Grade 7.

3.1 Different Forms of Bullying Encountered by Learners

This study determined the forms of bullying encountered by learners in the two selected National High Schools.

Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Different Forms of Bullying Encountered by Learners

Forms of Bullying	Frequency	Percentage
Verbal	26	58
Emotional	14	31
Physical	5	11
Total	45	100

The data show the forms of bullying encountered by learners in school as described in this study, including the types, occurrences, and characteristics of bullying. More than 11% of the learners experienced physical bullying, 58% encountered verbal bullying, and 31% experienced emotional bullying. Thus, the most common forms of bullying faced by learners are verbal bullying, followed by emotional and physical bullying. Bullying is a situation when one or more learners repeatedly abuse another learner for some time, weeks, or even months.

3.2 Verbal Forms of Bullying Encountered by Learners

Table 2 displays the mean score distribution of verbal bullying encountered by the respondents in this study. The table provides valuable insights into the frequency and impact of verbal bullying experiences among the participants. The calculated mean scores

show how often verbal bullying incidents occurred and their severity on the learner's well-being.

Table 2: Forms of Bullying Encountered by Learners (Verbal)

Verbal Bullying	Lanton National High School		New Society National High School	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description
1. I received violent threats.	2.29	Encountered once a week	2.31	Encountered once a week
2. Sexually offensive remarks were made to me.	1.69	Encountered once a day	1.71	Encountered once a day
3. Untrue, hurtful notes were written about me (including horrible graffiti).	2.51	Encountered once a week	2.62	Encountered once a week
4. I was teased about my body or physical appearance.	2.82	Encountered once a week	2.81	Encountered once a week
5. My character (personality traits) was attacked by the bully/bullies.	2.49	Encountered once a week	2.50	Encountered once a week
6. Offensive, threatening, and insulting remarks were made about me.	2.71	Encountered once a week	2.72	Encountered once a week
7. I was called terrible, hurtful names.	2.84	Encountered once a week	2.82	Encountered once a week
8. I was forced into doing things I did not want to do.	1.87	Encountered once a day	1.89	Encountered once a day
9. I was teased and taunted during the time when I was bullied.	2.16	Encountered once a week	2.15	Encountered once a week
10. The bully/bullies would criticize me.	2.51	Encountered once a week	2.50	Encountered once a week
11. Racist remarks were made about me.	1.93	Encountered once a day	1.95	Encountered once a day
12. I would receive untrue, often hurtful e-mails or SMSs.	2.67	Encountered once a week	2.70	Encountered once a week
13. I was treated differently because of my religious beliefs.	1.93	Encountered once a day	2.0	Encountered once a day
14. I was threatened in a language which I did not understand.	2.31	Encountered once a week	2.51	Encountered once a week
Overall Mean	2.34	Encountered once a week	2.37	Encountered once a week

Legend: 1:00-1.49 = Never Encountered; 1:50-2.49 = Encountered once in a day; 2.50-3.49 = Encountered once in a week; 3.50-4.49 = Encountered once in a month; 4.50-5.49 = Encountered once in a semester; 5.50-6:00 = Encountered once in a school-year.

The findings presented in the table shed light on the prevalence of verbal bullying within the study population. By analyzing the mean scores, the researcher identifies patterns and trends in the data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the nature of verbal bullying incidents reported by the respondents. This information can be crucial in formulating appropriate interventions to address and mitigate the harmful effects of verbal bullying on the learners' psychological and emotional health. Examining mean scores comprehensively reveals patterns and underscores variations in the severity of verbal

bullying incidents. These nuanced insights facilitate a deeper understanding, enabling educators and policymakers to customize interventions that address the diverse degrees of harm learners experience. This approach aims to cultivate a safer and healthier school environment.

The findings reveal the mean score distribution of bullying encountered by students in terms of verbal bullying in Table 2. The data shows the frequency and type of verbal bullying experienced by students in Lanton National High School and New Society National High School. On average, students from both schools reported encountering verbal bullying once a week. The most common form of verbal bullying was being called terrible, hurtful names, which was encountered once a week by an average of 2.83 and 2.82 students from Lanton and New Society, respectively. The second most common form of verbal bullying was being teased about physical appearance, which was encountered once a week by an average of 2.82 and 2.81 students from Lanton and New Society, respectively. The least common form of verbal bullying was receiving racist remarks, which was encountered once a day by an average of 1.93 and 1.95 students from Lanton and New Society, respectively. The data suggests that verbal bullying is a prevalent issue in both schools and requires intervention and prevention measures.

These results imply that verbal bullying is a significant problem in both Lanton National High School and New Society National High School. The mean score distribution highlights the frequency and types of verbal bullying experienced by learners in these schools. The findings indicate that learners from both schools encounter verbal bullying on a weekly basis, with the most common forms being called terrible, hurtful names, and teasing about their physical appearance. Additionally, the data reveals that racist remarks, although less frequent, are still encountered by a significant number of learners on a daily basis. The prevalence of verbal bullying, highlighted by the mean score distribution, underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions in Lanton National High School and New Society National High School. Addressing the persistent racist remarks, even if less frequent, is crucial for fostering a safer and more inclusive environment for all learners.

These results underscore the need for immediate intervention and prevention measures to address the issue of verbal bullying in both schools. The high frequency of these incidents indicates that learners are experiencing emotional harm and distress. School authorities, educators, and parents must implement effective strategies and programs to create a safe and supportive learner environment. Taking action against verbal bullying can safeguard learners' well-being and mental health and promote a more positive and inclusive school environment.

Thus, we cannot ignore the fact that verbal bullying is prevalent in public secondary schools. Similarly, physical and verbal bullying are the two most common forms examined by researchers. Hence, Wang *et al.* (2021) referenced Roland and Idsoe (2001), while Craig *et al.* (2020) cited Olweus (1991), adopted the most common definitions. Roland characterizes bullying as persistent violence, whether physical or psychological, carried out by an individual or a group targeting someone who lacks the means to protect themselves. Aligning with this perspective, Olweus provides a more

precise and stringent definition, describing bullying as recurring negative actions encompassing behaviors such as hitting, kicking, threatening, confinement, verbal abuse, and teasing. In general, the occurrence of physical bullying experienced by learners was found to be "*Encountered once a week.*" The descriptive interpretation implied that this group of learners had experienced physical forms of bullying only once a week. Participants assert they faced violent threats, teasing, and offensive, threatening, and insulting remarks. The participants supported this finding by sharing the terrible and hurtful names people had called them.

During the interview session, participants shared their experiences of hurtful verbal abuse beyond receiving threats and insulting remarks. We used the triangulation method to cross-reference these accounts with the quantitative data from the survey questionnaire. The data from both sources consistently revealed that participants faced various forms of verbal bullying, such as teasing, taunting, and language-based threats. Additionally, the interview session uncovered a common experience among participants of being attacked based on their character or personality traits, which further reinforced the impact of verbal bullying on their sense of self.

By employing the triangulation method, the study corroborated the multifaceted nature of verbal bullying and its significant consequences for those who endure it. The complementary insights from both qualitative and quantitative data sources provide a comprehensive understanding of the various dimensions of verbal abuse experienced by learners in the study. As a result, educators and policymakers can create precise and efficient strategies to address verbal bullying, promoting a secure and respectful learning atmosphere for learners. The triangulation of data sources strengthens the credibility and validity of the study's findings, enhancing the potential for meaningful and impactful recommendations to address verbal bullying in educational settings.

3.3 Emotional Bullying Encountered by Learners

Table 3 presents a comprehensive view of the mean score distribution for the various forms of emotional bullying encountered by learners in public secondary schools. The table's data allows for a detailed analysis of the frequency and severity of emotional bullying incidents.

The findings reveal the mean score distribution of bullying encountered by learners in terms of emotional bullying in Table 3. The other type of bullying identified by researchers is emotional bullying. Emotional bullying, also known as relational or social aggression, includes social exclusion or attempts to isolate a target from social participation, spreading gossip, refusing to socialize with the victim or excluding them from activities, criticizing the physical appearance or characteristics of the victim (Tiauzon & Malquisto, 2019; Olweus *et al.*, 2020).

Table 3: Forms of Bullying Encountered by Learners (Emotional)

Emotional Bullying	Lanton National High School		New Society National High School	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description
	1. I received aggressive stares from one learner/group of learners.	2.44	Sometimes	2.80
2. Untrue, hurtful notes were written about me (including horrible graffiti).	2.91	Half of the time	3.10	Half of the time
3. I was exposed to sneers, snickers, or sighs by other learners when I spoke.	2.60	Half of the time	2.71	Half of the time
4. Rumors were spread about me.	2.42	Sometimes	2.53	Half of the time
5. I was treated differently because of my skin color.	2.13	Sometimes	2.15	Sometimes
6. I was deliberately ignored by the person/group of people.	2.20	Sometimes	2.31	Sometimes
7. The bully/group of bullies made faces at me/made dirty gestures (e.g., zap signs)	1.98	Sometimes	2.11	Sometimes
8. I observed hostile body language from my 'enemies.'	2.22	Sometimes	2.31	Sometimes
9. When I spoke or came close to the bully/bullies, they would frown.	1.98	Sometimes	2.12	Sometimes
10. I received looks or glances which contained nasty messages (e.g., that I was unacceptable)	2.33	Sometimes	2.35	Sometimes
11. My school property (e.g., school books/stationery) was damaged.	2.07	Sometimes	2.11	Sometimes
12. I was excluded from the group or left out of things on purpose.	1.76	Sometimes	1.82	Sometimes
13. When I approached the bully/bullies, they would roll their eyes.	2.56	Half of the time	2.61	Half of the time
Overall Mean	2.28	Sometimes	2.39	Sometimes

Legend: 1:00-1.49 = Never; 1:50-2.49 = Sometimes; 2:50-3.49 = Half of the time; 3:50-4.49 = More often than not; 4:50-5.00 = Always.

Based on the data provided, it appears that both Lanton National High School and New Society National High School experience emotional bullying behaviors. The data was collected through a self-report survey using a Likert scale, which measures the frequency of different bullying behaviors.

The implications of these results suggest that emotional bullying, characterized by relational or social aggression, is present in both Lanton National High School and New Society National High School. The mean score distribution in Table 3 provides insights into the prevalence of emotional bullying behaviors experienced by students in these schools.

Emotional bullying includes actions such as social exclusion, attempts to isolate the target, spreading gossip, refusal to socialize or include the victim in activities, and criticizing their physical appearance or characteristics. These findings indicate that

students in both schools are subjected to various forms of emotional bullying, which can have significant negative impacts on their well-being, self-esteem, and social interactions. The use of a self-report survey with a Likert scale allowed researchers to measure the frequency of different bullying behaviors. This data collection method provides valuable information on the extent of emotional bullying and helps identify areas where intervention and prevention efforts should be focused.

The implications of these results highlight the urgency of addressing emotional bullying in these schools. It is crucial for educators, administrators, and stakeholders to develop and implement comprehensive anti-bullying programs and interventions that promote positive social interactions, inclusivity, and empathy. By creating a safe and supportive school environment, the detrimental effects of emotional bullying can be mitigated, fostering healthier relationships and well-being among students.

Similarly, the mean scores of both schools on each of the thirteen bullying behaviors are relatively similar. However, the students at New Society National High School reported slightly higher mean scores for all items compared to Lanton National High School. This indicates that emotional bullying is more frequent in New Society National High School.

To strengthen the credibility of these findings, the triangulation method was applied, combining quantitative data from the survey responses with qualitative insights gathered through focus group discussions (FGD). The consistency in the mean scores across both schools for each of the thirteen bullying behaviors, as revealed in Table 3, aligns with the narratives shared by FGD participants. The triangulation of data sources reaffirms that emotional bullying is indeed prevalent in both schools, with New Society National High School reporting slightly higher mean scores, further substantiating the need for targeted intervention programs to address this pressing issue.

Thus, the data suggests that emotional bullying is present in both schools, but is slightly more frequent in New Society National High School. The schools should take steps to address these issues and create a safe and inclusive environment for all students. This may include implementing anti-bullying policies, providing counseling services for victims, and educating students on the impacts of bullying behaviors.

However, it is commonly believed that bullying takes place primarily on the way to and from school, but Olweus, Solberg, & Breivik, (2020) has reported that without a doubt most bullying takes place at school. This is in support to the findings of the study. In fact, Olweus, Solberg, & Breivik, (2020) found that three times more bullying took place at school than in route to and from school. The study revealed that students experienced not only verbal bullying, but also emotional and combined forms of bullying in school. Participants reported experiencing emotional bullying in the form of aggressive stares, nasty messages conveyed through looks or glances, and hostile body language from their aggressors.

3.4 Physical Forms of Bullying Encountered by Students

Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the mean score distribution for the various forms of physical bullying encountered by students in public secondary schools. The data

in this table allows for a detailed analysis of the frequency and severity of physical bullying incidents, offering valuable insights into the challenges faced by students in the educational environment. By examining the mean scores of each form of physical bullying, the researcher identifies patterns and trends that may inform targeted interventions to address and prevent such harmful behaviors.

Table 4: Forms of Bullying Encountered by Learners (Physical)

Indicators	Lanton National High School		New Society National High School	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description
1. I was hit by a learner/ group of learners.	2.07	Sometimes	2.11	Sometimes
2. I was tripped when I walked somewhere.	2.16	Sometimes	2.25	Sometimes
3. I was physically pushed by the bully/ group of bullies.	2.16	Sometimes	2.31	Sometimes
4. I was hurt with a weapon like a stick, pair of scissors, knife, or something else.	2.20	Sometimes	2.42	Sometimes
5. I was burnt with a lighter/other object.	1.47	Never	1.75	Sometimes
6. Things were stolen out my bag.	2.38	Sometimes	2.64	Half of the time
7. Food was taken from me.	1.84	Sometimes	2.12	Sometimes
8. My limbs were sometimes twisted into painful positions.	1.98	Sometimes	2.0	Sometimes
9. My clothes/sports kit was damaged.	1.78	Sometimes	1.83	Sometimes
10. I was threatened into giving money or other things to the bully/bullies.	1.71	Sometimes	1.80	Sometimes
11. I was forced to fight with another person/other people.	2.56	Half of the time	3.12	Half of the time
12. I was slapped through the face or somewhere on my body.	2.38	Sometimes	2.52	Half of the time
13. I was spat on by the people who targeted me.	1.89	Sometimes	1.95	Sometimes
14. I was pulled by my hair when they tried to intimidate me.	2.29	Sometimes	2.46	Sometimes
15. I was poked or bitten.	2.00	Sometimes	2.10	Sometimes
16. I was kicked or stamped on.	1.96	Sometimes	2.17	Sometimes
17. I was victimized through pinching/scratching.	2.20	Sometimes	2.40	Sometimes
18. I was punched by another learner/group of learners.	2.00	Sometimes	2.51	Half of the time
19. Things were thrown at me.	2.22	Sometimes	2.30	Sometimes
20. The bully/group of bullies touched me in a sexual manner.	1.64	Sometimes	1.71	Sometimes
Overall Mean	2.04	Sometimes	2.22	Sometimes

Legend: 1:00-1.49 = Never; 1:50-2.49 = Sometimes; 2.50-3.49 = Half of the time; 3.50-4.49 = More of the than not; 4.50-5.00 = Always

Further, Table 4 revealed the mean score distribution of the occurrence of physical forms of bullying as encountered by students. The data provided shows the mean scores of different physical bullying indicators for two high schools - Lanton National High School and New Society National High School. The data is presented on a scale of 1 to 5, with

higher scores indicating always frequent encounters with physical bullying. The legend provided with the data suggests the frequency of encounters based on the score ranges.

The results indicate that physical bullying is prevalent in both Lanton National High School and New Society National High School. The mean score distribution presented in Table 4 provides insights into the occurrence of different physical bullying indicators experienced by learners in these schools. The data, presented on a scale of 1 to 5, indicates the mean scores associated with various physical bullying behaviors. Higher scores suggest more frequent encounters with physical bullying. The legend accompanying the data provides information on the frequency of encounters based on the score ranges.

These results highlight the need for attention and action to address physical bullying in both schools. The data suggests that students are experiencing physical aggression and harm within the school environment. Such behaviors can lead to physical injuries, emotional distress, and a negative impact on overall well-being.

School authorities, educators, and parents must prioritize implementing effective measures to prevent and intervene in physical bullying incidents. It involves enacting anti-bullying policies, raising awareness and educating on respectful conduct, nurturing an empathetic and inclusive culture, and establishing support systems for both victims and perpetrators. By addressing physical bullying, schools can create a safer and more supportive environment that nurtures positive relationships and contributes to learners' overall well-being.

Both schools report experiencing physical bullying once a week on average, with an overall mean of 2.13, which is 0.18 higher than the original mean. However, New Society National High School reports higher mean scores for most of the indicators, indicating that learners at that school face more severe forms of physical bullying compared to Lanton National High School.

Based on the data, it can be seen that both schools report encountering physical bullying once a week on average, with an overall mean of 2.04 for Lanton National High School and 2.22 for New Society National High School. However, New Society National High School reports higher mean scores for most of the indicators, indicating that students at that school face more severe forms of physical bullying compared to Lanton National High School.

Meanwhile, the most frequently encountered form of physical bullying for both schools is having things stolen out of bags, with mean scores of 2.38 and 2.64 for Lanton National High School and New Society National High School, respectively. Both schools have a mean score of 1.47 for the least encountered form of physical bullying, which involves burning with a lighter or other object.

Overall, the data indicates a prevalent issue of physical bullying in high schools. Urgent action is necessary to tackle this problem and guarantee the safety of learners. Schools should implement anti-bullying policies, provide counseling services for victims, and cultivate a culture of respect and inclusion to prevent bullying. Physical bullying involves physical attacks on the victim, including hitting, kicking, pushing, shoving, spitting, throwing object(s), or anything that does physical harm to the individual or their

belongings. Verbal bullying commonly involves verbal taunts directed at the victim. These include insults, taunting, teasing, and name-calling (Cardona *et al.*, 2020; Lapada & Lapada, 2021; Tan, 2022).

Although people often identify physical and verbal bullying as two different forms of harassment, individuals tend to co-occur these forms of bullying (Gonzales & Madrigal, 2021). Direct bullying encompasses physical and verbal aggression, both of which fall under this category. Direct or overt type bullying includes physical and verbal aggression repeatedly focused on a single target (Sansait *et al.*, 2022; Tus, 2020).

Similarly, the following participants reported that the bully or a group of bullies physically pushed them. A participant disclosed that he was compelled to engage in physical altercations with one or more individuals. Moreover, a participant shared that he was punched by another learner /group of learners.

It is also consistent with the other statements of participants who shared the same experiences. The bully/bullies threatened them by giving them money or other things. Another participant shared that her hair was pulled when they tried to intimidate her. Physical bullying is a form of violence in school. School violence is increasing, with influences from domestic and community violence extending into educational institutions. The escalation of traumatic incidents over time has manifested in school closures, physical altercations, and learner riots (Manuel, 2022).

Further, social withdrawal, feelings of isolation, loneliness, persecution, rejection, and diminished interest in school, along with the expression of violent writing and drawings, serve as precise indicators of learner bullying that can frequently escalate into violence (Huitsing *et al.*, (2023). Studies indicate that individuals enduring prolonged bullying are often the ones who engage in violent school offenses (Inocencio & Inocencio, 2021; Palco *et al.*, 2022).

Similarly, studies have shown that individuals who engage in physical bullying tend to have low levels of empathy towards others. They also have a more positive attitude towards violence and are prone to exhibiting aggressive behavior not only towards their peers but also towards parents and teachers. Physical bullying may stem from profound psychological and behavioral issues that require attention to curb such conduct (Inocencio & Inocencio, 2021; Olweus *et al.*, 2020; Palco *et al.*, 2022).

3.5 Learner's Sense of Self Being Affected by Different Forms of Bullying

Table 5 presents a comprehensive view of the mean score distribution of the learner's sense of self-being affected by different forms of bullying. Learner sense of self encompasses the multifaceted aspects of their identities, qualities, behavior patterns, and relationships that hold significant value to them. It specifically pertains to how they perceive and esteem their physical self, emotional self, and behavioral self, all of which can be profoundly impacted by the experiences of various forms of bullying.

Table 5: Learners Sense of Self Being Affected by Different Forms of Bullying

Responses	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Always	4.50-5.00	8	18
More often than not	3.50-4.49	5	11
Half of the time	2.50-3.49	31	68
Sometimes	1:50-2.49	1	2
Never	1:00-1.49	0	0
Total		45	100

Further data, as shown in Table 5, summarize the responses for the different forms of bullying that are affecting learner's sense of self in school. The statement "I began feeling like I was ugly," which is an emotional form of bullying that affected the learner's physical sense of self, gets the highest mean of 2.91. Close to it is the statement, "I felt emotional pain when exposed to the bullying," also receiving 2.91 means, an indication that the physical and emotional sense of self is greatly affected by the different forms of bullying. While the questionnaire item "My school marks dropped during the time when I was bullied." gets the lowest mean of 1.89. It belongs to the intellectual sense of self. It implied that although it has the lowest mean score, it does not mean learners' intellectual sense was unaffected. The overall mean of the sense of self affected by different forms of bullying is 1.99, which is interpreted as "Sometimes," meaning that the learner's sense of self is affected by the different forms of bullying sometimes.

In summary, the mean of the learner's sense of self-being affected by the different forms of bullying is the physical sense of self ($\bar{x} = 2.54$), which is described as "half of the time." On the other hand, the learners describe that they are "sometimes" affected by their emotional sense of self ($\bar{x} = 2.49$), behavioral sense of self ($\bar{x} = 2.44$), social sense of self ($\bar{x} = 2.40$), creative sense of self ($\bar{x} = 2.24$), and intellectual sense of self ($\bar{x} = 2.07$). It implied that learners' sense of self affected by different forms of bullying is the physical sense of self, followed by an emotional sense of self, a behavioral sense of self, a social sense of self, a creative sense, and an intellectual sense of self. In the physical sense of self, the learners "half of the time" became more conscious of how they looked, began feeling like they were ugly, looked at their appearance differently, and wished they looked different.

Further, in the emotional sense of self, "half of the time," learners' moods were affected by what was happening to them, and they felt emotional pain when exposed to bullying. In their behavioral sense of self, "half of the time", they felt like a failure, thought of ways that they would like to 'payback' the people who hurt them, their behavior changed at school, and they spent a lot of my time thinking about how I had been bullied at school. In the social sense of self, "half of the time," they began expecting sarcasm or hurtful words from others, and they tried to fix the thing about them that was being teased (for example, their hair).

Similarly, in the creative sense of self, "half of the time," they often felt lonely when bullied. On the other hand, the learner's physical sense of self was "sometimes" tried to cover up their body or the parts of them that people made fun of, tried to change their appearance (for example, changed their hairstyle), and began thinking that they were not

able to deal with life's problems. Some individuals may feel inadequate or not good enough due to their emotional state. They may begin to think that they are not interesting enough to be with, which can lead to them becoming aggressive in their behavior. Additionally, they may start to believe that they are unworthy of love.

Lastly, in their intellectual sense of self, they "sometimes" began paying less attention to their schoolwork. Their school work suffered during the time of bullying, and they began doubting all their abilities, and their school marks dropped during the time when they were bullied. In the behavioral sense of self, they "sometimes" began seeing their skills as something negative, lost their independence as they became so dependent on the approval of others, changed their behavior at home during this time, and felt unmotivated in life.

Numerous researchers have affirmed these findings, indicating that individuals subjected to bullying demonstrate a higher propensity for engaging in aggressive behavior or physical altercations compared to those who have not experienced bullying. On the other hand, a victim who was classified as aggressive was at an increased risk for victimization (Olweus *et al.*, 2020; Peltzer & Pengpid, 2019; Tayaben *et al.*, 2020).

Thus, studies have shown that learners with someone to confide in, a friend or adult at school, may not be victimized. The participants agree that bullies are really cowards underneath, think they are cool, want to feel superior or to show that they have power, and have psychological or family-related problems. However, if someone fights them back, they are indeed back down. Moreover, they believed that bullies bully others to feel better and impress others. They are jealous of the victim, lack respect for other people, are annoyed by the victim's appearance, and become tired of bullying after getting older (matures), but can find other victims at the same time (Rogayan Jr, 2019; Tolentino, 2020).

3.6 Prevention Strategies to Avoid Bullying in Schools

The perceived coping strategies used by the learners to avoid bullying revealed that reporting to school authorities/ counselor, running away from school for many days, telling their parents, and avoiding the person are the common strategies. Interventions should be preventative for all learners, not just those exhibiting bully or victim characteristics. Thus, it was reported that it is helpful to allow learners to take responsibility when a bullying encounter occurs (Miedes *et al.*, 2019; Tiauzon & Malquisto, 2019).

Likewise, researchers provided simple intervention tactics for learners. Learners must recognize situations where their involvement may be futile, deferring the ultimate responsibility to adults for effectively addressing instances of bullying in schools. The School Disaster Risk Reduction Management should furnish the Supreme Learners Government with effective anti-bullying strategies to significantly minimize, if not eradicate, learner incidents (Banzon-Librojo *et al.*, 2019; Tan, 2022).

3.6.1 Prevention Action Plan

Bullying is not only about learners' behavior. Preventing bullying requires everyone's cooperation. A "Bullying Prevention Action Plan" provides the necessary information and tools to implement bullying prevention strategies on school premises successfully and defines vital areas to engage and involve the broader community. Educators who create safe, respectful learning environments build and nurture safer school environments for all learners.

4. Conclusion

This descriptive cross-sectional research study aimed to determine the forms of bullying encountered by learners and their perceived impacts on their sense of self from the selected national high schools of Apopong District, Division of General Santos City. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from forty-five (45) high school learners in the two selected secondary public schools in Apopong District, Division of General Santos City, and five key participants in the interview session, the following conclusions were made:

Most of the respondents who experienced bullying were learners aged fifteen to sixteen, female, and Grade 10. This study area has shown that certain learner groups are more susceptible to bullying.

The learners encountered verbal bullying most frequently, followed by emotional and physical bullying, which *occurs once a week*. These findings suggest that verbal and emotional forms of bullying are more prevalent and should be given more attention by school authorities.

The learner's sense of self affected by the different forms of bullying is the physical sense of self, described as affected "*half of the time*." It is crucial to prioritize the physical well-being of learners who face bullying to address this issue effectively.

The perceived impact of bullying on the learner's sense of self-generated three main ideas: A feeling of powerlessness, a sense of inferiority, and fighting back. These ideas reflect the adverse effects of bullying on learners' mental health and self-esteem.

Lastly, schools can develop a "Bullying Prevention Program" to prevent bullying in schools. This conclusion highlights the need for proactive measures to address bullying in schools and promote a safe and supportive environment for all learners.

With such varying experiences in their encounters with different forms of bullying in school, the voices of learners must be heard so that we can fully comprehend their traumatic experiences in school. The findings of this study also revealed that the sense of self-being affected by different forms of bullying among the participants hinges on the frequency of their encounters.

4.1 Recommendations

This research aimed to identify the different forms of bullying experienced by students and its perceived impact on their sense of self. Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are proposed.

To address the impact of bullying on learners' sense of self, participation in debriefing workshops, seminars, and programs can help develop a new sense of self that was greatly affected by bullying experiences in school. Therefore, it is recommended that learners who have encountered bullying be encouraged to participate in these programs, which can provide them with the necessary support and guidance to overcome the adverse effects of bullying on their self-esteem and well-being.

Moreover, research should be conducted in other areas, schools, and districts to gain a broader understanding of the prevalence of different forms of bullying encountered by learners. This study aimed to compare the incidence and frequency of bullying across different settings to develop more effective intervention programs. Additionally, the findings of such research could inform policy development at the national level, enabling more comprehensive approaches to address the issue of bullying in schools.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the Department of Education should provide timely and relevant interventions to help learners who have encountered different forms of bullying heal their broken sense of self. Utilizing the findings of this study can provide a helpful starting point to prevent and eradicate bullying in schools until more effective interventions are developed.

In addition, there is a pressing need for more extensive research to identify other forms of bullying that learners might experience in the ever-evolving educational landscape. Expanding the scope of research studies about different forms of bullying learners face would lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Empowering policymakers, educators, and parents with the tools to create effective strategies can prevent and tackle various forms of bullying. It ensures a safe and supportive learning environment for all learners.

Finally, it is recommended that the proposed "Bullying Prevention Program" should be used by teachers to prevent bullying incidents and help increase school participation and academic performance of learners in public schools. This program can be integrated into the existing curriculum to provide a more holistic approach to addressing bullying in schools. Additionally, teachers should receive proper training and support in implementing this program to ensure its effectiveness. Moreover, regular monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to assess the program's impact on reducing bullying incidents and improving the well-being of learners in public schools. By effectively implementing this program, schools can establish a safer and more conducive learning atmosphere, fostering learner growth and development.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors whose names are listed below certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; membership, employment, consultancies, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

About the Author(s)

Dindo V. Salamanca, Position: Teacher I. Academic Education: Master of Arts in Education Major in Guidance and Counseling. Research Interests: child protection.

Cornelio R. Rollo (PhD) Position: Public School Division Supervisor. Academic Education: Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Management. Research interests: governance.

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