

# **Bullying in Physical Education Classes: Understanding of its Impact and Schools' Intervention Program Implementation**

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## **Abstract**

*Bullying incidents are still increasing around the world. It can happen anywhere and the most likely place for the act to happen is in Physical Education classes. This study aimed to determine the impact of bullying in Physical Education classes and the extent of the implementation of the schools' intervention program against bullying. Employing descriptive research and fishbowl sampling technique, 200 junior high school students who experienced bullying in Physical Education classes were included as the respondents. Results revealed that most of the students experienced emotional impact to a moderate extent, followed by attitude/behavioral, social, and academic impact to some extent. On the other hand, the physical impact was the least experienced by the students. On the implementation of the schools' intervention, students' experienced the programs that address bullying in school to a moderate extent. Significant differences were obtained on the impact of bullying in terms of physical, attitude/behavioral, social, and emotional aspects when the respondents were grouped according to age. Furthermore, there is also a significant difference on the physical impact of bullying when grouped in terms of the frequency of being bullied. Finally, based on the findings Anti-bullying Intervention Program for Physical Education was developed by the researchers to address the issues.*

**Keywords:** *bullying, physical education, impact.*

## **Introduction**

Bullying is happening and still a growing problem in different schools around the world (Wang & Lannotti, 2012), affecting between 9 percent and 54 percent of young people internationally (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). It crosses through different socio-economic, ethnic, and even cultural traditions. This can begin at an early stage, in pre-school, and through transitional stages, middle high school, up to even tertiary level. According to UNICEF (2018) one in every three students aged 13-15 are experiencing bullying, and approximately the same numbers are involved in physical fights.

Bullying can occur anywhere and its impacts are so deep that could be long term and irreversible. If students are abused during physical events such as Physical Education and sports class, they appear to refrain from becoming physically involved, not only in the classroom but generally (Collins, 2014). Victims of child bullying can end up with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in later life (Babbel, 2011). PTSD is traditionally considered to be a disorder that arises from single or repeatedly traumatic incidents. Bullying falls into this category because to be officially considered as bullying, the behavior needs to take place repeatedly.

Among the worst negative effects of bullying is resentment to school life. One of the most-likely places for the act to happen is during Physical Education classes, which were often overlooked. The atmosphere of physical education, which has the ability to be an ideal setting for students to undergo positive social interaction, can actually contribute to exclusion and victimization of students with special needs or health issues (Healy, 2014). For example, students during physical activities with poor motor skills has the high risk for being bullied compared to others (Bejerot et al., 2011). It is essential, therefore, that physical educators are aware of different prevention strategies and implement them to ensure that their classes will be having a positive physical and social experiences for all students. In the study of Hurley & Mandigo (2010) about the prevalence and impact of bullying in Physical Education classes, bullying was one of the major reasons why students drop out of physical education course. The same study revealed that approximately 18.3% experienced physical bullying in physical education class; 23.7% had experienced verbal bullying; and 20.4% experienced social bullying.

Bullying may also happen in other subjects, but we cannot deny for a fact that most bullying incidents may start and can actually happen during Physical Education classes whether held inside the classroom or in gyms and sports courts. Physical education enables us to observe others' success and failures through skill execution, competitive play and testing activities. Students with poor skills are more likely to make excuses and make use of diversionary techniques such as often stopping to change equipment or shoes, faking an injury, and eventually not attending classes to avoid failure (Tischler & McCaughy, 2011). But, through the implementation of a pro-social and bully free learning environment, this will promote and develop positive physical self-perceptions for all children, thus, any negative association with Physical Education can be eliminated.

In previous decades, research works continue to shed light on the possible short- and long-term effects of school-based bullying, less is known about the particular context of physical education and the instructional resources needed both for intervention and prevention (Hand, 2016). School-based bullying became a sad reality which places Physical Educators at the edge of losing their control of the situation. No educators would want their classes to be instrumental in wounding souls for it would weaken the educational advocacy of the academic institution for the holistic development of learners. The pressure and challenge now fall on the shoulders of Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health educators as realization comes clear that Physical Education classes can make or break young individuals.

Because of this, authorities and lawmakers found that the problem must not be ignored anymore nor to be taken passively; hence, a law has been made for the protection of students in educational institutions all over the country. This law, known as the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013, mandates, under Section 4, that the school principal or any individual holding a comparable position shall be responsible for enforcing and supervising policies to prevent bullying incidents. Anti-bullying prevention and intervention programs have been developed in order for the students to freely engage in different school activities. This will help them to express themselves and develop their self-confidence, motivation, and self-esteem.

While prior studies published in other foreign countries about bullying in educational institutions, there were few researches that focused on the bullying in Physical Education classes most especially in the Philippines. Thus, the aim of this study is to determine the extent of impact of bullying to the students being happened during their Physical Education classes in terms of physical, social, emotional, attitude/behavioral, and academic; to assess the school's intervention programs being implemented; and to know if there is a significant difference in the extent of impact of bullying to the students being happened during Physical Education classes when they are grouped according to profile. With this, the researchers believe that the findings of the study may be utilized to improve the

school's anti-bullying intervention program, as well as the basis for new school policies that will help the most affected students and teachers.

## Methods

Descriptive method of research was used in this study to determine the impact of bullying in Physical Education classes in terms of physical, emotional, social, behavioral and academic aspect. The respondents of this study were junior high school students of Tugatog National High School in Malabon City, Philippines. Using Cochran formula, out of four hundred fifteen (415) students who were identified to have experienced being bullied during Physical Education classes, two hundred 200 students were determined as the respondents of the study. Simple random sampling using fishbowl method was utilized as sampling technique in the administration of the survey questionnaire.

### *Participants*

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and frequency of being bullied, and types.

**Table 1. Profile of the Respondents**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Age</b>		
13-15 years old	136	68.0
16-21 years old	64	32.0
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	86	43.0
Female	114	57.0
<b>Frequency of Being Bullied</b>		
1-5 times a month	145	72.5
6-10 times a month	30	15.0
11-25 times a month	10	5.0
Every day/almost daily	15	7.5
<b>Types oy Bullying</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Physical Bullying	50	2
Verbal Bullying	170	1
Social Bullying	21	3
Cyber Bullying	6	4

Majority of the students were females with age that ranges from 13-15 years old. Most of the respondents have experienced bullying 1-5 times and 15 students being bullied every day. On the type of bullying experienced in Physical Education classes, “verbal bullying” ranked first, with a frequency of 170, this is followed by “physical and social bullying” with a frequency of 50 and 21 respectively. It can be noted that “cyber bullying” ranked lowest with a frequency of 6.

### *Procedure and Research Instrument*

Delphi technique was utilized to enhance the validity of the questionnaire. Panel of individuals with expertise on the topic were asked to review items for clarity and relevance. The questionnaire underwent three rounds of revisions to come-up with the final copy. The panel was

composed of Master of Physical Education and Sports Program Chairperson of Polytechnic University of the Philippines, PUP graduate school Professor, and a Master Teacher in Math. Upon the accomplishment of content-validation, the questionnaire was pilot tested to 30 respondents. According to Perneger et al. (2015) the pre-final questionnaire should be pilot tested on a limited group of about 30-50 of the expected respondents. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the reliability of the questionnaire with the assistance of a statistician. With the reliability coefficient of .967, the research instrument was confirmed reliable. The researcher-made instrument was composed of three parts. Part one contained the solicitation of the respondents' profile in terms of age, sex, frequency of being bullied, and type of bullying experienced. Part two determined the extent of impact of bullying to the respondents in terms of physical, social, emotional, behavioral/attitude and academic. While part three assessed the extent of implementation of the intervention program of the school to address bullying. This part of the instrument was adopted from the study of Villarin (2017) wherein permission was sought and approved without any objection. The students were asked to rate each statement as *to a very great extent* (5), *to a great extent* (4), *to a moderate extent* (3), *to some extent* (2), or *not at all* (1).

#### *Data collection and analysis*

After finalizing the questionnaire through the running of necessary tests for validity and reliability, the researcher drafted a letter asking permission from the School Principal of Tugatog National High School to conduct the study. Upon the approval of the request, since the respondents were minors, assent form for the students and informed consent for the parents were administered prior to the survey. Participants were reminded that participation was voluntary and they could stop answering the survey at anytime they want. All information to be provided will be strictly treated with utmost confidentiality and information taken from the study will be coded to each respondent's name. On the data presentation, no names or any other private information will be declared.. The researchers personally distributed and administered the survey questionnaire during Physical Education classes with the help of other teachers. After the distribution and completion, survey questionnaires were retrieved for tabulation, statistical treatment and analysis. Frequency and Percentage Distribution were used to present the demographic profile of the respondents while weighted mean was employed to present the impact of bullying and the implementation of school's intervention program. Rank was also employed to present the type of bullying being encountered by the students in relation to their Physical Education classes. On the other hand, t-Test for Independent Samples and F-Ratio were used to measure differences between the impact of bullying when grouped in terms of age, sex, and frequency of being bullied.

### **Results**

This study aimed to determine the extent of impact of bullying to the students being happened during their Physical Education classes; assess the school's intervention programs being implemented; and know if there is a significant difference on the extent of impact of bullying to the students being happened during Physical Education classes when they are grouped according to profile. Two hundred Junior high school students who experienced bullying in Physical Education classes were included as the respondents. Simple random sampling technique using fishbowl method was used in the distribution of questionnaire while frequency, percentage distribution, rank, t-test for independent samples and F-ratio were used in analyzing the data.

## Impact of Bullying to the Respondents

Table 2 depicts the impact of bullying to the student's physical, social, emotional, attitude/behavioral, and academic aspects.

**Table 2: Respondents' Assessments on the Impact of Bullying**

	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Physical	1.84	To some extent
Social	2.02	To some extent
Emotional	2.60	To a moderate extent
Attitude/Behavioral	2.39	To some extent
Academic	1.87	To some extent
4.50 – 5.00 To a very great extent 3.50 – 4.49 To a great extent 2.50 – 3.49 To a moderate extent 1.50 – 2.49 To some extent 1.00 – 1.49 Not at all		

On the extent of impact of bullying to the respondents in their Physical Education classes, “emotional impact” got the highest grand weighted mean of 2.60 with verbal interpretation of to a moderate extent; followed by “attitude/behavioral impact 2.39; social impact 2.02; academic impact 1.87; and physical impact 1.84 where all four results got a verbal interpretation of to some extent

## Implementation of the School's Intervention to Address Bullying as Assessed by the Students

Table 3 illustrates the assessment of the students in terms of their experience on the implementation of the different intervention programs.

**Table 3: Implementation of the School's Intervention to Address Bullying as Assessed by the Students**

School's Intervention Program	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
• Conducts counselling for both victims and bullies	2.85	To a Moderate Extent
• Enhances the psycho-social well-being of both the victim and the bully	2.95	To a Moderate Extent
• Provides wholesome educational materials (videos or manipulative) for recreation and association with others	2.84	To a Moderate Extent
• Provides opportunities to practice pro-social behaviour.	2.99	To a Moderate Extent
• Involves activities that will address acts of bullying	2.92	To a Moderate Extent
• Conducts life skills training.	2.95	To a Moderate Extent
• Helps the victim, the bully, and the bystanders understand the bullying incident and its negative consequences.	3.03	To a Moderate Extent
• Develops intervention strategies involving all parties, such as the bullies, victims, bystanders, parents, school personnel, service providers and all other persons who may be affected by bullying incident.	2.80	To a Moderate Extent
• Emphasizes formative and corrective measures rather than punishment.	2.77	To a Moderate Extent
• Conforms to principles of child protection and practice positive and non- violent discipline.	3.02	To a Moderate Extent

GRAND MEAN	2.91	To a Moderate Extent
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4.50 – 5.00: To a very great extent; 3.50 – 4.49: To a great extent; 2.50 – 3.49: To a moderate extent; 1.50 – 2.49: To some extent; 1.00 – 1.49 Not at all

On the extent of implementation of schools' intervention against bullying, the statement "helps the victim, the bully and the bystanders understand the bullying incident and its negative consequences", got the highest weighted mean of 3.03; followed by "conforms to the principles of child protection and practice positive and non-violent discipline" with a weighted mean of 2.99. On the other hand, "emphasizes corrective measures rather than punishment" got the lowest weighted mean of 2.91. All items under implementation of schools' intervention got a verbal interpretation of to a moderate extent.

### Significant Difference on the Impact of Bullying as Assessed by the Respondents' Grouped According to Profile

Table 4 displays the significant difference on the impact of bullying as assessed by the respondents' when grouped in terms of profile

**Table 4: Significant Difference on the Extent of Impact of Bullying as Assessed by the Respondents' when grouped According to Age, Sex and Frequency of Being Bullied**

Impact of Bullying	Age		Sex		Frequency of Being Bullied	
	t-value	p-value	t-value	p-value	F-value	p-value
Physical	-3.419	.001*	.722	.471	6.996*	.001
Social	-2.624	.009*	-.828	.409	1.782	.152
Emotional	-2.232	.027*	-1.308	.192	1.432	.235
Attitude/Behavioral	-2.752	.006*	-.284	.777	1.644	.181
Academic	-.469	.639	.262	.794	1.336	.264

\* significant at .05

Findings revealed that significant differences were obtained in terms of physical (  $t=-3.419$ ,  $p=.001$ ), attitude/ behavioral (  $t=-2.752$ ,  $p=.006$ ), social (  $t=-2.624$ ,  $p=.009$ ), and emotional impact (  $t=-2.232$ ,  $p=.027$ ) when they are grouped according to age. Similarly, a significant difference in physical impact with (  $F=6.996$ ,  $p=.001$ ) was also obtained when it comes to the frequency of being bullied. On the other hand, there was no significant difference obtained when the respondents are grouped according to gender.

### Discussion

Findings reveal that most of the respondents experienced verbal bullying in Physical Education class or related to PE activities and it creates greater impact on the emotional aspect of the students to a moderate extent. Compared to males, verbal bullying experiences and exposures among females have an emotional impact that leads to having low self-esteem brought by physical dissatisfaction. Girls are therefore more vulnerable to anxieties and emotional disturbances than boys

(Farrow & Fox, 2011). Bullied students may have a tendency to resort to being less participative during Physical Education class since they have developed a low self-esteem, depressive disorders (Nierenberg, 2015) and anxiety (Walton & Nibblet, 2013).

Furthermore, feeling of loneliness and isolation may result to lower class participation, absenteeism or even dropout cases. It occurs more often in Physical Education classes for the reason that most of the activities in class promote collaborative work with peers that creates an opportunity for bullying with regards to class performance or practical test. In addition, perhaps it is the type of bullying that is difficult to detect by the teacher. This adheres to what Cardona et al. (2015) mentioned in an article that the teacher does not actually recognize that a student is being bullied in his/her class. Bullies were able to control the setting of their classroom so that teachers will not suspect them. Thus, this situation should be recognized and addressed not only by Physical Education teachers assigned but also all the members of the school community.

Even most of the respondents encounter the implementation of the schools' intervention to a moderate extent in addressing bullying experiences of students in Physical Education, the need for extensive programs and activities are highly needed to promote violence-free schools. Several researches already proven that school-based interventions on anti-bullying were effective however, even interventions intended to be intensive can be more or less intensively implemented, depending on the resources and engagement of the schools (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Students perceived fear as one reason that prevents them from reporting bullying instances to those who are in authority (O'Connor & Graber, 2014). It is possibly true, that there are still bigger number of unreported cases of different types of bullying happening not only in PE classes but in school in general. Thus, it is important to promote a violence-free schools by encouraging parents, students, teacher and the entire community to fight and end all forms of violence (Ancho & Park, 2013). This means that interventions need to be lengthy and complex to achieve the desired results. Parental cooperation or meetings with parents and disciplinary strategies are two factors that help the program successful.

Since there are significant differences on the impact of bullying in terms of physical, attitude/behavioral, social, and emotional aspects when the respondents are grouped in terms of age, these only depict that bullying affects almost all aspects of human life but the impact differs in terms of age level of victims. The incidence and types of bullying vary across ages, reflecting a steady of victim and bully-victim roles over time and a small rise in age-related bullying behaviour (Cook et al., 2010). Bullying increases through middle school years and continues to reduce by the end of secondary school (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). As a consequence, a very young individual who lacks maturity to cope with pain and harsh treatment could be gravely affected than an adult victim. On the contrary, regardless of age, academic successes of the students are being negatively affected of bullying (Block, 2014).

Similarly there is a significant difference on physical impact of bullying when grouped in terms of the frequency of being bullied. Findings imply what Wolke & Lereya (2014) found on their study that victims of bullying during childhood and adolescence have repeatedly been shown to present a higher risk for serious somatic problems such as headaches, colds or psychosomatic problems, stomach aches or sleeping issues, and are more likely engage in smoking. Therefore, physical impact might vary based on the frequency of such event.

On the contrary, there is no significant difference on the impact of bullying when grouped in terms of sex. It only affirms, that though several studies confirmed that boys are significantly more involved and aggressive in different types of bullying compared to girls who are more associated with indirect bullying (Carrera Fernandez, et al., 2013; Brzezinski, 2016; Sittichai & Smith, 2018), the extent of impact in physical, emotional, social, behavior/attitude, and academic are the same regardless of their sex or gender. Therefore, the school should provide a holistic approach and gender sensitive strategies in addressing the problem.

## Conclusions

This study attempts to determine the extent of impact of bullying to the students being happened during their Physical Education classes, assess the school's intervention programs being implemented against bullying, and know if there is a significant difference on the extent of impact of bullying to the students being happened during Physical Education classes when they are grouped according to profile.

Over-all, findings shows most of the respondents experienced emotional impact to a moderate extent due to bullying in Physical Education class. It was followed by attitude or behavioral, social impact, and academic impact which the respondents experienced to some extent, while the physical impact was the least experienced by the student-respondents. It seems that though many countries have an anti-bullying policy, a huge number of bullying prevention initiatives, and with plenty of strategies to fight against bullying, bullying is still prevalent and existing even in Physical Education class.

On the implementation of the schools' intervention in addressing bullying experiences of students in Physical Education, majority of the students encounter it to a moderate extent. Even with the implementation of the programs, several cases are still happening, thus continuous enhancement and innovation of the programs are highly needed.

The study also reveals that there are significant differences on the impact of bullying. Based on the findings, the physical, attitude/behavioral, social, and emotional impact of bullying when grouped according to age are significantly different. Likewise, there is a significant difference on physical impact of bullying when grouped in terms of the frequency of being bullied. It only confirms that impact of bullying varies on the age level and maturity level of the students and the more frequent incident of bullying, the higher the negative impact on the physical health or aspect of the students. It is therefore very important for physical educators to be aware of the problems and to adopt a range of preventive approaches to ensure that their classes are promoting active physical and social experiences for all students to lessen the bullying incidents.

With the unique features of Physical Education classes which promotes and provide an ideal setting for positive social interaction and cooperation between student, it might actually a vulnerable place for bullying that may result to negative impact on the life of the students

Finally, based on the results, a proposed Anti-bullying Intervention Program for Physical Education was developed to address the issue. The main focus of the program is how the teachers may improve their strategies that will make their Physical Education classes free from any kinds of bullying and how they could utilize physical activities itself as a tool for coping management of students being bullied and an intervention for bullies.

The study is limited only to the Junior High School students of Tugatog National High School, Malabon, Philippines. Future studies might widen the scope by including all the secondary students within the city.

It is highly recommended for future researchers to conduct same study that may deeply explore the emotional impact of bullying and how it may affects their lives in the future. Exploring the factors that affects bullying and their coping mechanism might also be considered.

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