Bullying and its Consequences: A Case of Botswana Junior Secondary Schools

Herman Mangope[1] Baamphatlha Dinama[2]* Mpina Kefhilwe[3]

1. University of Botswana, Fcaulty of Education, P/Bag, 00702, Gaborone, Botswana.
2. University of Botswana, Fcaulty of Education, P/Bag, 00702, Gaborone, Botswana.
3. Bakwena Kgari Secondary School, P/Bag 0022, Serowe, Botswana
*Email of the corresponding author: dinamab@mopipi.ub.bw

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to establish the intensity of bullying and its consequences on students at junior secondary school level and suggest solutions in dealing with the problem. The study involved different stakeholders in the education system that are directly or indirectly affected by this issue. The study confirmed studies done elsewhere on bullying in schools and also found that bullying is rife in Botswana junior secondary schools and that it has a negative impact on both the victims and the perpetrators of bullying. It further found that the existing policies in schools are not comprehensive enough to deal with bullying.

Key words: bullying, victim, consequences, secondary school, aggression

1. Background of study

Bullying is not a new phenomenon since it may be traced back to the early years of human existence. It has been a world-wide phenomenon that is pervasive in most societies and it exists at home between siblings, in school and in the community at large. Similarly, bullies are everywhere and so are their victims as bullying is experienced by different people in diverse cultures - the only difference is the extent to which it is done (Adams & Lawrence, 2010; Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim & Sadek, 2010; Monks & Smith, 2006). In the traditional set up in Botswana, bullying was not seen as a problem but was viewed as part of growing up or a 'rite of passage' because a boy who was feared by his peers due to his 'bullish' character was seen as courageous. This attitude became entrenched in people's minds and hence became acceptable. Due to this mindset the bullied ended up keeping quiet since they knew that they could not get any form of recourse except being ridiculed by their peers and even parents. For example, parents would usually scold their male children for showing feminine traits if they reported that they were being bullied by their peers hence this thinking cemented the practice. However, bullying has far reaching negative consequences yet it seems to have become part of culture in some junior secondary schools in Botswana.

2. Statement of the problem

Bullying is a common phenomenon among the youth of Botswana yet it is infrequently addressed. The available national data on the prevalence of bullying is inadequate and unreliable. However, it is seen by some as 'part of growing up' and this thinking contributes to the soaring incidents of bullying. This thinking perpetuates the behaviour especially if the perpetrators go unpunished making them think that what they are doing is right and acceptable. Many students have dropped out of school as they could not get protection against the school bullies while others had no choice but to join the 'bully groups' in order to gain acceptance and security.

The culture in most junior secondary schools in Botswana seems to be encouraging and accommodating bullying as these institutions do not have any clear policies on how they could counter the problem neither do they have adequate and effective measures in place to fight the practice. This tends to be the case because school authorities may not be aware of its adverse effects. In carrying out this study, we were guided by two key research questions and these were:

1. How does bullying affect academic performance?
2. What are the consequences of bullying on the victims and the perpetrators?

3. Literature review

3.1 Introduction

Bullying especially amongst school children is a very old phenomenon (Olweus, 1993) and people are quite aware of it as children are frequently and systematically harassed and attacked by peers at school. It is widespread and is experienced by both sexes of different ages and has become a "normative behaviour in schools" since it is rarely challenged (Reid, Monsen & Rivers, 4004, p. 242) because it is viewed by some as a

rite of passage (Adams & Lawrence, 2011). The practice has negative effects on the victims because it threatens their physical and emotional wellbeing. Some victims of bullying may even commit suicide as a way of getting away from the ordeal (Olweus, 1993).

3.2 Understanding what Bullying Entails

There tends to be no universal agreement on the definition of what bullying is but there is a consensus that it entails hurtful behaviours that are deliberately aimed at another person who is weaker or less powerful (Reid, Monsen & Rivers, 2004) while the continued hurtful act might be physical or psychological (Monks & Smith, 2006). It is conducted by an individual or group on an individual or a group (Thompson, Arora & Sharp, 2002). It involves the use of strength against the physically and emotionally weak who are unable to defend themselves (Junn & Boyatzis, 2007). However, ordinary play amongst children that may end up accidentally causing pain on each other may not be referred to as bullying (Junoven and Graham, 2001) since there would not be any ill-feelings against either party.

Bullying is negative in its intentions because someone deliberately inflicts, or attempts to inflict injury or discomfort upon another (Olweus, 1993). The actions and behaviours of bullies are aimed at making the person they are being done to feel belittled and make them lose their self-worth and that is why Olweus, (1993) says that victims "often look upon themselves as failures and feel stupid, ashamed and unattractive" (p. 33). Healey (nd) identifies four major components of what constitutes bullying namely; lack of reciprocity, repetition, intentionality and power. Lack of reciprocity involves the bully's hurtful action towards the victim who is not aggressive and cannot fight back - repetition entails hurtful actions on the victim where there is a pattern over a period of time which is different from an episodic violence or assault (Olweus, 1993). While this is done, all the hurtful actions are intentional on the part of the bully. Power is the fourth component whereby the bully's power and popularity are clearly greater than that of the victim in terms of age, size or formal status - there is an imbalance of power since the victims cannot defend themselves (Healey, nd; St George, 2011; Woods and Wolke, 2004). Victims would not have done anything wrong to incur the bullying upon them but are just picked upon maybe because of their body size or other characteristics that may differentiate them from the rest of their peers.

Bullying as a form of violence and aggression can take various forms because it could be direct or indirect - direct in that it could be physical and exhibited through hitting, kicking and shoving the victim. It can also be shown indirectly in a non-physical or psychological manner and especially when it is verbal whereby a bully uses language to insult, call names and tease by making fun of the victim's physical and mental capabilities (Adams & Lawrence, 2010; Cook et al, 2004) through spreading lies and rumours about someone and persuading others to ignore or even isolate the potential victim (Monks & Smith, 2006; Reid, Monsen & Rivers, 2004; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie & Telch, 2010; Woods & Wolke, 2004). For a child, unlike an adult, hurtful words might be upsetting and frightening and leaves them feeling helpless and leaving them emotionally bruised. Non-physical bully tends to be the most difficult to identify whilst it has lasting psychological impact on the victim.

Victims may not report bullying for fear of retaliation by the bully and that the abuse may get worse when the perpetrator gets further enraged and more abusive on learning about him or her having been reported to authorities or adults (Reid et al, 2004). Furthermore, Reid and colleagues observe that "victims may be too frightened to or lack the confidence to tell, teachers or adults because they blame themseves or feel that telling adults will only make matters worse" (Reid et al, 2004, p.246). Victims of bullying often feel that they deserve the abuse hence their silence – they often feel greatly ashamed and guilty of bullying hence the silence. Victims always develop a sense of powerlessness that they do not see the reason to report the bully. They lack the social competence to tell teachers because they will not be sure if they will be supported. In addition, victims may doubt if teachers and adults or parents are interested in their plight. The best that victims do is to tell those that they can confide in and request them to keep the information a secret. However, there is a need for research to confirm if bullies that are reported would necessarily retaliate.

3.3 Teachers' Knowledge of Bullying

Teachers may not be aware of the gravity of bullying in their school while students may lack confidence in them that they will keep the information to themselves once they report incidents of bullying (Reid, et al, 2004). Similarly, if it happens that teachers are aware of bullying, they may underestimate its extent and in that way it will tend to exceed the teachers' expectations. This is so because teachers tend to have inadequate knowledge of the various bullying behaviours. Non-physical assault such as verbal bullying in terms of frightening stares, spreading rumours tends to occur more often than physical aggression in schools and has been found to have negative effects (Reid et al, 2004).

In the school environment, however, there are teachers who are good listeners hence are better at dealing with students' bullying (Oliver & Candappa, 2003). Some students tend not to confide in teachers due to the risk of possible breach of confidentiality that can have a negative effect on the victim. In addition, teachers at times fail to act on reported incidents and may also be unable to protect victims of bullying (Oliver & Candappa, 2003). Due to their inadequate knowledge of what bullying entails, teachers may not view name-calling, spreading rumours, and taking other people's belongings as bullying (Reid et al, 2004).

When children believe that their teachers are caring and are fair, they would trust their teachers to intervene and protect them from being bullied and intimidated. This positive relationship may enhance students' engagement in learning despite a bullying environment. A study by Konishi and colleagues established that students who perceived that they were connected socially to their Mathematics teachers performed better than in the subjects where teachers were not close to them (Konishi, et al, 2010). So, interpersonal relationships within the school environment positively influence academic achievement. Still in the same study, students who perceived positive relations with their teachers demonstrated higher academic achievemenet in both reading and Mathematics. Bullying is well understood by students but not necessarily by teachers and that is why principals cannot accurately estimate the extent to which bullying occurs in their schools (Konishi, et al, 2010). Establishing positive social relationships among students and school personnel could result in less violent behaviour and improved academic development. Students' sense of connectedness to teachers could reduce the impact of bullying on the student achievement. Students' sense of membership provides a safe place where students feel comfortable to express themselves and their concerns, including problems arising from bullying. Schools with higher levels of bullying are reported to have lower passing rates since the bullied students would always be worried about being harrassed by bullies hence they develop a disconnection between themselves and the academic environment.

Just like physical aggression, non-physical aggression could lead to absenteeism or decline in academic performance on the part of the victim. Females have been found to use more of the relational non-physical and indirect assault because they tend to "channel their aggression socially using indirect subtle methods such as slander, spreading rumours, social exclusion and manipulation of friendship relationship" (Reid et al, 2004, p. 244). This verbal or indirect aggression among females has always been there but has not caught the attention of researchers because there was no time in the history of human beings when females were less aggressive than males (Björkqvist, 1994), except that aggression has been limited to the physical dimension of bullying. Since women were viewed as physically weaker, for example, they could not use the same aggressive modes as males hence their use of verbal aggression. Furthermore, the issue that males are physically aggressive due to testosterone is questioned by Björkqvist (1994), who argues that "there is no clear evidence between hormones and aggression among humans" p. 181).

3.4 Characteristics that Contribute to Children Being Bullies

There are various factors that contribute to children being bullies and most of them are social. For example, the rearing conditions can create aggressive children who end up being bullies (Olweus, 1993). The lack of involvement in the upbringing of a child and lack of warmth expected of the parent increases the risk of bullying especially among boys. The parents' warmth and involvement help 'soften' and direct the way in which for example, the children's emotions will eventually develop. Emotional attitudes of the parents towards the children are very important particularly the mother who may happen to be the main care-giver and also especially during the early years. Violence in the form of bullying may happen if the primary caretaker allows aggressive behaviour towards peers, siblings and even adults and unrestricted temperament without setting clear limits of such behaviour while the child is still young. If the primary caretakers are permissive the child might think that what they are doing is acceptable as it does not attract any form of repulsion from the parents. For instance, a child's aggressive temperament necessarily calls for the parents' control. Physical punishment and violent emotional outbursts when raising the child may also have a negative impact on the psycho-social development of the child. Thus a child who grows up exposed to violent treatment at home may become violent when they grow up and this may contribute to the child being aggressive toward others (Shaffi & Shaffi, 2001).

Bullies usually feel insecure and inferior hence they put others down in order to build themselves up hence they want to harp power, control, lack of social skills and want others to follow them. They prefer attracting attention and are usually frustrated since they may be coming from homes where violence is common. They may lack emotional maturity because they do not have a sense of compassion and empathy and rarely care about how their victims feel since they derive pleasure in inflicting pain on their victims. Bullies would usually look for their victim even if they try to ignore them and would make sure that the victim gives them the attention they are seeking. Perpetrators of bullying may be coming from broken homes and may also be hiding their inadequacies for example, some have been found to have a low-self esteem and self-confidence and thus feel insecure. They

are full of resentment, bitterness, hatred and anger and would like to vent their anger on to others especially the weaker ones. These students who are bullies tend to have difficulties with relating to friends and parents and tend to be aggressive and lacking a moral compass and hence they have a lot of conflicts in their relationships with their parents.

While there may be different types of bullies, most share similar traits, for example, they have a strong desire to dominate, easily provoke others and do initiate aggression (Sanders & Phye, 2004). Bullies are skilled at avoiding blame and would feel no remorse or empathy for their victims. They may be bigger in stature, outspoken and may surround themselves with other students who usually support their practice (Adams & Lawrence, 2010) so that they too could have a negative attitude towards the victim. At times, the bully may influence others to perceive the victim as "weird" hence deserving harassment while the bully is seen as the "good guy". In addition, they could use direct or indirect verbal aggression, such as hurtful words, gestures and even stares. By verbally abusing their victims they may be indirectly expressing their sense of insecurity and inadequacy.

Jimerson and Furlong, (2006) observe that children who bully others do not easily make friends at school, and are usually lonely, are likely to perform poorly at school, may be truant and even drop out of school. It was not until the late 1980s and the early 1990s that bullying as a social issue received the attention of the public and research in many countries (Olweus, 1993). Students who bully do not perform any better in school because they are aware of inadequacies and are likely to be angry, depressed, hostile and domineering (Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003) and may be involved in frequent fights, theft, vandalism, abuse of alcohol and drugs and also have a negative view of school (Stone, 2011).

It has been found that physical violence is more common among boys than girls and that is why there is little doubt that men are more likely to perpetrate violent acts than women. Even though there is no consensus it has been found that healthy male adolescents with high levels of circulating testosterone were likely to respond vigorously and assertively to provocation and threats (Shaffi and Shaffi, 2001). This further strengthens the thesis that boys are more likely to engage in physical bullying more than girls.

3.5 Possible Victims of Bullying

Reid and colleagues also observe that children with special needs have been found to be victims of bullying as well as those children with physical difficulties, children from ethnic minorities and those who may not fit gender stereotypes usually referred to as 'Sissy boy or Tom-girls' (Reid et al, 2004).

The targets of bullies are usually other students who are quiet, small in stature and may not have friends around school. Victims are usually shy and may be fond of going around the school and home alone and this makes them susceptible to attacks by the bullies. Just like with animals, numbers provide a degree of security and keeping company of people closer while providing a sense of security. Victims of bullies tend to act submissively and anxiously and lack a sense of assertiveness and security. They are often perceived as negative by their peers hence experience peer rejection. Similarly, children with special needs such as learning disorders, physical and mental issues tend to be possible victims of bullies. The bully may force others to reject the victim so that he or she is left isolated and lonely (DeRosier, Kupersmidt & Patterson, 1994) and that is why "peer relationships within the school setting have a great influence on children's concurrent and later academic behavioural and emotional adjustment" (p. 199). That is why children with poor peer relationships are rejected and become easy prey to bullies.

3.6 Consequences of Bullying in School

Bullying may have unpleasant long lasting consequences on the victims such as depression, low self esteem, loneliness difficulty in sleeping well, hating school and having poor academic performance or even dropping out of school (Adams & Lawrence, 2010; Elias & Zins, 2003). A study by Oprinas and Horne (2006) shows that a high number of girls were bullied at school and were so scared that they would not report the incidents. Some may even develop ideas of committing suicide (Rigby 2001; Shaffi and Shaffi, 2001).

Healey (2003) observes that victims of bullying may differ in the way they resist the ordeal, some may be passing while others may surrender themselves to bullies. In this way, victims find means to cope with bullying. School climate too may affect a bullied child's academic outcomes, for example, a safe and healthy school environment can promote a student's academic performance and achievement (Konishi, Hymel Zumbo & Li, 2010) and this can only happen if the environment is caring, supportive and safe. If this is the case, the student is likely to like school and also develop a sense of self-direction (Konishi, et al, 2010).

Victims of bullying usually demonstrate several psychological problems some of which are depression and anxiety. Students who are bullied regularly do substantially worse in school and receive poorer grades and

participate less in class bevause being bullied impairs concentration. Their silence and lack of participation is often interpreted by teachers as lack of motivation to learn. These victims may view the school negatively and may become low achievers, and in such instances they are viewed as 'dumb' (Adams & Lawrence, 2010; Beran (2008; Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara & Kernic, 2005; Junoven, Wang and Espinoza, 2011); Konishi, et al, 2010).

Similarly, bullies too, are also affected as they tend not to do well in their academic work due to lack concentration while inking of what bullying tactics they are going to inflict on their victims. It has been observed that young children who are bullies and aggressive are likely not to change their behaviour as they grow up into adults (Luiselli et al, 2005). Olweus, (1993) says that bullies often look upon themselves negatively, for example, as being failures that lack a sense of belonging because peers may be uncomfortable to relate with him or her. Bullying may also have negative consequences on the perpetrators themselves (Jimerson and Furlong, 2006) because children who bully others do not make many friends at school, are usually lonely and are likely to report poorer academic achievement, be truant and may drop out of school. Vaillancourt, Hyme and McDougall (2003) observe that like victims, bullies are likely to suffer similar signs such as "depression, suicidal ideation and loneliness and to be involved in juvenile criminal activities as well as poor academic achievement, smoking and substance abuse" (p. 159). Bullies may have given up on school work and may have concluded that they are known for their bad behaviour. They may also experience depression and psychological distress especially if they are fully made aware of their actions and have been found to be susceptible to developing anxiety disorders and to abuse substance and involved in crime.

Peer victimisation cannot be ignored as it is closely linked to educational outcomes (Junoven, Wang & Espinoza, 2011). It is interesting to note that children who were bullied at high school are likely to be bullied at college or even at workplace (Adams & Lawrence, 2010). Victims do not know how to fight back whether they are physically or verbally attacked (Adams & Lawrence, 2010). The victimised children are likely to be lonely, fear school, avoid others, develop low-self-esteem and be depressed (Reijnetjes, et al, 2010).

3.7 Resilience in Bullying

Some students are said to be resistant to bullying because they develop survival mechanisms and are able to ignore the actions of the bullies and continue with their everyday lives. Carver (1998) makes the difference between resilience and thriving which entails "gaining in skill, knowledge, confidence or a sense of security in personal relationships" (p. 245) with regard to stressful conditions. Resilience involves the ability to recover quickly from stress and subsequent stressors by way of coping after a traumatic event (Shepherd, Reynold & Moran, 2010). It has not been clearly investigated why some people thrive and others do not. Someone who emerges from a traumatic event and experience with newly developed skills can be described as having thrived. Resilience entails the ability of the victim to 'bounce back' from adverse experiences by way of retaining psychological equilibrium and being able to operate in a competent manner with little or no indication of the impact of the adverse event (Theron & Theron, 2010). Resilience takes place due to some learned skills because one would have experienced stressful events. Even though victims may develop resilient responses to bullying they may not be considered to be less harmed and affected.

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The methodology used in this study was a qualitative paradigm that allowed the researchers to collect as much information as possible from the participants in terms of the researchers' awareness of multiple meanings (Creswell, (2003). This methodology was chosen because it helps generate rich sources of data and in this study participants chosen were directly or indirectly affected by the problem of bullying, hence making them a rich source of data.

4.2 Population size and sampling procedures

The qualitative approach uses small samples as was the case in this study, where data were collected from two junior secondary schools one from a school in a rural area and the other from a school situated in a semi-urban area. The school located in a rural area offered boarding to the students. The boarding school was chosen because during the school term, students spend all their time in school away from their parents so the chances of students abusing others and especially the younger and weaker ones could be higher and easily discernible.

In each school, interviews were conducted with heads of department of pastoral care. The Heads of Department (HODs) were chosen because they over-saw students' welfare and attended to issues of discipline. They were also in a position to provide concrete information on issues of students' relations with each other in and around school. The HODs seemed to have a clear idea of what bullying is from their professional point of view as they also managed to identify the different forms of bullying that usually take place in schools. Being heads of

pastoral care in their schools, they are the focal point for issues that concerned student welfare and they form the link between the school management, staff and the outside community on issues that concern student welfare. In both schools the HODs produced some records that show that they do certainly attend to cases some of which relate to bullying. Class teachers were also chosen because they had ample time dealing with students and could have some information on how students related with each other during their lessons and they could be the people who handled cases of ill-treatment of students by their peers first before they could be reported. Just like HODs, class teachers too had a deeper understanding of issues of bullying by providing professional information on their day to day experiences in the teaching profession. Students were chosen to participate because bullying usually happens amongst them. One of the particpants was a member of the student representative council and had attended to some cases of bullying amongst his peers. Three parents who had children at these two schools were particpants too. All participants consented to take part in the study and were willing to be interviewed.

4.3 Data Collection Instrument

Interviews were chosen because they allow for contact between the researcher and the participant, and they have the capability of establishing a relationship between the researcher and the researched that may promote human interaction (Creswell, 2003). Through interviews, researchers have access to information that could be concealed if some other methods were to be used (Bell, 2005) such as cues from facial expressions, hesitations and the tone of voice.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data and this type of interviews allow for follow-ups in order to obtain further clarification (Cohen and Manion, 1995). The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed word verbatim. This was done because with the qualitative methodology the participants 'speak for themselves' through narratives and this avoids "fixing" or manipulation of research data to yield findings that the researcher had hoped (Charles, 1998). Walker (1990) too advises that the researcher should attempt to represent, as widely as possible, the range of viewpoints encountered in the research, rather than to enunciate his or her own perspectives or views. In order to establish trustworthiness interviews were carried out more than once and also in order to get further clarification on issues that could have been earlier raised.

Participants were asked if they would like their names to appear in the findings of the study of which they opted not to have the public know their names hence their identities were protected by using pseudonyms. As Bogdan and Biklen, (1992) suggest, the participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice on their part while the information on the data from the participants was to be held in strict confidence (Best & Kahn, 1989).

5. Presentation and analysis of data

All the participants responded to say that they knew what bullying entails and that incidents of bullying do happen in Botswana junior secondary schools. They were, however, aware that some incidents that constitute bullying were often not reported because they were viewed as minor.

5.1 Incidents of bullying in schools

Participants and especially students reported that they know of bullying cases amongst students in junior secondary schools while others indicated that they had witnessed it. . However, Janet a day school student indicated that she was not aware of any bullying in her school when she said: *I have not heard of any bullying incidents in my school. If ever it is there, it may be happening among boys since they are violent by nature*. Mr Teko an HOD acknowledged the existence of bullying and said that it involves "*harassment, taking others' property by force, calling others names, and teasing them, and at times even beating them to the extent that some students desert from school*". The students at a boarding school also mentioned that some of them are at times forced by school bullies to do their laundry and indicated that boys are the ones who are mostly the victims of bullying. According to them bullying is part of school culture, a rite of passage and a way of welcoming the 'new-comers'.

Participants reported that bullying was more common in boarding schools than in day schools because students spend more time on school premises. They further indicated that older students at times force the younger ones especially the first-years to do their laundry or make their beds. Meshack a tiny first year boy in a boarding school said: *Big bullies always take our property such as money, clothes, jewellery, cell phones by force*". One of the participants, a class teacher, reported that there were times when the bullied students miss school because they will not have brought what they were asked to bring by the bullies.

This forces the victims to steal at times some items from their homes including money in order to 'buy safety' and avoid ill-treatment. In boarding schools bully victims may at times abscond from school to go and report their ordeal to their parents back at home fearing to report to the school authorities as the bullies may easily

come back for them. They may also not report to the teachers since they felt that teachers may take them lightly. However, the school authorities reported that students usually do not give reasons for their absconding.

5.2 Occurrences of bullying and knowledge of bullying

Class teachers, parents and students indicated that incidents of bullying were rare even though they down-played its consequences. For example Toledo a boy at a boarding school said: "*It does happen but there are very few cases*". The HODs reported that they usually receive reports of ill-treatment of students by bullies. However, HODs were convinced that a good number of cases were not reported to school authorities because a large number of victims were too scared to report their ordeal. Ms Teko said:

Students who are bullied by others may tell their older brothers and sisters who in turn fight or reprimand the bullies, only for the school to hear of such incidents from parents whose children may have been beaten up. However, bullying does not occur as much as it used to in the years gone by.

However, a class teacher, Mr Dana indicated that it was not easy to identify victims of bullies even though there are signs that could make one suspicious. He said:

One cannot clearly tell but sometimes the student's behaviour may make the teacher to suspect that they are experiencing some problems. A student may gradually lose concentration in class, lose interest in school and isolate themselves. It is easy to tell when a student is not concentrating. We teachers then try to find out what the problem could be. We usually wait for students to report to us.

The behaviour of a bullied student would usually change, for example, they could turn truant and even desert school and when they are followed they would report that they were being bullied. In addition, bully victims would usually be withdrawn, refuse to accept themselves, lose a sense of belonging with other students and develop a sense of worthlessness. In addition, they decide to be alone since they would have lost trust in almost everybody.

5.3 Possible victims of bullying

Even though the participants reported that both boys and girls could be victims of bullying they indicated that boys were more vulnerable especially the smaller and weaker ones. However, girls are also at times bullied by other girls especially in boarding schools whereby bigger girls would take the property of the younger girls by force and also force them to do their laundry and make their beds. Mr Migoros a class teacher said:

Small boys and girls in general may be bullied by the older girls or boys. First years and those transferred from other schools may be bullied too by those who have always been around or the older ones. The small ones are bullied because their body size makes them easy prey. Bullies may also harrass girls because they view them as physically weaker.

Bullies seem to look for some weakness on their potential victim such as shy students who are usually quiet and hence possible victims as the bullies capitalise on this trait that they view as a sign of weakness. New students who may have transferred from other schools may also be victims as they would not have friends to keep them company.

5.4 Victims of bullying and how they relate with others at school

It emerged from the findings of this study that bullying has negative consequences on the academic performance of students at junior secondary schools in Botswana and that it affects negatively both the victims and the bullies. However the negative consequences are mostly felt by the victims who are usually traumatised which leads to them losing their concentration on their school work. However, the consequences may not be easy to trace because in most cases victims do not report their experiences to the school authorities as they fear that the bullies may do worse things to them after the bullies' punishment by the authorities.

Participants indicated that a bullied student would not relate well with other students. They isolate themselves from others and would usually keep company of only those who do not pose a threat to them especially those almost their body size or those younger than them. Victims do so because they are afraid of being abused so they would feel safe around those who do not pose much of a threat. Thato a female student said that "*victims of bullies usually do not socialise well and they isolate themselves as they may think that people around them may also abuse them*". Mr Gape, a class teacher added that victims of bullying "*are always submissive to the bullies in order to avoid their wrath and win their trust*". Even the bullies too sometimes play truant as they do not enjoy being at school since they may not have friends as other students and may be afraid to associate with them because they do not want authorities to know that they associate with 'trouble-makers'.

5.5 Strategies in schools to prevent bullying

Bullying may have adverse psychological effects on the victims and may lead to withdrawal from peers, a behaviour that might negatively affect relationships later in their social life. Bullied students usually develop low self esteem and thus they would fail to exert themselves in the relationships that they form with others as they would not trust that they would be accorded the respect and dignity they deserve. This lack of trust would in turn make them to shy away from forming relationships as they view other people as a threat to their wellbeing. As a result, they would not seek assistance from either peers or teachers. However, school principals did not have any figures on bullying and the assumption is that they may not take bullying seriously or may not have skills in identifying it.

Presently there tends to be limited strategies in Botswana schools to prevent and deal with bullying. What is available are individual school regulations in the form of a disciplinary policy that tend not to be effective. The existing regulations tend to be vague hence ineffective because they do not provide any legal cover or guidance for people who may be attending to cases of bullying. In each school, there is a disciplinary committee that attends to cases of indiscipline amongst students which includes bullying. The HODs and teachers reported that they have strategies in place against bullying which are parts of the school policy on discipline. Mr Seko an HOD said:

First years are told during their orientation that bullying others is not allowed in school and that all those who would do it would face severe consequences. We also urge them to report any incident of bullying to the school authorities.

The information against bullying is passed on to students at assembly especially and only at the beginning of the year. This was confirmed by Daniso a male student who said that *"most of them are punished and teachers usually talk to students at assembly"*. However, spreading the information against bullying during orientation sessions may not necessarily be enough because such sessions come once at the beginning of the year and targets only the new students entering secondary school. HODs reported that schools sometimes enrich this strategy by inviting other stakeholders from outside the school like the local councillor and the police to talk to students on the issue of bullying and other discipline related issues. Sometimes HODs and the Guidance and Counselling teachers hold one-on-one counselling sessions with students who get reported as bullies and those who may have been bullied. However, the problem of bullying needs concerted effort from all stakeholders in the education of children. All parties concerned need to be sensitised on the issue so as to be able to draw a line between practices that constitute bullying and those that do not. Mr Setumo, a parent had this to say:

As a parent I advise my children not to fight or beat other students at school. I also talk to them that they should always report any case of ill-treatment by other students to the school authorities and not take the law into their own hands.

Another parent Mr Diako said:

The orientation for first years should be done in a more systematic and thorough manner and also in the presence of parents and guardians so that they are also aware of how their children are supposed to behave in school.

Mr Sekano a parent said:

The guidance and counselling department should work harder and aim at making the school a safe place where students can feel safe and happy. As for bullies they should be suspended or even expelled from school so that other students could enjoy their stay in school while they are away. Strict measures should be put in place to stamp out the problem.

Parents suggested that the schools should have a close working relationship with them and other stakeholders like the police and local authorities in moulding the behaviour of children. The participants especially teachers and students suggested that the Guidance and Counselling section should be active in addressing the problem.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion that is drawn from this study is that bullying exists in Botswana junior secondary schools and that it is both physical and psychological and victims are both boys and girls. Physical bullying is common among boys while verbal bullying is common among girls. Bullying may be rampant because some members of society view it as a rite of passage. It is clear that incidents of bullying are more in boarding schools than in day schools because students in boarding schools spend more time in the school premises during the course of the school term away from the safety of their parents. The practice has negative consequences on victims in terms of academic performance of students and social relationships especially with fellow students and other people in general. In addition, it has a negative impact on the victim in terms of suppressing positive emotions and a sense of self-esteem whereby the victim is left with a sense of self-condemnation, guilt, self-pity, fear, anxiety and

insecurity. Even though bullying is prevalent in Botswana junior secondary schools, many incidents go unreported and school authorities do not have comprehensive records of the actual prevalence of the incidents of bullying.

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