

Original Paper

The Micro-Politics of Schooling in Lesotho: Bullying

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Abstract

The paper is based on a study undertaken in 2015 to 2017 that explored the micro-politics of schooling in Lesotho, with specific focusing on bullying. A qualitative research design was adopted to probe for in-depth information about bullying in schools. The methodology employed was the case study approach in two high schools in Roma Valley. The population of the study was all teachers and students in the two high schools in Roma valley, while the sample comprised six teachers and eight students, who were purposively selected.

The study found out that bullying exists not only during school activities, but even during after school activities that learners are involved in. It was also found that bullying has negative consequences to all parties; perpetrators, victims and bystanders. Findings further revealed that the minority members of the society like visually impaired people, physically challenged and students with poor background are more prone to bullying because most of them do not have power to counteract bullies. The study further found that newly arrived students are the ones who are mostly targeted by bullies under the pretext of being taught the culture of the school. The study also found that teachers view bullying as an act of power imbalance where a powerful person takes advantage of a less powerful or vulnerable person. The study also found that cyber bullying is the latest form of bullying which is more harmful than any other form of bullying. The study also found that bullying contributes to depression and low self-esteem, which can lead to poor school performance and suicidal tendencies amongst the victims and bystanders.

The study therefore recommends that Lesotho government should come up with a policy to eliminate bullying in schools and establish programmes directed at teaching learners attitudes, knowledge and skills which they can use to circumvent bullying.

Keywords

bullying, schools, Lesotho, bully, victim, bystander

1. Introduction

Bullying is identified as a worldwide problem (Tattum, 1993). Learner safety in schools has become a current academic concern. United Nation Charter (2011) asserts that children have a right to safe and secure environment; free of fear, harm and humiliation. Bullying, therefore, violates children's rights to human dignity, privacy, freedom and security. Coloroso (2002) observed that bullying deprives children of their rightful entitlement to go to school in a safe, just, and caring environment. Bullying prevents students to learn in a harmonious way or sometimes it can lead learners, particularly those who bully, to engage in antisocial or delinquent behaviour such as vandalism, shoplifting, truancy, and drug as a way of proofing their roughness or toughness (Coloroso, 2007). As a result, the absence of bullying in schools can promote a learner friendly and safe school. For example, studies carried out in Africa show that bullying and other forms of violence are real issues of concern in schools. Liang (2007) found out that of 5074 Grade 8 and 11 students surveyed in the educational system in South Africa, 19.3 percent were victims of bullying while Mosia (2015) found that about 40 percent of learners in schools in Lesotho, had once been victims of bullying.

This is testimony that bullying is a worldwide problem in schools and thus regarded as a form of low level violence that can escalate and become physical and even lethal (Olafsen & Viemero, 2000). Porteus (1999) reiterates that the existence of bullying in schools is a worldwide phenomenon and a problem that can create negative impact for the general school atmosphere and for the rights of students to learn in a safe environment and to learn without fear. As observed by Liang (2007) some students end up hating school as they do not want to meet the bullies. On the one hand, Jimerson, Swearer and Epspelage (2009) describe bullying as a type of violence that has serious social and health consequences for victims who are repeatedly bullied. Thus, these effects can have lifelong negative consequences to the victim, perpetrator and to the bystander. Some scholars, such as Garrett (2003), view bullying as comparable to sexual harassment and as a matter of social justice, and by this nature demanding special attention. The consequences of bullying are far reaching beyond the school environment. This is supported by Coloroso (2007) who points out that in adulthood, bullying is an affront to democracy and to democratic institutions.

Usually, bullying affects both the bully and victim in a negative way. The victims of bullying experience serious and negative consequences such as developing psychological problems, which might even lead to suicide (Paquette & Underwood, 1999). According to Ladd and Ladd (2001) the emotional effect of being a perpetrator or a victim of bullying may stay with person for many years and often determine their self-concepts.

1.1 Research Questions

In order to understand the impact and effects of bullying in schools in Lesotho, the questions of the study revolved round who perpetrators are, who the victims are and their experiences of bullying, perpetrators experiences of bullying and finally the consequences of bullying.

2. Research Design and Methodology

The research design that was employed for the study was the qualitative approach. It involved studying things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. The general purpose of qualitative research methods is to examine human behaviour as it occurs in its social, cultural and political contexts. A case study approach was used to gain in depth understanding replete with meaning rather than conformation. The case study used in this study used questions such as “how”, “why”, “when” and “what”, and it helped to enable the researcher to gain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) assert that case studies involve looking at a case or phenomenon at its real-life context by employing many types of data. A pilot study was carried out to test the clarity and validity of the questions, and unclear questions were revised. It was carried out at one school in Roma valley other than the schools which data was collected. Three teachers and four students were involved in the pilot. The sample of the study consisted of fourteen informants from two high schools in Roma Valley that were purposively sampled.

3. Results

Data was analysed thematically and these are the themes that came out; perceptions on bullying, the experiences of bullying in schools, then ramifications of bullying in schools and lastly the measures which are used to counter bullying in schools.

3.1 Perceptions of Bullying

When informants were asked what they thought bullying was, most of them brought up the issue of power; they said bullying was when a powerful party intimidates the less powerful party. This explanation or definition is supported by Farrington on reviewed literature when he says, Bullying is repeated oppression of a less powerful person, physical or psychological, by a more powerful person (Farrington, 1993). The informants' definition of bullying brought aggression with many components: intent to harm, repetition, to discriminate and a power imbalance between the bully and the target or the victim. They said bullying is distinguished from conflict in the sense that in bullying there is a more powerful party. The victim therefore is the vulnerable party.

3.1.1 Vulnerability and Power

Power and vulnerability go hand in hand because the power takes a bully stance while the vulnerability represents the victim stance, so one cannot divorce the other while talking about the other aspect. There were several interview questions which were asked to the respondents by the researcher and the following sub-themes were constructed to go deeper in to the issue of vulnerability and power: Identity, Minority, and school new arrivals.

3.1.2 Identity

When asked who are commonly bullied in the school, students and a teacher indicated that people mostly bullied are homosexuals and students who have different physical features from others. The

issue of identity seemed to be also cause of bullying because students will start first by teasing someone about his or her identity and if that particular person doesn't like it that is when they will press more buttons. Informants stressed that gays, lesbians and people with queer sexuality are more prone to being bullied. This is how one student responded;

They are mostly new comers like those who arrive in form A and form D and people who do not have enough power to fight for themselves. Sometimes people who are different from others like fat people, gays and poor people (S.3).

Student four responded thus;

Form A's and sissy people. Sissy people are those who look like girls, like those who are like homosexuals, you know homosexuals are people who have soft spot and those people cannot even fight for themselves, they are too sweet and cannot even tell bullies to stop what they are doing (S.4).

While teacher four gave this response;

I think students who are sweet or have homosexuality features are the one to be bullied (T.4).

Rivers (2011) indicates that, homosexuals are at risk of being victims of bullying, and more evidence is found that victims of bullying are more prone to depressive tendencies when compared to other groups. This means homosexuals are more vulnerable in schools and are unacceptable their communities. Some people, if not most people do not understand how a person can claim to be attracted to the person of the same sex. The society is also frustrated by this, and as a result it projects this frustration onto the victims. The informants blamed the victims by pointing out that they are not leading expected life. One informant brought up the issue of religion that victims are being bullied because they are not religious. The social construction of bullying plays a big role on why people are bullied, because some people like to put other people in their own boxes and if they do not fit then they take them as evil. The issue of Christianity and homosexuality can be traced centuries back and it is clear that homosexuals do not have place in the Christianity. Informants believe that homosexuals are not Christian enough and this is how one teacher expressed it;

You know, students who are commonly bullied are powerless one, when I talk about powerless students I refer to those who are little bit different from others, that is those who are gays and maybe lesbians who are ungodly because other students will start to tease them on how they look and later they will tell them that they are going to marry them. So in short I would say such people who are like that are the ones who are commonly bullied because of how they are identified (T.5).

The informants outlined that the most vulnerable people are those who are powerless and the bullies are more powerful than the victims. The informants referred to bullies as though they are people who are outside community.

3.1.3 Minority

Informants added that most people who are commonly bullied are the minorities in the school

environment. They said they are likely to isolate themselves and like to spend their time alone not socialising with other students. As a result they are easily picked up because they are distinctive. They were asked why they think they are bullied. This is how one student responded;

The less privileged, those who are poor can easily be bullied in school (S.5).

Teacher seven answered thus;

They are bullied because they are poor, so as a result some students like to make fun of them on the kind of shoes they will be putting on and kind of food they will be eating, last year one guy who was my classmate was belittled by other students because he brought eggs to school as his lunch, when he opened his lunch box and broke his egg to prepare to eat, he found out that it was seruoa (rotten egg). Then other students started laughing at him calling him all sorts of names like sebolu, sewerage etc. This made it hard for him to cope at the school and he never came back this year (looking emotional). Yes, it's real a boring situation because he couldn't afford better meals (T.7).

Poverty is still a discomfoting problem in Lesotho. Learners who are poor face the most difficult time in schools as they feel isolated. Poverty is already a shameful thing that one cannot easily open up about it if one is a victim. One can relate how difficult it is for a victim of bullying to be mocked for the kind of a pair of shoes he or she puts on, that can hinder learning because that particular child will spend most of his time thinking of how to overcome bullying. Respondents said minority groups face a difficult time in school as they are not easily accepted.

From the interviews, poverty was identified as one of the reasons of bullying. There was one student who brought boiled eggs to school and he was not aware that those eggs were not fresh, that can happen to anyone but since he was identified poor learner, other learners could easily identify him and some started calling him kinds of names which symbolises rotten eggs. This tension escalated until such student's self-esteem was killed, respondent said such student never came back to school the following year and the reason was that he felt like school was no longer conducive place for him.

Since minorities are people who are less in numbers, they lack power even to make any campaign or to let their voices be heard about bullying. The informants said the fact that they lack power to show that they too are human beings, happen to be the most targeted group in the school setting. According to Bauman (2008) the weakness of victims also contributes markedly to the imbalance in power. In any analysis that of imbalances that precede bullying one may include a low capacity to reward or coerce others, an absence of legitimate power, little relevant expertise, being generally uninformed, and being the kind of person with whom few, if any, wish to identify with.

There was also concern by the informants with people with disability or special needs that they are also bullied in school, Learners with special needs are at risk of being bullied at the same time they are also more at risk of taking part in bullying others (Mishna, 2003). Learners may have certain particular features that make them targets of bullying, and they may lack protection to either speak for themselves or resist bullying. One informant said on the other hand, some learners with disability may be the ones

with behavioural problems since they know teachers have got soft spot for them. Adolescents with autism spectrum disorder have been found to be at higher victimisation risk for misinterpreting social situations (Roekel, Scholte, & Didden, 2009).

3.2 New Arrivals

New arrivals are mostly in Form A and Form D, there is a common tendency of ill-treating those who are arriving at school. For some schools, it's something that lasts for days while in some schools such ill-treatment lasts for months. Informants said the most group of people who are being bullied are the new one to the school because they are not familiar with the school culture and other politics. Informants were asked who are commonly bullied in the school and why are they bullied. Teacher one and student eight said;

They are bullied because they are powerless and they are also bullied because they are unfamiliar with this environment. Most of people who are bullied are form A's. They go through bullying as a way of making them to understand our culture and adhere to it (T.1).

Mostly are people who are not from Roma and those who are arriving at the school but it can also happen to anyone at any time (S.8).

This is how teacher one put it:

New comers especially form D's from other schools because there is an element that they were attending schools with girls, then these old students will instruct the new one to sweep the class and when they refuse then they will start uttering inappropriate comments and even assault them (T.1).

From informants' answers, bullying starts first as a chore, like what each and every student is supposed to do like sweeping the classroom or removing garbage. From what one would think are normal chores then bullies take advantage and bully others in line with school policies so that they can hide behind them. Respondents said the reason why bullies in school would do this is because they do not want to be seen as guilty in case bullying is reported. For victims, it is difficult to report bullying activities especially when one is new at the school. Some students who are new at the school do not know what is meant by bullying activities as they think it is a normal way of life.

3.3 Bullying Experiences

Students and teachers were further asked about their experiences of bullying. These are issues that on their experiences.

3.3.1 Forms of Bullying

There are at most three types of bullying namely physical, verbal and cyber bullying. Across gender, the most frequent type of bullying reported is teasing and name calling, followed by hitting and kicking and other threats (Stephen & Smith, 1989). Teasing and name calling are verbal forms of bullying while hitting and kicking are classified under physical bullying. In this study informants said all these three forms of bullying exist in schools, but they acknowledged cognised cyber bullying as the most hurting type of bullying.

The researcher found that out the boys are more generally violent and destructive in their bullying behaviour than girls. There was a 20 year old boy who admitted that he sometimes n uses some weapons as a form of security especially when he goes for sports functions outside school;

I got suspended for two weeks because I was carrying a knife to Setsoto Stadium on sports day, the reason I was carrying that knife was to secure myself from other boys who are not my classmates (S.3).

On the other hand girls seemed to use indirect and subtle forms of bullying and harassment, like spreading of rumours, malicious gossip, and manipulation of friendship which may include depriving one person of her best friend. Informants said they are familiar with all kinds of bullying and some who were victims of these forms of bullying reported cyber bullying as one of the most awful type of bullying because even people who are far away can see when a victim is being bullied and they also take part as by-standers.

Cyber bullying is actually one of the dangerous form of bullying because these students keep it as an evidence to show other students, even the victim can keep it as a form of message and that can keep on hurting others (T.2).

They further said;

Physical, Verbal and Cyber bullying (T.3).

Verbal can turn into joke but cyber bullying is the most dangerous one because it even involves people outside school (T.3).

All of them have been reported here at school with different degree (T.6)

This issue arose again from perpetrators of bullying, they reported Cyber bullying as the dominant form of bullying. Asked whether they ever bullied any one, some students said;

I have only been bullied and never bullied anyone (S.4).

Facebook status which was wrongly misinterpreted, which was not direct to anyone, the second time was when we had an argument with my school mate in a taxi and he then called students from St. Josephs who assaulted me and insulted me.....Probed on Facebook Status....I posted an update on Facebook talking about people who misbehave and uses drugs at school, the status was not directed to anyone, it was just a general statement whereby I was weighing my views that it is not a good thing, unfortunately people came to me on Monday and started bullying me saying I think I am better, calling me all sorts of things, one even slapped me saying I am the one who is reporting him to teachers (S.4).

While one teacher said;

Last time was when some other students discussed about me on their whatsapp group that I am lesbian, they called me a man, someone sent me screenshot (Evidence) of what they said about me and then when I arrived at school I attacked them one by one like I eagle, I hit them hard because I knew they wouldn't report me to the headmistress (S.6).

The respondents made their voice heard that cyber bullying is the most dangerous type of bullying as it

stays longer with the victim. Cyber bullying is extremely damaging type of interpersonal violence present in schools throughout different countries and regions (Zych, 2015). The cyber bullying seems to be one of the most common and popular type of bullying of late due to technology. Students are exposed to cellular phones and internet and since they spend most of their time on social media, they happen to misuse the mode of communication by bullying others. Cyber bullying occurs in cyber space and some people might not understand how that can have negative impact on someone's life. This problem should not be trivialized since it has been linked to real-world consequences and research has found out that cyber bullying is associated with negative emotions such as sadness, anger, frustration, embarrassment, or fear (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Aseltine (2000) says emotions like low self-esteem, suicidal ideation have been correlated with delinquency and interpersonal violence among youth.

3.3.2 Continuous Cultural Process

For most participants bullying seems to be continuous cultural processes, they do not see bullying as something that can come to an end because they are told it has been happening. They do not see how schooling can be defined without bullying. In their perspective bullying is embedded in school. They indicated that bullying mostly takes place in the playgrounds. On the question why students are bullied in schools, teachers two and five responded thus;

Culture, it's what has been happening and even those who come in form A without that element they then copy it and make it then pass it to the next generation (T.2).

Culture in boarding school, I also went through it (T.5).

While students four and one said;

Culture, that how it has always happened (S.4).

It's something that has been happening in our society and some people cannot even see that it's wrong (S.1).

Most informants associate bullying in schools with the school culture. They argue that culture is playing vital role for bullying to take place. Bullying is continuing because it feels like culture. Taten and Bakk (2009) posit that students become bullies as a result of cultural patterns and social processes in school. This culture is passed from generation to generation and it is often romanticised, glorified and celebrated.

3.3.3 Reporting Bullying

The informants said they there was no need for them to report bullying because sometimes teachers mediate and they don't follow up on whether the bully did not go back to victim to repeat bullying activities. Some said by reporting they make bullying worse;

I was afraid to report them because it was going to be worse if I reported it (S.4).

I cried and told my mum when I got home but I asked her not to tell Headmistress because those would bully me more if they got punished (S.6).

Most student informants pointed out that; it is difficult to report bullying because of a possibility of not being considered by teacher, as a result they keep it to themselves and bury the bitterness. Those who

witness bullying just feel bad about it and never report it for fear of the bullies. One student said;

I keep quiet and watch them because I always fear that if I have to say anything to teachers, they might turn back to me and start bullying me again (S.1).

Their concern is that some teachers do nothing to stop bullying activities. The perception among students is that there is no point in telling teachers about bullying (Lloyd & Stead, 2001; Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Thomson & Gunter, 2008). The victims also develop the secrecy because they do not want to be regarded as weak. The informants said if one reports bullying it shows that he is not fit to attend boys school where bullying is not supposed to be reported. In their ethnographic study, MacDonald and Swart (2004) identified a prevalent culture of secrecy at school (Do not tell) that contributed to the ongoing cycle of bullying. There is one informant who said that there is no need for him to report bullying because it is part of school culture and even teachers do tell them how bullying has always been happening in their years, so the culture of the school cannot divorce bullying. One student expressed this thus;

There is no need to report bullying because even teacher tell us that they were once teachers in this school and bullying has been in existence, so I think reporting it is a waste of time (S.5).

3.4 Self-Esteem

Bullying has been found to be a source of low self-esteem. Banks (2007) found out that victims of bullying lose self-esteem, feel shame, suffer anxiety and come to dislike school and play truant to avoid victimisation. One respondent said ever since she became a victim of bullying, that is when she became valueless and she could not face people or debate with other students because she felt like a useless member of the community. The freedom that she was supposed to feel at school no longer existed. This is how the student put it;

It is wrong thing because it makes others feel sad, it hurt others and some students don't feel free at school, I am also one of them who do not feel free at school, my self-esteem has deteriorated (S.4).

Solberg and Olweus (2003) posit that children who are bullied are more likely to suffer from disorder such as depression. Learners who have low self-esteem do not have any hope, like the student said. The bullied learners have a positive outlook of themselves, as result they view themselves as worthless or not good enough. Suicidal feeling develop in them due to crushed self-esteem. Students had this to say;

Bullying is a bad thing; it makes others to have low self-esteem (S.8).

It is bad, I am victim of it(he cried). I was locked in the classroom by one person and he was beating me saying that I said funny things about him on Facebook, I just wrote on Facebook that other students like to eat other people's food at school. Ever since that incident I feel like I have got low self-esteem, sometimes I even hate to log on to my Facebook (S.4).

Unnever, Dewey and Cornell (2004) assert that bully's hurtful behaviour has more to do with the emotion of shame and less to do with their self-esteem. Shame has to do with how one thinks of himself or herself and it results from not living to one's own personal standards. Asked on their

perceptions on why some people bully others in the school, some students responded thus;

People bully others because they are seeking for attention, they know that if they bully others, teachers will always send them to staff room so that they can stand in front of the assembly and they can be easily recognised by others (S.5).

They bully others because they are angry students who do not have love so they just want recognition because their self-esteem is low (T.4).

While a teacher answered;

For us here it is because it's one gender so the one who comes first thinks he owns the place, it is sort of a culture and the other thing is low self-esteem because most of them stay in the boarding school and there is no parental attention (T.3).

3.5 Revenge

Informants view bullying activities as a way of revenge by the bullies since most schools in Lesotho allow ill-treatment of newly arriving students. Sometimes treatment can be too harsh for one to take it, the same person can reorganise himself or herself and start bullying others when he or she is used to environment. The informants said they bully others because they were once bullied by other. This is how the students said;

It is culture, it has always been done and we do it to other arriving students as a form of revenge because we were also bullied when we were arriving here (S.3).

Students bully others at school because they want revenge, It might have happened to them in early life maybe in their families and now they want to show others what they went through and that they are now powerful (S.6).

One teacher also articulated the issue of revenge thus;

I think people bully others in schools especially here because they want revenge, there might have been a lot which happened to student, either societal rejection, family rejection or friends rejection so such victims will bully others because they just want to revenge, this problem will even go outside school where you will see such a victim as violent at community level even after school (T.5).

3.6 Bystanders and Their Role

A bystander is someone who sees or knows about bullying or other forms of violence that is happening to someone else, they can either be part of the problem or part of the solution (Teten & Ball, 2009). A bystander who is part of the problem is someone who is hurtful, that is someone who watches while the bullying is taking place and he or she encourages the bully to continue. A bystander who is part of the solution is someone who may report the bullying incident to authorities.

The role of bystander seems to be speed up reaction according to respondents. They said bystander give the bully more power by laughing or passing comments to the victim, in one way or another. They explained that bystanders are also bullies. If a bully is bullying a victim physically, bystanders will be uttering insults to the victim. So, the victim receives bullying from more than two different people. This

how the students elaborated on the role of the bystanders;

They are the most dangerous people because they are perpetrators, they even laugh when someone is bullying the other (S.4).

It is not good thing but sometimes we watch because we don't want to be witnesses in the office, when we ask bullies to stop with their tendencies, by the time they are being called to the office to be mediated we then end up being witnesses and as a result when the bully gets punishment we also get one. Therefore, we normally watch bullying like that and pass (S.5).

They are as bad as bullies because they even comment on WhatsApp groups by laughing if someone is bullying someone (S.8).

Teachers too had this to responses about the consequences the bystanders face after bullying is reported shows that bystanders also contribute a lot to bullying activities. Teachers' respondents mostly clarified that they punish bystanders if they get the information that they were available when one was being bullied, this therefore says one cannot be punished if he or she is not guilty nor took certain part in speeding up the reaction. Students one and three put it like this in their words:

We also punish them if we are informed that they were part of bullying activities (T.1).

If there is someone who support the bully, then they also face same punishment with the bully (T.3).

This is how teacher six responded:

We look at the possibilities or the role she played for one to be bullied and we offer same punishment of slightly lenient one from the bully (T.6).

The data made researchers realise that bystanders are as bad as bullies and that is why they get the same punishment as perpetrators. They are not passive as they witness bullying and they also play a role, and some are even more active than bullies. Klewin, Tillmann and Weingart (2003) assert that bystanders justify their acts by arguing that it is natural to be curious about unusual events; that there may be a good reason for not getting involved in other people's business, such as fear of getting hurt and that they are doing no harm. Despite their arguments, it is clear that bystanders contribute to bullying acts in one way or another.

3.7 Measures of Countering Bullying

Since almost all informants stipulated that bullying is bad behaviour, Andershed, Kerr and Stattin (2001) also confirm that it is a type of aggressive behaviour. The researchers formulated questions to get information on how the schools minimizes bullying incidences. A direct interview question to teachers was whether they have programmes for minimising or dealing with bullying problems. It is important to note that the researchers became aware through informants' answers that there is a lot that is being done to eradicate this problem even though it still continues.

The researchers discovered that many school-based intervention programs have been devised and some have been implemented in an attempt to reduce bullying. These have targeted on bullies, victims, and bystanders. Many programs seem to have been based on common sense ideas about what might reduce

bullying rather than on empirically-supported theories of why learners bully others. The following are the programs that are employed by two schools to encounter bullying.

3.8 *Counselling of Victims*

There is disciplinary committee which is made up of teachers and school prefects on each school. The teachers' responsibilities are to mediate and to actually find the root of the problem from both the victim and the bully. When the root of the problem is found, there are teachers who focus on the victim to try to assist with the counselling support. In dealing with the bullies teachers said this;

We comfort them, try to talk to them so that they can feel better and inform them of the punishment we gave to bullies (T.2).

We mediate both two sides and then there will be team which is assigned to counsel the victim (T.5).

3.9 *Punishment of the Perpetrators*

The teacher informants said they use punishment as a mechanism to tackle those who have committed bullying offences. They further said that there is no set standard on how students are punished, it is each teacher's discretion on how he or she can punish the students and often, punishment of bullies can come in the form of whipping, they can be assigned to clean school environment, they can be suspended from school for some days and parents being called to talk to their children or they can be expelled from school for the rest of their life. The issue most stressed is that on each punishment there is a clear communication, that is, they let student know why and how he or she will be punished. In a case where bullying activities done repeatedly, a parent will be called. Asked on the consequences bullies face teachers said;

They get punishment and can be sending home if matters are worse (T.2).

They get punished and get warnings which go up to three times, for the fourth time we expel student, before we expel or suspend that student we communicate together with student's parents the offences and the judgement (T.6).

The informants outlined that the school does not have clear policy on how offenders of bullying can be punished, it all depends on what they have done to the victim. Therefore, there is a lot of inconsistency on the punishment given, because teachers' discretion differs, for instance one teacher may suspend a learner for two weeks for punching another learner on the face while the other teacher might use corporal punishment to such a learner. Corporal punishment was the quickest remedy that teachers uses without involving parents, and they said they find it the best way to work with learners, this is in contrary to Molotsana (2001) when he says the constructive nature brought us to the awareness that, spanking is generally unhelpful as well as abusive to students.

Bullying does not happen among the students only, it can also be done by teachers to students. There are students who opined that some teachers punish them for no good reason and the think it is because they have personal interest or it is because they use punishment as a form of bullying. Informants said teachers also use their power in a wrong way to inflict pain. According to Kotzie (2002) teachers have

been beneficiary of corporal punishment in this sense and have always used their power to induce pain in learners. One student said this;

I have also been bullied by one teacher which I can't name him, he just called me to the office and whipped me without any cause, and he even told me that he has a right to whip me anytime.

My feeling is that he had his own family frustrations and he wanted to project that on me (S.3).

In addition, teachers have a tendency to call both bullies and victims to staffrooms as if they are going to mediate only to find that they want to expose them to other teachers, so that they can gossip about them. This makes students not to report bullying because they say teachers are just interested to gossip than to solve bullying problems.

3.10 Assembly as a Medium of Communication

There seems to be a uniform culture for all schools to have an assembly where all students meet daily every morning. The informants said assembly is used as a medium of communication to raise students' awareness on how bullying and violence at large is not allowed in schools. It is also through this meeting that some of students who bullied others are brought before the assembly and warned. The interview question which was asked was, if the school has any programs for minimising or dealing with bullying problems, and this is how teachers responded;

Almost every day principal talks about it on assembly, most students who are bullied are those who stay at the boarding (T.7).

Normally we address the bullying and school related violence in the classrooms, sports associations and assembly. We tell students how bad and unallowed bullying is (T.4).

Teachers use effective ways of keeping bullying within limits, stopping it, or preventing it altogether by communicating with students collectively, through this communication, it is where they are given rules, they are empowered of their rights, bullies are told that they are not supposed to behave in an odd way. This does not only end in assembly but teachers said they also talk about it in classrooms.

4. Conclusions

From the findings, it can be deduced that indeed bullying exists not only in schools but even on after school activities that learners are involved in. It can also be formally settled that identity of a person can be used by bullies as a bridge to bullying activities. There is also acknowledgement that students arriving at school for the first time are the ones who happen to be victims of bullying. Out of these findings it can also be deduced that the minority members of the society like visually impaired people, physically challenged and students with poor background are the ones who are more prone to bullying activities as most of them do not have power to encounter bullying.

The results here show that there are bullying activities like teasing, calling names, hitting, kicking, threats and Facebook or WhatsApp intimidations. These therefore, confirm that three forms of bullying namely physical, verbal and cyber bullying are found in schools in Lesotho. One other findings is that cyber bullying is the most common type of bullying in schools of late, the reason being students are

now on social media to communicate, socialise and to be informed of the latest events. The teachers have also said bullying in schools is a continuous since, it has been happening during their schooling times and there is no way it can stop. The findings show that teachers do influence bullying in one way or another and that is negative influence.

The findings depict that there are various reasons for bullying, such as revenge. From the finding it can be deduced that some students become bullies as a result of compensating for his or her low self-esteem, some students do bully others as a way of calling attention so that they can be recognised by either students or teachers.

The findings depict that bystanders are aware of negative consequences of bullying even though they still encourage and give a bully more energy and power. These findings also show that bystanders normally get almost same punishment with the perpetrators because they also bite big steak as well.

The findings portray that there are only negative impact and ramifications of bullying. There are numerous ramifications but there are those which stand up to the worst ones like school dropouts, students do dropout of school because they do not want to face bullying activities, some miss school for days as a result of running away from the bully. It is through these findings that some students even have to lie to their parents and teachers if they missed school. The findings further outlined that bullying in schools also causes depression for the victim, the depression that is caused by bullying can easily lead to poor school performance. Some students have poor grades as a result of bullying because they do not concentrate in class as they take most of their time thinking of their bully and how bystanders are going to laugh at them.

From the findings, it can also be deduced that bullying can take life of someone in two ways, it can either be by suicide or violence that leads to the death of the other student. The results further show that there are several measures which school administration takes to encounter bullying like counselling the victims. Counselling focuses only on the victims of bullying ignoring bullies in the schools. They further show that punishment is used to counter bullying. Punishment for bullying is not standard; it depends on teacher's discretion both the perpetrator and the bully. This therefore creates unbalanced and unfair punishment as it depends on the teachers' mood on how a learner can be punished.

From the findings, it can also be deduced that assembly is used by school administrations as a platform to raise awareness on bullying. These findings have brought up dissatisfaction on the students that, at assembly is where teachers use that platform to humiliate and discriminate them as well as bully other students while they use tough and improper language while trying to talk to students. These findings also spell out that some teachers take advantages of some students to embarrass them. On the other hand the study has found that teachers use assembly to make other students aware of how bullying is a bad kind of violence that is not supposed to be tried or experienced by anyone.

5. Recommendations

On the basis of findings of the study recommended that: first, Lesotho government should come up with policy to regulate bullying in schools. Article 28(a) of Lesotho Constitution decreed about violence and opposes it. The constitution is silent about violence in schools, the Ministry of Education is silent about bullying activities in school, the researchers therefore, recommend that there should be a clear school policy which will advocate for victims, will assist with counselling of the perpetrators and victims and make bystanders aware that they will be subjected to punishments given to perpetrators, if they do not take responsibility of reporting bullying activities.

Second, it is recommended that schools establish programmes directed at teaching learners attitudes, knowledge and skills to reduce their involvement in bullying. The ministry of education has already introduced subject that can address this problem and it is called Life Skills but the subject is not taught in all schools and on the taught school, it is not compulsory. It is therefore recommended that subject be compulsory in all schools and should have end of level objectives which include bullying and violence in schools at large. The researcher also recommends that the programme should start as early as in primary so that students have clear understanding on definition of bullying.

Third, empowerment of minority students in the school, so that they can have stance and report bullying activities without any fear. These should also include parental involvement so that it can make a possible consistent response between school and home to the issue of bullying.

Fourth, schools should have their own policy on the issue of punishment for the offenders of bullying so that they can apply almost same punishment to counter students who believe that punishment is not consistent and some get lighter punishment because they are affiliated to teachers:

There should be an anonymous suggestion box placed in the school or even anonymous website where students especially bystanders can report bullying to teachers without fear for their lives because victims have secrecy tendency to report bullying. Teachers should visit the suggestion box almost every week, whatever tip they get from the box there should be thorough investigations so that measures can be taken without any favour or prejudice. There should be policy on the use of social media, the researchers are aware that every learners is advised to have a tablet or at least a cellular phone so that they can use them for their school work. The students also use the gargets for social media where some end up misusing them to make offences such as cyber bullying.

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