



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i2/17481>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i2/17481

Received: 14 April 2023, **Revised:** 16 May 2023, **Accepted:** 29 May 2023

Published Online: 19 June 2023

In-Text Citation: (Remly et al., 2023)

To Cite this Article: Remly, A. H., Halim, A. A., Azmi, A. S., Anas, N., & Ramlan, A. N. M. (2023). Bullying Prevention Approach in the Klang Valley Education Sector: Issues & Challenges. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 12(2), 2391–2399.

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Vol. 12(2) 2023, Pg. 2391 - 2399

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www.hrmars.com

ISSN: 2226-6348

Bullying Prevention Approach in the Klang Valley Education Sector: Issues & Challenges

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Abstract

Bullying is a form of violence that is widespread within the education sector worldwide and has been deemed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a global health issue affecting adolescents and children. As a result of serious injuries and even fatalities, bullying incidents in Malaysia's educational sector have gained considerable attention. Thus, the objective of this study is to analyze the preventive approaches to bullying employed in schools throughout the Klang Valley, as well as the challenges encountered in attempts to combat the crime of bullying in each institution. The study design is qualitative in nature, with case studies based on semi-structured interviews with teachers and school administrators within the Klang Valley. Six teachers/school administrators from five Klang Valley schools were chosen via purposive sampling specifically SMK Sungai Besi, SMK Taman Selayang, SK Bandar Tasik Selatan, SK Bandar Baru Salak Tinggi, and SK Rinching Hilir. Thematic analysis and ATLAS ti23 software were utilized to assess the interview findings. As per the study findings, it became apparent that the executed approaches and activities have notably contributed to a decrease in bullying cases in the study locations. The organized activities include: (i) Motivational talks, (ii) Congregational prayers and Quranic recitations, (iii) Sports and co-curricular activities, and (iv) Continuous counseling sessions. Nonetheless, schools confront a number of difficulties in implementing these ventures, including effects from gadgets, parental concerns, attendance, and external influences.

Keywords: Bullying, Education Sector, Preventive Approach, Klang Valley

Introduction

Bullying is a deliberate act of tormenting and teasing others to the point of submission in forcing them to adapt to a new setting (Shahid et al., 2008), and it is often directed at those who are more vulnerable with the intent to intimidate or frighten them (Halim et al., 2022). It is classified into three types: physical, psychological and antisocial bullying (Yahaya et al., 2010). Physical bullying is the most apparent and visible form of bullying, that involves actions such as kicking, hitting, punching, slapping, destroying, and other physical assaults (Yung et

al., 2019). Meanwhile, bullying actions that aim to affect the victim's emotions, such as mocking and insulting, are referred to as psychological bullying (Noor et al., 2022). The physical flaws of the victim, such as an unappealing appearance, poverty-related issues, family problems, and so on, tend to be the root causes of this form of bullying (Isa et al., 2020). Whereas, antisocial behaviour in the context of bullying can take the form of physical acts like vandalism or psychological ones like social exclusion and rumor-mongering (Raja Ahmad et al., 2017).

It has been reported that 17.9% of school-aged adolescents in Malaysia between the ages of 13 and 17 were subjected to bullying within a month, whereas 22.7% of secondary school students in Johor were found to have endured bullying, as revealed by the Global School-Based Student Health Survey in 2012 (Tan et al., 2019). Furthermore, news reports on instances of bullying in schools have become regularly occurring. For example, in a case associated with bullying of a Year Six student, the police were brought in and eight people were summoned (Awani, 2019). In other occasion, 10 students were apprehended for bullying and compelled a classmate to complete their school assignments (Harian, 2019). Then, three students were detained and remanded in custody for bullying and attacking a fellow student (Awani, 2020). The latest assault deals with the arrest of four students for bullying (Harian, 2021). These constitute merely some instances of bullying in the three years preceding today. Bullying affects nearly half of all adolescents and children globally, placing them on the verge for behavioural problems, physical health issues, and suicidal ideation. This study seeks to fill a research gap, strengthen research on bullying offences in the education sector, and determine the best solutions to this issue with the intention to develop well-rounded individuals in all aspects of life.

- Hence, the goal of this study is to identify bullying prevention strategies alongside the challenges that schools in the Klang Valley encounter.

Literature Review

Teenagers who are still in school and engage in bullying are at greater risk of developing negative behavioural issues aggression, mental health problems, along with suicidal thoughts. Bullying appears to be common among Malaysian school students, with 79.1% of students having been linked to bullying offences (Sabramani et al., 2021). The Ministry of Education Malaysian (MOE) is deeply invested in addressing bullying among school students by undertaking a variety of programmes, including the *Sekolahku Sejahtera* programme (Yusuf & Fahrudin, 2012). The Bullying Complaint Portal was launched as part of this programme to serve as an outlet for victims to report bullying crimes to the Ministry of Education Malaysian (MOE). Furthermore, the MOE also aims to foster folks who exhibit qualities which include discipline, morals, ethics, competitiveness, and balance in physical, mental, intellectual, and social aspects (Etum et al., 2021). Each school ought to be accountable in reaching the MOE's targets in line with the appropriate principles and guidelines.

Table 1

MOE's Objectives and Guidelines to Address Bullying

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both educators and students exhibit and nurture empathy. • Students model the values of respect, compromise, and decent conduct in their interpersonal relationships. • Students interact effectively with one another and appreciate relationships.
MOE Guidelines (Teacher and Student Care)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a Caring Culture (welcoming students, implementing mentor-mentee programmes, and fostering mutual respect among teachers and students). • Practicing effective communication (decent interaction, greetings and smiles, courteous conversation, constructive criticism, and gratitude). • Engaging in good values (implementing programmes for students' character development and tending relationships on the basis of mutual respect, compromise, and with courtesy). • Developing Action Skills (self-assertive skills, decision-making skills, communication skills, and emotional stress management).

Religious education and activities are regarded as vital elements in the development of students' personalities, morals, and emotional support (Azmi et al., 2016). Morality is considered a marker in the formation of a righteous character, and its growth is also linked to religious matters (Daud et al., 2020). Aside from that, morality is the foundation that firmly secures relationships and safeguards society's existence, stability, tranquility, and well-being (Ahmad & Tamuri, 2005). Bullying incidents in schools continue to be a major concern, regardless of various preventive measures and interventions. As such, soul purification therapy has been accepted as a viable option in shaping students' favourable traits, such as pre-Zuhr tazkirah, Islamic month reflection programmes, and Yasin recitation every Friday morning, which have been implemented in schools as pivotal substitutes in combating bullying within Malaysia's education sector.

Methodology

A qualitative research design with a case study technique was utilized in this study. Semi-structured interviews with teachers and school administrators in the Lembah Klang area had been carried out to assess the approaches, activities, and constraints encountered when executing the bullying prevention methods. Six teacher/school administrators were recruited using a purposive sampling technique from five schools in the Lembah Klang area: SMK Sungai Besi, SMK Taman Selayang, SK Bandar Tasik Selatan, SK Bandar Baru Salak Tinggi, and SK Rinching Hilir. Thematic analysis was applied to analyse the interview data obtained with the backing of ATLAS ti23 software.

Table 2

Research Instrument

Question	
Q1	What kind of bullying prevention methods are being employed at this school?
Q2	What kind of bully prevention activities are there for students?
Q3	What religious activities take place at this school?
Q4	What are your thoughts on current bullying incidents in the education sector?
Q5	Could you tell me about your experiences as a teacher/school administrator dealing with bullying cases at your school?
Q6	What obstacles does the school face in putting bullying prevention activities in place?
Q7	What are your recommendations for establishing a bully-free school?

Source: Research interviews

Table 3

School Coding of the Study

School	Codes
SMK Sungai Besi	G1
SMK Sungai Besi	G2
SMK Taman Selayang	G3
SK Bandar Tasik Selatan	G4
SK Bandar Baru Salak Tinggi	G5
SK Rinching Hilir	G6

Source: Study sampling

Results and Discussions

Table 4

Interview Feedback

Items	Feedback
Q1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous awareness during assembly (G1) • On-going spiritual advice, encouragement, and guidance (G2) • Advice and punishment (G3) • Offer motivation prior to learning sessions (G4) • Provide a complaint box for students who hesitate to reach out to teachers and school administrators (G5) • Take students on learning excursions outside of the school grounds (G6)
Q2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constantly arranging anti-bullying programmes and invite competent youth groups (G1) • Perform congregational zuhr prayers at school and set up programmes to commemorate the Islamic month (G2) • Organize bully-free school programmes as well as display posters and banners that depict bullying (G3) • Continual approach throughout assembly (G4) • Manage a one-day bully-free school programme (G5) • Urge students to get involved in co-curricular activities and engage in community service (P6)
Q3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform congregational zuhr prayers at school and give tazkirah (G1)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appreciate the Islamic months and perform congregational zuhr prayers (G2)• Recite the Qur'an every morning (G3)• Appreciate the Islamic months and recite Yassin (G4)• Give tazkirah and conduct motivational talk programmes during significant events in the Islamic months, such as Israk Mikraj (G5)• Carry out fardhu ain classes, congregational zuhr prayers, and share tazkirah before zuhr prayers (G6)
Q4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bullying prevention initiatives are no longer limited to the school level, now that the Ministry of Education has taken notice (G1)• No school is free of bullying incidents (G2)• Bullying, particularly physical bullying, is still common within the education sector (G3)• Bullying at school is not to be taken lightly, as both physical and psychological bullying have occurred here (G4)• Bullying in schools is an alarming problem that concerns educators (G5)• Bullying cases persist regardless of numerous prevention efforts, with new cases reported nearly every month (G6)
Q5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bullying incidents at this school are still under control, and no major incidents have necessitated police involvement (G1)• Every year, around 10 cases of physical bullying take place in this school (G2)• Bullying cases have become alarming at this school, with accounts of physical and psychological bullying nearly every month, with 10-20 bullying cases estimated to take place (G3)• As per to my discoveries in the classroom, verbal bullying happens on a daily basis, whereas only 5-7 cases of physical bullying are reported annually. Hence, the situation is within control (G4)• Last year, only ten instances of physical and verbal bullying were reported (G5)• Physical and verbal bullying seems to be under control at this school, with fewer than ten cases reported each year (G6)
Q6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The primary challenge is from devices and gadgets (G1, G5)• Inadequate time to conduct additional bullying prevention programmes (G2, G6)• Attendance issues for students (G3)• The majority of students at this school are disrespectful and frequently defy their teachers (G4).
Q7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Looking forward to bullying-free schools in Malaysia since the act can negatively impact the country's education system (G1, G4, G6)• Creating a bully-free school is challenging, however it is doable if all parties are mindful of the issues at hand (G2)• Aspire Malaysian schools and education sector to be among the best worldwide (G3)• Bullying prevention activities should be expanded by the Ministry of Education and schools (G5)

Q= Question, G=Participant

Bullying Prevention Approach at the School Level in the Klang Valley

"The strategy that has been regularly carried out is to perpetually boost awareness regarding the adverse effects of bullying on students' futures during assemblies" **(G1)**

"Provide advice, positive reinforcement, and guidance from the spiritual aspect constantly through tazkirah before congregational zuhr prayers at school" **(G2)**

"We advise and direct students via organized programmes that include motivational talks and enforcing suitable disciplinary measures in line with the Ministry of Education's guidelines" **(G3)**

"The majority of the teachers here take a few moments before the beginning of each learning session to offer guidance along with advice on character and behaviour of students" **(G4)**

"The school's approach is to set up a complaint box for bully victims who are hesitant to voice it to teachers and school supervisors" **(G5)**

"We urge students' involvement in co-curricular activities and frequently bring them outside of the school premises for learning excursions" **(G6)**

Given the feedback from teacher/school administrators (G1-G6), it can be concluded that the most commonly utilized techniques in schools are regular daily advice and guidance to students in the classrooms, weekly during assemblies, and through motivational lectures organized by the schools. Preventive measures also entail emphasizing students' physical well-being, such as arranging co-curricular activities that foster leadership skills and solidarity among them. In addition, spiritual preventive activities were also administered, such as tazkirah before congregational zuhr prayers, programmes to celebrate the Islamic months, and recitation of the Yasin every Friday morning. Hence, the bullying prevention strategy deployed in schools in the vicinity of the Klang Valley is a balanced combination of spiritual and physical development, geared to students' physical and mental growth.

Challenges Faced by Schools in Implementing Anti-Bullying Activities

"The primary challenge is the use of gadgets" **(G1, G5)**

"Inadequate time to implement more bullying prevention programmes since teachers are preoccupied with teaching and learning activities (PdP)" **(G2, G6)**

"Student attendance is rather concerning" **(G3)**

"The majority of students in this school lack manners and frequently defy teachers" **(G4)**

According to teacher/school administrators' feedback, there were several obstacles encountered with the execution of bullying prevention activities, which comprise the negative effects brought about by unregulated gadget consumption. Students have instant access to any information they require. The school, on the other hand, has taken measures to confiscate phones from students who are caught bringing them into the institution. Moreover, due to their busy schedules that include tasks other than teaching and learning processes, school administrators and teachers have limited ability to fully focus on the bullying prevention approach. Attendance issues further jeopardize the effectiveness of the schools' endeavours, as some student skip school when they are aware their school plans to

arrange programmes, citing a lack of classroom learning activities on that day as an excuse. Furthermore, the erosion in morality and ethics is a challenge which has to be addressed for character excellence acts as a basis that shapes students' identities. Therefore, it can be drawn that the schools have made every attempt to actively look for viable options or resolutions to ensure that the Malaysian education sector is free from bullying, and that the obstacles encountered are dealt with in the most effective manner, eventually leads to a bullying-free education sector in Malaysia.

Conclusion

The preventive approach to bullying advocated by schools in the Klang Valley region is considered as a well-rounded blend of spiritual and physical measures that are highly crucial for students. Nevertheless, educators and administrators still confront minor concerns, which include the impact and unregulated use of gadgets, along with additional issues such as time constraints, student attendance, and a drop in students' morality and manners.

Acknowledgement

The study was funded by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) under FRGS grant research funds with reference code FRGS/1/2020/SSI0/USIM/03/1 entitled 'Model Preventif Buli Sektor Pendidikan Malaysia berdasarkan Sunnah Nabawiyah'

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