

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Bullying behaviour in primary schools is well-known to students, parents, teachers and educational personnel. School bullying is a serious problem which affects students' quality of life, inflicting psychological, emotional, and physical damage and occurs throughout the world. School bullying can be defined as any negative actions repeatedly inflicted by a stronger student or student gang toward another student (Farrington, 1993; Olweus, 1999). This negative action must be deliberate and carried out with the intent of causing harm to the victim (Farrington, 1993). Bullying might be classified in a variety of ways including physical assaults and psychological or emotional or verbal harassment. Beale (2001), and Woods and Wolke (2004) explained that physical bullying is action oriented and intended to intimidate or physically hurt the victim through pinching, pushing, kicking, and hitting, while verbal bullying is using words to humiliate or hurt someone's feelings through teasing, name-calling, insulting, or threatening behaviour.

The major reasons that children bully others are to enjoy exercising power and status over their victims, boredom, jealousy, attention seeking, showing off, anger, revenge, and self-protection (Besag, 1989; Besag, 2006). In this way, bullying eases the way for children to be drawn into a path of delinquency, vandalism and criminality (Farrington, 1993; Junger, 1996). The targets or victims of school bullying are at risk of a variety of negative outcomes. They are more likely than non-victimized children

to become anxious, insecure, lonely, depressed, to be rejected by their peers, drop out of school, feud, or decide to protect themselves by carrying guns/weapons to school (Boulton and Underwood, 1992; Craig, 1998).

There are many causes of bullying, such as domestic violence (Baldry, 2003), preferring cartoon violence (Theppipidh, 1990; Blumberg, et al, 2008), older students (Wolke et al, 2001), boys (Moultapa et al, 2004), and religion (Ian et al, 2004).

Studies have indicated that 56% of students in South Africa bully (Greeff, 2004), 38% in Netherlands (Veenstra, 2005), 34% in Australia (Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2004), 30% in Nigeria (Egbochuku, 2007), 22% in Italy (Gini, 2008), 21% in Canada (Hawkins et al, 2001), 20% in Malaysia (Wan Salwina et al, 2009) and 16% in Portugal (Pereira et al, 2004). The prevalence is 42% in Thailand, where the regional pattern was 44% in the north, 40% in the central, 39% in the eastern, 35% in the northeastern, and 27% in the southern region (Tapanya 2006).

This study aims to investigate the prevalence of bullying and the risk factors associated with bullying in Pattani primary schools, southern Thailand. By identifying students who are likely to bully others, educational authorities can introduce better strategies for reducing and preventing this problem.

1.2 Literature review

Social learning theory (imitation theory)

Social learning theory is also known as observational learning or imitation or modeling. Modeling is one of the most effective ways to teach children ways of behaving and their consequences. This theory is relevant to studies that have shown a link between movie portrayals of behavior and the behavior of juvenile viewers.

Adolescent subjects accept the behavior of movie characters as moral, even if it is violent or antisocial, as long as they can identify with the character. In addition, it is easier for the more aggressive viewer to accept the violence of the film actor. Studies of the effects of media violence on behavior generally caution that variables, such as belief in the reality of the media presentation, predisposition toward violence, an aggressive family environment, identification with aggressive media characters, and how the consequences of aggressive behavior are portrayed, may all affect the relationship between violence and exposure to media. Children who have a high degree of exposure to the media may exhibit a relatively high incidence of hostility themselves, imitating the aggression they have witnessed (Berkowitz, 1962; Feshbach and Singer, 1971; Gerbner et al, 1982; Cooke, 1993; Siegel, 1998).

Social learning theorists argue that people are not actually born with the ability to act violently but that they learn to be aggressive through their life experiences. These experiences include personally observing others acting aggressively to achieve some goal or watching people being rewarded for violent acts on television or in movies. People learn to act aggressively when, as children, they model their behaviour on the violent acts of adults. According to Bandura (1975) most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. Aggression reinforced by family members is the most prominent source of behavior modeling: children use the same aggressive tactics that their parents illustrate when dealing with others (Bandura and Ribes-Inesta, 1976). They learn to act aggressively when they model their behaviour on violent acts of adults, especially family members (Siegel, 1998). People are more likely to copy someone

they observe. Individuals in close intimate contact with one another imitate each other's behavior (Allen and Santrock, 1993; Williams, 2007).

Schools (school type and school location)

School type is another possible influence on children's bullying behaviour. Some evidence has suggested that this behaviour problem is greater in public schools than in private ones (Winbinger et al, 2000; Spivak et al; 2001; DeVoe et al, 2004; Kumchali, 2005). Another study found that there was similar bullying behaviour in both private schools and public schools (Nolin and Davies, 1995).

Studies of school location also have produced mixed and conflicting results: Jordan (2000) and Wright (2005) reported that a school's location (urban or rural) was not associated with bullying behaviours, DeVoe et al (2004) concluded that bullying was more likely to occur in rural schools but Pallas (1988) and Stewart (2003) suggest that bullying is more likely in schools located in urban areas.

Demographics (gender, age, religion)

The occurrence of bullying behaviour was also affected by gender, age and religion.

Boys bully others significantly more often than do girls (Wolke et al, 2001; Baldry, 2003; Pereira et al, 2004), whereas Wright (2005), Besag (2006) and Fitzpatrick et al (2007) stated that they found no gender differences in bullying behaviour.

A significant difference was determined between the bullying behaviours at different ages, with older students bullying others at a higher rate than younger students (Baldry, 2003; Pereira et al, 2004; Fitzpatrick et al, 2007). In contrast, studies by Ireland (2002), Spurling (2004) and Morris (2006) found evidence for the view that younger children bully more than do older children, and Brown (2005) stated that

students of different ages did not differ significantly in how often they admit to bullying others.

There was no association between religion and bullying (Public Health Agencies of Canada, 2004; Ian et al, 2004). Also, House of Commons (2007) reported that there was no clear difference in bullying behaviour for religion between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

Family (parental physical abuse)

Parental modelling of aggression and violence promotes the development of a child's negative behaviour; the child might copy the parent's physical actions and might then become a bully to gain success in their own social interactions. Exposure to parental family violence has been found to be related to negative behaviour of students; those witnessing it are likely to display increased violent behaviour (Singer et al, 1998; Rossman et al, 2000). Students who had witnessed parental physical abuse were more likely to bully others, when compared to those who had not witnessed parental physical abuse (Dauvergne et al, 2001; Herrera et al, 2001). Modeling of parental aggression and frequent parental conflict can result in children exhibiting bullying behaviour (Jaffe, 1990; Espelage and Swearer, 2003). Parental physical abuse has been shown to be a strong risk factor of bullying (Singer et al, 1998; Baldry, 2003).

Entertainment (preference for action cartoons)

In action cartoons, violence is commonly a part of the action and can have a negative impact on young children's behaviour. Some children imitate aggressive or violent behaviors shown on television. According to Theppidh (1990) and Kumchali, (2005), television program was related to aggressive behavior. Anderson and Carnagey

(2004), Rideout and Hamel (2006) and Krcmar and Hight (2007) found that children who watched an action cartoon or super-hero image were more likely to display aggressive behaviour. Kirsch (2006), Ostrov et al (2006) and Blumberg et al (2008) reported that the violence of cartoon programs may also influence young viewers to transfer violent acts from programs to real-world situations. Huesmann et al (2003), Gentile and Sesma (2003), and Boxer et al (2009) found that exposure to media violence has a significant additional effect in predicting bullying.

Friendships (number of close friends)

There is evidence that the number of friends is linked to bullying. Bullying behaviour is reinforced and sustained by peers. Self-confidence and bullying behaviour are more likely to be exhibited when a large number of peers, or perceived friends, are involved (Craig, 1998; American Medical Association, 2005). Nevertheless, there is some conflicting evidence: Smith (1999) and Collins et al (2004) found that children with fewer friends were more likely to be bullies in school, while O'Connell (1999) indicated that peer group size had no relationship with bullying behaviour.

1.3 Objectives

1. To estimate the prevalence of bullies at primary schools in Pattani, southern Thailand.
2. To analyze the risk factors associated with bullying, in Pattani primary schools.

1.4 Research hypothesis

Witnessing parental physical abuse and preference for action cartoons are the most strongly associated determinants of bullying in Pattani primary schools.

1.5 Definition of terms

General definition

Bullying can be defined in many different ways. It is an act of repeated aggressive behavior in order to intentionally hurt another person, physically or mentally.

Bullying is characterized by an individual behaving in a certain way to gain power over another person (Besag, 1989). Beane (2000) argues that bullies are people who have a need to feel powerful and they have learned that harassing, threatening, and applying physical abuse works in giving them the desired feeling. A bully distinguishes himself or herself from someone who teases because of the repeated pattern of physical or psychological intimidation. According to Olweus (1995), for it to be said that bullying has occurred, there also has to be an imbalance of strength, power, and dominance. Crothers and Levinson (2004) define bullying as the process of establishing and maintaining social dominance through overt aggression and doing so in many ways that victims are unable to deflect because of their lack of skills, their inability to effectively integrate with peers, or their inability to develop subgroups of peers. Greenbaum et al (1989) and Whitted and Dupper (2005) considered that bullies were a subset of aggressive people who derive satisfaction from controlling others both physically and psychologically and who do not pick fair fights.

Operational definition

In this study, bullying means a person's actions to cause physical or psychological harm to another person. Physical bullying is the most visible and easily identifiable forms of bullying, whereas psychological bullying is behavior that intentionally harms another person, and has nasty consequences.

Bullying was measured by two basic questions: 'In the past year, have you ever physically harmed anyone?' and 'In the past year, have you ever hurt someone's feelings verbally? Follow-up questions were asked to all students who answered 'yes' to either of the above questions. To provide a common understanding of what was meant by each of the two categories, all students either read or heard what the follow-up categories were. For physical bullying, the categories were 'kicked', 'hit', 'bite', 'pushed', 'throwing something at', 'beat' and 'pinched'. For psychological bullying, the categories were 'name-calling', 'insulting parents' occupation', 'insulting parents' name', 'insulting appearance', 'insulting economic status', 'insulting academic achievement' and 'insulting by stating a physical disability'.

1.6 Outline of thesis

This thesis contains six chapters, including this introductory chapter. It proceeds with the background, a literature review, objectives, and definitions of terms.

Chapter 2 describes the study design and sampling technique, variables and conceptual framework, data collection and management, and statistical method.

Chapter 3 comprises the preliminary analysis of the questionnaire responses obtained from the students in our study.

Chapter 4 describes the bullying outcome techniques by counting the number of bullying behaviour categories and its risk factors.

Chapter 5 presents identifying bullying outcome using factor analysis and standardized score techniques and its risk factors.

Chapter 6 gives overall conclusions, limitations and suggestions for further study.