Chapter 6

Discussion and conclusions

This chapter includes the conclusions from the study, discussions of the finding, and limitations and suggestions for further study.

In this study, two different techniques were used to identify bullying. The first technique counted the number of bullying behaviour categories, as described in Chapter 4, section 4.1. The second technique used factor analysis and standardized score; a student with a standardized score more than 1 was identified as a bully, as described in Chapter 5, section 5.1.

6.1 Prevalence of bullying behaviour

In our study, the prevalence of bullying behaviour shown when using two identifying techniques was very different; using the first technique we found that 32.9% of the students could be identified as a bully while using the second technique we found the prevalence to be only 20.9%. Using sensitivity analysis, we found that all bullies (301) identified from the second technique were the same as those identified using the first technique (sensitivity = 100.0%), while 966 of the students were identified as not bullies in both techniques (specificity = 85.0%), (Table 6.1). The 173 bullies identified from the first technique those were not identified as bullies using the second technique.

Count number	Factor/ Z-score		Total
	Bullied	Not bullied	
Bullied	301	173	474
Not bullied	0	966	966
Total	301	1,139	1,440
Sensitivity = 100.0% Specificity = 85.0%			

Table 6.1: Association between the prevalence of bullying behaviour of both techniques

Different prevalence estimates depend on the measures used, as shown by Salin (2001) who found that higher prevalence rates were obtained when participants were provided with a list of negative acts than when they were provided with a definition of bullying and asked to indicate whether they had been subjected to such behaviours. Bond et al (2007) compared two bullying scales completed by the same student sample and found slightly higher rates of bullying when using the Peer Relations Questionnaire than using the Gatehouse Bullying Scale.

6.2 Risk factors associated with bullying

In this study, both of the identifying techniques led to findings that witnessing parental physical abuse, cartoon type and age group were major risk factors for bullying. Witnessing parental physical abuse was clearly the most strongly associated determinant linked to bullying than those who had never witnessed parental physical abuse (4.5 times more likely when using first technique and 7.6 times more likely when using the second one). Exposure to parental family violence has been found to be related to negative behaviours of students; the students who had witnessed parental physical abuse were more likely to bully others, when compared to those who had not witnessed parental physical abuse. This is in accordance with the studies of Rossman et al (2000),

Dauvergne et al (2001), Herrera et al (2001), Espelage and Swearer (2003), and Baldry (2003) who all reported that 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.

Preference for action cartoons was also highly associated with bullying (1.87 and 2.87 times more likely with first and second techniques, respectively). This finding shows that the children who watch action cartoons or cartoon with super-hero images were more likely to display aggressive or bullying behaviour. This was consistent with the studies of Rideout and Hamel (2006), Kirsch (2006), Krcmar and Hight (2007), Blumberg et al (2008), and Boxer et al (2009), who argued that cartoon violence may also influence young viewers to transfer violent acts from programs to real-world situations and has a significant additional effect in predicting bullying others.

Students often copy the physical actions of parents or of action cartoon characters and so through their life experiences learn to be aggressive. By personally observing others acting aggressively to achieve some goal the children might learn to act aggressively. With this modelling, the child might then become a bully to gain success in his or her own social interactions. This explanation is in line with finding by Siegel (1998), Larson (2003), and Williams (2007) who found that children use the same aggressive tactics that they observe; they learn to act aggressively when they model the behaviour of violent acts. The children are more likely to copy someone they are looking at, and children have a greater tendency to imitate the modelling of those with whom they have the most contact (Gerbner et al, 1982; Cooke, 1993; Kirsch, 2006).

This study shows that exposure to parental physical violence and preference for violence cartoons have a negative impact on students' behaviour, because it is associated with higher levels of bullying.

Being an older student was also associated with bullying (1.56 times more likely with first technique and 1.81 times more likely with the second technique). Older students (11+ years) were more likely to bully others, when compared to younger students (8 years or less). Compared to the younger age group, most of the older students were probably stronger, and experienced more power and status in the primary school. This finding was similar to studies reported by Besag (1989), Farrington (1993), and Olweus (1999) who noted that bullying is a behaviour repeatedly inflicted by a stronger student toward another weaker one, by persons exerting power and status over their victims. Wolke et al (2001), Baldry (2003), Pereira et al (2004), and Fitzpatrick et al (2007) found that older and often stronger students tended to bully others more frequently than did younger students.

6.3 Limitations of the study

There are several limitations to this dissertation that should be considered.

School sample

This study was limited to four types of schools that were different in proportion. The study design attempted to cover the full range school types, with an approximation of the overall proportions of enrolled students, but there is no guarantee that the selected schools and students were truly representative of the total population.

Data Collection

In this study, the collection assistants were teachers in target schools who might sometimes have recorded information with some degree of bias, inaccurately or un-authentically. However, they were trained in interviewing techniques and the details of the questionnaire, and were asked to take care not to rush the questionnaire.

Some students may have had a problem in recalling their bullying behaviour in school over the past year. They might have forgotten their specific experiences and/or may not have wanted to recall, or admit, bullying other students. The recall of events is best within a previous 3 month period (Angold et al, 1996; Goodyer, 2001).

Research instrument

In this study, bullying was assessed by a set of dichotomous response questions (0=never or 1= ever) where students were asked about their specific experiences in school over the past year. It has less validity and reliability in identifying bullying than a 4-point or 5-point, or 7-point Likert-type response scale. The questions should refer to several events, such as during either the previous week, previous two weeks, previous month, previous two months, previous three months, or previous six months.

6.4 Implications of the study

This study showed that bullying is a serious problem in Pattani primary schools. Witnessing parental physical abuse and preferring action cartoons were the highest risk factors associated with bullying.

Parents are the most important persons in providing leadership and direction for the successful prevention and intervention of bullying. They should provide close attention and talk regularly with their children about their feelings and relationships with friends at school. They should work in partnership with the school to encourage positive behaviour. Moreover, they must have patience, try to avoid using violence, and closely advise and control the cartoon program viewing of their children (Peretti, 2000; Nelson, 2002; Spurling, 2004).

Findings from this study should help in the development of prevention and intervention policies in the primary schools and assist educational authorities to introduce better strategies for reducing the problem (Cowie, 1999; O'Brien, 2001; Badry and Farrington, 2005; Montana Healthy Schools Network, 2005).

School administrators and teachers are the next most important persons for preventing the prevalence of bullying in schools. The school environment should be safe, orderly, and bully-free. Teachers have to provide positive and mature role-modelling in techniques to students and teach them how to interact with one another. They should develop a program that teaches students about the dangers of bullying, develop school personnel in teaching bully-free practices and teach students about all forms of bullying: verbal, emotional, psychological, and physical, as well as teach students about disadvantages of cartoon violence viewing and physical abuse between parents. (Spurling, 2004; Wright Litz, 2005).

6.5 Recommendations and future studies

Results of our study reveal the extent of bullying in primary schools within Pattani province to be a serious problem.

Future research could focus on comparing prevalence rates among diferent types of schools or in one specific type of school across districts within Pattani province or nearby provinces, such as Yala, Naratiwat, and Songkhla provinces. Results may give the necessary information to teachers and administrators responsible for improving existing awareness programs, as well as continuing to educate our children in the safest and best learning environment possible.

In order for bullying to be prevented or decreased in our schools, school personnel need to commit to the ideal that bullying is unacceptable, is serious, and should not be tolerated. Bullying is not a rite of passage that students must work out for themselves. When one incident of bullying occurs it is serious. Silence from students does not imply acceptance. Teachers need training that will help them to identify students who suffer in silence. The training needs to include strategies for victims as well as bullies. School personnel need to intervene appropriately in order to gain the confidence of the students (Natvig el at, 2001; Tapanya 2008).

To gain that confidence, teachers need to be aware that victims of bullying who remain silent will rarely take the initiative to tell teachers they are being bullied and would benefit from having someone pro-active and notice their circumstance and offer them help. There is also a large, silent majority of bystanders in our schools. Bonds and Stoker (2000) claim that 85% of students in a school are neither bullies nor victims. These students are usually well-developed socially but they do not know how to reclaim the power from the bullies. Some of these students may be afraid to confront the issue and thus ignore or avoid bullying situations. If we can tap into this silent majority and teach these students the skills they need, we can create a positive

school climate with this silent majority holding the power and helping to make the school safe and secure for all (Hawkins et al, 2001; Pereira et al, 2004).

Further research should examine specific teacher referrals after bullying incidents and whether there is a consistent method of reporting these incidents throughout the grade levels and among all teachers. The administration of disciplinary actions, when dealing with the types of bullying incidents should consistent throughout the school. An increase in student learning is an overall goal of this study. If students feel safe at school, if they are not worried about the atmosphere in which they learn, then greater student achievements will be likely to exist (Hawkins et al, 2001; Gini, 2008). In order to create and maintain a safe and orderly school environment, all stakeholders must take an active role in combating the bullying problem in Pattani primary schools today.