Exploring Parents' Perception Regarding Bullying Amongst 6-8 Year Children Attending School

By

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Master of Science in Early Childhood Development
Brac Institute of Educational Development
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A thesis submitted to Brac Institute of Educational Development in partial fulfillment of
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing a degree at Brac University.

2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.

3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.

4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

_____

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Approval

The thesis/project titled "Exploring Parents' Perception Regarding Bullying Amongst 6-8 Year Children Attending School" submitted by

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of Spring 2021 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science in Early Childhood Development on December 2022.

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Exploring Parents' Perception Regarding Bullying Amongst 6-8 Year Children Attending School
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Student name: Maysoon Sadeq Chowdhury
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1. Source of population

_____

2. Does the study involve (yes, or no)

 a) Physical risk to the subjects   no
 b) Social risk   no
 c) Psychological risk to subjects   no
 d) discomfort to subjects   no
 e) Invasion of privacy   no

3. Will subjects be clearly informed about (yes or no)

 a) Nature and purpose of the study   yes
 b) Procedures to be followed   yes
 c) Physical risk   n/a
 d) Sensitive questions   yes
 e) Benefits to be derived   yes
 f) Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study yes
 g) Confidential handling of data   yes
 h) Compensation and/or treatment where there are risks or privacy is involved n/a

4. Will Signed verbal consent form be required (yes or no)

 a) from study participants   yes
 b) from parents or guardian   yes
 c) Will precautions be taken to protect anonymity of subjects? yes

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

 a) Proposal   yes
 b) Consent Form   yes
 c) Questionnaire or interview schedule   yes

Ethical Review Committee:

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Abstract

This research paper addresses parents and children's perceptions on bullying in schools. Bullying is a serious issue impacting children's mental health. The paper has followed a qualitative approach to conduct the research using in depth interviews as tools to understand parent's and children's perceptions on bullying. The collected data were analysed and then categorised. The findings were categorised in three parts; parent's perception, prevalence and the role of schools relating to bullying in Bangladesh. Although parents have a clear understanding about bullying, they seemed to differ in the severity of the problem and the alignment of views of children. This study presents parents' and children's perception on bullying, it explores the understanding parents have on bullying, the prevalence of bullying in English Medium schools in Dhaka as well as the role of school in bullying preventions.

Keywords: bullying; perception; socio-emotional development; mental health; early years

Dedication

I dedicate my thesis work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my parents and husband. My children Aymaan, Umayr and Ayesha who have been the most understanding through the process.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter I: Introduction & Background

Introduction

"*If and when adults are faced with poor treatment or persecution, they will most likely have a good chance of getting assistance and protection from society as a whole. It seems only logical and fair that children be assured the same right*" (Olweus, 1978).

Childhood bullying is an inescapable problem in most countries around the world. Unfortunately, a sad phenomenon for many school-age children is victimisation at the hands of their peers (Harel-Fisch et al., 2010; Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001). The pervasiveness of bullying among children is well documented. The consequences may be far-reaching for children who bully others and who are victimised, both of whom are at risk of emotional, social and psychiatric problems that may persist into adulthood (Nansel et al., 2001; O'Connell et al., 1999). Bullying takes many forms, including physical (e.g., hitting, spitting), verbal (e.g., threats, insults), social (e.g., social exclusion, gossip), and cyber-bullying (e.g., malicious messages spread through the Internet or cell phone) (Craig, Pepler, & Blais, 2007). Till date there is very little research has been dedicated to studying the perspectives of the parents and children involved in bullying. An ecological framework, whereby bullying dynamics are seen to extend beyond the children who are bullied, and include peers, teachers, the school, community, and parents (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Mishna, Wiener, & Pepler, 2008), is essential to address the complexities involved in bullying.

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Bullying in schools has become a worldwide problem that can have negative ramifications for the overall institutes climate and for the fundamental rights of students to learn in a safe environment without anxiety or concern(Banks,1997). Sadly, being bullied at school is a relatively accepted childhood experience (Aalsma & Brown, 2008) and almost all children have faced bullying as it occurs in nearly every school around the world (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001).

Bullying can have detrimental lifelong consequences-both for students who bully and for their victims (Wolke, 2015). According to the evidence, victims endure higher psycho-social effects, such as low emotional adjustment, poor relationships with classmates, and low self-worth compared to the general school population (Eslea et al., 2003; Gini & Pozzoli, 2009). There are studies that establish the effects of bullying on all areas of children's lives— academic, social, emotional, and physical health (Craig, 1998; Crick & Bigbee, 1998). The studies indicate that victims of bullying tend to be less accepted by peers, to be more insecure and withdrawn (Hodges & Perry, 1999; Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999), and have internalising problems such as depression (Pellegrini, 1998).

Bullying requires well planned and effective intervention approaches to deal with the increasing prevalence rates that are reported and the serious consequences for bullies, victims and bystanders who merely observe bullying. Estimated rates of bullying and victimisation vary from 10% to 25% across a range of westernised and non-westernised countries (Menesini,2017). Bullying is detrimental to students' well-being, development and learning. Children need to feel attached, secure and safe before they can learn (Armitage, 2021).

Bullying tendencies can emerge in early childhood. The effects and impact of school bullying can be noticed by parents with their children as early as preschool (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). The tell-tale signs of bullying can appear through unexpected behaviors like being unhappy at home, moodiness, disengagement, or verbally lashing out (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). If parents are unaware that bullying happens among young children, they are unlikely to see it and subsequently stop it. If bullying is not initially stopped it will grow and spread. When parents are equipped and prepared, they can nip bullying in the bud (Storey, 2013). Dan Olweus, a leading bullying prevention authority, advises, "*It's better to intervene too early rather than too late*" (Olweus,1993).

However, research on bullying experienced by younger children is still very limited, in the global area as well as in Bangladesh. School going children in particular look to adults for help (Charach et al., 1995). It has therefore been recognised that parents' involvement is highly correlated with program success (Eslea & Smith, 2000), and teachers are crucial and critical in implementing programs and interventions (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000). This led me to choose this topic as my topic for this thesis. I believe research in this area will help in developing effective implementation strategies when working with families and schools in tandem.

Background

The most widely used definition of bullying was developed by leading bully prevention advocate, Dr. Daniel Olweus in 1993 and stresses three components: aggressive intentional behaviours that are repeated and involved a power imbalance favouring the perpetrator.

Children and adults broadly understand the scholarly definition of bullying, yet often left out one of the three pillars: repetition. This part of the definition is important due to the

associated "dread or fear of future occurrences" that intensifies a victim's distress (Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2006, p. 269). The trauma or phobia of being victimised again in the future would bring about avoidance coping, such as skipping school or at times suicide or suicidal thoughts.

Bullying can happen in different ways, verbal: using words to hurt (e.g., name calling, taunting, threatening); physical: using actions to hurt (e.g., hitting, kicking, pushing); relational: Using friendships to hurt (e.g., excluding people, spreading rumours, saying someone can't be their friend, turning someone's friends against that person) (Storey, 2013).

Children's aggressive and early bullying behaviours develop systematically depending on the response of the target. For example, if a targeted child cries and then submits, the aggressive child is likely to select and target the same child again, and the bullying behaviour will continue. Sometimes, the submission of the targeted child may become rewarding in and of itself, and the aggressive child may take pleasure in hurting another child intentionally. If parents and other caregivers allow this to continue, these behaviours may lead to full scale bullying—hurtful behaviour that is done repeatedly and deliberately to a selected, less powerful, and vulnerable peer (Storey, 2013).

Bullying style is somewhat gender dependent, when it comes to bullying seen amongst boys, it is more common for them to deliver and receive direct forms of physical and verbal aggression related to issues of power and dominance. These behaviors demand immediate intervention, and are relatively easy to detect and observe. On the other hand, girls usually begin to deliver and receive more sophisticated, subtle, and indirect forms of relational bullying associated with patterns of affiliation and exclusion. For example, girls begin to manipulate relationships, exclude classmates, spread rumours, tell secrets, and threaten not to play if their demands are not met (Storey, 2013).

Research studies have shown that teachers perceive nonphysical aggression, such as exclusion or verbal aggression, as less severe because of the less apparent damage (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Stephenson & Smith, 1989). Moreover, despite the inclusion of indirect, verbal, and social exclusionary victimisation in definitions (Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Smith et al., 2002), some of the most common and hurtful forms of bullying—exclusion for example—are often not seen as bullying and thus their damage is overlooked (Cullingford & Morrison, 1995). Parents need to be aware of and need to look out for young children involved in relational bullying, as it can be more difficult to catch but can hurt as much or even more than more direct forms of bullying. (Storey, 2013).

When parents observe their child, the assessment of misconduct faced by their child from bullying may be compromised through personal definition of bullying where they often leave out the word repeated (Mishna et al., 2006). When parents were confronted with a bullying situation with their child, if a parent did not consider an incident bullying, whereas the child did, the results showed the child may be left not only being bullied, but minimise or invalidated by the parent's reaction (Mishna, 2004). Therefore, understanding parents' perceptions and conceptualisations is crucial and critical to bullying research and intervention efforts, as parents' understanding of bullying undoubtedly impacts their recognition of bullying incidents and subsequent intervention plans (Sawyer, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Bullying is a serious concerning problem that can drastically affect the ability of students to progress academically and socially. Research suggests being a victim early on in school not only increases the odds of continued bullying throughout a child's school career, but also increases likelihood of school avoidance as a result of being a victim (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). Bullying brings a multitude of negative consequences for victims. Victimisation may result in anger, sadness, depression, anxiety, reduced self-esteem, isolation, school absenteeism and at times even suicide. These devastating effects of bullying require anti-bullying interventions. Bullying interventions are most effective when it follows a multidisciplinary approach. It is therefore vital to understand the parents' meaning of bullying because their definitions are likely to be linked to their attitudes toward bullying and their willingness to support bullying interventions programs (Wolke,2015). A comprehensive and thorough intervention plan that involves all students, parents, and school staff is required to ensure that all students can learn in a safe and fear-free environment (Banks,1997).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the views of parents' perception regarding their knowledge and understanding of bullying occurring amongst 6–8-year-old children attending schools. It is important to understand what parents know about bullying and whether they are equipped to recognise signs of bullying before any effective anti-bullying campaigns can be introduced as an appropriate intervention measure. In order for any intervention program to be implemented in schools effectively, the parents' role is crucial. Their understanding of bullying will allow authorities to mediate the outcomes of anti-bullying programs for students.

When adults watch a child engaged in bullying and don't intervene to stop the bullying, that child is likely to continue to bully in subsequent play sessions. Intervention will prevent the bullying behaviour from continuing and escalating. Intervention also lets children know that bullying is not allowed and will not be tolerated (Storey,2013). This information will provide us with a clear understanding and direction for developing programs in the schools and community to address the problem of bullying among peers.

Significance of the study

Bullying affects children of all ages, ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. It can threaten their physical and emotional safety at school and can negatively impact their ability to learn. A deeper understanding of the problem and possible interventions towards its treatment and or prevention is needed. 6-8yr children may not be aware of intentional bullying since they are in the process of developing social skills. However, their parents need to know the behavioural changes that occur when a young child experiences bullying. If parents themselves do not have a clear understanding of bullying, it may affect children's overall learning process.

In Bangladesh, unfortunately, the impact of bullying on academic performance and on socialisation of students are undermined and not taken seriously. Parents and teachers in Bangladesh, do not have a clear understanding on the concept of bullying as it is not a well understood concept. A teacher's lack of sufficient knowledge on bullying results in harmful consequences on a student's development and learning (Mahmood, 2012). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the parents perception regarding bullying amongst 6-8yr children attending school. The results of this exploratory research intend to highlight that understanding parents' perceptions is crucial to bullying research and intervention efforts, as parents' understanding of bullying undoubtedly impacts their recognition of bullying incidents and subsequent interventions (Sawyer,2011).

The definition that parents have on bullying is one aspect that influences whether children feel safe and confident in disclosing their victimisation experience, as children's expectations about adult interventions are influential in disclosure (Mishna & Alaggia, 2005; Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000). Parents' understanding of bullying may affect whether they acknowledge effectively and appropriately to their child who has disclosed victimisation and whether they are attuned to signs implying their child might be experiencing bullying even if their child does not disclose. It is therefore necessary to conduct research on parents' perceptions of bullying to increase understanding of the factors that affect how parents understand, recognise and respond to bullying incidents with the aim of broadening parents' knowledge and ability to respond effectively.

This study adds to ongoing research in the field of bullying by focusing on how parents perceive and understand bullying. Using in-depth interviews, we report parents' views regarding: how bullying is defined, the prevalence of bullying and the role of schools. The findings of this research attempts to address an essential gap as they highlight the intricacy of bullying and the need to expand the bullying literature to capture the perspectives of parents. In doing so, this research takes an ecological approach that focuses the key role of adults in protecting children, which includes identifying and responding to different bullying scenarios.

Research Topic and Research Questions

Research Topic: Parents perception on bullying in 6-8 year old school going children

The key research question is;

- What are the parents' level of knowledge and awareness about bullying in the early years?

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Operational Definition

Bullying: Bullying is the systematic and strategical abuse of power and is detailed as aggressive behaviour or premeditated harm-doing by peers that is carried out repeatedly and engages an imbalance of power, either actual or perceived, between the victim and the bully (Olweus, 1994). Bullying is characterized by three factors: 1) repetition 2) unwanted 3) power imbalance

Bully: is a student, teacher/parent, or other member of the school community who engages in the harassment, intimidation, or bullying of another student.

Bystanders: are persons who either instigate action or fail to respond to prevent or to stop bullying behaviours. The bystander actions may include prodding the bully to initiate the behaviours or by laughing, cheering, or making comments that further encourage the bullying activity to continue or by remaining passive. Almost all children, regardless of social class, play a role in the bullying dynamics as it occurs with only a minority of students considered uninvolved (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996).

Victim: is the student or students against whom harassment, intimidation, or bullying has supposedly been perpetrated.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Bullying is the strategical abuse of power and is defined as aggressive behaviour or premeditated harm-doing by peers that is carried out repeatedly and involves an imbalance of power, either actual or perceived, between the victim and the bully (Olweus, 1994). It can take the form of direct bullying, which includes physical and verbal acts of aggression such as hitting, stealing or name calling, or indirect bullying, which is characterised by social exclusion (e.g., you cannot play with us, you are not invited, etc. and rumours spreading (Kaukiainen, 1992).

Children can be involved in bullying as victims and bullies, and also as bully/victims, a subgroup of victims who also display bullying behaviour (Boulton, 1994). One in three children report having been bullied at some point in their lives, and 10–14% experience chronic bullying lasting for more than 6 months (Currie, 2009). Between 2% and 5% are bullies and a similar number are bully/victims in childhood/adolescence (Copeland,2013).

On its most basic and potentially most harmful level, bullying is a deliberate, direct attack on the human spirit. Most bullying is done with an audience. The bully, the victim, the bystanders are key players. From the perspectives of statistics, it is far more likely that a child will be a bystander than a victim or a bully (Kipper,2013).

Victor Schwartz, M.D. medical director for The Jed Foundation, said on the mental health impact of bullying: "*The bully is often harassing the victim to demonstrate power and entertain the bystanders. If those bystanders laugh or encourage the bully, the situation is likely to continue. However, if the bystanders are sympathetic to the victim, then the bully loses influence and his or her reason for bullying.*" Therefore, it's important for bystanders to

recognise the power they have to stop the bullying situation and make it known that this type of behaviour is not acceptable.

Types of Bullies

Research by Norwegian Professor Dan Olweus confirms that there are two basic groups of bullies. 'Bullied bullies' are bullied at home or at school or both. They have few friends and low status amongst their peers. They are lonely and disconnected. Bullied Bullies are the children usually responsible for school massacres-they are the kids who couldn't take it anymore (Matthews, 2011). 'Cool Bullies' are the more typical bullies. Cool bullies appear confident and they have higher status. Bullied bullies have had too much pain to care how others feel- and cool bullies haven't had enough (Matthews,2011).

Characteristics of Bullying

Bullying consists of three main types of participants: bullies, bully-victims, victims.

Characteristics of Bullies

Some bullies have well-developed social skills and use bullying to gain or maintain dominance in their peer group (Smokowski, 2005). They may have a positive attitude toward violence and lack empathy for their victims. Boys are more likely to be classified as bullies than girls (Juvonen, 2003). Bullies may also exhibit co-morbid conditions, such as attention-deficit disorder, depression, and oppositional-conduct disorder (Smokowski, 2005).

Characteristics of Bully-Victims

Bully-victims are those who bully others and are bullied themselves; they also are known as reactive bullies or provocative/aggressive victims (Smokowski, 2005). These may be impulsive aggressive children who respond with aggression to being bullied, or victims who transition from victimisation to bullying behaviour over a period of time (Pellegrini, 1999). Children in this group may have attention problems, low self-esteem, and especially high rates of depression and oppositional-conduct disorder (Barker, 2008). They are more anxious and less popular than bullies, have poor social and problem-solving skills, tend to annoy peers, and may, therefore, not be well-liked by peers or teachers (Smokowski, 2005). They are more likely to come from families with inconsistent or poor parenting, low warmth, and may learn aggressive behaviour from home (Smokowski, 2005).

Characteristics of Victims

The majority of bullying victims are passive or submissive victims. They may be physically smaller, less assertive, more anxious, insecure, or sensitive than bullies (Pellegrini, 1999).

Victims of bullying also may have difficulty making friends and may relate better with adults than peers (Smokowski, 2005). They also may have lower self-esteem, which may result in their being less likely to report victimisation from bullying (Smokowski, 2005). Compared with bullies and bully-victims, victims report the highest levels of loneliness and anxiety, whereas bullies report the lowest (Juvonen, 2003). Victims have the lowest social status among peers and bullies have the highest, however, bully-victims are most avoided by classmates (Juvonen, 2003).

Impact Of Bullying

Bullying is a serious issue for children, it is a potentially dangerous and the stakes are high. The consequences of the experience include depression, physical ailments (headaches, stomach aches, ulcers), sleep problems, academic problems, low self-esteem, weight loss or gain, long term emotional scars, serious physical injury, property damage, problems with future relationships, violent revenge, aggression, even suicide (Kipper, 2013). The Suicide Prevention Resource Centre notes that it is often the children most at risk for suicide who are bullied, which in turn further raises their risk of suicide (as well as of anxiety, depression, and other problems associated with suicidal behaviour). For the victims of bullying, long term consequences can range from feeling tense, afraid, depressed, or anxious to more severe physical and psychological results. Some children believe the only way to remove themselves from bullying is to avoid school and social settings or to take more drastic measures, such as responding with violence or even inflicting self-harm. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people, resulting in about 4,400 deaths per year (CDC,2002). Bully victims are between 2 to 9 times more likely to consider suicide than non-victims (Kim,2008).

Global Context

Prevalence of school bullying varies across studies, individuals, contexts, cultures and countries. In a research study of school aged children and youth in the UK and USA, the findings were 10 to 33% of students were bullied by their peers, and 5-13% of students admitted bullying others (Swearer, 2015).

Boys and girls engaged in all forms of bullying, but most studies noted a gender difference, more boys were reported as being bullies compared to girls. The boys were more involved in

physical bullying while girls had higher rates of relational, verbal and cyber bullying (Swearer,2015).

The child's age also impacts the prevalence rate. Peer bullying begins in preschool years, peaks during middle school and then starts to decline by the end of high school (Bauer,2011). Prevalence rates also vary according to types of bullying. Prevalence rate of bullying experienced by Bangladeshi school students suggest that nearly half of the school students (44.4%) had experienced bullying victimisation (Ahmed, 2021). In the USA, in grades 4-12, 31% students reported being physically bullied by peers, 12% were cyber bullied, 51% were verbally bullied and 37% reported being socially bullied (Vaillancourt et al. 2010). Verbal and social bullying were more common among students, but people were more concerned about physical and cyber bullying than verbal and social bullying. Verbal and social bullying may be difficult to identify because the consequences of these types of bullying are not visible to others (Swearer,2015).

Research has indicated that students around the world frequently report witnessing and facing bullying (Eslea et al., 2003). Although bullying among children is not a new phenomenon, it has recently received increased attention internationally during the past several decades. For instance, in Australia, it is estimated that 1 child in 6 is subjected to bullying on a weekly basis (Rigby, 2002). Previous studies in Norway and Sweden found that 15% of students reported being involved in bully/victim problems at least 2–3 times per month (Olweus, 1993). Studies in the United States have yielded slightly higher rates of bullying, ranging from a low of 10% for "extreme victims" of bullying (Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988) to a high of 75% who reported being bullied at least one time during their school years (Hoover, 1993). Bullying is not a part of development for children and adolescents and should be considered a precursor to more serious aggressive behaviours (Nansel et al., 2001) . Bullying contributes to an environment of fear and intimidation in schools (Ericson, 2001). Furthermore, a decade

of research shows that bullying may negatively affect the psychosocial functioning, academic work, and the health of children who are targeted (Limber, 2006; Swearer et al., 2001). The persistent prevalence and detrimental consequences associated with bullying have resulted in developing national initiatives to address bullying in numerous countries around the world.

Bangladesh Context

In a report published in February 2020, UNICEF calls for concerted action to prevent bullying and harassment online for the 32% of children in Bangladesh. Thirty years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the creating of the World Wide Web, it's time for renewed focus on children's digital rights. UNICEF warned of the dangers posed by online violence, cyberbullying and digital harassment for the 32% children aged 10- to 17-year-olds who are online in Bangladesh and called for concerted action to tackle and prevent violence against children and young people online. According to the UNICEF Bangladesh study, about 25% of the children (ages 10-17) started to access the digital world below the age of 11. While older children may be exposed to cyberbullying than younger ones, children are not immune from harmful content, sexual exploitation and abuse, and cyberbullying. Victims of cyberbullying are more likely to use alcohol and drugs and skip school than other students. They also are more likely to receive poor grades and experience low self-esteem and health problems. In extreme situations, cyberbullying has even led to suicide. (UNICEF, 2019).

According to a report published by UNESCO, 23% of school students in Bangladesh are victims of bullying (UNESCO,2019). Other research also reported that 44.4% of school students in Bangladesh suffered from bullying (Ahmed,2021). In Bangladesh, 35% of students aged 13 to 15 years reported being bullied one or more days in the past 30 days or being involved in a physical fight at least once (UNICEF, 2014).

According to the education ministry's submission of the draft of the Bullying Prevention Policy 2019, there are three types of bullying. The first is verbal, which is saying or writing something to mock someone or swearing at or threatening someone. The second is physical, which is hitting someone with something, slapping, kicking, pushing, poking, spitting, snatching away or breaking someone's belongings' and making indecent and impolite gestures. The third is social, which is severing relationships with someone or provoking someone to stop being friends with someone because of social status or religious identity. The Government is going to frame a 'Bullying Resistance Counselling Policy' in order to prevent bullying at all educational institutions across the country. Counselling will be ensured to prevent 'bullying' in educational institutions. It has been reported that many victims of bullying have chosen to end their lives as they were unable to bear the vicious cruel acts (Policy on preventing bullying in schools and colleges, Bangladesh Post, Sourav, 2020), therefore, such a decision was taken in the face of widespread maltreatment or abusive culture, especially in educational institutions.

Mekhala Sarkar, associate professor of psychiatry at the National Institute of Mental Health insists that both families and teachers should play an important role in addressing bullying. When a child is humiliated in front of other students or in a family, it hurts their self-esteem as well as teaches them that it is ok to insult someone because children are excellent observational learners (Bullying: One in every five child is a victim, New Age, Riyasad, 2020).

In conclusion, school bullying is the most common offence among students globally. Unfortunately, there is little research available for this phenomenon in Bangladesh. Results of this research study is an attempt to highlight the views of parents and their knowledge around the nature and prevalence of bullying in Bangladeshi schools. Bullying is a serious problem

that can affect the ability of students to progress academically and socially. A comprehensive intervention plan that involves all students, parents, and school staffs is required to ensure that all students can learn in a safe and fear-free environment.

Chapter III: Methodology

Qualitative research in primary school bullying is somewhat scarce when it comes to parents perception.. Smith and Brain (2000) claim much of the social science research on bullying has been framed by quantitative paradigms with few qualitative insights. Qualitative research insights can add to new understandings and meanings that advance the discipline's knowledge of the bullying phenomena (Smith & Brain, 2000). Within the bullying phenomena, parents' experiences, although important, have yet to be adequately understood (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005).

My study's focus is to explore the parents' perception of bullying in children aged 6-8 years in school. At the same time, I tried to get the parents' opinions and a have limited insights from children regarding the prevalence of bullying and the role of schools in bullying. I have chosen the qualitative research approach, which is appropriate for my research topic due to its inherent nature.

Research Approach and Design

This thesis is aimed at gaining a deep understanding of parents' perception of school bullying. The nature of the study is exploration; subsequently, this study has been be designed as an exploratory study of a qualitative nature. The purpose of qualitative research is to gather an in-depth understanding of the social context, human behaviour and the reasons that shape the context and guide the behaviours.

For conducting the study on exploring parents' perception regarding bullying amongst 6-8yr children attending school, the data collection method was chosen to be In-depth-interviews (IDIs). The IDI is a type of face-to-face interview, and the objective of choosing this data collection method is to get participants understanding of bullying, their attitudes or willingness to address school bullying, prevalence of bullying and the role of schools in

bullying management.

The purpose of my research was to find an in-depth information as well as the information about different aspects of bullying in the participants' child's life. The in-depth information included accounts and experience of the participant. The IDI procedure entails lengthy interviews in which participants describe a variety of scenarios and experiences that aid in the study's goal of understanding parents' perception about school bullying. This research further looked into the prevalence and the role of bullying in English Medium schools in Dhaka. Through this data gathering approach, a variety of opposing thoughts and perspectives regarding school bullying evolved, based on varied life experiences.

Research Site

In Bangladesh, there are different education systems available, these include the national curriculum both in Bangla and English, and Madrassahs. The Madrasah Education System focuses on religious education, teaching all the basics of education in a religious environment. Then there are the International Schools that are mainly private schools where all the courses are taught in English and in international curriculums.

For the purpose of this study, the latter English Medium Schools have been selected and these schools are established schools and have been in operation for over 20 years in Bangladesh. The 3 schools that have been selected are among the top 5 leading English Medium Schools in Dhaka. The student teacher ratios in the primary classes are small. On an average there are 20-25 children per class with 2 teachers in charge. The schools that have been selected are in the Gulshan-Uttara area. The reasons for choosing schools in these areas was due to the interest in interviewing upper middle-class parents to understand their perception of bullying in schools in respect to their children between the ages of 6-8 years. The participants of my study are therefore parents from these English Medium Schools and most of the participants

themselves are students of leading English Medium Schools in Dhaka.

Research Participants

The targeted population from which data was collected were from parents and children of English medium school students. All 12 adult and 5 child participants were originally from Bangladesh and belong to upper middle-class families. The adults were all educated to postgraduate level and some had even pursued their higher degrees abroad and had come back to settle in Bangladesh. All adult participants except one, had themselves studied in the English medium education system of Bangladesh. The age range of the participants were 35-40 years, and they had children ranging from 10 months to 13 years. The participants had an average of 2 children each. The child participants were all aged between 6-8 years.

There were 3 fathers and 9 mothers that had been interviewed for this research. Out of the 9 mothers, only 2 were working outside the home and were pursuing corporate careers. Our target age group for children was 6-8 years and these children had either working professionals or businessmen as parents. Usually, the father and the mother were a 'stay at home mum'. The 2 mothers who were working professionals depend on grandparents and hired help for support in looking after their children. Most of them were living in nuclear families, except 2 who were residing in multigenerational joint families. The 2 living in joint families were not the same mothers who were working outside.

The reason for choosing this group of research participants was due to the fact they each had a child within the age range of 6-8 years, studying in an English Medium school. Their children were in classes from KG-1 to class 2. The participants were themselves English Medium students so were familiar with the style and approach of teaching and could give better insights on aspects of bullying and where it could take place in schools.

Sampling Procedure/Participants Selection Procedure

The targeted population for this study were those parents with a child aged 6-8 years and were enrolled in school. The participants came from an upper middle class economic background and all lived in Dhaka city. They should come with an English medium educational background themselves with children studying in the top 10 English Medium Schools of Dhaka.

Research participants were selected on the basis of which school their children went to. 3 schools were selected and then participants from those schools were identified and approached for an interview. In this study, sampling technique was purposive. Parents of these 3 English Medium Schools were selected and interviewed. The 12 IDIs were conducted with mothers as well as fathers.

Data Collection Tool

The adult participants were interviewed using a questionnaire to support the In-Depth-Interview. The child participants were all interviewed informally.

Data Collection Method and Procedure

This study incorporated one method of data collection; it used the IDI questionnaire to gather a broader spectrum of evidence and perspectives to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of an analysis. During data collection, several tools such as notepads, laptops, computers, digital voice recorders, and so on were used to document the fieldwork.

An extensive guideline to aid the IDI had been developed and included in the Appendix. It has been designed to collect data to help explore the parents' perception regarding their knowledge of bullying occurring amongst 6-8 years olds attending schools.

Permission and necessary approvals were taken from the individuals for interviewing them and their children. The conversation, with permission from the participants were recorded and later transcribed and translated (if the interview is conducted in Bangla) for data analysis.

17 IDIs were conducted in total, these were all conducted separately over zoom meetings. Each IDI took approximately 30 minutes to complete and approximately 4 hours to transcribe each interview after the meeting. Follow up questions if any were addressed in separate phone conversations.

Data Management and Analysis

On completion of the qualitative study, the collected data were analysed. The analysis was based on the interpretation of field notes and transcription of audio recording of the interview. It was then organised and sorted into categories and then highlighted in accordance with the research objectives. The data were further reviewed to find themes and categorised based on those themes.

Validity & Reliability

Validity & Reliability of the IDI was done during the study. In the IDI, I used a semi-structured questionnaire and the validity and reliability of the questionnaire was ensured through pilot testing.

Ethical Issues

In this study it was planned that there would be full voluntary participation. Therefore, participants were not forced into participating and their informed written consent was taken prior to the interviews.

All the participants were informed about the procedures and risks involved in participating in the study and based on that information they made an independent voluntary decision to give

their consent to participate for themselves/or their child. My research participants received an explanation of the procedures that would be used and the potential harm and risks associated with participating. The explanation was clear and easy to understand for the participant. They understood that their participation was important and that is why they had been asked for their contribution. They had been assured about confidentiality, anonymity and was given the assurance that no identifying information obtained about them would be released to anyone outside the study. At the same time anonymity was maintained: assurance to the participants that no one, not even the researchers would be able to link data to a specific individual. These assurances were important to obtain valid and accurate information. Participants were assured that they can answer honestly with no responses identified with them. All information was stored by ID#s and not names. No names were used in any publication of the data.

Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations. It is limited to only English medium schools in Dhaka city and cannot be seen as representative of all schools. The sample size for this study is inappropriately small sample size-as only a few schools had been observed. There is a lack of research material about bullying in the Bangladeshi school context. There was no chance to observe the practices in the classroom. While conducting the study, the researcher faced some challenges in conducting IDIs because of the resistance of participants to meet in person concerning COVID.

Inclusion Criteria:

· Parents of children aged 6-8 years were selected

· Participation was voluntary and without coercion.

Exclusion Criteria:

· Parents of older children in middle or high school had been excluded.

· Parents from Bengali medium and non-urban areas were not chosen.

· Parents who were reluctant or unwilling to actively participate or continue at any point of time were not interviewed.

Chapter IV: Results/Findings & Discussion

Themes identified and presented in this section are important and interlinked either directly or indirectly. Categories were identified by examining IDI transcripts. Subsequently, data were organised into following themes and sub themes.

Demographic Information

A total of 12 parents of children in kindergarten to grade 2 was interviewed. All but 3 was female between the ages of 35 to 40. All participants have a master's degree and are educated in the English medium education system in Bangladesh. Another 5 children were interviewed, who were students from the same 3 English Medium schools.

The adult participants selected for this research were either working at multinational companies, own their business or were staying at home mums in Dhaka. All were belonging to upper middle-class families. Except of 2 participants all were living in nuclear families.

Results/Findings

This section will present the findings from the primary collected data. Data from 12 IDIs conducted with parents and another 5 IDIs conducted with children of 3 different schools are produced and analysed here. First, the demographic details of the participants are given and then, the results of the interviews are provided following the content analysis method where the findings are presented in themes and sub-themes.

Demographic details

12 parents and 5 children participated in the IDIs. They all were parents of children in primary years i.e. KG1-Class 2, of three different English medium schools. Mothers and fathers were interviewed. All participants except one, had an orientation of the English medium education system of Bangladesh. The age range of the participants were from 35-40 years old, and all have children ranging from 10 months to 13 years. The participants had an average of 2 children each. 5 children participated in the IDI, they were from the same 3 schools, and were in classes ranging from kindergarten to class 2. 3 of the children's mothers were also selected and interviewed for this research study.

There were 3 fathers and 9 mothers that had been interviewed for this research. Out of the 9 mothers, only 2 were working outside the home and were pursuing corporate careers. Our target age group was 6-8 years old children, these children had either working professionals or businessmen as parents. Usually, the father and their mother was a 'stay at home mum'. The 2 mothers who were working professionals depend on grandparents and hired help for support in looking after their children. Most of them were living in nuclear families, except 2 who were residing in multigenerational joint families. The 2 living in joint families were not the same mothers who were working outside.

Theme 1: Parents perception regarding bullying

Subtheme 1: Parents understanding of bullying

All participants had an understanding of bullying. A child participant said bullying can be when

someone is being mean, and can include tricking another child. The child said;

> *'Tricking is when someone says, I will give you this marker if you do this, but once you do that thing they decide not to give you the marker. Or when they say you can only be my friend if you say you don't like that person' (IDI #13: Child # A, 25.10.2022)*

Mothers have said that bullying can take the form of teasing, it can include being mentally or physically harassed by one's peers. Group of children consisting of boys and girls together sometimes single out one specific child and make fun of him, or isolate him and not talk to him, and even humiliate him in front of everybody all comprise bullying according to the parents. A mother had said that these actions can be done through actions as well as through words. A mother said;

> *'For me its definitely something serious, when someone feels threatened or intimidated, like if someone makes him feel inferior, or hurts him is bullying. (IDI #7: Mother # G, 21.10.2022)*

Several participants have mentioned that bullying can come from peers as well as adults, those in mentoring roles. It is thought to be an unacceptable way of communicating to any individual. One mother said;

> *'It is a negative or unacceptable way of communicating with another individual.' (IDI #4: Mother # D, 13.09.2022)*

A father mentioned that there are certain types of children that are targeted by bullies. One father said;

> *'From what I get about bullying is that there are certain students who can be male or female they can pick on other students, who are docile, who are weak or have something different about them and I figured that these kids are being picked on. The more weaker ones'. (IDI #10: Father# A, 09.09.2022)*

Another father mentioned that the child may themselves feel they have a weakness and the

others may also think those are weaknesses and they just try to make fun of it and make the child feel bad about it so that the child who is affected becomes mentally depressed.

Participants mentioned that there are different ways to make someone feel bad about themselves. One participant said that;

> *'Calling a person fat or skinny is a way of bullying. Ways in which you make the other person feel bad is a type of bullying. Sometimes you may be doing it unintentionally but most of the time it's intentional. (IDI #8: Mother # H, 25.10.2022)*

One of the fathers highlighted that if bullying is not taken care of it can lead to serious consequences. He said;

> *'If this is not taken care of, that child might actually develop other mental syndromes which could lead to other serious issues like injuries to one's self or even suicide' (IDI #10: Father # B, 09.09.2022)*

Subtheme 2: Parents understanding of the types of bullying

All mothers and fathers have an idea on the types of bullying. They realise it can be physical, causing bodily harm as well as hurt their child emotionally or mentally. Generally, most of the parents mentioned verbal bullying being the most common at this age.

One mother said as:

> *They tease them, not by calling them names. They tease them like my daughter experiences bullying because of her teeth. She used to have a lot of chocolates as a child so she has a cavity and children would comment on her teeth. Some of the girls wouldn't talk to her, they would make fun of her because there was a big cavity in her front teeth that could be seen when she smiled. She was very upset; she would cry and not want to go to school. (IDI #5: Mother # E, 13.09.2022)*

Physical Bullying

A few of the participants have said that their children are too old for physical bullying. At the same time a mother mentioned that her child was being pushed in school, by 2 children in particular. The children who were pushing were not realising that her child or the other children being pushed were not enjoying it. A few mothers and fathers had expressed incidents that were of physical nature but might be a one off incident or because it did not involve several children targeting one child, he was unsure if it qualifies as bullying. He said;

> *'My son has experienced fighting but probably that is not bullying. Bullying is probably if there are children who are together and are pushing one kid and giving him a hard time. But if it's a one to one issue it's probably not bullying'. (IDI #10: Father # A, 09.09.2022)*

A mother narrated an incident where her daughter and her friends were repeatedly being disturbed by one child who was new to their class and school.

> *He was slapping and hitting the other girls with their bags. Calling them toxic, sad, ugly and scribbling on their bags. Everyday different things, snatching away someone's tiffin money and not returning them. (IDI #5: Mother # E, 13.09.2022)*

Verbal Bullying

The majority of the participants agreed that verbal bullying is taking place a lot in the children in this age group. One child complained to his mother, that he always had to stand next to a boy who disturbs him, after enquiring why, the child told his mother that everyone says " *I am short so I have to stand in front of the line*". This made the mother wonder if her child was being made fun of because he was shorter than the others. One parent mentioned that it's up to the parent to continuously counsel their children on what's appropriate to say to another person.

> *'From the parents' side we should make it very clear to our children we should never be commenting on one's physical aspects or certain aspects that the child may be hurt by.*

My son has mentioned that one child's tooth has fallen and other children have commented about her teeth, and were laughing that her tooth has fallen out. I have tried to explain to him that we should not comment like that. Today or tomorrow everyone in your class will have a tooth falling out and they will all regrow. It's nothing to comment or laugh about. I think verbal bullying is more prevalent amongst children. (IDI #4: Mother # D, 13.09.2022).

Relational Bullying

It seems that parents' perception in this regard varies with the age and gender of the child. Girls were facing exclusion from groups more than the boys based on the participants interviewed. The younger children were yet to face any such situations. The participants who were interviewed and had sons as children and who themselves were quite social had never complained of being left out.

Those who had children closer to age 8 have narrated incidents of relational bullying. One mother said;

The girls are forming groups. If one of the members doesn't like one of the girls or if they won't follow the rules, they'll be made to leave the group or make her feel left out of the group. This has happened to my daughter. She said she didn't go to school for a week because she was sick, when she went back she wasn't allowed to get back into the group she was in. she said, they don't talk to me anymore, they say i didn't go to school so i can't be a part of their group anymore. I think they are ok now. My daughter is friends with everyone, maybe she has a group but she's still friends with everyone. I didn't bother to interfere, I didn't bother. Like my Mum, I barely knew my friends' names. I think I grew up and ended up pretty well. (IDI #8: Mother # H, 25.09.2022).

Cyberbullying

All the participants are well aware of the concept of bullying. They are very concerned about it especially since they do not understand it very well. One mother said;

> *'I was mostly concerned about cyber bullying. It is a time that I am not with them. My children have not faced cyber bullying but I have heard from my children's friends' parents that they have experienced cyber bullying that is why I got so concerned. (IDI #1: Mother # A, 09.09.2022).*

Another equally worried parent participant said;

> *'I am really worried about cyberbullying. Especially in games like Roblox, they don't really know who is adding them. And I don't know how to keep track of this game since I don't really understand it. It is quite scary. But I have told her not to share personal details with anyone. That is unless you know the IDs, like if they are my friends' children or your friends from school. Anybody else you want to add because they are a good player or whatever, but make sure you don't give any information about yourself. Other than your name or age. Don't give away anything about yourself, like where you live, which school you go to, which grade because you don't know who is behind that screen. She is a mature girl so I hope she did understand' (IDI #8: Mother # H, 25.09.2022).*

Subtheme 3: Parents understanding of the characteristics of a bully and a bully victim

Almost all the participants have an idea of the characteristics displayed by bullies and the victims of bullying. Several parents mentioned that a lot comes down to a child's home environment and what they are exposed to at home. One of the Fathers said;

> *'I am guessing these are all results of the upbringing of the child. The challenges faced at home, brings out all the bullying characteristics, in school or with friends or in public places.' (IDI #9: Father # A, 09.09.2022).*

Another Mother, mentioned;

They are all children at the end of the day, but I feel they may have witnessed or faced this type of behavior and are applying it at school. Maybe they need something, like appreciation, or not getting the love and affection, maybe not getting the empathy they need and are showing to be more aggressive. (IDI #3: Mother # C, 12.09.2022).

Parents generally believe that the child who is bullying other children, is seen to be more aggressive than the others, is a little dominating and at times a little controlling too. One mother said;

I have seen a bit of controlling behaviour, they try to control who you can mix with, who you can talk to, why this school bag today, and so on. Sometimes it becomes a little physical and aggressive too. They often start to team up and try to single out one child. (IDI #3: Mother # C, 12.09.2022).

Another participant felt that the bullies are aggressive with their interaction with other children. They want to feel superior and more powerful than the others. The encouragement given by others, acts as the fuel on the fire. If others are encouraging a certain trait, or a certain behaviour of one child, it gets repeated, even if it is hurtful.

One mother honestly confessed that she would most likely miss the signs if her own child is becoming a bully. She said;

It is very difficult to say, my son can be a bully, it can be a different side of him that I have not seen. Anyone can be a bully. It depends on the emotions that he feels on the inside and how they see the world, if they have any inhibitions and how they see the world, they might start bullying. As parents, or what I try to teach is to be comfortable with yourself and the way you are. There's nothing to put someone down for. Again I don't know for sure what makes someone a bully. (IDI #3: Mother # C, 12.09.2022).

All the participants had an idea of the traits and characteristics of a victim of bullying.

According to one parent;

They try to pick on students who are good in studies, usually good students tend to be very soft, the polite ones. They pick on introverts, as they know they will not try to speak up. They also try to pick on the weaker ones. Maybe those that are weak in studies or those that do not have many friends. The less popular kids are targeted more. Or even children with special problems or needs. Maybe someone stammers. Sometimes they bully if someone wears glasses, or if someone has a learning difficulty or has a lack of understanding or is not sharp enough to pace up with the peers. (IDI #2: Mother # B, 18.09.2022).

Another parent mentioned that the victims of bullying are usually the ones who are soft spoken and a little introverted. Those you can't speak up for themselves or are shy or not very close to their parents. The same parent said;

Bullies can sense who will not complain and those bully victim children don't complain. Teachers can't really be blamed since they have so many issues to handle, they might hear out the child once but may not pay much attention the second time. Here, parents have a big role; they have to know what is happening in a child's life. If the child is unable to share what is going on, the chances of the child being victimised becomes higher. (IDI #3: Mother # C, 12.09.2022).

One mother thinks that the bully victim will display signs that they will be submissive, not be able to communicate, keeping to themselves. These traits are usually those that are targeted by bullies. The mother said;

'These traits are very common in my son and that's why I get worried. He's fat, he's not overweight but he is chubby, compared to the other children he is, and on top of that he's an introvert. So he's not very aggressive. Things like this makes me worry that he may be on the receiving end and is at risk of being bullied.' (IDI #4: Mother # D, 13.09.2022).

Few participants raised an interesting point, regarding the process of learning to deal with bullies, the mother said;

> *We think that bullying if it's harmless can be good, a little bit of bullying can be good for the children as it can help the children stick up for themselves. However, most parents don't understand about bullying and the potential damage it can do to our kids, their confidence goes down with frequent bullying incidents and in the long run their academic performance also goes down. My daughter wasn't doing great in KG 1, whatever she was doing she would think it was wrong even though it was right. She was scared to speak up in class, scared what if she is wrong and what others will think. (IDI #5: Mother # E, 13.09.2022)*

The same mother explains, why she feels her daughter became a bully victim;

> *She was targeted not because she was the youngest there are many who are of similar age to her, but rather because she is very soft hearted and cannot answer right away if someone asks her something. If someone makes fun of her she will just stare at them not understanding that they are laughing at her and will not be able to give her reply, or talk back or give them an answer back. IDI #5: Mother # E, 13.09.2022).*

Similarly, another participant believes that the quiet, good kids are often targeted by bullies. She described why her daughter was a potential bully victim;

> *My daughter plays with her cousin all the time. They are best friends but sometimes he bites her or hits her. When they fight he gets physical. When my daughter comes crying and it's been happening since they were 2 or something, I would say why don't you just hit back, like what else can I say? My daughter have concerns about this that he might get hurt and she is not that kind of a person. So she refuses to hit someone back. So I guess people know by hanging out with her that she's the softer kind, because another*

friend's kid was also bullied, and was also a quiet kid like my daughter. (IDI #8: Mother # H, 25.09.2022)

The fathers interviewed for this research described similar traits of bullies and their victims as the mothers did. According to one father, the bullies are generally taller or stronger than most of the other kids. Most of them tend to have problems with their family at home. Witnessing a lot of disturbances in their homes. The bully victims can be anybody. The victim could be a little weak and more polite or maybe an introvert, definitely not the strongest one in the class. Bully victims are usually docile or introverts. May be well mannered. One father said;

> *'Maybe they are good people, many conventionally call them nerds or bookworms. Most of the time these children get picked on' (IDI #9: Father # A, 09.09.2022).*

Subtheme 4: Parents perception of the role of the bystander

One of the participants believes that the role of the bystander depends a lot on the class size. According to her, if the class is very small, there will be very few people opposing the bullying they witness. Another mother feels the others students in the class are the observers and they are like the audience, they don't participate in the bullying activities and they also don't say anything to stand up for the one being bullied. This could be because they are scared they will be bullied too. One mother said;

> *They might think by supporting the victim they will become victims too. (IDI #3: Mother # C, 12.09.2022)*

One participant said;

> *We have seen in schools where there are popular groups, and if one of the members did something unacceptable the other members still applauded it to get to be part of that group to feel that inclusion and to be a part of that group.*

Another mother feels that if a child's friend becomes a victim, it depends on the child's

personality if he/she will defend their friend. If the child is confident, they may stand up for their friend who is being victimized. And if they do not have a strong personality and are not very confident they may choose to be quiet.

One of the fathers mentioned;

> 'Fear could also be a reason to join the bullying. The child may think if he/she is with the bully child they will not become a target next time.'(IDI #10: Father # B, 18.09.2022).

Subtheme 5: Parents perception on why some children are bullies the other bully victims

Most of the parents felt the bullies are not getting the love, affection and empathy from their parents. It is this sadness, anger, and frustration that remains and they end up channeling and becoming aggressive towards others.

One participant assumed that it could be that the bully is yet to get acceptance from their families for who they are as individuals. She mentioned;

> Feeling of acceptance begins at home, it begins from your family and maybe they didn't get the appropriate attention from home and so they are trying to seek it from outside. Displaying behaviours that want attention, i think it's mainly to do with attention seeking disorder. (IDI #4: Mother # D, 13.09.2022)

Another parent identifies the home environment as being a crucial factor in determining whether a child will be included to bullying others;

> Family environment has a huge role to play, and the way they are treated by their parents makes a huge difference. If they are always being bossed around or are being overpowered, the child will want to feel that power over other people, maybe his friends or surroundings where he can actually show power. (IDI #6: Mother # F, 18.09.2022).

Another reason according to a parent who had a child who was bullied mentions;

The bully gets fun out of it, when he says something to someone and that person doesn't reply and is shy and stays quiet. He finds it fun, he feels stronger and he feels superior. He will continue with the same behavior if nobody stops him. (IDI #5: Mother # E, 13.09.2022)

It is commonly believed among the participants that the victims of bullying have similar traits that are targeted by the bullies. Generally when the child is a little introvert, too polite, a little shy, does not have too many friends. The bully tends to pick on whoever is each to pick on. They go after the one that is an easy target.

One of the participants said;

'Bullies target those who, when they see, will not fight back or say anything in return and will not be able to complain. Those that will become scared when others try to frighten him/her. They lack confidence, or soft spoken and introverted will face this more. (IDI #3: Mother # C, 12.09.2022)

General consensus from the participants is that anybody can be a victim, there's no specific trait or characteristic, anyone can be a victim of bullying. The bully can also be a victim at different times. Maybe the bully is not being bullied by his victim, but maybe he is being victimised by someone else.

Theme 2: Parents perception regarding the prevalence of bullying

Subtheme 1: Parents understanding of the prevalence of bullying in child's school

One parent gave an interesting insight on the prevalence of bullying and its prevalence. She said;

I haven't had many complaints. But I would say bullying is a problem everywhere, it doesn't matter which school or which country. It matters how you are training your kid to handle it. (IDI #2: Mother # B, 09.09.2022)

A parent narrated an incident involving her child and another child who happened to be a teachers son, this child gave her son that he was more powerful since he had mother as apart of the teaching team.

> *There was one incident where my son was chased by a kid and he said that it was the class bully and he irritates everybody. I told him next time he should tell the kid if you do this one more time that he will go and speak to the teachers. Mikhale agreed but said he's the son of a teacher. I told him it doesn't matter if he's the son of a teacher or the principal but you have to speak up against this and you cannot allow yourself to be a victim. (IDI #2: Mother # B, 09.09.2022).*

Parents of some schools have expressed that school bullying is rampant and is largely overlooked or ignored. According to the participant, bullying is happening across all classes. The mother said;

> *I hear lots of things and so feel its common. To some extent its common and the teachers are aware of it but don't say anything. (IDI #5: Mother # E, 13.09.2022).*

In the incident regarding her daughter's teeth, the teachers initially ignored it. It happened inside the class and repeatedly it kept on happening again and again and it was not coming to an end. Until the mother went to the class teacher it would not have stopped. The teachers may have expected the children to solve the conflict by themselves or maybe the teachers are choosing to overlook the incidents.

A father added;

> *From when we were in school, I am sure there were bullying, and there have always been bullies but maybe not as much. But over the years there has been reports of bullying and hazing in schools. compared to what we have heard before. (IDI #9: Father # A, 09.09.2022).*

Another mother from a different school, said that bullying doesn't happen frequently at all. The

teachers have a good control of the situation. The areas where children could be victimised like the washroom, corridors, cafeteria all have an adequate number of adults supervising. As a result, bullying incidents are pretty low.

A mother whose child goes to the same school as the child discussed above, mentioned that her only experience with bullying is with a special needs child. She mentioned;

> *When there are people from different places bullying is more prevalent. Here the students are from the same background, same culture so bullying isn't that common. (IDI #6: Mother # F, 18.10.2022).*

Similarly, another mother felt the prevalence of bullying was quite low due to more awareness. This is what she said;

> *I think all schools are a lot more aware about bullying. It was not like this when we were in school. It was definitely different to when we were in school. Its a lot better than our times. Teachers are definitely ready to listen to parents about bullying since they are already aware of it (IDI #7: Mother # G, 21.10.2022).*

Subtheme 2: Parents perception regarding the prevalence of bullying

The participants had mixed reviews when determining if they have an accurate perception of the prevalence of bullying in their child. One of the mothers felt that parents are a lot more aware of bullying related issues nowadays. However, she did question whether the access to classroom incident information was due to the fact the children are still very young and are still sharing things happening in school with their parents.

In contradiction another parent, mentioned that the children being young can be afraid to share what is happening as they are unsure what the consequences may entail. The mother said the following;

'Yes, they are children and they are very afraid to share things. My daughter is an introvert, she doesn't talk much, she keeps things inside her heart. I think lots of children are like that. They don't feel comfortable sharing their experiences. So I feel a lot of parents may not be aware that their children and experiencing bullying in school'. (IDI #5: Mother # E, 13.09.2022).

Another mother, also acknowledged that she most likely did not have accurate information to base her judgement and to confidently say there was no bullying. She added that she only saw her child interacting with peers for a maximum of 10-15 minutes after school and at playdates and birthday parties, these were not even every month. She added;

But at least I'm happy with the way my kids are sharing what's going on. Alhamdulillah. I think so, the other parents are also fully aware of what's going on in their child's life in regards to bullying. I think all parents nowadays are fully aware about bullying and if it's going on in their child's life. This is something everyone is aware of these days, at least the 5-6 kids my son hangs out with are very involved. (IDI #7: Mother # G, 21.10.2022).

Similarly, another mother said she is confident that her daughter is not telling her what is going on at school regarding bullying, she only shares incidents that involve her directly or when somebody does something to her.

Sub theme 3: Parents perception on most common form of bullying

It is noticed that parents with boys have mentioned that the most common form of bullying at this age is more physical bullying that involve pushing and shoving, and even name calling and teasing amongst peers is common. However, parents of girls of the same age are more inclined to suggest that relational bullying is more common. A mother mentioned, for her sons age she felt physical bullying was more common, however when thinking of her own childhood she went on to say that she remembers children being excluded being a lot more common.

A mother with a daughter, feels that relational bullying is a lot more common than any of the other types of bullying. She went onto describe an incident with her daughter at school;

> *'You don't like roadblocks or you don't like BTS? you can't be a part of our group. In this situation I tell my daughter it's perfectly fine that if you don't like BTS you don't have to change yourself to be a part of the group. Even if you don't have any friends doesn't mean you have to try and make the wrong friends. Maybe the right friends will come into your life and you guys will click. (IDI #3: Mother # C, 12.09.2022).*

Another mother with a daughter feels that relational bullying is very common, she said;

> *' I think it is grouping and trying to make someone feel left out.' (IDI #8: Mother # H, 25.10.2022).*

Most of the other participants felt that verbal bullying is quite common at this age. Teasing and name calling was popular. One mother mentioned her daughter was verbally bullied by her peers in school; The child would be told that her hair is sticky or oily. Another mother mentioned that verbal bullying often goes unchecked and unnoticed so it keeps prevailing. Unlike physical bullying, children know that if they get physical, people are watching them and there will be consequences.

One father said;

> *'Verbal and relational bullying often goes undetected because parents and teachers alike are more aware of the physical bullying that occurs with children'. (IDI #10: Father # A, 09.09.2022).*

Sub theme 4: Type of bullying that has the most serious impact on the lives of children

The participants all unanimously responded that all types of bullying have serious and detrimental effects on the lives of young children. One mother explained that any form of bullying can affect a child and leave scars for the future. Another participant mentioned that a

child's confidence level is impacted as is their self esteem. She added;

> *However good they are, they will think that no one will appreciate them and will humiliate them. They will eventually suffer from inferiority complex, not good enough, anxiety and even depression. IDI #3: Mother # C, 12.09.2022).*

One of the fathers mentioned that;

> *I think all of them have a significant impact on the lives of children. When they are Kids they are very impressionable. Things like these affect them more than compared to when you are adults. So any kind of bullying it can be physical it can be verbal it can be relational Even mental I would not say one is more detrimental than the other they are all equally harmful IDI #9: Father # A, 09.09.2022).*

The type of bullying that has a serious impact on the child, seems to vary with gender, participants with boys seemed to think that physical bullying is more serious for their child. One mother of a boy, said;

My son was trying to save one child from being bullied, but he got hurt by the bigger, stronger one. He was very upset and he didn't want to go to school for a few days. I think that had a greater impact on his mind. IDI #5: Mother # E, 13.09.2022).

Another boy mum, also agreed that physical bullying would have the most serious impact on her child, however she went on to add that had it been her who was a victim of bullying, verbal bullying would be more hurtful for her and have a greater impact. She said;

> *Verbal can be as bad as someone physically bullying. Words can really hurt and stay with you for a very long time and leave a very big impact. (IDI #7: Mother # G, 21.10.2022).*

Mothers of daughters cited verbal bullying being more serious. One of the participants with a daughter said;

I think it's the one about bullying about looks. Has a huge impact, even if you are stick thin you feel like you're ugly, fat or not good enough. Because all your life you have felt that you are not good enough. (IDI #8: Mother # H, 25.10.2022).

Sub theme 5: Children's experience of bullying perceived by the adults

Most of the participants have not faced their child being bullied by an adult caregiver. However, there are a few exceptions. One parent faced a situation where her child was bullied by a teacher. However, the parent was unsure whether the actions could be counted as bullying, she wonders if the teacher's behaviour was her style of teaching and managing children's learning. She questions herself and tries to convince herself that the teacher's behaviour is acceptable and assumes that the teacher understands limits and boundaries, when dealing with the emotions of young children.

Another parent had a negative experience with her sons class teacher. She herself has categorised it as bullying.

I will not name the teachers but there are some teachers who have punished kids for doing things that ordinarily a 6 year old would do. The teacher would punish kids for doing things that's normal for children at that age. For example my son was punished for sticking out his leg while eating. Like it's just so silly and I did receive complaints. (IDI #7: Mother # G, 21.10.2022).

The same participant mentioned that her son's classmate told his mother that the teacher was abusive towards him. She said;

One of the teachers, took a duster and pointed to him and said 'I will hit you with the duster' and that is something I am not ok with this happening at school as I myself don't do this with my kids at home. This happened last week, with my sons friend. I think teacher bullying is what happens more at this age, this is what I have personally noticed.

The child is very hurt and upset. He came home and asked his mother why this was said to him. (IDI #7: Mother # G, 21.10.2022).

The participant feels that teacher bullying is definitely there in class, and since we are not there with our children in class we just get to hear what our children come home and say to us.

She went on to say;

Teacher bullying is there, some children especially my son is scared to tell me what happened at school. When he was in playgroup, i used to ask him if the teacher scolded him, every day he used to say that he was scolded in class. That use to really bother me, why? My son was not that naughty, my eldest son was always very calm, just recently he has become a little hyper but he was never naughty. (IDI #7: Mother # G, 21.10.2022).

Similar to parents feeling that teachers are not as warm and empathetic as they should be a child felt the same way and narrated her experience with a school teacher;

One of my best friends transferred to another school, before she left she gave me a card. My teacher took it and ripped it and threw it in the dustbin, she said I shouldn't have taken it out in class. I did not tell anyone, including my mum. (IDI #14: Child# D, 25.10.2022).

Another Mother said that her daughter doesn't like her doctor. The doctor always asks her why are you becoming so fat? The mother accepts and acknowledges that she is her child's biggest bully. The mother said;

'It's better if she let me tell her what's wrong with her, instead of her having to hear it from her friends. She needs to be more active, stop eating junk and this is only going to hurt her. And of course as a mother it hurts me too, when I hear someone calling her fat or something like that. It must hurt her as well so i tell her not eat junk every chance she gets it and not sneak it in and not be lazy. I tell her to run,to fetch her own things, to go to the park and all these things that I keep telling her for her own good. (IDI #8: Mother

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 # H, 25.10.2022).

This mothers child was also interviewed, the child narrated an incident where she was bullied by an older student in an extracurricular class, even though she was scared she told her teacher but not her mother.

> *In my piano class there was a girl who is 13, she said you are fat and ugly and your mother is also ugly. I was scared but i still told the teacher but my mother doesn't know.(IDI #12: Child # d, 25.10.2022).*

Theme 3: Parents perception on the role of schools in bullying

Sub theme 1: Parents' perception on school teachers role in understanding bullying in the classroom.

Participants seem to have a similar outlook on what teachers could be doing to keep bullying incidents under control. One parent mentioned that teachers need to know and understand each student in their class. They need to observe the children to truly understand what they may be doing in class and what their interaction with peers is like. She had said;

> *At times they have to become friends, they have to be teachers at times and other times they have to be mentors and they need to know when it's appropriate to change roles. So that children are under the impression they know the boundaries and plus they know this is a place or this is the person we can go to with our problems. Most often children don't have a person to share their problems with. So it goes unnoticed, teachers need to be that safe place or person where students know they can go to. (IDI #2: Mother # B, 09.09.2022).*

Other participants had similar insights. They feel that teachers need to be more involved, they need to be more vigilant and attentive towards their students. Teachers or other adults should always be around to supervise. One parents said;

> *Kids who are out of character suddenly, teachers should watch out for those signs. They should teach kids to be nice to others, and explain to them how comments can hurt other children's feelings. IDI #7: Mother # G, 21.10.2022).*

One of the fathers mentioned;

Teachers can go for more training, they need to open up and they need to self develop. We, in our businesses keep on learning new things through videos and speaking to others and when we get stuck we discuss with seniors and those in the same industry, teachers are no exception and should be doing the same. IDI #10: Father # A, 09.09.2022).

Sub theme 2: Anti-bullying policy within whole school community

The participants that responded were divided in responses regarding the existence of an anti-bullying policy at their child's school as well as the effectiveness of it. A few parents had positive experiences, one mother said during the pandemic in online classes there was one titled health and moral classes. In this class they would be discussing anything and everything about daily lives. They would be discussing problems that could be related to school bullying. Another slightly dissatisfied parents complained;

Anti bullying we haven't seen anything yet. I don't know if they have anything. They just say it, but in the real world I don't know how effective it is. We can say a lot of things but not be able to implement it. The bulletin boards everyone can see, but how it is being implemented in the classrooms is of concern. I can say that every kid has experienced bullying but nothing is happening to stop it. That's why it is happening all the time. I'm not sure if teachers are taking proper steps or actions to curtail it. (IDI#5: Mother

The same mother went on to say;

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13.09.2022).

One of the fathers is not aware if anti bullying policies exist or if they are in place. He mentioned an incident where his son was bullied but did not feel comfortable reporting it since the other child was a son of a teacher in his school;

> *When my son brought up the bullying incident he did not bring it up once but several times since it really bothered him and one day I heard apparently he is also the son of a school teacher in his school. which means even if he complains about him he might get away with it so that is also what are the things in this case bullies know that if there is a parent working in the school and is well connected they may get away with it. (IDI #9: Father # A, 09.09.2022).*

Another Father said:

> *Awareness is the only way you can reduce bullying, without more awareness it will not be reduced or be eradicated. Even if you punish it might set an example but at the same time awareness needs to be the real remedy. (IDI #10: Father # A, 09.09.2022).*

Sub theme 3: Activities can foster mutual understanding and appreciation

Three of the eleven participants agreed that group work would be helpful to teach children the importance of working together with people who are different from themselves. One of the mothers added;

> *Even different kinds of cultural programs, putting a show together, science fair or UN days. Any events the students put together helps them understand and appreciate how to work together. Most importantly learn how to be a team player. (IDI #2: Mother # B, 09.09.2022)*

Another mother with similar views said;

> *Maybe they could start group work and maybe the teachers could pick the groups based*

on completely different individuals or something, I don't know. So that everyone works

together, when you work together in a group you get to know the other individuals.

Another mother reflected on the importance of counselling children about respect for others; She
said;

It's very important. Children should be taught that they shouldn't be judgmental and they

should learn to appreciate each other's differences. (IDI #6: Mother # F, 18.09.2022)

Teachers can ask the child to help or teach them how to do the task. They could explain

to the child to help explain it to him as he is not able to complete it. (IDI #8: Mother #

H, 25.09.2022)

One of the fathers mentioned this;

The better the mix the better the understanding will be. I come from a Christian Catholic

school, we had students of different religions and backgrounds from all over the country

, that's why I thought our understanding and tolerance was much better. (IDI #10:

Father # A, 09.09.2022).

He also said;

It needs to be an inclusive society. But in general, the schools I feel are trying to be

exclusive and that's why the seed of the bullying is and that could be perhaps worked on.

(IDI #10: Father # B, 09.09.2022)

Sub theme 4: reducing bullying in schools

The general consensus within the participants is that there should be zero tolerance to bullying

and the school needs to be stricter and the parents should be involved from the start.

One mother said;

Bullying should be taken very seriously. I do believe in the fact that children can be

counseled but there are times when examples have to be set. We have to learn to balance

between both. When an incident does occur it's important to not just think of the child's future, we should be thinking about what will happen to the school's environment and how it can set a better example for others by taking a strict action against a bully. You should be counseling them but at times there should be zero tolerance perception. (IDI #2: Mother # B 09.09.2022).

Another parent said;

The school can be more strict. And tolerate no bullying. If the same incident is repeated more than 3 times the child should be expelled. When we were younger, there were 30-40 students in the class, now there are only 20 students in a class. Its a lot easier for teachers now. There are 2 teachers in a classroom at a time. These teachers are experienced. They have themselves experienced what the children are going through, they should be able to intervene and stop it from becoming a big issue. They should know what's happening and they also know the nature of each child. They don't want to involve themselves, they have plenty of other work like making slides and preparing for the children's studies. They don't want to be disturbed. (IDI #6: Mother # F, 18.10.2022).

Sub theme 5: Bullying incidents reporting by parents to the teacher

Generally, the participants have said that all complaints are directed to the class teacher at first. One parent elaborated and said;

complaints are directed to the class teacher. I think they will just have a meeting with the parents and hear the side of the story and listen to it. They should have them both sit down. And talk to the children in front of the parents. IDI #6:Mother # F, 18.10.2022).

A father mentioned;

There should be a policy where all students should be free to complain. Children should be given Confidence to go and complain. any issues they are having within peers.

The schools are the experts the teacher should know how to handle incidents related to bullying. I am just a parent who is new to bullying. I can only go to YouTube and search for ways to curb bullying but they are the educated you should know how to handle bullying. IDI #9:Father# A, 09.09.2022).

Discussion

This section presents the interpretations of the study results in light of the research question; what are parents' level of knowledge and awareness about bullying in the early years? The researchers reflections and it also provides an analysis of the findings with reference evidence to the existing literature. The discussion has been presented under different themes.

Defining Bullying: There are 3 criteria that need to be met for bullying to have taken place. These include aggressive intentional behaviours that are repeated and involve a power imbalance favouring the perpetrator (Olweus, 1993).

It is interesting to note that most of the parents were unable to define bullying in a way that was consistent with the above defintion. All the participants described interactions children have on a daily basis, some were one off or infrequently, or non intentional with no power imbalance and therefore, cannot be termed as bullying based on the definition just discussed.

Evidence of intentionality or targetting was not brought up by any of the participants. Similarly, only a few of the participants mentioned that the incidents were happening repeatedly but the incidents were occuring between peers, a situation which usually doesn't have an element of power imbalance.

Supporting literature indicates that parents are often confused and unsure whether to term an incident as actual bullying. In the research paper, some respondents were not able to define bullying precisiely, a few were tentative and unsure of the definitions. This uncertainty in not being able to categorize certain behavior as bullying is important, since the way parents analyze or understand behavior can influence their following actions and approach to interventions. The finding that parents experienced frustration identifying bullying incidents even though they were able to provide examples of bullying behaviors is backed again in the

literature (Hazler, 1998; Hazler et al., 2001).

Research suggests some people have difficulty differentiating bullying behaviors from other forms of social interactions such as rough-and-tumble play or playful teasing, thereby minimising the direct attention to bullying (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Hazler, 1998). Terming all uncomfortable peer interactions of their children as bullying by parents can be risky, children lose out on the learning opportunity to know how to defend themselves and speak up for themselves in stressful situations.

Impact of Bullying: Verbal and relational bullying was considered by the participants to leave a more serious impact on the lives of children, however this does not correspond with the literature; Prospective Teachers' Attitudes Toward Bullying and Victimisation, Craig, W. M., Henderson, K., & Murphy, J. G. (2000). Physical types of aggression were labelled more often as bullying, were viewed more seriously and were more likely to warrant intervention than verbal aggression.

Gender Differences; The participants have described scenarios with different types of bullying, one common theme arises. Participants with a male child, are narrating incidents that are more physical in nature, accounts include pushing, throwing and hurting. However, participants with female children share stories of verbal taunts, and exclusions from peer groups. Parents of both boys and girls have complained of verbal 'bullying' but those of a relational nature are more seen and noticed by participants with girls. A few parents felt that boys engage in physical bullying more often, and that girls tend to be more indirect by participating in relational bullying.

Parents' perceptions of gender differences in bullying correlates to the research, which validates that girls tend to use indirect methods such as social exclusion and rumours to bully, while boys tend to bully by more direct and physically aggressive means (Craig & Pepler,

1997; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Eslea & Smith, 1998; Nansel et al., 2001; O'Connell et al., 1999; Smith & Shu, 2000).

Such stereotyping can influence parents' capability to recognize bullying behaviours that do not fit their assumptions (e.g., a male child being left out of sports games). Furthermore, attributing more attention and concern to specific forms of bullying, for example physical, may discourage children from confiding other equally harmful forms of victimisation to their parents out of concern that they may not be taken sincerely.

Bullying and Academic Performance: Few of the participants said that if a child is unhappy or fearful in school, they will not be able to learn effectively and their grades will suffer. This is supported by the literature, understanding how school bullying impacts student learning, the study explored the relationships among school bullying, students' sense of belonging at school and academic performance in science, maths and reading. The research indicated that both bullying victimisation and bullying climate had significant and negative relationships with students' science, maths and reading performance. Liang Huang (2022).

Another literature, Creating Safe Schools through Invitational Education, (Purkey,1999). mentions, education is a delicate process, easily disrupted by fear, anxiety, and other by-products of poor conflict resolution. Learning is enhanced by a positive atmosphere, one which is free of the anxiety associated with experiencing or witnessing anti-social behaviours. Schools where students resolve these inevitable conflicts through non-physical means are more likely to become safe and inviting. In contrast, schools where bullying occurs frequently can become uninviting for a significant number of students. (Ainsworth, 1995; Purkey & Novak, 1996).

Bully victims will confide in parents and not teachers

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A participant mentioned that teachers are not always aware of what is going on in their classroom, and they are so busy preparing for lectures that they miss signs of children who are being targeted by bullies. It is therefore all the more important for parents to be involved and more aware of the interactions that are taking place in their child's school.

The way adults accept bullying can affect their reactions to a child's disclosure (Limper, 2000). If a child identifies an incident as bullying and the adult does not, the child may be further harmed by the lack of response, which may result in greater caution or reluctance by the child in disclosing bullying incidents in the future. If children are not listened to and accepted to be telling the truth when they do disclose bullying, they may stop telling their parents or other adults about the victimization they encounter. Factors Associated with Perceptions and Responses to Bullying Situations by Children, Parents, Teachers, and Principals (Mishna, 2004).

Many children do not share incidents of bullying with adults (Atlas & Pepler,1998) for a number of reasons, including feeling too embarrassed to speak about their experiences and lacking confidence in the adult's ability to help them (Mishna & Alaggia, 2005). Parents' understanding of bullying may affect whether they respond effectively and appropriately to their child who has disclosed victimization and whether they are attuned to signs indicating their child might be experiencing bullying even if their child does not disclose.

A significant finding was that at most times adults did not acknowledge certain incidents as bullying, whereas the child did. The adult's conclusion influences his or her response as well as the child's reporting (Craig et al., 2000; Landau et al., 2001; Limper, 2000). When such differences occurred between the child and adult, the adult downplayed or did not validate the child's experience. Underestimating the damage caused by some forms of bullying, in particular nonviolent offences, may lead to an inproper response (Astor, 1995; Cullingford &

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Morrison, 1995). Furthermore, Clarke and Kiselica (1997) argued that when caregivers do not respond, "what the children learn from the adults' handling of bullying incidents must be more daunting to them than the individual bullying incidents"

Bullying by friends: A participant mentioned that oftentimes the bully targets children who will not speak up or defend themselves, the participant mentioned that her child was targeted by her cousin who she is close friends with. When she came to complain, the mother told her to retaliate and hit back but the child refused since she didn't want to hurt her cousin.

A research by Mishna et al. (2008) , discovered that bullying among friends is fairly common. This finding highlights the challenges parents may experience when trying to classify behaviours as bullying when it occurs among friends. In addition, this point highlights the need for parents to become aware that even children who have friends are vulnerable to being bullied. One of the child participants mentioned that she was having tiffin while sitting next to her friend, at one point her friend pusher her off the bench to make space for another girl who was looking for somewhere to sit. The participant was told to look for another friend to sit with. However, to the parents and teachers the two girls are considered to be close friends. Similarly, during the pandemic, another participant would chat to her friends on googlemeet, one of her friends told her to show her house, and if she likes it only then will she be allowed to continue conversations with the other girls in the group.

On interviewing a few of the child participants, it has been found that many of the parent participants were unaware about their child had been bullied. This finding highlights two serious concerns: children do not always tell their parents about their bullying experiences; and many parents do not know that their child is bullied. One consequence is that many children are suffering in silence (Smith, 1991). This finding is important, as parents will be unable to protect their children from further bullying if they are unaware of its occurrence.

Although the prevention and elimination of bullying is extremely complex, telling an adult of its occurrence is a critical element required to protect children. Furthermore, parents play an important role in communicating with the child's school in order to further assist with protecting the child from victimisation.

Bullies seeking attention from outside, home and family environment

Several participants mentioned that the children who are bullies have a certain unmet underlying need for love and attention. It has been seen by several of the participants that the children who are being the bully are in fact disturbed at home. Either they are neglected at home or are themselves powerless and helpless at home.

This is in correlation with a research paper on Parenting and School Bullying (smith,1998). The study attempts to link bullying behaviour having its origins in parenting as well as in the school environment. Little work has yet been done directly in this area. However, several studies in Europe, Australia and the US have now linked violent behaviour and harsh discipline in parents with bullying behaviour, and overprotectiveness in parents with victimisation.

There are a number of factors related to family functioning which may lead to bullying, including, (a) lack of warmth, (b) little involvement on the part of parents in the lives of their children, (c) lack of limits on aggressive behaviour, and (d) poor role models for the management of conflicts. In addition, when handling the inevitable parent-child conflict, the family uses harsh and inconsistent punishment often delivered in a corporeal, aggressive, and hostile manner. (Marini,1999).

In general, it is thought that bullies are bullied at home or elsewhere, from which they take the lesson that by being dictatorial over others one gets what one wants. A family member may get away with bullying another family member, thus teaching the victim to use bullying

approach to gain authority over weaker peers (Rivers et al. 2007:19−20). Parents of bullies often use power-assertive techniques like physical discipline to manage others (authoritarian parenting style). They may lack warmth and are often not involved in their children's lives. Bullies may duplicate their parents' aggressive behaviour (Smokowski & Kopasz 2005:103; Barboza et al. 2009:104). Bullies often come from a home background where there is appreciation for power and influence over other.

Schools role, in curbing bullying; One participant, was in fact not satisfied with the schools handling of her childs complaints, she felt that the bullying for her child did not stop as quickly as it should have. The school was slow to report to the other child's parents, her child was still made to interact with the child who was making fun of her teeth. Another participant who mentioned her child was made to stand next to another child who would be irritating him, the teacher was unaware that her student was uncomfortable. Similarly, another participant narrated an incident where the school had complained that another child was overly sensitive and was overreacting to the incident that made the child upset.

It became clear from the research that schools should adopt an anti-bullying policy. Teachers should give more attention to classroom rules and they should become skilled in dealing with bullying. Recommendations were made concerning the role of teachers as well as the place of school ethos and policies when the above-mentioned behavioural problem needs to be managed. Bullying in schools - the educator's role : original research Venter, E. & Du Plessis, Elize. (2012).

A school's failure to deal with bullying allows an adverse environment to hamper with learning, whereas dealing with the issue improves school climate, maximises achievements and in general creates a happy community (Beaty & Alexeyev 2008:2). Learners should feel safe in the school. A culture of respect and recognition of human dignity is important. A zero-

tolerance policy with swift and deliberate consequences for engaging in bullying should be part of the school code of conduct. There should be no excuse for bullying (Smokowski & Kopasz 2005:108).

Conclusion

Parents are particularly important in helping children who experience bullying victimization. There is an abundance of bullying related studies focusing on children, however there is a lack of research that tries to understand parents' perspectives. Adding to the knowledge base of parents' perspectives of bullying will increase our understanding of the factors that affect parents' ability to recognize and respond to bullying behaviors among school-aged children. Bullying is occurring within a broader social context, as parents today are highly influential in their child's lives, and are critical advocates in addressing their children's victimization experiences and protecting their children, it is crucial that research include them. All children have the right to feel safe at home, at school, and in the community (United Nations, 2008). It is thus essential that parents recognize the seriousness of childhood bullying, and learn how best to intercede in order to protect their child from victimization.

The literature reviewed indicated that bullying in early-primary students' needs urgent addressing. It is usually seen that middle school has initiatives in place to reduce or curtail bullying but not in the primary years. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh and in the global context very little is done to protect 6-8 years against bullying. This study presents parents' perception on bullying, it explores the understanding parents have of bullying, the prevalence of bullying in English Medium schools in Dhaka as well as the role of school in bullying.

It is believed that after understanding parents' perception of bullying, anti-bullying initiatives can be effectively implemented and adopted in schools. Curtailing the extent of bullying in schools and helping the children to feel safe and secure during their learning journey.

Recommendations

The recommendations are given below:

- Request for periodic training for childs school teachers so that they are aware of the signs of bullying.

- Parents, teachers and counsellors should work to build a strong framework and support system for children.

- Mass awareness campaigns are needed

- Policies to ensure that teachers are trained in how to address bullying and to make counselors mandatory for primary year classes

- More extensive research is needed with a larger sample.

- Different population groups for more detailed analysis on this topic.

A comprehensive and strategic action plan with effective intervention measures will help curb bullying incidents before they escalate to serious issues.

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Appendix A: In Depth Interview Questionnaire for Parents

Exploring **Parents** perception regarding bullying amongst **6-8yr children** attending school

Date of Interview:

SECTION A: Demographic information

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Education:

Age of child:

SECTION B: Parents Understanding of Bullying and the Types of Bullying

Bullying

1.   Please can you explain what you understand by the term 'bullying'?

2.   What are the types of bullying?

   a. Describe any experince your child has had with physical bullying.

 Examples: hitting, kicking, pushing, slapping, spitting on or at someone; damaging or stealing someone's property

   b. Describe any experince your child has had with verbal bullying.

Examples: name-calling, hurtful teasing; insulting, humiliating, or threatening someone

   c. Describe any relational bullying taking place at your child's school?

Examples: gossiping or spreading rumors about others, excluding someone from a group, setting someone up to embarrass them or make them look foolish

   d. Describe any electronic or cyber bullying taking place at your child's school?

Examples: sending e-mail or phone text messages or pictures to single out, threaten, or embarrass someone; hurt their feelings or make them look bad; spread rumors or reveal secrets about them

3. What characteristics define a bully, and a bully victim?

4. What do you think is the role of the bystander?

5. Why are some children bullies and why are some bully victims?

Prevalence of Bullying

6. How prevalent do you think bullying is in your child's school?

7. Do you believe that bullying is occurring at your child's school more frequently than you know? *If yes*, how frequently do you believe bullying goes unnoticed by other parents as well?

8. As a parent, which form of bullying do you perceive as the most common and why?

9. Which form of bullying do you consider as the most serious impact on the lives of children?

10. Has your child experienced bullying carried out by adults e..g. Teachers, coaches other parents etc? Please describe the incident

Role of School in Bullying

11. What can school teachers do to have a better understanding of the bullying going on in her classroom with her students?

12. What values should the anti-bullying policy encourage among the whole school community?

13. What activities can foster mutual understanding and appreciation of differences in others?

14. How are bullying incidents reported by parents handled by the teachers?

15. What does your child's school need most to reduce bullying?

Annexure B: In Depth Interview Questionnaire for Children

Section A: Demographic Information

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Education:

Section B: Children's Understanding of Bullying and the Types of Bullying

1. Do you know what bullying is? Can you describe it?

2. What are bullies like? Why do you think people bully?

3. Who are the ones who get bullied?

4. Have you ever felt too scared to go to school because you were afraid of bullying?

5. What do you usually do when you see bullying going on?

6. What do you think parents can do to help stop bullying going on?

7. Have you or your friends left other kids out on purpose? Do you think that was bullying ? Why or why not?

8. Do you ever see kids at your school being bullied by other kids? How does it make you feel?

9. Have you ever tried to help someone who is being bullied? What happened? What would you do if it happens again?

10. Would it be ok to tell your teacher? What would others think? What do you think the teacher would do?

11. Boys vs girls bullying styles, can you describe?

Annexure C: Consent Form

Title of Study:

Exploring **Parents** perception regarding bullying amongst **6-8yr children** attending school

This research study is being completed as a part of a Masters program in Early Childhood Development by Maysoon S. Chowdhury, a MSc student of BRAC IED.

Purpose of Study:

Bullying is a common occurrence in today's schools and we would like your help in learning more about a parent's perspectives on this matter. Your information and experiences are important to us. In the in depth interview or the focus group discussion you will be asked questions about bullying experiences your child has discussed with you, and those you may have observed or experienced while at their school.

Bullying brings a multitude of negative consequences for victims. Victimisation may result in anger, sadness, depression, anxiety, reduced self esteem, isolation, school absenteeism and at times even suicide. These devastating effects of bullying require anti-bullying interventions. Bullying interventions are most effective when it follows a multidisciplinary approach. It is therefore vital to understand the parents' perception and meaning of bullying because their definitions are likely to be linked to their attitudes toward bullying and their willingness to support bullying interventions programs.

It will take you approximately 60 minutes to complete the interview. Your answers will remain anonymous. The information you provide will be stored and safeguarded. Only myself, Maysoon S. Chowdhury, and my Supervisor, Mr. Safayet Khan helping with this research will have access to your responses.

………….

I (Participants Name), agree to participate or agree to the participation of my child (participant name) in the research mentioned above.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this research study and I have received satisfactory answers. I understand the general purposes, risks and methods of this research.

I consent to participate or have my child participate in the research study and the following has been explained to me:

- The research may not be of direct benefit to me

- My participation is completely voluntary

- My right to withdraw from the study at any time without any implications to me

- The risks including any possible inconveniences, discomfort or harm as a consequence of my participation in the research project

- Security and confidentiality of my personal information

In addition I consent to:

- audio -visual recording of any part of or all research activities

- Publication of results from this study on the condition that my identity will not be revealed.

Name: (Please Print)

Signature:

Date