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Peer Leadership Skills and Practices in Reducing Bullying Cases

Leonard C. Manuel*

*Faculty Member, Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College

Corresponding Email: *leonardmanuel06@gmail.com

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Abstract: Promoting a safe learning environment has been a crucial element in the crafting and implementation of school policies and programs to ensure students' growth and development. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the peer leadership skills and the performance on the peer leadership skills of the students in reducing bullying cases. A survey questionnaire was used in gathering the data needed from the respondents in the public secondary schools in Narvacan, Philippines. The data were treated statistically using the weighted mean and one-way analysis of variance. It was found that the most common bullying cases the students encounter in school are verbal abuse specifically name-calling and persistent teasing and insult, physical abuse, and emotional abuse. This study also showed that the students possessed the necessary peer leadership skills in addressing bullying in school. However, their difficulty in expressing themselves and in training their peers to be leaders were noted as the least skill they possessed. Furthermore, the students were still developing their performance on peer leadership practices in reducing bullying cases in school. Although the result is very close to its significant level, it was found that there is no significant difference in the bullying cases between and among the students in the five public secondary schools. However, it was found that there is a significant difference between and among the students in the five secondary schools along with peer leadership practices and skills. The findings of the study serve as a basis for the school administrators to continuously explore alternative solutions or strengthen further the existing policies on bullying problems in school.

Keywords: Bullying Cases, Peer Leadership Practices, Peer Leadership Skill

1. INTRODUCTION

Peers complete the learning experiences of the students in school. They undoubtedly create a significant impact on the lives of their fellow learners by molding their social well-being and building bridges across their learning gaps. However, this idea changes when peers become a threat to the student's growth and development due to social malpractices such as bullying and its other forms.

According to Ref [1], bullying is perceived to be an anti-social act and an interpersonal conflict, which often occurs anywhere in places where they should be most protected like

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schools. Many have been experiencing bullying and many other forms of violence on a day-to-day basis within schools. This aggressive act separates the student victims from the outside world—to their peers, the school, and their goals towards education. Ref [2] stated that the presence of bullying at school often creates a barrier for young people to develop into well-adjusted adults. This is proven by Ref [3] who stated that peer mistreatment can harm young people's sense of belonging, safety, and connection to the school. Students who feel unsafe or alienated are less likely to learn.

The adverse effect of bullying incidents on both the victims and the bullies is very alarming as it continuously corrupts the educational orientation of the students in school [4]. It may even affect hilariously their academic performance, their ability to build harmonious relationships with others, and their sensitivity to certain matters. Worst still, their lives might also be in danger because of the trauma that it leaves them [5]. The United Nations noted, "bullying, aggression, and other forms of violence in schools can blight student experiences of formal education and their abilities to make the best opportunities they have" [6]. Thus, this problem threatens the right of the students to learn and grow in a safe, conducive, and supportive avenue [7].

Bullying in school has been the content of studies and a primordial concern of most researchers worldwide [8]. It is then a fact that bullying captivates the attention of the scholars because of its negative effects on the students both bullies and victims wherever grade levels they belong. Each day, many children are victims of bullying. These acts of aggression and violence keep many students from attending school [6]. Many times, they are physically threatened or they're unable to endure another emotionally degrading day [9]. Concerning this, bullying incidents frequently happen during elementary school and slightly less during middle school, and less so, but still frequently, in high school [10].

Peer leadership is anchored on transformational leadership theory in which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation. It creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders [11]. Furthermore, it enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms which include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the mission and the collective identity of the organization among others [12].

With the involvement of peer leaders, bullying cases might be lessened or even be eliminated from occurrences among them. Peer leadership enables students to experiencetheir power to effect change by exercising leadership in their environment through formal and informal interventions, especially in handling bullying cases in the school climate [13]. Ref [14] indicated in their studies that comprehensive peer-led conflict resolution programs have

[14] indicated in their studies that comprehensive peer-led conflict resolution programs have resulted in a decreased number of fights and less physical violence in general, increased cooperation among students, improvements in the classroom climate, and lower rates of suspension. Thus, the peer leaders can give support and provide opportunities to their fellow students to avoid violence such as bullying. Ref [15] has found out that programs and practices that focus on students' social interactions through encouraging peers to befriend others, teaching conflict resolution skills, and supporting informal counseling-based approaches, help protect victims and increase pro-social attitudes and behaviors.

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Through this, the student leaders demonstrate the power and ability to leverage their peers into significant changes in behaviors and attitudes. The result of peer-led mentoring programs avoids an increase in attitudes that support violence and demonstrates a decreased tendency in developing aggressive behaviors [16]. However, the problem arises on how their peers accept the practice and how it is effective for them in the process.

In the classroom setting, many students were engaging themselves in acts of aggression and violence such as bullying. However, it was also observed that there were also students who still have the compassion and affection to extend help to their fellow learners who have experienced hostility and emotional dilemmas. These students have shown potential, traits, and actions to become the leader—role models to their peers.

Although there were widespread studies conducted to investigate the extent of bullying in school and its preventive measures, many researchers were still concerned with the continuous increase of bullying cases among learners at different levels, especially in the advent of cybertechnology. This study, however, deals with the investigation of the peer leadership skills and practices that contributes to the reduction of bullying cases among secondary students. Furthermore, this study provides an empirical analysis of the status of bullying cases in schools as the school navigates to strengthen the bullying policies and programs necessary to thrive in creating a safe and conducive learning environment for the learners. It is must need to assess the students' peer leadership skills and practices and help them to handle and apply such to turn into positive circumstances. Results of this study may help the teachers and school administrators to develop the leadership potential of the students.

Thus, this paper dealt with investigating the extent of bullying cases in the public secondary schools in Narvacan, Philippines and to further explore significantly the effectiveness of peer leadership skills and practices in resolving bullying incidents in schools. This study focused on answering the following research questions:

- 1. What is the level of frequency of bullying cases in school?
- 2. What is the level of effectiveness of peer leadership skills in reducing bullying cases?
- 3. What is the level of performance of the peer leadership practices in reducing bullying cases?
- 4. Is there a significant difference between and among the students in the five public secondary schools along:
 - 4.1. bullying cases,
 - 4.2. peer leadership skills, and
 - 4.3. peer leadership practices?

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology contains detailed information about the procedures and steps followed in the study. It can be divided into subsections if several methods are described. Subsections of this part include research design, population and locale, data gathering instrument, data gathering procedure, and analysis of data. It is to note that this section should include the

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stipulation of ethical considerations undertaken in the conduct or implementation of the research.

A. Research Design

This study used the quantitative approach employing descriptive-comparative research methods. The descriptive method is an appropriate choice when the research aim is to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends, and categories [17]. Related to the research questions, the level of frequency of bullying cases in school; the level of effectiveness of peer leadership skills; and the level of performance of peer leadership practices in reducing bullying cases were statistically described. On the other hand, the comparative design was used to determine the significant difference in the bullying cases, peer leadership skills, and peer leadership practices among the five public secondary schools.

B. Population and Locale

The respondents of the study were the Grade 10 in the five secondary schools in Narvacan, Ilocos Sur Narvacan namely Imelda National High School, Lungog Integrated School, Narvacan National Central High School, San Pedro National High School, and Sulvec Integrated School. The study utilized the random sampling procedure in selecting the student-respondents and total population sampling in selecting for the teacher-respondents. Three hundred twenty-three student-respondents and thirty teacher-respondents were involved in the conduct of this study.

C. Data Gathering Instrument and Procedure

A descriptive survey questionnaire was employed in this study. The instrument was a researcher- made which was validated by five education experts. Suggestions and recommendations were further incorporated in the development of the instrument. The survey utilized a five-point Likert scale and was aligned to the research questions which were the level of frequency of bullying cases in school, the level of effectiveness of peer leadership skills, and performance of the peer leadership practices in reducing bullying cases.

The researcher asked permission from the principals of the five secondary schools to conduct the study. Upon approval, the researcher floated the questionnaire to the target respondents. The consent form was attached to the survey questionnaire. The respondents may opt not to accomplish the form. The questionnaires were retrieved and the responses were tallied and treated with the appropriate statistical tools.

D. Analysis of Data

The weighted mean and analysis of variance were used in analyzing the data. The weighted mean was used to describe the level of frequency of bullying cases in school, the level of effectiveness of peer leadership skills, and performance of the peer leadership practices in reducing bullying cases. Analysis of variance, on the other hand, was used to determine the significant difference between and among the students in the five public secondary schools along bullying cases, peer leadership skills, and peer leadership practices.

E. Ethical Consideration

The researcher asked the consent of the respondents which means that their involvement of the was voluntary. Furthermore, their identity was secured and the responses were kept confidential.

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3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the thorough analysis of data, the following findings were drawn from the studentand teacher-respondents in the five secondary schools in Narvacan Ilocos Sur.

Table 1: Level of Frequency of Bullying Cases

Delleina Casas in Salasal	STUDENTS		TE	ACHERS	As a whole		
Bullying Cases in School	MEAN	DR	MEAN	DR	MEAN	DR	
1. Name-calling	3.08	Moderately Often	3.53	Very Often	3.31	Moderately Often	
2. Spreading false rumors	2.15	Seldom	2.93	Moderately Often	2.54	Seldom	
3. Persistent teasing and insults	2.48	Seldom	3.00	Moderately Often	2.74	Moderately Often	
4. Hitting, biting and pinching	1.97	Seldom	2.57	Seldom	2.27	Seldom	
5. Stealing or damaging property	1.40	Never	2.17	Seldom	1.78	Never	
6. Extortion	1.44	Never	1.67	Seldom	1.55	Never	
7. Making threats	1.68	Never	2.03	Seldom	1.85	Never	
8. Excluding someone in any activity	2.01	Seldom	2.33	Seldom	2.17	Seldom	
9. Damaging friendships	1.71	Never	2.17	Seldom	1.94	Seldom	
10. Giving dirty looks	1.97	Seldom	2.27	Seldom	2.12	Seldom	
11. Unwanted physical contact	1.55	Never	1.73	Never	1.64	Never	
12. Using electronic devices such as computers and mobile phones to torment and embarrass	1.83	Never	2.30	Seldom	2.06	Seldom	
Overall Mean	1.94	Seldom	2.39	Seldom	2.17	Seldom	

Result shows that the prevalence of bullying in school is not widespread which further means that the bullying cases are rarely encountered by the students in public school based on the perceptions of both student-respondents and teacher-respondents. However, it is significant to note that name-calling with a mean score of 3.31 and persistent teasing and insults with a mean score of 2.74 are the most frequently observed and reported bullying incidents in school. Thus, student-offenders are committing more vicious verbal bullying with their peers which can be a long-term source of stress and anxiety for the victims. This implies further the essentiality of creating a positive communication support system in schools and in promoting firmly the values of respect and kindness among the students. The result is aligned with the study conducted Ref [18] that the bullying victims were mainly lied about, called names, and beaten up, whereas the most popular forms of bullying among bullies were beating up, excluding from group, and name-calling. Another key finding that approves the result of the study is that of Ref [19] who found that most bullies have experienced physical bullying including kicking-slapping, physical assault, rude physical jokes, and more verbal bullying including name-calling and insult-swearing.

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Table 2: Level of Effectiveness of Peer Leadership Skills in Reducing Bullying Cases

Door Loodorchin Chille	STUDE	ENTS	TEACHERS		As a whole	
Peer Leadership Skills	MEAN	DR	MEAN	DR	MEAN	DR
1. Ability to influence positive vibes in others	3.53	VS	3.53	VS	3.53	VS
2. Ability to take stand against violence	3.75	VS	3.70	VS	3.73	VS
3. Has the enough strength to mediate	3.47	VS	3.63	VS	3.55	VS
4. Ability to motivate others	3.56	VS	3.77	VS	3.67	VS
5.Communication skills	3.43	S	3.2	S	3.32	S
6. Can sympathize easily	3.71	VS	3.87	VS	3.79	VS
7. Know how to train peers to become leaders as well	3.40	S	3.43	S	3.42	S
8. Ability to comprehend to different school policies	3.77	VS	3.77	VS	3.77	vs
9. Open for improvement	4.09	VS	3.93	VS	4.01	VS
10. Respect the indifferences of others	4.13	VS	3.87	VS	4.00	VS
11. Able to demonstrate good camaraderie	4.05	VS	3.93	VS	3.99	VS
12. Sense of volunteerism	3.74	VS	3.60	VS	3.67	VS
13. Keen observer	3.58	VS	3.57	VS	3.58	VS
14. Has the impartial treatment to all	4.03	VS	3.77	VS	3.90	VS
Overall Mean	3.73	VS	3.68	VS	3.71	VS

Legend: 3.50-4.29 Very Satisfactory (VS) 2.70-2.69 Satisfactory (S)

The study reveals that peer leadership skills have been perceived to be effective in reducing bullying cases in school with an overall average of 3.71. Furthermore, this means that the students consider using their innate and identified peer leadership skills in response to reducing, if not eliminating, bullying incidents. Their ability to impart significant change to their peers can be of great help for both the victims and the bullies to cope or even neglect any form of violence among them.

However, the items "Know how to train peers to become leaders as well" (3.42) and "Communication skills" (3.32) got the least performed peer leadership skill as perceived by the students and teachers. This only shows that students have limited competence in conveying their motivational and inspiring messages to their peers to bring out also their leadership potential. Furthermore, the result suggests that communication skill is absolutely essential in becoming an effective and efficient peer leader. Hence, this implicates the school to provide more exposure to the students to strengthen their communication skills effectively in the context of peer leadership. Ref [20] identified in his book the effective student leadership skills which include the ability to influence others, ability to encourage others to establish and achieve goals, empathy toward the experiences and ideas of others, sense of purpose, direction and vision for the group, and willingness to take risks in the face of challenge. Ref [21] stated that it is impossible to be a leader without effective communication skills. According to Ref [22], a leader must have the ability to communicate effectively in a wide variety of situations. Thus, without communication, productivity and confidence can be of a significant loss to effective leadership.

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Table 3: Level of Performance on Peer Leadership Practices in Reducing Bullying Cases

Table 5. Level of Ferformance on Feer Leade	STUDENTS		TEACHERS		As a whole	
Peer leadership practices in reducing bullying cases	MEAN	DR	MEAN	DR	MEAN	DR
1. They serve as role models in school.	3.46	A	3.37	A	3.41	A
2. They do not involve themselves in any form of bullying.	3.26	A	3.53	Н	3.40	A
3. They stop their classmates from bullying others when they see them.	3.31	A	3.37	A	3.34	A
4. They tell/report immediately to their teacher or guidance counselor the bullying incident that they have witnessed.	2.84	A	3.5	Н	3.17	A
5. When they catch someone bullying the other, they get him to the guidance office.	2.27	L	2.93	A	2.60	L
6. They talk to their bully classmate to stop doing it.	2.69	L	2.97	A	2.83	A
7. They give advice both to the victim and the bully.	2.85	Α	2.93	A	2.89	A
8. They give advice only to the victim but not the bully.	2.58	L	2.53	L	2.56	L
9. They do not laugh when they see someone being bullied.	3.17	A	2.9	A	3.04	A
10. They do not open any topic that destroys one's dignity in a conversation.	3.34	A	3.43	A	3.39	A
11. They respect one's privacy.	4.06	Н	3.77	A	3.92	A
12. They keep on communicating with their peers the sensitive issues in school like violence and aggression and their effects.	3.03	A	3.23	A	3.13	A
13. They participate in any school activity against bullying and other violence among peers.	3.67	Н	3.50	Н	3.59	Н
14. They encourage their colleagues to be part of any school activity that develops their sense of belongingness and camaraderie among peers.	3.58	Н	3.43	A	3.51	Н
15. They use their social media account to disseminate sensible information about the bad effects of bullying in one's life, specifically to peers.	2.58	L	2.73	A	2.66	L
16. They take responsibility in monitoring the safety of his/her peers from the bullies.	3.07	A	3.10	A	3.09	A
17. They boost the confidence of their peers, especially the bullied ones to cope up with bullying incidents.	3.25	A	2.83	A	3.04	A
18. They promote equality among their peers.	3.55	Н	3.2	A	3.38	A
Overall Mean	3.14	A	3.18	A	3.16	A

Legend	3.50-4.29	High (H)		
	2.70-2.69	Average (A)		
	1.90-2.69	Low (L)		

The study reveals that the generated overall mean of 3.16 shows that the students werestill working on the progress of developing the effectively their peer leadership practices. This implies then that school should also provide constant support and proper guidance to the needs of the student while performing these practices.

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It can be noticed that the items "They participate in any school activity against bullying and other violence among peers" and "They encourage their colleagues to be part in any school activity that develops their sense of belongingness and camaraderie among peers" got the highest responses from the students and teachers based on the overall mean. The result implies then that the students are very active in participating in some, if not all, the school activities that promote unity and cooperation between and among them. Thus, this may lead them in eliminating violence or other bullying incidents in school. On the other hand, the items "When they catch someone bullying the other, they personally get him to the guidance office", "They give advice only to the victim but not the bully", and "They use their social media account to disseminate sensible information about the bad effects of bullying to one's life, specifically to peers" got the lowest mean scores of 2.60, 2.56 and 2.66 respectively. This shows that they still have apprehensions and fear in getting into trouble when they lend help to the victims. Furthermore, this result suggests that the students have limited engagement in supporting informal counselling-based approaches to help protect victims and increase pro-social attitudes and behaviors. This is approved by the study conducted by Ref [22] that interventions that involve peers, such as using students as peer mediators or engaging bystanders to disapprove of bullying and support victims of harassment, were associated with increases in victimization.

Table 4: Result on the Comparison of the Bullying Cases in the Five Public Secondary Schools

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	F crit
Between Groups	4.94	4	1.236	2.384	2.398
Within Groups	175.76	339	0.518		
Total	180.704	343			

The data presented in the table shows that there is no significant difference in the bullying cases between and among the five public secondary schools in Narvacan as supported by the computed value of 2.389 which is lesser than the critical value of 2.398. The result implies that the prevalence of bullying cases has been experienced in public schools. Thus, the public schools shall collaborate to further intensify their effort and commitment to strengthen the policies and programs for school safety.

Table 5. Result on the Comparison of the Peer Leadership Skills in the Five Public Secondary Schools

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	F crit
Between Groups	32.377	4	8.094	17.643	2.398
Within Groups	159.651	348	0.459		
Total	192.0279	352			

The table reveals that there is a significant difference in the peer leadership skills of students in the five secondary schools in Narvacan as supported by the computed value of 17.643 which is greater than the critical value of 2.398. This shows that the students have their unique and grounded abilities to promote positive and violence-free relationships with

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peers in the school. Thus, this suggests that the school should provide further the appropriate assistance and guidance to improve these skills of the students.

Table 6: Result on the Comparison of the Peer Leadership Practices in the Five Public Secondary Schools

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	F crit
Between Groups	32.782	4	8.195	19.199	2.398
Within Groups	148.549	348	0.426		
Total	181.330	352			

The data shows that there is a significant difference in the peer leadership practices of students in the five secondary schools in Narvacan as supported by the computed value of 19.199 which is greater than the critical value of 2.398. The result shows that the students perform different peer leadership strategies to respond to and prevent any form of bullying in school. Thus, the school administrators shall benchmark the effective ways to address the bullying in the school context.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study found that bullying still exists in schools that might hamper the learning experiences of the students. Verbal abuse specifically the name calling and persistent teasing and insult, physical abuse and emotional abuse were the most common bullying incidents which the students experience in school. This implies the need to design or adapt comprehensive intervention measures which require multilateral support from the students themselves, teachers, school counsellors and administrators, parents, the community and other stakeholders. There has to be a hands-on involvement of these individuals in design and implementing evidence-based policies; and concrete programs and services to holistically safeguard and promote the welfare of the students in the learning environment.

Students are aware of performing their peer leadership practices in reducing bullying cases in school. The school should widen the scope of these practices that enable every student to accommodate such. Thus, teachers should integrate the concept of peer leadership in their classes while school administrators should create opportunities like the student group involvement, student leadership forum, and other leadership development activities. Communication as an essential component in peer leadership should be further developed among the students. Students must be encouraged to contribute to class conversations, create a welcoming and harmonious space for other students, and speak up on the issues of bullying to them.

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