

Bullying Victimization and Aggressive Traits among At Risk Female Adolescents: A Case Study in a Malaysian Welfare Home

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Editor:
Amelia Mohd Noor

Received date:
24 March 2021

Accepted date:
29 April 2021

Published date:
16 June 2021

Abstract

The present study was conducted to better understand aggressive traits and experiences of bullying victimisation amongst a group of at risk female adolescents in a welfare home setting. The objectives of this study were to determine if the presence of aggressive traits in victims provoke bullying, and to explore their experiences of bullying within a setting where their bullies also reside. The sample consisted of fifty two female adolescents, aged between 13 and 18 years old, from one children's welfare home in Perak. A self-administered questionnaire and focus-group interviews were used to collect data. As a group, the adolescents scored higher in all subdomains of aggression, particularly hostility; compared to the norm reference. Mann-Whitney U test indicated significant differences in the subdomains physical aggression, verbal aggression, and hostility; between adolescents who had experienced bullying victimisation and those who had never been bullied. 71% of the adolescents in the welfare home were bullied which evidences an extraordinarily high bullying prevalence. 62% of the incidents were committed by people whom victims knew, further suggesting proximity is a critical concern. Victims reported the prevalence for different types of bullying: emotional and physical either on its own or simultaneously. While physical abuse was found at 29% prevalence, participants' separate disclosure as part of police enquiry reported that it was the most memorable with vivid recollection of experience and lingering trauma which informs intervention for bullies and victims. 60% of victims kept silent; their responses disclosed disbelief in any meaningful action by caretakers. The findings herein contribute to the body of knowledge on bullying in welfare home settings that occur in Malaysia.

Keywords: Aggressive traits; at risk female adolescents; bullying victimisation; welfare home

1. Introduction

Violence is a major global public health problem that appears to be increasing, consequentially causing serious individual and social damages (Hillis et al., 2016; Krug et al., 2002; Rumble et al., 2018); especially to young people. A circular (no 8/2010), accompanied by a guide on the prevention and management of bullying among children in schools was disseminated in all Malaysia schools (Office of Director-General of Education Malaysia, 2010). Despite this, Azizi et al. (2011) and Marret and Choo (2018), stressed that bullying in schools should be addressed more seriously and diligently by the Ministry of Education and relevant agencies.

Social problems have been linked to mostly male delinquents and at-risk male adolescents (Mohammadzadeh et al., 2020; Naimie et al., 2018). Statistics obtained from the Malaysian Ministry of

Education indicated about 14,000 bully incidents occurred between the years 2012 and 2015, with most cases involving physical bullying (National Human Rights Society Malaysia, 2018). In addition, there was an increase of 0.11% of bully cases in secondary schools in 2016 compared to 0.06% in 2015 (National Human Rights Society Malaysia, 2018). A national school-based survey in 2019 reported a bullying prevalence of 16.2% (Tan et al., 2019) from among adolescent students.

Bullying however does not only happen in schools (Chrysanthou & Vasilakis, 2020). As for the environment in which violence against children and adolescents takes place, children in welfare home appears as a space that has not been explored yet, especially in terms of the aggressive bullying behaviour amongst inhabitants. In addition, limited research has been done regarding the criminogenic

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background of at-risk female adolescents in the Malaysian setting. Vulnerability and at-risk issues, as well as difficulty in gaining access and obtaining were difficult barriers. However, police-based counselling and intervention programmes has facilitated access and subsequent consent.

1.1 Forms of bullying amongst children and adolescents

Among the pioneers in research on bullying was Olweus (1973). According to Olweus (1993: 48), acts of bullying are “aggressive, intentional acts carried out by a group or an individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself”. Research on bullying as a form of violence has becoming more prolific since the 1990s as researchers discover different types of bullying behaviour and factors that surround bullying of violence. Examples include the works by Rigby and Slee (1999), Roland & Idsøe (2001), Fekkes et al. (2005), Khalim (2014), and (Hillis et al., 2016).

Olweus (1994) had first clarified bullying as a special type of aggression, in which an individual physically attacks or threatens another individual, who is perceived as weak and powerless; to make the person feel frightened or upset for a considerable length of time, both because of the emotional trauma following such an attack and fear of renewed attacks. In relation to this, (Roland & Idsøe, 2001) described how bullying others and being bullied were related to aggressiveness. Further, bullying involved two different dimensions of aggressiveness: (1) reactive aggressiveness which is a tendency to express negative behaviour when angry, and (2) proactive aggressiveness which is the tendency to attack someone to achieve some material or social rewards (Roland & Idsøe, 2001).

More recently, Khalim (2014) categorized bullying into two types: direct and indirect. Direct bullying involves physical contact such as hitting, punching, kicking, threatening, slapping, pulling, pushing, or pinching to cause injuries to the victim while indirect bullying involved with insults and teasing a person psychologically or mentally. (Mrug et al., 2016) found that adolescents would be more aggressive if their peers are also aggressive, involve in antisocial activities and have multiple exposures to violence. It was also found that if adolescents want to raise their status, they should behave in an aggressive manner (Mrug, et al., 2016).

1.2 Prevalence of bullying amongst children and adolescents

According to Menesini and Salmivalli (2017), there is a wide variation in prevalence rates of bullying across studies and countries, as there are differences in definitions and measurement. For example, Fekkes et al. (2005) claimed a prevalence of 8.46% bullying among Dutch elementary children. Juvonen and Graham (2014) reported that 20–25% of American

youth are directly involved in bullying as perpetrators, victims, or both. While in China, the prevalence rates range between range from 2% to 66% among school children (Chan & Wong, 2015). Comparatively, around 84% of Malaysian school children have experienced bullying victimisation (National Human Rights Society Malaysia, 2018).

Past studies explored the negative impacts of aggressive bullying leading to serious negative consequences both to the victims and the aggressors. The victims might experience social rejection or exclusion as peers might refrain from interacting with them to avoid being threatened by the aggressive bullies (Chan & Wong, 2015; Smith & Thompson, 2017). In addition, the victims may develop psychological or personality disorders, experience physical injury and death, show poor academic performance, have bleak future careers, and suicide ideation (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Meyer, 2015; Olweus, 2013). According to Srivastava et al. (2017) personality factors and interaction with parents at home combined, are associated with bullying behaviour. More recently, Antoniadou et al. (2019) found that junior high school students who frequently bullied have high scores in psychopathic traits, low scores in empathy and low scores social skills. A recent consequence of bullying in Malaysian schools that was reported in mainstream media was one fatality from physical bullying in a dormitory (BERNAMA, 2019) and several reported adolescent suicide (Ang, 2020; Hassan, 2019). Tan et al. (2019) found a 46.1% response to adolescent reporting attempt at suicide because of bullying.

Despite the volume of research on aggressive bullying in schools, there is a startling lack of studies focusing on aggressive bullying behaviour amongst female adolescents sharing living and learning arrangements in a welfare home setting. This is mainly due to difficulty in gaining access to this at risk or vulnerable group and obtaining their participation. To fill in the gap of knowledge, this current explorative research sought to determine whether aggressive bullying occurs in female adolescent welfare homes, and if it does occur, 1) does the presence of aggressive traits in female adolescent victims provoke bullying and 2) what are the subjective experiences of bullied victims who live with their abusers?

2. Methodology

This research was conducted to better understand aggressive traits and experiences of bullying victimisation amongst a group of at risk female adolescents in a welfare home located in the state of Perak, Malaysia. This study formed part of a community crime prevention outreach initiated by Division 11 of the Criminal Investigation Department, Royal Malaysia Police, Perak Contingent. This study used a quantitative survey and a focus group discussion to collect data.

2.1 Sample

The sample for the present study comprised of 52 female adolescents placed in a welfare home. Selection of the location and potential respondents were purposive in line with the nature of the research objectives. Criteria for sample selection:

- i) Participants were Malaysian females aged between 13 to 18 years old.
- ii) Area: The purposive sample was selected from one of the functioning welfare homes in the state of Perak, Malaysia
- iii) Respondents who had been diagnosed with mental disabilities or had poor Malay language literacy were excluded from the study.
- iv) The selections of respondents were made by the welfare home authority.
- v) Participants of the study completed the survey forms.

2.2 Instruments used

A self-administered survey and a focus group semi-structured interview were used as the tools for data collection.

- The self-administered survey consisted of two sections. Section A contained demographic items. Section B contained a validated Aggression Questionnaire Malay Short Form (AQM-12SF). The AQM-12SF was translated from the original 12 item Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) short-form (Bryant and Smith, 2001). Permission was granted by the authors of AQM-12SF prior to usage in this study. AQM-12SF consisted of four subdomains: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. Each subdomain consists of three items with a total of 12 items representing aggression. Respondents rated the frequency of all items on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (completely like me) scale. The range of scores for each subdomain is 3 to 15. Higher scores indicate a higher level of aggression. The total internal consistency of this measure was 0.89 (Bryant and Smith, 2001).
- Focus-Group Interview Guide for bullying victims. In order to better understand the experiences of bullying victims who lived with their abusers, a Malay-language focus-group interview guide was developed. The focus-group qualitative discussion contributes to the quantitative finding by addressing experiences that cannot be readily measured in surveys. It provides validation of the seriousness of bullying behaviour and victimisation and exemplifies those experiences. The focus group was adapted because it was considered appropriate for activity planning to inform police investigation, useful in gathering opinions and, discreet observations could be made about responses. Data was elicited through participative

engagement that investigated different nuances of what participants experienced and understood about bullying. The data was also collected for cross reference purposes to understand perception, attitudes and consequences of bullying and how if at all did that align with findings by precedent research on female adolescent bullying and victimisation. In addition, the focus group session provided peer support for participants in sharing their traumatic experiences. The main themes were:

- i) Actions and feelings after being bullied
- ii) Post-incident thoughts
- iii) Unforgettable experience as a victim of bully

2.3 Procedure and data collection

The forms and the consent process were developed based on recommendations and sample forms from Lancaster University, Stanford University and adapted from Bailey's (1996, p. 11) recommended items. As advocated by Flewitt et al. (2009) the anonymity of participants was protected using coded transcribed data. The Focus-Group Interview Guide for bullying victims was given to two experts for their opinions. Their suggestions were incorporated. Pretesting of this Guide was done on a sample of four adolescent students (two males and two females) with the school's permission. Minor modifications were made before the actual data collection was carried out in the selected welfare home.

The format and content of the two instruments were forwarded and later approved by the head of Division 11, Criminal Investigation Department, Royal Malaysia Police, Perak Contingent. Permission to conduct the research and consent for adolescents' participation were obtained from the welfare home authority as the gate keeper and the participating adolescents.

Participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet and a Participant Assent/Consent Form. Proper instructions were given verbally to the respondents prior to data collection. Participants were assured with confidentiality and anonymity. They were told that they should not be embarrassed if they are unable to answer any items or questions and that they will not face penalties for their omissions. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

Data was collected through a visit to the welfare home, after a community engagement session on violence prevention was held. Collection of survey data was done first and participants took about 10 minutes to complete. After collecting the completed survey forms, the female adolescents were invited to take part in small focus group discussions. 25 female adolescents accepted the invitation, and they were divided into five groups.

Each of the five focus-groups took about 60 to 75 minutes to complete to explore three themes, as mentioned previously. Focus-groups discussions were carried within the welfare home compound by the research team and assistant. The focus-group discussions were audio-recorded. Participants were asked to speak one at a time so that their responses and opinions were clearly recorded without overlaps. No video recording was made as respondents did not provide consent for that.

For the qualitative data collection, information behaviour techniques were used to elicit sensitive information that provided an indication of what participants experienced (Saat et al., 2018). The scope of data was not constrained by preconceived assumptions or dimensions about bullying prevalence, behaviours, experiences and consequences. Data collection continued until the topic was exhausted or when participants did not contribute more information.

Data for both survey and focus-group were collected on the same day. After the initial ice breaking the focus-group discussions went smoothly.

2.4 Data analysis

The quantitative information was compiled into a set of systematic and computerized data. Statistical analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS

version 20.0 for univariate and bivariate analyses. Each item and answers were carefully coded and then entered. Data was first analysed by frequency and percentages. A bivariate analysis of correlation was employed to ascertain the association between aggression and bullying victimisation experiences. Information obtained in the focus-group discussions were transferred in the form of verbatim, coded, and themes interpreted.

Information obtained in the focus-group discussions were transferred in the form of verbatim, coded, and themes interpreted as guided by explication methods (Smith et al., 2013) and phenomenology approaches (Saat et al., 2018; Tufford and Newman, 2010). Themes were guided by Khalim's (2014) categorization.

The qualitative data explication used an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2013). Explication was guided by "memoing" (Glaser and Holton, 2004) about participants' responses, followed by contextual interpretation and meaning using phenomenology approaches and bracketing (Tufford and Newman, 2010). The most salient constructs from participants' responses were identified and shaped into themes that were not redundant but still managed to be meaningful. The themes helped triangulate for validation.

Table 1. Sociodemographic profile of the respondents

Demography	n	%
Age		
13 years old	1	1.9
14 years old	2	3.8
15 years old	6	11.5
16 years old	11	21.2
17 years old	14	26.9
18 years old	18	34.6
Ethnicity		
Malay	45	86.5
Chinese	1	1.9
Indian	2	3.8
Aboriginal	4	7.7
Have been bullied		
Never	15	28.8
Rarely	35	67.3
Often	2	3.8
Know that bullying is wrong		
Yes	47	90.4
No	5	9.6
The bully		
Known	32	61.5
Unknown	6	11.5
Not applicable	14	26.9
Type of bullying experienced		
Physical bullying	15	28.8
Emotional bullying	23	44.2
No bullying	14	26.9
Action post-incident		
Kept quiet and did nothing	31	59.6
Discuss in a good way	3	5.8
Make a report	12	23.1
Retaliate	6	11.5

n=52

3. Results

3.1 Quantitative results

Seven sociodemographic questions were asked: age, ethnicity, experience of bullying victimisation, the bully, type of bully victimisation, knowledge that bullying is wrong, and actions post-incident. Demographic information regarding reasons for their placement in the welfare home were not asked as it was deemed too intrusive. Most of the female adolescents were aged 18 years old (34.6%). There were very few females aged 15 and below in this present study (17.3%).

Most of the female adolescents were of Malay ethnicity (45%). As female adolescents of other ethnic groups were too few, comparison based on ethnicity was not carried out. To do so, would not yield meaningful information, as well as rise potentially bias comparative results.

Nearly 29% of the females had never been a victim of bullying. Around 67% of the female adolescents admitted being rarely bullied, while

nearly 4% claimed to have been often bullied. With regards to knowing the bully, most respondents knew the individuals who bullied them (61.5%). These bullies were their peers or other people in the welfare home. On the matter of types of bullying, a majority of the respondents experienced emotional bullying (44.2%).

Most of participants also knew that bullying was wrong (90.4%). Referring to Table 1, nearly 60% of victims kept quiet and did nothing after the bullying incident. This was followed by around 23% of respondents claimed making a report about the bullying experience to a relevant authority figure. Some of the respondents later retaliated against their bully (11.5%).

Based on the results presented in Table 2, respondents in this present study appeared to have a higher mean score of hostility (mean 10.23) compared to other aggression subdomains. This was followed by Anger (mean 8.48). As a group, participants scored lowest on physical aggression (mean 6.92).

Table 2. Respondents' aggression profile

	Current study (n =52)	Dervishi & Ibrahim (2018) (n = 427)	Özdemir, Vazsonyi, & Çok (2016) (n=307)	Bujang (2019) (n = 156)
Aggression subdomain				
Physical aggression	6.92	2.48	5.73	1.67
Verbal aggression	7.42	2.57	6.32	3.24
Anger	8.48	3.03	7.96	4.19
Hostility	10.23	2.77	8.78	4.07

The results of the present study were compared to the results found in three previous studies. Dervishi and Ibrahim (2018) study had Albanian female youth aged between 16 and 20 as respondents. The study conducted by Özdemir et al. (2016) was participated by Turkish female adolescents aged between 14 and 18 years old. Bujang's (2019) study was participated by 156 Malaysian women aged 18 to 55. These three studies used local language versions of the original BPAQ

short-form (Bryant and Smith, 2001). Referring to table 2, it appeared that the female adolescent respondents in the current study had higher mean scores in all aggression subdomains, particularly hostility.

The next analysis involved comparing differences in the aggression subdomains between adolescents who had experienced bullying victimisation and those who had never been bullied. Results are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Comparison of aggression between adolescents who had experienced bullying victimization and those who had never been bullied

	Physical aggression	Verbal aggression	Anger	Hostility	Total aggression
Mann-Whitney U	176.00	174.00	183.50	157.00	123.50
Wilcoxon W	296.00	294.00	303.50	277.00	243.50
Z	-2.07	-2.12	-1.91	-2.45	-3.12
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.039*	.034*	.056	.014*	.002*

In terms of overall aggression, there are significant differences between the two groups, $p < .05$. Results shown in table 3 indicated significant differences in three subdomains: physical aggression, verbal aggression, and hostility. A means comparison between the two groups indicated that participants who had experienced bullying victimisation had significantly higher mean scores in subdomains subdomains physical aggression, verbal aggression, and hostility.

3.2 Thematic findings

In the second part of this current research, participants were asked a series of questions in five focus groups. As mentioned previously, 25 female adolescents participated in the focus-group discussion. Three themes were explored: i) Actions and feelings after being bullied, ii) Post-incident thoughts, and iii) Unforgettable experience as a victim of bully. It is mentioned here that some of the respondents did not give verbal responses in the interview as they did not

admit to having been bullied in the welfare home or had nothing to say.

Responses were transferred verbatim and clustered corresponding to similarity of answer stems. Table 4 contains a summary of responses regarding actions and feelings after being bullied. Not everyone in the focus group verbally participated. Selected extracted responses are also presented in Table 4.

Based on the information in Table 4, the most unforgettable experience of bullying were related to physical abuse. Respondent 1 said: "I will never forget what people did to bully me, beat... punch..." Some respondents were hit with objects repeatedly while others were slapped, punched, or kicked, for example Respondent 3 said: "Hit me with a chair, stuff, brooms... " and Respondent 4 "...was punched, slapped and kicked...". For Respondent 13, her experience was especially brutal: "I was beaten and cursed, I was beaten so much that I could do nothing and wanted to die". Not many respondents

said that emotional bullying was the most unforgettable experience they had.

Extracted from the focus-group discussion, Khalim's (2014) categorization may be applicable. Some female adolescents admitted to having had direct bullying victimisation in the welfare home while others experienced indirect bullying. Of particular concern was the intent to retaliate as self-reported by seven victims which suggests their possibility to become perpetrators. For example, Respondent 9 said: "Retaliate to the bully what was done to me... and I would like to kill anyone who is brave enough to disturb me". This is similar to what Mrug et al. (2016) and Runions et al. (2018) found, in which there appears to be a link between aggression, rage, and revenge in predicting involvement in bullying. Identifying the risk factors would better inform early identification, prevention and intervention (Álvarez-García et al., 2015; Choi & Park, 2018).

Table 4. Summary of respondents' experiences and involvement in bullying

Question	Responses	Excerpts from selected respondents (translated from the Malay language)
What are your actions and feelings after being bullied?	8 said that they would report to the responsible authorities 3 said feeling afraid and in pain 2 said feeling afraid 2 felt stressed 5 said they cried in silence 2 said that they were angry 2 were afraid of being bullied again	I kept quite because of fear (Respondent 7, Respondent 21) Just be quite (Respondent 2, Respondent 4) Sit quietly while staring at the distance, and cry when thinking back (to the experience) (Respondent 9) Ignore it, and act as if I was not bullied (Respondent 10) Retaliate subtly (Respondent 3) I want to tell (to someone) but I am afraid she will do worse... if possible, I want her to change homes, or I get changed from here. (Respondent 12)
If given an opportunity, what would you like to do to the person who bullied you?	5 said will seek justice 2 said they will discuss with the person 7 would retaliate 3 will ask the welfare home staff to punish the bully 3 said the bully should be appropriately punished	Report to the police if the crime was serious (Respondent 1, Respondent 21) I will not keep quiet when I am bullied and I will retaliate... no need to give opportunity to that bully (Respondent 4) I will avenge myself against the person who bullied me (Respondent 7) Retaliate to the bully what was done to me... and I would like to kill anyone who is brave enough to disturb me (Respondent 9) Allow her to bully again and give opportunity to her to change (Respondent 10) I want her to feel what I felt (Respondent 12)
What is your unforgettable experience as a victim of bully?	13 said incidents of physical bullying 4 said emotional bullying 1 did not want to tell	I will never forget what people did to bully me, beat.. punch... (Respondent 1) Hit me with a chair, stuff, brooms... (Respondent 3) I was punched, slapped and kicked (respondent 4) I was told to drink urine, told to do (a lot of) heavy work (respondent 5) Embarrassed in public by a school friend during standard 6 (Respondent 8) Bullies often play with my head, and cursed me and associate (those curses) with my family (Respondent 9) I was beaten and cursed, I was beaten so much that I could do nothing and wanted to die (Respondent 13)

4. Discussion

There were several key findings from this study which reflects the available literature and adds to what is known about bullying in Malaysia. Bullying consequences can be severe. Victims experienced myriad forms of trauma, most of which were life-long flashbacks and detrimental to their adulthood and

subsequent relationship with others. For example, a review by Meyer (2015) reported that North-American school-aged children consider bullying as a serious problem.

In most news incidences, bullying resulted in serious life changing and/or life-threatening injuries. The cycle of bullying continues to be reinforced and

at times escalates to death. When bullying was published in the Malaysian media (Vanar, 2017; Chua, 2018; BERNAMA, 2019; Mohamed, 2019), news were extracted from police reports, court cases, or from viral videos where academic based inquiry was not conducted.

Given that country-specific, age-specific and gender specific risk factors are crucial towards the development of appropriate prevention and interventions for use in schools, familial mediation, medical and police investigation and interventions, the findings from this current study has provided some much needed insight from the perspectives and experiences of female welfare home inhabitants, and based on a Malaysian demography. Malaysian adolescent females who were victims of bullying and had close proximity from staying with their bullies had higher bullying prevalence, and for longer durations. Their nuanced experiences had not been identified in earlier research.

This study found that 71% female adolescents inhabiting welfare homes experienced various forms of bullying. Previous statistical data on the Malaysian prevalence of bullying in schools (Tan et al., 2019) indicate the comparatively higher prevalence of bullying in this study's welfare home setting. This finding was also significantly higher than recorded by most western research. In addition to that, findings herein evidenced that female adolescents inhabiting welfare homes had higher aggressive traits, particularly hostility when compared to Albanian (Dervishi and Ibrahim, 2018), Turkish (Özdemir et al., 2016) and Malaysian (Bujang, 2019) studies for a similar age or gender cohort. It appears that victims either 1) provoke bullying or 2) have high aggressive traits which predisposes participants to be vulnerable or at risk of bullying. This study evidence higher aggressive traits correlates to bullying behavior.

However, nearly 60% of victims did not report incidences of bullying to the relevant authorities in the welfare home or elsewhere (Table 1 is referred). The range of reasons for non-reporting included fear of reprisals, fear, anxiety, and failures in authoritative punishment and deterrent. It is likely that bullying is perceived as 1) part of the norm within the welfare home, 2) a private matter which should be handled by the parties involved without outside intervention, or 3) part of the aggressive traits routinely expressed by the research participants. Out of the 25 female adolescents interviewed, only eight said that they would report (Table 4 is referred). According to Respondent 12: 'I want to tell (to someone) but I am afraid she will do worse...'

The results herein evidenced that bullying was prevalent and pervasive, even with knowledge about bullying's wrongful behavior. This information about female adolescents' bullying experience may help to better inform participative intervention strategies and the identification of symptoms of both bully and victim in welfare homes. This is very much

needed to install a sense of responsibility in the management and prevention of violence in institutions by inhabits of the institutions themselves.

For example, a successful intervention programme was developed from amongst school adolescents in Kota Kinabalu and supported by the school authorities (The Star Online, 2018). The school was previously renown as "Gangster School" with weekly cases of physical, emotional and cyber bullying perpetuated by both male and female students. Gang fights were commonly reported on Fridays with police and parents called in to intervene. It took three years of their student-led kindness projects for the school and students to eventually be the first winner of "Malaysia's Kindest School" award (The Star Online, 2018).

It is evident that the bullying phenomenon is complex, time consuming and difficult to solve requiring committed effort from many parties, therefore, continued work is required along with the collaboration of government agencies, such as Social Welfare Department, Royal Malaysia Police, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education. Interventions to mitigate bullying from among adolescents necessitate their participation and record of their experiences. Knowledge obtained from bullies and their victims are central to better intervention outcomes.

5. Conclusion

The lack of public policies that prioritize preventive actions against bullying in schools and welfare homes, makes evident that children and adolescents are exposed to the risk of regular abuse from peers. The problem and complexity of bullying may be worse than previously thought as not much information is readily available beyond bullying in registered schools and perpetrated by school-aged boys. This current study has shown that bullying also occurs in welfare homes and are perpetrated by female peers. Verbal bullying prevalence was higher however physical bullying was more traumatic and memorable.

Overcoming bullying among adolescents is not a simple challenge. In general, it depends on a firm and competent interdisciplinary intervention, especially by professionals from social psychology, education and health disciplines; in dealing with aggressive behaviour and bullying issues. Knowledge resulting from this current study can be used as a reference that will help guide the formulation of public policies and to outline multidisciplinary intervention techniques that would seek to more effectively reduce the problem within the children welfare institution.

Evidence-based training should be conducted to guide administrators, teachers, and other staff knowledge and skills to recognize bullying, to intervene effectively, and reinforce the importance of bullying prevention and reaction efforts in in and out door settings (e.g., canteen, playground, classroom,

and hostel). Monitoring mechanisms should concentrate on friendship patterns and probe why certain children do not have or seem not to have at least one friend, as this might be a symptom of suffering from being bullied. The welfare home institution should be encouraged to establish some kind of peer support system, possibly with the help of educationists, parents (of children placed in welfare homes as part of a protection order or temporary custody) or psychologists and other professionals.

At the very least, the Social Welfare enforcement, the social welfare officer, and the welfare home management must acknowledge the existence and impact of bullying within the welfare home institution, and must develop practices to reduce it promptly. The welfare home staff should be able to

advise, investigate, diagnose, and adopt appropriate practices in violent situations that involve children and adolescents, either as bullies, targets or witnesses.

To prevent the emergence and spread of bullying behaviour, identification of the factors underlying and surrounding aggressive and bullying behaviours are very important. No doubt internal factors such as individual personality and mental health will affect issues of bullying. However, external factors such as family background, school environment, and peer relationships; should also be considered. As found in this current study, the victims live in proximity to their bullies within the same welfare institution; which sustains more pervasive and invasive bullying behaviour.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to acknowledge Ms Kavitha a/p Shundagasan for her helpful hospitality and assistance in this study. Acknowledgement is also extended to ACP Ong Chin Lan, Assistant Chief Director of Division 11, (Sexual, women and child investigation division), Criminal Investigation Department, Royal Malaysia Police (RMP); and SAC Dato' Gan Tian Kee, State CID Chief, Royal Malaysia Police Perak Contingent for their support and motivation in making this study a success.

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Citation

- Ding, I. L., Mat Saat, G. A., & Mat Saat, S. A. (2021). Bullying Victimization and Aggressive Traits among At Risk Female Adolescents: A Case Study in a Malaysian Welfare Home. *Evaluation Studies in Social Sciences*, 2(1), 36-45. <https://doi.org/10.37134/esss.vol2.1.6.2021>