

## **Incidence of bullying in schools: A study of a cross-section of primary and secondary school students in Brunei Darussalam**

Palanisamy K. Veloo  
*Wawasan Open University, Malaysia,*

This paper consolidates the findings of two studies conducted in Brunei Darussalam on the incidences of bullying among Primary and Secondary school pupils. Students from both Primary and Secondary schools responded to a questionnaire on the incidence of bullying in their school. Results from the studies show that the frequency of the incident of bullying peaked at around secondary one and showed a decline in the upper forms. While the ranking of the types of bullying experienced by students at the different levels of schooling were similar, differences were noted in the ranking of the types of bullying experienced by boys and girls particularly in the primary years. Psychological bullying was more common among girls whereas bullying of a physical nature was more common among boys. The classroom was the place where students' experienced most bullying and a close friend and parent were the individuals to whom most students would report the incidence of bullying. Some implications for classroom practice and further research are discussed.

**Key words:** Bullying; experiences of bullying; primary school; secondary school; Brunei Darussalam

### **Introduction**

Bullying in schools has become a serious problem all over the world and is increasing at an alarming rate with serious consequences on all sectors of society. The incidences of bullying in schools are well documented in many western countries and Japan, providing an extensive body of information about the problem. Pioneering work on bullying was conducted by Dan Olweus, a researcher in Norway in the 1970s, exposing the widespread nature and harm of bullying (Olweus, 1991).

The negative consequences of bullying within the school environment affect students' sense of security and their right to study in a safe environment. Bullying which was once thought of as a relatively harmless behaviour, is now known to have sustained harmful effects on the victims. These effects include depression, isolation, low self-esteem, fear, insecurity, lack of hope, unwillingness to go to school, feeling ill in the mornings, truanting, doing poorly in school work, withdrawn and lack of confidence (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton & Scheidt, 2001; Olweus, 1993). The bullies on the other hand while enjoying the feeling of power, generally feel insecure, do not fit in with other students and feel no sense of accomplishment. International research suggests that bullying is common in schools and

occurs at all grade levels, particularly during the primary years of schooling (Rigby, 2002; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993).

### **A Definition of Bullying**

Bullying is a term that is used to describe a wide range of unacceptable behaviours in school. Bullying has two key components: repeated harmful acts and an imbalance of power. It involves repeated physical, verbal or psychological attacks or intimidation directed against one or more students who cannot properly defend themselves because of relative size or strength, less psychologically resilient or because the victims are outnumbered (Olweus, 1993; Berne, 1999; Sampson, 2002, Rigby, 2002). Physical bullying includes such acts as hitting, kicking, tripping, punching, stealing or damaging things belonging to another. Verbal bullying includes name calling, insulting, teasing, threatening, sexual harassment, and racist remarks. Psychological bullying may be more indirect in nature. It includes spreading rumours, giving dirty looks, stalking, socially isolating someone by intentionally excluding that person from friendship, not including the person in play or preventing others from befriending the person.

The widespread use of technology such as computers, the internet and cell phones, has given rise to newer types of bullying called cyber bullying. Text bullying is any form of message or call (email, text, photo, etc) that the receiver finds upsetting or distressing. This includes prank calls and repetitive empty voicemail messages. Overflowing people's phones or mail boxes with irritating texts is also a form of bullying, and it is possibly one of the most annoying. Text bullying is more common in countries where cell phones are readily available to a large proportion of 10 – 19 year olds (BBC, 2004; Barnados, 2004).

Bullying can be 'intentional, direct and indirect, lasting attacks of a physical, psychological and/or verbal in nature, directed against a weaker victim by one or more individuals' who are characteristically seen as physically powerful or dominant (Rigby, 2002; Burns, 2002). While boys have been found to typically engage in direct bullying, girls who bully have been found to engage in more subtle and indirect forms of bullying such as spreading rumours and enforcing social isolation (Ahmad and Smith, 1994; Smith and Sharp, 1994). Whether the bullying is direct or indirect, the essence of bullying is that physical or psychological intimidation is directed against a victim repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse (Batsche and Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993).

### **Review of Literature**

International studies have found that around 10 - 20% of any student population is a victim of bullying or are being bullied regularly (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2002; Nansel et al., 2001). Banks (1997) found that direct bullying increases through the primary school years, peaks in upper primary and lower secondary school years, and declines as students progress through their secondary years of schooling. However, while direct physical assault decreased with age, verbal abuse remained constant. Studies have also shown that boys engage in bullying behaviour and are victims of bullies more frequently than girls (Batsche and Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993).

The most common form of bullying is name-calling, while violence, threats, social exclusion and thefts are also frequent. The playground is the place where most bullying occur (Eslea and Smith, 1994; Mellor, 1990). The effects of bullying can be very

damaging. Victims often cannot concentrate on schoolwork (Mellor, 1991), refuse to go to school (Reid, 1989) and may suffer from depression (Olweus, 1993).

Studies in Scandinavian countries show that a strong correlation exists between bullying during school years and experiencing legal or criminal problems as adults. Research from some countries has shown that, without intervention, bullies are more likely to engage in crime than their peers (Farrington, 1993; Olweus, 1993; Rigby and Slee, 1999) and bullying victims suffer psychological harm long after bullying has stopped. In one study, 60% of those characterised as bullies in grades 6-9 had at least one criminal conviction by the age of 24 (Olweus, 1993). Chronic bullies seem to maintain sustained levels of aggression into adulthood, negatively influencing their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships (Oliver, Hoover and Hazler, 1994).

Victims often fear school and consider the school environment to be an unsafe and unhappy place. At least 7% of 8th Grade students have been reported to have stayed home at least once a month because of bullies (Banks, 1997). The act of being bullied tends to increase some students' isolation because their peers do not want to lose status by associating with them or because they do not want to increase the risks of being bullied themselves (Banks, 1997). Being bullied often leads to depression and low self-esteem that can carry into adulthood (Olweus, 1993; Batsche and Knoff, 1994). Extensive studies in other countries during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s generally have found that between 8-38% of students are bullied with some regularity (Limber, Flerx, Nation and Melton, 1998).

While much of the research available on bullying in schools is limited to the developed countries such as Britain, United States, Canada, Australia and Japan, little has been written on the subject in Asian countries (Burns, 2002). In a synthesis of national studies on bullying and violence in schools, Ohsako (1998) concludes that the three most commonly classified types of bullying, namely, (a) physical (kicking and hitting), (b) verbal (name calling, insulting), and (c) psychological (isolation, ignoring), exist in all the countries named in the study - Ethiopia, Israel, Jordan, Latin America, Malaysia and Slovakia. In Singapore, a survey of 2,767 Secondary School students in 2003 showed that about half the students had been bullied at various times, mostly in the form of name-calling and teasing (Sunday Times, 30 March 2003). The report concluded that verbal bullying is more common than the physical form of bullying such as being kicked or having money stolen.

On the Malaysian scene according to Rahimah and Noraini (1998) bullying and violence in Malaysian schools is on the increase. Their cautious approach to the topic is based on the premise that in Malaysia school bullying is considered to be a school disciplinary matter which can be dealt with by heads of schools. In the absence of a well documented body of research on bullying, the focus of much attention is on 'gangsterism' and 'indiscipline' in schools. Local newspapers on the other hand have address the issue of bullying more boldly and directly, with headlines such as 'Field day for school bullies' (The Malay Mail, 25 May 1996), and 'Cane school bullies' (New Straits Times, 11 June 1996). Two cases of students who died from injuries sustained from separate school bullying incidents were highlighted in the New Straits Times (1 February 2002). In this context, it is of particular interest to note that bullying is officially classified as a 'criminal' act in Malaysia (Ministry of Education, 1993), yet all such cases are left to the discretionary power of heads of schools to deal with. Recently it was reported in the Star newspaper that five students in a school bullying case were remanded for further police investigation (TheStar, January 13, 2011).

In Singapore, a survey of 2,767 Secondary School students in 2003 showed that about half the students had been bullied at various times, mostly in the form of name-calling and teasing (Sunday Times, 30 March 2003). The report concluded that verbal bullying is more common than the physical form of bullying such as being kicked or having money stolen.

In Brunei Darussalam the need for documented research on bullying in Bruneian schools became all the more important in the light of His Majesty's expression of concern about the incidence of gangsterism and other anti-social activities in schools (Borneo Bulletin, 24 September 2003). Speaking to local educators and teachers on the occasion of the 13th Teacher's Day celebration, His Majesty declared: "These activities indicate that something is wrong which is either due to weakness in the management, influence from surrounding environment, teachers' weaknesses or the education system itself that needs to be overhauled." (Borneo Bulletin, 24 September 2003). Numerous instances of bullying in schools have been highlighted in the local press the Borneo Bulletin. These include: "Where do bullies come from?" ( Borneo Bulletin, 25th October, 2003); "Probe launched after boy allegedly hit by student," (Borneo Bulletin, 14th April, 2004); "Rumpus in school car park," (Borneo Bulletin, 24 April, 2004); "Gangsterism in schools concerns parents," (Borneo Bulletin, 26th May, 2004); "Ministry serious on bullies - Deputy minister says parents role crucial," (Borneo Bulletin, 4th June, 2004). A recent news report in the Borneo Bulletin (6th August, 2010) reported that the principal of Chung Hwa Middle School Bandar Seri Begawan has denounced the behaviour of two of its students shown in a video bullying a junior in a toilet. In another incident of bullying, the Brunei Times (April 7, 2011) reported that a boy was rushed to RIPAS hospital due to bullying in school. These reports in the local press, and news reports from neighbouring countries highlighting the menace of bullying in schools, have prompted parents and policy makers in Brunei Darussalam to be concerned about the nature and seriousness of bullying in schools. A news report in the Borneo Bulletin entitled "Call to curb school bullying," (15th April 2004), highlighting parents' concern about bullying in schools, is a case in point.

This paper consolidates the findings of two previous studies in Brunei Darussalam (Samuel and Veloo, 2005; Veloo, Crocker & Suppaiah, 2006) in order to provide a broader picture of the incidence of bullying in Bruneian primary and secondary schools.

## **Bullying in Primary Schools**

### ***Sample***

The subjects for the primary school study were drawn from intact classes of primary 5 and 6 pupils from a simple cross-section of primary schools from both urban and semi-urban areas of the country. A total of 215 pupils completed a questionnaire entitled "Bullying in Schools".

### ***Instrumentation and administration of the test***

The term bullying was explained when they were briefed prior to completing the questionnaire. The test administrator read each of the 30 items to the students both in Malay and in English. Difficult words in the test item were explained to students by the test administrator. Students were given ample time to respond to the item read and they

wrote their responses directly on test pages. Some sections of the questionnaire required a 'yes' or 'no' response while others required students to indicate whether the bullying experienced was: *never*, *sometimes*, or *frequently*. The procedure was repeated until all questions had been completed. The Cronbach Alpha for the instrument used in the study was found to be 0.89, indicating that it has a reasonably high degree of internal consistency.

### ***Common types of bullying in primary schools in Brunei***

In the first section of the questionnaire pupils were asked to indicate the types of bullying they had witnessed in their school. Pupils were asked to tick either 'yes' or 'no' against the item when it was read to them by the test administrator.

Table 1. Frequencies and percentages of pupils by level who had witnessed bullying.

Types of Bullying	Primary 5		Primary 6		Combined result	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Hurtful names	95(75.4)	31(24.6)	70(78.7)	19(21.3)	165(76.7)	50(23.3)
Things hidden	87(69.0)	39(31.0)	56(62.9)	33(37.1)	143(66.5)	72(33.5)
Teased Unpleasantly	79(62.7)	47(37.3)	55(61.8)	34(38.2)	134(62.3)	81(37.7)
Things thrown at students	80(63.5)	46(36.5)	43(48.3)	46(51.7)	123(57.2)	92(42.8)
Hit or kicked	73(57.9)	53(42.1)	47(52.8)	42(47.2)	120(55.8)	95(44.2)
Things stolen	72(57.1)	54(42.9)	45(50.6)	44(49.4)	117(54.4)	98(45.6)
Students' things damaged	71(56.3)	55(43.7)	43(48.3)	46(51.7)	114(53.0)	101(47.0)
Punched	72(57.1)	54(42.9)	38(42.7)	51(57.3)	110(51.2)	105(48.8)
Unpleasant things written	65(51.6)	61(48.4)	44(49.4)	45(50.6)	109(50.7)	106(49.3)
Threatened with harm	60(48.0)	65(52.0)	34(38.2)	55(61.8)	94(43.9)	120(56.1)
Tripped	53(42.4)	72(57.6)	21(24.1)	66(75.9)	74(34.9)	138(65.1)
Asked for money	37(29.4)	89(70.6)	10(11.2)	79(88.8)	47(21.9)	168(78.1)

The results in Table 1 do not indicate the seriousness of the problem of bullying. It just indicates how common a particular type of bullying is in the school. If an incidence of bullying is common, it would have caught the attention of more students than if it was not common. Therefore, a higher percentage reported in Table 1 indicates that the type of bullying described is common.

The most common type of bullying witnessed by pupils was 'name calling'. About 76% of pupils reported that they have witnessed pupils being called by hurtful names. About 66% reported that they have witnessed pupils' things being hidden, about 62% have witnessed pupils being teased, about 57% percent have witnessed things being thrown at pupils, about 55% have witnessed pupils being kicked, and about 54% reported that things were stolen. The least common type of bullying witnessed by pupils was extortion, that is, when pupils were being asked for money.

Rank order correlation for items displayed in Table 1 between Primary 5 and 6 pupils was 0.87 ( $p < 0.01$ ) which is highly significant and suggests that there are very few differences in the ranking of items by class.

### ***Personal experience of bullying***

In order to get a clearer indication of the seriousness of bullying pupils were asked to indicate how often they had personally been bullied. Tables 2 and 3 provide a picture of

the nature and type of bullying experienced by pupils frequently in the primary schools investigated.

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of pupils by class who had been bullied frequently

Types of Bullying	Primary 5 (n=126)	Primary 6 (n=89)	Combined result (n=215)
Hurtful names	57(45.3)	27(30.7)	84(39.3)
Teased	23(18.2)	13(14.8)	36(16.8)
Excluded from friendship	25(19.8)	10(11.2)	35(16.3)
Punched	24(19.0)	8(9.0)	32(15.5)
Things stolen	18(14.4)	14(15.7)	32(15.0)
Things hidden	21(16.7)	9(10.0)	30(14.0)
Hit or kicked	18(14.3)	11(12.4)	29(13.5)
Things thrown at students	17(13.5)	6(6.8)	23(9.8)
Asked for money	15(12.0)	6(6.8)	21(9.8)
Shirt or dress dirtied	15(11.9)	6(6.7)	21(9.7)
Students' things damaged	15(12.0)	5(5.7)	20(9.3)
You were picked on	12(9.6)	8(9.0)	20(9.3)
Threatened with harm	11(8.8)	8(8.9)	19(8.8)

Table 2 shows that the most common type of bullying experienced by pupils was being called by '*hurtful names*' (39.3%). This was followed by being '*teased*' (16.8%), '*excluded from friendship*' (16.3%), '*punched*' (15.5%), their '*things stolen*' (15.0%), and their '*things hidden*' (14.0%). About 9.8% of the pupils surveyed have been '*asked for money*' (extorted), 9.3% of the pupils had experienced being '*picked on*' by their bullies and 8.8% have been '*threatened with (physical) harm*'. As the rank order correlation was still fairly high, 0.72, ( $p < 0.01$ ) it may be concluded that most of the items were ranked similarly by primary 5 and primary 6 pupils.

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages of pupils by sex who had been bullied frequently

Types of Bullying	Boys (n=100)	Girls (n=112)
Hurtful names	43(43.0)	40(35.7)
Teased or made fun of	16(16.0)	25(22.8)
Excluded from friendship	11(11.0)	21(18.8)
Punched	18(18.0)	14(12.5)
Things stolen	16(16.0)	16(14.3)
Things hidden	9(9.0)	21(18.8)
Hit or kicked	12(12.0)	17(15.2)
Things thrown at you	12(12.0)	11(9.9)
Asked for money	10(10.0)	11(9.9)
Shirt or dress dirtied	11(11.0)	10(9.0)
Your things damaged	9(9.0)	11(9.9)
You were picked on	12(12.0)	8(7.2)
Threatened with harm	9(9.0)	10(9.0)

Table 3 shows frequencies and percentages of pupils by sex, who had been bullied frequently. The data shows that certain types of bullying were more common among girls than boys. For example, incidence of bullying such as being ‘excluded from friendship’, being ‘teased’ and ‘things (being) hidden’ were more common among girls than boys. Only ‘hurtful names’ was ranked highest by both girls and boys while most of the other items were ranked differently. The rank order correlation of 0.41 was low and not significant. This suggests that the types of bullying frequently experienced by boys and girls were different in primary schools.

## **Bullying in Secondary School**

### ***Sample***

The subjects for the secondary bullying study were drawn from intact classes of Forms 1, 2 and 4 students. A total of 2757 students comprising 921 Form 1, 986 Form 2 and 850 Form 4 students from 18 secondary schools in all the four districts of the country were chosen to participate in the study. Subjects for the study were not randomly selected. They were instead selected from a simple cross-section of classes in a school comprising good, average and below average classes. All students were asked to complete the “Bullying in Schools” questionnaire which was the same questionnaire used in the primary school survey.

### ***Common types of bullying in Secondary schools in Brunei.***

Table 4 shows how commonly a particular type of bullying was witnessed in secondary school. A higher percentage reported in Table 3 indicates that the type of bullying described is common

Table 4. Frequencies and percentages of pupils who had witnessed incidence of bullying by class.

Types of Bullying	Form 1	Form 2	Form 4
	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hurtful names	640(69.0)	708(71.0)	665(78.2)
Teased Unpleasantly	557(60.3)	682(68.8)	698(81.9)
Things hidden	538(57.8)	648(65.3)	614(72.2)
Things stolen	462(49.7)	555(56.1)	509(60.0)
Punched	439(47.3)	511(51.6)	522(61.5)
Things thrown at students	414(44.9)	482(48.7)	428(50.2)
Hit or kicked	405(43.6)	463(46.7)	462(54.5)
Unpleasant things written	386(41.7)	452(45.6)	375(44.0)
Students’ things damaged	364(39.5)	386(39.3)	366(43.1)
Bad stories about students	320(34.7)	414(41.7)	463(54.5)
Tripped	306(33.0)	369(37.3)	320(37.9)
Clothes dirtied	197(21.3)	263(26.5)	222(26.2)
Threatened with harm	193(21.0)	207(20.9)	289(34.2)
Asked for money	178(19.3)	152(15.3)	114(13.4)
Not included in play	146(15.9)	160(16.1)	145(17.0)

In Table 4, students' responses to items by forms were ranked. Using rank order correlation, the Spearman Rho between Form 1 and 2 students was 0.97,  $p < 0.01$ , and between Form 1 and 4 students was 0.95,  $p < 0.01$ . This results are highly significant and suggests that there are very few differences in the ranking of items by Form. In other words, the nature and type of bullying among the three levels of Secondary schooling investigated were very similar.

The most common type of bullying was "*Verbal Bullying*". About 70% of the students reported that they have witnessed students being called by hurtful names. Between 60 to 80% of students reported that they have witnessed students being teased unpleasantly. The next more common types of bullying reported by students can be classified as "*Physical Bullying*". Physical bullying includes hitting, kicking, tripping, punching, stealing or damaging things belonging to another. About 60% of students' reported that they knew of things being hidden, about 49% of students reported things stolen, about 47% reported students being punched and about 40% reported things damaged. The third most common types of bullying reported by students can be classified as "*Psychological Bullying*". This includes spreading rumours, dirty looks, stalking, socially isolating someone by intentionally excluding someone from friendship, not including the person in play or preventing others from befriending the victim. Over 40% of students reported unpleasant things written, about 34% reported bad stories being spread about self and about 21% reported being threatened with harm.

### ***Students' personal experience of bullying***

Table 5 shows frequencies and percentage of students' who had been frequently bullied.

Table 5. Frequencies and percentages of pupils by form who had personally experienced bullying.

Types of Bullying	Form 1 (n=921)	Form 2 (n=986)	Form 4 (n=850)
Hurtful names	236(25.6)	241(24.3)	147(17.3)
Teased Unpleasantly	177(19.2)	168(17.0)	128(15.1)
Things hidden	118(12.8)	143(14.4)	74(8.7)
You were picked on	108(11.7)	112(11.3)	74(8.7)
Things stolen	103(11.1)	99(10.0)	25(2.9)
Things thrown at students	92(10.0)	90(9.1)	59(6.9)
Bad stories about self	80(8.7)	73(7.4)	48(5.6)
Students' things damaged	79(8.6)	72(7.3)	27(3.2)
Hit or kicked	77(8.3)	72(7.3)	21(2.5)
Excluded from friendship	76(8.2)	64(6.5)	31(3.6)
Not included in play	74(8.0)	56(5.7)	33(3.9)
Punched	66(7.2)	72(7.3)	30(3.5)
Asked for money	43(4.6)	31(3.1)	8(0.9)
Shirt or dress dirtied	33(3.6)	25(2.5)	9(1.1)
Bullied because of colour	31(3.1)	27(2.7)	8(0.9)
Threatened with harm	28(3.0)	24(2.4)	15(1.8)
Bullied because of race	25(2.7)	21(2.1)	16(1.9)

In general we notice that the percentage of students who have been frequently bullied show a decline in the higher forms. The most common type of bullying



experienced by students at all levels of schooling is “*verbal bullying*”; such as being called by ‘*hurtful names*’ (17 to 25 %) and being ‘*teased unpleasantly*’ (15 to 19%).

The next group of common bullying behaviour is more physical in nature. This includes “*things hidden*” (9 to 13%), “*things stolen*” (3 to 11%), “*things thrown*” (7 to 10%), “*things damaged*”(3 to 9%), “*hit or kicked*”(3 to 8%), and “*punched*”(4 to 7%). “*Being picked on*” is the most common form of psychological bullying. Between 9 to 11 percent of students reported that they had experienced this type of bullying. Other forms of psychological bullying include, “*bad stories about self*” (6 to 9%), “*excluded from friendship*” (4 to 8%), and “*not included in play*”(4 to 8%). Certain forms of psychological bullying such as “*asked for money*”, “*bullied because of colour*”, and “*threatened with harm*” are more common among Form 1 and 2 students than Form 4 students.

The rank order correlation was still fairly high (Spearman Rho (F1,2/F4 = 0.85,  $p < 0.01$ ) and it may be concluded that most of the items were ranked similarly by Form 1, 2 and 4 students.

Table 6 shows frequencies and percentage of boys and girls who have been bullied frequently. In general boys are victims of bullying more frequently than girls. The data also shows that direct physical bullying is more common among boys than girls. On the other hand indirect psychological bullying is more frequent among girls than boys. For example, being ‘*excluded from friendship*’, “*not included in play*”, and “*spreading bad stories*”, were more common among girls than boys. As a matter of fact, apart from ‘*hurtful names*’ and ‘*being teased unpleasantly*’ which were ranked highest by both boys and girls, differences were noticed in the ranking of other items. The rank order correlation (Spearman Rho = 0.72,  $p < 0.01$ ) is significant, indicating that, in general, there was still a fair amount of similarity in the ranking of items by both boys and girls.

Table 6. Frequencies and percentage of boys and girls who had frequently experienced bullying in school.

Types of Bullying	Boys	Girls
Hurtful names	363(25.1)	257(19.8)
Things hidden	205(14.1)	128(9.9)
Teased Unpleasantly	271(18.8)	199(15.3)
Picked on	169(11.7)	124(9.5)
Things thrown	150(10.4)	90(6.9)
Punched	143(9.9)	24(1.8)
Hit or kicked	137(9.4)	33(2.5)
Things stolen	138(9.5)	86(6.6)
Bad stories (self)	95(6.6)	104(8.0)
Things damaged	94(6.5)	81(6.2)
Not included in play	71(4.9)	91(7.0)
Excluded from friendship	66(4.6)	104(8.0)
Asked for money	60(4.1)	22(1.7)
Threat of Physical harm	47(3.3)	19(1.5)
Clothes dirtied	42(2.9)	24(1.8)
Bad stories (parents)	41(2.8)	24(1.8)
Bullied because of race	36(2.5)	26(2.0)
Bullied because of colour	32(2.2)	32(2.5)

## Where does Bullying Normally Take Place?

In the fourth part of the questionnaire, students were asked to indicate the places where they normally experienced bullying. They were asked to tick more than one box if they wished. This was to ensure that all possible locations where students experienced bullying could be identified. Table 6 and figure 1 below show the locations where bullying commonly took place.

Table 7. Frequencies and percentages of locations where bullying normally takes place

	Classrooms	Travelling to school	Corridors	Toilets	Library	Playground	Canteen
Primary	181(84.2)	85(39.5)	63(29.3)	71(33.0)	37(17.2)	76(35.3)	82(38.1)
Secondary	2157(78.4)	1079(39.2)	939(34.3)	1086(39.6)	202(7.4)	556(20.4)	1100(40.1)

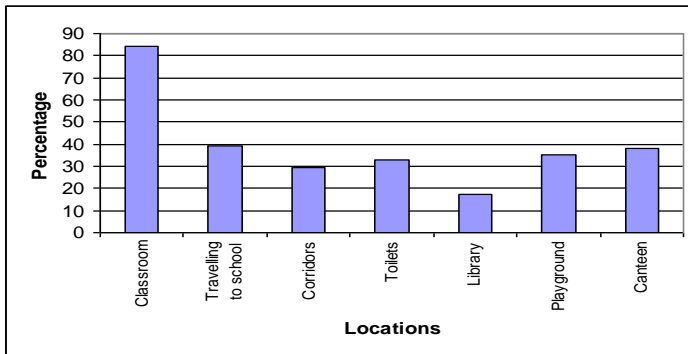


Figure 1. Where bullying normally occur in primary schools

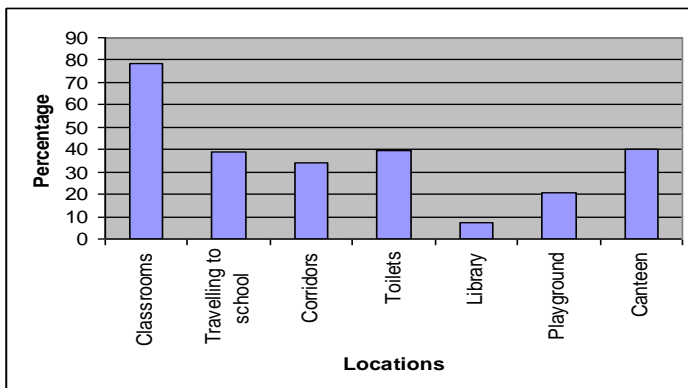


Figure 2. Where bullying normally occur in secondary schools

Table 7, Figures 1 and 2 show that the classroom was the place where students experienced most of the bullying. Other locations where students had experienced bullying were while travelling to (and from) school (39%), the school canteen, the playground, corridors, toilets, and the school library. It is a matter of concern to note that such a large percentage of students indicated that they experienced bullying in the classroom. Presumably in Bruneian schools students spend more time in their classrooms than on the playground. This result differs from results obtained in other countries where it was noted that the most common location for bullying was the school playground (see for instance, Eslea and Smith, 1994).

### Who Would You Tell if You Were Bullied?

The final section of the questionnaire asked students to indicate the person they would report to or tell if they were bullied. Students were asked to check more than one box if they wished. The responses of students are presented in Table 8, Figures 3 and 4.

Table 8. Frequencies and percentages of persons students would tell if bullied

	Close friend	Parents	Class teacher	H.Master	Discipline Master	Counseling teacher	Nobody
Primary	104(48.4)	123(57.2)	123(57.2)	64(29.8)	58(27.0)	21(9.8)	43(20.3)
Secondary	1601(58.3)	997(36.3)	599(21.9)	340(12.5)	620(22.7)	163(6.0)	619(22.6)

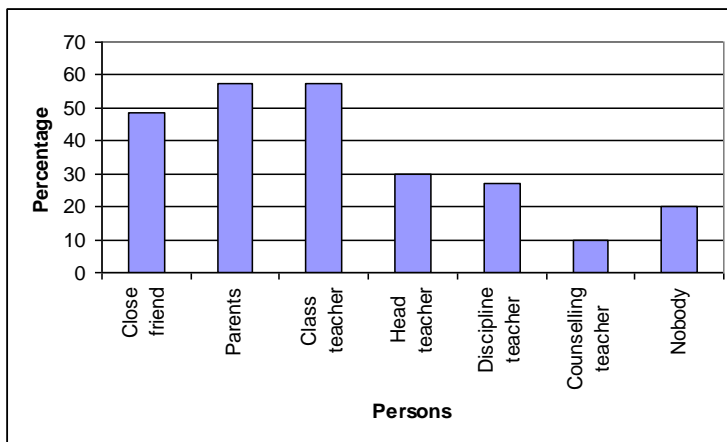


Figure 3. Persons primary pupils would report to when bullied

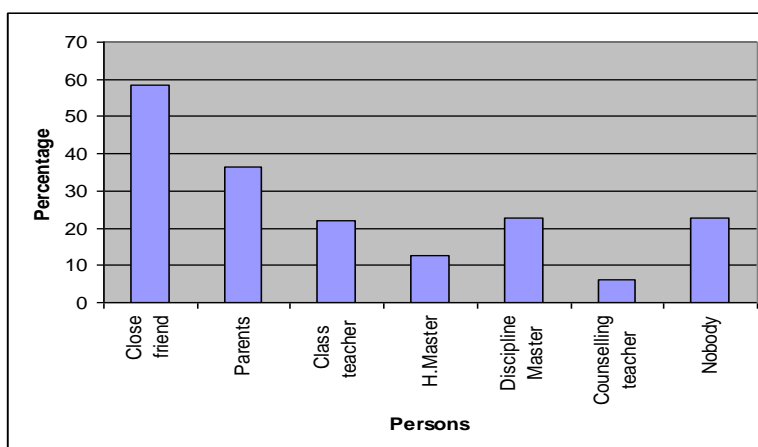


Figure 4. Persons secondary students would report to when bullied.

When bullied about 57% of the primary pupils surveyed said that they would tell their 'parents' or the 'class teacher'. About 48% would tell a 'close friend'. It is worthy of note that only about 10% of the pupils would tell their 'counselling teacher'.

Among secondary pupils about 58% would tell a 'close friend' about 36% said that they would tell their 'parents' and 22% the 'class teacher'. About 23% of the students indicated that they would tell no one when bullied. Many of these students indicated in their free responses that they did not tell anyone because they feared they might be bullied more. This problem should be looked into carefully because if it is not addressed it may lead to other forms of behaviour and psychological problems. It is surprising that only about 6% of the pupils would tell their 'counselling teacher'.

## Discussion

This paper has attempted to provide a broad picture of the incidence of bullying in Bruneian primary and secondary schools. Since the subjects of this investigation were drawn from a broad spectrum of the school population, including private schools (for secondary students), we believe that the results of the study can provide readers with a general picture of the extent of bullying in Bruneian schools.

### *Does bullying occur in Bruneian schools?*

Data from students who have witnessed bullying and from students who have themselves been bullied clearly show that bullying does occur in Bruneian primary and secondary schools. Both primary and secondary school students have reported that they have been bullied in school. A much higher percentage of students also reported that they had witnessed students being bullied in school. This result is similar to that found in a Singapore study reported in the Singapore Sunday Times (*Sunday Times*, 30 March 2003).

The results also show that the incidence of bullying peaks at around Form 1 and then declines as students progress to higher forms. This is consistent with the findings of

bullying studies reported elsewhere (Banks, 1997). In this study we have also found evidence to indicate that bullying that is more physical in nature was more common among boys, while bullying of the less aggressive kind, such as excluding someone from friendship, was more common among girls. This finding is consistent with findings from other countries (Ahmad and Smith, 1994; Smith and Sharp, 1994).

### ***What forms of bullying are most commonly reported by students?***

Schools are places where children should learn and grow and excel. Schools should be welcoming places. Regrettably, this is not so for some children. Taunting and teasing damages the self confidence of a child, pushing and hitting hurts a child. The most common type of bullying is name calling or students being called by '*hurtful names*'. Other more common types of bullying students have experienced are '*being teased unpleasantly*', and being '*excluded from friendship*'. This finding is also similar to that found in the Singapore study which indicated that about half of all students had been bullied at various times, mostly in the form of name-calling and teasing (Sunday Times, 30 March 2003). Although the results show that the more aggressive forms of bullying such as being '*punched*', being '*threatened with harm*', being '*hit or kicked*', "*things thrown*", "*things damaged*", and "*things stolen*" are less frequent; between 4 to 15% did experience such physical forms of bullying. These figures should alert whatever form, is not tolerated in school.school authorities to take preventive measures in order to ensure that bullying, in

### ***Where does bullying normally take place?***

Both primary and secondary student surveyed reported that the '*classroom*' is the place where most of the bullying occurs. Students are also likely to be bullied in the school '*canteen*' when they '*travel to and from school*' along the school '*corridors*' and even in the toilets. It is also interesting to note that about 35% of primary and 20% of secondary students reported that they had been bullied at the '*playground*'. This result differs from findings reported in other countries where the playground is the place where most students experienced bullying (Eslea and Smith, 1994; Mellor, 1990). One possible reason for this is that students in Brunei Darussalam do not spend as much time in the school playground as their counterparts in other countries do, since during the brief recess periods, many tend to remain in their classrooms. Also students return home for lunch, and then proceed to religious classes, instead of having lunch in school and spending more time in the playground, as is the case in many other countries.

It is also worth noting that bullying can occur during periods when classes are without teachers. It is important for school management to ensure that teachers get to classes on time and classes are not left without teachers for extended periods of time.

### ***Who would the victims of bullying confide in when they are being bullied?***

Based on the results of the two studies, the class teacher or the parent would be the person to whom a primary school pupil would report the incident of bullying. A close friend is the individual to whom most secondary students would probably report the incidence of bullying. It may be that, as children mature physically and psychologically, and as they enter into adolescence, they might find it easier to relate to a close friend than

to parents. The next most popular person to whom a primary pupil would report bullying is a close friend whereas for the secondary students it would be the parent.

It is also interesting to note that the school counselling teacher is apparently not the individual of choice to whom pupils would report bullying. This is something that policy makers and the school management may wish to look into.

## Overall Implications

The results of the two studies consolidated and reported here have produced some useful initial evidence regarding the occurrence and nature of bullying among school students in Brunei Darussalam. The study has also raised many questions which need to be further investigated. Besides focusing on what takes place, where and when, subsequent studies need to pay attention to how bullying emerges and is controlled, as well as why bullying occurs, or is allowed to occur. This study did not investigate cyber bullying. With the proliferation of computers, the internet and cell phones cyber bullying may be on the rise in Brunei Darussalam. This has to be investigated in future studies. Future studies should also include in-depth case studies, through interviews with teachers and students.

Providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our students so that they can learn in a relaxed and secure environment is goal of the Ministry of Education. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in our schools. If bullying does occur, all pupils should know that the incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. It is hoped that the incidence of bullying is taken seriously by everyone concerned before it becomes a major national problem.

## References

- Ahmad, Y., & Smith, P.K. (1994). Bullying in schools and the issue of sex differences. In John Archer (Ed), *Male Violence*. London: Routledge
- Banks, Ron. (1997). Bullying in Schools. *ERIC Review*, 7(1), 12-13.
- Barnados Text Bullying. *Barnados*. Dec. 2004  
<<http://www.barnados.org.nz/Resources?Text%20Bullying.asp>>.
- Batsche, G.M., & Knoff, H.M. (1994). Bullies and their victims: Understanding a pervasive problem in schools. *School Psychology Review*, 23 (2), 165-174.
- BBC News. BBC. 7 Dec. 2004  
<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/manchester/4075519.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/manchester/4075519.stm)>.
- Berne, S.(1999). *Bullying: An effective anti-bullying program for secondary schools*. Hawker Brownlow Education, Australia.
- Borneo Bulletin. 24 September 2003. *Education panacea for country's social ills*. Bandar Seri Begawan.
- Borneo Bulletin. 24 September 2003. *Education panacea for country's social ills*. Bandar Seri Begawan.
- Borneo Bulletin. 25 October 2003. *Where do bullies come from?* Bandar Seri Begawan.
- Borneo Bulletin. 14 April 2004. *Probe launched after boy allegedly hit by students*. Bandar Seri Begawan.
- Borneo Bulletin. 15 April 2004. *Calls to curb school bullying*. Bandar Seri Begawan.
- Borneo Bulletin. 24 April 2004. *Rumpus in school carpark*. Bandar Seri Begawan.
- Borneo Bulletin. 26 May 2004. *Gangsterism in schools concerns parents*. Bandar Seri Begawan.
- Borneo Bulletin. 4 June 2004. *Ministry serious on bullies*. Bandar Seri Begawan.

- Borneo Bulletin. 6 August, 2010. *The principal of Chung Hwa Middle School (CHMS) Bandar Seri Begawan has denounced the behaviour of two of its students.* Bandar Seri Begawan.
- Borneo Bulletin. 7 April, 2011. *Boy rushed to RIPAS due to school bullying.* Bandar Seri Begawan.
- Burns, Robert B. (2002). *Beating the School Bully: A Review Paper on the Correlates of and Intervention Procedures for School Bullying.* Monograph (7). Universiti Brunei Darussalam.
- Eslea, M. & Smith, P.K. (1994). Poster presented at the *Annual Conference of the Developmental Section of the British Psychological Society*, University of Portsmouth. England.
- Espelage, D.L., & Swearer, S.M. (2003). Research on school bullying and victimization: What have we learned and where do we go from here? *School Psychology Review*, 32(3), 365-383.
- Farrington, D. (1993). Understanding and Preventing Bullying. In M. Tonry (ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Vol. 17. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Limber, S., V. Flerx, M. Nation, & G. Melton (1998). Bullying Among School Children in the United States. In M. Watts (ed.), *Contemporary Studies in Sociology*, Vol. 18. Stamford, Conn.: Jai Press Inc.
- Mellor, A. (1990). *Bullying in Scottish Secondary Schools.* Edinburgh: SCRE.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (1993). Students' school discipline report. Kuala Lumpur.
- Nansel, T.R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R. S., Ruan, W.J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviours among U.S. youth: Prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(16), 2094-2100.
- New Straits Times, 11 June 1996. *Cane school bullies.* Kuala Lumpur.
- New Straits Times. 1 February 2002. *Getting to grips with the bullies.* Kuala Lumpur.
- Oliver, R., Hoover, J.H., & Hazler, R. (1994). The perceived roles of bullying in small-town Midwestern schools. *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 72 (4), 416-419.
- Olweus, D. (1991). Bully/victim problems among schoolchildren: basic facts and effects of a school-based intervention programme. In D. Pepler and K. Rubin, (Eds.), *The Development and Treatment of Childhood Aggression.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at School: What we know and what we can do.* Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Ohsako, Toshio. (1998). *Violence at School: Global Issues and Interventions.* Paris. UNESCO Publishing.
- Rahimah Haji Ahmad & Noraini Mohd Salleh. (1998). In Toshio Ohsako (Ed), *Violence at School: Global Issues and Interventions.* Paris. UNESCO Publishing.
- Reid, K. (1989). Bullying and persistent school absenteeism. In D. Tattum and D. Lane (Eds.), *Bullying in Schools.* Stoke on Trent, Trentham.
- Rigby, K. (2002). *New perspectives on bullying.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Rigby, K., & P. Slee (1999). Australia. In P. Smith, Y. Morita, J. Junger-Tas, D. Olweus, R. Catalano, and P. Slee (eds.), *The Nature of School Bullying: A Cross-National Perspective.* London and New York: Routledge.

- Sampson, R. (2002) *Bullying in Schools*. Problem Oriented Guide for Police Series 12, U.S. Department of Justice.
- Samuel, J.D., & Veloo, P.K.(2005). The Incidence of Bullying in Selected Primary Schools in Brunei Darussalam. *Journal of Applied Research in Education*, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.
- Smith, P.K., & Sharp, S. (1994). *School Bullying: Insights and Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- The Malay Mail. 25 May 1996. Field Day for School Bullies. Kuala Lumpur.
- The Sunday Times. 30 March 2003. Survey: 50% of students have been bullied. Singapore.
- The Star. 13 January, 2011. Five students in school bully case remanded. Kuala Lumpur.
- Veloo, P.K., Crocker, G., & Suppaiah, C. (2006). *Incidence of bullying in Bruneian secondary schools*. Unpublished research report submitted to the Curriculum Development Department, Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam.
- Whitney, I., & Smith, P.K. (1993). A survey of the nature and extent of bullying in junior/middle and secondary schools. *Educational Research*, 35 (1), 3-25.