

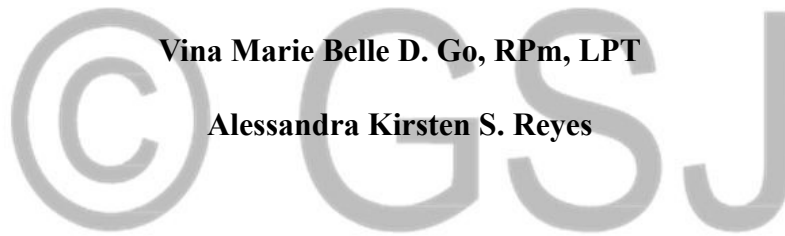


A Teacher's Perspective:

**An Interpretative Phenomenological Investigation of the Response & Interventions on
Bullying Incidents among Private School Students in the Philippines**

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Abstract

This pilot research examined the lived experiences of private school high school teachers in the Philippines who have witnessed and responded to bullying incidents. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was utilized as the lens to explore the patterns of inner thoughts, feelings, and meaning-making through their years of teaching experience. Using data from one-on-one interviews, data analysis produced a synthesis of three individual cases of teachers with varying durations of teaching experiences and teaching roles and positions. Overall results showed superordinate themes centering on the teacher's experiences of (1) Clarity of their responsibility in the situation, (2) Teacher capability, (3) Role and Power in their Position, and (4) Influences of their Past Experiences. Themes were then further categorized into hindrances and facilitators to their response to bullying incidents in high school. Theoretical and practical reflections of their lived experiences embedded in their present context and position as well as from their total experiences as a teacher are discussed. A call for school administrator intervention is needed to address the hindrances and enact possible strategies to build on the current available facilitators to empower teachers to respond to bullying incidents in a timely manner.

Key words: teacher, bullying response, hindrance to bullying response, facilitators to bullying response, interpretative phenomenological analysis, lived experience, high school bullying

Introduction

Bullying incidents are still quite common in schools in the Philippines (Tan, 2020). It is usual to have experienced or have witnessed bullying acts at school, and might have heard how the adults are to be responsible for stopping or intervening. In school, teachers act as the students' second parents and are therefore considered the authority figures and adults in that situation. Teachers are expected to intervene promptly, but this is often not the case (Petrakis, 2015; Tan, 2020). Studies have focused on the experiences of the bullied and the bully, but the teacher who usually receives the blame has been left unexamined (Strindberg, 2021; Makwanise, 2021). Studies that focus on the teacher usually evaluate the success of bullying prevention programs (Philipps, 2004) rather than the inner thoughts, feelings, and meaning-making of the teachers who also have their own experience in these incidents. The pressure on teachers is especially higher in private schools where students are of a higher socioeconomic status and where parents are more likely to demand the school's attention (Petrakis, 2015; Tan, 2020).

This pilot study aims to understand the unique experiences of teachers as they encounter and respond to bullying incidents among private high school students in the Philippines. Moreover, this study seeks to delve into the emotional, professional, and social dimensions of teachers' interaction with bullying incidents to emphasize the crucial role of educators and its impact on their response to bullying in schools. In doing so, the research intends to contribute valuable insights that may guide policies and interventions in creating a safer environment for students and teachers in their respective educational institutions.

To conduct this investigation, the research question "What are the lived experiences of teachers who witness and respond to bullying among high school students in private schools within the Philippines?" framed the questioning.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used as the framework and lens of this pilot study. This was used because the researchers were interested in the unique experiences of the teachers and gained insight into their often unexamined perspective. Phenomenological Analysis will allow a depth of understanding because the respondents will already be able to derive meaning from their own experience and the combined interpretation with the researchers would contribute to a generation of new knowledge in this field.

Method

A qualitative research study using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as the research design. This was done to fully understand and flesh out the unique experiences of the participants as well as fulfill the final requirement of the Qualitative Methods course.

A private sectarian exclusive school for girls in Metro Manila was chosen as the location of the study. Teachers were given consent forms before scheduling an interview. Participants were chosen based on their availability and willingness to articulate their teaching experience. Their current position and other roles and duties ancillary to teaching were also considered to provide a wider reach. The researchers have gathered the following participants: (1) a former teacher for more than 10 years and is now holding an administrative position, Grade Level Coordinator (GLC), (2) a teacher for more than 10 years who in conjunction with teaching, also holds a supervisory position in Science, and (3) a Teacher for more than 5 years. All the participants have experienced additional roles ancillary to being a subject teacher such as being an adviser, proctor, and club moderator.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed for analysis. Interview questions such as rapport-building questions “*How did you start teaching?*,” exploratory

questions “In your X years of experience as a teacher, have you witnessed bullying in school? Can you give some scenarios of what you witnessed?” and prompts such as “Can you recall the first/gravest/mildest instance of bullying in school that you have witnessed in your teaching career?” were used in the interview. These questions served as the opening of the conversation, and follow-up questions followed the participants’ story and train of thought. The line of questioning ends with “What does the school have in place to prevent/hinder bullying? What are your suggestions, if any?”

Data analysis for IPA was done in a two-part method: Initial analysis and Summary Analysis. For the initial analysis, the researchers transcribed the interview results word-for-word and then read and re-read the interview transcripts while making descriptive comments, highlighting statements that stood out to them, and placing initial codes. The similar codes were then clustered together to create specific themes. It is important to note that the themes were always framed in such a way that it connotes the experience of the teacher and not just the specific event that was happening. The teacher was placed in the center and the feelings, thoughts, and meanings behind these were analyzed from what was said to what they meant.

The summary analysis was conducted using an online brainstorming tool called Google Jamboard. This Google Workspace tool allowed the researchers to put the themes into digital post-its, categorize, and label the clustered themes. From this, the researchers found despite not being asked about hindrances and facilitators, the themes could be categorized as such. From the superordinate themes and themes from this IPA, the researchers formed a thematic map to make sense of the experiences of the teachers who respond to bullying incidents in high schools in the Philippines.

Results

The results of the interviews showed that there are four superordinate themes of the experiences of teachers in responding to bullying. All of them mentioned having difficulty in discerning whether it was bullying or not and what could and could not be done if it was determined that it is, hence “*Clarity of Responsibility in the Situation*” became the first superordinate theme. Teachers also constantly expressed the need for a team because responding to a bullying situation alone felt irresponsible and unfair, and oftentimes, teachers needed to ask help from other teachers with roles that may better fit the needs of the situation. Thus “*Teacher Capability*” became one superordinate theme.

Although all teachers experienced a sense of duty, they felt it in varying degrees depending on the current role that was assigned to them and this was apparent across three interviewees since they were in three different positions, and so “*Role and Position in Power*” became another superordinate theme. Lastly, a big difference in the use of positive or negative words in describing their experiences was observed by the researchers. Later on, this was analyzed to be a result of the “*Influence of Past Experiences*” that affected the teacher’s perspective of her place, role, and responsibility in that situation.

All of these superordinate themes influence and are influenced by one’s Self-Efficacy. Bandura’s concept of Self-Efficacy is very much apparent in the teaching profession as one’s capabilities are constantly measured and put on display in their daily performance as a teacher.

Table 1 lists the specific sub-themes and illustrative quotations for each of these master themes.

Table 1. *Superordinate themes and constituent subthemes*

Superordinate themes	Subthemes	Examples of illustrative text
Clarity of Responsibility	Hesitancy due to ambiguity	<i>“Pag nakita mo, pwede mo tanungin pero you won’t force it kasi baka mamaya... kaya parang sabihin mo na lang na okay I hope you feel better, mga ganun na lang”</i>
	Cultivate confidence from social support	<i>“... Yung parang affirmation na we saw you and we saw what you did, we know how much you cared for your students. And even the grade level coordinator, na backed up, they backed me up.”</i>
Teacher Capability	Feelings of incompetence and limited ability	<i>“imagine a parent telling you na “I completely lost my trust in you” so dala-dala ko siya.”</i>
	Availability of tools and strategies	<i>“Always refer to your code of conduct. Tapos it’s a good thing pag yung school may anti-bullying policy, kasi detailed yun eh– “ano yung signs of bullying?” “pano mo ma-cclassify as bullying?” “anong gagawin mong step-by-step” meron tayo sa school.”</i>
Role and Power in Position	Role confinement and powerlessness	<i>“As an adviser para kang second parent, stage mom talaga... mas first-hand mo nakuha yung information unlike if you’re a subject teacher na may mawiwitness ka, you would report but somehow hindi ka na nasasama sa other process.”</i>
	Appointment to a position of authority	<i>“As a teacher, gumawa ako ng report, piantawag ko mga magulang tapos nag seek kami ng help sa prefect of discipline kasi in the end siya pa din ang may pwedeng sanction. Apparently hindi pa din tumigil... Ngayon na GLC ako, when I’m handling cases, kumukuha talaga ako ng mga proof para mas solid yung report at buo ang loob ko pag kausap ang parents.”</i>
Influences of Past Experiences	Negative outcomes from previous experience	<i>“Feeling ko parent ako, if something happened to them I wouldn’t want to know from other people, they have to let me know... Medjo heavy din for the part of the adviser kasi mas madaming time na kasama sila, all the reports morning pa lang, and you would carry that all day.”</i>
	Positive outcomes from previous experience	<i>“Ang maganda naman so far sa mga na ha-handle ko, they are very open sa na experience nila so mas nakakapag investigate ako... after ko sila makausap tumitigil naman din sila.”</i>

Clarity of Responsibility in the Situation

Hesitancy due to ambiguity. Upon witnessing bullying, teachers feel reluctant to act upon and respond to such situations due to the lack of clarity and understanding on the term “bullying”. In this sense, the internal conflict between whether a situation constitutes as bullying or simply teasing is what prevents them from responding. This is apparent as the teacher expressed:

Teacher #2: *“Di ko sure kung bullying na yun, kasi pinag-uusapan siya, iniisolate kasi they wouldn’t want to be grouped with her.”*

In this excerpt, the teacher recalled a situation wherein a couple of high school students were isolating a girl who exhibited odd behavior in class. For context, this particular student repeatedly farts and picks at her nose in the classroom which garnered negative attention from her classmates. With that said, this teacher felt hesitant to respond to the situation right away due to the confusion between it being considered as bullying already or a simple, though quite inappropriate, response to odd behavior.

Due to this confusion, teachers also expressed hesitancy to respond proactively in fear of responding the wrong way which might further escalate the situation:

Teacher #1: *“Pag nakita mo, pwede mo tanungin pero you won’t force it kasi baka mamaya... kaya parang sabihin mo na lang na okay I hope you feel better, mga ganun na lang”*

This teacher shared approaching a situation with concern for the student by checking up on her as an immediate response but refraining from further asking or prying for more information if the student is uncomfortable in doing so. The phrase “baka mamaya...” implies that the teacher feels fearful that the student might view her act of kindness with malicious intent, resulting in a report being made against her.

Moreover, the hesitancy expressed by the teachers also stems from the child protection policy that is in place:

Teacher #3: *“noon kasi ang dali gawin nun eh ngayon kasi may child protection policy, medyo limited si teacher...”*

“noon kasi wala pang child protection policy eh, so traditional teacher pa na “sino yung gumawa neto” kailangan umamin....”

In this excerpt, the teacher showed the difference in responding to bullying before and after the child protection policy (CPP) came to be. Prior to the CPP, the teachers took on a traditional approach wherein they handled such scenarios directly with an iron fist by imposing that the student at fault owned up to his/her mistakes. However, in light of the CPP, the teachers were restrained from taking on a traditional approach, leaving them unsure of the appropriate approach to partake in.

Cultivating confidence from social support. An important aspect that facilitated the response among teachers was the support and guidance from qualified personnel such as the grade-level coordinators (GLC) and guidance counselors. Such support enabled the teachers to confidently navigate through such incidents:

Teacher #3: *“You call their attention tapos you seek help dun sa mga...yan sa GLC, sa guidance counselor, you report it oo.”*

This teacher expressed calling the attention of the aforementioned personnel as part of the immediate actions she takes when witnessing bullying. Similarly, another teacher explained:

Teacher #1: *“With the help of the guidance counselor, we would know if they’re lying or not with their anecdotes and stories”*

From this excerpt, it can be seen that this teacher finds refuge in the presence of guidance counselors in these situations as they act as an extra set of eyes in evaluating the anecdotes of students involved. In doing so, they can deduce whether or not the student is telling the truth, in

turn enabling them to push forth the appropriate solution. An underlying feeling of hope is also apparent among these teachers due to the presence of these qualified personnel– where “hope” pertains to the feeling of optimism in the positive impact and change that’s to come within the school climate in the presence of such expertise.

Teachers also expressed the importance of affirmation and validation from colleagues in the workplace, especially during negative experiences in handling bullying incidents:

Teacher #2: *“The teachers who are with me in the faculty room kasi we were all grade 3 teachers, they would comfort me.”*

“...Yung parang affirmation na we saw you and we saw what you did, we know how much you cared for your students. And even the grade level coordinator, na backed up, they backed me up.”

After receiving a letter from an angered parent as a result of her involvement in a bullying incident, teacher #2 explained how her fellow teachers served as emotional support to her. She felt comforted and empowered through the unwavering kindness and recognition that she received from her peers, which enabled her to build back her confidence and power through this traumatic experience.

Teacher Capability

Feelings of incompetence and limited ability to respond. Although the presence of and seeking help from the grade-level coordinators and guidance counselors are of great importance to teachers in handling bullying incidents, they also foster feelings of incompetence among them. This is because they feel helpless– as though they are incapable of taking action on their own. It may be for several reasons; first is the lack of experience they have in handling or being in such situations:

Teacher #1: *“Siguro it’s a matter of experience. Pagmatagal ka na nagtuturo you would know eh, you would know na eto na dapat ganito ganyan.”*

The underlying thought of teacher #1 is that prolonged teaching experience would mean naturally having the appropriate insights and knowledge in handling situations such as bullying and the like. It conveys the idea that age-old teachers are more equipped than teachers who have less years of experience, which may also foster feelings of incompetence and doubt among younger teachers as well as unexpected pressure among more experienced teachers to handle such incidents with ease. Moreover, teacher #1 also expressed the lack of sufficient skills and knowledge as a hindrance in handling such incidents:

Teacher #1: "Kasi siyempre as an adviser, hindi ka naman nag-aral ng ... psychology, behavioral science to assess the feelings ng bata or process the feelings of the student. You will need to ask for help."

From the excerpt above, feelings of helplessness can be seen from teacher#1 as she expressed that she is unable to process the feelings of the child involved in a bullying incident as she is unequipped to do so. Over time, this may be a reason for turning a blind eye on witnessed bullying incidents.

Similarly, teacher #3 expressed wanting to take action in an incident but was unable to do so due to the policies in place and the need for the involvement of parents:

Teacher #3: "For example may bullying incident, alam mong nawitness nung tatlong batang 'to...dahil minors sila, hindi ko sila pwedeng patawag to ask them. Kailangan ko munang magpaalam sa parents if I can call this students for an investigation to shed light."

Despite the initiative to respond to and prevent further escalation of bullying, teacher #3 expressed limited ability to respond (due to the CPP) and an underlying desire for more authority to immediately resolve such incidents without the need for parental involvement which may cause more complications and a prolonged process. Another underlying feeling that can be

deduced from this excerpt is the feeling of frustration because the teacher had already identified the solution to the problem but was restrained in doing so.

Lastly, teachers may also be painted as negligent due to the insufficient knowledge and authority they have to respond as can be seen in this excerpt:

Teacher #2: *“yung parent nung bata na nabully, nagsulat siya ng letter na sabi niya “I have completely lost my trust with Ms. _____ as their adviser”. So ayun, nag struck siya sakin for many years.”*

“It’s not even me who bullied.”

For context, teacher #2 was wrongly accused of witnessing an incident and turning a blind eye when in reality she was teaching a different class during the time that the bullying took place. As a result, the parents of the victim blamed her for their child’s negative experience. In turn, the effect of such words shattered the teacher’s professional identity:

Teacher #2: *“...nabreak niya ako as a teacher.”*
“Nung una parang naisip ko, gusto ko nang mag resign kasi ayoko na, ayoko na makareceive ng, ayokong maka–yung letter kasi ng parents....”

The excerpt above shows the detrimental effect that such incidents have on the teachers (besides the students involved) that are usually overlooked by other authority figures such as parents, co-workers, and other school administrators.

Availability of tools and strategies. Despite the hindrance caused by the insufficient knowledge among teachers, the presence of tools and proactive strategies have lessened feelings of incompetence and has served as facilitators. Some teachers have employed the use of hyper-vigilance as a proactive strategy in prevention:

Teacher #1: *“Anecdotal report, may notebook na sinusulatan. Although hindi every single time or every minute, I think really helpful na nag tatake note ka talaga.”*

The excerpt above shows teacher #1 effectively monitoring her students as her proactive way of prevention and as a reference in case of an unforeseen incident. Similarly, teacher #2 partakes in a similar strategy by cultivating a close relationship with her students:

Teacher #2: *“I try to get to know them. I try to know kung sino mga friends nila, sino yung mga walang friends.”*

“Tapos parang based on their personality, parang sa sarili ko lang, sino yung mga may possibility na kaya ano to, kasi usually mga weaker nga yung nabubully.”

In doing so, she can identify the weaker links– students who are likely to get bullied by their peers and keep a close eye on them for active prevention. This shows resiliency in teacher #2 as she actively tries to rebuild her professional identity and regain authority amidst the traumatic experience that she had undergone.

Lastly, an active anti-bullying policy in the workplace can also lessen feelings of incompetence among teachers and act as a guide in handling such incidents:

Teacher #3: *“Always refer to your code of conduct. Tapos it’s a good thing pag yung school may anti-bullying policy, kasi detailed yun eh– “ano yung signs of bullying?” “pano mo ma-cclassify as bullying?” “anong gagawin mong step-by-step” meron tayo sa school.”*

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that a clear and detailed school policy on bullying would act as a valuable resource to teachers as it would empower them to act on such incidents without hesitation. Moreover this policy would also serve as a protective shield on teachers who are doubtful of one’s capabilities in handling such incidents and are fearful of applying the wrong solution. In sum, the existence of a detailed anti-bullying policy would not only educate the teachers but also provide a safer space for the betterment of teacher and student well-being.

Role and Power in Position

Role confinement and powerlessness. Similar to the corporate world, teachers also have a hierarchical system, naturally entailing that some teachers who are higher up in the ladder have

more responsibilities and power over those who are beneath them. In turn, teachers who are lower in rank feel confined and restrained in their current positions, leaving them feeling powerless and over-ranked:

Teacher #1: *“As a teacher, you’re more focused on the subject matter and there’s really only so much that you can do so just report it to their adviser. Pero pag adviser ka, mas kaya mo nga silang kausapin at mag-investigate.”*

Teacher #1 shows the limited role of a subject teacher who is seemingly confined within the bounds of her respective subject matter. The excerpt shows a subject teacher who has an underlying feeling of longing– for the ability to act on such incidents, but is also discouraged in doing so. The phrase *“pero pag adviser ka”* also conveys a bit of envy for the higher-ranked position that has more power to push forth change. As such, the role of an adviser can be seen as more fulfilling than that of a subject teacher:

Teacher #2: *“As an adviser para kang second parent, stage mom talaga... mas first-hand mo nakuha yung information unlike if you’re a subject teacher na may mawiwitness ka, you would report but somehow hindi ka na nasasama sa other process.”*

Teacher #2 expressed the deeper bond that an adviser may have with his/her students as she mentioned *“para kang second parent”*. Moreover, she explained the ability of advisers to hear and experience the incidental report from students first hand, as opposed to a subject teacher who may report the witnessed incident but was no longer looped in during the lengthy process of investigation and analysis. While this underscores the feeling of fulfillment for the role of an adviser, it also shows how seemingly unfair it would be for subject teachers to report the witnessed incident– in hopes of taking part in the process, but was simply left out of the loop due to their lack of rank in the hierarchy. Lastly, teacher #3 explained her role as a grade-level coordinator, which over-ranks a subject teacher and an advisor:

Teacher #3: *“As a teacher, kailangan ma-stop mo talaga pero mahirap kasi maraming in denial, pati ang parents natin hindi lahat mag aadmit sa kasalanan ng anak... mahabang*

proseso, kaya we need to team up pa with the guidance kasi hindi namin siya kaya on our own kahit na GLC na kami.”

The excerpt above shows the harsh reality of being a part of the education system— no matter how highly ranked a teacher is, they are still over-ranked by the parents. In other words, regardless of whatever position a teacher is in, that is immediately over-ranked by the parents of their students. As such, teachers— much like the excerpt above, also experience feelings of frustration (regardless of their rank) due to the lack of power they have over their students.

Appointment to a position of authority. Once a teacher is appointed to a higher-ranked position, they feel a heightened sense of empowerment and duty out of awareness that their particular role allows them to do more— to create changes in procedures, to enact sanctions, to investigate on their own, etc.:

Teacher #1: *“Parang kasi may levels, and hindi siya distinct na distinct. As a person you don’t know how to set that boundary, as a teacher di mo alam hanggang saan so hihingi ka ng tulong sa guidance or GLC, pero pag at least GLC ka na, alam mo na ikaw na at kaya mo na gumalaw.”*

Teacher #2: *“Kailangan ng communication between advisers and teachers kasi mas alam ni adviser ano gagawin at may pwede siyang gawin v.s. sa teacher na siya naka-observe pero may hangganan. Si GLC and advisers would know how their students behave.”*

Teacher #1 shows the acknowledgement of the “levels” of power that is appointed to teachers with their respective roles. It can be seen that a GLC has more freedom and power to move without hesitation and doubt in the boundaries that he/she can cross. Meanwhile, teacher #2 also placed emphasis on the role of subject-teachers to push forth active communication and relay any information garnered to the advisers and GLCs— showing the importance of “team work” among teachers, regardless of rank in the hierarchy. Lastly, teacher #3 shared her progression from a teacher to a GLC:

Teacher #3: *“As a teacher, gumawa ako ng report, piantawag ko mga magulang tapos nag seek kami ng help sa prefect of discipline kasi in the end siya pa din ang may pwedeng sanction. Apparently hindi pa din tumigil... Ngayon na GLC ako, when I’m handling cases, kumukuha talaga ako ng mga proof para mas solid yung report at buo ang loob ko pag kausap ang parents.”*

The excerpt above underscores the acknowledgement of her role as a subject-teacher– which may be limiting, but also contributed to the sufficient knowledge that she has gained that became beneficial to her as she was appointed to a role of power. Moreover, it also shows the confidence boost that such a role contributes to a teacher’s ego which cultivates a more proactive behavior to manifest.

Influence of Past Experiences

Negative outcomes from previous experiences. Teachers also conveyed a sense of being emotionally impacted and disheartened by previous experiences involving incidents that led to unfavorable outcomes:

Teacher #2: *“Feeling ko parent ako, if something happened to them I wouldn’t want to know from other people, they have to let me know... Medjo heavy din for the part of the adviser kasi mas madaming time na kasama sila, all the reports morning pa lang, and you would carry that all day.”*

Teacher #2 who had encountered a traumatic experience, expressed feelings of deep empathy for her students akin to a parent. The words *“I wouldn’t want to know from other people”* also showed fear of history repeating itself. Moreover, she also expressed the sad reality of being an adviser– to grow a deep bond with each student and to have to witness them inflict pain on each other. Similarly, teacher #3 expressed feelings of hopelessness due to an incident beyond her control:

Teacher #3: *“Ang hirap, kasi pano mo haharapin yung nabubully after mo malaman na lahat ng witness hindi pinayagan ng magulang na magtestify. Walang mangyayari sa complaint niya, mawawalan ka ng gana, pero ‘di pwede.”*

From the excerpt above, teacher #3 showed how unfavorable outcomes in such incidents may also demotivate them to continue moving forward and pushing forth change. However, it is also the lack of positive outcome that urges them to shake off feelings of hopelessness and gain back their sense of obligation.

Meanwhile, the absence of such negative outcomes may also allow teachers the confidence in their abilities, leading to more proactive choices:

Teacher #1: *“So far hindi pa ako nakaka encounter ng case na hindi ko naexperience nung bata ako so somehow nakaka empathize ako... nakakasad lang pag ginawa mo lahat pero tinutuloy pa din nila, but so far naman tumitigil naman sila after ko kausapin”*

Although feelings of hesitation are still apparent in teacher #3 due to the possibility of failure to provide aid in such situations. The lack of failed attempts, provides a sense of comfort and confidence in teachers' power through the hope to continue the streak of desirable outcomes.

Positive outcomes from previous experiences. The presence of positive experiences contributed to the teachers' confidence and cultivated self-efficacy in them when handling difficult bullying situations:

Teacher #1: *“Ang maganda naman so far sa mga na ha-handle ko, they are very open sa na experience nila so mas nakakapag investigate ako... after ko sila makausap tumitigil naman din sila.”*

Teacher #1 showed how openness of her students served as an encouragement from her to keep at what she was doing. Moreover, the rapport that she has built with her students also helped her in solving such incidents with ease and at a timely manner. Meanwhile, despite the traumatic experience that teacher #2 has encountered, the experience of encountering bullying among high school students that resulted to a favorable outcome became her confidence booster:

Teacher #2: *“Merong mild lang sa high school... kinausap ko sila isa-isa and close monitoring ng mga bata na how they are, talk to them in general and talk to each one separately. Naging ok naman na eventually, natanggap naman na nila siya, iwas-iwas lang.”*

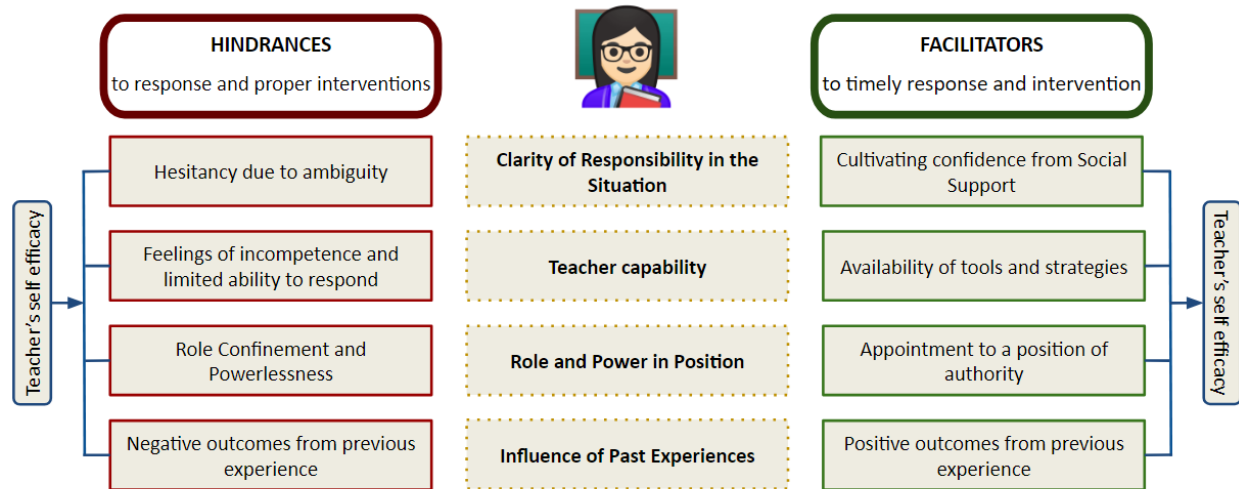
Learning from her past negative experience, teacher #2 showed resilience as she tackled a new incident by partaking in rapport building— much like teacher #1, but also taking the time to individually process and speak with each student for a more holistic approach on the matter.

Lastly, teacher #3 recalled a time without the CPP where bullying incidents were handled with ease:

Teacher #3: *“Wala pang child protection policy kaya natanong ko sila na ‘sinong gumawa nito?’ kailangan may umamin. So may nag-admit pero hindi ko pinahiya, sinabihan ko ang class na may sakit ang classmate dapat hindi nila ginawa yun and na ‘how would you feel kung sa inyo ginawa yun?’... hindi na nakarating sa GLC. Nag-apologize yung mga bata and tinanggal naman nila. The next day, hindi na nila ginawa.”*

In the excerpt above, teacher #3 showed how the absence of CPP in her early years of teaching fostered a sense of responsibility and confidence within her that remained to this day, even with the difficulty of navigating through the restricting policies in place.

Thematic Map and the Importance of Self-Efficacy



Categorizing the themes into hindrances and facilitators, it was found that teachers' experiences are highly dependent on whether they receive enough sources of facilitators or they encounter too many hindrances that they cannot overcome. All four superordinate themes are found in the teacher's experience of responding to bullying regardless of their current position or number of years of experience in the teaching profession. Initially, the researchers hypothesized that years of experience would be an important factor; however, after analyzing and categorizing the results, it shows that it's not the duration but the effect on and the effect of these on one's self-efficacy that caused the most influence on their ability and initiative to respond to bullying incidents.

Clarity of Responsibility in the Situation. Teachers experience ambiguity in the situation itself, questioning the truth of the reported incident, and also deciding whether the observed acts are considered bullying or just merely playful teasing. The lack of clear guidelines for teacher interventions and inconsistencies in applying sanctions also hinder the teachers from taking immediate action. Because of this, although there is an inclination to do something about the witnessed bullying incident, the teacher has to go through many channels to make sure that the

steps that she is about to take will not cause problems or litigations later. Sometimes the interventions applied by the teacher might cause her her job if the “bully” feels accused or maligned, which is why administration and peer support are helpful facilitators of teacher response. Student support and cooperation also aid teachers to be able to investigate the matter faster and thus can easily apply more immediate interventions.

Teacher Capability. Teachers' narratives surrounding the response to bullying tend to sound defensive as they feel a need to show that as the adults in the situation, they have taken their responsibility seriously and have done all the best that they can. This is why feelings of incompetence and limited ability were apparent in the way they spoke of their position in the situation, and enlisted the help of other teachers/guidance counselors/GLC who might have the skill set that they are lacking. What enables teachers to increase their capabilities to respond is the availability of tools, strategies, and resources that would help them feel more capable and competent to address the situation at hand. By doing so, teachers would then be able to have a more immediate response to bullying incidents and not wait to concur and collaborate with other “more capable” members of the faculty.

Role and Power in Position. A surprising theme that was found in the narratives was the duality of the effect of role and power in a position. It seemed that the role given to a teacher may either confine them into a state of powerlessness or empower them to have the authority to control the situation. Administrators need to see how role and power in position affect each of the teachers to gain insight as to why bullying incident response is not as prompt.

Influence of Past Experiences. Lastly, the marker that distinguishes the differences among teachers' responses is not the years of experience, but rather the kind of experience that the teacher has gone through. Negative past experiences make teachers more fearful about

encountering these bullying situations and the absence of negative past experiences allows them to still have the drive and optimism to resolve it. The presence of positive past experiences encourages initiative among teachers with hopefulness and confidence to resolve it within their capacity.

Discussion

As emphasized by the thematic map, all of the themes under hindrances can be seen to be anchored on the teacher's self-efficacy while all the themes under facilitators influence the formation of the teacher's self-efficacy. What this means for intervention strategies is to focus on lessening the hindrances and strengthening the facilitators, but more importantly, the emphasis should be adding to teacher's self-efficacy more than anything.

As bullying remains an issue for students, teachers, and parents, school administrators must view the results of this study as their basis for improvements in school policy. The following are itemized recommendations based on the themes in the results.

Clarity of Responsibility in the Situation. To minimize the ambiguity, school administrators may team up with teachers, guidance counselors, and grade-level coordinators to create improvements in school policies and procedures regarding bullying. They may document clear parameters to distinguish bullying cases from those that are not and have an easy way to access previous cases and the decisions on each. The researchers view this as a repository of past cases of bullying, something akin to law cases that are being studied by law students to understand how the policies and procedures are interpreted on a case-to-case basis. This will help forge clarity into what is currently deemed as ambiguous situations. Since it was mentioned that social support was a facilitator despite the ambiguity, school administrators must strengthen the camaraderie among teachers, and superiors must show that they will protect and defend their

teachers when parents of the bullied and the bully become aggressive. Teachers, whatever their role, must also see the significance of establishing rapport with their students, as this facilitates easier investigation and offers fewer occurrences of miscommunication of gestures, words, and actions done by the teacher to prevent and stop bullying.

Teacher Capability. To answer the lack of competence and the limited ability of regular teachers to handle bullying cases, it is recommended that teachers be given training or workshops to teach tools and strategies that they may employ when faced with a bullying incident. This also coincides with the theme of having available tools, strategies, and resources as a facilitator for timely response and intervention.

Role and Power in Position. Perhaps one of the more controversial findings of this study is the theme of role confinement. In making a streamlined process of reporting incidences, it seems that the process became longer. It is a recommendation that teachers will be given a lighter teaching load to accommodate a heavier workload as advisers. That specific role has the right balance of power and responsibility, and an adviser will only be able to devote as much time and care as having to assume the 3 roles (adviser, guidance counselor, and GLC) if she doesn't have too many classes to worry about. Having said so, the role of a GLC can be dissolved, and instead distribute the power and responsibility to the advisers who then receive constant support from trained guidance counselors for more psychologically-related cases. By doing so, overreliance on others can be avoided. If the GLC is retained, she must be acting like a supervisor for the advisers, rather than the one conducting the investigation herself.

Influence of Past Experiences. There is very little that can be done to alter what has happened in the past; however, with the availability of counseling and therapy to teachers as well, teachers might be able to process their feelings and achieve peace from guilt and fear in

their negative experiences. Teachers who have positive outcomes must be given an avenue to share their stories so that through vicarious learning, other teachers may become inspired and learn from the strategies employed by successful teachers. In doing so, the self-efficacy of the observing teachers may also be improved vicariously.

After going through this pilot study, the researchers also found a wealth of information about the bullied and the bully but very rare studies about the teacher's experience in these bullying incidents in school. As a person responsible for the safety of the children in the school setting, it is important that more studies can be conducted to form theory-based knowledge aside from its connection with self-efficacy. It can be postulated that there might be other factors that cause delays in response or inaction, bystander effect, among others. However, these factors have yet to come out in the three interviews, so an increase in sample size would also deepen the understanding of the lived experiences of these private high school teachers. Using triangulation, it would also be good to get the opinions of administrators, students, and parents/stakeholders regarding the overall responsibility of the teachers in bullying incidents. It would be interesting to see what they think are hindrances and facilitators to teacher response to these situations.

To conclude, hindrances to timely response are sometimes unavoidable. Children can lie and misunderstand leading to misreports of the situation. Teachers are not always very confident of their capabilities and roles cannot encompass so many empowering responsibilities. Lastly, outcomes cannot be fully controlled. What can be controlled, on the other hand, is the meaning-making that teachers make of their duty and their experience. By equipping teachers with high self-efficacy, teachers would have the necessary "backup" in case unforeseen hindrances become present and can push themselves to make the necessary and prompt decisions that would be beneficial to the students.

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