Bullying of Teachers in the Workplace: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract—The purpose of this undertaking was to describe the bullying of teachers in the workplace, specifically in Davao City and Davao del Sur in the Philippines. Employing phenomenological approach with 20 teachers, in-depth interviews and focus group discussion were conducted which revealed that bullying of teachers in the workplace is prevalent. Four major types of bullying as experienced by teachers emerged, such as emotional bullying, verbal bullying, physical bullying and cyberbullying. Workplace bullying negatively affected all facets of the teachers' lives, their physical health, psychological health and social health, being the emergent themes as consequences of workplace bullying. The participants had different approaches in coping with the experience, either personal struggle or group support. Based on the results of the study, it came out that most bullying incidentsare perpetrated by the school head or the authority figures in the school, co-teachers and students.

Index terms—bullying, teachers, workplace

I. INTRODUCTION

There had been many definitions of bullying and it comes in many forms, shapes and sizes. It is commonly defined as an adverse behavior towards another with the deliberate intent to harm, putting the targeted victim in a situation that is hard for him to defend himself. Though bullying in schools and universities is a widespread phenomenon, the common subject is student-student bullying or teacher bullying a student. Much has been researched about bullying in schools but it only focuses on students and their rights. No attention is given to teachers, that they themselves could be victims of bullying too [1].

Targeted teachers who experience rigid public scrutiny and taunting from workplace bullies may possibly cause them a sense of humiliation, making them lose their self-confidence, doubt their capacity, thereby creating an abnormal fear to do their functions in school and maintain relationships with learners and colleagues. In Manila, Philippines, Basaswho was the chairman of the Teacher's Dignity Coalition was quoted as saying, "cases of students bullying their teachers have been increasing". The worst so far, he said, was the case of a teacher in Caloocan City, Philippines who was stabbed and killed by a student [2].

Most school leaders do not believe that workplace bullying exists in their premises which might explain why they are more likely to take no action in response to reported workplace bullying incident than to attempt to address the problem directly [3]. Maria Ines Asuncion, Davao City Division Superintendent for Secondary Schools in the Philippines was quoted as saying "teachers also need help in protecting their rights against bullying by parents". She further stated that there should be a two way protection between a child and a teacher, that if teachers protect children in school, teachers and principals should also be protected [4].

In the field of education, bullying is a major concern among educators globally because it does not only affect the teachers but also the students, and the whole community as well. Considering that workplace bullying has serious repercussions on every facet of the teachers' lives, those in the academe and the whole community as well, have the moral obligation to address the growing problem of workplace bullying and unearth the conditions surrounding this phenomenon. This doctoral dissertation is just a step forward to achieving that goal and help in the prevention of the occurrence of workplace bullying.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to answer the following questions:
1. What are the bullying incidents experienced by teachers from their bullies in their workplaces?
2. What are the contributions of these bullying experiences to the life of these teachers?
3. What are the coping mechanisms adopted by the teachers to address bullying?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

In this research study, I applied descriptive qualitative method particularly phenomenology. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of human perception of events or phenomena from the actual happenings in the real world. It is reliving the experiences of the participants involved in the study and going deeper into their thoughts, identifying the essence of the experience as described by the participants, through lengthy discussions [5].

The phenomenological approach is very good at surfacing deep issues. In my study, I needed to make the

voices of the bullied teachers heard, in an attempt to expose the taken-for-granted assumptions like the existence of workplace bullying of teachers and challenge its complacency. My objective here was to extract a common theme from the experiences of the subjects, convert these experiences to a description of the universal essence of the phenomena and grasp the very nature of the thing. To understand a complex phenomenon, I considered the multiple "realities" experienced by the participants themselves—the "insider" perspectives [6].

B. Research Participants

Prior to the conduct of the study, I already identified a few of my informants. The identified informants were my friends who teach in the public and private schools, whom I have chosen through purposive sampling as my participants based on a pre-selected criteria relevant to the research study, in this case, teachers who have been victimized by bullying in their respective workplaces [7]. They were referred here in this study as "targets" and "victims" of workplace bullying since they all suffered torment in the hands of their bullies.

Starting with only three informants, I asked them if they knew other teachers who somehow experienced bullying in their schools and if it would be possible to contact them. They gave me some referrals who could be informants in my study. After contacting these prospects and explaining to them the purpose of my study, some of them agreed to participate. I also asked some school heads and educators I personally knew and asked if they had knowledge of any bullying incident in their school or bullied teacher that they could refer me to. Unfortunately, they denied any reported bullying incident that happened in their school or any bullied teacher they were aware of.

I also applied the different social media network like Facebook, Yahoo and Skype to contact friends who might be of help. Some of these friends really took time to help me search for participants in their schools. The rest was like a chain reaction. Starting with only few informants, it started to grow fast through chain of referrals or snowballing [8].

To obtain a good quality of qualitative research, I opted to get just a considerable number of participants for my research with twelve informants for the in-depth interviews and eight participants to engage in focus group discussion. Focus groups are considered to work well with approximately 8 people [9]. I believed that this is already a considerable number of participants, adequate to give credible information and significant results and findings. The participants come from both private and public schools of Davao City and Davao del Sur, Philippines. Their names and the schools where they teach were purposely concealed and they were given their own pseudonyms to protect their identities. The participants were teaching in different levels of education, from grade school, high school up to college.

C. Data Collection

Prior to approval of my research study, it underwent scrutiny from the defense committee of the Graduate School of the University of Mindanao. Interview guide was duly validated by each of the committee member to ensure that the study as sensitive as this, would not harm the participants. The defense committee checked if ethics and research rigor were applied to the conduct of the research, such as securing informed and voluntary consent of the research participants as a form of respect for them, before conducting the interviews.

Prior to conducting the study, I secured permissions from the respective Division Heads and Superintendents of the college or school where it belongs for the data collection involved in the study and permissions to gather data were also obtained at an early stage in the research from the school heads of the research participants. During the whole duration of this doctoral dissertation study, I had been guided by my research adviser who had long been teaching Methods of Research at the University of Mindanao, Davao City.

In the collection of data of the study, I underwent these processes namely: interviewing in-depth with the study-informants, conducting FGD (Focus Group Discussion) to a group of eight participants and note-taking. Aware that my study dealt with a very sensitive issue and my participants might find the interview traumatic, I initially met with some of them just to have a casual conversation to assess their health condition and have an initial evaluation. For a few whom I failed to meet before the formal interview, I was able to get information about them through my friends who referred them to me. Knowing that they were all in good shape and prepared to be interviewed, we set the schedule for the formal interview. In-depth interview is one approach that was undertaken in order to gather information from the participants. The in-depth interview is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic [8]. Through the interview process, the researcher listened to the participants' descriptions and then repeatedly reviewed and studied the data as they were transcribed [10].

Focus groups resemble interviews, but in focus group discussions, both the strengths and the weaknesses of focus groups flow directly from their two defining features: the dependence on the researcher's focus and the group's interaction [11]. On the scheduled date of the interview, I provided a safe and supportive environment to make the participants feel relaxed and comfortable. I also made sure that there were available water, food and first-aid kit in place, in case someone gets emotionally upset during the interview. I also prepared myself to assist and show emotional support if interview becomes intense.

During the interview, I made them feel that I was really interested in what they had to say but I would not judge them whatever their answers would be, because showing emotional support, and emphatic listening had a therapeutic value of understanding and being understood.

Data were collected through audio recordings of interviews with the expressed consent and approval of the participants, since audio or video recording improves the accuracy of the content shared in the focus group or in-

depth interview, as well as the speaker's intonations [12]. These audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and checked by the participants for confirmation, if everything was taken as it is. This is one way of controlling research bias in a research study [13].

To minimize the risks or harm that may come to the participants, anonymity of the interviewee in relation to the information shared was maintained [14]. Confidentiality of the findings and protection of the identities of the informants by using a coding system to hide their true identities were explained to them and teachers were informed that the entire database (i.e. digital voice recorders, typed transcripts, field notes, and other related materials) would be destroyed upon completion of the analysis [15]. No transcripts were left lying around or in case, it would fall into the wrong hands, it could not be traced to a particular person.

D. Data Analysis

Analysis of data in qualitative research, particularly phenomenology involves summarizing the mass of data collected and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important features [9]. Data were analyzed using a method which included data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification [16].

Data reduction is the abstraction of data from the transcriptions, deleting data which are not important and transforming it into a comprehensible material, easily understood by many. Data display on the other hand is the organization of data and showing it in the form of graphic organizers such as: matrices, charts, graphs, that would enable the viewer to draw his conclusion [13]. It is clearly showing the data in an arranged, orderly manner and the interrelationships of bits of information, readily available to the viewer.

Conclusion drawing and verification was the last step of qualitative analysis. It involves going back to consider what the analyzed data mean and to assess their aftermaths for the questions at hand, while verification, integrally linked to conclusion drawing, required revisiting the data as many times as necessary to cross-check or verify these emergent conclusions [17]. At this point, no definitive judgments were made but rather, the data were allowed to "speak for themselves" by the emergence of conceptual categories and descriptive themes.

The conceptual framework was then interpreted with reference to the related literature on the subject in an attempt to explain, with a theory, the phenomenon being studied, by the researcher with the assistance of two independent readers and analysts who are experts in the field of study to form a triangulation team wherein each examined the data and compared individual findings to obtain a deeper and broader understanding of how each investigator viewed the issue.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Bullying Incidents Experienced by Teachers

As the results of this study have revealed, bullying of teachers in the workplace, particularly in the locale mentioned is prevalent. Moreover, the bullying incidents as experienced by the teachers are not limited to one type only but comes in many forms and shapes and one is through emotional bullying. This study has confirmed that emotional bullying is not only confined to students as victims, but teachers as well.

Furthermore, a person is being subjected to emotional bullying or abuse when he is subtly or bluntly, often falsely accused of wrongdoing, and is persistently humiliated, but ironically, the victims are portrayed as the ones at fault [18]. Considering the case of Carlo (pseudonym), one of the participants who was often blamed and accused unfairly by his school head for every problem encountered in the school, humiliated publicly, rumors spread about him, his competence belittled, all of which caused emotional stress on him. People could not talk to him during those times because he seemed unstable. When he was all alone, he would suddenly cry. During his sleep at night, he would wake up because he could still hear the voice of his principal hurling insults at him. It was as if, he was slapped on the face with the painful truth that he was not fit to teach at all. Those bullying incidents started only with a single instance when he answered his principal back during a discussion.

Liza (pseudonym) on the other hand, was really affected psychologically when her head teacher spread malicious rumors about her, even questioned how she raised her children with her meager salary. She really felt that she was walking around the campus without a head. Those bullying incidents eventually drove her to resign from her job. The cases of Carlo and Liza are articulations that emotional bullying is any form of bullying that causes damage to a victim's psyche and/or emotional well-being by spreading malicious rumors about people, humiliating and ridiculing certain people, ignoring people on purpose and belittling [19].

Let's take the case of Pura (pseudonym), who painfully narrated her experience with her school head, which all started when she, together with some teachers filed a petition asking for a dialogue with the school head, to discuss some policies which the latter, being the new school head, imposed in the school. All of them who signed the petition were personally identified by the school head and they had been the subject of the school head's subjective eyes, starting with giving them the lowest rating during the ranking system, followed by disapproving or giving them difficult time with their loan applications, questioning their authority as teachers and even threatening them. Though Pura wanted to file a complaint, she doubted if anyone would hear their case.

Another form of bullying that the teachers have experienced is through verbal bullying. It is the use of face to face language to hurt or threaten others, which involves name-calling, teasing or being otherwise insulted or humiliated, especially on someone's looks or appearance [20]. Verbal bullying is usually committed as a direct assault on the victim's character, to damage his reputation [21].

We take into consideration the case of Benjie (pseudonym), who experienced public humiliation from

his co-teacher when he was shouted at, during his class in front of his students. It made him so angry that he confronted the female teacher and went to the extent of filing a complaint with the grievance committee. His case is supported by the view that co-teachers were named as responsible for 19% of workplace bullying offenses against teachers [22]. Verbal bullying in the workplace may be difficult to capture because the way it is perceived by one person may be different from the way it is perceived by another such as making insinuations, telling objectionable jokes, and teasing.

Another form of bullying is one that is easy to detect. Physical bullying is any unwanted physical contact or use of physical force by the bully to hurt or threaten the victim which includes but not limited to punching, pushing, kicking, headlocks, pinching, school pranks, fighting and use of available objects as weapons to hurt, take or damage other people's belongings [20]. This is true to the case of Dennis (pseudonym) because aside from the fact that his motorcycle which the students deliberately damaged, was important to him, what the students did was a direct insult to him. His case is also supported by the statement that 29%-30% of cases in the U.S. sample indicated students as perpetrators of workplace bullying of teachers [23].

What may be a new form of bullying is the use of technology and websites. Cyberbullying can be described as willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices, to express malicious or mean sentiments, send hurtful emails and messages and post insulting messages to another individual [20]. Another commonly used method involves posting humiliating or embarrassing information about someone in a public online forum such as chat room or web page. Most commonly used social networking site is Facebook, in posting malicious statements against a person who is physically distant. Nonetheless, though cyberbullying does not involve personal contact between an offender and victim, it remains psychologically and emotionally damaging [24].

Among the participants' responses, only one had the experience with cyberbullying. The bullying incident was triggered when Kathy (pseudonym) refused her female student along with her boyfriend in her literature class, from taking their quarterly exam because they had been absent for more than eight consecutive times which automatically dropped them from the subject, which angered the female student and posted malicious statements against her on Facebook. The bullying experience taught her a lesson not to trust easily and to act with authority when inside the classroom because according to Kathy (pseudonym), the students could not have taken her seriously because she looked too kind and fragile because of her young age and built. The bullying experiences had different contributions to the life of these teachers which are illustrated below.

B. *Contributions of Bullying Experiences to the Life of These Teachers*

Several themes emerged as contributions or effects of the bullying experiences on the teachers. The first theme that emerged was about the negative consequences on the physical health of these teachers. Effects of stress and work trauma owing to the experience of workplace bullying may manifest through physical health symptoms such as temporary high blood pressure, tension headaches, chest pains that are not related to cardiac problems, lower back pains, light headedness, panic attacks and heart problems [21]. This is true to the case of Pia (pseudonym) who suffered temporary high blood pressure at the height of her anger when she was being bullied by her co-teachers. Her co-teachers were envious of her because they thought that Pia (pseudonym) was earning a lot as manager of the school canteen. If the signs of her deteriorating health were not given attention, it could have led to something more serious.

The second theme that emerged was about the negative consequences on the psychological health of these teachers. Teachers' experiences with workplace bullying may change how they view life and can make drastic changes on their attitude because of the traumatic experience. The victim's misplaced sense of safety is accompanied by feelings of extreme anxiety and helplessness [21].

Pura (pseudonym) was too affected that even in the comforts of their home, it was always the topic of her conversation with her husband. Flashbacks of the bullying incidents kept playing at the back of her mind as if they were happening again, causing her undue stress and anxiety. Nonetheless, it was found out that majority of individuals who were subjected to such situation repeatedly and systematically had a more weakened mental health than those subjected to the same situation only once in a while [25].

Victims of long-term workplace abuse also experience symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Patricia (pseudonym), because of the bullying experience she suffered from her principal who was her friend, now became afraid to trust anyone. She became hyper-vigilant and suspicious, even to her friends because according to her, even friends would take advantage of you. Her case is further reinforced by the statement that research found that a third of women and a quarter of men experienced the key symptoms of PTSD: hypervigilance, thought intrusions, avoidance-disassociation [26].

The third theme that emerged was about the negative consequences on the social health of these teachers. Typical responses from the participants of the study revealed loss of passion for the profession, negative effects on professional and social relationships and adverse effects on work performance. Gina (pseudonym), during those times when she was still being bullied, could not concentrate on her teaching profession. She was irritable and could not focus on anything, as if her mind was always blank. This was confirmed that targeted teachers who experience rigid public scrutiny and taunting from workplace bullies may possibly cause them a sense of humiliation, making them lose their self-confidence, doubt their capacity, thereby creating fear to do their functions in school and maintain relationships with learners and colleagues [21].

Among the twenty participants, only one took the extreme of quitting her job after a long period of absence from work which is a variant response from the participants. Liza (pseudonym) got traumatized by the bullying experience, that her job, relationship with her peers and even her children got affected along the way. She was full of anger that she could not afford to stay in school anymore and finally decided to quit. Her case is an articulation of the view that some victims are affected immensely that they cannot afford to go back into the workforce, or can do so only after intensive rehabilitation therapy [27].

Though the bullying experience affected the physical, psychological and social health of most of the participants, there were some who took the experience on the contrary and even reaped some positive outcomes, the fourth theme which emerged. Some of the participants became closer to their families, felt the strong support of their families because of the experience, while others are challenged to do better and improve themselves while a few perceived it as equivalent to more blessings.

In the case of Portia (pseudonym), the bullying experience taught her to prove to those who belittled her, that they were all wrong. It made her stronger and enabled her to survive the pains brought about by the experience. This was confirmed by some who believe that their experience with bullying has made them more resilient and made them survive the tough times in their lives [28].

If most participants are negatively affected by their bullying experiences and a few experienced positive effects, a very few however are unaffected at all, which is the last theme that emerged. This is true to the cases of Iza (pseudonym), who was not affected by the experience and took the experience as something that would just come to pass and Benjie (pseudonym) who did not feel the negative effects of the bullying experience because he immediately put a stop to it by raising the issue to the grievance committee.

C. Coping Mechanisms of Teachers to Address Bullying

From the findings of the study, two themes emerged from the research question which deals with the coping mechanisms adopted by the teachers to address bullying. Based on the general responses of the participants in this study, most of them coped with bullying through personal struggle, mostly by praying and confronting the bully face to face. In the cases of Benjie, Pia and Phem (not their real names), they opted to confront the bully directly. After confronting the bully, Phem just cried it all out and prayed for spiritual guidance. Pia, on the other hand, confronted her bullies but that didn't stop the bullies from what they were doing, but the more they pinned Pia down, the more blessings came pouring on her so she just prayed for her detractors. Benjie, however, aside from confronting his bully, also filed a complaint with the grievance committee who settled the issue.

One typical way of coping with workplace bullying through personal struggle is by avoiding or ignoring the bully and trying to be strong. In the case of Patricia (pseudonym), she coped with the experience by ignoring the bully, who was also her principal. Eventually, they patched up and became friends again. The victim may ignore the bully and not fight back or sink to the bully's level by exhibiting similar behavior [29].

Only one of the participants of the study went to the extreme of leaving her profession after a prolonged absence from work, which is a variant response from the participants of the study. This was cited in the National Education Association that 10% of teachers who got bullied often take a leave of absence from work after the bullying experience [3]. Liza (pseudonym) could no longer take the bullying perpetrated by the head teacher and the administrator because it already involved her children so she thought that the best way to deal with it, was by quitting her job and leaving the organization.

The other theme that emerged was group support. Group support also plays a vital role in coping with workplace bullying. Typical responses from the participants of the study include asking assistance from higher authorities, reporting to school head, sharing the bullying experience with co-teachers, family and friends, and spending time with them. Portia (pseudonym) and Phoebe (pseudonym) survived the bullying experiences because they had their friends and families to confide with. Getting emotional support from family and friends, telling people that you trust like co-workers who are truly understanding and supportive, finding yourself an ally and letting people know and share your experiences are ways of coping with workplace bullying [30].

Helen (pseudonym) tried to address the bullying by seeking assistance from the barangay captain to serve as mediator because the PTA (Parents and Teachers Association) of the school got furious at her because of the false accusations by the school head, that she used the PTA money to fund the construction of the school building, and it was the barangay captain who initiated the settlement. Her case is further accentuated that a bullied person has to speak to someone with higher authority about how to deal with the problem of bullying and having the bullying incidents properly documented or logged, so it would be easier to explain the situation and hopefully have the higher authorities assess and address the bullying situation [29].

However, it was cited that if the problem of bullying cannot be solved informally, the victim may file a formal complaint and follow the grievance procedure, but the facts of the incidents have to be stated clearly [30]. This is what Benjie (pseudonym) did, by writing a letter of complaint addressed to the Department Head and it was settled peacefully from Dean to Dean.

D. Implications for Practice

On the bullying incidents experienced by teachers from their bullies in their workplaces, the results imply that the Philippines needs new laws to address the complex issues of bullying involving teachers as victims. With the new Anti-Bullying Law of 2013, primary and secondary schools are required to formulate policies against bullying and the corresponding administrative procedure for its implementation. However, this new

Anti-Bullying Law is confined to acts of bullying between students, still for the protection of children in schools [31], neglecting that teachers also need to be protected especially with the growing boldness now of students with the use of the internet and cellphones, which gives them easy access to harm their teachers [24]. The results imply that the government may need to pass new anti-bullying laws, explicitly protecting teachers from workplace bullying.

With the possible passage of a new anti-bullying law, specifically for the protection of teachers, the Department of Education (DepED for brevity) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED for brevity) may institute a whole school prevention framework and formulate a standing policy to address the bullying of teachers in their workplaces [3] and conduct periodic assessments if schools are strictly enforcing its implementation, evaluate its effectiveness, promote transparency on the expectations, rewards and punishments and accountability that should be clear and visible to the school staff and teachers, and clearly define the roles of every staff and employee [32]. The anti-bullying policy includes the methods of handling bullying cases and complaints.

The results of these bullying incidents experienced by teachers, mostly perpetrated by school heads and authority figures in schools imply that the academe may need to provide values and character formation seminars to school heads to remind them of their roles & responsibilities in school and be able to model high standards for interpersonal interaction and organizational culture, values development system for school heads, teachers and the whole school staff, so the problem of bullying will no longer occur [3].

The issue of workplace bullying clearly indicates that school heads have to provide professional development trainings for teachers to raise awareness of the different forms of bullying and motivate them as well, to assert their rights [33] because apparently, teachers lack the training and orientation with respect to handling bullying in the workplace.

On the contributions of these bullying experiences to the life of these teachers, the results clearly showed the negative consequences of the bullying experiences on the teachers' physical health such as stress-related illnesses, negative consequences on psychological health such as anger and avoidance and negative consequences on social health such as absenteeism and leaving the profession due to workplace bullying. It simply implies that the academe really need to make efforts to manage stress in school, by providing a positive school climate, free from conflict and provide social-emotional skills trainings to help victims regulate their emotions and reduce aggression [3].

The results of these negative health consequences on the teachers because of bullying also imply that the academe may not only consider the effects of bullying on the teachers but the more subtle ways in which teachers may remain employed but disengaged—essentially, "retiring on the job" which means teachers producing low quality teaching [34]. Dissatisfaction with their job because of the unjust situation that they are in, produces stress on these teachers, and consequently, the different negative health consequences. This is a very important matter, if the academe wants to produce quality products, hence, implying that the academe needs to ensure that teachers will not be subjected to degrading and inappropriate behavior and for school authorities to devise strategies so that all teachers receive fair treatment and respect, beginning with how teachers can be evaluated fairly and objectively and establishing consequences for failure to comply with expectations of appropriate behavior, thus preventing the occurrence of bullying [35].

On the coping mechanisms of teachers to address bullying, the results showed that teachers opted to cope with the experience through personal struggle and group support. This implies that the academe may need to provide a support system for teachers such as education unions, which offer several approaches to support teachers who are being bullied in the workplace, ensure proper grievance procedures and representations for teachers in cases of bullying [3]. Ensuring self-care and social support is especially important which means taking time off, trying not to take the experience personally, and spending time with trusted others [27].

E. Implications for Future Research

In as much as this study is limited to the public and private schools in Davao City and Davao del Sur, Philippines, the following future researches are recommended:

Since the findings of this study are not generalizable beyond the twenty (20) participants, future research may be conducted on the bullying experiences of teachers in the workplace with another group of participants in order to strengthen and validate the findings of this study.

Second, future research may be conducted on bullying of teachers in other parts of Region XI in the Philippines and other regions to add to the research base and gather more information and insights from other victims of bullying.

Third, future research may be conducted to investigate whether workplace bullies in the teaching profession actually portray characteristics of anti-social personality disorder or psychopathy since based on transcripts, bullies in the teaching profession portray a sense of wickedness.

Fourth, further research may be conducted to identify preferred and effective intervention strategies to address workplace bullying in the teaching profession and prevent the loss of good teachers in the academe.

Fifth, a different research may be conducted, documenting how principals respond and act to complaints and grievances of workplace bullying by educators.

The findings of this study were viewed from the lens of the teachers. Further research may be conducted to determine the students' and school heads' views and insights on bullying of teachers in the workplace to confirm the findings of this study.

F. Concluding Remarks

This study saw the varied experiences of teachers with workplace bullying. Based on the responses of teacher victims during the interview, a common definition of workplace bullying emerged, which is, any adverse treatment towards another with a deliberate intent to harm, applying power over the victim, thereby creating a hostile work environment, arousing fear and tension, putting the victim in a vulnerable and uncomfortable manner.

For most of the teachers victimized by their school heads or persons of authority in their school, they started to be bullied when they questioned the decisions or policies of their school heads. The bullying there fore, was to prove to the targeted teacher that they were in control and their authority should not be questioned. This is supported by the view that the bullies' aggressive behavior is to prove their power and authority over others, and because they are in authority, they have the tendency to abuse their position [33].

From all the interviews with the twenty participants, almost all of those victimized by their school heads did not file a complaint or case in court against their abusers, simply because of fear of reprisal. Educational institutions with autocratic leaders are most likely to have bullying incidents in their school, perpetrated by the school heads themselves since it is easy for them to bully because teachers are given low autonomy in school and are evaluated subjectively [36]. Knowing that court cases in the Philippines take too long to be acted upon and to be decided, and may even be influenced by political figures, this prevents teachers from complaining against their perpetrators, knowing that their abusers could easily retaliate against them.

On the other hand, it is easier for teachers bullied by their students to take action against the latter and elevate the bullying incident to higher authorities because teachers have more power and authority over the students in school, unless they are up against a large group of students. We could clearly see that "power" is a significant factor in bullying.

Teachers who were bullied by their peers or co-teachers had different experiences and responses to the bullying incidents. From the interviews, it is clear that teachers lack the training and the awareness with bullying which makes them vulnerable. Some of them did not even recognize that they were being bullied until such time that the bullying was already severe. Most of them opted to ignore the bullying and just resorted to prayer and emotional support from family and friends. Based on their stories, it emerged that teachers bullied by their peers appeared to be either weak or posed as a threat to their bullies.

Moreover, teachers teaching in the public schools especially in the grade school level disclosed that it is the organizational culture in the school that people engage in gossiping and teasing. It is apparent that when schools are managed poorly by its school heads, there is a tendency that the school climate will be chaotic and teachers will have no clear direction in their work, which could generate competition and envy among them. As a result, everyone wants to get ahead of others. Sadly, the crab mentality of Filipinos come in, a way of thinking best described as "if I can't have it, neither can you" which explains why teachers destroy and malign their co-teachers to reach their way to the top. However, school heads refuse to admit the existence of bullying in their schools because they are afraid that it will reflect poorly on their leadership.

From the findings of the study, the bullying incidents generally had negative effects on the lives of the teachers. The health of some of them suffered tremendously and most of them suffered emotionally and psychologically. Though every one of them coped with the experience eventually, the bullying experience already left a mark on their whole being. It is quite unfortunate that teachers who are crucial to our children's education, the very people who mold the youth, being the future leaders of our nation, are given low regard in this country. It is such a waste to see schools lose good teachers due to bullying. If in other countries, teachers are one of the highest paid workers, it does not apply in the Philippines. If only, there are anti-bullying policies in the Philippines, explicitly for the protection of teachers, bullying incidents can be minimized, if not eliminated. Unfortunately, nobody can expect its total eradication even with the presence of anti-bullying policies because in the Philippines, there are applicable laws but not all are strictly enforced. I regret to say that enforcement of some laws in the country can be influenced by people who are in power and those on top.

The contributions of this study lies in the availability of the teachers' views and insights on bullying of teachers in the workplace and the concepts derived from the results. It also opens opportunities for future researches in other areas of bullying of teachers that have not been explored yet.

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