

Measuring Primary School Students' Attitude Toward School Bullying in China

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Abstract

In China, school bullying has been a controversial topic, which has attracted the attention of society and schools. Bullying among school children has become a very common phenomenon. In addition, there are many kinds of bullying, from physical bullying to relationship bullying. In most cases, teachers cannot be aware of the existence of harassment in time. It is true that the relationship and contact between students and teachers are so limited that they cannot find problems immediately. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the students' true attitude towards bullying. This study designed a questionnaire for primary school students' interpersonal relationships to understand their attitudes towards bullying. Use SPSS software to sort out the final version of the questionnaire. This study uses SPSS software to sort out the final version of the questionnaire, which provides a reference for improving the mental health of basic education.

Keywords

School Bullying; Attitude; Mental Health; Primary Students; Quantitative Study.

1. Introduction

School bullying has been a controversial topic that gets attention both from society and schools. Undoubtedly, harassment among school children is a very common phenomenon. Many literature work supported that many adults experienced different types of harassment when they were in school (Olweus, 1993). Due to types of bullying are various from physical to relational, teachers, at most times, cannot be aware of the existence of harassment behaviors on time. Olweus (1993) emphasized from data that 65% of primary school students in Norway reported that their teachers never or rarely intervened in other students' bullying acts. More seriously, 85% of secondary/ junior school students claimed that their teachers never discuss bully with them even though some students are suffering. This result proves that schoolteachers pay little attention to bullying among students and hardly any action to stop this behavior. Admittedly, the relationship and contacts between students and teachers are so limited that they are not able to find issues immediately (Olweus, 1993).

Therefore, the development of this scale is based on the consideration of students' physical and mental development. Because schoolteachers and related administrators cannot accurately know whether there is unreasonable bullying among students, this scale can help teachers build awareness of whether students have a tendency to bully others, so as to prevent and avoid more serious bullying result.

2. Literature Review

Bullying is portrayed by dull forceful conduct, occupied by an individual or friend bunch with more force than the casualty. The rehashed hostility can be either immediate (for example verbally abusing, beating) or social with the expectation to harm connections (for example spreading bits of gossip) (Wolke et al., 2000). Relationship bullying is very common, and it is

also a bullying situation often overlooked by teachers and parents. Different from physical violence, relationship bullying usually manifests as a group of people neglecting a certain individual. Victims will be isolated and squeezed out by the whole group, so that they cannot get a sense of identity in the group, causing serious psychological trauma. Children who are bullied often do not choose to inform their teachers or parents because they fear retaliation. More importantly, even if the teacher is informed, the teacher's failure to give a reasonable solution will only make the victim's situation more difficult. Previous researches proved strong evidence that children who engaged in bullying either as a victim or bully in primary or secondary schools undertake the increased risks of mental issues in adolescence age (Lereya, Copeland, Zammit & Wolke, 2015). Therefore, no matter what kind of bullying type, it will eventually cause immeasurable consequences for the student's physical or psychological health. As Rigby mentioned (2005) students in primary school are more frequently involved in bullying than in secondary school. What's more, the rate of bullying even increased after these students attend secondary school. They also show a less sympathetic attitude toward victims as they get older. On the one hand, students' attitude toward victims is significantly related to their bully behaviors. Rigby (2005) suggested that higher empathetic feelings toward victims inhibit aggressive behaviors while decreasing the possibilities of physical or verbal abusing. On the other hand, children in primary school are vulnerable to external influences. Thus, how other people behave under certain circumstances will affect their beliefs and behavior. For instance, when a imitate friend or classmate expects to be supportive and helpful to victims, students have pressure to do the same. In contrast, they can also become part of bullying groups once their friends and classmates do the same thing (Rigby, 2005). Therefore, paying attention to school violence during elementary school and timely assistance to victims is one of the key factors to prevent subsequent victims from being persecuted. If the teachers are not able to find the problem in time, the students, whether as victims, perpetrators, or bystanders, will reduce their empathy and are likely to become perpetrators in the future.

China's education system is a rather special existence. Teachers are authoritative representatives in schools. Therefore, all students must follow the instructions of the teacher and must respect everything the teacher says. From the moment a student enters the school gate, the teacher is obliged to pay attention to every move of the student at all times. However, even under such high-density attention, school violence is still a very common situation (Arndt & Luo, 2008). Cao and Yang (2018) conducted related research in rural China. They recruited 1452 students from grades 4 to 9 and asked them to take the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ) aiming at identifying both students who are being bullied or bullied. The result consistently showed that 262 students in the sample have been bullying in the past 3 months (Cao & Yang, 2018). In the other words, almost 20% of students endured school violence. The high violence probability also reminds the serious issues that we faced in China. Both for a bully or a victim, are equally at an expanded danger of developing a scope of emotional wellness issues such as depression, anxiety, or even suicide. They also used to be alone at school while even reject to regularly attend schools. Furthermore, the identity of bullies and victims is convertible. Individuals who get victim yet also can menace others; in another word, bullies may also be a victim (Cao & Yang, 2018). Therefore, we can see from the data that school violence is still one of the most common problems. Therefore, improving teachers and school management's awareness of violence is one of the factors that prevent subsequent influences.

Most studies on school bullying focus on the period from middle school to high school and ignore the elementary school period, which is the ultimate goal for children's personality growth. Especially in the context of Chinese culture and social structure, people firmly believe that elementary school students are a very innocent group. Therefore, they attribute the bullying phenomenon in school to the phenomenon of slapstick play among children. Furthermore, academic literature has suggested that the reason for bullying at school are

complex. Yet students' attitude toward bullying is significant for schoolteachers and managers to implement related solutions (Rigby, 2005). Moreover, bullying can stimulate various negative effects on children's mental development either as the bully side of the victim one. Even if amounts of researches already focus on the criteria of school bullying subject worldwide, the issue is still especially rough in China. Since there is rarely scales subjecting to primary school's students' attitude toward bullying, the research will focus on making useful scales to assess attitudes of primary students. Furthermore, the scale is designed for elementary school students who are in one of the most significant stages of constructing positive qualities, in which teachers are easier to find out students' issues and reinforce positive behaviors than later development stages. Therefore, the attitude scale aims at increase teachers' awareness of students' potential bullying behaviors and make immediate prevention plans.

3. Pilot Testing

The overall questions are divided into relational bullying and physical bullying categories. On the one hand, relational bullying refers to relationship attacks which is a harmful manipulation of peer relationships or friendship. That usually cause a negative impact on students' life or development through behaviors such as exclude others from a certain group or spread gossips or rumors about someone. On the other hand, physical bullying consists of a range of actions including hitting, kicking, pushing, or taking others' belongings. (Wolke et al., 2000). These two types of bullying forms are used as a component of the 20 items. Among them, these two forms are subdivided into behavior, cognitive, and affect structures to increase the effectiveness of the problem from multiple angles. Since the target population is relatively young, no double-sided form of items such as positive or negative is designed.

The first version (see Appendix 1) is sent to experts to review each items' structures, statements and factor elements. Comments by experts are used to finalize the version for students (see Appendix 2). In the revision of the question, the overall opinions given by the experts are in a unified format and increase the readability of the question. Among them, most items are suggested to be modified to make the meaning more straightforward, because the audience is elementary school students. On the contrary, for items whose meaning is too negative, the format of sentences is also revised. For instance, one of the items "It is ok to start a fight with someone I dislike" is reworded to "Sometimes fighting is the only way to solve problems". The new version tends to be more comprehensive and straightforward for primary school children. Moreover, some of the items are not clear in meaning which might confuse students. for example, when the sentence "It is okay to take classmate's breakfast" is reworded to "It is okay to take classmate's breakfast without permission", the meaning becomes easier to understand by the target group. Although none of the items were discarded, most of the items were revised and reworded under the expert's reviews and suggestions. The finalized 20 items scale is more appropriate and interpretative for the target group.

4. Quantitatively Try-Out

The sample population is composed of 78 primary school participants from a range of areas in China (see Table 1). The target population has various social backgrounds, who are also different in grade and age. Due to the geological issues, most parts of the participants filled the questionnaires online, and a few participants finished it in person. The questionnaires have two language versions: Chinese (see Table 2) and English. Thus, students from international schools can choose to fill the English version form, but others from local Chinese primary schools use the Chinese Version.

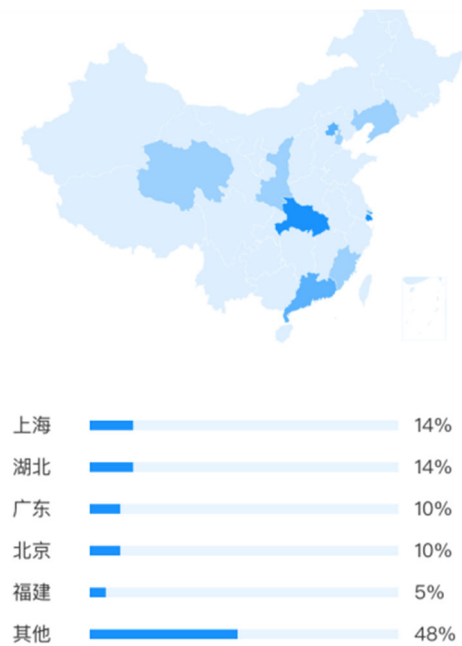


Figure 1. Population Areas

The 78 primary students need to mark their selections on the scale form. The Chinese version questionnaires are assigned by cooperating with primary school teachers and parents. Participants indicate their options under the instructions of their teachers and parents. We informed and required teachers and parents to let children know that the study keeps their anonymity and confidentiality, hence they should select the true options from their sincere sense. Moreover, teachers and parents need to assure and explain to students that the questionnaires are no wrong or right answers, which means students only need to anonymously indicate their true selections.



Figure 2. Primary School Students' Attitude toward Interpersonal Relationship

The finalized 20 items (see Appendix 3) aim at assessing students' attitudes from relational bullying and physical bullying perspectives, which were designed based on effect, behavior, and cognitive factors. The scale is in a Likert format but only consisting of four options, since the target population is primary students who might be confused by a "Neutral" option. Therefore, participants require to make responses from the 4 options (4 = I agree a lot, 3 = I agree a little, 2 = I disagree a little, 1 = I disagree a lot). According to the questionnaires, a higher score represents a more supportive attitude toward bullying. In detail, students who have a higher grade above average are more likely of performing bullying behaviors. The final scale will remind teachers and parents to have an early intervention on time.

The 78 participants' responses were calculated through SPSS into item-correlations from mean, variance, and standard deviation. Cronbach analysis is mainly used to evaluate the consistency

of continuous variables and ordinal categorical variables and is suitable for the research data of this study.

5. Data Analysis

The mean score of 78 respondents in the 20 items is 25.56 and in the 18 items is 22.47. The sum of the highest score and lowest score in the 20 items is 80 and 20, and in the 18 items is 72 and 18 respectively (see Appendix 4). Thus, the midpoint score for 20 items and 18 items is 50 and 45 respectively. Comparing the 78 participants' mean score (25.56 and 22.47) and midpoint (50 and 45) score from the scale range, the primary students have a positive attitude toward school bullying, which means they are less likely to bully others at school.

As can be seen from the table, this study has 78 valid data ("Valid" row), no missing data ("Excluded" row), and the total sample size is 78 cases ("Total" row).

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	78	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	78	100.0

Cronbach's Alpha Value represents data's internal consistency and reliability, while a reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is considered to be acceptable (DeVellis, 2017). In this study, the Cronbach's coefficient value of the 20 items for measuring students' attitude toward bullying is 0.938, which indicates that these 20 items have high internal consistency.

Furthermore, the data in the "Corrected Item-Total Correlation" column refers to the Pearson correlation coefficient of each specific item and other items. If the index is less than 0.3, we consider that the item is not relevant to other items and can be eliminated (DeVellis, 2017). In this study, all the values in the "Corrected Item-Total Correlation" column are greater than 0.3, that is, there is no need to exclude items.

Moreover, the degree of agreement between items is related to the measurement content. The larger the value of Cronbach's α coefficient, the stronger the internal agreement (DeVellis, 2017). It can be seen from the Cronbach's Alpha (see appendix 4) if Item Deleted column that when the item 1 and 2 are eliminated, Cronbach's α coefficient increases from 0.938 to 0.941. Therefore, item 1 and 2 will be removed from the last version of scale. Since the Cronbach's Alpha Value will decrease if other items are removed, the last 18 items will be the final version of the scale.

6. Discussion

The attitude scale is conducted to provide an insight for Chinese primary schools about students' attitudes toward school bullying. Items are analyzed from behavior, affect, and cognitive perspectives both in types of relational bullying and physical bullying. Undoubtedly, students define and perform bullying in distinctive ways. Thus, both internal and external bullying or relational and physical bullying are significant factors of measurements. In this case, the scale maximized its validity by cooperating with different experts and considering factor themes into items. The validity of the data still needs further verification.

Taber (2017) mentioned that it is hard to test the reliability of instruments such as attitude scales or knowledge tests just by repeated reading, especially in educational research. Admittedly, students are continually changing because of encounters between instrument

organizations and because of the experience of the estimation interaction itself. Thus, they may respond to a bunch of inquiries, and that every movement may set in chain thinking measures that lead to new experiences or further combination of information. A day, week, or a month later, these students may address similar inquiries distinctively for no other explanation than that reacting to the first test gave a learning experience (Taber, 2017). Thus, in future research, a re-test measurement is necessary to improve the scale's validity. For instance, researchers could send the scale to different primary schools and expand the target populations' range of age and grades. Furthermore, since girls and boys usually play different bullying behaviors, their conceptions toward the attitude scale items are different. For current factor analysis, we can also take gender differences into consideration, which is also helpful to improve validity.

In summary, school violence is still one of the most serious social problems in China. Therefore, the school should provide a systematic and reasonable solution. One of the effective ways to prevent violence is to set a scale and regularly measure the potential violent tendency of students. In the future improvement of the scale, it is recommended that the types of school violence be detailed, such as adding factors such as verbal and online bullying to ensure the validity and reliability of the scale and data.

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Appendix 1

Draft Pool

Version 1: For Expert Review

Primary School Students' Attitude toward bullying

Response Categories:

I agree a lot (4)

I agree a little (3)

I disagree a little (2)

I disagree a lot (1)

	Factor theme	P/N	Constructs	Items	Remain/Discard/Reword	Comments
1	Physical Bullying	P	Behavior	It is ok to start a fight with someone I dislike.	Reword	Students may not clearly understand the meaning of the sentence
2	Physical Bullying	P	Behavior	It is ok to push my classmates	Reword	The sentence is over negative and not really clear in meaning
3	Physical Bullying	P	Behavior	It is ok to throw others' books	Reword	Students may not clearly understand the meaning of sentence
4	Physical Bullying	P	Behavior	It is ok to hide other students' homework	Reword	Clarify the sentence
5	Physical Bullying	N	Cognitive	I threat classmates to get what I want	Reword	Clarify the sentence and make it easier to understand for primary students
6	Physical Bullying	N	Cognitive	It is important to show my authority by punching	Reword	Make the sentence more straightforward, because your target population is primary students
7	Physical Bullying	P	Affect	I like to encourage my friends to fight	Remain	
8	Physical Bullying	P	Cognitive	It is not a big deal to hit students if they are annoying	Reword	Too complicated sentence. Simplified it.
9	Physical Bullying	P	Affect	I like to take classmate's breakfast	Reword	Add a "without permission" will be better for students to understand
10	Relational Bullying	P	Cognitive	It is normal that students speak others' gossips, so it is ok for me to do the same	Remain	

11	Relational Bullying	P	Affect	I feel funny to mock at others' looks	Remain	
12	Relational Bullying	P	Affect	I like to give my classmates a nickname	Remain	
13	Relational Bullying	N	Cognitive	I excluded someone I do not like from my clique of friends	Remain	
14	Relational Bullying	P	Affect	It is ok to make fun of someone's weight	Reword	Make the sentence straightforward, simplify it! "I like to"
15	Relational Bullying	N	Cognitive	I do not care if my classmates are unfairly judged	Remain	Good
16	Relational Bullying	N	Cognitive	Students have lower grade should get little respect	Reword	Double barriers. It is also a tricky question for kids.
17	Relational Bullying	N	Cognitive	I isolated classmates who are always different from mine.	Remain	
18	Relational Bullying	N	Cognitive	Sometimes, it is necessary to threat my classmates to get what I want	Remain	
19	Relational Bullying	N	Cognitive	When most of classmates ignoring someone, I joined in	Remain	
20	Relational Bullying	P	Cognitive	Some students deserve to be isolated	Remain	

Appendix 2

For quantitative try-out

***The survey will be anonymous and keep confidentiality

Please click [] in the appropriate box



My Age is ____

My grade is ____

Do note that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

Please mark the response which best applies to you.

	Items	I disagree a lot	I disagree a little	I agree a little	I agree a lot
1	Sometimes fighting is the only way to solve problems				
2	I should push away the classmate who is blocking my way				
3	It is not a big deal to mock at other students' looks				
4	I can laugh at students with poor academic grades.				
5	I like to make jokes about other's weight				
6	I can threat classmates to get what I want				
7	Hiding another student's homework is not a serious problem				
8	Some students deserve to be isolated				
9	It is okay to take classmate's breakfast without permission				
10	I isolated classmates who are always different from mine				
11	I use my fists to show my authority and power				
12	It is normal for students to speak gossips, so it is ok for me to do the same				
13	I do not care if my classmates are unfairly judged				
14	I think it is funny to draw doodles on other people's books				
15	Sometimes, it is necessary to threat someone to get what I want				
16	I like to encourage my friends to fight				
17	I hit students who are annoying me				
18	I like to give my classmates a funny nickname				
19	I excluded someone I do not like from my clique of friends				
20	When most of classmates ignoring someone, I joined in				

 Thank You for Your Response! 

Appendix 3

Final Version

***The survey will be anonymous and keep confidentiality

Please click [] in the appropriate box



My Age is ____

My grade is ____

Do note that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

Please mark the response which best applies to you.

	Items	I disagree a lot	I disagree a little	I agree a little	I agree a lot
1	It is not a big deal to mock at other students' looks				
2	I can laugh at students with poor academic grades.				
3	I like to make jokes about other's weight				
4	I can threat classmates to get what I want				
5	Hiding another student's homework is not a serious problem				
6	Some students deserve to be isolated				
7	It is okay to take classmate's breakfast without permission				
8	I should isolate classmates who are always different from mine				
9	I use my fists to show my authority and power				
10	It is normal for students to speak gossips, so it is ok for me to do the same				
11	I do not care if my classmates are unfairly judged				
12	I think it is funny to draw doodles on other people's books				
13	Sometimes, it is necessary to threat someone to get what I want				
14	I like to encourage my friends to fight				
15	I hit students who are annoying me				
16	I like to give my classmates a funny nickname				
17	I excluded someone I do not like from my clique of friends				
18	When most of classmates ignoring someone, I joined in				

 Thank You for Your Response! 

Appendix 4

SPSS DATA

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
Sometimes fighting is the only way to solve problems	78	1.6410	.88236	.779	.492	DELETED
I should push away the classmate who is blocking my way	78	1.4487	.74985	.562	.458	DELETED
It is not a big deal to mock at other students' looks	78	1.1795	.57533	.331	.512	.494
I can laugh at students with poor academic grades.	78	1.0769	.38710	.150	.746	.741
I like to make jokes about other's weight	78	1.1667	.54455	.297	.594	.567
I can threat classmates to get what I want	78	1.1026	.49908	.249	.748	.761
Hiding another student's homework is not a serious problem	78	1.1667	.54455	.297	.702	.710
Some students deserve to be isolated	78	1.2949	.74046	.548	.658	.663
It is okay to take classmate's breakfast without permission	78	1.0897	.43203	.187	.660	.683
I should isolate classmates who are always different from mine	78	1.1667	.52016	.271	.775	.775
I use my fists to show my authority and power	78	1.1667	.49456	.245	.799	.786
It is normal for students to speak gossips, so it is ok for me to do the same	78	1.4744	.75118	.564	.688	.699
I do not care if my classmates are unfairly judged	78	1.2179	.57315	.329	.618	.627
I think it is funny to draw doodles on other people's books	78	1.1923	.58238	.339	.675	.682
Sometimes, it is necessary to threat someone to get what I want	78	1.1667	.52016	.271	.778	.792
I like to encourage my friends to fight	78	1.1154	.42582	.181	.737	.728
I hit students who are annoying me	78	1.7308	1.00225	1.004	.632	.637
I like to give my classmates a funny nickname	78	1.4231	.84545	.715	.737	.750
I excluded someone I do not like from my clique of friends	78	1.3333	.78404	.615	.666	.673
When most of classmates ignoring someone, I joined in	78	1.4103	.74617	.557	.725	.716

Scale Statistics

Sample Size, N=78

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
25.5641	78.197	8.84291	20	.938

(Scale Range: 20-80)

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value
22.4744	64.253	8.01577	18	.941

(Scale Range: 18-72)

Item-Total Statistics				
Items	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Sometimes fighting is the only way to solve problems	23.9231	70.150	.492	.940
I should push away the classmate who is blocking my way	24.1154	71.818	.458	.939
It is not a big deal to mock at other students' looks	24.3846	72.837	.512	.937
I can laugh at students with poor academic grades.	24.4872	73.110	.746	.935
I like to make jokes about other's weight	24.3974	72.398	.594	.936
I can threat classmates to get what I want	24.4615	71.628	.748	.934
Hiding another student's homework is not a serious problem	24.3974	71.437	.702	.935
Some students deserve to be isolated	24.2692	69.524	.658	.935
It is okay to take classmate's breakfast without permission	24.4744	73.136	.660	.936
I should isolate classmates who are always different from mine	24.3974	71.126	.775	.934
I use my fists to show my authority and power	24.3974	71.282	.799	.933
It is normal for students to speak gossips, so it is ok for me to do the same	24.0897	69.044	.688	.934
I do not care if my classmates are unfairly judged	24.3462	71.866	.618	.936
I think it is funny to draw doodles on other people's books	24.3718	71.224	.675	.935
Sometimes, it is necessary to threat someone to get what I want	24.3974	71.100	.778	.934
I like to encourage my friends to fight	24.4487	72.666	.737	.935
I hit students who are annoying me	23.8333	66.842	.632	.937
I like to give my classmates a funny nickname	24.1410	67.266	.737	.934
I excluded someone I do not like from my clique of friends	24.2308	68.907	.666	.935
When most of classmates ignoring someone, I joined in	24.1538	68.677	.725	.934

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Item No. (After Deleted)
.938	20	/
.940	19	1
.941	18	2