

## Teachers' Perspectives on Bullying: A Crucial Step Towards Safer School Environments

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**Abstract:** Workplace Teachers' Perspectives on Bullying: A Crucial Step Towards Safer School Environments. **Objectives:** This study aims to examine teachers' understanding of bullying acts. **Method:** This study is qualitative research with a case study approach. A semi-structured interview and Multimedia Discourse Completion Tasks (MDCTs) were employed to collect the research data. **Findings:** The findings revealed that almost all the teacher participants possess an excellent understanding of bullying. They based their examination of bullying acts on several risk factors, such as physical features or body build, externalizing behaviour, self-esteem, social skills and popularity, and delinquency. Additionally, the foundations they utilized in categorizing bullying acts included intent to hurt, power disparity, and long-term repetition. **Conclusion:** In conclusion, teachers are expected to be more sensitive to bullying acts and they can use their knowledge to prevent bullying in the school environment.

**Keywords:** bullying, teacher's understanding of bullying, bullying risk factors, bullying categories.

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### ■ INTRODUCTION

Bullying is defined by scholars (e.g., Houbre et al., 2006; Magin, 2013; Smith and Brain, 2000) as repeated and aggressive behaviour involving a power imbalance. It can manifest as physical, verbal, or social harm to individuals who are less powerful and hence it has negative psychological and health effects. In other words, bullying is an aggressive act that inflicts injury upon other persons in the sphere of social power discrepancy (Volk et al., 2014).

The effects of bullying can be detrimental as it can lead to depression and suicide incidents in adolescents (Turner, et al 2013). Chronic exposure to bullying can create health risks, including psychiatric disturbances and increased risk of disease (Zarate-Garza et al., 2017). It can harm the target person's physical and mental health and it reduces their adaptation to adult

roles, including maintaining social relationships and doing everyday work (Wolke & Lereya, 2013). Not only the victims, but the bullies will suffer too. Vanderbilt and Augustyn (2010) assert that bullying disadvantages both victims and bullies. Victims are commonly at high risk of suffering from emotional syndromes, meanwhile the bullies themselves suffer long-term poor psychological effects (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). In childhood bullying, victims are at a high risk of suffering from psychological problems, meanwhile bullies are at risk of externalizing criminality. As they grow up as adults, the bullying they experienced in early life can affect their psychopathology and criminality (Klomek et al., 2015).

Today educators have witnessed the acts of bullying in schools with alarming frequency and it occurs almost every hour in the classroom and

is related to the type of classroom activity and individual characteristics (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Jacquart et al. (2006) assert that bullying in a school setting can take the forms of violent behaviours, mockery, or humiliation among students. Salmon and West (2000) affirm that school bullying significantly impacts the victims' physical and mental health. As reported in a study by Abed et al. (2023) bullying among students is a very serious problem. This often causes poor academic achievements and mental health problems. Hutzell and Payne (2012) avowed that bullying victimization leads to students avoiding school locations as they often recall and perceive schools as bad setting in which they experience incidents of victimization. Bullying in schools negatively impacts victims' mental health, physical health, and academic achievement, and school-based interventions can help reduce its negative effects (Graham, 2016). As reported by Samara et al. (2021), students with bullying behaviour are less likely to be academically active. They are less motivated, have lower self-esteem, and have inferior academic attainment. Young-Jones et al (2021) asserted that bullying victims in college will experience significantly lower academic motivation and basic psychological needs and this can potentially impact their educational outcomes.

Teachers have a crucial role in preventing school bullying through various strategies. According to Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier (2008), teachers can make an intervention in order to cope with peer victimization at schools. Teachers can manage and prevent bullying acts by demonstrating appropriate behaviours and dealing with it effectively (James et. al., 2008). According to Tucker & Maunder (2015), to prevent bullying, teachers can use a holistic approach to bullying, such as focusing on empathy development and teaching social skills to support their students' social and emotional welfare. Direct Sanctions, while common, may not be more effective than alternative strategies and

could lead to less sustainable outcomes in bullying intervention. Burger et al. (2015) advise teachers to apply non-punitive actions, and involvement of teachers, parents, or other adult members to reduce classroom bullying. Therefore, as asserted by Rigby (2011), teachers require better training and understanding assessments about which approaches to use in particular situations can help reduce classroom bullying. Importantly, teachers should take treatment programs to increase their knowledge and use of bullying intervention skills and reduce classroom bullying (Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004).

Understanding bullying words by non-native English teachers is crucial. Smith and Brain (2000) affirmed that understanding bullying words can be used as an effective intervention strategy to prevent bullying in schools. As understanding bullying language requires a systematic examination of power dynamics, social structures, and linguistic details, English teachers must be cautious not only in identifying overt instances of bullying but also in recognizing the more covert forms that may often evade detection. By understanding bullying language, they would be able to foster safer and more inclusive learning environments conducive to both academic success and the emotional well-being of their students. Furthermore, understanding bullying language equips them to teach students how to address such behaviour, and therefore it can foster resilience and promote a culture of respect and empathy. By integrating discussions on bullying language into English teaching, teachers not only enhance their students' language skills but also cultivate critical thinking and foster inclusive communication practices.

Bullying has been studied in several areas, such as in psychology (e.g., Gonçalves et al., 2021; Barbero et al., 2020; Santosa, 2022), in education (e.g., Çalýpkan et al., 2019; Goodwin et al., 2019; Walters, 2021), in social interaction

(e.g., Wiertsema et al., 2022 ; Hellström & Beckman, 2020). These studies have pointed out that bullying has negative impacts on the psychology of individuals who are bullied. Although there has been growing research on bullying however, there has been limited research in Indonesia that has examined how bullying in English is used by bullies. Nor has research been conducted on how non-native English teachers comprehend of bullying in English.

This research aims to study the understanding of bullying acts, including verbal ones, by English teachers in Central Java, Indonesia, and the reasons or foundations to evaluate the bullying. By examining their understanding of various forms of bullying, including verbal harassment, and micro-aggressions, the study could provide valuable information about the underlying mechanisms through which teachers comprehend bullying. By understanding bullying acts, teachers could prevent bullying behaviour in the classrooms. Teachers are figures who are expected to guide their students and they play an important role in reducing school bullying.

## ■ METHOD

### Research Design and Procedures

A qualitative research design with a case study approach was employed in this research. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with the participants to gather rich and detailed information about their perspectives, understanding, and reasons related to the topic under study. The interview data were transcribed and analysed aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives.

### Participants

The research was conducted in Central Java, Indonesia. A total of 25 English teachers took part in the study. Their experience of teaching

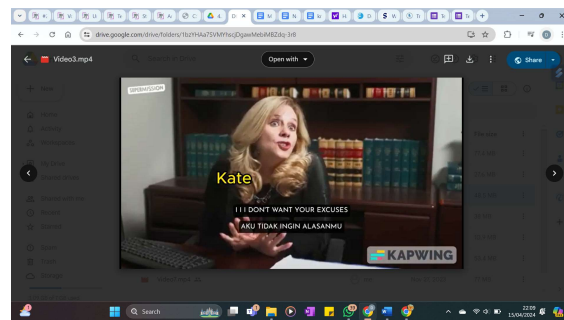
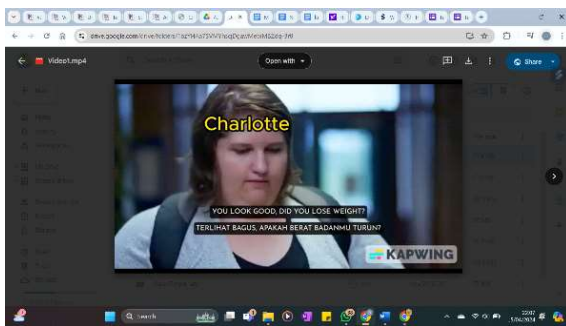
English ranged from 1 – 10 years. By using purposive sampling, the study selected the participants based on pre-set criteria. Before their involvement in the research, participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They were given the opportunity to ask questions and make an informed decision about their participation. Additionally, participants were informed about the recording of data, such as audio or video recordings during interviews or observations.

### Instruments

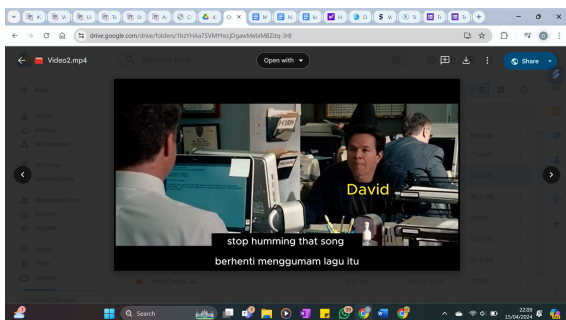
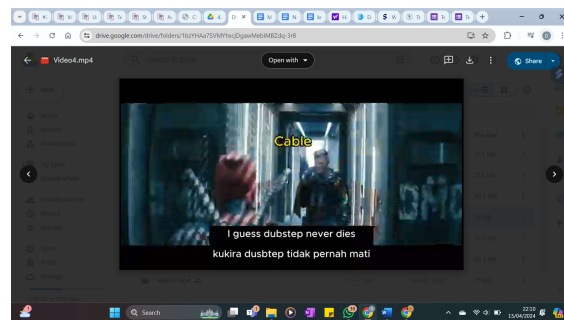
The study utilized a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to obtain the research data. The study developed a questionnaire in the form of Multimedia Discourse Completion Tasks (MDCTs) that contained four videos with situations in which people conducted bullying and the other four videos with situations in which people performed non-bullying acts as distractors. Each MDCT situation was provided with an open-ended answer. Content validations were carried out during the construction of the MDCTs and interview guides to guarantee their validity and feasibility. In both cases, an expert in the field clarified, added, and modified the necessary aspects.

The research participants had to watch all the MDCT videos systematically and they judged whether the characters or persons in each video conducted bullying acts. The MDCT videos can be accessed in the following link [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bzYHAa7SVMYhscjDgawMebiMBZdq-3r8?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bzYHAa7SVMYhscjDgawMebiMBZdq-3r8?usp=drive_link).

MDCT-1 is a forty-nine second bullying video clip about a student named Charlotte who is bullied by a group of students. The aspect of bullying in this video is physical bullying, she is called "piggy" which is a figurative word for a pig.

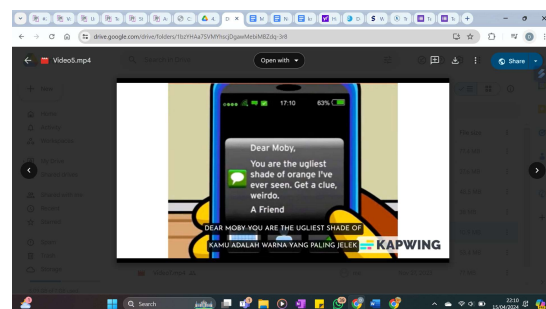


MDCT-2 is a nonbullying video. It is a twenty-second video clip about two men (John and David) who are working. John is accidentally humming a song making David disturbed. There is no aspect that can be categorized as bullying in the video because when John is asked to stop, he directly stops it with no hard feelings.



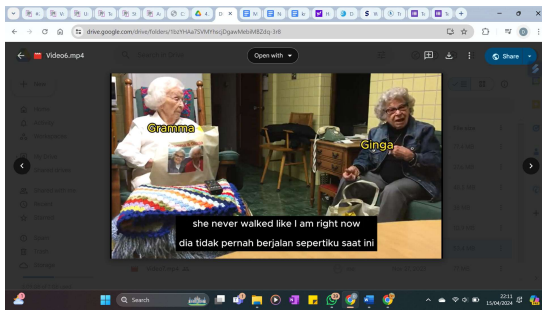
The MDCT-5 is a twenty-five-second bullying video clip about an animated character named Moby who receives a short message from a friend. In the message, his friend said that Moby is the ugliest shade of orange he has ever seen. This is bullying because it makes fun of Moby's physical appearance. Moby looks sad and is trying to change his skin colour by spraying dye on his body.

MDCT-3 is a thirty-four-second bullying video clip about a boss named Kate who bullies her assistant for not making her tea right away. The aspects of bullying in this video are the unwillingness of the boss to hear excuses from her assistant and her statement that her assistant will always be an assistant because she cannot do the job as easily as making a cup of tea. As an assistant, Lisa does not have the power to reply to her boss.

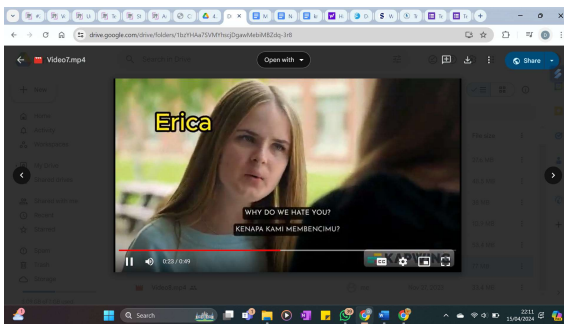


MDCT-4 is a twenty-three-second nonbullying video clip about a superhero who is fighting his enemy. In this video, his enemy mistakenly shot the superhero's friend because he dodges the shot. The superhero curses at his enemy.

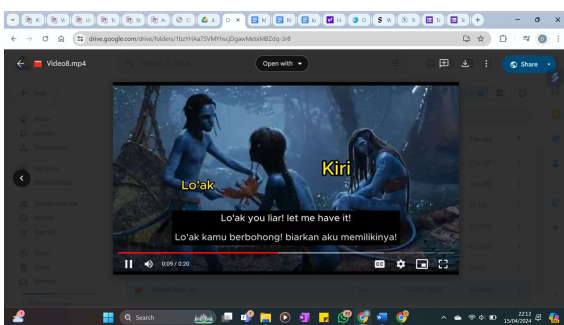
MDCT-6 is a thirty-eight-second nonbullying video clip about two ladies (Ginga and Gramma) who are filming a video for their YouTube channel. In the video, Ginga says that she is healthier than Gramma.



The MDCT-7 is a forty-nine-second bullying video clip about a student named Lia who is bullied by a group of students, one of whom is Erica. In the video, the bullying is carried out by Erica and her friends by gossiping behind Lia's back. Erica and her friends call Lia a freak and stupid, and has no friends because Lia is always alone.



MDCT-8 is a twenty-second-non bullying video clip about siblings in the film Avatar named Lo'ak and Kiri. In the video, they are fighting over something, which makes them annoyed and they say that they hate each other.



The selected bullying video in this research indicates that there is an imbalance of power in which the victim cannot respond to the bully. As stated by Volk et al. (2014) bullying is an aggressive act that inflicts injury upon other persons in the sphere of social power discrepancy. This also follows the definition of bullying by Olweus (1993), that is, an intentional and typically repetitive negative behaviour that is directed against an individual or group of people who have difficulty defending themselves. Meanwhile, videos contain no power imbalance.

The research participants watched the conversations in the eight video clips. Then they took part in a semi-structured interview. Through the interviews, the researchers elicited the foundations or reasons that they had considered when evaluating bullying acts and nonbullying acts.

## Data Analysis

Their evaluation of bullying expressions was analysed through their ability to explain the linguistic and non-linguistic aspects shown by the characters in the videos. We adopted Ahmed et al.'s (2022) bullying risk factors and its criteria for bullying behaviour to analyse the foundations or reasons for bullying acts (see Table 1).

The research data were validated using an expert judgement technique that was conducted by a senior lecturer in the field. According to Escobar-Pérez & Cuervo-Martínez (2008). Validez de contenido y juicio de expertos: una aproximación a su utilización. Avances en medición, 6(1), 27-36., an expert judgment refers to an informed view from a person with experience in the field, who is seen by others as a qualified expert, and who can provide information, facts, judgments, and assessments. To evaluate the research data, the study asked the expert to weigh in on the data elicited from the interview. Content validations were carried out to guarantee their validity. In this stage, the provided comments and suggested exclusions of unnecessary aspects.

**Table 1.** Risk factors for bullying

Risk factors for bullying	
Individual risk factors	Gender Grade level Ethnicity Socioeconomic status Physical features and body built Externalizing behavior Self-esteem Social skills and popularity Academic achievement Disability status
Peer group risk factors	Peer group norms Delinquency Drug and alcohol abuse
School risk factors	School climate Teacher attitude Classroom characteristics School belonging
Parental risk factors	Parental characteristics Family discord
Community factors	Neighborhoods
Societal risk factors	Social media

(Ahmed et al., 2022: 3)

## ■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Teachers' Comprehension of Bullying and Nonbullying Acts

The data show that almost all the respondents understood what bullying is. There were 64% (n=16) teachers who could correctly identify the occurrences of bullying in the 4 videos containing bullying, whereas the rest (36%, n=9) considered the event as non-bullying acts. The teachers who correctly described bullying in the videos said that bullying relates to hurtful verbal acts or physical harm to other people.

Teacher : *"In my opinion, bullying occurs when an individual deliberately inflicts harm on another person. This can manifest through verbal insults, physical aggression, or other intentional acts of cruelty"*. (A response to MDCT-1)

The teacher's interview results reveal that bullying involves intentionally harming others. This

harm can be done either through direct physical actions or through indirect verbal attacks. In addition, the teacher said that verbal bullying involves likening a person to an animal such as "piggy". The teacher further stated that in addition to causing emotional harm to the victim, bullying also results in physical harm to the victim.

There are several reasons why the English teachers in this study are likely to have a comprehensive understanding of bullying. First, they might have undergone professional training that includes education on topics such as child psychology, classroom management, and student well-being. Bullying prevention and intervention strategies are often covered in these training programs. Second, nowadays in Indonesian education contexts, bullying prevention and awareness programs are cutting-edge topics and are often integrated into school curricula. The teachers in this study might have received training and resources to address bullying within the school

context. As asserted by scholars (e.g., Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004; Rigby, 2011) teachers who obtain training about bullying would have a better understanding of classroom bullying. Third, with the teaching experience of more than ten years, they frequently interact with their students through various activities. The close interaction has provided opportunities for them to observe student behaviour and identify signs of bullying. Wang et al. (2015) pointed out that positive student-teacher relationships can influence students' attitudes toward bullying and, in turn, reduce bullying behaviours. Another reason could be because they, like all educators, are expected to adhere to school policies and procedures related to student behaviour and well-being. This includes recognizing and reporting instances of bullying according to school rules or guidelines. As reported by Ivaniushina and Alexandrov (2022), clear and fair school rules can help prevent school bullying. This knowledge has possibly eased them to define the concept of bullying in the interview. Regarding the bullying in the videos, the English teachers have a very good understanding of words, tone, body language, and subtle cues of the actors in the videos. This understanding has helped them comprehend interactions that indicate bullying behaviour.

However, almost all of them found that the MDCT-3 video clip was very challenging to understand whether it contained bullying acts or not. Indeed, the video contains a bullying act in the form of condescending. The video shows a boss who thinks that the assistant does not show good skills at work. In this context, the boss makes a statement causing his assistant looks incompetent, she says *"this is why you'll always be an assistant"* and *"you can't even get simple task"*. As an assistant, she (Lisa) does not have the power to reply to her boss's words. Even though some of the teachers may understand that it is bullying, they did not mention directly the word "bullying" to describe the bullying acts.

Instead, they identified it with other acts such as "condescending", "mocking", and "scolding" or "angry".

Teacher : *"The boss underestimated Lisa's work because she wasn't fast enough. And when Lisa tried to explain, the boss immediately dismissed her without listening and she said, "This is why you'll always be an assistant"*. (A response to MDCT-3)

Teacher : *"Hmm... because she scolded Lisa earlier because she wasn't working fast enough. Hmm... being condescending is also a form of bullying, sis, because speaking to someone in a demeaning manner, that's how it is"*. (A response to MDCT-3)

The teacher was able to detect bullying from the utterances spoken by the boss. However, the teachers also did not clearly say what bullying was. Based on these answers it can be inferred that they can tell which utterances are categorized as "condescending" but not yet categorized as bullying.

Teacher : *"From the sentence "I only asked for a tea, you can't even do simple task" however, here, Lisa is just an employee not an OB. This appears to be more of a condescending remark"*. (A response to MDCT-3)

In responding to MDCT-3, many of them provided similar responses, mentioning that the boss "reprimands" or "warns" her subordinates. They were able to identify the crucial utterance indicative of bullying in the video when the boss says, *"You'll always be an assistant."*

Teacher : *"In the video, Lisa, in her role as an assistant, was reprimanded by her boss for failing to prepare tea. This resulted in the boss becoming angry and remarking that Lisa would remain an assistant if she continued to perform poorly her duties"*. (A response to MDCT-3).

Based on the teacher's statements above, it is evident that they can discern utterances that could lead to bullying. However, they prefer categorizing such an act as "condescending" and other terms rather than labelling it as bullying. The term bullying may carry connotations of extreme forms of aggression, such as physical violence or persistent harassment (Rodkin et al., 2015; Volk et al., 2014). The behaviour observed in the MDCT-3 was subtle or did not meet their perception of what constitutes bullying, therefore the teachers may have chosen milder descriptors like "condescending" or "reprimands". These words may have seemed like a more accurate descriptor based on their observations of the videos, even if they acknowledged that the behaviour could be categorized as bullying. Moreover, they are possibly hesitant to label the behaviour as bullying as the short video clips have a less clear context situation. They may prefer to take caution and use a more neutral term until they have obtained more information or context. The teachers in this study may also have misinterpreted the behaviour through the cultural norms of the 'white' people in that the behaviour depicted in the MDCT-3 is just as a normal act of condescending, reprimands, or scolding by a boss towards his worker rather than bullying. According to scholars (e.g., Morris et al., 2015; Roos et al., 2015), perception of cultural norms and context can influence how people perceive and interpret behaviour. One person may consider an act bullying, but another may see it just as assertiveness in normal social interaction.

Regarding the non-bullying videos, there were 19 (76%) teachers who could comprehend all the videos correctly, meanwhile, the rest (16%) identified video 6 and 8 incorrectly. The non-bullying clips (6 and 8) seemed to confuse them as both videos contained offensive language, which was considered bullying.

Teacher: "*Mocking her walking with crutch. The first grandmother commented on the*

*second grandmother's use of a crutch*". (A response to MDCT-6)

The teacher categorized what Grandma said in MDCT-6 bullying as it contains a mocking act. However, in the context of bullying, it is not included in the category. Bullying only occurs when people cannot defend themselves. In fact, in the video 8, they can mock each other.

Teacher: "*Kiri is mocking the shape of Loak's face. That is when she calls her as a penis face*". (A response to MDCT-8)

The teacher categorized the phrase "penis face" in MDCT-8 as bullying. While linguistically it constitutes offensive speech, in the context of bullying, if both parties possess a similar strength and social position, it may not be classified as bullying. Volk et al. (2014) stated that bullying is an aggressive act that inflicts injury upon other persons in the sphere of social power discrepancy. The question remains: why did they identify the offensive acts in those videos as bullying? They may have overgeneralized all offensive acts as bullying including the ones in both videos. Indeed, offensive words or acts can have negative emotional impacts on others and they can cause distress or discomfort. As a result, the teachers may quickly label such behaviour as bullying due to the strong negative feelings it suggests, even if it is a one-time occurrence. A one-time offensive comment or behaviour does not necessarily constitute bullying, although it can still be hurtful. Olweus (1993) affirms that bullying is a repetitive negative act directed against an individual or group of people.

In summary, the teachers have good abilities in understanding the acts of bullying, although they define it differently. The following sections discuss their evaluations of bullying acts according to Ahmed et al. (2022).

### **Physical Features and Body Build**

All the teachers highlighted the existence of physical features and body-build factors in



observing bullying expressions. In their evaluation, they pointed out that mocking an individual's physical features or body build was an easy clue to identify bullying acts, such as the ones in MDCT-1 and MDCT-5. They stated that one of the risk factors of bullying was being physically obese or having a different skin tone. Responding to MDCT-1, the teachers identified utterances containing verbal bullying such as "Hey did you lose weight?", "wow only 500 pounds to go", "Stop guys, you don't wanna get charged of animal cruelty, do you?", and "sorry piggy there is no mud to wallow in". These utterances bully Charlotte's physical features and body build. Charlotte was bullied since she was fat. The following excerpts show the teachers' assessments of verbal bullying on the basis of physical features and body build.

Teacher : "Because the girl is asked, "what is your weight?" Then she becomes an object of insult by the two girls who are her classmates. After that she is bullied not only verbally, but also physically by tripping her". (A response to MDCT-1)

Teacher : "Eh... what is it... that weight is 500 pounds, you know. "Wow 500 pounds to go". That's the verbal bullying. While tripping Charlotte is physical bullying". (A response to MDCT-1)

Teacher : "Bullying... what is it called... bullying, right? So she did... so her friends bully Charlotte because Charlotte's body is big. Her classmates are teasing her by saying, "How many kilos have you lost?", "What size are you now?" It's like that, right... like that. Calling her "pig" yes sis... like a pig like that... like that..." (A response to MDCT-1)

In responding to MDCT-5, the teachers understood that the message from Moby's friend contains verbal bullying. The phrases "the ugliest shade of orange" and "weirdo" are identified as indicators of verbal bullying. The teachers

correctly interpreted that Moby is subjected to bullying due to his skin colour.

Teacher : "You're the ugly one", "the ugly orange", that's what I hear. "You're the ugliest shade of orange. (A response to MDCT-5)

Teacher : "The words in that message. "You're the ugliest shade of orange I've ever seen. Get a clue weirdo." That's the verbal bullying". (A response to MDCT-5)

Teacher : "In the message, Moby's friend stated that Moby is the ugliest orange colour he has ever encountered. Consequently, Moby, as the recipient of the message, feels sad and appears to be attempting to change his appearance". (A response to MDCT-5)

These excerpts collectively emphasize that physical features, body build, and skin colour are the most influential factors in the assessments of bullying. In other words, bullying can be characterized by offensive words about individuals' physical appearance. This indicates that all of the English teachers have good abilities in understanding English expressions that can cause bullying. Most of the teachers can easily identify bullying when the bullying is directly conducted via words. Goodwin et al. (2019) reported that indirect bullying is harder to detect as compared to direct one, in particular with the advent of social media. Ahmed et al. (2022) affirm that individuals who are obese or underweight tend to be the easy target of bullying. This also confirms Fanti & Kimonis (2012) who reported that bullying victims often look different from most of the people around them.

### Externalizing Behaviour

The teachers mentioned that intimidation and disturbance are the reasons why they categorize the conversations contain bullying. In their assessments, they considered not only what the bullies said but also how the victims reacted to the situation. The following excerpts illustrate

their evaluations of bullying language based on externalizing behaviours.

Teacher : *“Because she is mad at her and criticized her. She said “you’ll always gonna be an assistant”.* ((A response to MDCT-3)

Teacher : *“Because it makes her insecure”.* (A response to MDCT-1)

Teacher : *“What makes it physical bullying is the message says that he has the ugliest orange colour. This has made him sad reading it”.* (A response to MDCT-5)

These excerpts imply that bullying can be characterized by acts violating social norms and/or are harmful to others. The teachers explained that a negative effect shown by the victim serves as a sign of bullying. This is in line with what Wolke & Lereya (2013) found in their research that bullying can have serious effects on the victim’s emotional health. In this case, teachers can be expected to identify bullying around the learning environment. With this finding, they can detect it early so that bullying can be avoided as bullying victimization can lead to depression and suicide incidents (Turner, et al., 2013) To prevent this from happening, teachers should be more aware of their students’ behaviours.

### **Self-esteem**

According to the teachers’ evaluation, the presence of bullying is linked to low self-esteem, such as narcissism, arrogance, and unsatisfactory emotional states (such as little empathy and an undesirable attitude).

Teacher : *“Kate as the boss is condescending to her worker and she said “you’ll always be an assistant. You can’t even get a simple task”.* (A response to MDCT-3)

Teacher : *“Because she is different from the others”.* (A response to MDCT-1)

Teacher : *“Considering her as a weak person”.* (A response to MDCT-7)

These excerpts indicate that the teachers can detect bullying according to the bully’s

utterances and situation relating to externalizing behaviour. They stated that condescending is an indication of arrogance. Indeed, bullying victimization is positively correlated with social anxiety in teenagers, with guilt and self-esteem acting as mediating factors in their relationship (Wu et al., 2020). The teachers also mentioned that individuals who misuse their power to demean their subordinates reflects an act of arrogance and it is considered as workplace bullying. According to Medina et al. (2020), abusive use of authority and unethical managerial practices are factors in downward and vertical workplace bullying.

### **Social skills and popularity**

Social skills and popularity are the other factors that teachers mention as a basis for assessing bullying. A teacher gave an explanation as follows.

Teacher : *“Because Lia likes to be alone, so this seems strange to Erica. In fact, the others like to be in a group and have lots of friends”.* (A response to MDCT-7)

The excerpt shows that one of the reasons why bullying occurs is due to the victim’s having no friends. This underlies the assessment of bullying. As we frequently observe, the unfortunate reality in our surroundings is the common occurrence of bullying directed towards children or students who may find themselves without friends. Children or students who have low social skills tend to become victims of those who are more popular in their environment. However, Wierstema et al. (2022) assert that bullies experience a paradoxical dynamic too. They may obtain popularity but concurrently they are at a high risk of facing rejection from their social environment.

### **Delinquency**

The teachers explained that delinquency is a factor of bullying to occur. As Ahmed et al. (2020) reported that having a delinquent record

such as membership in a gang correlates with a higher level of bullying and victimization. Several excerpts confirm this:

Teacher : *"Intimidation is conducted by more than one person"*. (A response to MDCT-7)

Teacher : *"Many people bullied one person"*. (A response to MDCT-1)

Teacher : *"Because there is a group that intimidate her"*. (A response to MDCT-7)

In their assessment, they stated that the influence of peer groups or 'gangs' was a significant factor leading to the bullying incidents. Park & Metcalfe (2020) assert that bullying victimization is positively associated with delinquency, with stronger effects at higher risk factors and over consecutive years. Lee et al. (2020) have pointed out that teenagers who experience negative emotions as a result of being bullied or cyberbullied are more likely to engage in delinquency. Hence, this research found that the prevalence of bullying is influenced by the number of individuals involved in the bullying situation.

### **The Foundation for Categorizing Bullying Acts**

This research investigates the teachers' knowledge of the foundations underlying bullying acts. To identify the foundations of bullying acts, this study employs Ahmed et al.'s (2022) criteria: intent to hurt, power disparity, and long-term repetition.

#### **Intent to hurt**

Almost all of the teachers mentioned that the harm caused by bullying is deliberate, not accidental.

Teacher : *"In my opinion, bullying is when individuals intentionally hurt others. They can hurt them verbally, physically, or intentionally hurt other people"*. (A response to MDCT-1)

The teacher mentioned that bullying occurs with the intention to hurt the victims, psychologically or physically. This agrees with what Marcos et al. (2020) have reported that bullying aims to hurt others, often through physical or verbal aggression, relational disorders, social manipulation, and malicious rumours. In this study, before the bully hurt the victim they gossip behind the victim. A recent study by Hassan & Mohammed (2023) mentioned that bullying is aggressive behaviour that targets weaker individuals for physical harm or social exclusion, often motivated by status and peer group dynamics. From the result, it can be concluded that the bullies feel stronger than the victim because they do it with many people.

#### **Power disparity**

The teachers asserted that bullying includes a real or perceived power inequity between the bully and the victim. The following utterances are the teachers' assertion:

Teacher : *"Because she has power, she can order her subordinates as she pleases"*. (A response to MDCT-3)

Teacher : *"She feels more superior than her assistant"*. (A response to MDCT-3)

Teacher : *"Maybe Lia is alone, she has no friends and Erica thinks that she has many friends who can help her to bully"*. (A response to MDCT-7)

Teacher : *"That's because Erica's gang plan to bully Lia who is alone"*. (A response to MDCT-7)

Teachers explained that bullying occurs because the bully and the victim have a power imbalance. Kaufman et al. (2020) have reported that 43.1% of children classified as victims by the BVQ experienced all four characteristics of bullying, including power imbalance. Different results found in the research from Stives et al. (2022) found that parents often focus on intent

to cause harm in bullying definitions, but often overlook power imbalance and repetition, and consider bullying as a way to boost self-esteem. Here it can be concluded that not only teachers need to be informed about bullying but also the parents. It is often the social power gap is not only because they have different economic statuses, but the social power gap found here is how many people attack the victim. The victim does not have equal power because often the victim is only one person while the bully involves many people. Furthermore, the assessment of MDCT-3 supports Wright's (2020) research. Workplace harassment can be caused by hierarchical work cultures, power disparities, and supervisors who dehumanize their subordinates.

### **Long-term repetition**

In their assessment, they stated that the bullying was carried out for months by the bully. The answer regarding the duration of bullying is mostly found in MDCT-7. In the video, the victim stated that he had been bullied for months *"you guys have been tormenting me for months and I'm done"*. The following are the teachers' answers.

Teacher : *"From Erica's bad words towards Lia, and Lia said I annoyed with your words, "you've been abusing me for months"*. (A response to MDCT-7)

Teacher : *"That's because Erica's gang plan to bully Lia, who was alone. Calling her stupid, ugly... Lia also said earlier that she had been bullied for months. And she looks stressful, right?"* (A response to MDCT-7)

Almost all teachers can detect bullying based on how long the bullying has occurred. Thornberg et al. (2020) affirm that bullying is associated with short- and long-term maladjustment and is influenced by both victim and bully roles. Another study by Ybarra et al. (2014) revealed that both differential power and

repetition are key in identifying youth who are bullied and at particular risk for concurrent psychosocial challenges. Again, bullying is closely related to the relationship between students and teachers at school. Here teachers as their parents at school must be more aware of bullying incidents because bullying is not just an incident that can happen and disappear in blink of an eye.

### **CONCLUSION**

This research has analysed teachers' perspectives and their understanding of bullying language and acts. It was found that the English teachers in the present study understand the bullying language and acts. They also understand the risk factors of bullying that they categorize correctly.

The findings imply that when the teachers in this study have a clear understanding of bullying language and acts, they are better equipped to identify instances of bullying in their schools or classrooms. As we all know, bullying is a serious problem. The result will help researchers, practitioners, and teachers to figure out the steps towards a safer school environment. Bullying is not something that can be easily identified. Often bullying and other students' misbehaviour can be misleading. Bullying may be felt only by the victim and not seen by other people such as friends or teachers. With their understanding of bullying language and acts, they can implement proactive measures to prevent bullying and promote positive interactions among their students. The important thing is that bullying has a serious impact on victim's mental health and achievement at school. Hopefully, by knowing what bullying is, teachers will be more skilful in dealing with and preventing bullying in the classroom. The result also revealed that the teachers are mostly aware of bullying that occurs both directly and indirectly. With this understanding, they can collaborate more effectively with colleagues, administrators, and school staff to address bullying issues.

The limitation of this research is the fact that our study is conducted with a small group of teachers. Further research may carry out a comprehensive investigation with a larger sample and topics about establishing a safer school environment. The researchers suggest teachers learn from resources or participate in bullying-related seminars. It is also recommended that they read educational materials to increase their awareness of bullying in literature, movies, and other media. Teachers also hoped to be more engaged with students' parents to get a deeper understanding of their students' condition. School environment must be a safe place for students. The fact that nowadays students tend to be more sensitive and easily stressed, the school environment must be a safe place for them. And teachers are the closest one to them in school.

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