



## **BULLYING IN SCHOOL FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF THE BULLIES: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Bullying is a pervasive issue affecting individuals across various settings, including homes, schools, and workplaces. Particularly impactful among secondary school students, it poses significant risks to their psychosocial, emotional, and academic well-being. This research seeks to explore the dynamics of bullying, examining the experiences of both bullies and their victims, and identifying the underlying factors that contribute to bullying behavior. Extensive research underscores the adverse effects of bullying on children's health and behavior, manifesting in diverse forms that can be challenging to monitor comprehensively. Employing a multiple case study approach, this study analyzes processes and outcomes across various instances, highlighting how unique contexts and circumstances influence each case. From exposure to bullying behaviors in adult and media settings to the importance of community-wide involvement, effective anti-bullying initiatives necessitate collaboration among parents, educators, and communities. A holistic intervention strategy involving all stakeholders ensures a safe and supportive learning environment for students.

**Keywords:** *bullying, bullying in school, effects of bullying, multiple case study*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

According to the survey conducted by the Teen Online & Wireless Safety (2009) in the United States of America (USA), 58 percent of the bullies are trying to get back to

the victims for various reasons and feel that the victim deserves it. Furthermore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015) and the US Department of Education found that 70.6 percent of young students have seen bullying at school, with approximately 30 percent admitting to bullying others.

In the Philippines, bullying is widespread in schools and over the Internet. A study states that about 50 percent of Filipino students are bullied in school (Bullying in the Philippines, 2016). Bullying has the potential to harm both the aggressor and the victim. The Department of Education (DepEd) issued DepEd Order Number 40 (2012), which provides the policy and guidelines on protecting children in school from abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and other forms. It was the basis of creating an anti-bullying committee in our schools today. Subsequently, President Benigno S. Aquino III signed the Republic Act 10627 or the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 on September 12, 2013. It mandates that all elementary and secondary schools implement policies to prevent and address the acts of bullying in their institutions. Sadly, bullying in schools continues to thrive among children even though parents and teachers collaborate to prevent it from happening in schools. In the School Year 2013-14 alone, the Department of Education in Manila documented over 1,700 bullying and child abuse cases, even after passing anti-bullying legislation. Fortunately, 60 percent of the cases were resolved. In the latest survey, 80 percent of young teens in the Philippines experience cyberbullying (GMA News Online, 2016).

The researcher wanted to explore the other side of the story of bullying, the bully's experiences. There appears to be very little research that gives the perpetrators' explanation of their behavior. The researcher is interested in focusing his research on the experiences of bullies in school.

This study aims to understand the bullies' bullying experiences and the surrounding factors that drive them to bully other students. It endeavored to go deeper into the research informants' feelings, sentiments, and insights about their bullying behavior in school. Through this, the researcher can review measures to prevent or lessen bullying incidents inside the classroom and recommend a program that will address the needs of the bullies as future citizens of this country.

## **Literature Review/Related Works**

Bullying in schools is gaining widespread attention from research, the media, school officials, and parents who are concerned about their children's well-being and safety. There is no single cause of bullying behavior and no predominant factor that predicts which children become bullies. Instead, the interaction of individual, familial, peer, school, and community factors the risk increases that a child will become a bully (Allen, 2005). Moreover, there is clear evidence that school violence and bullying have a negative impact on the academic performance and physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the victims (UNESCO, 2016). There is a vast amount of study on bullying in Australia, Canada, Europe, and Japan, and awareness of the extent and impacts of bullying is expanding.

Hartmann (2011) believes that a bully generally feels like a victim. Sadly, if there is no intervention to help the bully deal with his or her own problems, that means moving on to the next victim. It is not uncommon for them to justify his actions by blaming the other child for his behaviors. Moreover, we must also seek to resolve the problems of the bully while working to resolve the problems of the bullied. Many of them will find a new outlet for their behavior and a new way to achieve strength, but others never will.

**Types of Bullying.** These are the primary forms of bullying: physical, verbal, social, and cyberbullying.

**Physical Bullying.** School personnel is more likely to pay attention to this than other types of bullying. It includes slapping, hitting, choking, poking, punching, kicking, biting, pinching, scratching, spitting, and damaging or destroying property belonging to the bullied. In UNICEF Report (2014), around 6 percent of boys and girls reported being physically attacked or hurt on the school premises. In addition, 22 percent reported being threatened, robbed, or assaulted at school. On one hand, parents and other caregivers are found to be the most common perpetrators of physical abuse against adolescent girls. However, teachers were also mentioned by a substantial proportion of girls in some countries: 48 percent in Uganda, 42 percent in Kenya, 32 percent in Nigeria, 28 percent in Tanzania, 16 percent in Cameroon, 12 percent in Timor- Leste, Moldova, and Zimbabwe, 11 percent in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and 10 percent in Zambia.

**Verbal Bullying.** It is difficult for teachers, counselors, and other school authorities to detect since no physical harm occurs. It includes name-calling, taunting, belittling, cruel criticism, personal defamation, racist slurs, and sexually suggestive or sexually abusive remarks (Coloroso, 2004). It can make youngsters feel furious, scared, and helpless. When a child cannot share their feelings with someone else, it can leave them emotionally exhausted and bruised. Verbal bullying should be dealt with seriously by parents, counselors, teachers, and school administrators for it destroys children's self-image and self-esteem. In certain situations, verbal bullying can cause the victim to become so sad and desperate to escape that he or she turns to substance misuse or, in severe cases, suicide.

**Social Bullying.** Social or relational bullying is a deliberate exclusion from a social group or intimidation within the group. It includes psychological injury and social system manipulation. It refers to instances where the perpetrator may spread rumors, backbite, or exclude the victim from their peer group (Coloroso, 2004). Social bullying aims to make another person or group feel inferior and hurt them. Social bullying has a wide range of harmful outcomes. Depression, anxiety, social isolation, and low self-esteem are common symptoms among victims (Davies, 2015). Due to tremendous emotional and societal pressures, some victims commit suicide or homicide. Bullying victims may carry emotional scars into adulthood, leading to melancholy, social isolation, and an inability to respond effectively to unfair situations.

**Cyberbullying.** It refers to the willful and repeated harm inflicted through computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices. A child or teen is subjected to text

messages, emails, or online posts, such as on Facebook, Twitter, blogs, or other websites. These messages are sometimes cruel, threatening, defamatory, and deliberately misleading. It may include spreading rumors, posting false information, hurtful messages, embarrassing comments or photos, or excluding someone from online networks or other communications.

Data from the Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (2007) found that around 7 percent of students aged 9 to 15 reported cyberbullying experiences. The experience of being victimized by bullying others online increased with age, and bullying through social networking sites was more common than bullying via mobile phones as students got older. On the other hand, the EU Kids Online Final Report (2011) collected from over 25,000 children and adolescents between the ages of 9 and 16 in 25 European nations, 6 percent reported being bullied online, and 3 percent admitted to having bullied others online. Meanwhile, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2013 (2014) found that in the USA, in the previous year, 15 percent of children in grades 9 to 12 were bullied via email, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites, or texting.

**Effects of Bullying.** These are the effects of bullying on the bullied and the bully's academic, emotional, physical, and social life.

**Academic.** Bullying in school affects academic achievement and students' personality and self-confidence since bullied children feel fear and weak. Kids who are bullied regularly obtain lower marks, participate less in class discussions, and maybe mislabeled as low achievers because they are afraid of being bullied if they speak up in class. Moreover, they miss opportunities to participate in their discussions or even enjoy school activities. Students who faced bullying for much of their time in school had the most significant risk of low achievement and engagement (Crist, 2017).

**Emotional.** Data show that stressful events in life could lead to depression, anxiety, and other psychiatric symptoms. Being bullied is a significant life stressor. Copeland, Wolke, and Angold (2013) provide compelling evidence that being a victim of bullying, or both a victim and a perpetrator, increases the likelihood of major emotional issues. They experienced depressive and anxiety disorders and suffered most severely from suicidal thoughts, depressive disorders, generalized anxiety, and panic disorder. Most common stress or anxiety-related symptoms include sleep disorders, gastrointestinal concerns, headaches, palpitations, and chronic pain. Furthermore, Steele (n.d.) mentioned that bullying victims have difficulties trusting others, have fewer job possibilities, and grow up to be loners.

**Physical.** Physical injury is an immediate indication that physical bullying took place. Children who experienced chronic bullying showed greater adiposity and showed higher body mass index and waist-hip ratio and risk of becoming overweight (Baldwin, Arseneault, & Danese, 2015). Bullying was linked to a higher likelihood of headaches, sleeping issues, abdominal pain, bed-wetting, and feeling exhausted in children aged 9 to 12. In the USA, bullying was linked to headaches, stomachaches, backaches,

dizziness, and sleep disturbances, according to a survey of over 16,000 kids in grades 6 to 10 (Srabstein et al., 2006).

**Social.** Steele (n.d.) mentioned that bullies often become unhappy adults. In maturity, where quick tempers and violent activities are often condemned by society, their techniques of interacting with the world often do not function very well. They may struggle to keep a career, establish friendships, and even sustain sexual or family ties. Bullies frequently engage in learned behavior, which they learned from abusive parents, siblings, relatives, or carers at home. They were more likely to be unhappy and worried later in life, and they had a higher rate of young adult psychiatric problems. In South Korea, it was found that being bullied contributed to an increased risk of social problems (Kim, Leventhal, Koh, Hubbard, & Boyce, 2006). In the study, social problems were described as acting younger than one's age, being overly dependent on adults, and behaving socially immature - all factors that heighten the risk of social isolation within the peer group.

## **Related Studies**

**Bullying in School.** In a study by UNESCO (2006) in 16 Latin American and Caribbean countries, based on data from around 91,000 students aged 10 to 14, 51 percent overall reported experiencing some kind of bullying like being robbed, insulted or threatened. Meanwhile, in Laos, bullying was reported by 98 percent of girls and 100 percent of boys at school, with the victims mostly being girls or ethnic minorities.

The Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Survey (2007), a national survey of students between 9 and 15 years old, found that 27 percent reported experiencing frequent bullying, while 9 percent admitted bullying others. While in the USA, in a 2015 poll of students in grades 9 to 12, 20.2 percent said they had been bullied on school grounds, and 15.5 percent indicated they had been bullied online. In a study in France carried out by the International Observatory on Violence in Schools (2011) found that around 32 percent of the students aged 9 to 12 experienced bullying at school perpetrated by other students.

In the Philippines, Datukon (2016) mentioned that 2 out of 10 children per day experience being made fun of, name-calling, and making the child do something he/she does not want to do. Cyberbullying affects girls more than it affects boys. Recently, Filipino cyberbullies appear to be creative since, more than words, they use photoshopped images to hurt their victims.

**Bullies' Perspective of Bullying.** Research made by Zapf and Gross (2001) found that it was not always the perpetrators that escalated the conflict but, at times, the victims who carried out retaliatory, provocative, and threatening themselves.

Several studies find that families of bullies have a high level of interparental conflict. Baldry (2003) mentioned that physical violence between parents was significantly related to direct bullying in children, with bullies being 1.8 times more likely

to have been exposed to domestic violence than not exposed. The impact of mothers threatening fathers was also a significant predictor of bullying, with children exposed to inter-parental threats being more likely to be involved in indirect bullying in school. Some research also points to a link between the experience of child maltreatment and bullying behavior, suggesting that the bully at school may be a victim at home (Williams, 2010). Moreover, school and community-related risk factors for bullying include a lack of adequate adult supervision and cultures in which teachers, other adults, and students have indifferent or tolerant attitudes towards bullying.

**Anti-Bullying Practices in School.** There is a potential benefit of developing an anti-bullying committee in schools. However, schools must utilize the most effective approach. It was found that using a zero-tolerance approach in response to bullying is unhelpful in dealing with the core issue (Rigby, 2012). Furthermore, a zero-tolerance policy would require schools to conduct formal investigations of bullying complaints and penalize offenders according to a graduated system, leading to higher suspensions with no reduction in bullying incidents. Instead of these programs, establishing more positive relations between school community members and using more non-punitive intervention strategies, providing a more effective and humane approach. Seaman (2012) agreed that the strategy of embedding skills of empathy and compassion into the curriculum included situations in which students could practice putting themselves in the victim's shoes. This approach could provide a safe environment where students can feel compassion for victims and strengthen their morals. Moreover, Bauman, Rigby, and Hoppa (2008) mentioned that counselors were reportedly more empathetic when confided in and understood the seriousness of the incidents than teachers, especially when it came to relational bullying.

## **Research Questions**

The main concern of this study was to explore bullying from the experiences of the bullies. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the bullying experiences of the research informants at home?
2. What are the bullying experiences of the research informants in school?
3. What are the bullying experiences of the research informants with peers?
4. What drives bullies to bully despite the warning given by the school?
5. How does bullying affect the academic, emotional, personal and social life of the research informants?

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## **METHODOLOGY**

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The study's research informants were chosen using the purposive sampling method. They were the identified bully students from Grade 7 to Grade 12 of New Albay National High School for SY 2016-2018. The critical age of students in aggressive and violent

behavior is found at the beginning of secondary school or in early adolescence. The researcher purposely chose from the record of the Prefect of Discipline and the anecdotal records from the Guidance Office of the students who had remarkable cases of bullying in school.

This is qualitative research and utilized the multiple case study approach. A case study is a research technique that entails an in-depth investigation of a specific limited system using several modes of data gathering to methodically obtain information on how the system runs or performs (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). In order to gather deeper and broader information regarding the experiences of bullying by the research informants, an interview guide was utilized to gather relevant data on the subject under study. The audio recorder made the data valid and reliable during the in-depth interview.

The approach which was used to analyze the data was thematic analysis. This was done in keeping with the multiple case study. The study wanted to present a holistic view of data wherein the data and information gathered were transcribed in a verbatim fashion, and themes were created. The transcription was encoded in the computer for safekeeping and analysis. Transcribed data were submitted to the data analyst for the validity and accuracy of the analysis.

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## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Discussions**

- Case 1 - The Only Child
- Case 2 - The Effeminate
- Case 3 - The Avenger
- Case 4 – The Influencer
- Case 5 – The Stubborn Joker
- Case 6 – The Anxious Child
- Case 7 – The Hot-Tempered
- Case 8 – The Naughty Kid
- Case 9 – The Optimistic

### **Bullying Experiences at Home**

The emerging themes were no act of bullying at home, being bullied for handicap, being scolded by parents, being called gay, and being called by father's name. It is noteworthy that some research informants had no bullying experiences at home. On the contrary, they were the ones who instigated bullying at home towards their younger siblings.

Another emerging theme was being bullied for handicap. Sadly, physical deformities became the subject of bullying at home such as having a cleft lip, bald head, and closed ear. Bullying was instigated by their family members.

Another emerging theme was being scolded by parents. Some research informants felt that since they were the oldest among the siblings, they were responsible for taking care and overseeing their younger siblings and maintaining the house's cleanliness and orderliness. On the other hand, another emerging theme was being called gay. His effeminate ways made him the subject of bullying at home. Lastly, being called by father's name. Research informants had experienced bullying due to the old-fashioned name of his father.

One of the most common forms of bullying for teenagers is verbal bullying. It can make youngsters feel furious, scared, and helpless. According to Cowie and Jennifer (2008), verbal bullying can exacerbate problems at school that a victim may already be dealing with at home or elsewhere. Some research also pointed out a link between the experience of child maltreatment and bullying behavior, suggesting that the bully at school may be a victim at home (Williams, 2010).

### **Bullying Experiences in School**

The emerging themes were being called by parent's name, bullied for gay actuations, retaliated by bullying, simple mockery, bullied for physical defects, being instigated to fight, and bullied for the mistakes made.

The first emerging theme was being called by parent's name. The research informant was teased due to the old-fashioned name of his parents. Another emerging theme was bullied for gay actuations. He was bullied for being effeminate though his sexual orientation was straight. The research informant bullying experiences in school led him to get even with the bullies. They bullied in order to avenge the bullying that they had gone through.

Furthermore, another emerging theme was bullied for physical defects like having big teeth, a bald head, and a cleft lip. Although, there were also instances that bullies instigated the research informants into fighting. Lastly, some were bullied for a mistake made. They were bullied for failing to execute the plan and got booed by their classmates.

According to the survey conducted by the Teen Online & Wireless Safety (2009) in the United States of America (USA), 58 percent of the bullies are trying to get back to the victims for various reasons and feel that the victim deserves it. Furthermore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015) and the US Department of Education found that 70.6 percent of young students have seen bullying at school, with approximately 30 percent admitting to bullying others.

### **Bullying Experiences with Peers**

The emerging themes were retaliatory bullying, bullying by stereotyping, casual bullying among peers, physical bullying, and bullying on social media. The first emerging



theme was retaliatory bullying. Among their peers, retaliation or getting even with the bully was the common reason for bullying experiences with peers. On the other hand, research informants were stereotyped by friends as boastful by the way they walked and talked. The bullies even called him names like piranha.

Another emerging theme was casual bullying among peers. These are jokes and are not intended to hurt their peers. Moreover, another emerging theme was physical bullying. The arguments between friends turned into physical violence. They got into a fistfight.

The last emerging theme was bullying in social media. Social media is the standard form of communication today. However, it also turned into a venue for others to bully their friends. Uploaded photos, especially when they were still children, became the subject and object of bullying by their friends.

Children and adolescents, and adults can react aggressively when being threatened and attacked, especially when they feel the attack was unjustified (Fluck, 2014). Moreover, children who displayed externalizing behavior problems were more likely to engage in bullying behavior.

### **Motives for Bullying**

The emerging themes were no apparent motive, to get even, and after being pissed off. The majority of the research informants had no apparent motives for their bullying behavior. Bullies motivation was unclear, for it was just a spur of the moment and just wanted to have fun. Moreover, some were influenced by their friends to instigate bullying towards their classmates, schoolmates, and peers.

Another emerging theme was to get even. The bullying experience made them seek vengeance to get even with the person who bullied them first. The last emerging theme was after being pissed off. Bullying was instigated after being pissed off by the bullies. They were irritated and pissed off.

According to Zapf and Gross (2001) that it was not always the perpetrators that escalated the conflict but, at times, the victims who carried out retaliatory, provocative, and threatening themselves.

### **Changes in Academic Life after Bullying Experiences**

The emerging themes were nothing had changed and lost interest in school. The first emerging theme was that nothing had changed. They went to school even the odds they experienced due to bullying. Some of the research informants were so focused on their studies that they did not have time to think about the bullying experiences.

Another emerging theme was losing interest in school. They lost their enthusiasm to go to school. A research informant was absent for a week, and when in school, he skipped classes. He wanted to shun bullies and stop studying.

According to Gorman (2017), bullied children have lower academic achievement, a greater dislike of school, and less confidence in their academic abilities. Furthermore, students who are repeatedly bullied receive poorer grades, participate less in class discussions, and maybe mislabeled as low achievers because they are afraid of being bullied if they speak up in class.

### **Changes in Emotional Life after Bullying Experiences**

The emerging themes were nothing had changed, losing interest in others, and no feeling of hatred. The first emerging theme was that nothing had changed. They were never discouraged in life, for they treated bullying as a joke and never took the teasing seriously. Another emerging theme was losing interest in others. They avoided the bullies and did not mind what the bullies were doing. It made them feel comfortable while they were in school.

The last emerging theme was no feeling of hatred. At first, some research informants held grudges and wanted to take revenge, but they realized that it did not do any good as time passed. They forgave the bullies and let go of their hatred.

Copeland, Wolke, and Angold (2013) provide strong evidence that being a victim of bullying or being both a victim and perpetrator is a risk factor for serious emotional problems. Often, they have low self-esteem and feel depressed, anxious, and lonely.

### **Changes in Personal Life after Bullying Experiences**

The emerging themes were that nothing had changed, becoming vengeful, losing friends, and losing interest in school. The first emerging theme was that nothing had changed. They were not affected by the bullying experiences that they had either at home or in school. Another emerging theme was becoming vengeful. Some research informants became vindictive and wanted to take revenge for the ordeal they had received from the bullies. Some wanted to join the activities of the bullies so that they could bully other students too.

Another emerging theme was losing friends. Friendship was broken, and friends separated ways because of bullying. Lastly, some lost interest in school as bullies continued to bully them.

Long-term impacts of bullying might be challenging to recognize and relate to past bullying conduct and other factors such as anxiety or other traumatic childhood events that can also have physical ramifications in adulthood (Hager & Leadbeater, 2016).

## Changes in Social Life after Bullying Experiences

The emerging themes were losing interest in others, and nothing had changed.

The first emerging theme was losing interest in others. Their aversion either they were hurt or avoiding further conflict by the bullying instigated by others.

Another emerging theme was that nothing had changed. There were no changes in the social life of the research informants after their bullying experiences.

Depression, anxiety, social isolation, and low self-esteem are common symptoms among victims (Davies, 2015). The feelings of pain that accompany peer rejection, ostracism, or loss are social pain (Vaillancourt, Hymel & McDougall, 2013).

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## Implication for Practice

Based on the findings, the following implications for practice are offered.

- a. Schools must collaborate with parents in designing ongoing formation programs, character-building activities, and counseling sessions for children and parents.
- b. Schools can design parenting programs for parents/guardians for updates, trends and issues of parenting the millennials and Generation Z.
- c. Justice and Peace Education must be integrated across curriculum to develop tolerance among the members of the community.
- d. Teachers must exercise prudence and consistency in enforcing positive discipline to the children guided by Republic Act 7836, Republic Act 10627, Republic Act 9262, and DepEd Order 42 series of 2012. It can be done during Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, Midyear Performance Review and Evaluation (MPRE), or In-Service Training (INSET).
- e. Revival peer counseling groups among the secondary schools in the Division de Oro. Moreover, members of this group must be given training workshops and full support for them to perform the expected tasks.
- f. Efficient and functional anti-bullying program as mandated by Republic Act 10627. Moreover, a close monitoring scheme on the interventions done to the bullies.
- g. Employment of full-time Registered Guidance Counselor (RGC) to cater to the emotional and psychological needs of the growing up young men and women.
- h. Strengthen Gender and Development (GAD) in schools and wholeness spirituality.
- i. Conduct of personality tests or emotional quotient workshops for the students to know better their thought processes by the Guidance Office.
- j. Formal training for teachers on how to deal with bullying and other related issues of the students in absence of a Registered Guidance Counselor.

## **Implications for Future Research**

The responses of the study were limited to the students in New Albay National High School, Maragusan East District, Division of Davao de Oro, the following implications for future research are considered:

First, future research should study the effectiveness of intervention programs for the victims and perpetrators of bullying in their respective schools. Second, another research of the same focus may be conducted in another location to investigate the same phenomenon of bullying in public schools. Third, a re-interview of the same research informants may be conducted to see whether their understanding of bullying has changed over a period of time. Lastly, future research could investigate the same phenomenon in junior high schools in urban areas, both private and public. They could also do comparative research on bullying in urban and rural areas vis-à-vis private and public schools.

## **Concluding Remarks**

The main focus of the study was the bullying experiences of the bullies in school. The implementation an anti-bullying law in the Philippines under RA 10627 did not deter the children's bullying experiences at home and in school. Teachers have the professional and moral obligation to understand and recognize bullying in all its manifestations and implications in school. Moreover, it is necessary to establish integral plans for counteracting it and therefore, each school must have a functional anti-bullying committee.

Indeed, some children are exposed to adults who bully at all levels, including home life and social interactions. Others were exposed to violent movies and television shows that have bullying embedded and frequently celebrated in action.

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## **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

In conducting this study, the author(s) adhered to strict ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose and procedures. Respondents were assured of their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The anonymity of all participants was rigorously maintained to protect their privacy. The well-being of the respondents was safeguarded throughout the research process. There was no conflict of interest in the conduct of this study. Plagiarism was strictly avoided, ensuring all sources and references

were properly cited. Furthermore, there was no bias in the interpretation of the findings. The results of this study are used solely for research purposes.

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