

**LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**

Teachers' Perceptions of Students who Bully Teachers: A Pilot Study in Lebanon

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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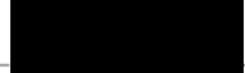
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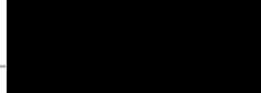
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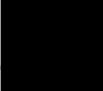


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## **Dedication**

To my parents, the pride reflected in your eyes was worth it all. Thank you for your confidence in me, encouragement, and love, throughout my academic journey and my life. You will never know the depths of my admiration or gratitude for you. To my brothers thank you for bearing with me and celebrating with me every little accomplishment. To my family, you make my heart full.

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# Teachers' Perceptions of Students who Bully Teachers: A Pilot Study in Lebanon

Leah Mazen Itani

## Abstract

Teaching is one of the most stressful professions. Teachers are frequently confronted with numerous disruptive bullying acts, resulting in lost classroom instruction time. Teachers' wellbeing is an essential factor of student success, quality of instruction, and school culture. When referring to school bullying, it is generally assumed that students are the victims of such aggressions. However, little attention is given to student-to-teacher bullying and the way it affects teachers. This purpose of this pilot explanatory study is to explore teachers' perceptions of teachers' bullying by students, explore different types of bullying, and recommend proactive solutions. Peer-reviewed studies on the subject was examined in order to gain a better knowledge of bullying and to create a self-administered survey that addressed these concerns. This study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature and took place in a private school in Beirut. The research design consisted of focus groups with witnesses of bullying incidents, individual interviews with bullied teachers, and two questionnaires addressed to all teachers. A total of 53 teachers filled out the questionnaires, of which 10 accepted to be interviewed. The results of this study highlight the need of recognizing bullying in its various forms, correctly responding to bullying when it occurs, and including preventative measures that will discourage bullying and foster acceptance. Further research is needed on a larger sample of public and private Lebanese schools to explore this phenomenon on a national scale, also soliciting the input of students to gain a better understanding of the dynamics involved in bullying teachers.

Keywords: Bullying, teachers' wellbeing, empowerment, prevention, student-to-teacher bullying

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **Introduction**

Bullying is a generic term that received a lot of attention from educational researchers during the past five decades (De Wet, 2011; Yahn, 2012, Woudstra, van Rensburg, Visser & Jordaan, 2018). According to Yahn (2012), bullying is a social interaction phenomenon that is translated into a complex and dynamic series of aggressive attitudes influenced by societal and cultural expectations. Researchers who have studied bullying focused on youth and children as victims (Espelage & De la Rue, 2012; Smith, 2011), while others targeted their studies on adults as victims (De Wet, 2010a; Keashly & Neuman, 2010). Bullying in the workplace has received sufficient research attention as well (Einarsen et al., 2010; Power et al., 2013; Samnani & Singh, 2012) due to its negative consequences on employee performance. In an educational setting, when the word bullying is mentioned, an extensive body of research is available about bullying perpetrated on students (Hemphill, Heerde, & Gomo, 2014; Billett, Fogelgarn, & Burns, 2019). However, in the broad range of research on bullying, little attention has been given to teachers being bullied (De Wet, 2012). Prior studies (Espelage et al., 2013) have failed to thoroughly address teacher bullying instances. Research on bullying exercised by students towards teachers has only started in the late nineties (Pervin & Turner, 1998; Terry, 1998). The topic of student-to-teacher bullying has been merely discussed in academic, social, and political contexts compared to other forms of violence and bullying exercised towards teachers (Garrett, 2014). The latter indicates that the initial step to deal with student

teacher bullying is to recognize the issue as a universal problem that requires worldwide commitment.

As defined by Olweus (1993), bullying is a set of aggressive behaviors characterized by being recurrent, intentional, and within the context of a dominant power relationship. However, the paradox in the case of student-to-teacher bullying lies in the power imbalance. The teacher being the victim sounds obscure for many people, especially school administrators and parents. Recently, the topic of teachers' bullying or harassment has witnessed an increase in the media's portrayal (Riley, 2014; Woudstra, Van Rensburg, Visser & Jordaan 2018). However, these situations were justified by the weak performance and unprofessionalism of the victimized teacher (Munn, Johnstone, Sharp, & Brown, 2007, De Wet, 2010). The fear of being reprimanded is what keeps teachers silent about reporting student abusers (Solomon Modiba, 2 019). Unfortunately, teachers know for a fact that reporting bullying situations will question their professionalism, so they choose not to talk (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova 2013).

Despite 30 years of research on teachers who have experienced bullying by students, there is still no agreed-upon no consensus on how to define student-to-teacher bullying (Woudstra et al., 2018). This type of bullying occurs in a school setting which is the workplace of teachers and that is why it is considered as a type of workplace bullying. Workplace bullying is explained by Carbo and Hughes (2010) as the “unwanted, unwelcome, abuse of any source of power that has the effect of or intent to intimidate, control or otherwise strip a target of their right to esteem, growth, dignity, voice or other human rights in the workplace (p. 388).” Referring back to Olweus's definition of bullying, not all tripartite characteristics - intention to cause harm, repetition, and power

imbalance- apply in the case of student-to-teacher bullying (Santos, & Tin, 2018). Additionally, De Wet (2010) defines student to teacher bullying as spiteful acts targeted to undermine the power of teachers. Upward bullying is another way to categorize this type of bullying, as less powerful individuals are threatening personnel with higher professional authority (Santos & Tin, 2018).

As stated by Smokowski and Evans (2019), there are several consequences related to student bullying, including but not limited to depression, trepidation, loneliness, withdrawal from school, and low self-esteem. Similarly, bullying has direct effects on teachers' wellbeing, which affects their level of motivation and effectiveness. This discouragement is reflected in the feeling of helplessness towards all teacher duties from classroom management, meeting students' individual needs, and academic preparations, quality of performance (De wet, 2010; Fisher & Kettl, 2003). The negative impacts that bullying has on teachers indirectly affect students' academic success and psychological well-being (Chen & Astor, 2008). In addition to the occupational stress teachers experience, encountering bullying triggers emotional dissonance, physical distress, and lower professional functioning (Willson et al., 2011; Reddy et al., 2013). Research on teachers extrapolates that work-related stress has a direct effect on overall job satisfaction and in return, lower professional commitment (Klassen & Chiu, 2011; Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010).

Being a teacher myself and hearing incidents that my colleagues encounter without having proper back-up or support on how to deal with such incidents, motivated me to tackle the issue of teachers who are bullied by students. In addition, in Lebanon for instance, there is virtually no public research about this topic. As a teacher in Lebanon, I feel that bullied

teachers staying silent is preposterous. Encountering humiliation by a student is common, but talking about it in public remains taboo. Furthermore, teachers that are subject to bullying by their students prefer not to disclose these incidents to avoid questioning their professionalism.

Such incidents are not to be taken on a personal level, nor should they be looked upon as taboos and kept secretive. Being victimized by a student may have deleterious effects but shouldn't reach the point of being detrimental. Teachers have the right to learn how to deal with such incidents. Taking action and being proactive to avoid student bullying are vital. Teachers who are victims should be aware of how to reflect on bullying scenarios and pinpoint the underlying reasons. Victims should be made aware of when they should seek professional help when they themselves are helpless. The absence of administrative support towards students' violent behavior can lead to teachers' distress (Gonzalez, Brown & Slate, 2015). Administrative support plays a vital role in helping teachers cope with and be proactive members with students who bully teachers (Asio, 2019). Today, student-to-teacher bullying is a serious problem in Lebanon that needs to be addressed and solved. Therefore, this research aims to identify teachers' perceptions of students who bully them and discuss possible actions in that regard.

## **2.1 Problem Statement**

The concept of teacher bullying is still a perplexing phenomenon in Lebanon. There are different opinions about teachers' perception of student bullying; some believe that bullying from students is a social taboo, while others deal with such incidents professionally. However, to date, students-to-teacher bullying has not been given proper attention from an academic perspective to document and assess teachers' perceptions

about the issue. Teachers being bullied is a stigmatized concept that needs to be brought up in public and talked about in the open. Understanding the seriousness of this problem can only be done by an investigation of the harmful consequences bullied teachers suffer. This phenomenon exists in all our schools; therefore, this thesis aims to shed light on it by investigating bullying incidents that occur in a Lebanese school.

## **2.1Purpose of the Study**

Bullying has been proven to threaten the victim's psychological, social and physiological wellbeing. Consequently, if teachers are targets of these bullying acts, they will negatively influence the quality of teachers' work performance. This research focuses on teachers being bullied by students in the school context. This study's purpose is to clarify teachers' perceptions of teachers being bullied by students, explore these different types of bullying, and recommend proactive solutions.

## **2.1Research Questions**

The purpose of this research is to put the spotlight on teachers suffering from the bullying of students in silence and have not yet received any attention pertaining to this issue. Therefore, this study aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. What types of bullying do students subject teachers to?
2. What are teacher's perceptions of students' bullying teachers?
3. What are some suggested solutions to help teachers respond and reduce the occurrence of bullying incidents by students?

## **2.1Significance of the Study**

This study was conducted to fill the gap of a relatively obscure topic. Willson et al. (2011) and Reddy et al. (2013) mentioned that bullying towards teachers has detrimental effects on the teacher's career, namely, motivation, health, and performance. Therefore, it is time that we investigated teachers' perceptions of students' bullying given the aforementioned negative effects. This research study is intended to help a minority population by trying to identify measures to prevent this abuse from happening in the future. This study is considered novel, as no Lebanese or regional studies were conducted about the topic at hand. The findings of this study will help schools become aware of a serious problem that is impacting the quality of learning experiences and teachers' wellbeing, both of which can eventually threaten a school's reputation. The study will also guide teachers on how to be proactive and reduce the occurrence of bullying incidents. This study serves as an urgent call for national and international research about a sensitive topic that has been neglected for too long.

## **2.1Thesis Division**

The thesis is composed of six main chapters. Chapter one is the introduction, which provides the context, argument, the purpose, and significance of the study. Chapter two discusses the literature review, which explores the various research study-related concepts, meanings and theories. The third chapter introduces the section on methodology, which guides readers through a comprehensive, clear path of how participants were chosen, and how the study was performed. The fourth chapter is a summary of the findings of the study, and in chapter five the analysis is fully discussed. Lastly, chapter six sets out

the conclusion with implications on solutions for dealing with the students who bully teachers, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Literature Review**

The literature review discusses seven themes related to the study hand. The first part reviews the definition of bullying and more specifically workplace bullying from international studies conducted in more than six different continents, including America, Canada, The United Kingdom, Hungary, Taiwan, Australia, India, Hong Kong, Argentina, and Nigeria. An analysis of how administration, colleagues, parents, and students can be causes of teachers' bullying in a school context follows. The second part outlines the different types of bullying; overt and covert, which are subdivided into verbal, physical, emotional, social and cyberbullying; each of the aforementioned types of bullying are closely discussed on how they are reflected in real-life applications in schools around the world. Characteristics of both a student bully and a bullied teacher are investigated from the lens of international researchers. Research findings on how bullying affects a bullied teacher's life is also shared. Three frameworks are provided: Attribution Theory, Humiliation Theory, and Organizational Culture Theory. All of the following terms were reviewed from the lens of international literature and pioneers in the field of school bullying.

#### **2.1 Definition of Bullying**

Educator exploitation seems to be a global issue, proposing that the discussion by policymakers and experts ought to be outlined inside a worldwide setting while likewise thinking about neighborhood subtleties (Longobardi et al., 2019). The findings of a

national study conducted in the United States indicate that 80% of educators experienced a minimum of one type of harassment in their recent or previous school year (McMahon et al., 2014). Furthermore, a study conducted in Canada reported that during their career, 80% of teachers confirm experiencing school violence (Wilson et al., 2011). Olweus (1999) asserts that there is a direct relation between bullying and violence because both terms fall under the big umbrella of aggression. Bullying is categorized as an aggressive behavior that can be perpetrated at any age cohort in life – early years, youths, and adulthood (Ozkilic, 2012).

When discussing bullying, differentiating between reactive and proactive aggression is essential. Dodge (1991) clarifies that reactive aggression is a negative response stemming from a person's anger, whereas proactive aggression is negative conduct that is guided towards somebody for the reason of having control over them or achieving wanted results. The majority of bullying cases are considered to be proactive animosity (Farhat, 2019). As Slee et al. (1999) and Uz and Bayraktar (2019) indicate, bullying can take on violent and nonviolent forms. Bullying can be portrayed in the form of direct aggressive behavior like hitting, beating, or even throwing an object at someone; it can also take on indirect nonviolent forms like discrimination, verbal harassment, spreading rumors, neglecting, and naming.

Bullying is an elusive term that has been exhaustively studied and, yet has failed to be cohesively defined. Over the years, researchers have regarded bullying as a “legacy of confused meanings” and “lack of consensus” (Chan, 2009, pp.144-145). However, consensus on a set of specific characteristics was made by researchers to help identify a behavior as bullying (Chan, 2009). As agreed by researchers (Olweus, 1991; Ozkilic,

2012; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson & Liefoghe, 2002; Uz & Bayraktar, 2019), bullying has three main characteristics, namely intentionality of doing the behavior and causing harm, repetition, and power imbalance. Bullying is a wide range of purposeful aggressive behaviors exercised by a person or group and intended to cause distress and harm to the victim (Harel-Fisch et al, 2010; Monks & Smith, 2006; Olweus, 2003; O'Connell, Pepler & Craig, 1999). Rigby (2002) and Owleus (1993) agree about power imbalance being a quality that facilitates the bullying act. This power imbalance between the bully and the victim exists as a result of the bully's predominant physical or mental strength (Einarsen, 2000; Smith & Sharp, 1994). In this case study, the power imbalance between a teacher and a student can be either physical where the student is bigger in size and has more physical strength, or it can be implied socially where the bully is mentally sharper and more manipulative (Naito & Gielen, 2005). This characteristic of power inequality can also be explained in the sense which victims are incapable or do not know how to defend themselves (Batsche, 1997; Craig et al., 2000; Hazler et al., 2001; Dzuka & Dalbert, 2007). Regardless of the type of power imbalance, Rigby (2002) argues that the bully enjoys hurting the other person, abuses the use of this power over the helpless victim, and usually repeats the undesired action.

## **2.2 Definition of Workplace Bullying**

As defined by Asio (2019), “workplace bullying refers to unreasonable behavior by an individual that intimidates or degrades another individual in work (p.14)”. Workplace bullying follows the same set of the three aforementioned criteria but takes place in the work area of the victim (Pörhölä et al., 2006). Teachers getting bullied by students in a

school setting is considered a type of workplace bullying. Cowan (2012) differentiates disrespectful behavior from bullying by highlighting the following features: determination, escalation, power inequality, intention, and hostile effects. Williams and Ruiz (2012) highlighted a new perception when they demonstrated that workplace bullying can be defined as follows “Workplace bullying generally involves repeated, unreasonable actions, but it can also be a single, severe action” (p. 4). Workplace bullying was described as negative widespread abusive behavior experienced by less powerful victims who are left in distress (Cowan & Fox, 2015). Regardless of the varying definitions of workplace bullying, there are some common themes under this overarching understanding of this behavior. The consistent themes deduced from the different definitions of workplace bullying are: power imbalance, intended adverse behavior, and negative effects on the victim’s work ability (Persky, 2018).

As de Wet (2010) asserts, there's a fine line between a student's mischief and bullying perpetrated on an instructor since bad conduct or breaking the standards of communication can change into bullying when the student bully willfully challenges their educators' authority to disempower them. A study conducted in New Zealand confirmed that a significant number of school suspensions occur due to aggression and bullying-related incidents (Carroll- Lind, 2009). Believing that bullying incidents at schools occur only between educators is a misleading conclusion (Uz & Bayraktar, 2019). Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012a) confirmed that an evident number of students bully teachers worldwide. The concept of student to teacher bullying received less research attention in the area of school bullying (Benefield, 2004; De Wet, 2010). The investigation of student to teacher bullying was initiated in England during the later nineties (Pervin & Turner; 1998; Terry,

1998). Studies of this topic expanded to New Zealand (Benefield, 2004) and South Africa (De Wet & Jacobs, 2006). In these studies, instructors were inquired to assess students' bullying practices perpetrated on them, and they expressed that bullying was exercised on them in different proportions.

## **2.3 Bullying Teachers**

Bullying exists universally in everyday life (Gibbs, 2007). School is a common workplace where bullying occurs. Regardless of absence of consensus on the definition of workplace bullying however, researchers agree that the sole purpose of workplace bullying is in disempowering the victim (Woudstra et al., 2018). As De Wet (2010, p.195) defines it, workplace bullying is “malicious acts to disempower teachers as professionals and human beings”.

### **2.3.1 Teachers Bullied by Colleagues**

Workplace bullying is not only perpetrated by administrators, but also by colleagues (De Wet, 2010). Bullying between colleagues exists due to the bully believing that they are more powerful or worthy than their victim peer (Mirzab & Alameddine, 2020). The existence of this informal power may be caused due to the bully's personality traits, where he/she feels a sense of satisfaction by inflicting pain on their fellow colleague. Working in a political and competitive school where teachers compete to get promoted gives the bully a reason to take hostile actions and step over their colleagues to get the promotion themselves (Gibbs, 2007). De Wet (2014) also found that sometimes the victims were people who failed to fit in well socially with their school colleagues. Additionally, bullies are also more conscientious (Lind et al., 2009) and possess higher cognitive abilities (Kim

& Glomb, 2010) in comparison to other coworkers. On the other hand, colleagues may target those that perform well at work, so they stop over-performing (Lind et al., 2009). Moreover, Granstra's (2015) and Zapf and Einarsen's research (2010) accentuated that coworkers with insecurities and low self-esteem might resort to bullying their colleagues.

### **2.3.2 Teachers Getting Bullied by Parents or Guardians**

Another bullying phenomenon that is widely spread amongst teachers is parents bullying. In 2010, an article published by Williams (2010) highlighted that one in seven teachers has been victims of cyberbullying by parents or their children. Johnson (2008) acknowledged the existence of parent to student bullying and conducted a study to discuss what triggers confrontational bullying between parents and teachers. The latter used a questionnaire that was distributed amongst 130 teachers from a Mid-Atlantic state suburban Excellence High School. The total number of respondents to the study reached 117 responses and a full sample was selected. Results revealed that most teachers suffer from bullying through confrontation in five cases (1) when they remove students from a sports team, (2) when students have homework issues, (3) received low grades on assignments (4) or quizzes and tests, (5) and low attendance. Johnson (2008) stated that “teachers reported blatant, out in the open, and in your face behaviors to describe the bullying incident committed by parents” (p. 8). A more recent study was conducted by Billett et al., (2019) on students and parents who bully teachers in the Australian context, proposed that 57.8% of the surveyed teachers reported being bullied by a parent at least once in the year before the survey was conducted. Parent-led teacher targeted bullying occurs most commonly in the form of parents verbally insulting a teacher (15.2%), shouting at them (14.4%), and disputing on behalf of their children (Billett et al., 2019).

However, the types of parent-led bullying differed in relation to the years of the teachers' experience. Teachers in the first 4 years of their career are the least bullied by parents and have parents sharing false information on their behalf to put them in trouble (Billett et al., 2019). Teachers in their mid-career (between 9 and 14 years) are the major targets of parents' harassment and they experience sorting out other parents against them or attacking a teacher's individual space (Billett et al., 2019). Phone calls and text messages are the main forms of parent-led bullying perpetrated on mid to late-career teachers in the form of swearing and disparaging messages (Billett et al, 2019).

### **2.3.3 Teachers Getting Bullied by Students**

Student to teacher bullying has been discussed in the literature using different terms and characterizations. Terry (1998) used the term cross-peer abuse for defining the bullying of teachers by students, whereas Branch (2006) described student to teacher bullying as upward bullying. The term *contrapower harassment* has also been used to cover a wider range of harmful student behaviors directed at professors, such as disrespectful, hostile, and violent acts (Lampman et al., 2009). As reported by Billett et al., (2019) teachers in primary sectors are the typical targets of parent led bullying. Conversely, student led bullying is mostly perpetrated on teachers of secondary sections (Billett et al., 2019). Student to teacher bullying is a complex idea that was absent from the public discourse (Garett, 2014). Researchers started investigating student to teacher bullying during the late 1990s (Özkiliç, 2012). This multifaceted phenomenon was empirically studied in Finland (Kivivuori, 1997) followed by the United Kingdom (Terry, 1998; Pervin and Turner, 1998); the previously mentioned researchers were able to distinguish a pattern of characteristics to identify student bullies (Garett, 2014). According to the latter, student

to teacher bullying shares the same element of the term bullying in general, which are power imbalance, repetition, and intentionality. Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012a) define student to teacher bullying as purposeful behavior inflicted to insult and harm a teacher. Nevertheless, Billett et al., (2019) argue that student to teacher bullying may be verbal, nonverbal, or physical in nature, may be planned or impulsive, and may be a single occurrence or a repeated act over a long period of time. Benefield's (2004) survey of 587 teachers in New Zealand found that 28 percent of participants reported experiencing mild bullying from students on a weekly basis (Woudstra et al., 2018). Similarly, a 2007 study of teachers in Luxembourg found that teachers were often abused by students for offensive behavior, with 23.9% reporting strong verbal attacks; 19.4% of alleged defamation; and 7% of sexual harassment (Woudstra et al., 2018). A study of 571 teachers in Canada found that an unprecedented number had witnessed and sustained deliberately victimizing or fear-inducing abuse by students; 60% of teachers described receiving insults or name-calling from students, nearly 50% had experienced rude or obscene gestures, 41% were subjected to harmful remarks, and 40% reported intimidation. Likewise, Dinkes et al., (2006) explain that during a study conducted in the U.S. in 2006, 7% of teachers reported being threatened to be harmed and 4% were physically attacked by students. Both educators were subjected to rude or abusive care. Dzuka and Dalbert (2007) found in Slovak secondary schools that nearly half of the teachers in their sample reported having witnessed at least one recent violent student act. Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012b) found, in an internet survey with 219 teacher-respondents, that 70 teachers suggested that their students had bullied them. Furthermore, Kõiv's (2015) study of 560 Estonian teachers found that the rate of teacher-targeted abuse led by students and parents has increased by a whopping 300%. Woudstra et al. (2018) reported that during their study in South Africa, "62.1% of

teachers reported exposure to verbal bullying, 34.6% to physical bullying, 27% to indirect bullying, and 6.6% to cyberbullying" out of the 153 public secondary school teachers surveyed on student-to-teacher bullying (p.1). In Taiwan, up to 30% of students replied affirmatively to having participated in at least one violent act against teachers in the year before the study (Chen & Astor, 2008). Bullying of teachers by pupils is very distinct in form from school-based and peer-to-peer-level workplace abuse. When students harass their professors, the condition is that the lower-ranking group within the school is harassing the higher-ranking party. This may be known to constitute so-called cross-peer harassment (Terry, 1998). Most school-based and workplace-based studies define harassment by the following three criteria: (1) harassment is when someone intentionally directs aggressive behavior towards another party to hurt them; (2) bullying is a recurring behavior manifested over a period of time; and (3) there is such an imbalance of power between the party responsible for the harassment and the party subject to the harassment that the party cannot defend itself (Pörhölä et al., 2006). Common criteria for harassment also include victim impact in the literature on workplace harassment in particular. The criteria of teachers being bullies includes, in particular, the victim's experience of being bullied and the perceived damage to the victim caused by the harassment in the workplace literature (Rayner & Keashly, 2005). In this study we discuss student to teacher bullying from the teacher's perspective. Therefore, our concept of harassment does not take into account whether or not the perpetrator(s) deliberately engages in harassment. Instead, we characterize student harassment of teachers as a communication process in which a teacher is regularly exposed, by one or more students, to encounters that he or she perceives as offensive, disturbing, or threatening (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012b).

## **2.4 Criteria of Bullying**

Bullying has multiple pillars, yet the most important criteria of identifying the aspects of bullying can be classified as follows:

### **1- Criteria of Power Imbalance:**

One of the teacher's roles is to manage the classroom and control students' misbehaviors. Therefore, it is considered shameful and hard to believe that students could bully and have control over their teachers (De Wet, 2010). Some researchers also emphasize the significance of the disparity of control between a student bully and a teacher victim (De Wet, 2010; Benefield, 2004). It is commonly agreed that teachers should not be seen as victims since they are perceived as professionals who are more powerful than teenagers and are in charge of the classroom (Garett, 2014). When influence is employed by one peer over another, informal power exists; this power abuse may entail intimidation (Özkiliç, 2012).

### **2- Criteria of Repetition:**

As stated, for most concepts of bullying, the idea of repetitive or systemic actions is central (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; O 'Moore, 2000; McEvoy, 2005). Olweus (1993) indicates that bullying happens when a person is constantly subjected to negative acts over time, meaning that extreme, isolated negative events can actually constitute as bullying. In truth, many educators believe that the long-term impact of severe bullying on their physical, mental, or occupational health and well-being can be equal to or higher than the effects of less serious recurrent violent conduct (Siann et al. 1993; Sullivan, 2000; West, 2007).

### **3- Criteria of Perception and Intent:**

Victims' and offenders' perspectives have been explored from a variety of viewpoints in literature. Munn et al. (2004) investigated the experiences and reactions to bullying in the workplace using a social exchange approach, whereas Parzefall and Salin (2010) investigated the experiences and responses to bullying in the workplace using a social exchange viewpoint. Numerous reports have compared the experiences of educators and students who bully (Menesini & Modiano, 2004; Naylor et al., 2006). In a study conducted in the United States by Blasé and Blasé (2008), 172 instructors were polled on the major causes of victimization as well as the intensity of their experience of maltreatment of subordinates in 38 disparaging behaviors. Their analysis was critically distinct from previous studies (Keashly, 1998) because the "intensity of harm" was understood as "a function of victim perspective, not a simple occurrence of behavior" (Blasé & Blasé, 2008, p. 292).

## **2.5 Perceptions on Students who Bully Teachers**

Each teacher will see abuse differently, and these variations in attitudes will lead to differences in the way teachers cope with harassment. Some teachers see abuse as a normal process of growth (Antonopoulos, 2015). Other teachers may feel it is the victim teacher's fault, and another group of teachers may think the bullies are evil by nature. Harassment attitudes are often viewed differently in terms of ethnicity and form of harassment (Farhat, 2019). In a study conducted by Sherman (2009), a group of teachers was asked to rate the seriousness of 16 separate vignettes according to the nature of the assault and the gender of the perpetrator and survivor. The findings concluded that teachers viewed physical harassment as more severe than verbal or relational harassment, same gender-based harassment is more serious than opposite gender-based encounters, boys were more likely

to be physically aggressive, girls were more likely to spread gossip, and more attention was paid to physical harassment (Sherman, 2009). Smith et al. (2002) piloted an international study in 14 different countries to compare kids' understanding of bullying relative to their age and gender. This study concluded that younger kids acknowledge acts as being aggressive or not, whereas older ones do understand the different types of bullying. As for gender differences there was slightly any difference in understanding, although boys experience and perpetrate more physical bullying and girls experience and exercise more indirect forms of bullying (Smith, 2002). In Turkey, a study was done by Sahin (2010), under the title of Teachers' perceptions of bullying in high schools: A Turkish study. Findings highlighted that teachers thought students are influenced by violent content they are exposed to on the internet and movies. A group of high school teachers participating in this study thought that bullies were using harassment to get what they want as portrayed to them in movies (Sahin, 2010). In the US, several fifth-grade teachers voiced fear that children become bullies because of what they are subjected to at home (Migliaccio, 2015). There are also myths that abuse can help students be tougher, so solutions are not needed as students who are being harassed should learn how to fix their issues and stand up for themselves (Gordon, 2019). According to a study piloted by Antonopoulos (2015), when asked to describe bullying, respondents had similar answers and unitedly agreed that during any bullying incident there must be a victim and a bully.

## **2.6 Types of Bullying**

Researchers who investigate school bullying differentiate two distinct categories (Mattioni, 2012). The first set is labeled as overt bullying; this type of bullying can be seen and is exercised face-to-face (De Wet, 2010). Physical and verbal aggression fall

under the overt category (Chen & Astor, 2008). The second set of bullying behaviors can be categorized as covert bullying (Hemphill et al., 2014). Covert bullying is done through a third party and it is usually hidden (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Cross et al., 2009). Covert bullying can be reflected in the form of social/relational or cyber bullying (Mattioni, 2012).

### **2.6.2 Forms of Overt Bullying**

Verbal bullying is the most common form of bullying experienced by teachers (De Wet, 2010; Porhola et al., 2006). Verbal bullying can be reflected through insulting, threatening, yelling, and swearing (Billett et al., 2019; Mattioni, 2012). Mainly, student-to-teacher bullying manifests itself in unethical, hostile verbal communication (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012a; Mattioni, 2012). Verbal aggression towards teachers can also be demonstrated in the form of belittling, ridiculing, name-calling, and mocking (De Wet, 2010; James et al., 2008; Mooij, 2011; Terry 1998). Physical aggression is another type of overt bullying exercised on teachers by students. Physical violence is when the victim and the bully are in direct physical contact Chen & Astor, 2009; De Wet, 2010). Student bullies can attempt to hit, kick, or punch their teachers, vandalize their properties by stealing or destroying them, or even sexually harassing their teachers (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012b; Chen & Astor; De Wet; Dzuka & Dalbert, 2007). A study conducted by Billett et al., (2019) on the forms of teacher targeted bullying, deduced that hitting or punching and damaging personal property were evident common forms of student perpetrated bullying.

### **2.6.3 Forms of Covert Bullying**

Ruining a teacher's social relation and reputation is a type of bullying known as social/relation bullying (Billett et al., 2019). This type of bullying is indirect and not easily seen or acknowledged. Students can bully their teachers by spreading rumors and deceitful gossip, humiliating them and mimicking their behavior (Woudstra et al., 2018). Sabotaging a teacher's reputation could be achieved when a student bully lies to get the educator in trouble, or even inviting others to be against the teacher (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012b). Social/relational bullying could also be in the form of ignoring the teacher's presence, repeatedly coming late to class, constantly disrupting the class flow and not letting the teacher work in peace, or refusal to cooperate with the teacher (Olweus, 1993; Hemphill et al., 2014).

The fourth type of bullying exercised on teachers is cyberbullying or bullying done via a third party (Cross et al, 2009). Cyberbullying is the use of technology to deliberately cause harm to an individual (Mattioni, 2012). Nowadays, students are very tech-savvy and therefore, they can easily bully their teachers using communication platforms mediated by technology (Mattioni, 2012; Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012a). Sending abusive pictures, threats, or even obscene messages through phone calls, emails, and messages are some forms of cyberbullying used by students (Billett et al., 2019). Students can also leave painful messages on their teacher's social media profiles or even hack their accounts (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012a).

Student to teacher bullying can be manifested in direct verbal and nonverbal forms or even physical aggression. Furthermore, teachers also experience bullying in indirect forms of social/relational or cyberbullying. Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012b) reported that a study was

done in Finland examining the types of bullying experienced by teachers in elementary and secondary school. It attests that the most common form of bullying is direct verbal bullying and specifically the use of obscene language and inappropriate comments. In agreement with the previous findings, a study conducted by Billett et al., (2019), confirmed that the verbal form of bullying was the most common form of teacher-directed violence by students. The forms of verbal bullying were portrayed as 28.6% having students swearing, 28% shouting and yelling, and 25.5% despitful and hostile verbal comments (Billett et al., 2019). Another study conducted in Turkey by the Turkish Education Union on teachers being bullied by students, shows that 65% of the research's participants reported verbal violence (Uz & Bayraktar, 2019). Denying to cooperate with teachers and deceiving teachers were respectively the second and the third most common student to teacher forms of bullying (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012b). On the other hand, the study conducted in Turkey reported that 16.9% experienced psychological violence, while 14.4% reported physical violence. (Uz & Bayraktar, 2019; Yaman & Kocabasoglu, 2011).

## **2.7 Characteristics of Bullies and Victims**

### **2.7.2 Characteristics of a Student Bully**

Characteristics of students who bully are multifaceted and debatable. When students were asked to describe a bully, one-third of the forty interviewed students used the term “mean” and 35% of them claimed that bullies have strong physical attributes and are usually “big” and “tall” (Khosropour and Walash, 2001). Antonopoulos (2015) concluded that bullies had poor self-esteem, no consequences to their actions at home, unstructured home life, and that the student's guardians neglected the actions of their child. Another conclusion

was that any person has the ability to be a bully and bullies come in all shapes and sizes, with diverse intellects, and may have either low or high self-esteem (Antonopoulos, 2015). Furthermore, the latter explains that a perpetrator could be a student who lacks social and communication skills and could therefore, have recourse to physical communication to cope with anger. The findings also highlight that students who bully are sometimes imitating family members. Some bullies were characterized as very purposeful and extremely intelligent, as they use their bullying act to achieve a certain purpose (Antonopoulos, 2015). Research acknowledges that the universal trait of defiance is shared by bullies (Farahat, 2019). Student bullies behave provocatively, leaving the instructors feeling bullied and disempowered. Challenging the existing power in the classroom excites the bully as it empowers them with social dominance and a sense of authority. Some research proposes that bullying is gender-specific as males tend to be bullies more than females (Orpinas & Horne, 2006; Gereš et al., 2018). However, this belief is highly arguable as other studies claim that bullying is neither gender nor age specific (Antonopoulos, 2015). Nevertheless, research asserts that certain types of bullying are more likely to be exercised by a specific gender. Olweus (1993) described the individual traits of bullies in his book which are: hostility, abuse, lack of sympathy, a strong desire to control, physically strong, and generally surrounded by a small group of supporters.

### **2.7.3 Characteristics of Bullied Teachers**

When discussing the characteristics of bullied teachers, the most significant fact is the existence of power imbalance between victim teacher and student bullies (Özkılıç, 2012). It is important to examine the skills of teachers who have been bullied and non-bullied

during their teaching profession to understand the explanation behind the power imbalance (Uz & Bayraktar, 2019). Studies reveal that fresh graduate teachers lack the needed experience and skills and therefore are more likely to be subjected to bullying incidents (Terry, 1998). Additionally, Royer (1997) explains that inexperienced teachers have a professional disadvantage since they graduate lacking the required skills and methods to deal with and control aggressive behavior.

Undesirable student behavior is highly affected by the teacher's ability in organizing classroom events and directing the actions of students (Başar, 2009). To recognize, eradicate and strengthen problematic student habits, a teacher should have adequate knowledge and skills relevant to classroom management (Yuksel, 2013; Ozcan, 2012; Demirtas, 2011). The level of responsibility of students in a well-managed classroom is high, and showing undesirable behaviors is low (Basar, 2009). De Wet (2012) found that the atmosphere of the classroom and the teacher's management style play an important role in disclosing the aggressive actions of students. Uz and Bayraktar, (2019) report that the numerous variables involved in developing a teacher's classroom management style inhibited the results of available studies from concluding evident patterns. For example, Yilmaz and Aydin (2015) declared that a teacher's classroom management skills are not related to years of experience, gender, or age. However, the results of other studies emphasized a strong link between the aforementioned characteristics and a teacher's classroom management abilities (Yuksel, 2013; Meister & Melnick, 2003; Stoughton, 2007; Kirkpatrick, Lincoln & Morrow, 2006). Therefore, it's considerably biased to elucidate the weakness of teachers, who ought to professionally execute classroom leadership against bully students. Classroom management skills is the foremost basic skill

within the teaching profession that is required to redirect student behavior and resources to be in line with the teaching objectives (Demirtas, 2011).

In addition to the teacher's years of experience and classroom management skills, a teacher's characteristics and personality play an important role in whether they are bully-victims or not (Farhat, 2019). Studies have found that bullies prefer to exploit victims who are more vulnerable than they are and do not have allies (Veenstra et al., 2010). Evidence also indicates that abusers tend to blame victims and they believe that abuse continues because of the victim's own behavior or personality (Hara, 2002). Olweus (1993) described two types of victims: the passive and the provocative. The first and most typical type of victim is a passive or submissive victim who is uncertain, sensitive, nervous, silent, of low self-esteem, physically weak, and whose conduct tells the bullies that they will not respond when threatened. Docile teachers are easy bullying targets for students. The second form is a provocative victim who is overly energetic, has low focus, is nervous, hostile, and creates stress and irritation. Having a teacher with the following characteristics can easily provoke a student bully (Olweus, 1993; Farahat, 2019).

## **2.8 Effects of Workplace Bullying on The Victim**

Documented effects or emotions reported by bullied victims are consistent through studies. Bullied victims experience a number of disruptive emotional and physical responses that can lead to bad health (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Power et al., 2013). On the same front, Mirzab and Alameddine (2020) argue that bullied laborers suffer physical and mental distress which will negatively influence their professional performance and social life. Research has documented a variety of detrimental impacts associated with

mistreatment of teachers, including declines in the self-esteem of teachers, stress and health concerns of teachers, weakened working conditions, and adverse effects on classroom teaching activities (Blasè & Blasè 2007). Teachers experienced a drop in career satisfaction (De Wet, 2010) and a loss of faith in their peers (Jacobs & De Wet, 2015) as a result of being bullied in their classrooms.

Studies in Ireland, Germany, and Austria indicate that victims of workplace bullying experience more depression, irritability, and anxiety than most workers (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003). Studies in Finland portray a clear correlation between workplace bullying and depression (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; Kivimäki et al., 2003). Furthermore, Aquino and Thau, (2009) confirm the idea that victims appear to experience less well-being and work satisfaction and more depression than other workers who are not bullied. Mirzab and Alameddine (2020) substantiate that bullied workers suffer from insecurity, poor concentration, aggression or revenge, panic attacks, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The psychological impacts of repeated workplace abuse can contribute to lack of attention and psychiatric depression (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; Harber et al., 2013). In addition to the psychological effects, being harassed in the work field can also cause the victim physiological distress. Kivimäki et al., (2003) contend that cardiovascular diseases are amongst the main health problems related to workplace harassment. Having nightmares, sleeplessness, headaches, back pains, eating disorders, elevated blood pressure, heart attacks, depression, and exhaustion are other detrimental impacts suffered by workplace bullying victims (Hall, 2005; De Wet, 2010; Uz, & Bayraktar, 2019). Woudstra et al (2018) argue that workplace bullying causes bullied employees to suffer sleep interruptions loss of rest, migraines, back pain, nausea, hyperactivity, skin changes,

ulcers, first-time drug misuse, and even suicide. These detrimental consequences of pupil abuse of teachers have an indirect influence on the academic performance and psychology of students (Chen & Astor, 2008) and the school at the institutional level (Ingersoll, 2001).

The psychological and physiological consequences highly impact the social status of bullied workers. Bullied workers feel anxious and drained; therefore, they choose to withdraw themselves from socializing and forming friendships with colleagues (Mirzab & Alameddine, 2020). Mirzab and Alameddine (2020) also proclaim that low self-confidence and the feeling of being disrespected lead to social isolation and poor work results which could lead to absenteeism. Loh, Restubog, and Zagenczyk (2010) and Yeung and Griffin (2008) propose that in different countries, workplace harassment leads to lower rates of staff engagement. Previous studies have shown however, that teacher effectiveness, teaching-learning processes in schools, relationships with others, emotional conditions, and personal lives are adversely impacted by abuse (Benefield, 2004; De Wet & Jacobs, 2006; De Wet, 2010). The most significant finding of Klein and Bentolila's research was that bullied teachers displayed low morale on their job and their relationship with their students (2018). Bullying activity often has a detrimental effect on employment, including decreased productivity, frustration with the company, and job losses (Hollis, 2012; Williams & Ruiz, 2012). Prior research has shown that mistreatment of teachers can adversely impact teaching and learning in schools (Beale & Hoel, 2011; De Wet, 2010). Blasè et al. (2008) have found that abuse has adversely influenced the conduct of teachers in the classroom; teachers have reported being less caring, patient, tolerant, and amusing with students and have been compelled to use strict, dated, authoritarian and inadequate teaching practices. Teachers had trouble focusing on work and said that during their time

of training, they could not do so. Teachers had trouble focusing on work and admitted that they would not do much work during their time of planning as a result of being bullied (Jacobs & De Wet, 2015). More specifically, teachers reported that as a result of being bullied, they suffered less commitment to their jobs, burn-out, apathy, and detachment from professional practices (Blasè et al., 2008; Orange 2018).

## **2.9 Theoretical Frameworks**

Student-to-teacher bullying is somehow different in nature from regular workplace bullying (Pörhölä, 2012). When bullying arises from a lower status of formal power to a higher one, this is also known as upward bullying or cross-peer abuse (Branch, 2006; Terry, 1998). In literature, there is a comprehensive research on different theoretical frameworks explaining various aspects of workplace bullying. In this part, three different theoretical frameworks are discussed. The attribution theory is used to better understand why bully-victims intend these bullying acts. This was followed by an analysis of the effects of bullying acts on victims or more specifically bullied teachers using the humiliation theory. Finally, the organizational culture theory provides a clear in-depth description of the role of the school in decreasing bullying incidents and thus helps in forming individually tailored effective solutions.

### **2.9.2 Attribution Theory**

To eradicate negative behavior, we always try to investigate the reason causing people to behave in a certain way (Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008; Weiner, 2000). According to the attribution theory we always try to understand why people behave the way they do (Heider, 1958; Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008; McDermott, 2009). From its name, the

attribution theory attributes our actions to specific reasons. The attribution theory suggests that humans have internal motives and external motives (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012a). Internal motives exist when a person's actions are induced by personal attributes, like personality traits. Whereas external motives arise when the behavior is assumed to be caused by conditions or scenarios. Stability, controllability, and locus of intention are the three fundamental causal factors directing an individual's motive to act in a certain way (Weiner, 2000). Stability - the period of the cause- whether the cause of the action is continuous or temporary. Controllability refers to the assumed regulation of the cause of action by the subject. Any triggers may be seen as controllable, whereas others may be viewed as difficult to alter. The locus descriptor relates to the location of the cause, which may be attributed to either internal or external factors. Weiner claims that this three-dimensional causal framework can represent all causes of actions (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012a).

Fundamental attribution error is one of the basic concepts of the attribution theory. McDermott (2009), for example, summarizes the findings of recent research in this subject by claiming that persons due to a fundamental error of assignment, they overemphasize internal reasons when analyzing the negative actions of others (Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008). Conversely, as people perceive the good actions or consequences of others, they prefer to overemphasize the situational factors and underemphasize the individual ones. The course of this attribution fallacy is inverted as people come to judge their own behavior and this is referred to as personal bias (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012a). Thus, we prefer to assign positive effects to internal or personal factors when we wish to account for our own success, but when we have to justify shortcomings that we are held

responsible for, we attribute them to external causes. The hypothesis could cause one to believe that teachers would be more likely to assign their perceptions of abuse to factors relevant to students or circumstances than to their own characteristics. In this study, bullying is investigated from the teacher's viewpoint, and thus using the attribution theory framework we will analyze teacher perceptions on the reasons for the bullying acts.

### **2.9.3 Humiliation Theory**

To understand how victim teachers feel we use the humiliation theory to explain the consequences of bullying incidents. Jackson (1999) defines humiliation as extreme public denigration, where a powerful individual publicly humiliates a less powerful victim (Evans & Smokowski, 2015). Unlike shame, humiliation involves the intervention of an outside entity that creates feelings of weakness in the victim; humiliation also triggers resentment against the attacker (Hartling & Luchetta, 1999; Jackson, 1999). Humiliated victims often internalize the rage they have towards the perpetrator as depression (Lindner, 2007). Harassment or bullying is a type of humiliation (Meltzer et al., 2011; Simmons, 2011) provided that harassment typically happens publicly, entails subjugation of a less influential victim and impacts the whole school population by limiting social harmony. The humiliation theory is used as a framework in school bullying to elucidate the role of humiliation in the outcomes of victims as well as illustrating how harassment prevents the development of a peaceful and coherent school environment (Evans & Smokowski, 2016). Bullying occurring during social interactions and dynamics of relationships is a form of humiliation (Klein, 1991). Humiliation violates the basic human right of recognition and respect, which causes a deterioration of interpersonal relationships and disrupts social cohesion (Lindner, 2007).

The dynamics of humiliation include three roles: the humiliator, the perpetrator, and the witness (Evans & Smokowski, 2016; Klein, 1991). Bullies humiliate their victims on a mental, emotional, or relational level in order to relegate their victims to a lower social status in an attempt to define themselves (Evans & Smokowski, 2016). In reference to the work of Smith (2001) and Lindner (2007), humiliation has four distinct forms: Conquest Humiliation-compel a former equivalent to a subordinate position. Conquest humiliation could be seen if two friends of an equal rank fight and one uses emotional violence to humiliate the rival and relegate him/her to a lower social position, thus establishing an unequal power. To preserve the social hierarchy formed by conquest of humiliation, the bully uses Reinforcement Humiliation. Following the aforementioned scenario, the more powerful opponent will act in any required way in order to sustain the subordination and marginalization of the rival. Relegation Humiliation is seen as a way of establishing a stronger power difference between the humiliator and the recipient. The bully will undermine his/her rival's new connections by raising the severity and duration of harassment; thereby rendering the rival to seem socially unacceptable and relegating the rival to an even lower social role. The last and most severe type of humiliation is Exclusion Humiliation whereby the bully tends to completely exile the opponent. In the previous example, exclusion humiliation would have the bully exercise extravagant mortification to guarantee that everyone in the class totally dismissed and avoided the competitor. Similar types of humiliation are applicable in student to teacher bullying incidents.

As cited by Evans and Smokowski (2016), the shame of being bullied violates the basic desire for dignity and appreciation of the individual. Humiliation also destroys social status and induces the internal discomfort of ostracism. Being bullied leads to frustration

and anger; this anger may be outsourced as revenge or internalized as depression. This frustration is reflected as people who were once victims become bullies themselves. Other suspects on the other hand, internalize the shame and feel sorrow (Juvonen et al., 2003). Fitness (2001) reports that research proved that negative emotions and interpersonal tension are aggravated by humiliation. Bullying victimization and ongoing humiliation are reasons for interpersonal trauma (D'Andrea et al., 2012; Lindner, 2001a). Qualitative interviews with 10 students and 10 teachers showed that perceptions of humiliation such as abuse, culminated in drug use, attendance issues, school dropouts, and suicidal thoughts (Frey & Fisher, 2008).

Furthermore, abuse risks the physical well-being of victims who also complain of feeling frightened and powerless. Forming and maintaining healthy social relationships is prohibited by bullying victimization which is a form of humiliation (Evans & Smokowski, 2016). The detrimental interaction consequences of the abuse are not limited to the victims. Bullying incidents and embarrassment have contributed to the disruption of social harmony in schools and classrooms (Evans & Smokowski, 2016). Indeed, fear of shame '... seems to be one of the most important motivators of person and collective human behavior' (Klein, 1991, p. 96).

#### **2.9.4 Organizational Culture Theory**

As indicated by D'Cruz, Paull, Omari, & Guneri-Cangarli, (2016), bullying happens as a function of the features of both the offenders and the institutional systems. Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012) assert that workplace bullying only continues when corporate environments tolerate, model, or award it. In comparison, workplaces with power

imbalances and hierarchical positions have a higher rate of sexual discrimination (Cleary, Hunt, & Horsfall, 2010). Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012) indicated that an organizational solution is required to resolve the issue of harassment; focusing on people can be unsuccessful, particularly if the organizational culture supports violence.

Certain environmental factors can lead to increased harassment in the workplace. High levels of workload, low job security and low levels of autonomy lead to higher risks of workplace bullying (Baillien, De Cuyper, & De Witte, 2011; De Cuyper, Baillien, & De Witte, 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Moreover, unclear job descriptions or role confusion can also cause increased cases of workplace abuse (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Leadership style was found to contribute to increased cases of workplace harassment; targets were viewed by their leaders as less helpful and understanding, while offenders indicated that their leaders were more aggressive and less charismatic (Hauge et al., 2011; Hepworth & Towler, 2004).

The Organizational Culture Theory proposed by Schein (1984) involves an overview of organizational structure, regulations, and leadership. The above-mentioned concepts were used to direct this research. Many of the earlier findings on workplace harassment in higher education were intended to assess the level of incidence or to examine the effect of harassment on the targets (Hollis, 2012; Keashly & Neuman 2010). There has been no study into the organizational environment and structures that affect and promote this activity in order to explain why and how it has occurred (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). According to Schein (1984), the philosophy of organizational culture includes the concept that the principles, framework, rituals, values, and activities of an institution guide people's actions. Salin (2003) researched workplace harassment and argued that in

addition to interpersonal complexities, there are systemic variables such as motivational mechanisms and procedures that function as possible catalysts for workplace harassment. When these mechanisms are present with other supporting mechanisms such as perceived power imbalances and low potential effects, workplace bullying is promoted (Salin, 2003).

As per Schein (1984), institutions have a community of their own created by their values, philosophies, policies, and practices. He concluded that culture can be powerful or vulnerable, optimistic or pessimistic, based on the type of leadership, the amount of time that people work together, and the experiences they encounter. Schein and Schein (2010) defines the culture group as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solves its external adaptation and internal integration problems” (p.18). Culture is divided into three distinct levels (a) artifacts, (b) adopted principles and core beliefs, and (c) fundamental underlying concepts (Schein and Schein, 2010). Objects usually contain manuals, policies, and visible frameworks or procedures. The shared interests and traditions consist of morals, goals, and philosophies. Simple expectations are the implicit attitudes and principles that determine actions. Motivating systems and procedures, part of what Schein (1984) referred to as objects, function as possible catalysts or facilitators of bullying in the workplace. The motivational structures used in Schein's (1984) concept of objects include competitive rivalry and red tape as well as challenges in hiring personnel such as tenured professors. Twale and De Luca (2008) clarify in their book about workplace bullying that the prevalence of harassment is affected by the governance structure, tenure, and the architecture of conventional higher education organizations. The authors argued that there are intrinsic characteristics of academic institutions that allow

abuse. The systems and mechanisms listed as contributors include faculty governance system, faculty peer evaluation of advancement and tenure, competitiveness and compensation structures, power imbalances and organizational structure, both autocratic and laissez-faire leadership types, and lack of civic policy (Twale & De Luca, 2008).

## **2.10 Literature Review Summary**

De Wet (2020) affirms that many academic papers have been written to investigate the degree to which students' intimidation of teachers affected teachers' well-being and instructional proficiency. Researchers around the world adopted various frameworks in conducting studies that aimed at studying teachers who are bullied by students. Using Olweus' (1993) fundamental definition of bullying as a guide, De Wet (2010), defined teacher-to-student bullying as aggressive actions defined by an imbalance between the aggressor (learner/s) and the teacher. The aggressive acts are deliberate and repeated, with the intention of causing physical, emotional, social, and/or professional harm to the victim. In their article, Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012a) state that "research on teacher victimization is still scarce and understanding of the phenomenon is rather limited." As a result, more study on teacher-targeted bullying is needed.

Power et al. (2013) and Maher (2008) explained how the formality or informality of student-to-teacher relation plays a role in bullying. The literature review highlighted the fact that the problem of bullied teachers is a worldwide phenomenon present in different parts of the world although the reasons and forms of bullying perpetrated differed (Zirelllo & Osterman, 2011).

From the literature review, I used the attribution theory to understand what makes student bullies act the way they do. Kauppi and Pörhölä, (2012a) indicate that according to the attribution hypothesis, people have both internal and external motivations that drive them to act in a certain way. Internal motivations occur when a person's behaviors are motivated by personal characteristics such as personality traits. External motivations emerge as the action is thought to be the product of circumstances or situations. Power et al. (2013) used the attribution theory to investigate the effect of culture on the adequacy of workplace bullying across six different continents. According to the attribution theory error, Power et al. (2013) found that high-performance societies assume that everyone will excel if they work hard enough, a mentality that, according to the fundamental attribution fallacy, can lead managers to keep workers individually accountable for factual errors.

According to Meltzer et al. (2011), bullying that occurs in public involves the subjugation of a less powerful perpetrator and threatens the social unity of the school community by limiting it as a type of humiliation. In their article, Evans & Smokowski (2016) adopted the humiliation theory to ensure a better understanding of the feelings and consequences suffered by the bullied teachers. Evans & Smokowski (2016) clarify that the humiliator, the victim, and the witness all play roles in the humiliation dynamic. D'Andrea et al. (2012) and Frey & Fisher, (2008) describe interpersonal trauma and social insecurity as results of ongoing humiliation.

In the article written by D'Cruz et al. (2016), bullying occurs as a result of the characteristics of the individuals and social processes. Hollis (2012) reports that the intent

of many of the earlier findings on workplace bullying was to investigate the impact of harassment on the targets. However, Keashly & Neuman (2010) clarify the absence of studies into the organizational environment that influences the bullying activity to understand why and how it has happened.

Organizational culture theory proposed by Schein (1984) is used in this study to show how and why organizational structure, regulations, and leadership styles can affect teachers being bullied. According to Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012), an organizational approach is needed to address the problem of harassment; relying on individuals can be ineffective, particularly if the organizational culture promotes abuse. In my thesis, I used Olweus's empirical studies accumulated over the years to have a deeper understanding of the progression of the bullying concept. Smith's studies aided my thesis in acknowledging the different types of bullying and characteristics of the bully.

De Wet's reviewed studies were highly useful in my thesis as they offered valuable knowledge on the definition of workplace bullying and specifically teachers being bullied, the different characteristics involved in student to teacher bullying, characteristics of bullied teachers, and effects of workplace bullying on the victim.

# **CHAPTER III**

## **Methodology**

In the previous section, the literature concerning students who bully teachers was interpreted. This section clarifies which instruments of data collection were used and why. The purpose of this study is to elucidate teacher perceptions on students who bully them and outline the types of bullying students commit towards teachers. The following section introduces the design approach, sample selection, instruments, data analysis reliability and validity, and the ethical considerations.

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study follows a mixed-method approach; it incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments and analysis techniques (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). The qualitative research methods used in this study are focus group interviews and individual interviews; these instruments allow for an in-depth analysis of the perceptions of teachers on students who bully teachers and a rich contextual understanding of the types of bullying perpetrated on teachers (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). As for the quantitative methods and survey, they allow this study to cover a wider scope of participants and have access to more data. Both methods complement the purpose of this study and ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

## **3.2 Participants**

### **3.2.1 Sample**

The sample of the study is a convenient sample. Participants were selected from a private school, located in the heart of Beirut. This school follows the Lebanese and American programs of education. This school has educators and students from medium to high socio-economic classes. Staff, teachers, and students from all sects and religions are equally welcomed and respected in this school's setting. For the purpose of this study, teachers who taught elementary classes onward were encouraged to participate.

### **3.2.2. Sampling Procedure**

In this mixed methods research, voluntary response sampling was used for selecting teachers. Voluntary response sampling was used because the researcher had no means of contacting participating teachers unless they have volunteered by signing in their emails in the online questionnaires. All elementary, middle, and high school teachers currently teaching in the school the researcher work in, filled in two online surveys. Every survey asked respondents who were bullied if they would like to participate in interviews and further discuss the issue. If they accept, respondents were asked to provide their email address so that the researcher can contact them. Consequently, ten teachers confirmed their willingness to participate, and they were contacted with a consent form to declare if they do not mind being interviewed further. All the interviewees were asked to participate in a focus group interview, however, seven of those teachers accepted. All interviews were done via the Zoom video conferencing platform.

*Table 1 - Reports research questions, Data Collection Methods, and Participants*

Research Questions	Data Collection Instruments	Participants
1. What are teacher's perceptions of students' bullying teachers?	Online survey Individual interviews	Elementary, Middle, and High School Teachers 10 teachers identified as direct victims or witnesses of bullying
2. What types of bullying do students perpetrate on teachers?	Online Survey Focus group interviews	Elementary, Middle, and High School Teachers 7 teachers from different sections

### **3.3 Instruments**

This section will discuss the instruments of data collection used and why. The purpose of this study is to investigate the types of bullying perpetrated by students on teachers and to get teacher's insights on the subject. In this mixed-methods case study, the instruments that were used are individual interviews, focus group interviews, and surveys. Quantitative data was collected using two different surveys relative to each research question, and

qualitative data was collected from individual and focus group interviews with the teachers. The data collection process started with the online questionnaires. After that, the researcher looked into the results and modified the interview questions that were used in the qualitative data collection afterward. Open-ended questions were conducted to collect rich and reflective data on teachers' perception of students' bullying teachers. Focus group interviews were used to allow a deep understanding of types of bullying performed on teachers by students. Interviews and questionnaires are the most suitable instruments to get the target teachers' insights and reflections on their bullying experience by students. Individual interviews' (Appendix A) and Questionnaire's (Appendix B) main purpose is to reveal teachers' perceptions of students who bully them. As for the second focus group interview questions (Appendix C) and questionnaire (Appendix D), their aim is to identify the types of bullying students expose teachers to. Having for each research question qualitative data and quantitative ones will help the researcher compare between the two so they can support each other and make it more reliable. Interviews was recorded with permission from each participant. Subsequently, the perceptions shared in these interviews were interpreted and analyzed in narrative format.

Questionnaire items (Appendix A) were adapted from two surveys; one done by Asio (2019) from his article Students bullying teachers: Understanding and behavior of college students from a higher education institute and the other assembled by Mattioni (2012) from his article School staff's perceptions and attitudes towards cyberbullying. No restrictions, permissions, or extra charges were required to obtain the questions; therefore, they were adopted in relation to the research questions of this study.

The individual interview questions (Appendix B) were online with de Wet's article

“Victims of Educator-targeted Bullying: A qualitative study”, (2010). The focus groups’ interview questions (Appendix C) and the second questionnaire related to the types of bullying (Appendix D) was modified based on the “Teacher as a victim of Bullying Scale” from the article “Teachers Bullied by Students: Forms of bullying and perpetrator characteristics” written by Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012b). To ensure the participation of the greatest number of teachers all 4 instruments were translated into Arabic. An Arabic coordinator, a practitioner translator, and the researcher translated both surveys and interview questions. All translations were compared to confirm the reliability of the Arabic version of the instruments.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Before the data collection, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was acquired. After, permission from the school principal to approach the teachers, with the bullying topic, was obtained. Upon obtaining the approval of the principal, the researcher contacted the Information Technology (IT) department asking them send this study’s email to all elementary, middle,, and high school teachers . The email sent to the school’s IT department, including two links for the surveys, “Teachers’ Perceptions of Students Who Bully Teachers” and “Types of Bullying,” and it was distributed to the teachers through the IT responsible. Every survey included a question asking teachers whether they were bullied by students or were witnesses of bullying incidents; if their answer was “Yes” they were asked if they want to be interviewed to further discuss the topic. If their answer was “Yes”, they had the freedom of providing their email to be contacted and participate in interviews. Based on the responses, ten of the interviewees mentioned that they were witnesses or direct victims of bullying and were invited to undergo individual interviews.

Seven teachers were voluntarily asked to participate in a focus group interview, and the sessions were recorded after taking their approval. During the interviews, the researcher was also taking notes to assist in the data analysis process. All data collected from the interviews were manually transcribed by the interviewer and printed in Microsoft Word 2016 to be used in data analysis. All data and information collected from the questionnaires was analyzed and aggregated using SPSS. Frequency and percentage tables were extracted from the SPSS, which helped in gaining insights about the responses of the teachers in a tabular format. Data tables extracted from SPSS were pasted in Microsoft Excel 2016 to build charts to illustrate the results in a readable format. Mainly three types of charts were used, clustered column, stacked column, and 100% stacked column charts, especially for answers where the research wanted to showcase aggregate share of total responses.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

This study followed the explanatory sequential design, whereby quantitative data was collected first, followed by qualitative data. Findings collected from the surveys were further analyzed and questions of the interview were amended accordingly. Meaningful data analysis was made through descriptive statistical analysis by referring to percentages. Analyzing the frequency through descriptive statistics allowed the highlight of common patterns and dispersion of data. This study involves a mixed-methods data analysis. All quantitative information collected from the questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS to aggregate the data and Microsoft excel for charting purposes. Data was inserted into SPSS to produce frequency tables and identify the statistical distribution of the whole sample. Data extracted from the SPSS also comprised the relative percentages for each frequency,

and the aggregated share per each category. Descriptive statistics, in the form of measures of frequency, variation, and measures of the position were used to summarize the characteristics of the data set collected from the surveys. Qualitative data was collected from focus groups and individual online interviews. During the online interviews and focus groups, teachers' responses were voice recorded and transcribed. Notes were taken during focus groups and individual interviews to facilitate further data analysis. Qualitative data was analyzed using the qualitative content analysis and the thematic method. All interviews and focus group data transcriptions were reviewed, explored, and coded to categorize data extracts. By grouping similar types of data, repeated patterns were used to identify common themes and analyze data accordingly. Mixed data was analyzed using the convergent design. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected individually then each set of data was separately analyzed. Results collected from qualitative and quantitative research methods were compared. Finally results from the mixed methods were interpreted. Similarities and differences were identified and answers to these research questions were collected. Findings were grouped, analyzed, and triangulated to answer each research question.

### **3.6 Credibility: Reliability, Validity, and Triangulation**

Credibility is how accurately an instrument measures the targeted skill, problem, or variable tested (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Reliability is how the same instrument yields similar outcomes when used in different contexts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Fraenkel & Wallen emphasizes the vitality of the quality of the instrument in relation to the information that will be collected upon their use (2003). Therefore, in this study, the interview questions and survey items were taken directly from the research questions and

literature to ensure their credibility and reliability. To achieve content validity, the questionnaire items were piloted before actual implementation. A group of experts in the field of education comments concerning the use of the language and clarity of the content was taken into consideration. Choosing the mix-methods pilot explanatory study ensures reliability since data obtained is neither solely numerical nor narrative and subjective only. To check for the reliability of the quantitative instruments, a pilot study was conducted. The data of this pilot study was analyzed using SPSS. Accordingly, one question in the instruments was modified to increase reliability. All Cronbach alphas obtained were above 0.7, ensuring high reliability. Using multiple instruments ensured the triangulation of the data and the validity of the findings (Merriam, 2009). Though the terms reliability and validity, are quite elusive in a qualitative study, I tried to achieve them through the adoption and examination of texts according to the three distinct frameworks that, in turn, served the same function – uncovering the underpinning philosophies of teachers' perceptions of students who bully teachers. The purpose of using mixed methods is not to obtain identical outcomes, but rather to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the findings (Lincoln & Giba, 1985). The mix between the straightforwardness of the quantitative data and the descriptiveness in the qualitative data yields consistent and dependable results. Combining both qualitative and quantitative instruments result in the certitude of conclusions and results drawn from the study (O'Cathain, Murphy, & Nicholl, 2010).

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

The interview and survey questions were adapted from studies done on analyzing students who bully teachers in a school setting. After the authors of the chosen instruments were

contacted and informed of the purpose of the study, they provided permission to use their instruments and adapt it to suit this study's context. As for the participants, they willingly signed a consent form to participate in this study and had complete freedom to withdraw at any point of the process. To respect the participants' privacy, all data was confidential and collected anonymously.

The following section discussed the design approach, sample selection, instruments, data analysis reliability and validity, and the ethical considerations. This is a mix-methods pilot explanatory study whereby qualitative and quantitative instruments were used in data collection. In this mixed methods research, voluntary response sampling was used for selecting teachers. Participants willingly participated and had the freedom to withdraw at any stage of the research. Data was collected anonymously and no private information was collected from participants. Data was collected using questionnaires, individual interviews, and focus groups. Surveys were composed using Microsoft forms and electronically sent to teachers. Interviews and focus groups were conducted using ZOOM application, recorded and transcribed. Mixed data was analyzed using the convergent design. By grouping similar types of data, repeated patterns were used to identify common themes and analyze data accordingly.

# **CHAPTER IV**

## **Findings**

The purpose of this mixed method study was to investigate the teacher's perceptions of teachers being bullied by students, explore these different types of bullying, and recommend proactive solutions. These concepts were researched examining the perception of elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Prior to data discussion, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section describes the results of the questionnaires, which is divided into two subsections: the first subsection provides the teachers' perceptions of students who bully teachers and the second covers teachers' perceptions on the types of bullying exercised. The second section depicts witness or victim teachers' individual interviews, and the last one is concerned with witness or victim teachers' focus group interview.

### **4.1 Results of Questionnaires:**

#### **4.1.1 Results of the questionnaires on teachers' perceptions of students who bully teachers**

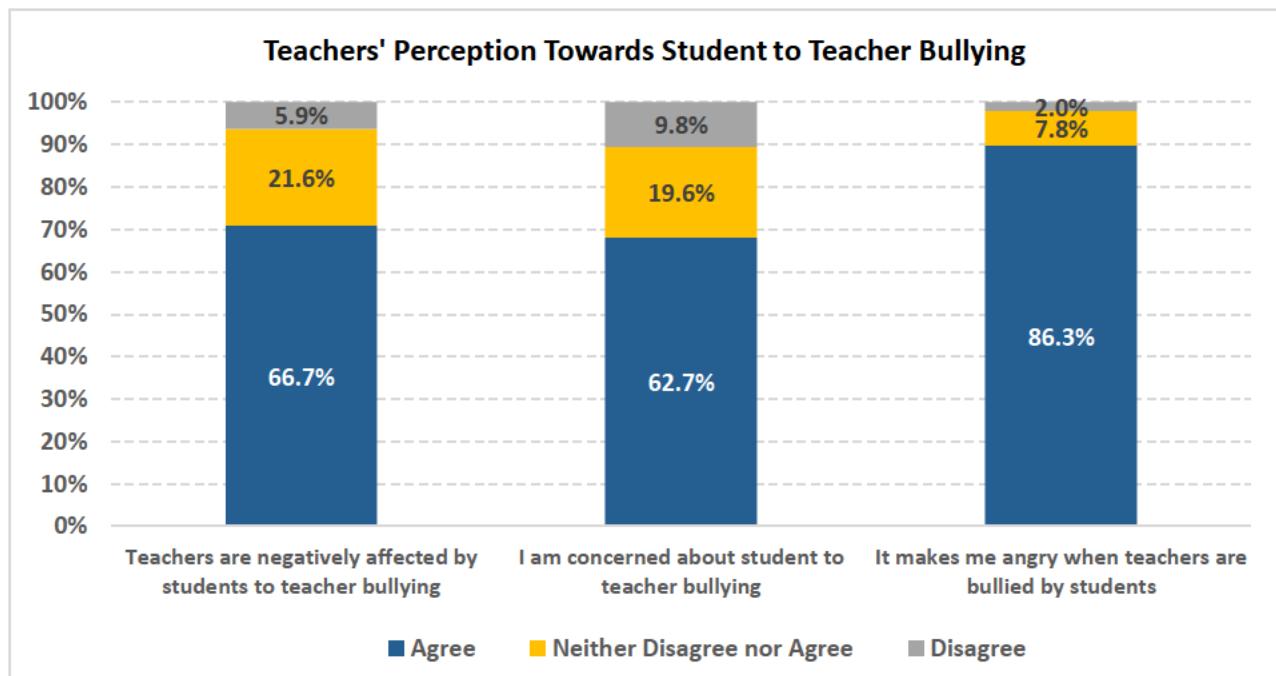
The first questionnaire was designed to reveal teachers' viewpoints on students who bully them. The questionnaire was composed of 18 questions, the first 8 questions aimed at collecting demographics of the sample population and general information on teacher bullying. Out of these questions, 3 questions focused on teachers' understanding of student to teacher bullying and 5 discussed teacher's reactions and existing solutions. Around 51 participants filled the questionnaire, of which 96.1% were females and 3.9% were males. The participating teachers' age ranged from 18 to 64 with 49% of teachers aging between

35 to 44 years. 49% of the teaching experience of the surveyed teachers varied between 11-20 years.

Participants were mainly either from the elementary school or middle school teachers comprising 58% of the overall participants. When asked if students bully teachers 56.9% of the participants said yes, however, when asked if they themselves were bullied 66.7% answered by no. In the past 2 years only 23.7% admitted to being bullied. Most teachers (66.7%) agree that bullying negatively affects victim teachers.

Question 9 (see figure 1) collected teachers' opinions on student to teacher bullying at their school using a Likert scale. The statements in the question were categorized under three different groups which are: teachers' perception towards student to teacher bullying, School's responsibility towards its teachers, and solutions.

*Figure 1 - Answers for Question 9*



Around 86% of teachers, expressed that, students to teachers bullying makes them angry and 67% agreed that teachers are negatively impacted by bullying. As for the solutions, 90% of the teachers shared that classroom management dealing with bullying should be taught in undergraduate courses, and that teachers who are victims of student bullying need help in approaching this issue. More than 50% of the interviewed teachers thought that student to teacher bullying is an unavoidable part of school life and that teachers are well prepared to tackle this issue.

Only 16% of the participating teachers claimed that they needed help when dealing with bullying. When asked about their perception of the phenomenon, teachers reflected a very high level of understanding of different phrases that reflect different aspects of students to teachers bullying (see table 2).

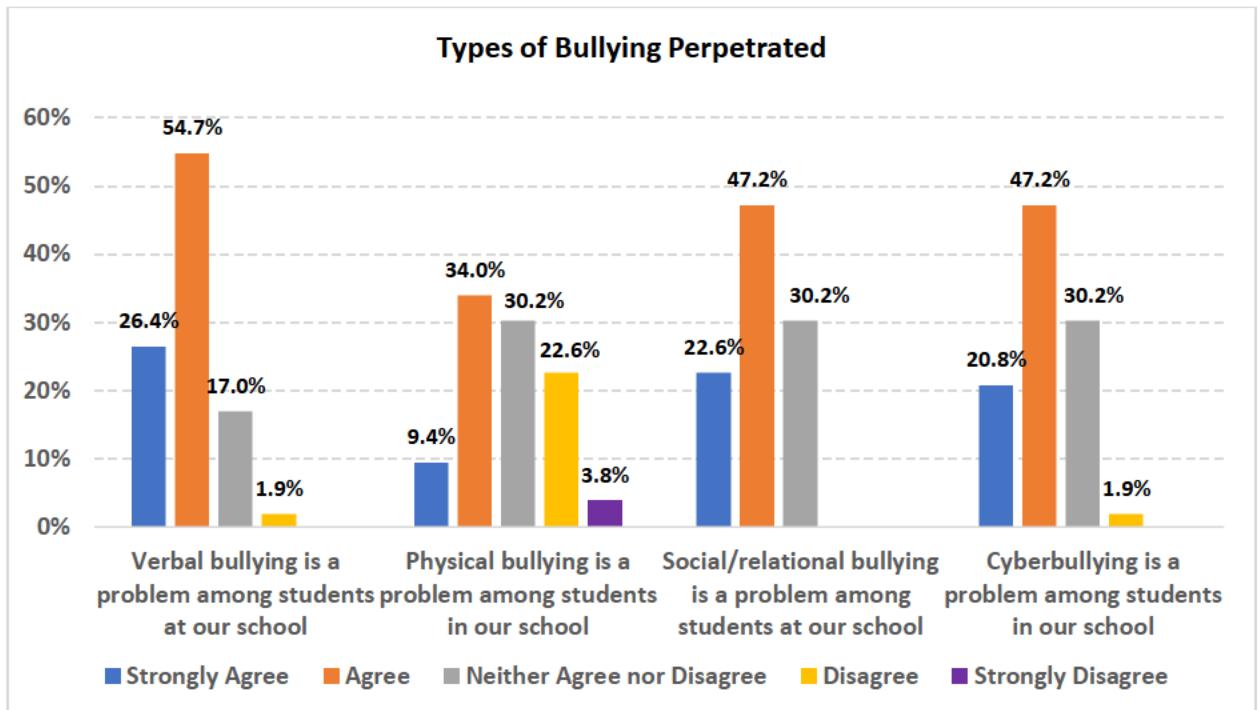
*Table 2 - Question 13 - Teachers' Understanding of Students to Teachers' Bullying*

	Not Understood	Moderately understood	Understood
“Workplace bullying” refers to unreasonable behavior by an individual that intimidates or degrades another individual in work.	2.0%	7.8%	90.2%
Bullying negatively affects the physical or psychological health of the targeted teacher(s).	0.0%	3.9%	96.1%
Bullying generally involves repeated, unreasonable actions, but it can also be a single, severe action.	2.0%	7.8%	90.2%
Bullying can be in the form of shouting, threats of violence, malicious gossips, etc.	0.0%	5.9%	94.1%
Anyone can bully a teacher such as students, staff, school administrators, department head, etc.	9.8%	0.0%	90.2%
Policy on teacher bullying should be implemented in every institution.	3.9%	2.0%	94.1%

Bullied teachers can report their situation to a committee in the school for proper evaluation and counseling.	2.0%	5.9%	92.2%
There exists a law/ policy that protects teacher from bullying.	7.8%	13.7%	78.4%
Bullying can lead to personality breakdown and sometimes loss of professionalism of a teacher.	2.0%	7.8%	90.2%
Every teacher is a possible target of bullying.	0.0%	2.0%	98.0%
Bullying can be through social media, physical, emotional or psychological means.	0.0%	2.0%	98.1%
Bullied individuals (e.g. teachers) can be bullied inside or outside the classroom.	0.0%	2.0%	98.0%
Bullied teachers can suffer depression, physical deterioration and sometimes loss of life.	2.0%	5.9%	92.1%
Bullying a teacher can also lead to unemployment of that individual.	2.0%	7.8%	90.2%
A bullied teacher can fight back to those bullies but in a more unexpected way.	7.8%	13.7%	78.5%
<b>Definition of students bullying teachers</b>			
<b>Effects of students bullying teachers</b>			
<b>Types of students bullying teachers</b>			
<b>Laws or measures of students bullying teachers</b>			

Teachers showed that they are knowledgeable of what teacher bullying is, its types, effects, and policies. The most common types of bullying perpetrated by students on teachers were discussed in question 16. A majority of 81% of the participants thought verbal bullying was the most common type of bullying, followed by 70% for social/relational bullying, 68% for cyber bullying, and 43% for physical bullying (see figure 1).

*Figure 2 - Types of Bullying Perpetrated in a School in Lebanon*

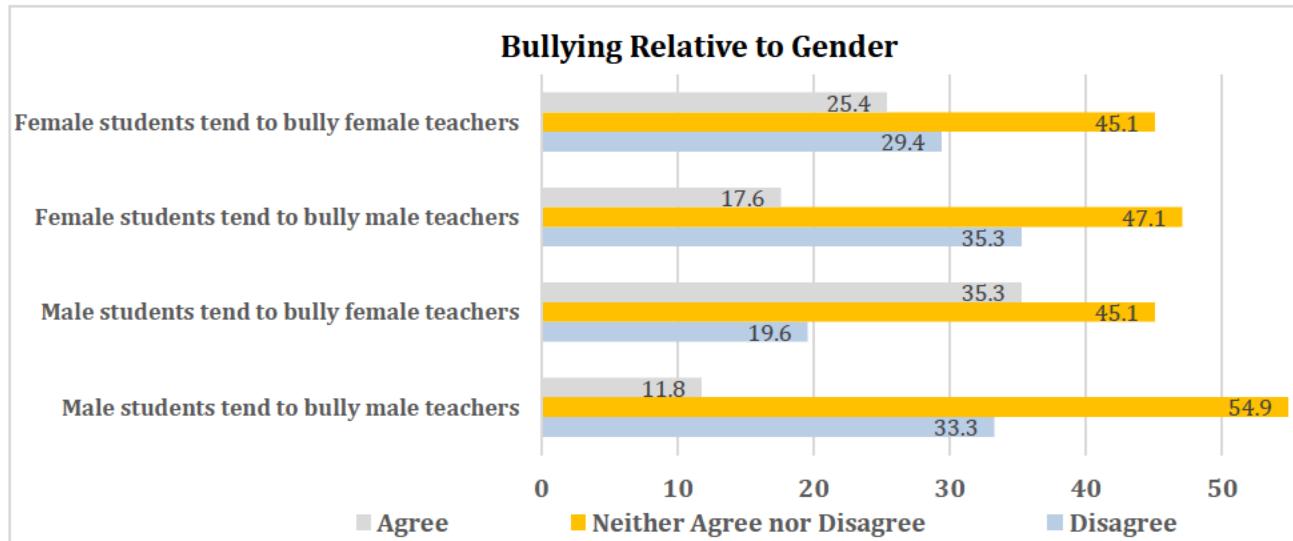


When teachers were asked about how they responded to bullying, 56% reported to their head of sections, and 33% of those teachers declared that it is the management team's responsible to stop students to teachers' bullying. 38% of teachers found that existing school rules and regulations adequately cover bullying towards teachers, however 29% disapproved. A notable share of the participants (69%) declared that the whole school should be involved in an anti-bullying strategy. The last 2 questions asked teachers if they were witnesses of students to teacher bullying, 11 out of 51 teachers responded by yes, however only 10 out of those teachers provided their email for further contact.

#### **4.1.1 Results of the questionnaires on types of bullying**

The second questionnaire aimed at gathering respondents' attitudes and opinions on the different types of bullying exercised by students on teachers. 51 teachers participated in this questionnaire, of which, 96% were females mostly aging between 35-44 and having 11-20 years of experience. Participating teachers were almost equally distributed among elementary, middle and high school sections. When asked about the gender of student bullies, 68% of the teachers agreed that bullying can be perpetrated by an equal number of boys and girls. A minority of teachers agree that bullying can be perpetrated by a certain gender towards a specific teacher sex. More than 25% of the participants agreed that female students bully female teachers, 17% thought that female students bully male teachers, 35%; the highest percentage- believed that male students bully female teachers, and 11% perceived that, male students bully female teachers.

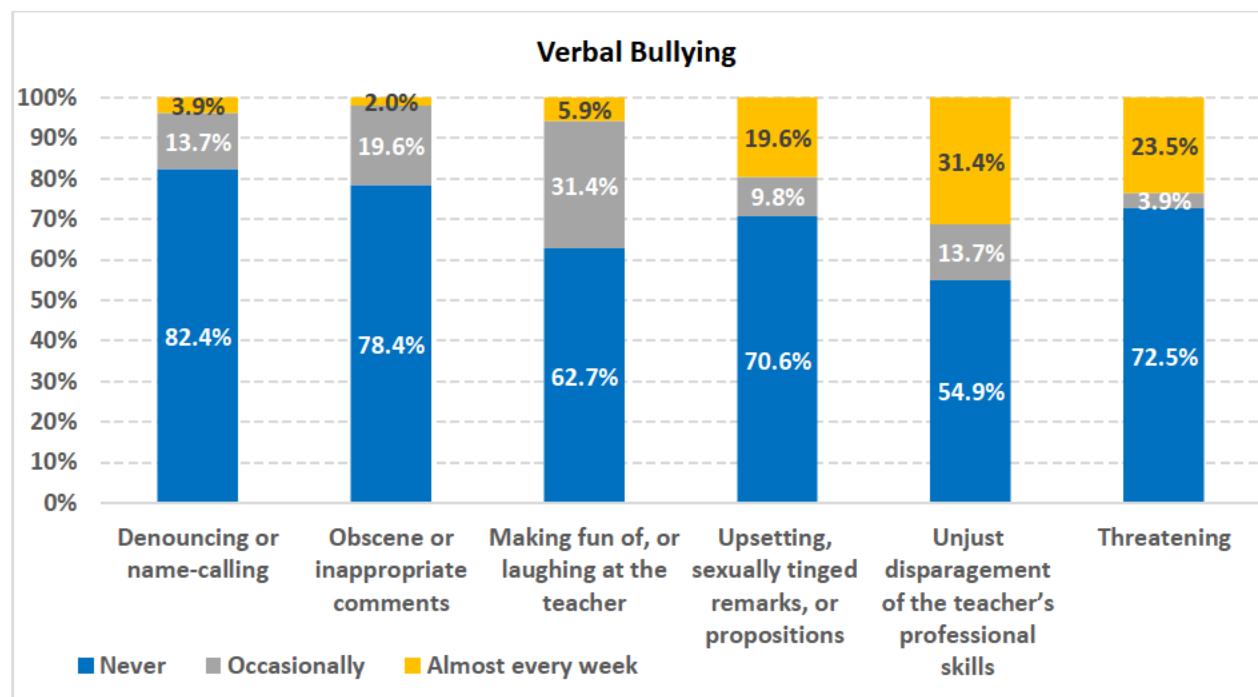
*Figure 3 – Bullying Relative to Gender Question Number in the Second Questionnaire*



Based on their experience, this 43% of this sample believed students across all grade levels exercise student to teacher bullying. A notable percentage (74%) of the teachers agreed that poor management is the basic characteristic of victim teachers. Bully students however were found in descending order to have anger management issues, be attention seekers, and are victims of bullying themselves.

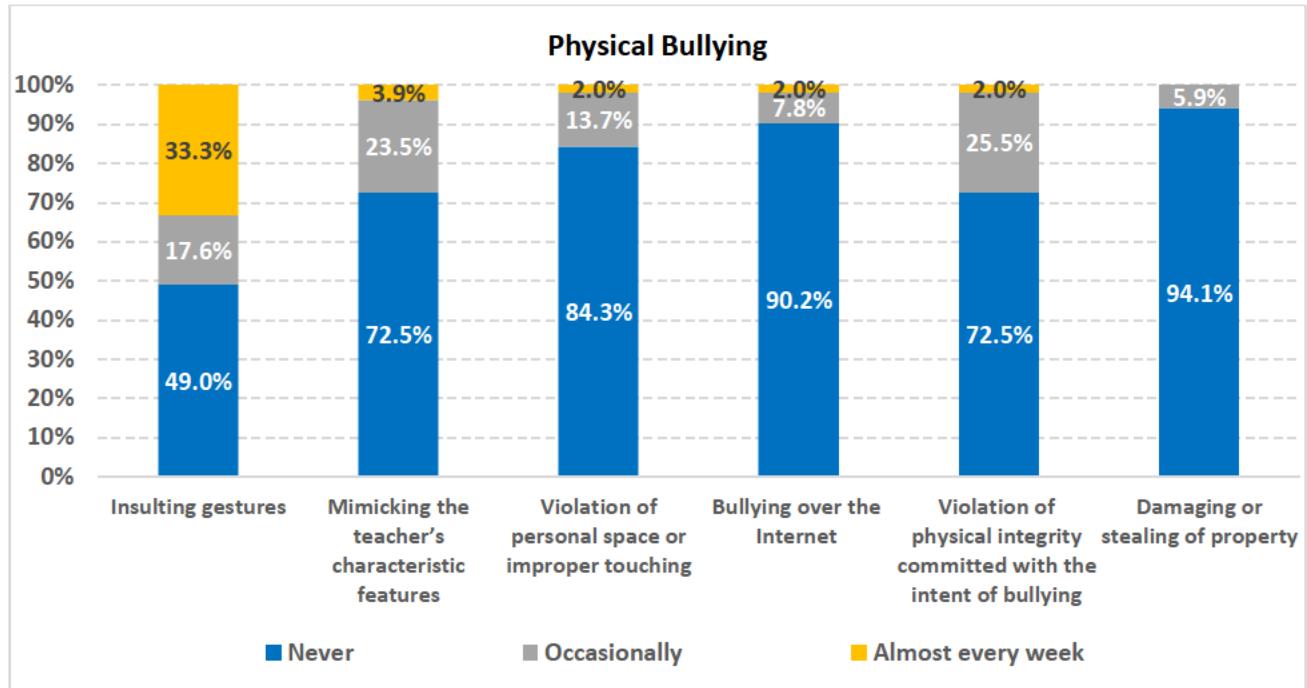
Question 11 used a psychometric scale to understand the frequency of the different types of bullying perpetrated by students on teachers. Question 11, asked teacher to indicate how often the occurrence of different types of bullying were perpetrated on them. The results of question 11 were clustered into the 4 types of bullying physical and verbal which fall under overt bullying and social-relational and cyber which are covert types of bullying. In verbal bullying, 45% of the teachers were subjected to unjust disparagement of teacher's professional skills occasionally and weekly.

*Figure 4 - Types of Verbal Bullying Encountered by Teachers*



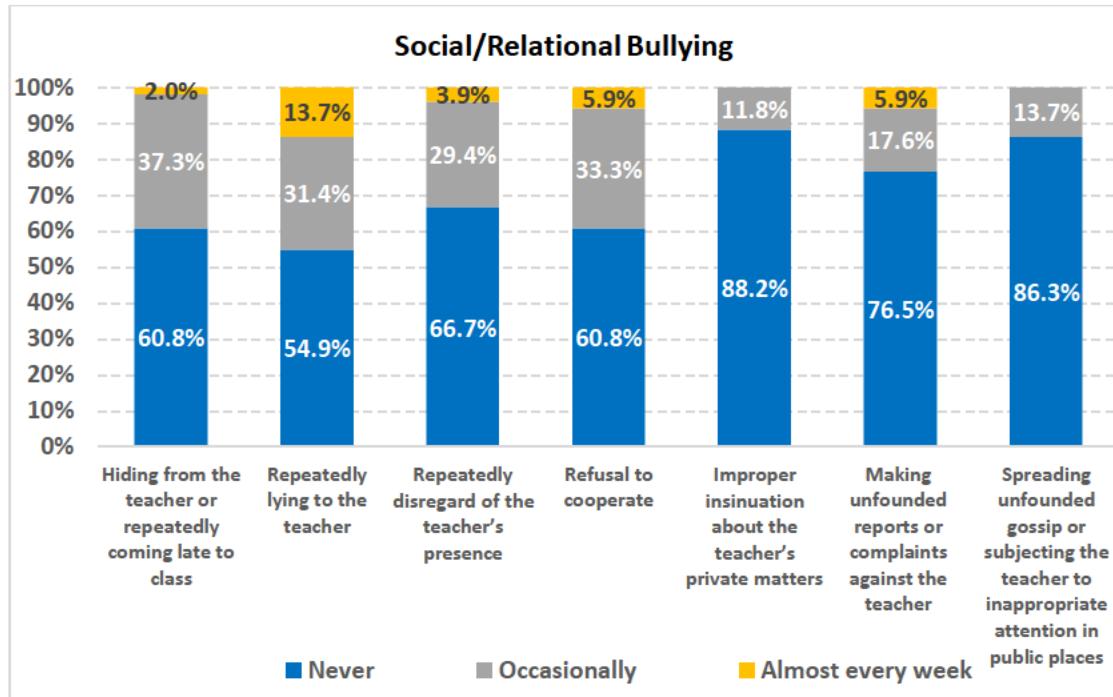
As for physical bullying, more than 50% of teachers reported being subjected to insulting gestures.

*Figure 5 - Types of Physical Bullying Encountered by Teachers*



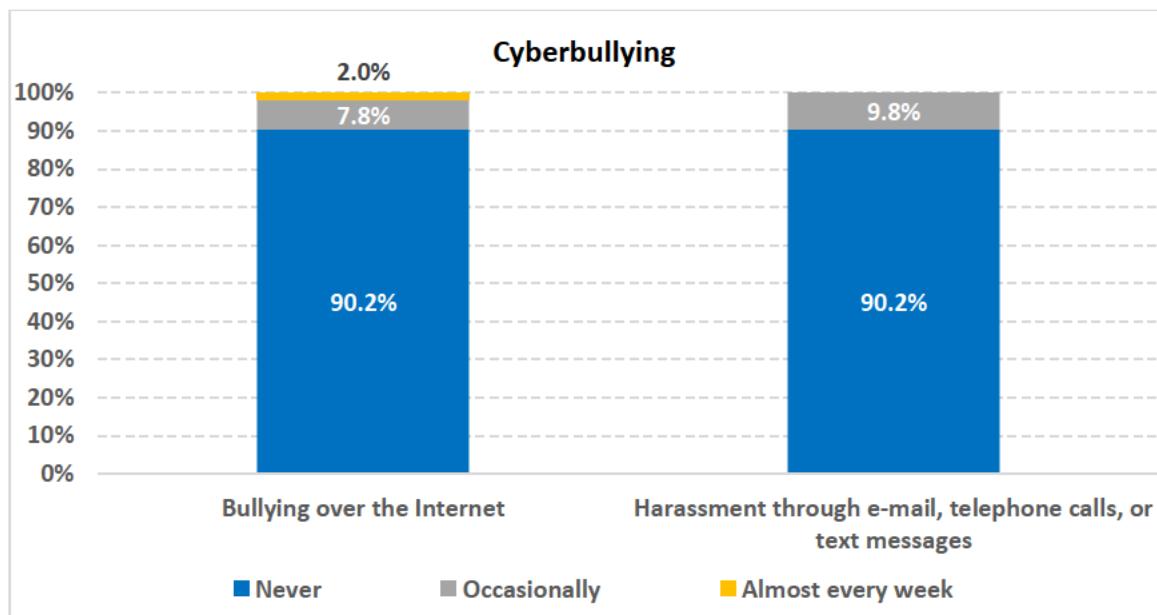
Concerning social/relational bullying, 45% of the participants expressed that students repeatedly lie to them, and 39% communicated that students recurrently refuse to cooperate and hide from the or come late to class.

*Figure 6 - Types of Social/Relational Encountered by Teachers*



Almost 10% of the teachers, shared that they are occasionally cyber bullied over the internet.

*Figure 7 - Types of Cyberbullying Encountered by Teachers*



## **4.2 Results of the Teachers' Interviews:**

This section describes the teachers' responses to each of the individual interview questions. The first question was divided into two parts by which the first part was asking teachers about their understanding of workplace bullying. Referring to their career as teachers, all participants described workplace bullying from the perspective of a school setting. All teachers agreed that workplace bullying is portrayed in acts that aim intentionally to harm the victim and make them feel uncomfortable. Five participants explained that workplace bullying is bullying perpetrated by people present at school from staff, to students, teachers, or even parents. Two participants highlighted the fact that these acts of harassment should be repetitive in order to be considered as bullying. Another two teachers elaborated that workplace bullying can be in the form of name calling, mimicking, invading personal space, and mocking. For the second part of the first question, teachers were asked to justify whether they think students to teachers bullying should be considered as workplace bullying. 80% of them agreed since this bullying is taking place at a school setting -which is a teacher's workplace- then it should be categorized as workplace bullying. However, the remaining 20% disagreed. The first participant claimed that learners across all grade levels are incognizant of what they are doing and that bullying should be targeted by the community that is capable of actually taking action - the teachers, department, head of sections, and administration. The other participant noted that students after all are children and this act of bullying should not be considered as workplace bullying.

The second question was about the interviewees' experience with student to teacher bullying. When asked about their experience, 70% of the teachers shared a personal

bullying incident, nevertheless all the participants with no exception had witnessed or heard of colleagues being bullied. Half of the teachers perceive the experience of student to teacher bullying as students talking disrespectfully, pinpointing weaknesses, and teasing teachers. While describing their experience, some teachers described the characteristics of student bullies. 20% of them stressed that bullying is exercised more by upper grade students, another 40% stated that bullying is perpetrated by students with learning difficulties. One of the teachers claimed that many students are "spoiled" and have little empathy especially since most of them belong to the upper socioeconomic class. The same teacher continued to highlight that sexual and physical bullying is practiced mostly by boys, whereas girls are more likely to bad mouth teachers and make fun of the way they speak, dress, or walk. Also, she continued to say that bullying can be contagious among students as they learn from each other. Teachers shared verbal, sexual, physical, and cyber bullying incidents that occurred with them or with a colleague. One of the participants shared that a friend of hers -a short teacher-, was harassed recurrently for her height and called a "midget" and "pipsqueak". Another participant stated that a group of female students told her that they were trying to frame her male colleague through spreading false rumors of him touching them inappropriately. Three teachers explained that they were sexually bullied and shared incidents where one was asked about the color of her underwear and the other had a student hump on the chair that makes noises. One of the participants described an incident where his friend was pushed to the wall by a student and yelled at just for asking him to finish a task. As for cyberbullying, a teacher shared that her colleague was suffering from belittling, purposeful mocking, and having her students say "we can't hear you", muffling microphones and saying "the sound is not clear", and having her online whiteboard being erased.

The third question asked participants to indicate if they have encountered a bullying incident by a student. Teachers described the incidents and explained how they dealt with them. 70% of the participants reported that they were bullied at least by a student during their career, while 30% were not. 62.5% of the teachers reported verbal bullying incidents while others suffered sexual or physical bullying.

As for the verbal bullying incidents, one of the teachers narrated that having students defy her, pretending to be more knowledgeable, and ridiculing the classroom activities are considered to be forms of bullying. Another participant, shared that because she looks different and has an exotic taste in everything she does, her students profaned her personal life. They stalked her on social media, checked her Facebook pictures, and started gossiping around ridiculing her and making disrespectful comments. Nevertheless, although these incidents were recurrent, this teacher meticulously reported every incident and received proper back-up. Thanks to her efforts to maintain effective classroom management and the support for these incidents were put to an end. The third participant expressed that during her years of teaching, she had spilled coffee on her pants and had to change into a smaller sized one. When she entered class one of the students was disrespectfully laughing at her and asked: “haven’t you noticed that your pants are somehow short?”. The teacher replied firmly stating that she knows that the pants are short and she liked them this way. When the teacher replied to him confidently this student knew his limits and did not try to cross them again. It was conveyed by a teacher that a girl described her as a cow, and she made fun of her when she was wearing glasses by saying: “Why are you wearing glasses you know it is not Halloween!”. Although these comments hurt this teacher, she chose to ignore until this girl told her to stuff the apple in

her mouth -portraying that the teacher is a pig- and all the class burst in laughs. “I instantly left class and went to the head of section to report this incident, the counselor and the head of section came to class and talked to this girl and she was expelled for three days.” this is what she summarized. The fifth participant also shared bullying incidents that were exercised by the same student during her first teaching year. This teacher shared that one time she entered class already stressed out and a boy ridiculed her leading her to leave class bursting in tears; when she came back to class this boy was smiling: “He was very happy that he made me cry. He felt victorious”. She resumes expressing that once he tried to scare and threaten her saying that his dad is powerful and he belonged to a certain political party. This teacher explained that since these incidents occurred during her first year of teaching, she was too scared to share them with anyone. “I did not want anyone to question my professionalism and I felt that it is disgraceful of me to share such incidents”. This same teacher complained that she has suffered sexual looks and comments on the way she dressed, however, they were masked in compliments. Participant 6 clarifies that she has received several indirect sexual comments and been touched on the arm or back by a couple of boys from her class. In her case, she chose to ignore and it worked most of the time as she wasn't fulfilling their need for attention, she explained. In other instances, she reported to her superior to discuss a behavioral plan in coordination with the counselor. During her first year of teaching, the last participant has endured several incidents happening frequently and recurrently. “Bullying by students was bearable until I had to deal with sexual harassment” commented one of the participants. She explains that during her first year she was warned about this particular class and received mixed advice on how to approach them. “There was this group of three boys who recurrently attempted to harass me, I was called names, they changed my name just for the fun of it,

one repeated how I talked in class, another student kept pushing me to the corner or to the wall so there was no personal space between us, and many inappropriate sexual behaviors” these were some of the incidents shared by this teacher when she was asked about her student to teacher bullying experience. Once, one of those three boys had his hand broken and wrapped with a cast. He asked permission to go to the toilet. After he came back, he asked me to put back his cast and so I did. He started saying move it. Move it here and move it there. And I didn't get what he was saying, at first, but then, when everyone in the class started laughing, then I realized that he was making like a sexual joke or something like that.”

After this particular incident, this teacher expressed her aggravation to her coordinator “I don't want to talk to him. I don't want to talk to the administration. I just want the phone number of the parents. I want to call the parents myself. I don't care if this is against the school rules, but this is unacceptable for me.” Her coordinator's reply was that these boys have a special case and we cannot talk to the father because the father hits them and he asked her to give them a lot of warnings instead. This teacher also tried to seek external help from other more experienced teachers “Another person, who has many years of teaching experience, also teaches them. He asked me not to give them warnings, but instead to treat them with love and somehow ignorance. He also invited me to attend his class, to see how he treated them. When I was going to the class upstairs and saw these three boys coming down. I asked them where they were going in the class time. They told me that they were going to the head of department office, because they were kicked out of class by that teacher. The incident that drove me to my limits is when I entered the class and students refused to learn or even listen to anything I say. Although I tried to convince

them that we will take things lightly and not a lot of work, but I had zero response. They didn't react to me at all. I told them "You know what?". I took my bag and I said, "I will just get out of the class". I burst into tears and I slammed the door and went to the head of section office. When this teacher expressed her frustration to her coordinator, she was told that it's so weird that she has handled this until the end of the year. Many teachers, come from the first or the second week to him crying. This teacher conveyed reaching her limit by saying "After I talked to my coordinator about it, I told him that I will not ever enter this class again without a camera and the voice recorder, which happened. They, they did put that and yes the boys' actions improved a lot."

In fourth question, each teacher was asked to list the reasons behind student to teacher bullying. 60% of teachers mentioned student and teacher related reasons, 30% blamed students only as being the triggers, whereas only 10% accused the teachers themselves for this occurrence of such incidents. 50% of teachers agreed that students who bully have been bullied themselves. Other student related reasons are low self-esteem, rebellion and trying defy power, behavioral problems, learning difficulties, and attention seeking. One of the participants explained that some students bully teachers because they dislike them, or because they have a discourteous attitude, or they are mean by nature and enjoy torturing others. Other teachers highlighted that a student might bully as a result of their parental relationships. Having very strict or very lenient parents are causes of student to teacher bullying. Participants 4,5, and 8 clarified that the students who bullied them were getting physically abused or maltreated at home. Bullies act this way because this is how they are raised or treated. So, they will act similarly, thinking that is normal. 20 % of teachers claimed that coming from a broken family and having problems at home could

be triggers for a student to be a bully. As for the participants who accused the teachers to be the triggers of bullying, they referred to the teacher's low self-esteem, poor class management, teaching style, and teacher's attitude and personality. Other teachers highlighted reasons blaming the Lebanese mentality and the school structure. By Lebanese mentality the teacher clarified that, students, perceive themselves as better and superior because they come from higher socio-economic classes compared to teachers. Another participant claimed that a relaxed school behavior management system and the number of students in class are factors that could trigger students to teachers bullying.

The fifth question asked teachers about the influence of student-to-teacher on a bullied teacher's professional and private life. 80% of the interviewed teachers agreed that bullied teachers are affected on both a professional and a personal level. One participant thinks that the influence of student to teacher bullying is strictly personal and will not affect the victim's professional performance in academics. On the other hand, one of the participants disagrees as she stresses that bullied teachers should differentiate between their professional and private life and not let them affect each other, therefore a bullied teacher will only suffer professionally. Bullying can have very negative to detrimental effects on teacher's life. Professionally, teachers will feel insecure at their workplace and their class performance will deteriorate. Feeling helpless and frustrated are some of the side effects of being bullied. 30% of the participants shared that, bullied teachers will feel overpowered, weak, and too vulnerable for the students. Numerous participants agreed the bullied teachers will lose focus and will feel unable to deliver at expected level across other classes, they will not be able to teach well, for the day that they are bullied, or, probably for the whole week. Sharing her own experience, one of the participants clarified

that after being bullied she felt demotivated and didn't put any effort in preparing for her classes. 30% of the interviewed teachers shared that a bully victim will question their professionalism since they are not being able to manage their classes properly.

Lastly, a participant clarified that bullied teacher feel irritated because they think that they are under the microscope all the time as if someone is watching over every step waiting to reprimand them. Personally, participants expressed that a bullied teacher is going to be preoccupied with this matter and this will affect the way they interact with everyone around them. 50% of the interviewees declared that bullied teachers will take the tension from the school to their house setting. This tension will be expressed as anger taken out on the kids, husband, parents., less productivity in the house. The familial life of that teacher is going to be distracted all the time. Two of the participants expresses that being bullied is going to affect the teacher psychologically and make them feel more inferior and incompetent. Another two participants shared that from their personal experience they used to go back home upset, cry in front of their parents, and fight with friends, with family members, with everyone around.

Participant 8 shares "I used to cry with my fiancé a lot and in front of my parents, so all my evening it was spent, crying or being upset, until I burst and I started seeing a therapist."

The final question asked teachers about suggestion to prevent students to teachers' bullying. Their responses were divided into things teachers, students, or schools should do. On a teacher's level, 40% of the participants suggest that there should be a training for teachers on the topic of students to teachers bullying, the school should initiate workshops

or trainings on how and what to do when faced with bullying incidents. It was also suggested that teachers should be backed up by counselors or psychologists and given practical advice on how to deal with the situation in case it happens. It was advised by one of the participants that teachers should take care of the whole well-being of the child, not teaching only teaching as instructions, but also spend time with bullies or students who have some problems solve the problems. Another participant recommended from her own experience with bullies, that it was helpful giving them more attention and care by preparing them their own work and explaining to them that when they are punished it is because with their action, they broke a certain rule and that it's nothing personal between this student and their teacher. 20% of the interviewees expressed that in such incidents teachers should be aware of the school rules and apply them meticulously. Teachers from their side should pay attention to some triggers that might provoke bullying for example the way they dress, shaming learners, and personality weakness and flaws. One participant shared that a main reason for student to bully them is not knowing their curriculum well and not being able to deliver the lesson successfully. On the other hand, another participant found that the teachers should work on themselves to stop this concept from its roots. He explains, "we have to set an example not to let any student have the chance to cross the limits inside the classroom." He also added that when the school carries out assemblies on bullying, "teachers, instead of playing with their phones, seriously now I'm talking, they should pay attention to what is being said so that they can apply them in class and during their own classes." When it comes to bully students, interviewed teachers highlighted that the bully is someone who needs help, so they should receive counseling and be monitored from a younger age. A participant suggested that trying to solve these problems and getting to the root of them early on will help in reducing bullying. 30% of the interviewed

teachers clarified that some students don't even know what is bullying and this of their act as a joke, therefore awareness and talking about the subject are some suggested solutions. Awareness campaigns could be done through watching a movie, having a question-and-answer discussion, interactive activities, games, or roleplaying skits to teach kids what bullying is, how to prevent it, and react to it. "This way we will get to kids more and be able to make an impact in this issue" elucidated one of those teachers. Some learners have learning difficulties, or behavioral problems making sure they have taken their medication can help in minimizing bullying acts. 30 % of the participants agreed that getting to the root of the problem and investigating why is this learner bullying is one of the solutions. Teachers, counselors, or the school should look into what's going on in their personal life, how can they find a way for this person to feel more comfortable and feel better in the class. 50% of the teachers stressed the importance of having both bully students and victim teachers should receive counseling, but in order for this to be feasible, the school should have enough counselors on campus. 20% of the participants think that what is being done by the school is enough to prevent teacher bullying, however, teachers take things more seriously. Other participants expressed that something more should be done. One of the participants communicates "The administration can definitely do something to stop bullying altogether. Once it happens, there should be severe laws against teacher bullying students and students bullying teachers bullying in general. Bullying in general should be a redline not dealt with by a grey colored slip." Another participant stresses that strict regulations against bullying of any kind should be taken by establishing clear procedures. The school should provide more moral support among victim teachers by encouraging them to talk about their experiences. Another participant adds that the administration has to have a clear idea about the cases of the students, and they should talk to the teacher

before she enters that class. She continues by explaining “Even if she or he has many years of experience and they know that this class has a special case, then they have to prepare the teacher.” One of the participants shared her concern of having the school put more effort by stressing this issue should and giving it more importance at upper grade levels. 30 % of the interviewees expressed that as part of the solution, parents, should be involved because whatever is coming out of the child is related to their home environment as well. Working on preventing bullying is a school community’s responsibility, therefore collaboration between the counselor, teachers, administration, parents and students should take place.

#### **4.3Results of the Teachers’ Focus Group Interview**

Teachers’ focus group interview was designed to explore the types of bullying teachers are exposed to and to collect suggested solutions that would help reduce the occurrence of bullying acts. The first question asked was about the different types of bullying teachers are familiar with and which type do they believe is the most recurrent. All the interviewed teachers identified verbal bullying as the most common type of bullying across all age groups. One of the teachers clarified that verbal bullying can be in the form of mean words, picking on the teacher’s appearance, attitude, and looks. Physical bullying was also recognized by teachers however, but they believed it's very rare. More than half of the participants expressed how online or cyberbullying is on the increase lately. The final type of bullying highlighted was sexual bullying depicted in the form of comments or actions, online or in person.

Question number two asked teachers to reflect on their experience and identify characteristics of a student bully. Some of the shared responses were being bullied

themselves and bullying others as revenge, seeking attention and trying to be heard, over empowering others in order to prove themselves, and having psychological or personality problems. Teachers added that hiding their low self-esteem or being overly confident are traits of students who bully as well. Some teachers also claimed that some students are sadists and they willingly harm regardless of the reason. Having learning difficulties or being mistreated at home are also believed by teachers to be characteristic of a student bully.

In the third question, teachers identified common qualities of teachers who are targets of bullying acts. Classroom management was the main characteristic highlighted by most interviewees. Teachers explained that being in control or lenient are major factors allowing or prohibiting students bullying. Being young and inexperienced were also found to more likely subject teachers to bullying. According to the findings, students target teachers with opposing or similar personalities, those who project vulnerability, or those who remind students of someone they dislike. Teachers who are different in the way they dress, act, talk, or deal with people are more subjected to student bullying.

The fourth question asked teachers to elaborate on forms of bullying other than physical bullying, cyber bullying, and social-relational bullying. More than one teacher showed their concern with the sudden increase of cyber bullying with the shift to distant-online learning and the easy access students have to teachers now. Being touched inappropriately and receiving masked comments that have a double meaning were some forms interviewees considered as sexual bullying. Violating personal space was also highlighted to be an underrated type of bullying that teachers suffer.

In question 5, participants were asked to elaborate on the bullying incidents they witnessed or they themselves suffered. Teachers mainly shared various verbal bullying occurrences. Some of the shared experiences are having the same student repeatedly mimicking the teacher in a very exaggerated way. Another incident is a bully recurrently making fun of the teachers especially verbally commenting their outfits. A third teacher added a friend of hers reported to her being insulted by a student who used swearwords and obscene language with that teacher. One of the interviewees described that a friend of hers was ridiculed because of how short she is and students were calling her names. A fifth participant reported witnessing teachers who were name called, received impolite gestures, and had sounds uttered when their back was turned to students. One of the participants, shared a cyberbullying incident via Zoom where she encountered noises overlapping her voice and received annoying voice messages on WhatsApp. The final incident was a form of sexual bullying; this participant clarified knowing a student who repeatedly mimicked sexual acts in class, on the chair in front of the teacher while making noises. The same student asked the teacher their favorite number and replied by sharing that is 69.

The sixth question inquired the motives of students who bully teachers. Teachers' responses are grouped into three categories: students' characteristics, teachers' characteristics, and external triggers. Concerning students, interviewees clarified that, students who bully adults are most probably being bullied by an adult. Having learning difficulties, feeling frustrated and letting it out on the teacher was also a reason for students to bully. Some bullies seeking attention find it cool to bully teachers and gain popularity. As shared by more than one participant, teachers can also be the main cause of students

to teachers bullying. These participants highlighted that class management, experience, lack of expertise, and young age can trigger bullying towards teachers. Other teacher related cause are looking young, being, physically appealing, and not being academically competent. Some teachers pinpointed that the outside environment, school environment, and classroom environment have a great impact on either encouraging or inhibiting students to teachers bullying. Participants clarify that in more relaxed environments where no strict measures are taken bullying is more likely to occur.

In question 7, teachers were asked to clarify their insights on what could be done to reduce bullying incidents perpetrated by students. Concerning the teacher's role, respondents emphasized the importance of teachers not being shy in reporting bullying incidents, however they should be selective and not overdo the reporting for it to stay effective. Being consistent in reporting the incidents and applying the school rules and consequences help decrease bullying incidents. The beginning of the year is essential for teachers in setting the tone, therefore interviewees accentuated that, teachers should be strict and set clear teacher and learner expectations from the beginning of the year, however after students are familiar with the class routines and school rules, teachers should be more flexible to avoid learner frustration or rebellion which might turn to bullying. Talking to the bully, befriending them, gaining their trust, and understanding the root of the problem are other solutions that help reduce bullying.

Finally, teachers have to be prepared to deal with specific age groups especially middle and high school teachers, since they are subject teachers, they should take psychology courses on dealing with adolescence to better understand the needs of students. As for the

school, first and foremost, all participating teachers agree that the administration has to support the teachers more and have increase the empathy towards teachers as humans. Interviewees also suggested that awareness campaigns should take place especially for new teachers who are not experienced and who are still young. Schools should shed more light on the issue of teachers being bullied and hands-on workshop about bullying and to know how to face it should be held for teachers. Interviewees also clarified that awareness campaigns should also be held for students, specifically, on the topic of students to teachers bullying. Teachers believe that schools should reconsider and strengthen laws and rules related to teacher bullying. When reporting a bullying incident, the school should be flexible and allow victim teachers directly to the head of section No hierarchy in reporting bullying and instantaneous help must be provided to bullied teachers. Moreover, teachers insisted that schools should take strict measures, inform, and cooperate with the parents of the bully. Some participants expressed that schools need psychologist in addition to counselors to deal with bullying incidents more effectively.

The purpose of the final question was to gather suggested solutions to deal with the issue of student to teacher bullying. Teachers unanimously reinforced that the schools and the teachers should fulfill their aforementioned roles. There should be collective efforts from all the school community to fully support both the victim and the bully. Schools should have set rules and clear step-by-step procedures on who to report to and how to respond to different bullying incidents. Schools should be very firm once it comes to, applying the consequences of bullying teachers. In addition to setting and applying the rules, proper follow up should take place as a means of backing up the teacher and showing the students that this issue is taken very seriously at this school. One of the participants highlights the

importance of regularly reporting to parents on their child's status and any action plans being done. Counselors should be involved in setting the rules and regulations related to bullied teachers and guide them in dealing with bully students. Counseling sessions should take place for both victim and bully. Victim teachers should receive emotional support and practical solutions. As for the bully, the counselor should dive into the roots of the problem and try to find the reasons driving the bully to act this way. Participants also showed a concern in the number of counselors available in school: one of the interviewees stressed on the fact that red zone classes should be visited regularly by the counselor to observe the class dynamics. Having counselors in class can help in pinpointing triggers of the problem noting that the teacher may be at fault. Observations for classroom improvement and long-term follow-up are conducive of a healthy school community.

# **CHAPTER V**

## **Discussion**

### **5.1 Different Types of Bullying do Students Subject Teachers to**

Student-to-teacher bullying was described by Terry (1998) as cross-peer abuse, whereas Branch (2006) stated that the notion student-to-teacher bullying can be considered as upward bullying. Despite the difference in framing the concept, both authors agree that bullying can have different forms. Dodge (1991) mentioned that bullying is a broad topic hence we need to differentiate between reactive and proactive aggression whenever we need to classify different types of bullying. On another note, Slee et al. (1999) and Uz and Bayraktar (2019) specified that bullying can take on violent and nonviolent forms, including direct aggressive behavior like hitting, beating, or even throwing an object at someone; it can also take on indirect nonviolent forms like discrimination, verbal harassment, spreading rumors, neglecting, and naming. Starting from here, this subsection will discuss the different types of bullying students perpetrate on teachers in Lebanon. Data collected will be cross-referenced with previous studies conducted across several countries to identify the similarities and point out the differences.

Question 16 addressed the teachers to identify the most common types of bullying perpetrated by students. The criteria used in question 16 classifies bullying into two parts, namely overt and covert bullying. According to Chen and Astor (2008), overt bullying involves physical and verbal aggression, whereas covert bullying is exercised by involving a third-party and the act of bullying is usually hidden (Crick and Bigbee, 1998; Cross et

al. 2009). In addition, Mattioni (2012) argues that covert bullying can be reflected in the form of social/relational or cyberbullying. Results aggregated from question 16 revealed that the most common type of bullying exercised by students to teachers is overt bullying, especially verbal bullying where 54.7% of the respondents to this category strongly agree that verbal bullying is a common problem at their school. Results obtained in line with a wide array of studies in different countries, as several authors (De Wet, 2010; Porhola et al., 2006) point out that verbal bullying is the most common form of bullying experienced by teachers around the world. On the same front, Kõiv's (2015) study considering 560 Estonian teachers found that the rate of teachers subject to verbal abuse led by students and parents has accelerated by around 300% between 2010 and 2015. Furthermore, a nationwide study in Luxembourg found that teachers were often abused by students for offensive behavior, with 23.9% reporting strong verbal attacks, representing the highest percentage when compared to other forms of bullying (Woudstra et al., 2018). Another study conducted by Woudstra et al. (2018) shows that 62.1% of teachers in South Africa across a sample of 153 schools included in the study suffered from verbal bullying. On the same front, physical bullying took a notable share, where 33.3% of respondents to this category strongly agree that physical bullying is a problem in their school. Referring to Woudstra et al., (2018), her study concluded that 34.6% of teachers included in the selected sample suffered physical bullying.

On the other hand, looking at covert bullying results revealed in question number 16 shows that amongst the respondents for the categories referring to covert bullying, i.e., social/relational and cyberbullying, 47.2% of the respondents to both categories strongly agree that these criteria of bullying represent a problem in their school. The most recent

literature published by Woudstra et al., (2018) shows that 33.6% of teachers included in her sample suffered from indirect/covert bullying, 6.6% of which categorized the aggression under cyberbullying. As defined by Mattioni (2012), cyberbullying is the use of technology to deliberately harm an individual. As agreed by researchers (Olweus, 1991; Ozkilic, 2012; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson & Liefooghe, 2002; Uz & Bayraktar, 2019), one of the main characteristics of bullying is the intention to create harm, which is being satisfied nowadays using cyberbullying. Previous studies (Dinkes et al., 2006; Chen & Astor, 2008; Terry, 1998) did not provide the necessary attention to covert bullying during their studies as the reported cases were low compared to today's numbers. The reason behind this variation is that today's students are very tech-savvy, and bullying using social media platforms and other online solutions is easier and keeps their identity hidden (Mattioni, 2012; Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012). A recent study done by Ghamrawi et al. (2016) surveyed 213 teachers across 14 schools in Lebanon about their perception of cyberbullying. Results showed that 57.1% of total respondents agree and strongly agree that cyberbullying by students to their teachers is common, whereas 42.9% disagree and strongly disagree. Those results strengthen the data collected in question number 16 showing that teachers in Lebanon suffer greatly from both overt and covert bullying.

The sub-categories of overt and covert bullying, i.e., verbal, physical, social relational, and cyberbullying can take different forms. According to Slee et al. (1999) and Uz and Bayraktar (2019) indicate, bullying can take on violent and nonviolent forms. Violent forms include hitting, beating, or even throwing an object at someone, it can also involve nonviolent forms like discrimination, verbal harassment, spreading rumors, neglecting, cyberbullying, and naming. Another important aspect that must be considered in bullying

is the repetition of such behavior. Several authors Olweus, 1991; Ozkilic, 2012; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson & Liefooghe, 2002; Uz & Bayraktar, 2019), identify the repetition of bullying as one of its main characteristics as its linked to the possible consequences on the bullied person's wellbeing and career prospects. Therefore, question number 11 used a likert scale to understand the frequency of the different types of bullying perpetrated by students on teachers. The results of question 11 were clustered into the four types of bullying, namely verbal and physical bullying which fall under overt bullying and social/relational and cyber which are covert types of bullying. The first aspect to be discussed is verbal bullying. According to (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012b; Mattioni, 2012), verbal aggression toward teachers can be demonstrated in the form of belittling, ridiculing, name-calling, and mocking. Furthermore, a study of 571 teachers in Canada revealed that 60% of teachers described receiving insults or name-calling from students, nearly 50% had experienced rude or obscene gestures, 41% were subjected to harmful remarks, and 40% reported intimidation (De Wet, 2010; James et al., 2008; Mooij, 2011; Terry 1998). On the same front, our sample selected several common verbal aggressions that they have encountered at their school. Unjust disparagement of the teacher's professional skills was ranked first, with 45.1% respondents encountering a similar situation occasionally and almost every week, followed by making fun of the teacher which was ranked first, with 37.3%, and finally threatening 27.4%.

This was also confirmed by the interviewees and the priory represented data. Teachers were compared to cows, received comments on their outfits, ridiculed for being short, called names, received impolite gestures, and had sounds uttered behind their backs. Also, several teachers reported various incident were students made fun of them. On the same

front, another participant also shared she was ridiculed by a boy leading her to leave class bursting in tears; when she came back to class this boy was smiling and proud because he defeated his teachers and was able to break her down. She expressed that the same student tried to scare and threaten her saying that his dad is powerful and he belonged to a certain political party. This teacher explained that since these incidents occurred during her first year of teaching, she was too scared to share them with anyone. Most the incident encountered by the teachers were mentioned in the secondary data as discussed.

However, threatening was not something common to encounter in other countries as no secondary data was found mentioning a similar aspect, yet this research believes that it is something related to the constituents of the Lebanese community where most family members are part of sectarian armed parties. According to Farhat (2019), practicing bullying can be highly related to the environment of the bully. Results of the interviews were also similar, all the interviewed teachers identified verbal bullying as the most common type of bullying across all age groups. One of the teachers clarified that verbal bullying can be in the form of mean words, picking on the teacher's appearance, attitude, and looks.

Another aspect to be discussed is physical bullying. As Slee et al. (1999) and Uz and Bayraktar (2019) indicated, physical bullying can take on violent, like hitting, beating, or even throwing an object at someone, and it can include nonviolent forms such as insulting gestures and mimicking the teacher in different ways including the way they walk or act. This was evident in the selected sample where most of the respondents were subject to insulting gestures and mimicking of their characteristics 50.9% and 27.4% (selected per category) respectively almost every week and occasionally. Furthermore, other authors

(Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012b; Chen & Astor; De Wet; Dzuka & Dalbert, 2007) stated that student bullies can attempt to hit, kick, or punch their teachers, vandalize their properties by stealing or destroying them, or even sexually harassing their teachers, which was also evident in our sample were 27.5% of teachers that their physical integrity was violated occasionally and every week. A study conducted by Billett, Fogelgarn, and Burns on the forms of teacher-targeted bullying, deduced that hitting or punching and damaging personal property were evident common forms of student perpetrated bullying (2019). None of the survey respondents declared being sexually harassed, the point which was stressed upon during interviews.

Therefore, teachers in question number five were asked to elaborate on the bullying incidents they witnessed or they suffered. Some of the shared experiences are having the same student repeatedly mimicking the teacher in a very exaggerated way. One of the teachers narrated that having students defy her, pretending to be more knowledgeable, and ridiculing the classroom activities are considered to be forms of bullying, which can be related to the issue of power imbalance highlighted by (De Wet, 2010). Teachers feel that they can't exercise their power over the class during such situations.

Several other teachers complained that they encountered sexual bullying in the form of looks or even violating personal space, and direct harassment. Another Participant stated that she has received several indirect sexual comments and been touched on the arm or back by a couple of boys from her class. "Bullying by students was bearable until I had to deal with sexual harassment" commented one of the participants. Several authors (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012b; Chen & Astor, 2008; De Wet, 2010; Dzuka & Dalbert, 2007) mentioned that physical bullying covers direct and indirect sexual harassment.

As we also noticed that some incidents were gender-related, boys physically harassing a female teacher and girls harassing a female teacher. According to the findings of a study done by Sherman (2009), teachers viewed physical harassment as more severe than verbal or relational harassment, same gender-based harassment is more serious than opposite gender-based encounters, boys were more likely to be physically aggressive, girls were more likely to spread gossip, and more attention was paid to physical harassment.

As for covert bullying, the first part to be discussed is cyberbullying. According to Cross et al., (2009), cyberbullying or bullying done via a third party. According to Mattioni (2012), cyberbullying involves using technology to cause harm. As reported by Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012) the number of cyberbullying incidents increased significantly as students are becoming more tech-savvy. In addition, students are finding new ways to reach teachers easily without being known or even caught. Billett et al., (2019) added that cyberbullying exacerbated during the social media era, where students are able to send abusive pictures, threats, or even obscene messages (Billett et al., 2019). However, this was not the case in our sample, where participants reported that they merely encountered cyberbullying incidents, which also contradicts with the results obtained by Ghamrawi et al. (2016); showing that 57.1% of teachers, including in their research in Lebanon, agree that cyberbullying by students to their teachers is common in schools. This shows that there is a disparity in cyberbullying incidents across schools in Lebanon. This research can relate the results to the level of commitment of the administration towards dealing with bullying incidents. A fact that was also noted in a study that was done by Kraft and Wang (2009), which aims in measuring the effectiveness of cyberbullying strategies. The study revealed that schools taking corrective actions including using penalties and

restricting access to technology have successfully limited the number of cyberbullying incidents.

That being said, teachers mentioned during their interviews that the number of cyberbullying incidents is increasing across Lebanon, which is an area of concern to them. Several teachers stressed that cyberbullying incidents increased significantly due to online learning. One of the participants, shared a cyberbullying incident via Zoom where she encountered noises overlapping her voice and received annoying voice messages on WhatsApp.

Finally, the last type of bullying identified in this study as part of covert bullying is social/relational bullying. According to Woudstra et al., (2018), social/relational bullying involves spreading rumors and deceitful gossip, and humiliating. Furthermore, Kauppi and Pörhölä, (2012a) argue that sabotaging a teacher's reputation could be achieved when a student bully who lies to get the educator in trouble or even inviting others to be against the teacher. This type of social/relational bullying was occasionally and almost every week encountered by the questionnaire respondents to this category (45.1%). Another form of social Social/relational bullying could also be in the form of ignoring the teacher's presence, repeatedly coming late to class, constantly disrupting the class flow and not letting the teacher work in peace, or refusal to cooperate with the teacher (Olweus, 1993; Hemphill, Heerde, & Gomo, 2014). Both lack of cooperation with the teacher and disregarding their presence was highly encountered by the questionnaire respondents occurring occasionally and every week, 39.2% and 33.3% respectively. The result somehow doesn't conform with the interviews where participants mainly were concerned about spreading rumors and gossiping, whereas 86.3% of the questionnaire respondents

mentioned that they have rarely encountered similar incidents. One of the interviewees stated that her students profaned her personal life. They stalked her on social media, checked her Facebook pictures, and started gossiping around ridiculing her and making disrespectful comments.

The research believes that female interviewees were more prone to open such discussions with a female interviewer rather than filling their responses in a questionnaire and revealing their true responses afraid of being judged when having to deal with such situations. Some still believe that bullying from students is a social taboo (Çetinkya, Şahin, and Turan 2018).

## **5.2 Identify Teachers' Perceptions of Students Bullying Teachers**

This part of the research cross-referenced the data findings with secondary research gleaned by examining scholarly journals, as well as discuss and analyze the findings. The first interview question asked teachers to identify whether they believe that bullying teachers are a problem at their school. This study's importance was confirmed by having more than 50% of the questionnaire participants acknowledging that students do bully teachers at their school. Additionally, 70% of the interviewees reported that they were bullied at least once during their careers. This question was necessary, to begin with since those who have been previously subjected to bullying can provide their reflection on the topic at hand. The results of the focus group revealed that 60% of teachers encountered bullying incidents. All the interviewees, with no exception, had witnessed or heard of colleagues being bullied by students indicating that the data given in this study reflects real-life incidents, which enhances the reliability of the data collected. The second

research question was developed to gather teacher's insights into students' bullying them. All of the instructors believed that workplace bullying takes the form of behaviors intended to hurt the victim and make them feel uneasy. Several scholarly articles (Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996; O 'Moore, 2000; McEvoy, 2005) stated, for most concepts of bullying, the idea of repetitive or systemic actions is central. Aligning with our study findings that declared, workplace bullying, is bullying performed by persons who are present at schools, such as employees, students, teachers, or even parents in a repeated manner. Moreover, Olweus (1993) indicates that bullying happens when a person is constantly subjected to negative acts over time.

More than 80% of teachers feel that bullying at schools needs to be classified as workplace bullying as it occurs within their working context. Half of the teachers perceive the experience of a student to teacher bullying as students talking disrespectfully, pinpointing weaknesses, and teasing teachers with the intent of disempowerment. This idea is confirmed by Asio (2019) and Pörhölä et al.'s (2006) definition of workplace bullying, stating that bullying refers to intentional behavior aimed at intimidating another individual at the workplace. It is commonly agreed that teachers should not be seen as victims since they are perceived as professionals who are more powerful than teenagers and are in charge of the classroom (Garett, 2014). Although formally a teacher is an adult who should be managing the classroom, however, bully students impose power informally. The issue of the power imbalance between the teacher and bullying students was brought forward by De Wet (2020), whereby the latter mentioned that students could bully teachers and have control over the class.

On another note, the participants in this study demonstrated a high level of awareness concerning the definition of teacher bullying, and its different types, effects, and policies as priory demonstrated in table 2. Unlike what Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012) statement “research on teacher victimization is still scarce and understanding of the phenomenon is rather limited.”

The findings of this research and prior research results fundamentally confirm Olweus's (1993) definition that to consider a behavior as bullying, it should be intentional, deliberately causing harm, repeated over time, and involving an imbalance of power, whether formal or informal. Since being the teacher entails formal power, consequently, when a teacher is bullied by a student, reporting is not an easy task because it is perceived as a declaration of being the less powerful individual who cannot keep up with leadership and management expectations. Three of the bullying victims interviewed declared not reporting the incidents because they were too scared to share them with anyone not to risk questioning their professionalism.

Question nine of the first questionnaire was designed to demonstrate teacher's perceptions of student-to-teacher bullying by rating a set of given statements about bullying. Collectively, more than 60% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that teachers are negatively affected by students to teacher bullying, and show concern about student-to-teacher bullying. Furthermore, a notable chunk (86%) of the participants expressed their anger towards the existence of the phenomenon of students bullying teachers at their school. The results of this research are in line with West's (2007) findings that point out the long-term effects of teacher bullying on their physical, mental, or workplace health and well-being. Bullying may have a significant negative impact on a teacher's life.

Teachers will feel uneasy at work and their learners' performance will be negatively affected as a result.

On another note, the findings of this study agree with those of West (2007), who found that teacher bullying has long-term consequences on their physical, mental, and workplace health and well-being. Bullying has the potential to negatively influence a teacher's life. Bullied instructors, according to 30% of the individual interviews' participants, will feel overpowered by students, weak, and too vulnerable for the pupils. Aquino and Thaus (2009) support these findings and declare that victims appear to have worse levels of well-being, work satisfaction, and depression than non-bullied workers. This is due to the existence of informal power arising when one peer exerts influence over another; this power misuse may include intimidation (Ozkiliç, 2012). To better understand how victim teachers feel, the humiliation hypothesis is adopted to analyze the repercussions of bullying occurrences. According to Hartling and Luchetta (1999), humiliation includes an outside entity (student bully) intervening to generate emotions of weakness in the sufferer (teacher victim), as well as animosity toward the attacker.

De Wet (2010) and Cowan (2012) have shown in their previous studies, that teacher effectiveness, teaching-learning processes in schools, relationships with others, emotional conditions, and personal lives are adversely impacted by abuse. The findings of this study confirm the aforementioned results, as 80% of the interviewed teachers agreed that bullied teachers are affected on both a professional and a personal level. One participant thinks that the influence of student-to-teacher bullying is strictly personal and will not affect the victim's professional performance in academics. On the other hand, one of the participants disagrees as she stresses that bullied teachers should differentiate between their

professional and private life and not let them affect each other, therefore a bullied teacher will only suffer professionally. Teachers experienced a drop in career satisfaction (De Wet, 2010) and a loss of faith in their peers (Jacobs & De Wet, 2015) as a result of being bullied in their classrooms. This framework was proven to be true by having several participants agreeing that harassed instructors will lose attention and feel unable to produce at anticipated levels in other courses; as stated by them, they will be unable to teach properly for the day they are abused, or most likely for the entire week. One of the attendees shared her personal experience, stating that after being bullied, she felt demotivated and did not put in any effort in preparing for her classes.

Evans & Smokowski (2016) clarify the use of the humiliation hypothesis in school bullying to explain the role of humiliation on victim outcomes as well as to show how harassment inhibits the establishment of a calm and cohesive school environment. Based on this study's results, previous research, and the humiliation theory we can strongly deduce that bullied teachers' discomfort is reflected in their classroom performance and student and peer relationships, which, on a greater scale will impact the school environment.

Lastly, a participant clarified that bullied teachers feel irritated because they think that they are being scrutinized all the time as if someone is watching over every step waiting to reprimand them. Participants expressed that a bullied teacher is going to be preoccupied with this matter and this will affect the way they interact with everyone around them. Evans and Smokowski (2016) support those results bullying lowers social position and causes emotional pain. Around 50% of the interviewees declared that bullied teachers will take the tension from the school to their house setting. According to Lindner (2007),

victims who have been humiliated frequently internalize their fury as sadness and more often expressed as anger taken out on the kids, husband, and parents. The familial life of that teacher is going to be distracted all the time. Two of the participants expressed that being bullied is going to affect the teacher psychologically and make them feel more inferior and incompetent. These results are confirmed by Mirzab & Alameddine's (2020) findings stating that bullied workers experience uncertainty, poor focus, aggressiveness or retribution, panic attacks, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Bullied victims experience a number of disruptive emotional and physical responses that can lead to bad health (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018; Power et al., 2013). Studies in Ireland, Germany, Austria, and Finland indicate that victims of workplace bullying experience more depression, irritability, and anxiety than most workers (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; Kivimäki et al., 2003). This was evident by having two bully-victims expressing that they used to go back home upset, cry in front of their parents, and fight with friends, with family members, with everyone around. One of the participants shared "I used to cry with my fiancé a lot and in front of my parents, ... until I burst and I started seeing a therapist." This teacher's suffering is explained by Liner (2007) who clarified that bullying undermines the fundamental human right to recognition and respect, causing interpersonal relationships to deteriorate and societal cohesiveness to be disrupted. Woudstra et al. (2018) argue that workplace bullying causes bullied employees to suffer sleep interruptions loss of rest, migraines, back pain, nausea, hyperactivity, and even suicide these are some extreme consequences of bullying that were not witnessed in this study. Overall, results were in accordance with Evans and Smokowski, (2016), bullies humiliate their victims on a mental, emotional, or relational level in an attempt to identify

themselves by lowering their victims' social standing. If teachers are bullied and didn't get the proper follow-up or support, their psychological disturbance will directly or indirectly impact both their career and personal lives.

The fourth question of the individual interviews and the sixth question of the focus group inquired the motives of students who bully teachers. Teachers' responses were grouped into three categories: students' characteristics, teachers' characteristics, and external triggers. Almost 60% of teachers blamed students as the main reason for bullying teachers, 25% mentioned both student and teacher-related reasons, 15% attributed bullying to external reasons, whereas only 10% accused the teachers themselves of this occurrence of such incidents. These results could be better understood under the context of the attribution theory discussed by Kauppi and Pörhölä (2012), which attributes our actions to internal and external motives. Internal motives exist when a person's behaviors are influenced by personal characteristics such as personality traits, whereas, when behavior is caused by situations or scenarios, external motives emerge.

Around 50% of teachers agreed that students who bully have been bullied themselves. Other student-related reasons derived from the interviews are low self-esteem, rebellion and trying to defy power, behavioral problems, learning difficulties, and attention-seeking. Students in special education programs and contained classrooms were proven by researchers (Rose, Swearer & Espelage, 2012; Swearer, Wang, Maag, Siebecker & Frerichs, 2012) to be more prone to perpetrate bullying and start fights. For instance, this can be explained by referring to the studies that have clarified that students with learning difficulties, might be bullies because of their lack of social and communication skills (Schmidt, Prah, & Čagran, 2014) and therefore, they use bullying, especially the physical

type, to vent frustrations (Antonopoulos, 2015). These findings, compared with the survey's results, bully students were found in descending order to have anger management issues, be attention seekers, and are victims of bullying themselves. Whereas in the focus group, interviewees clarified that, students who bully adults are most probably being bullied by an adult. One of the participants explained that some students bully teachers because they dislike them, or because they have a discourteous attitude, or they are mean by nature and enjoy torturing others. In line with Antonopoulos's (2015) investigation of bully students' characteristics that highlighted the intelligence and manipulative nature of bullies. Another teacher clarified that students bully influenced by movies and media content around them. A Turkish study conducted by Sahin (2010) highlighted that, teachers thought students are triggered to bully because of violent content they are exposed to on the internet and movies. Other teachers highlighted that a student might bully as a result of their parental relationships.

Having strict or lenient parents is a cause of student to teacher bullying. Conforming with Antonopoulos, (2015) findings that living with parents who fail to structure or follow-up with their kids' behavior is a reason for students becoming bullies. Participants clarified that the students who bullied them were getting physically abused or maltreated at home. Bullies act this way because this is how they are raised or treated. So, they will act similarly, thinking that is normal. Furthermore, Gordon (2018) suggests that there exists a misconception that if abused, parents think, that this will help their children be tougher and stronger. In fact, this behavior will cascade not only to the teachers of victimized student bullies but also to their friends. Both theories were reiterated upon by 20% of the interviewed teachers who claimed that coming from a broken family and having problems

at home could be triggers for a student to be a bully. On the same front, Migliaccio (2015) cited that several fifth-grade teachers in the U.S. voiced fear that children become bullies because of what they are subjected to at home. One of the key principles of attribution philosophy is fundamental attribution error, which was reflected in the findings of this study. McDermott (2009) highlights current research on this topic, claiming that individuals overemphasize internal causes when assessing the unfavorable acts of others due to a fundamental attribution error. This theory is evident in the results of this study as 75% of student-related triggers emphasized by teachers were internal factors and only 25% of the factors were external.

As for the participants who accused the teachers of being the triggers of bullying, they referred to the teacher's low self-esteem, teaching style, and teacher's attitude and personality. Excessively harsh or lenient discipline are key factors in enabling or forbidding student bullying, according to teachers. As clarified by Mirzab and Alameddine, (2020) communication breakdowns between the abuser and the victim due to opposing personality features may exacerbate the situation and cause bullying. De Wet (2012) asserts that the classroom environment and the instructor's classroom management style have a major impact on revealing students' aggressive tendencies.

Consequently, 74% of the teachers agreed that poor management is the basic characteristic of victim teachers. As Demitras (2011), clarifies classroom management abilities are the most basic skill necessary in the teaching profession for redirecting student behavior and resources to meet the educational objectives. Focus group results validate the fact that teachers can also be the main cause of students to teachers bullying due to their class management, lack of expertise, and young age. When asked in a separate focus group

question about the characteristics of a victim teacher, the same results were yielded where 36 out of 51 teachers chose classroom management as principal factor causing teacher bullying. According to numerous researchers (Yuksel, 2013; Ozcan, 2012; Demirtas; 2011; Başar, 2009), a teacher must have appropriate knowledge and talents in classroom management in order to detect, remove, and improve undesirable student behaviors.

Özkılıç, (2012) and Benefield, (2006) assert that when it comes to student bullying, inexperienced teachers are at a disadvantage. Other teacher-related causes are looking young, being physically appealing, and not being academically competent. Teachers who were young and inexperienced were likewise more likely to be bullied. According to studies, new graduate instructors lack the necessary expertise and abilities, making them more vulnerable to bullying events (Terry, 1998). Furthermore, according to Royer (2003), inexperienced teachers have a professional disadvantage since they graduate without the necessary skills and strategies for dealing with and controlling violent conduct. The attribution error was not evident when teachers stated triggers related to themselves, since, according to the findings of this study, teachers attributed teachers' related reasons to student bullying teachers equally between internal and external reasons.

When we have to defend against failures for which we are held accountable, we blame external factors (Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008). Supporting this concept, some teachers pinpointed that the surroundings, whether in class, school, or at home, have a notable impact on either encouraging or limiting bullying incidents. Farhat (2019) explains that harassment attitudes are often viewed differently in terms of ethnicity and forms. In this study, this was reflected by teachers blaming the Lebanese mentality and the school structures as being causes of bullying. By Lebanese mentality, the teacher clarified that

students perceive themselves as better and superior because they come from higher socio-economic classes compared to teachers. Another participant claimed that a relaxed school behavior management system and the number of students in the class are factors that could trigger student-to-teachers bullying. Some teachers reported that different forms of bullying include threatening, which is not highly common in other areas of the world as a form of bullying. The attribution theory supports this study's findings where teachers proved that they are more inclined to attribute their views of abuse to elements related to students or situations rather than their own qualities. Although there exists a fundamental attribution error, we cannot neglect the fact that external factors, especially ethnic ones have a great impact in shaping and creating norms to the way people act, think, and speak to be deemed acceptable.

According to the findings of previous studies, bullying is gender-specific, with males being bullies at a higher rate than girls (Orpinas & Horne, 2006; Gereš, Orpinas, Rodin, Štimac-Grbić, & Mujkić, 2018). However, some research reports that bullying is neither gender nor age-specific, making this view very debatable (Antonopoulos, 2015). Despite this, studies show that some forms of bullying are more likely to be perpetrated by a specific gender. The results of this research agree with Antonopoulos's findings that bullying is neither gender-based nor related to any age category but rather related to the personality traits of the bully. Based on the participants' experience, this sample reported that student to teacher bullying is mostly exercised by 33% of high school students and 43% of students across all grade levels. When asked about the gender of student bullies, 68% of the teachers agreed that bullying can be perpetrated by an equal number of boys and girls.

In a study conducted by Sherman (2009), a group of teachers was asked to rate the seriousness of 16 separate vignettes according to the nature of the assault and the gender of the perpetrator and survivor. The findings concluded that teacher's same gender-based harassment is more serious than opposite gender-based encounters. Different types of bullying can be perpetrated by students of different genders and age groups. However, according to our study's results, female teachers are more subjected to bullying than male ones and this can be due to the fact that this research's participants are mostly females. Students who bully are perceived to certain internal and external qualities. Nevertheless, most highlighted qualities in this research are internal and have to do with the bully's personality, manners, self-esteem, and learning difficulties. Finally, another important aspect that needs to be considered is the influence of the bully on his peers, which might create extensive problems for teachers.

### **5.3 Suggested Solutions to Help Teachers Respond and Reduce the Occurrence of Bullying Incidents by Students**

As Terry (1998) states, bullying between students and teachers was investigated in England in the late 1990s. Similarly, Benefield (2004) researched student-to-teacher bullying in New Zealand and South Africa, to evaluate how instructors perceive students' bullying tactics, and they expressed that bullying was exercised on them in different proportions. However, in the Arab world in general and in Lebanon specifically, mere literature existed concerning student-to-teacher bullying. Considering the study at hand, when teachers were asked to reveal their perceptions on how to deal with the phenomenon of students who bully teachers, 90% agree that victim teachers need help in stopping students' bullying. Furthermore, 55% of the participants of the first questionnaire,

acknowledged that it is the responsibility of all school staff to stop student to teacher bullying.

Based on the responses aggregated in this study, solutions to student-to-teacher bullying were classified into three main categories, namely solutions by students, teachers, and schools. In the individual interviews, 30% of the participants agreed that one of the resolutions is to get to the core of the problem and investigate why there is learner bullying. These findings are consistent with the findings of Solomon Modiba's (2019) research study, in which he claimed that a solution rests in the development of classroom interactions by engaged practitioners. Remarkably, our questionnaire findings support the previously suggested approach, with 88% of respondents agreeing that pupils who bully instructors should be spoken to by specialists from the school personnel about their behavior and given the chance to improve.

Participants stressed that instructors should look after the overall child's well-being, spend time with bullies or kids who are having issues and help them overcome their problems. It was also suggested that school personnel need to clarify for student bullies that similar acts will be penalized due to the nature of the behavior itself and not on personal grounds. These findings are in line with the research findings of Mueller (2011), which unearthed that one way to rehabilitate bullies into an appropriate behavior is for teachers to create teaching-learning environments in the classrooms that exude enough love, sufficient education security, adequate treasuring of pupils, and unconditional acknowledgment of all students. Some students have learning disabilities or behavioral issues, so ensuring sure they take their medicine might help reduce bullying.

Around 30% of the teachers polled indicated that some children have no idea what bullying is and treat it as a joke thus raising awareness and talking about the issue are some proposed approaches. To teach youngsters what bullying is, how to prevent it, and how to respond to it, awareness campaigns might include viewing a movie, having a question-and-answer session, interactive activities, games, or roleplaying. One of the teachers explained, "This way, we'll be able to reach out to more students and have a greater influence on this issue."

Looking at the second category, i.e., solutions by teachers, respondents stressed the significance of instructors not being afraid to report bullying situations, but they must be judicious and not overdo it in order for the reporting to be effective. Teachers should be aware of school regulations and apply them rigorously in such instances. According to 20% of interviewees, continuous reporting of bullying events and enforcing school regulations and consequences can reduce bullying occurrences. Smith and Thompson (2019) cited similar results by declaring that in order for an anti-bullying strategy to be effective, direct punishments in the form of explicit regulations should be employed. On the other hand, teachers should be more flexible when pupils have become accustomed to class procedures and school norms in order to minimize learner dissatisfaction or disobedience, which might lead to bullying. Other ways to minimize bullying include talking to the bully, befriending them, earning their trust, and recognizing the core of the problem. Shalabi, (2018) explained that teachers acknowledged the importance of talking to the victim and understanding why they behaved this way, however due to them being overworked, some teachers cannot find the time to take this initiative.

Instructors in middle and high school must be prepared to deal with certain age groups. Because they are subject teachers, they should take psychology classes on dealing with adolescents to better understand the requirements of pupils. Furthermore, 90% of respondents to the initial survey feel that classroom management and how to cope with teacher bullying should be taught to teachers at the university level. Similarly, instructors in Yaman's (2011) study said that the content of pre-service teacher training's "classroom management" courses, which did not reflect real-life school settings, was one of the reasons for their exposure to bullying by their students. Additionally, 40% of respondents to the last question in the initial interview said schools should offer the necessary training (through workshops or on-the-job training) to teachers about student-to-teacher bullying. According to Longobardi et al. (2018), greater focus should be placed on schools offering preservice training to assist teachers to respond more effectively to these less severe but ubiquitous forms of violence. Teachers should also be backed up by counsellors or psychologists and given practical advise on how to cope with the issue if it arises. Teachers need to be aware of some triggers that may lead to bullying, such as the way they dress, shaming students, and personality flaws and weaknesses. Farhat (2018), in contrast to our findings, uses a self-efficacy and stress management module, both of which, according to the literature and the findings of her study, are variables that influence their reaction to bullying.

The last category is the accountability of schools to deal with student-to-teacher bullying. In that regard, all of the participating instructors think that the administration needs to assist teachers more and show more empathy for them as people. Interviewees also advised that public awareness campaigns need to be undertaken, particularly for new

instructors who are inexperienced and young. Participant clarified that the administration has to have a good understanding of the kids' situations, and that they should speak with the instructors before they encounter these students. According to Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012), resolving the issue of harassment requires a holistic organizational approach, since focusing on people alone might be ineffective, especially if the organizational culture encourages violence. Harassment in the workplace can be exacerbated by certain environmental conditions. Baillien, De Cuyper, & De Witte, (2011) clarify that workload, job stability, and autonomy are all factors that increase the risk of burnout.

Teachers feel that laws and norms governing teacher bullying in schools should be reconsidered and strengthened. Another aspect of concern was the lack of awareness of school instructors about the policies that are in place to safeguard teachers from bullying. Respondents were asked if the school rules and regulations properly handle bullying, teachers' replies were extremely close: 33.96 % said yes, 28.31% said no, and 37.73% said they were not sure. Longobardi et al. (2018), on the other hand, emphasize the need of clear policies and comprehensive school-based interventions for promoting a healthy school atmosphere. "The school management can absolutely do something to eradicate bullying altogether... bullying should be a prohibited and not dealt with by a grey colored slip" one of the participants said. Once this occurs, strict regulations should be enacted against students who bully teachers.

## **Recommendations**

For effectively dealing with the implications of student-to-teacher bullying the following set of recommendations are proposed:

1. Bullying of teachers by students should be discussed in university courses, and instructors should be taught how to cope with it. This researcher suggests further coordination between educational bodies and the Lebanese Ministry of Education to embed in higher education and university curriculums courses on how to deal with bullying, as this topic is gaining traction and requires action.
2. The ministry of education should reinforce rules and regulations protecting teacher's well-being and raise schools' and teachers' awareness on these laws and how to properly implement them.
3. Schools should consider conducting campaigns about student-to-teacher bullying to raise awareness on the topic. This can be done through ongoing workshops, seminars, and assemblies. In order to do that, schools can create an antibullying committee from their existing teachers who can get expert training on that matter from NGOs or Other organizations that are well versed in the subject to deliver it to students.
4. Workshops and training for the entire school community can be offered to provide practical solutions on a school level. On teachers' level these workshops should target assertiveness and teaching classroom management skills and techniques.

Schools should contact local anti-bullying NGOs or consultations that deal with teachers' well-being, leadership, and management skills through hands-on workshops.

5. Schools should hire more counselors, psychologists, and specialists that are well versed in this topic, to assist instructors in dealing with students to teachers bullying. In order to do that, schools should set a budget dedicated to proactively solving the issue of students to teachers bullying. Counselors should assist harassed professors in creating norms and regulations, as well as counseling them on how to deal with a student bully. Counseling should be sought by both the victim and the aggressor. Teachers who have been victimized should get both emotional and practical support.
6. Counselors need to perform regular class visits, especially the ones with the bully pupils, to assess class dynamics. Classroom counselors can aid in the identification of issue triggers, with the proviso that the teacher may be the real bullying cause. Observations for classroom improvement and long-term follow-up are beneficial to a healthy school community.
7. Parents of bully students, should stay informed about their kid's development and any action plans in place to help their youngster change his or her behavior is a crucial part of dealing with bullying.

8. According to the Organizational Culture theory and the unanimous findings of this study, teacher bullying can only be reduced if collective efforts of the whole school community were aligned. Changing a culture is not an easy task, therefore, to control the phenomenon of teachers being bullied, a whole school action plan should be set by all the school stakeholders and adopted. Schools should establish clear guidelines for who to report bullying to and how to respond to different types of bullying. In addition to creating and enforcing the rules, appropriate follow-up should be performed to support the teacher and show the students that this is a serious issue.

# **CHAPTER VI**

## **Conclusion**

### **6.1 General Conclusion**

This study was conducted to assess teachers' perceptions of students-to-teacher bullying in a Lebanese school. The aspect of student-to-teacher bullying gained traction during the past decade, where several international organizations, scholars, and countries started taking a step forward to deal with this important phenomenon. In Lebanon, student-to-teacher bullying has lately been receiving attention from different stakeholders, yet no academic research was done so far to highlight the importance of this dialectical behavior of students and what is the teachers' perception about it. Therefore, this subject was chosen based on personal interest in the subject at hand. This study can be considered novel in the absence of similar academic research concerning the subject at hand and is expected to pave the way for future studies. This study reviewed a comprehensive number of scholarly articles on this topic to gain insights and allow the reader to understand the different views pertaining to the subject. In order to achieve the aim of this research, a mixed-method was used for data collection involving both quantitative and qualitative tools.

### **6.2 Implications**

Results aggregated from the primary data revealed that teachers in Lebanon suffer greatly from both overt and covert bullying. Most the overt bullying types encountered by the teachers were mentioned in the secondary data. Based on the interviews the most type of bullying encountered by the teachers was verbal bullying. All of the questioned instructors

identifying verbal bullying as the most prevalent form of bullying in all age groups. One of the instructors explained that verbal bullying might take the shape of hurtful remarks directed against a teacher's looks, demeanor, or behavior. However, threatening under the context of verbal bullying was not something common to encounter in other countries as no secondary data was found mentioning a similar aspect, yet this research believes that it is something related to the constituents of the Lebanese community where most family members are part of sectarian armed parties. According to Farhat (2019), the environment in which the bully behaves might have a significant impact on the bully's behavior.

This research also found that several of the events were gender-related, with guys physically assaulting female teachers and girls verbally bullying female teachers. Sherman (2009) discovered that teachers rated physical harassment higher than verbal or relational harassment, and that same-gender harassment is more harmful than opposite-gender harassment. Boys were more likely to be physically aggressive, girls were more prone to gossip.

Teachers, on the other hand, stated in their interviews that the number of cyberbullying events is on the rise in Lebanon, which is a source of concern for them. Cyberbullying incidences have grown considerably as a result of online schooling, according to some teachers. Most of the respondents to the questionnaire didn't mention anything about cyberbullying. However, female respondents felt more comfortable sharing such incidents with a female interviewer rather than filling out a questionnaire and disclosing their actual feelings for fear of being judged when confronted with such scenarios, according to the study. Bullying by students is still considered a social taboo by some (Farhat, 2018). Additionally, teachers in Lebanon mentioned that sometimes they lost control over the

class. This raises the issue of power imbalance. Bullying students exert authority informally, despite the fact that a teacher is an adult who should be supervising the classroom.

Furthermore, according to Gordon (2018), abuse can help youngsters become tougher and stronger, and that this conduct will spread not just to their instructors but also to their peers. Both views were echoed by 20% of the instructors polled, who stated that coming from a broken home and having issues at home might be triggers for a kid to become a bully.

According to Farhat (2019), harassing attitudes are typically regarded differently depending on race and form. This was echoed in this research by instructors who blamed bullying on the Lebanese culture and school systems. According to the Lebanese mindset, students see themselves as better and superior to instructors because they come from higher socioeconomic strata. According to Farhat (2019), harassing attitudes are typically regarded differently depending on race and form. This was echoed in this research by instructors who blamed bullying on the Lebanese culture and school systems. As stated by one of the participants, according to the Lebanese mindset, students see themselves as better and superior to instructors because they come from higher socioeconomic strata. The attribution theory backs up the findings of this study, which show that instructors are more likely to blame their opinions on abuse on factors such as pupils or conditions rather than their characteristics. Although there is a basic attribution mistake, we cannot ignore the reality that external influences, particularly ethnic characteristics, have a significant impact on molding and setting acceptable standards for how individuals act, think, and communicate.

As Ozkiliç (2012) pointed out, peer influence poses a significant risk; bullying may spread from one person to another through influence, especially among teenagers who are anxious to keep up with the latest trends in all activities. This was supported by the focus group results, which revealed that bully students have been bullied and bully others as a kind of retaliation, wanting attention and attempting to be heard, preferring to empower others in order to prove themselves, and having psychological or personality difficulties.

Bullying may take many forms and be committed by students of all genders and ages. However, according to the findings of our study, female instructors are more likely to be bullied than male teachers, which might be related to the fact that the majority of the participants in our study were females. Bullying students are said to have specific internal and external characteristics. However, the majority of the traits emphasized in this study are internal and have to do with the bully's personality, manners, self-esteem, and learning problems.

Finally, the bully's impact on his peers is an essential factor to examine, since it may cause significant difficulties for instructors. It is undeniable that instructors with poor classroom management skills are more likely to be bullied. These abilities may be learned and developed; nevertheless, some uncontrolled circumstances, such as a teacher's age, physical appearance, and years of experience, are thought to impact the chance of being bullied. Here we arrive to the conclusion that bullying is a complicated social problem that needs thorough research, constant follow-up, and uniformity in community efforts.

Student to teacher bullying proved to be an existing issue in Lebanon and negatively impacting teachers. This issue needs to be tackled on multiple levels. Teachers being

bullied by students is a topic that needs to be introduced in university courses and teachers should be trained on how to deal with it. On a school level, workshops and training should be provided to the whole school community to raise awareness on this topic and suggest practical solutions. Schools should also hire more counselors, psychologists, and professionals to help teachers better cope with bullying.

### **6.3 Limitations**

Even though the study accomplished its goal, there are a few limitations that should be considered in future research. Because this is a case study, one of the drawbacks is the limited sample size, which makes it difficult to extrapolate the findings to other situations. Girls were considerably more active in the current study in terms of a sample size than boys. I understood that the substantial differences in sampling numbers between males and females may have had a major influence on the overall conclusion of the study. Furthermore, the small number of teachers that participated in the interview procedure may have resulted in a biased and inconsistent outcome.

When compared to earlier research, which generally employed more complex statistical techniques, the current study's straightforward statistical methodology can be questioned in terms of personal judgment. As a result, this research may not apply to other locations or schools, whether in Lebanon or elsewhere in the Arab World. The findings of the study should not be interpreted as a final evaluation of the perceptions of teachers of student students who bully teachers, but rather as a study that contributes to the current research literature on student-to-teacher bullying.

The perspectives of teachers were the main focus of this investigation. Participants who are the victims here may have portrayed their views on students who bully teachers, but considering the bully or students' point of view might change the findings and lead to new insights. Another flaw in the study was that the students bullying instructors' measures were based on impressions rather than actual learning observations. This privilege was lost since schools were closed due to the coronavirus. After COVID 19, a shift to online education was witnessed, so this topic could be further researched with the focus on cyberbullying, especially that students are more tech-savvy than teachers and they have room to manipulate or easily mess around the class time and activities.

#### **6.4 Further Research**

This study is the first step in diagnosing the problem of bullying in Indonesia, and it is based on a small sample of students from one private school in Lebanon. As a result, the findings cannot be applied to other areas or schools in the country. First, is the replication of this study in different private schools and in public schools- which are usually hard to access in Lebanon-, addressing novel contexts with students and teachers from a different socio-economic background will yield significant results and a more comprehensive picture of the reality of student to teacher bullying in Lebanon. It's feasible that the same study might be repeated in the future with bigger sample size, perhaps on a regional or national basis, to determine how widespread the phenomena is across the area or country.

Based on the limitations that I have discussed; I would propose few suggestions for future research. Another suggestion, evaluate the students' perceptions of students who bully teachers. Students' data collection and feedback should be more developed and analyzed.

Research focusing explicitly on students with disabilities is required to further elaborate on why they are at a higher risk of being bullies. Another suggestion for future study is to use a more complex quantitative approach and correlate different variables to students who bully teachers in order to obtain better insights into what solutions are more effective when dealing with teachers' bullying. Furthermore, investigating the impact of a character program on students who bully teachers would be a significant expansion of the findings of this study, which emphasized character as a key preventative factor.

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# **Appendices**

## **Appendix A Perception's Questionnaire**

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=oynncllRd0qhZiS\\_s9vJn2CAyrNJRIRPoJg6yxETSJNUNKNBM0iTUDhYR000STA3Qk1DR0dMMVZBQy4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=oynncllRd0qhZiS_s9vJn2CAyrNJRIRPoJg6yxETSJNUNKNBM0iTUDhYR000STA3Qk1DR0dMMVZBQy4u)

## **Appendix B Types of Bullying Questionnaire**

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=oynncllRd0qhZiS\\_s9vJn2CAyrNJRIRPoJg6yxETSJNUOViwVTlVTVFHMUxTTEVZM0VKQ0xFOVJNOC4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=oynncllRd0qhZiS_s9vJn2CAyrNJRIRPoJg6yxETSJNUOViwVTlVTVFHMUxTTEVZM0VKQ0xFOVJNOC4u)

## **Appendix C Teachers' Individual Interview**

1. What does workplace bullying mean to you? Do you think students' bullying teachers should be categorized under workplace bullying? Why or why not?
2. What is your experience of student-to-teacher bullying?
3. Have you ever encountered a bullying incident by a student yourself? What did you do about it?
4. What do you think are the reasons for student-to-teacher bullying?
5. What is the influence of student-to-teacher on a bullied teacher's professional and private life?
6. What can be done to prevent student-to-teacher bullying?

## **Appendix D Focus Group Interview**

1. What are some types of student-to-teacher bullying you are familiar with? In your opinion which type is the most recurrent?
2. According to your own perceptions and experience, what are the characteristics of a student bully?
3. In your opinion what are the characteristics of teachers who are targets of bullying?
4. Have you experienced any type of bullying by students that weren't mentioned in the survey? Feel free to elaborate.
5. Did any of your colleagues report to you an incident where a student bullied him/her? What type of bullying were they subjected to?
6. What are the reasons that might cause a student to bully a teacher?
7. In your opinion how can a teacher reduce the occurrence of such incidents? And what role does the school play in student-to-teacher bullying?
8. What are some suggested solutions?