



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO SCHOOL CLIMATE REPORT

BULLYING AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In partnership with



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

National Coordination
Trinidad and Tobago



UNESCO
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Executive Summary

About The Survey

In 2016 The Silver Lining Foundation conducted a baseline survey to assess the prevalence of school violence and bullying across 20 secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The survey examined bullying trends from indicators including:

- Acts of gender-based violence
- Sexist language
- Sexual assault
- LGBT students' experiences

This report discusses the major findings in relation to types of bullying experienced by all students, the potential causes and effects of bullying, experiences of sexual and gender-based violence, reporting bullying to school administrators and parents, and lastly the frequency and effectiveness of intervention strategies.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Verbal Bullying

The survey assessed the rates of Verbal Bullying from responses given by students to acts of Teasing, Harassment and Threats/Intimidation which occurred over the preceding 3 months. During this period:

- 73% of students indicated that they have been teased or harassed at least ONCE.
- 75% of respondents indicated having played an active role in teasing or harassment of classmates/schoolmates, either by themselves, or as a group.
- 33% of respondents indicated

that they have been threatened or verbally intimidated at least ONCE.

- 35% of respondents reported that they have perpetrated verbal threats or intimidation to their fellow classmates.
- Appearance, Ability and Sexual Orientation/Gender Expression (in that order) were the most common causes of Verbal Teasing, Harassment or Intimidation.

Physical Bullying

The survey assessed the rates of Physical Bullying from responses given by students to acts of violence against student's belongings (i.e. stealing or interfering) or person (i.e. hitting or pushing) which occurred over the preceding 3 months. During this period:

- 24% of students indicated that they have been pushed or hit at least ONCE.
- 20% of students indicated that their belongings were stolen, and 20% indicated that their belongings were damaged.
- 24% of students indicated that they have hit or pushed a class/schoolmate at least ONCE.
- 34% indicated that they have interfered with another's belongings in order to harass them.
- 14% of respondents indicated that they physically intimidated someone else or physically threatened them in a face to face situation.

Sexual Bullying

The survey assessed the rates of Sexual Bullying from responses given by students to acts of sexual harassment (i.e. taunts/advances) or sexual aggression which occurred over the preceding 3 months. During this period:

- 25% of respondents made sexually explicit remarks to someone else or used such language to taunt someone else at least ONCE.
- 23% of respondents were victims of a named type of sexually-based physical bullying.
- The two most common forms of harassment made to victims were:
 - sexually explicit taunts or advances (29%)
 - being touched inappropriately by another (28%)
- Students in the 17-18 age group both experienced and engaged in more sexual bullying than other age group.
- The majority of students reported having either never or rarely experienced physical violence or verbal abuse in the home.
- Verbal aggression in the form of yelling, cussing or insults were more predominantly experienced by students in the home (17.85%) than physical aggression with 6.29% (n=35).
- This corroborates the higher occurrence of acts of verbal bullying in schools (73%) than physical bullying (24% in the highest case)

Cyber Bullying

The survey assessed the rates of Cyber Bullying from responses given by students to acts of spreading rumours via the internet or making threats or intimidating another using phone/internet messaging which occurred over the preceding 3 months. During this period:

- 37% of respondents indicated that at least ONCE they were the victim of rumours being spread via mobile phones.
- 35% indicated that at least ONCE they were victims of rumours being spread about them via the internet.
- 20% of respondents also indicated that they were threatened or intimidated at least ONCE by someone using phone messaging.
- 20% of respondents indicated that they were threatened or intimidated at least ONCE by someone using internet messaging

WHAT CAUSES BULLYING?

Family Situations

Psychological/Emotional Impact

- Emotional and Psychological effects of bullying showed predominantly negative responses (i.e. feelings of sad, angry, hurt, suicidal) from students who were both victims and instigators of bullying.
- Girls and LGBT students showed more fear of bullying than male and non-LGBT peers.
- Parental support was more readily accessible to students at denominational schools than non-denominational.

Gender & Sexuality

- Male students were more likely to engage in bullying behaviours than female students.
- Male students experienced verbal and physical acts of bullying at slightly higher rates than female students, who were slightly more likely to experience sexual and cyber bullying.
- Boys tend to display acts of aggression arising from attacks based on their physical appearance, sexual orientation and gender expression.
- Verbal attacks based on notions of

masculinity targeted against a boy's sexuality or gender expression were mostly heard on a daily basis than attacks made to a girl's sexuality or gender expression.

- Students view masculinity in more positive terms (strength, independent, standing up for oneself/one's rights) while views on femininity were more negative (shy, soft, girly, putting on makeup and talking about boys)
- LGBT students experienced bullying at higher rates than non-LGBT students.
- LGBT students also showed higher propensity in all categories for engaging in bullying.

Group Dynamics

- The most commonly reported acts of bullying that were committed in groups include smoking and drinking of alcohol, teasing and name-calling, fighting, social exclusion through rumours, embarrassment or isolation.
- Using or forcing others to use illegal drugs was reported fewer times.
- Vandalism and damage to belongings and school property, 'back-chatting' teachers or person in authority, and lying to a teacher to cover up a situation were also highlighted as acts done in groups.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

- 100 students reported having been molested or being unsure of their experience and 51 students were raped or were unsure of whether what happened to them would be considered rape.
- Boys and girls described assaults mainly by family members, or friends of the family, with girls additionally identifying reputed members of the community
- Boys showed less certainty of

whether what happened to them would be considered rape or molestation.

- 75% of students who were victims of sexual assault were between the age range 15-16

REPORTING & INTERVENTION

- 63% of students never or rarely reported incidents of bullying.
- Bullying acts at school were not reported because 43.9% of students do not want to be seen as a tell-tale or snitch, 27.1% do not trust teachers at school and 25.3% have tried to report but nothing was done.
- 25.8% of students indicated that reporting bullying acts will lead to being bullied more, either by their peers (19%) or teachers (6.8%).
- Heterosexual students were more likely to discuss or share their bullying experiences with someone than their LGBT peers
- 71.72% of heterosexual students and 64.71% of LGBT students responded that they "Never" or "Rarely" reported their bullying experiences to a teacher or principal.
- LGBT and non-LGBT students do not report acts of bullying to a TEACHER because they fear being called a "tell-tale" or "snitch."
- LGBT and non-LGBT students do not report acts of bullying to a PARENT/ CAREGIVER because they fear the bullying experience would become worse.
- Students in the same peer group as the respondent are reported to be the most frequent interventionists, followed by older students.
- 31% of students viewed their teacher's effectiveness in handling bullying as "inadequate."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are listed throughout the survey in blue text boxes.
There is a need for:

- True and accurate age-appropriate sex and sexuality education including consent, rights and protections, laws, social norms, safe-sex practices, and understanding sexual diversity.
- Drug education including the role drugs can play in cycles of abuse and violence.
- Restorative justice practices that seek to repair the negative actions of students without disrupting their education, and foster accountability.
- Creating respectful classroom spaces.
- Using classroom exercises and lessons to build trust and respect in the classroom, and to empower students.

A Note on Data Analysis

The data collected from this survey was analysed qualitatively as well as using statistical tests.

We utilised two-tailed t-tests with a threshold effect size of 0.50, and alpha level of 0.05.

Tests for correlation measured effect size using the correlation coefficient. This was also a two-tailed test with an effect size of 0.30, and an alpha level of 0.05.

The survey was shown to have excellent statistical power, meaning that it could detect even small or weak correlations and effects. Its statistical power is determined by the large sample size, the low alpha level (0.05), and by using parametric tests. This survey met all the necessary parameters. This means that the effects found can be substantiated, and are reflections of the real situation.

For example, we found that gender has a small effect size on the types of bullying experienced, which means that there may not be an effect in the wider population. The statistical significance of this test tells us of its generalisability beyond the survey to be applicable to the wider population. Although having a small effect on bullying behaviours, gender was shown to be statistically significant. This means that its effects are generalisable to the wider population. Male students were more prone to engaging in bullying behaviours than female students. The statistical significance of the various tests will be indicated as they are discussed.

The test for correlation between Emotional impact, Fear of bullying and Parental support to Intervention, tested at 1.00, rendering it a perfect test.

All other tests conducted had a statistical power of 0.99:

- Gender and Types of Bullying
- Gender and Bullying Engagement
- Sexual Orientation and Types of Bullying
- Sexual Orientation and Bullying Engagement
- Type of School and Types of Bullying
- Type of School and Bullying Engagement
- Age and Types of Bullying
- Age and Bullying Engagement
- Age to Emotional impact, Fear of bullying and Parental support
- Form Class and Types of Bullying
- Form Class and Bullying Engagement
- Form Class to Emotional impact, Fear of bullying and Parental support
- Religious group to Types of Bullying
- Religious group and Bullying Engagement
- Religious group to Emotional impact, Fear of bullying and Parental support

This means that the effects found are reliable and valid for the population studied, even if it may not be generalisable to the wider population. Key findings and recommendations are highlighted throughout the report.

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SECTION ONE: DEMOGRAPHICS

Six hundred and fifty-one (651) students from twenty (20) schools were surveyed. Students who participated in the survey ranged from Second Form to Sixth Form and ages 13 to 20.

These age groups were further segmented by gender, religion and sexual orientation.

SEX AND AGE

Of the total number of respondents, 50.85% were male (n=330), and 49.15% were female (n=319).

Age Group	13 - 14	15 - 16	17 - 18	19 - 20
Of the male respondents	20%	62.42%	1.82%	0.61%
Of the female respondents	28.21%	54.23%	16.30%	1.25%

Table 1: Age of population surveyed

Sixty-two percent of the respondents were age 15-16 at the time of the survey, mainly consisting of students from Forms 3 and 4. Students in Form 2 made-up 16.74%, while Forms 5 and 6 combined provided 17.66% of the responses.

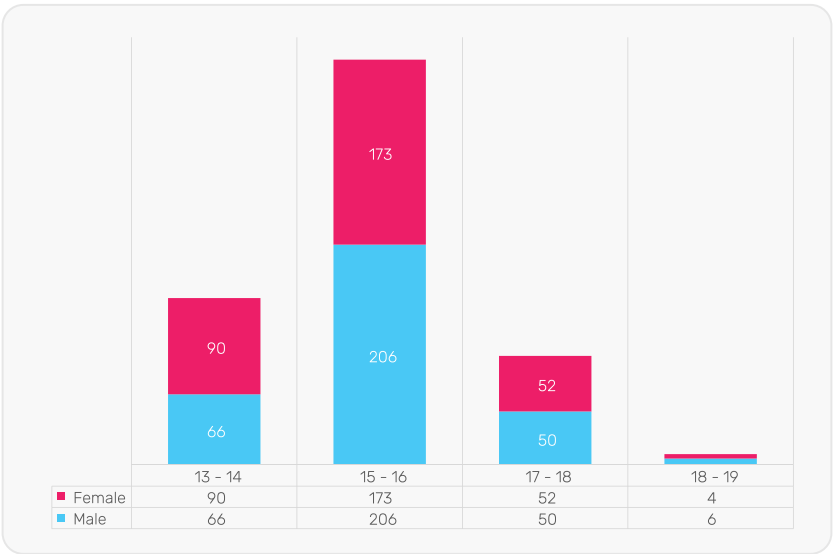


Figure 1: Sex and age of population surveyed

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Researchers in Caribbean Sexuality Studies like Kamala Kempadoo (2009), Rosamond King (2015), Krystal Ghisyawan (2015, 2016) and others, suggest that sexual identity categories are not consistently or extensively used by same-sex loving populations. Ghisyawan (2016) also points to the variety of terms used with limited popularity. Rather than providing students with identity categories they may not understand or know, this survey asked about their sexual desires.

Figure 2 shows the categorisations of students desires into three main groups. Attraction to the opposite sex, referred to as heterosexuality, is the dominant sexual disposition at 83.56%. Students who selected that they liked people of the same-sex, both or that sex does not matter to them, were grouped into the category labeled "Attraction to same-sex or both". This group makes up 11.6% of the population surveyed. Lastly, "Asexual" (4.3%) refers to those who experience no sexual desire.

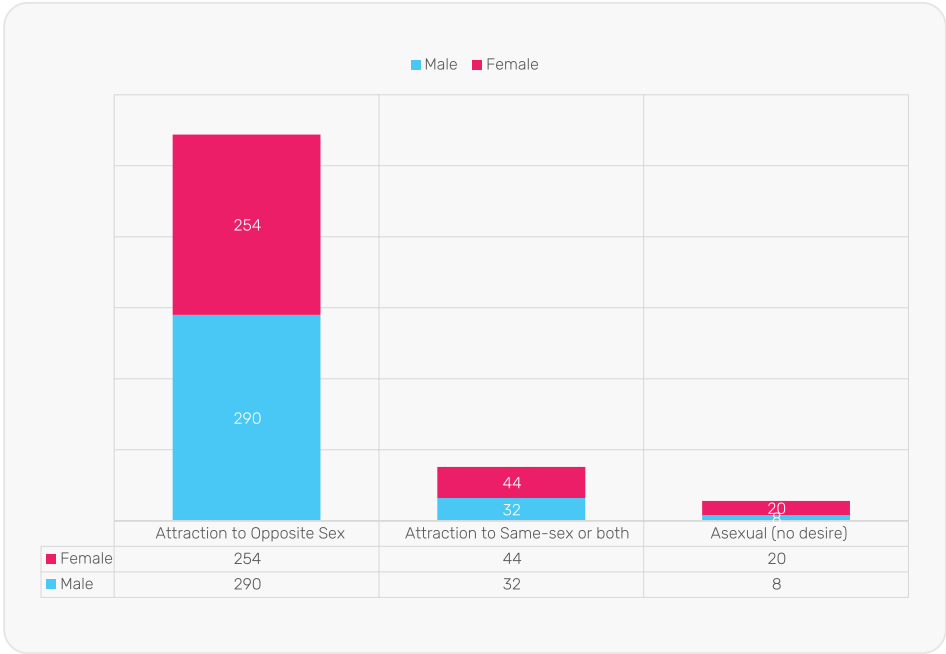


Figure 2: Sexual Orientation of population surveyed

RELIGION

Respondents came from various religious backgrounds seen in the table below. Census information was used to identify religious groups in Trinidad and Tobago. Of those surveyed, 24.20% were Pentecostal; 15.45% were Roman Catholic; 8.60% practiced Sanatanist Hinduism, 8.92% identified as 'Other Hindu'; 8.12% practiced Islam; 23.24% belonged to

other Christian sects including Seventh-Day Adventists, Presbyterian, Spiritual Baptists and 'Other Christian'; 0.96% practiced African Spiritual Worship; while 3.5% did not believe in religion and 1.75% had no belief in God. Additionally, 5.25% identified as simply "Other".

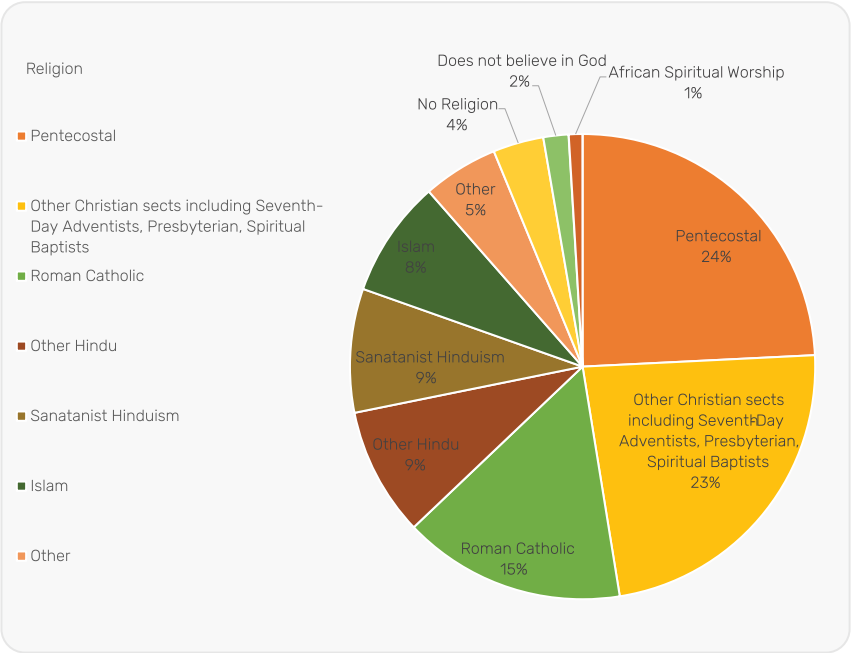


Figure 3: Religions practiced by surveyed population

SECTION TWO: TRENDS IN BULLYING ENGAGEMENT

Understanding Bullying

Recently, social media and smart phones have greatly increased the visibility of bullying in schools in Trinidad and Tobago, begging our attention to this growing issue. It is important to underscore that there is no universal definition of bullying nor is its existence as a social phenomenon universally recognized. Discourse around what bullying is varies relative to cultural context as well as over time. Nevertheless, the recognition of bullying, however it is defined, has tremendous implications for institutions being able to interrupt the cycle of physical and psychic violence that results.

Children in Trinidad and Tobago are also meant to be provided with the opportunity to attend schools and educational institutions without fear of violence being perpetrated against them. However in T&T's school system, like in most countries around the world, many students suffer from school based violence on a regular basis.

School violence in these contexts usually encompasses physical violence (corporal punishment and hitting/fighting); psychological violence (verbal and mental abuse); sexual violence (harassment and rape); and bullying. Bullying is characterized by an ongoing series of events, rather than a single or isolated event. Bullying definitions are diverse but often share similar traits. An act of bullying is one that:

1. Involves aggressive behavior that is unwanted on the part of the victim;
2. Involves a pattern of activity of behavior over time;
3. Has a negative impact on an individual(s);
4. Involves an uneven balance of power.

These types of bullying often overlap and reinforce one another, as well as occur both in and around the school environment. In this survey, bullying was categorized as verbal, physical, and sexual, as well as cyberbullying as a specifically singled out criterion.

Verbal Bullying

73% of students indicated that they have been teased or harassed at least once over the preceding 3-month period (prior to taking the survey). The nature of this teasing/harassment primarily centres on name calling or teasing based on characteristics such as appearance or perceived sexual orientation. Of the 73%, 16% reported being victims of teasing/harassment often or frequently within the period (Figure 4).

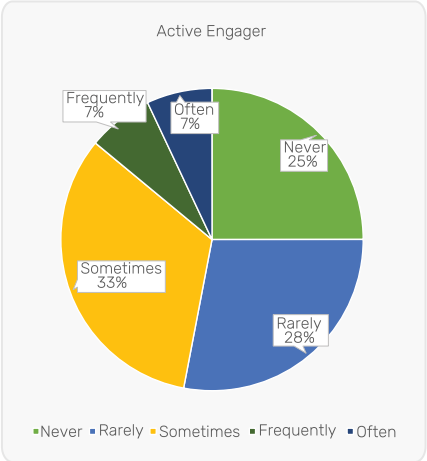


Figure 4: Frequency of victim experience of teasing/harassment

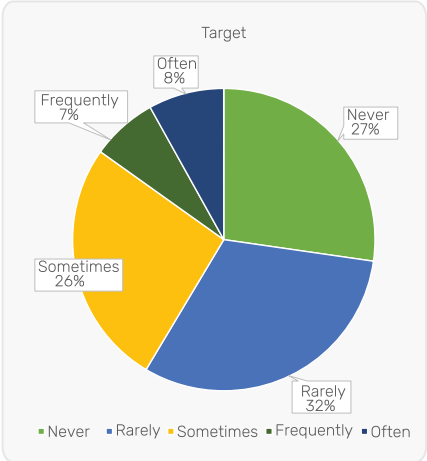


Figure 5: Active participation in teasing/harassment

Conversely, 75% of respondents indicated that they played an active role in teasing or harassment of classmates/schoolmates, either by themselves or as a group over the period. Of this, 14% indicated that this active participation was often or frequent over the period. Similarly the majority of the events were based on teasing/harassment about appearance, ability, gender expression etc. (Figure 8).

A higher order of verbal bullying takes place in the form of threats or intimidation, without the use of physical force. This often takes the form of threats of future violence and abusive language (cursing). The nature of this form of abuse often increases the relative stress and mental harm caused by verbal bullying, as the victim often lives in fear of the ‘following through’ of the threats.

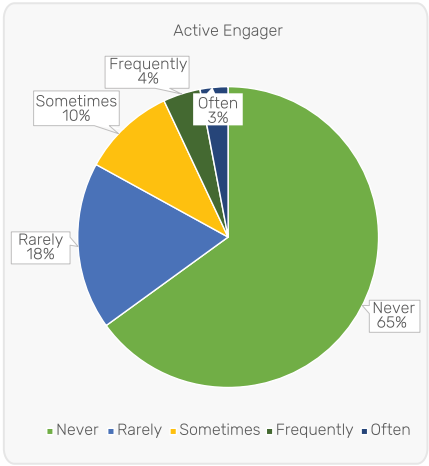


Figure 6: Victim experience of verbal threats or intimidation

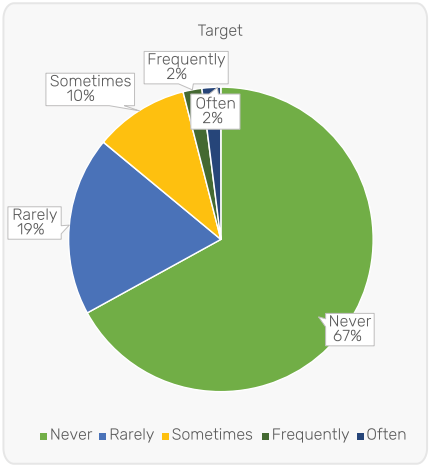


Figure 7: Active participation in verbal threats or intimidation

33% of respondents indicated that they have been threatened or verbally intimidated at least once within the period preceding the survey. Of those reporting, 4% said they were victims of this often or frequently (Figure 6). Similarly, 35% of respondents reported that they have perpetrated verbal threats or intimidation to their fellow school or classmates within the period, with 7% doing so often or frequently (Figure 7).

Regardless of the magnitude of verbal bullying, common themes emerge in the nature of the teasing, threats or basis of intimidation. Verbal bullying, in particular, requires a ‘substrate’ or characteristic which the bully utilizes in their jokes, teasing or the foundation for intimidation. According to respondents, their physical or outward appearance was the primary cause of verbal teasing, harassment or intimidation, with ability and sexual orientation/gender expression coming in as the second and third most common reason for verbal bullying (Figure 8).

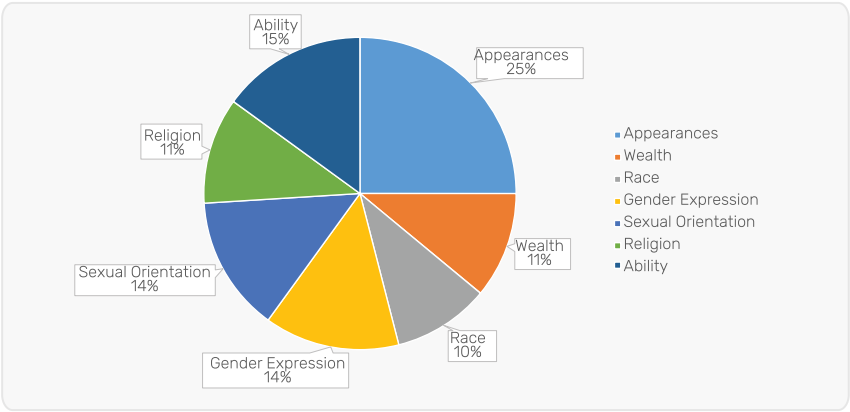


Figure 8: Common themes for verbal bullying

If bullying based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expression are combined, they total 28%, taking the lead as the most common basis for teasing and harassment. Students identified the following as common insults:

Homophobic slurs: battyboy, bullerman, faggot, “you so gay” or “You like boys awa?”
You like boys.
You not nice.
She is a hoe.
She/he does smell stink.
He or she is fat.

Physical Bullying

24% of students indicated that they have been pushed or hit at least once over the preceding 3-month period (prior to taking the survey). The nature of this bullying/harassment primarily centres on physical acts of violence against students' belongings or person. Apart from being physically assaulted, 40% of respondents indicated that their belongings were interfered with, either stolen or damaged, over the three month period. (Figure 9)

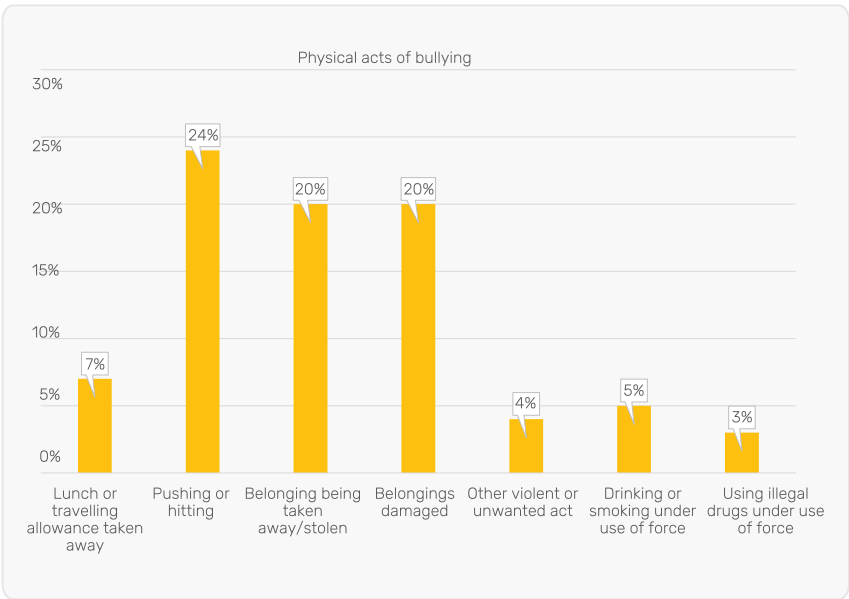


Figure 9: Frequency of victim experience of physical bullying

Similarly, 24% of respondents self-reported that they have hit or pushed a class/ schoolmate at least once over the last 3 months with 34% indicating that they have interfered with another’s belongings in order to harass them. In addition, 14% of respondents indicated that they physically intimidated someone else or physically threatened them in a face to face situation (Figure 10).

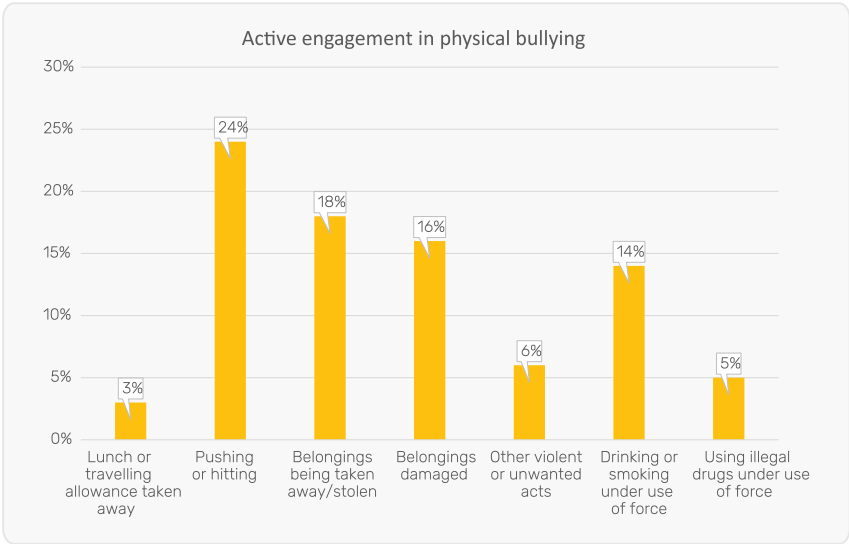


Figure 10: Active participation in physical bullying

Sexual Bullying

A higher order of physical bullying takes place in the form of sexual harassment or sexual aggression. The Caribbean in particular, and Trinidad and Tobago, is often said to suffer from cultural norms where sexual violence is sometimes lauded, for example, through the appropriation of terms such as ‘stabbing’, ‘slamming’ and ‘daggering’ to describe physical intimacy through dancing.¹ The sexual nature of physical bullying at work in the wider public is especially influential in the secondary school system where adolescents are now forming their perceptions and practices around sexuality.

On average 81% of all respondents indicated that they have never actively bullied or harassed someone using sexually-based actions. However, 25% of respondents indicated that they have at least once made sexually explicit remarks to someone else or used such language to taunt someone else (Figure 11). On average, 23% of respondents indicated that they had been the victim of a named type of sexually-based physical bullying

¹ Kamala Kempadoo, Caribbean Sexuality: Mapping the field. Caribbean Review of Gender Studies 2009. <http://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/november2009/journals/Kempadoo.pdf>

over the last 3 months. Of the types of harassment, the two most common forms were having sexually explicit taunts or advances made to the victim (29%), and being touched inappropriately by another (28%) (Figure 11).

Students in the 17-18 age group experienced more sexual bullying than others - including the sending and receiving of sexually explicit texts and pictures, sexual harassment, taunting and gestures. This age group also engaged in sexual

bullying at higher rates than other ages. At this age, students are approaching adulthood and more likely to begin exploring their sex lives if they haven't already done so. Heightened sex drive and disregard for sexual boundaries can possibly contribute to increased amount of unwanted sexual advances among this age group.

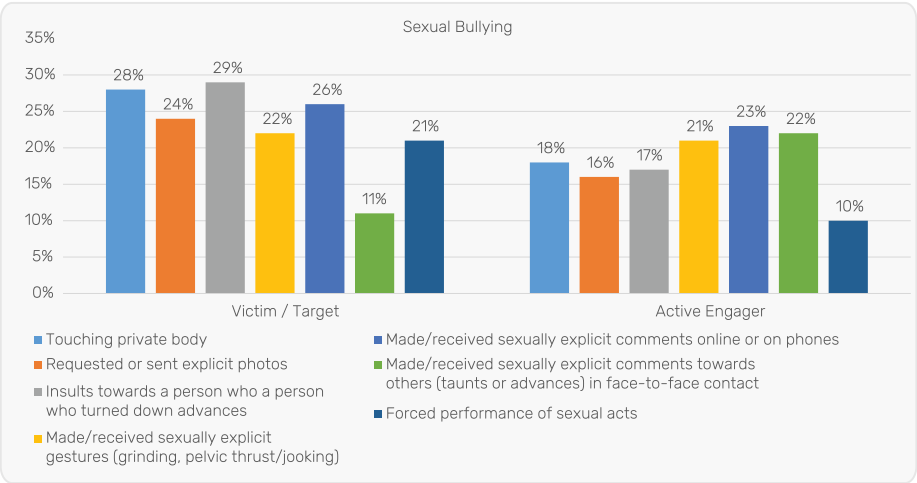


Figure 11: Reception and participation in sexually-based acts of physical bullying

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is a particular form of bullying that has been accorded special significance over the last few years due to the widespread usage of the internet and various modes of communication afforded by it. Cyber bullying is often thought to have exacerbated the traditional forms of bullying by creating a bullying environment that is not time or geographically limited.

Cyber bullying is similar to the definitions of traditional bullying in that it must: be intended to cause harm; perceived as harmful by the victim; have a repetitive nature; have a power imbalance; and be done primarily using online methods (which include mobile phone messaging).²

37% of respondents indicated that they experienced being the victim of rumours being spread via mobile phones at least once, while 35% indicated that they were victims of rumours being spread about them via the internet. 20% of respondents also indicated that they had been threatened or intimidated at least once over the last 3 months by someone using phone messaging and 20% indicated the

same using internet messaging. On average 82% of respondents indicated that they had never undertaken any activity to cyber bully a fellow class/ schoolmate (Figure 12).

² Heidi Vandebosch and Katrien Van Cleemput. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*. August 2008, 11(4): 499-503. doi:10.1089/cpb.2007.0042. <http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/cpb.2007.0042>

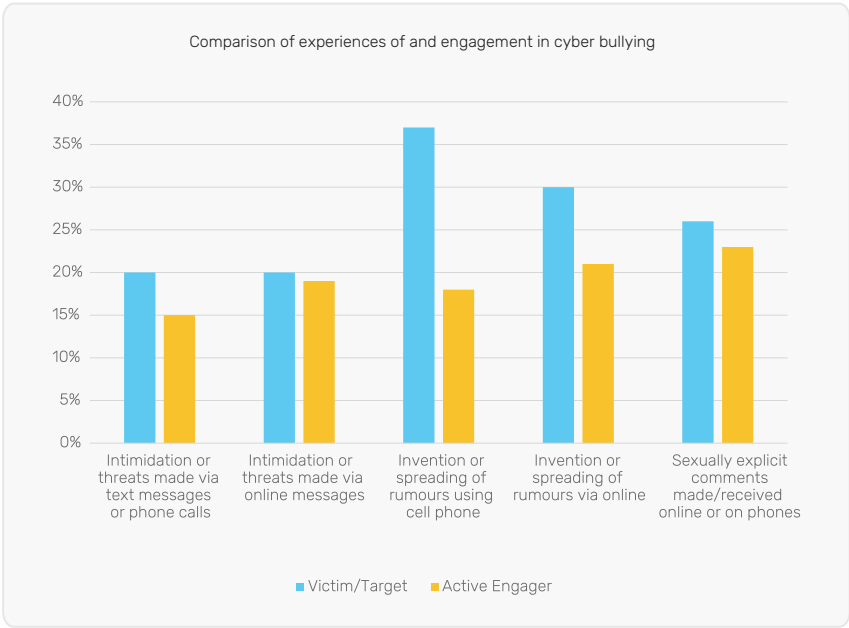


Figure 12: Frequency of active cyber bullying

SECTION THREE: CAUSES OF BULLYING

Common theories for why children and adolescents engage in bullying include:

1. They come from dysfunctional homes.
2. Bullies want to exhibit power.
3. Bullies cannot control their emotions.
4. They don't care how others feel.
5. Bullying behaviour gets rewarded.³

This approach focuses on the bully as damaged or flawed, which can further stigmatize those who engage in bullying behaviours. But as our data demonstrates, students who were the recipients of bullying behaviours, also perpetrated acts of bullying on other students. This includes students who

demonstrated flexible sexual desire or were gender-non-conforming, hereafter referred to as LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender), who experience higher levels of being targeted for bullying, as well as engaging in bullying behaviours themselves. There must be a lot in common between bullies and their targets. What do they share?

To answer this question, we can consider the material, ideological, and psychological conditions of both the engagers as well as the targets, in each of the recognised causes mentioned above.

³ <https://nobullying.com/common-causes-of-bullying/>

Violence At Home

Students were asked about their exposure to violence at home and in their communities. Most students report living in a relatively abuse-free household with most students never or rarely having experienced physical violence (82%) or verbal abuse (68%) in the home.

Aggression was more commonly exhibited in verbal ways, with 17.85% of students saying that yelling, cussing, or insults were heard most of the time or always at their homes. Verbal bullying was also more common in schools than other forms of bullying. Physical aggression was less common, with 6.29% (n=35) of students reporting witnessing physical violence always or most of the time. If we include those who 'sometimes' witnessed violence in the home (n=107; 18.2%), it still indicates that the majority of students come from homes where violence is not as common. Of those who did (n= 35), 36% listed their father as the most violent in the home, followed by the mother (11%), and then other male family members like brothers, uncles, stepfathers and grand fathers.

The data presented earlier suggests that more students engage in bullying than can be accounted for by exposure to violence in the home.

While by no means exhaustive, the snapshot that we are able to glean from this survey of the students' interactions with violence, abuse and harsh language at home indicates the degree to which experiences at home shape and do not shape the social environment on school grounds. The somewhat large discrepancy between students' experiences with abuse and bullying at home and at schools points to the importance of other factors.

Psychological Factors: How does bullying make you feel?



By its very nature, as a tactic meant to infantilise, demean, belittle, embarrass and insult others, bullying carries psychological effects.

A longitudinal study conducted in North Carolina, that assessed 1420 participants 4 to 6 times between the ages of 9 and 16 years, determined that childhood bullying causes serious emotional problems that last into adulthood. Targets were at greater risk of anxiety disorders, while bullies were at greater risk of antisocial personality disorder.

But those who were bullies as well as targets were at greater risk of depression and panic disorder. Men in this group had a much greater risk of suicidality; for women, the greater risk was agoraphobia [fear of the outside]. The study demonstrated that the psychological damage doesn't just go away, but stays with a person.⁴

The graphic above is based on the responses students gave to the question, "How does bullying make you feel?" The size of the font indicates the frequency of that response. The most common response was 'sad', then 'angry', 'hurt', 'disappointed', 'disgusted', 'horrible', and others shown in the graphic. These responses along with 'suicidal', 'unwanted', and 'anxious' all corroborate the above described emotional and psychological effects.

⁴ William E. Copeland, Dieter Wolke, Adrian Angold. "Adult Psychiatric Outcomes of Bullying and Being Bullied by Peers in Childhood and Adolescence." *JAMA Psychiatry*. April 2013. <http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/1654916>

Note that this graphic shows mainly negative responses. The responses were all compiled, and common filler words like 'of' 'like' or 'to' were removed. No student provided a positive response, even though they admitted to engaging in bullying behaviours. Studies have shown that students feel empowered when they can exert power over another person through an act of bullying, so **how can we make students feel empowered in ways that do not cause harm to others?**

Knowing that students who are targets of bullying also engage in bullying, it is clear to see that students are not just affected by bullying, but come to it with psychological and emotional problems. Studies have accounted for these problems by looking at individual dispositions to emotional problems, but also social factors, including, but not limited to, family situations, wealth, racism, and socio-political climate. These social factors are further discussed in the following section on social aspects of bullying.

What is Emotional I.Q.?

In Caribbean society, mental health issues are often ignored, under-treated, or dismissed as "madness". Little attention is paid to emotions specifically. Even as adults we are often unable to identify specific emotions when we are experiencing them.

There is a need to teach mental health education, including emotional i.q. from a young age so children can identify their negative feelings and seek help before they turn into larger problems.

We tested how these emotional and psychological effects varied based on gender, sexuality and type of school. Table 2, and the subsequent statistical tables, show the effect sizes of the various factors tested. The higher the number shown, the stronger the effect of the independent variable (such as gender or sexual orientation) on the dependent variable (fear of bullying). The larger effects on fear of bullying were due to differences in gender and sexuality (Table 2). **Girls and LGBT students showed more fear of bullying than male and non-LGBT peers.**

School type influences emotional impact and parental support, more than it does fear of bullying. Students at non-denominational schools were slightly more impacted emotionally than students in denominational schools, which had notably more parental support. Type of school had a small impact on the fear of bullying, which was more consistent across schools.

Denominational schools tend to reach out to parents more, especially partially-funded schools that rely on donations and support from students' families. Parents have more opportunities to get involved in the schools and with students. This involvement also impacted on students' reporting of bullying incidents and turning to parents for assistance with school-based issues.

Parental support plays an important role in combatting negative psychological and emotional dispositions. According to StopBullying.gov, suicide risk for kids who are bullied is influenced by depression, problems at home, and trauma history, with marginalised groups, including indigenous peoples, gender and sexual minorities being particularly susceptible due to lack of support. This risk increases further when these kids are not supported by parents, peers, and schools.

The Grassroots Empowerment Project suggests the use of Parent Peer Specialists (PPS), to support the parents of students facing difficulties. The PPS draws from their own experiences as parent or caregiver of a child with emotional or behavioral disorders, as well as their training, to provide information and support to other parents with children in similar situations. Parents are not trained to deal with these situations, hence the system of peer support among parents and caregivers is an evidence-based practice shown to increase parents' confidence and capabilities in these situations.⁵

Age Group	Emotional Impact	Fear of Bullying	Parental support
Gender	0.09	0.19	0.09
Sexual Orientation	0.11	0.22	0.11
Type of School	0.14	0.006	0.45

Table 2: Effect size of Gender, sexual orientation and type of school on emotional impact, fear of bullying and parental support.

Note: These results are statistically significant and thus generalisable to the wider population.

⁵ <http://www.grassrootspower.org/documents/PositionPaper-ReductionofStigmaIntheSchoolsthroughMentalHealthEducation.pdf>

Social Factors

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

Bullying carries a social aspect, in that it encompasses the behaviours of groups and individuals towards other groups and individuals, with the aim of influencing social image. This includes how a person/group portrays themselves to their peers, as well as the opinions of them as held by their peers. Thus bullying can be used to strengthen or weaken one's standing within the social hierarchy of the school.

Hierarchies within the school setting can be formed on the basis of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, wealth, athletic or other physical prowess. As demonstrated above, these factors make a real difference in how students experience bullying.

Also referred to as "relational aggression" or "alternative aggression", these bullying behaviours seek to damage someone's relationships or social status. This can be accomplished by reducing one's access to and acceptance within social groups. All acts of bullying can contribute to this isolation by affecting the manner in which someone is perceived by peers, but also by allowing or restricting access to peers. For instance, if someone is the constant victim of bullying in the schoolyard at recess, they may find ways to stay in or away from those areas, even at the expense of making or maintaining friendships.

There are other acts that are distinctly social in focus, such as deliberately excluding someone from games or activities, and influencing others to do the same, inventing and spreading rumours, embarrassing someone.

A longitudinal study by researchers in north Georgia found that over the seven years of middle school and high school, aggression decreased until the senior year of high school. They also show that boys engaged in relational aggression more than girls, even though this behaviour was previously attributed to girls.⁶

Our data shows, male students were overall more likely to engage in bullying behaviours than female students. The statistical significance of this result, indicates that **male students across Trinidad and Tobago ARE more likely to engage in bullying behaviours than female students are.** This was especially true for verbal bullying (seen by the difference in the means of 11.64 for male students, and 8.50 for female students, Table 3 below).

Male students experienced verbal and physical acts of bullying at slightly higher rates than female students, who were slightly more likely to experience sexual and cyber bullying. (Table 3)

Women use social media more than men,⁷ but online can be a hostile space for women and gender minorities as men can get territorial, and can use the simultaneous distance and proximity of online interfaces to harass women.⁸ They can message them directly, while still being far away.

⁶ Pamela Orphinas, Caroline McNicholas, Lusine Nahapetyan. "Gender Differences in Trajectories of Relational Aggression Perpetration and Victimization from Middle to High School". Nov 2014.

⁷ Juntae Delane. "How do men and women use social media." Digital Branding Institute. <http://digitalbrandinginstitute.com/how-do-men-women-use-social-media/>

⁸ Duggan, Maeve. 2017. "Online Harassment." Pew Research Center. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/07/11/online-harassment-2017/>

"Of those who have been harassed online, 55% (or 22% of all internet users) have exclusively experienced the "less severe" kinds of harassment while 45% (or 18% of all internet users) have fallen victim to any of the "more severe" kinds of harassment... In broad trends, the data show that men are more likely to experience name-calling and embarrassment, while young women are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and stalking."⁹

Why are boys more aggressive than girls?

Psychological and sociological studies on male behaviour, including aggression have shown a mixture of genetic inclinations, evolutionary necessity to provide for the social unit when there are limited resources, and socialisation through media and upbringing into more aggressive gender roles.¹⁰ Research on male aggression in Caribbean communities have linked it to notions of masculinity that rely on demonstrations of virility, sexual prowess, physical strength and heterosexuality¹¹. Men are expected to demonstrate their control and power over others. This has led to a culture of fear, where men and boys are in constant fear of losing face, either through their inadequate embodiment of masculinity or by someone shaming them, calling into question their prowess, bravery, or sexuality.

Reflecting on the comments most commonly heard in schools, we see a prevalence of attacks based on physical appearance, sexual orientation and gender expression. Most heard on a daily basis are comments related to boys being too feminine. This was more common than comments related to girls being too masculine or not feminine enough.

It shows that boys' behaviours and gender expressions are more closely policed than girls. Boys face slightly more pressure to be the right kind of masculine, than girls do to be the right kind of feminine.

The students show adherence to strict gender binaries believing in appropriate and exclusive behaviours for each gender. Students showed a lack of understanding of the terms related to gender. When asked what was meant by "feminine" and "masculine", many students felt each was when a person engaged in behaviours opposite to their sex. For instance, "feminine" was described as "When a boy don't act right" or "when a boy acts like a girl", or "when you act differently from your gender". Fewer students thought masculinity was "when a girl behaving like a boy" or is "tomboyish".

Most of the students understood these terms as having negative implications.

⁹ Pew Research Center. Online Harassment. 2014. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/10/22/online-harassment/>

¹⁰ Dorian Furtuna. "Homo Aggressivus. Male Aggression: Why are men more violent?" Posted Sep 22, 2014 <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/homo-aggressivus/201409/male-aggression>

¹¹ Rhoda Reddock (Editor). *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*. Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press. 2004.

Other descriptions of “feminine” included shy, soft, girly; putting on makeup and talking about boys; loving fashion and the colour pink; being weak and scared of insects; playing “big woman”; feeling they are too nice all the time; whiney; when you let people hit you (as a boy); being pretty.

“I think being feminine or girly simply means that you are not capable to do some of the stuff that boys do meaning you soft and not tough enough.” Only a few students thought of “feminine” in positive terms, including having strength of character and respecting oneself.

Similarly, to be “masculine” meant tomboyish, immature, “to act like a man” or grown-up while one was still a young boy. But there were overall, more positive understandings of masculinity, associating it with strength and standing up for oneself/one’s rights, to be socially and financially responsible and independent. A number of students suggested that masculinity meant being

respectful of women and girls saying, “I think it mean when boys are doing things for girls like opening the door”. Another student responded, “I think it means to stand up for what you think is right...fighting these days is not worth it... because today one of my haters is six feet below and I am 6 feet above achieving all my goals.”

Students engage in gender-policing that often targets LGBT students who do not properly exhibit the dominant and expected gender traits. **LGBT students experienced bullying at higher rates than non-lgbt students.** While this result is not generalisable, it does reflect the clear difference in the experience of LGBT students surveyed, from their non-LGBT peers (Table 5).

LGBT students also showed higher propensity in all categories for engaging in bullying (Table 6).

Type of Bullying	Mean (Male)	Mean (Female)	t-test	Degrees of freedom (df)	Significance	Standard Error Difference	Confidence Interval
Verbal	11.64	8.50	4.387	601.987	.000	.715	1.732, 4.540
Physical	5.52	3.59	4.195	543.792	.000	.460	1.025, 2.832
Sexual	1.98	1.12	3.518	532.993	.000	.242	.376, 1.326
Cyber	2.28	1.47	2.990	538.038	.003	.270	.276, 1.335

Table 3: Gender and engagement in bullying behaviours. These results are all statistically significant, and thus generalisable to the wider population

Type of Bullying	Mean (Male)	Mean (Female)	t-test	Degrees of freedom (df)	Significance	Standard Error Difference	Confidence Interval
Verbal	8.63	8.19	.716	644	.474	.619	-.771, 1.658
Physical	5.74	4.92	1.752	602.846	.080	.465	-.098, 1.729
Sexual	1.94	1.95	-.071	644	.943	.256	-.521, .485
Cyber	2.75	2.86	-.338	644	.735	.317	-.730, .515

Table 4: Gender and experiences of bullying

Type of Bullying	Mean (Non-LGBT)	Mean (LGBT)	t-test	Degrees of freedom (df)	Significance	Standard Error Difference	Confidence Interval
Verbal	8.32	9.43	-1.314	635	.189	.844	-2.766, .548
Physical	5.21	6.51	-2.040	635	0.042	.638	-2.555, -.049
Sexual	1.88	2.44	-1.586	635	.113	.350	-1.241, .132
Cyber	2.48	2.97	-.298	635	.766	.435	-.983, .724

Table 5: Sexual Orientation and experiences of bullying

Type of Bullying	Mean (Non-LGBT)	Mean (LGBT)	t-test	Degrees of freedom (df)	Significance	Standard Error Difference	Confidence Interval
Verbal	9.94	10.47	-.544	635	.587	.976	-2.447, 1.386
Physical	4.38	5.36	-1.574	635	.116	.626	-2.216, .244
Sexual	1.48	2.00	-1.568	635	.117	.332	-1.173, .132
Cyber	1.81	2.27	-1.241	635	.215	.368	-1.179, .266

Table 6: Sexual Orientation and bullying engagement

GROUP DYNAMICS

Social influence is used to compare one's own behaviour to that of peer groups, outgroups and role models as a means of gauging whether one's behaviour is appropriate. This becomes especially important at adolescence when children want to create their own integrated self-image apart from their parents¹². In other words, adolescents tend to mimic the behaviours of the group to which they hope to belong. Studies have been conducted on the effect of this on engagement in 'risk', including sexual habits, drug and alcohol use.

B. Bradford Brown outlined four key psychosocial tasks:

1. to stand out—to develop an identity and pursue autonomy,
2. to fit in—to find comfortable affiliations and gain acceptance from peers,
3. to measure up—to develop competence and find ways to achieve, and

4. to take hold—to make commitments to particular goals, activities, and beliefs.¹³

Students may engage in risk behaviours that hinder or help their accomplishments of these goals.

A number of students from various schools from rural and urban areas in Trinidad and Tobago said that "most of" or "plenty" acts of bullying were committed in groups. The most commonly reported was smoking and drinking of alcohol, teasing and name-calling, fighting, social exclusion through rumours, embarrassment or isolation. Using or forcing others to use illegal drugs was reported fewer times. Vandalism and damage to belongings and school property, 'back-chatting' teachers or person in authority, and lying to a teacher to cover up a situation were also highlighted as acts done in groups.

¹² Kimberly A. Maxwell. "Friends: The Role of Peer Influence Across Adolescent Risk Behaviors." Journal of Youth and Adolescence. August 2002, Volume 31, Issue 4, pp 267-277. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1015493316865>

¹³ The Psychology of Adolescence. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK53420/>

Few students reported more violent acts of shooting, robbery and 'other violent act', including 'attempted homicide'. One male student (east coast Trinidad) reported a shooting in school and the 'chopping' of a teacher. Another student (south west Trinidad) reported shooting someone who had raped their friend who was only 10 years old at the time of the incident. The types of acts engaged in by groups is not surprising or uncommon. Initiation into cigarette, drug and alcohol use is commonly done through friends and peer groups. It is unclear which one or combination of these goals the students are trying to accomplish by their behaviour. Nevertheless, it is integral to remember the role and influence of the group on the behaviours and experiences of individuals.

Drug awareness

Students from numerous schools reported the use of alcohol, cigarettes and illegal drugs on school compounds. There should be better education on drug use and its effects. More alarmingly, students reported witnessing coerced drug usage among their peers. Security searches, checks and monitoring are proving ineffective in eliminating this problem from schools.

We recommend a more proactive approach than interruption and punishment after students are found with banned substances. Instead effort should be at deterring the possession, use, and sharing of these substances. School administrators are encouraged to pursue the establishment of educational programs that can provide a greater deal of clarity on all aspects of drug use, including its role in patterns of violence and intimidation.

To that end, a useful starting point would be to ensure that the school is properly equipped to hold successful drug awareness campaigns. The outcome is sustainable suppression of drug abuse among students.

THE BYSTANDER EFFECT

Bullying may happen in isolated places, but often it occurs around other students and peers, especially if these acts are intended to have social consequences for either the engager or the target. Bystanders give the bully an audience.

Those who stand-by and watch bullying occur are not without guilt or consequence. Their inaction is not passivity, but the active choice to not engage, to ignore, to pretend or even to watch on in enjoyment. Observers may choose not to do intervene because they:

- Fear the bully will make them his or her next target
- Believe it to be "none of their business"
- Feel like a "tattletale"
- Feel that intervention won't accomplish anything, especially if they have previously told teachers who haven't taken action
- Or due to a phenomenon called the bystander effect, onlookers assume someone else would be responsible and intervene or influence the situation, and thus do nothing.

No matter what the case, observing without intervening is harmful, and not just to the victim or bully. It is harmful to bystanders themselves, making them more likely to drink and smoke, skip school, and become anxious or depressed.¹⁴

Ann Steele. "The Psychological Effects of Bullying on Kids & Teens". Masters in Psychology Guide.
<http://mastersinpsychologyguide.com/articles/psychological-effects-bullying-kids-teens>

Social Outcomes: Wealth, Crime, Delinquency

Wolke, Copeland, Angold and Costello's study of youth in North Carolina described psychological as well as social outcomes for these youth as adults, in the areas of health, risk and illegal behaviours, financial gains and social relationships.¹⁵

Their participants reported being diagnosed with a serious physical illness, being in a serious accident, or of testing positive for a sexually transmitted disease. They self-reported perceived poor health, high illness contagion risk, and slow illness recovery, and engage in regular smoking. Bullies and victims showed elevated chances of psychiatric problems and regular smoking. Bullies were more likely to be involved in official felony charges, substance use, and illegal behavior. There was no evidence of elevated risk for risky/illegal behavior for victims.

Wolke et al used courts' records to gather data on official charges, and self-reporting to assess recent police contact, lying, fighting, vandalism and breaking and entering, frequent drunkenness (described as drinking to excess at least once weekly for 3 months), recent use of marijuana or other illegal substances and one-time sexual encounters with strangers (hooking up with strangers).

Our data demonstrates engagement in illegal activities among youth, including under-aged smoking and drinking, use of illegal substances, physical and sexual assault, and attempted homicide. Wolke et al assessed financial risk based on dropout rates, educational status, job problems like being dismissed or fired from a job and quitting a job without financial preparations, failing to honour debts

and poor management of finances. Their research showed that both groups were susceptible to poor financial outcomes. Similarly, both groups experienced disruptions to their social relationships with spouses, friends, parents.

¹⁵ Dieter Wolke, William E. Copeland, Adrian Angold, E. Jane Costello, "Impact of Bullying in Childhood on Adult Health, Wealth, Crime and Social Outcomes," *Psychological Sci.* 2013 Oct; 24(10): 1958-1970. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4090076/>

SECTION FOUR: SEXUAL ASSAULT

Of the 651 students surveyed, 100 students reported having been molested or being unsure of their experience (discussed in Sex and Sexuality Education section below); and 51 students were raped or were unsure of whether what happened to them would be considered rape.

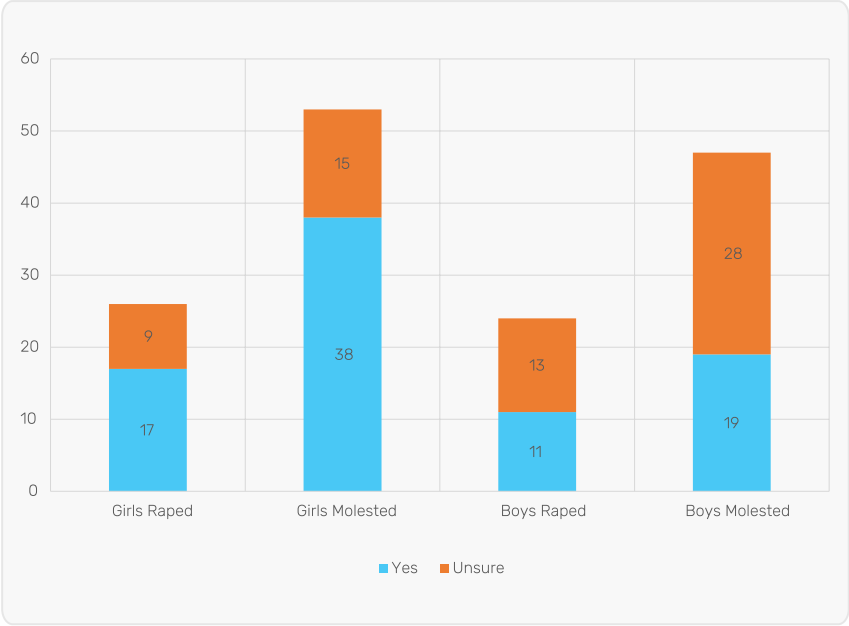


Figure 13: Incidents of sexual assault (rape and molestation)

Of the one hundred students who experienced molestation, fifty-three (53) were female and forty-seven (47) males, with fifteen (15) and twenty-eight (28) students respectively being unsure. They described these acts as forced touching of breasts and genital areas.

Seventeen girls reported being raped, with nine of them unsure. Three of them reported current and ongoing sexual assaults. Eleven girls were both raped and molested. Eleven males reported being raped, sodomised or otherwise sexually assaulted by male and female family members. Six boys experienced both.

The girls described assaults mainly by family members, friends of the family, or reputed members of the community. These girls said that their reports to parents or teachers are not taken seriously, which allows abuse to continue. Their own hesitance and that of their family to “cause a scene” also lead to low rates of police reporting (see Figure 15).

The boys showed less certainty of whether what happened to them would be considered rape or molestation, yet as Figure 13 demonstrates, the numbers of boys and girls raped and molested are almost the same. When prompted to share more, only two boys responded.

One boy stated very bluntly, “A penis was inserted in my anus”, while the second described assaults by a male and female cousin, each on separate occasions.

Citing the 2003 study by Halcon et al in nine Caribbean countries, Reid, Reddock and Nickenig (2016) purport that 47.6% of females and 31.9% of males described their first intercourse as forced or coerced and held family members or persons known to their family responsible for the act.¹⁶

Knowing the Laws and One’s Rights

The number of students unsure of whether or not an assault occurred indicates their lack of knowledge of what constitutes rape and molestation, including ambiguities about consent, and points to the need for mandatory age-appropriate sex and sexuality education for all students. What acts constitute rape or molestation should be made known to students. Legally and ethically, what autonomy do the students have over their bodies?

Students should be taught about consent, what it means to give consent and how consent determines whether an act is wanted or unwanted. Boys and girls need to know what constitutes consent so that neither are taken advantage or victimized, or commits acts of assault towards someone else. For instance, in describing the acts that occurred, some female students mentioned having been drinking alcohol with the person who assaulted them, or having kissed or flirted, and thought this is made them responsible for what happened.

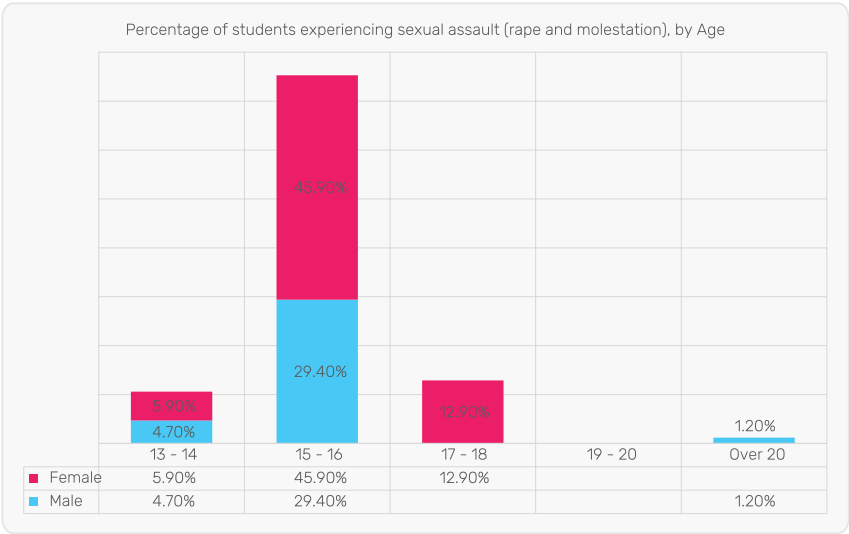


Figure 14: Age breakdown of students experiencing sexual assault

¹⁶ Sandra D. Reid, Rhoda Reddock and Tisha Nickenig, “Breaking the silence of child sexual abuse in the Caribbean: A community-based action research intervention”. Caribbean Research Empowerment Network. Mar 07, 2016. <http://www.thecren.com/index.php/blog/99-breaking-the-silence-of-child-sexual-abuse-in-the-caribbean-a-community-based-action-research-intervention>

Of the students who had experienced sexual assault, the majority [75%] were between the age range 15-16. This reflected the dominance of this age-group in the population surveyed [62%]. Not reflected in this graphic, are the students who were unsure of whether an assault had occurred.

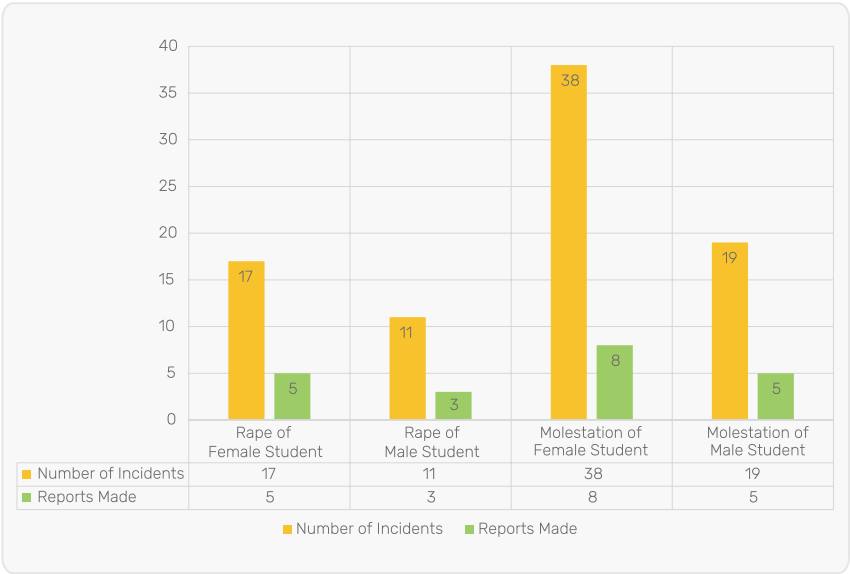


Figure 15: Rate of reporting sexual assaults (rape and molestation)

Sex Positive Education Initiatives

The under-reporting of sexual assault is linked to poor follow-up, investigating and justice procedures, as well as the social stigma attached to sexual assault. An education that is sex positive can potentially stem the continuation of these and other harmful narratives of shame attached to sex, whether consensual or not. This can work to stem rape culture wherein victims are blamed for their being assaulted, are shamed for their sexual activity (even unrelated to the assault), and the importance placed on virginity, which is more of a social construction than a biological fact.

SECTION FIVE: WHO REPORTS?

Of the 651 students surveyed, 226 students have never reported an act of bullying, and 188 students rarely report acts of bullying. This means that 63% of students never or rarely report incidents of bullying, even though, as many as 73% experience some form of bullying.

Coupled with the significant number of students who never or rarely report bullying at school, 206 students are prevented from informing parents of bullying for fear that their situation may worsen at school. In addition, 147 students avoid reporting because their parents or caregivers won't take them seriously. Thirty-four students fear being further abused at home, and 93 students do not report acts of bullying as they may be told that it is part of growing up.

At school, 43.9% of students do not report bullying acts because they do not want to be seen as a tell-tale or snitch.

Additionally, significant numbers of students do not trust teachers at school (27.1%), and have tried to report but nothing was done (25.3%).

Alongside the number of students who are reluctant to report bullying at home, 146 students do not report bullying at school because they do not want their parents to get involved. For 25.8% of students, reporting bullying acts will lead to being bullied more; either by their peers (19%) or teachers (6.8%).

It is clear that students are not (or rarely) reporting bullying because adults do not provide help and do not act on their reports, both at home and school. This may lead to students developing a "code of silence" about abusive behavior, which will have further psychological effects.

Students report mostly to friends and parents.

LGBT Students' reporting of bullying

Reporting incidents of bullying to school authorities have been a huge obstacle for LGBT students. Previous research has shown LGBT students were more unlikely to report acts of bullying fearing the situation would worsen if records were made public of the event/incident.¹⁷

Our analysis showed heterosexual peers were more likely to discuss or share their bullying experiences with someone than LGBT students.

Overwhelmingly heterosexual peers showed a higher response rate when compared to LGBT students to reporting their bullying experience either to "Friends, (46.05% to 37.62%) "Siblings" (18.20% to 9.90%) "Teachers" (18.42% to 12.87%) or "Parents" (29.17% to 25.74%)

While a significant majority of students (54.57%) indicated that they chose to share bullying experiences with "No one," overall, both groups indicated the highest preference to sharing bullying experiences were with "Friends" (83.67%) followed by "Parents," (54.91%) and "Teachers," (31.29%)

¹⁷ Kosciw J.G., Greytak E.A., Palmer N.A., Boesen M.J. The 2013 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools. GLSEN; New York, NY, USA: 2014)

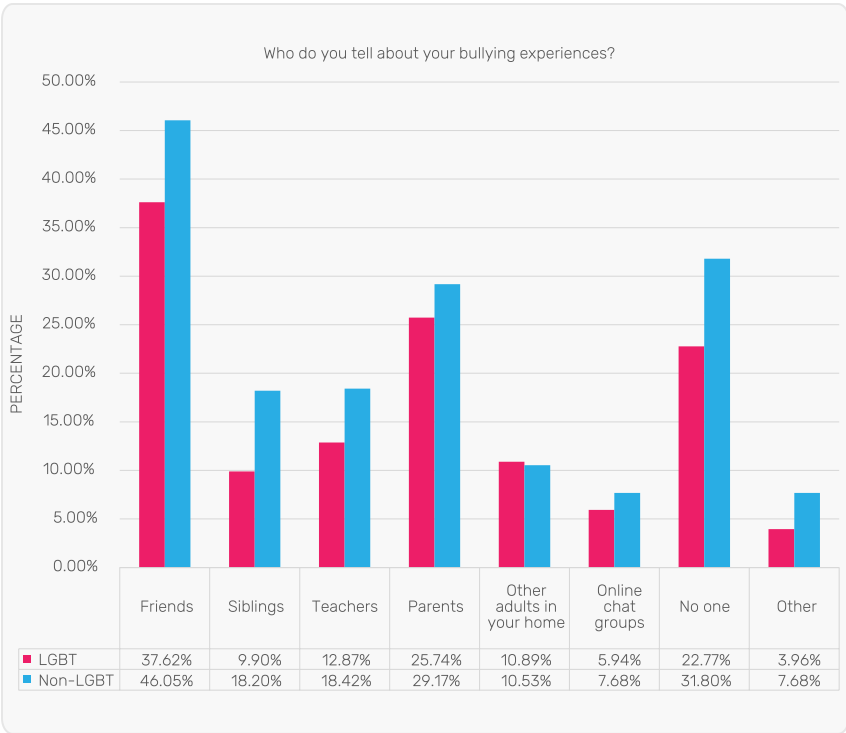


Figure 16: Comparison of reporting for LGBT (pink) and non-LGBT students (blue)

When we asked students how regularly do they report bullying experiences directly to a teacher/principal, our findings once more proved a high resistance from both groups to inform either a teacher/principal. **71.72% of heterosexual peers and 64.71% of LGBT students responded that they “Never” or “Rarely” reported their bullying experiences to a teacher or principal. Less than 10% of students did so on a regular basis.**

The most common reason given for this lack of reporting by both groups of students is the fear of being called a “tell-tale” or “snitch” prevented both LGBT students and their heterosexual peers from reporting bullying experiences to their teachers.

By an overwhelming majority, 52.99% of heterosexual students to 42.16% of LGBT students said this was their major concern preventing them for reporting to a teacher. Second most common was the issue of “trust”, with 32.05% and 28.43% of students (Het vs LGBT), believing that there was no teacher in school that they trusted.

Finally, 30% and 24% of students from both the heterosexual and LGBT groups respectively indicated that they had reported bullying in the past, but nothing was done.

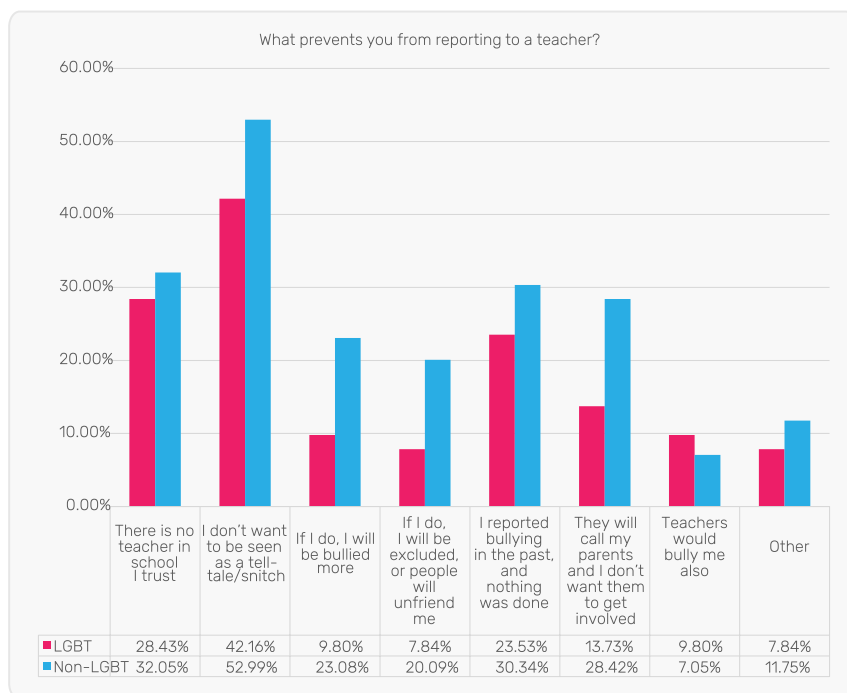


Figure 17: Reasons given for not reporting incidents of bullying to Teacher

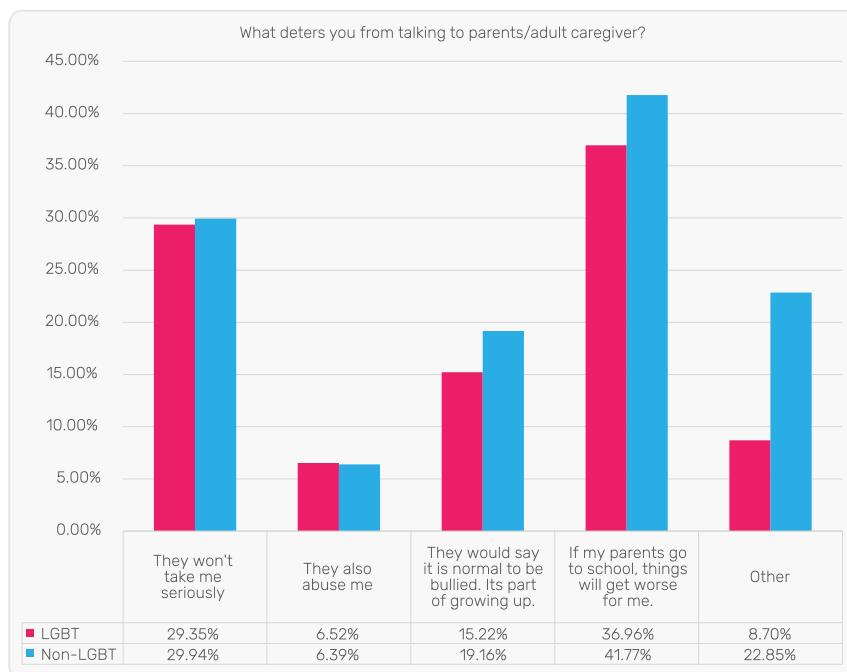


Figure 18: Reasons given for not reporting incidents of bullying to parents and caregivers

Fearing that bullying experiences would become worse after reporting to a parent/ adult caregiver was the predominant concern among both groups, with 41.77% of heterosexual peers and 36.96% of LGBT students citing this reason as a main deterrent from “talking to parents/ adult caregivers.” **This demonstrates that even if students want to tell their parents and are supported by their parents, the treatment of violence in school is so inadequate that their fear of repercussions overpowers their desires to report and receive help.**

Also, both groups (29.94% Hetero to 29.35% LGBT) shared a strikingly similar concern citing “they won’t take me seriously,” as another deterrent factor that prevents them from talking to parents/caregivers. Meanwhile 19.16% of Heterosexual peers and 15.22% of LGBT students indicated that parents/ caregivers “would say it is normal to be bullied/it’s part of growing up.” And 12.91% of both groups said parents/caregivers would also “abuse me” which deters them from talking.

Building stronger families

Students expressed a need to feel supported by their parents. With this support students would feel more comfortable reporting incidents of bullying rather than suffering in silence or feeling hopeless about how to deal with it. Parent-Teacher Associations can be very useful and important in bridging home and school environments to provide support for students. In addition to regular meetings, the PTAs can organise educational talks and smaller discussion groups where parents can be guided by trained persons in how to deal with various challenges they may face. These groups may address matters of drug use, sex and sexuality, including how to talk to your children about safe and healthy sexual practices, or about sexual orientation.

SECTION SIX: WHO INTERVENES?

As emphasized in the definition offered at the outset of this report, interactions that are defined as bullying create gross imbalances of power through aggression. This power dynamic is often framed as a reality involving just the engager and the target. If we understand power as being reinforced by the broader school community, we can also see the ways in which the actions and inaction of every person in the school contributes to this reality as well. Therefore, a key aspect of students' experiences with bullying is who responds and how. Beyond simply focusing on cataloguing the acts of bullying, this survey prompted students to reflect on how bullying is interrupted.

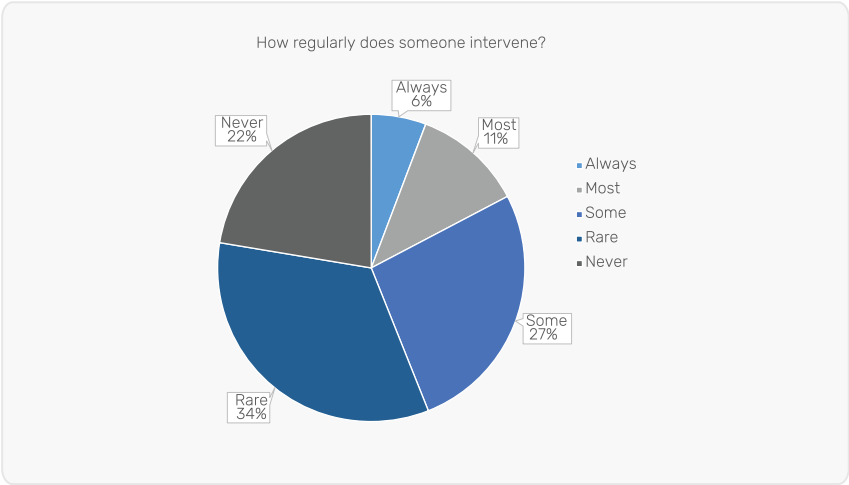


Figure 19: Rate of intervention

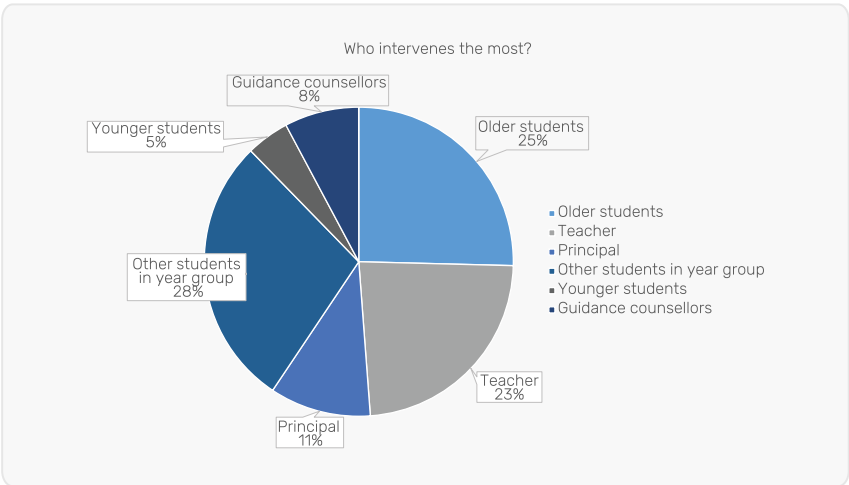


Figure 20: Rate of intervention in named categories

The above figure reflects the data from our inquiry into who exactly intervenes in incidences of bullying. Students in the same peer group as the respondent are reported to be the most frequent interventionists, followed by older students, while younger students and guidance counsellors stand out as the least frequent interventionists. Teachers were also ranked fairly highly. Guidance counsellors were consistently identified as the most disinclined to intervene in the presence of incidents of bullying.

It is worth noting that there is more to the data than simply how often the respondents witnessed a member of each identified group intervene. Not all groups represented in this chart have the same amount of contact with students who are bullied.

Another factor to bear in mind is that not all of these groups have the same chances of witnessing bullying. The likelihood of bullies engaging in patterns of intimidation may vary depending on the company that is present.

Belying the information presented in this portion of the survey are a number of additional questions about intervening. Who should be intervening? For whom is it safest to intervene and for whom could it be more dangerous? Why are some groups less likely to intervene than others (assuming comparable opportunities to intervene)? How would intervening affect the prevalence of bullying in the school's broader social dynamic? Confronting these questions is essential in the scaffolding of effective policies to make schools safer and more hospitable.

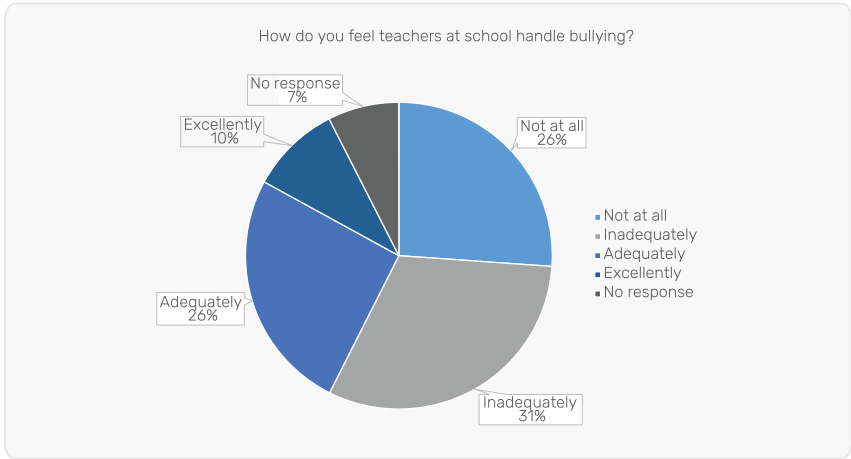


Figure 21: Perception of teacher effectiveness in handling bullying

Another key element in this process of creating effective anti-bullying policies is looking at how existing policies are perceived by the students they are designed to benefit. When asked “how do you feel teachers at school handle bullying?” students reflected on the impact made by their respective school administration’s existing anti-bullying efforts. Figure 21 illustrates how students responded when asked to opine as to whether bullying was being handled “excellently,” “not at all” or some point in between.

Troublingly enough, the majority of responses indicate that students feel that their schools are inadequately addressing bullying. Further, the second largest share of responses indicated that school officials were perceived as not being handling bullying at all. Despite the fact that almost the same share of responses indicated that anti-bullying efforts were “adequate,” the broader context demands improvement in the methods that school officials use to prevent, address and remedy recurring aggressive student conduct.

SECTION SEVEN: IMPROVING INTERVENTION AND EDUCATION STRATEGIES

Student responses indicate that there is no standard practice in schools for education and disciplining of bullying. Some of what they observed include:

- Punishment
- Calling in the parents of the student
- Sharing their experiences by writing essays
- A walk on bullying
- Assigning prefects to help with the situation
- Peer Helper Bodies or Peer counsellors, where groups of students counsel each other
- Guidance counsellor.
- Home room sessions.
- RBC Young Leaders talk about bullying
- Using posters around the school
- Bringing police officers to talk to all students
- PTA meetings
- Relying on guards and safety officers

The most common venue where students were exposed to anti-bullying measures was during school assembly. Almost half of the students had been exposed to other interventions, including lessons on bullying, the appointment of a special teacher to deal with bullying, or having a play or dramatisation on the subject.

These methods are not uniformly adopted across the schools surveyed. Some students responded that their schools only address bullying after it has happened, including responding to the suicide of a student by saying there was nothing they could do to prevent it. **Students suggested there be more cross communication on this matter, by having administrators listen more to students and their concerns. Student forums can be useful here, conducted by class or year group.**

To better equip school officials in their efforts to make necessary adjustments to their anti-bullying policies, students were also asked what more they thought could be done about bullying in their schools. In this way, we were able to illuminate why exactly so many students declined to rank their school's handling of bullying as "excellent." Many students called for a more aggressive punishments for bullies.

In its vaguest terms, the word "punishment" showed up multiple times, including corporal punishment, incarceration, pursuing criminal charges with the police, detention, suspension or expulsion of those engaged.

It is worth pausing here to offer that despite the need to make students feel more confident in their school's capacity to protect pupils from bullying, these suggested measures could wind up being detrimental to the student body. While police responses could be applicable in some extreme cases, teachers must demonstrate an ability to competently and consistently address bullying without conflating matters of student discipline with matters of law enforcement. In our effort to deter bullying we don't want to exacerbate the avenue between the schoolhouse and the jailhouse through misguided policy.

Further, while removing particularly aggressive actors from the student body has clear immediate benefits on each school's learning ecosystem, any solution that poses the threat of interrupting access to education is in every case highly problematic.

Herein lies the need to find policies that disrupt students' capacity to bully without disrupting their capacity to learn.

With regard to the responses advocating for corporal punishment we bear witness to the cyclical aspect of school violence. Some students offered specific and graphic suggestions for how to sanction bullies with physical violence. A number of questions are worth reflecting on for school officials. How are students being conditioned with regard to authority and power over other people's bodies? What do we want students to learn about violence overall? What leads them to believe that discipline should be inherently retributive? Any programming that seeks to re-educate students about how they relate to one another and adjust their expectations of their schools' anti-bullying program should take these questions among others into consideration.

Among the more constructive responses were suggestions that encouraged counselling for aggressors. One student suggested having a counsellor on staff specifically designated for working with bullies. Some students voiced concerns that their teachers weren't adequately trained or even invested in handling disruptive behaviour in their classrooms. To put it in constructive terms, the schools can invest in properly equipping teachers to suppress bullying.

There should also be a minimum annual standard of anti-bullying education that is comprehensive, repeated, reviewed and updated. rather than being reactive, education as a whole should seek to teach compassion, empathy, emotional literacy, communication skills, and conflict resolution. Of course a large factor behind how each school takes these suggestions into account is the question of resources. Implementing new measures, designating classrooms and resources for students who engage in bullying, hiring new counsellors or training counsellors already on staff can be costly and onerous for school administrators as they contend with a number of other pressing issues.

Restorative Justice

What does “justice” mean? Often, it is thought to be synonymous with retribution or revenge: An eye for an eye. But as the saying continues, that only leaves everyone blind.

Restorative justice instead looks to find a place or balance and agreement between those involved, but also to the community. The offender must take responsibility for their actions, understand how they have caused harm. In discussion between the parties involved, the central question is: What can an offender do that will teach them a lesson while enriching the community and that would train them into different/better behaviours in the future?

Thus, the emphasis is not on punishment but on accountability, healing and personal enrichment to reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

Strategies may include:

Bully-Victim Mediation

This is simply a meeting between the victim and the bully, in the presence of a trained mediator.

Peacemaking circles

The circle formation promotes perceptions of equity among the parties involved. This circle may include (1) admissions of guilt by the offender/engager, (2) testimonies of those offended/hurt, (3) explanations of expectations by both parties, on what they want to get out of the experience, (4) exercises for healing of all parties involved. this can be a small gathering with the engager, the target and a mediator, or it can be a larger **restorative circle**, that includes members of the school community, family members and others who have a stake in the students’ success.

Community Justice board or committee

A board is convened with community members, such as students from the same and other peer groups, a teacher or guidance counsellor. The board functions like judge and jury would in a court of law. They review the details of the incident and determine the course of action to be taken. The board prepares a record of the incident and sees to it that the participants complete the required actions they are ‘sentenced’ to perform within a given time-frame. The restorative circle and the justice board emphasise collectivity and community. Restorative practices also work to build the skills and capacity of students and adults to prevent future bullying. The other strategies discussed in this section are all aimed at addressing the needs and obligations of those in the school community, at fostering accountability and understanding the impact of actions, and doing the work needed to repair the harm caused. In this approach, teachers, students and the community can reach agreements to meet all stakeholders’ needs.

Creating Safer Classrooms

What does it mean to have a 'safe' classroom? As places of learning, the classroom should be tailored to optimise learning. Being free from fear, threat or intimidation is essential for students to be able to focus during lessons and gain knowledge as intended. There are many strategies for creating safer classrooms. Rebecca Alber wrote a list of 20 tips on the edutopia blog including community building, sharing students' creative work; creating a space that is student centred and reflective of their experiences; admitting your limitations as a teacher, such as admitting know to have all the answers; remaining calm; modeling kindness, vulnerability and empathy; giving students the opportunity to problem solve and resolve conflicts, among others.¹⁸

While these strategies are applicable across the board, particular effort must be taken to address the needs of students who are minorities (in whatever way) by having open discussion about socio-cultural differences, sex, gender, sexuality, race, etc. Teachers must strive to create a classroom of mutual respect. This can be done through special lesson plans or by building lessons into other topics. But the most important and influential way of imparting this knowledge is through modelling the types of behaviours that promote respect and courtesy.

An initiative called Safe Space has been utilised in schools around the world. SLF currently runs one of their own in San Fernando, but it is a strategy that can be used in every school. The Safe Space holds regular meetings and functions as a space for students to talk freely about the issues affecting them, often under the supervision of someone trained in counselling and mental health.

While used for LGBT students to find a space of acceptance in an otherwise judgmental environment, Safe Space can be more broadly conceived as a student forum or as a group therapy session. Guests can be brought in to discuss specific problems students may be confronting.

More information on forming a safe space at your school can be found on the SLF blog at: <http://www.silverliningtt.com/how-to-build-a-safe-space-at-your-school/>

¹⁸ Rebecca Alber. "20 Tips for Creating a Safe Learning Environment". Edutopia blog. Sept 9, 2011

Educating For Change

How can educators teach about bullying?

The most obvious option would be to have lesson plans addressing the information reviewed in this report – who is a bully; types of bullying; causes and consequences etc. This is very important, but we have found that rather than directly addressing “Bullying”, it may be more useful to break this down to the specific problems contributing to bullying behaviours. These include lack of respect for person and belongings, disregard for authority, ineffective/inadequate communication skills, lack of empathy, inability to control emotions, inability to work in a team.

These skills can be built into the syllabus through classroom exercises that reflect these themes in form and content.

For example, classroom activities can incorporate team-building exercises prior to assigning teamwork exercises, in order to first educate about what it entails to be part of a team. These include exercises that build trust, that allow each participant space to speak and be heard, that encourage mindful listening and respectful engagement.

Rather than holding out these activities as extra-curricular or leaving these topical discussions for special groups, they can be built into the syllabus through readings, essays, experiments, arts and music, and interactive projects. These measures should be taken into consideration during curriculum design, instead of leaving the creativity up to individual teachers, especially as teachers are not trained in developing these particular skills in students.

These skills can be timed into age-appropriate lessons that build on each other in each subsequent standard or form to ensure that these skills do not fall away as students get older. Similarly, waiting until students are in secondary school before teaching these skills makes it all the more difficult to break their already badly formed interpersonal skills.

There should be a minimal required level of training for teachers in mediation, conflict resolution and in managing diverse classrooms, so they can better deal with problems arising there.

What do we do next?

The Silver Lining Foundation is dedicated to ending violence in schools and disrupting the cycles of violence, disrespect and intolerance that plague our society.

Specifically targetting LGBT youth, our on-going Safe Space project, currently at University of Trinidad and Tobago Tarouba campus provides a space for these students to meet and discuss the challenges they face.

Our Stronger Families program provides a forum for parents to meet and unite their strenghts, sharing their experiences and strategies for raising healthier and better adjusted children towards the goal of a more inclusive and kind future.

We also aim to assist teachers and bring about a change in the culture of education in Trinidad and Tobago. We will soon be offering a training workshop in diversity management and conflict resolution targeting teachers. The workshop aims to teach skills in two areas: (1) prevention, through the creation of more respectful and safe classrooms; and (2) intervention, moderating and resolving classroom conflict. While practicing these skills, participants will also be instructed in recognising signs of bullying, talking to parties involved in incidents of bullying, and terminology related to human diversity, particularly gender and sexuality, gender-based violence, race and ethnicity.

Through this workshop, teachers will learn about strategies for creating a more inclusive and conflict-free classroom through a student-centred approach to education and restorative justice.

Future cycles of this survey will be conducted to assess changes in bullying behaviours.

We cannot raise children with social, emotional and psychological issues and expect them to be wholesome, productive and just adults. We must be courageous enough to break these harmful patterns of individual and institutional practices if we are to work towards a healthier society.

The ASPnet promotes the values and principles enshrined in UNESCO's Constitution and the United Nations' Charter, including fundamental rights and human dignity, gender equality, social progress, freedom, justice and democracy, respect for diversity and international solidarity, as well as supporting the global implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular Goal 4 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

Until bullying and school violence in all its forms, are eliminated in and around schools across the world, many of the ambitious targets set by the global community through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to provide safe and supportive learning environments, to end violence against children in all settings and to achieve gender equality and eliminate violence against women and girls, will not be realized.

Therefore, UNESCO and the ASPnet will continue the monitoring of school violence at all levels, to ensure that all children and adolescents are able to fulfill their right to a quality education. The ASPnet in Trinidad and Tobago will aim to be a key provider to policy-

makers, stakeholders, and education communities of data and key publications, and will continue to contribute towards the monitoring of SDG 4 and its targets.

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