

# PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS ON TEACHER BULLYING

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## Research Problem

Just over 42% of students surveyed believe that their worst experience of bullying was perpetrated by a teacher, most commonly through humiliation and embarrassment (Pottinger & Stair, 2009). We wanted to examine what is perceived by teachers when it comes to other teachers who bully.

## Research Question

What are the perceptions of middle school teachers on teachers who bully?

## Hypothesis

We hypothesized that we would find a higher level of observed bullying by teachers, but a level of unawareness of teacher participation in bullying.

## Purpose

1. To examine the perception of middle school teachers on teacher bullying
2. To develop a reliable survey instrument to measure specific perceptions of teachers on teacher bullying
3. Results from this pilot study would increase the awareness and knowledge among teachers and administrators about teacher bullying behaviors that are often overlooked, but should be accounted for

## Theoretical Framework

The **Symbolic Interactionism Theory** argues that people develop their opinions based on the their own personal experiences, personal interactions, and self-perception (Ingoldsby, 2003).

As applied to this study, Symbolic Interactionism Theory would assume that teachers would expect interactions between themselves and students to be socially normal within their role as a teacher. In any given situation no trace of bully-like behaviors would be shown by teachers (Ingoldsby, 2003).

## Literature Review

- Kennedy, Smith & Miller (2012) found that there was a significantly lower rate of teachers interviewed in peer on peer bullying.
- Glasner (2010) found that teachers most often identified bullying by being informed by students or by seeing visible signs of distress in students.
- Pottinger & Stair (2009) found that students reported little to no differences in bullying from a peer or teacher.
- Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco & Brethour (2006) found that just under half of students reported being bullied by a teacher.
- Twemlow & Fonagy (2005) found that the level of stress a teacher undergoes was directly related to disciplinary issues.

## Demographic Variables

Gender	Age	Years Teaching
Female = 5	20-30 years = 1	6-10 years = 1
Male = 0	31-40 years = 2	11-15 years = 1
Self Identified = 0	41-50 years = 1	16-20 years = 3
	51-60 years = 1	

## Method

- **Participants:** 5 female Midwestern middle school teachers
- **Research Design:** Snowball and Purposive
- **Data Collection Instrument:** IRB approved survey
- **Procedure:** A quantitative survey on a 6 point Likert scale was distributed through faculty mail to the teachers. Informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw were explained.
- **Data analysis:** We analyzed the survey data using descriptive statistics: frequencies, mean comparisons, correlations, as well as Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis.

## Frequency Distribution

	SD	D	SLD	SLA	A	SA	Total
TOP	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	100.0%
IND	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%	100.0%
DIS	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
PMO	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
PYR	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	100.0%
STE	40.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
HUM	20.0%	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
INT	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
POL	20.0%	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%	100.0%
ITC	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%

**TOP** = I believe that there are teachers who bully students at this school;

**IND** = I have noticed that other teachers have disparaging labels for some students. These may include but are not limited to labels such as dumb, stupid, incompetent, trouble, behind or a handful;

**DIS** = I have observed teachers being disrespectful towards students. For example, making sarcastic remarks, being discouraged, or being rude toward students;

**PMO** = I am aware of at least one situation in the past month where a teacher bullied a student;

**PYR** = I am aware of at least one situation in the past year where a teacher bullied a student;

**STE** = I am aware of other teachers who show favoritism in their interactions with students such as accepting late work for some while rejecting others;

**HUM** = I am aware of other teachers who use humiliation to stop classroom disruption by using personal put downs, sarcasm, or isolation of students;

**INT** = I feel that teachers should have a significant role in addressing teachers who bully students;

**POL** = Our school has policies and procedures in place to address teachers who bully students;

**ITC** = If I were to observe another teacher bullying a student I would know how to intervene in the best interest of that student.

## Results

100% of the survey participants either slightly agreed or agreed that there was a prevalence of bullying in their respective school. Our hypothesis was strongly supported; teachers believed there was a prevalence of bullying but were unaware of specific situations where teacher bullying occurred. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis: 0.925

## Implications

### For Educators:

- Provide training to teachers to recognize teacher bullying
- Provide training on how to intervene when a teacher is bullying a student
- Alterations to current policies should be developed and made clear regarding administration and teacher intolerance towards teacher bullying

### Future Research:

- Utilize larger, random, and more diverse sample on a national level
- Allow more time for better return rates
- Deliver a mixed-method survey and qualitative interview protocol
- Research from students' perspective

## Conclusion

As stated in current literature, just over 42% of students surveyed believe that their worst experience of bullying was perpetrated by a teacher, most commonly through humiliation and embarrassment (Pottinger & Stair, 2009). Our research found that 100% of teachers slightly agreed or agreed that teachers are bullying students, suggesting that policies need to be established and enforced to identify and prevent teacher bullying in schools.

