Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Bullying in schools is a problem in many countries around the world. It occurs in all schools at all grade levels, although most frequently at the elementary level (Sampson, 2002). Bullying affects a significant number of children and adolescents in all schools. In many countries, it is an issue of growing concern to parents, teachers, and social workers. Research on the prevalence of school bullying has occurred in diverse settings in many countries. Based on interviews in the United States, DeVoe and Kaffenberger (2005) indicated that the prevalence of physical bullying was found to be 8% among students aged 12-18 years during the preceding six months. A study in Portugal by Pereira et al. (2004) reported that approximately 20% of students had been bullied and around 16% of them admitted having bullied others at least three times during the term. A study in Hong Kong reported that 17.2% of secondary school students admitted bullying other at some time during the previous six months and, in the same study, 18.3% reported that they had been the victims of physical bullying (Wong, 2004). In addition, a study in Italy of 238 students between 11 and 14 years found that 26.3% had physically bullied others at least once during the previous three months (Baldry and Farrington, 1999). Furthermore, a study in Turkey indicated that more than one-third (35.5%) of 692 students between 14 -17 years of age had physically bullied at least once during the academic year (Kepenekci and Cinkir, 2006).

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However, in Thailand 3,047 students from grades four to nine (P4-M3) in five regions between 1 February to 31 March 2006, a study in southern Thailand found that only 15.1% had physically bullied others at some time during the preceding two months based on interviews (Tapanya, 2006).

Many studies have reported that students start to bully at a young age, and students who are bullies tend to be bullies as adults. In addition, Totten and Quigley (2005) reported that in the vast majority of cases, the seeds of bullying behaviour and victimization are planted at home. The family is the most important socializing institution. However, they found that individual characteristics can interact with family factors to increase the likelihood that a child will be a bully or be a victim of bullying. Studies have found that family violence, ineffective parenting, parent-child conflict and sibling conflict are correlated with the development of aggression in boys and girls.

The three southernmost provinces of Thailand consist of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. They are multiculturalism different from the other parts of Thailand. The author selected Pattani province to be representative of these three provinces. Bullying behaviour is different according to family structure, social and cultural environments. Therefore, this study was initiated in order to study how domestic violence has an effect on bullying behaviour. The result from this study may be useful for preventing bullying at school. In addition, information from bullying can be an indicator of family violence, not only personal problems but also social problems and needs to be solved urgently. As a matter of scientific interest we would like to know the prevalence of physical bullying and the risk factors associated with physical bullying in Pattani province, southern Thailand.

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1.2 Objectives

1. To investigate the prevalence of physical bullying among lower secondary school students (M1-M3) in Pattani province, southern Thailand.

2. To investigate the risk factors affecting physical bullying among lower secondary school students (M1-M3) in Pattani province, southern Thailand.

1.3 Research hypothesis

1. The prevalence of physical bullying is different between boys and girls.

2. Students who experience parental violence at home are more likely to be bullies at school.

1.4 Literature review

Gender roles in bullying

A difference between the genders with respect to bullying is a very commonly researched topic (Mongold, 2006). Flouri and Buchanan (2003) reported that boys were more likely than girls to physically bully others. Other studies (Baldry and Farrington, 1999; Juvonen et al., 2003; Craig et al., 1998; Litz, 2005; Kepenekci and Cinkir, 2006) reported that boys tend to physically bully others to a greater rate than girls. Besag (2006) and Baldry and Farrington (1999) reported higher psychological emotional bullying among girls.

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Age group

In the social sciences, age is a main factor in determining various types of social problems. It is commonly believed that among young people who commit crimes, many of them will grow out of it (Mongold, 2006). Some studies have found that physically bullying among students decreases with age (DeVoe and Kaffenberger, 2005; Dechant and Kaye, 1998). But contradictory results from previous studies (Woods and White, 2005; Pereira et al., 2004), have reported that bullying increases with age.

Marital status of parents

Dechant and Kaye (1998) indicated that family structure and relationships relate to whether or not a student had a tendency to become a bully or a victim. They found that 23% of bullies are from the families where parents were either divorced or separated.

Parental violence

Bully-victims are children who have been victimized themselves, by peers or adults, and whose pain and frustration have led them to escape their situation by bullying others (Sarazen, 2002). Researchers in Australia reported that students who were bullies and victims indicated similar family backgrounds in terms of family disharmony (Ahmed and Braithwaite, 1996, 2004). Findings from Craig et al. (1998) suggest that bullying starts at home. Students who are exposed to violence between their parents are more likely to become bullies in later childhood. Flouri and Buchanan (2003) also reported that students from disagreeable family situations tended to score higher on a bullying behaviour scale. Research has shown that environmental factors can lead to

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the development of bullying behaviours. Totten and Quigley (2005) indicated that the families of aggressive children were characterized by elevated levels of ineffective parenting, family violence, and confliction relations. Stevens et al. (2002) reported differences in family background of bullies, victims, and bully/victims. The students who bully reported more conflict, punishment and a less close relationship with their parents. In Hong Kong, Wong (2004) reported that the process by which violence is taught is circular. It begins when a student learns violence acts from their parents. In addition, lack of warmth in the family, use of physical violence within the family, lack of clear guidelines for behaviour and monitoring of children's activities was associated with bullying.

1.5 Definition

The term "bullying" has traditionally referred to physical bullying. Physical bullies are action-oriented. In this definition, physical bullying occurs when a student experiences repeated attacks, over time, by one or more other students who systematically abuse their power. There are many ways to bully someone. A physical bully intends to hurt the other person. Bullying is about using ones power over another person. Attacks include slapping, hitting, kicking, punching, or attacking with weapons (Green, 2005).

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