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An investigation of bullying between public and private schools: incidence, nature and interventions.

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ABSTRACT

The growing epidemic of bullying is one that warrants urgent deference. When considering the repercussions of this issue in the South African context specifically, it is essential that a high level of criticality is taken into account. This is mainly due to South Africa's rich historical background and the country's urgency to protect and respect the basic human rights of all individuals in the country (Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention; and the Department of Basic Education, 2012). According to our Bill of Rights, "everyone has the right to be free from all forms of violence, on the part of either the government or other sources; not to be tortured in any way; and not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way" (CJCP & DBE, 2012). Any act or behaviour which goes against these essential human rights thus results in grave ramifications such as the infringement of human rights. The purpose of this study was thus to investigate the prevalence, nature, and intervention surrounding the issue of bullying in South African high schools. More specifically, this study aimed to explore the possible differences between the prevalence, nature, and intervention in government/public and private high schools. In addition, the possible differences between gender and the issue of bullying were further investigated. The study employed the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire in order to find possible associations between the two independent variables (type of school and gender); and the issue of bullying. The total sample comprised of 358 grade eight to eleven learners from one private school and one government school in Johannesburg. The statistical analyses were done by means of frequencies and cross-tabulations using the chi-square statistical test with school type and gender as independent variables. The overall results on the prevalence of bullying indicate that 27.7% of high school learners have experienced bullying in school. Neither the type of school nor the gender of the learner was found to have a significant impact on the prevalence of bullying. In addition, the current study found that verbal bullying is most commonly experienced by the learners, followed by social bullying. Common areas for bullying behaviour are the playground and the classroom (with and without the teacher present). Boys have been found to partake, as well, as experience bullying more than girls. Teacher and learner intervention are commonly reported, whereas adult intervention is not seen as a means of support for learners.