Research Articles and Essays

Bullying Victimization of Learners with Disabilities: Basis for the Development of an Anti-Bullying Survival Kit

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Abstract

This explanatory mixed methods study aimed to determine the challenges experienced and the coping strategies employed by high school learners with disabilities who have experienced bullying victimization as basis for the development of an Anti-Bullying Survival Kit. As an output of this study, this survival kit contains insights, strategies, activities, and resources that may help address bullying.

Keywords: bullying, victimization, learners with disabilities, Anti-Bullying Survival Kit

Anybody can be a target of bullying, but some people such as those with disabilities have a tendency to be bullied or victimized more often when compared to their peers with no disabilities (Young et al., 2011). Bullying is a type of aggression which has the following characteristics: intentionality, repetitiveness of aggressions, and imbalance of power between aggressor and victim (Olweus, 2013).

It is, therefore, important to be deliberate about addressing bullying at school and in

creating an effective anti-bullying intervention for learners with disabilities. Perhaps, an Anti-Bullying Survival Kit may help learners with disabilities prepare and empower themselves, and become free from bullying.

This study was primarily anchored on the Stress Coping Transactional Model of Lazarus and his associates (Lazaruz & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Launier, 1978). This framework highlights the subject's relation with the environment or situation where they are interacting, and the coping approaches resulting from the evaluation of the situation. This evaluation or appraisal, in turn, is being shaped by both situational and personal variables (Lazarus & Launier, 1978).

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the challenges experienced and the coping strategies employed by high school learners with disabilities who have experienced bullying victimization as basis for the development of an Anti-Bullying Survival Kit. This study further aimed to answer these questions: (1.) What are the challenges faced by high school learners with disabilities who experienced bullying victimization? (2.) What are the coping strategies employed by the high school learners with disabilities? and (3.) What Anti-Bullying Survival Kit may be developed for learners with disabilities?

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were developed for this study: (1) all participants (i.e., students with disabilities) answered the interview questions honestly and to their best ability; and (2) all participants have a documented disability.

Epistemological, Methodological, and Theoretical Research Perspective

The bullying situations that the learners with disabilities have encountered influenced my decision in selecting narrative inquiry as a research methodology, influenced by interpretivism as theoretical perspective, and informed by constructionism as epistemological

stance. Although it was impossible to completely let go of my biases and beliefs, I have reflected on these biases, acknowledged them, and made attempts to bracket them.

Delimitation of the Study

The sample size in a qualitative study is relatively small. For this study, the researcher used narrative inquiry as a research methodology and approach, and selected five learners with disabilities as participants for interview. The qualitative interpretations of the experiences of the participants in this study can only be true to them and cannot be generalized to the general population.

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Research Design and Methodology

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This study utilized a case selection type of explanatory sequential mixed method design, wherein quantitative data were gathered and analyzed first (quantitative phase) in order to determine the participants who will take part in the qualitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Prior to conduct of the study, the approval of the school principal, advisers, parents, participants, and Research Ethics Review Committee were sought A survey using a validated Bullying Victimization Scale was conducted among 57 high school learners with disabilities who have given their assent to participate in the study. They were enrolled in either of the two public high schools in Iloilo City, Philippines for the school year 2018 to 2019. These public high schools have special education and inclusion programs designed for learners with disabilities. Participants who had the highest score in the survey and have met other inclusion criteria became the participants for the second, qualitative phase. In this study, bullying victimization referred to any intentional single or repeated behavior pattern (e.g. occurring at least twice a week) of aggressive behavior that creates reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm or damage to one's property.

In the second phase, narratives were explored in-depth through interviews. As a

methodology used in this study, narrative inquiry sees "participants as authors of their stories" (Wang, 2017, p. 4) thereby encouraging them to generate "meaning of their own truths, value their own creation of knowledge through the process, and convey their interpretations freely" (p. 4).

Purposive specifically intensity sampling was utilized to identify the participants for the second phase of data collection. Qualitative samples lean towards purposive (Kuzel, 1992). Intensity sampling in qualitative research involves selecting cases that manifest rich information and have experienced the phenomenon in a high extent (i.e. has high extent of bullying victimization experience) (Kuzel,1992 & Patton, 1990 in Miles & Huberman, 1994). With fewer samples, qualitative studies can explore more deeply the experiences of the participants (Russell & Gregory, 2003).

Participants who have achieved the following inclusion criteria took part in the interview: A high school learner: (a) with disability/ies; (b) who had repeated and frequent experiences (at least twice a week) of bullying within the last three years; (c) whose parent/guardian signed the written consent allowing their child to take part in this study; (d) who gave assent for participation in the study; and (e) who had a high score in the Bullying Victimization Scale on the extent of bullying experienced.

These participants were four males and one female, with ages between 14 and 20 years old, and has one of the following diagnoses: deafness, blindness, or multiple disabilities. All of the participants considered themselves as victims of bullying. They were interviewed in a semi-structured manner using an interview guide with a combination of close and open-ended questions. The participants were interviewed inside the counselling room with the presence of a guidance counselor and a sign language interpreter (for deaf participants) who have signed a confidentiality agreement form. Each interview lasted for a maximum of one hour. An audio recorder and a cellphone were used to audio and video

record the interviews. The learners' anonymity was assured, and the privacy and confidentiality of data were also strictly observed. Their real names were replaced with pseudonyms in this study. The researcher also gathered stories about the research participants from their family members, schoolmates, or teachers.
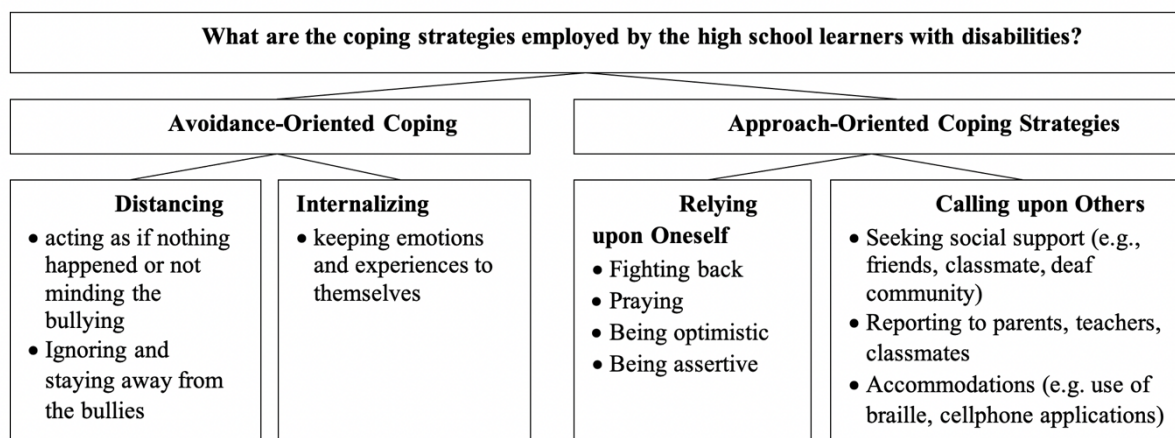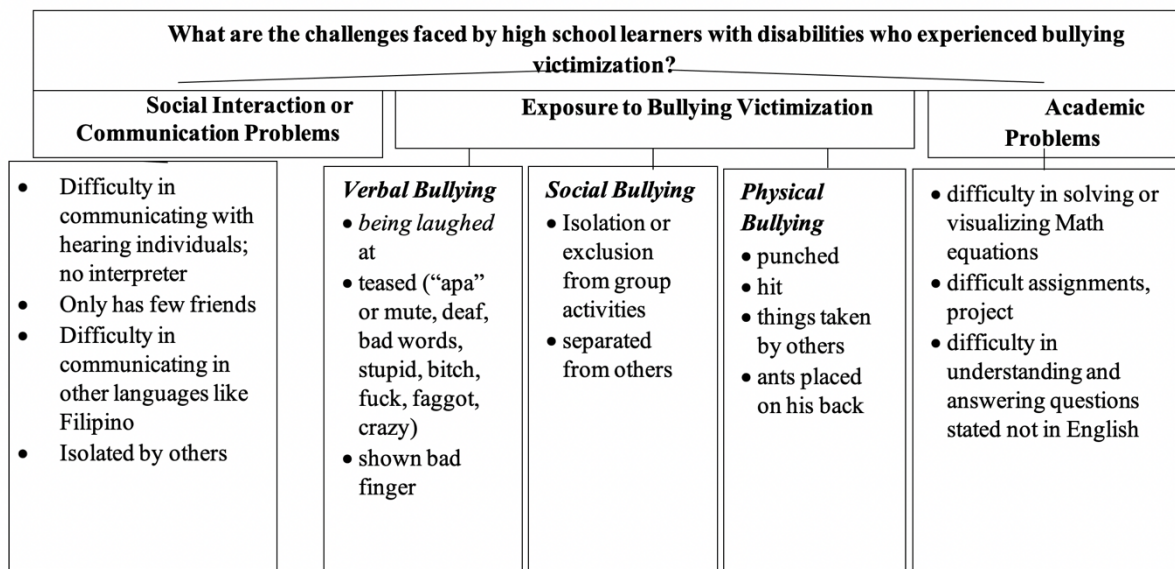
In this study, the analysis of data in qualitative phase involved a description of themes that emerged from stories of participants (analysis of narratives). Analysis of narratives involved data coding, dividing the transcript into small components (e.g., phrases, sentences, paragraphs), and labeling each unit. Evidence was clustered into codes, and themes were developed out of the codes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). "Themes can then be grouped into even larger dimensions, related or compared" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 132). These themes after repeatedly being refined were presented back to the research participants in order to validate and clarify these themes (member checking).

Results and Discussion

In analysis of narratives, the database is examined in order to "address the research questions" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 131).

Figure 1

Themes, categories and codes. Results of analysis of narratives of transcripts from interviews with learners with disabilities.

What are the challenges faced by high school learners with disabilities who experienced bullying victimization?

Social Interaction or Communication Problems	Exposure to Bullying Victimization			Academic Problems
• Difficulty in communicating with hearing individuals; no interpreter • Only has few friends • Difficulty in communicating in other languages like Filipino • Isolated by others	*Verbal Bullying* • *being laughed at* • teased ("apa" or mute, deaf, bad words, stupid, bitch, fuck, faggot, crazy) • shown bad finger	*Social Bullying* • Isolation or exclusion from group activities • separated from others	*Physical Bullying* • punched • hit • things taken by others • ants placed on his back	• difficulty in solving or visualizing Math equations • difficult assignments, project • difficulty in understanding and answering questions stated not in English

What are the coping strategies employed by the high school learners with disabilities?

Avoidance-Oriented Coping		Approach-Oriented Coping Strategies	
Distancing • acting as if nothing happened or not minding the bullying • Ignoring and staying away from the bullies	**Internalizing** • keeping emotions and experiences to themselves	**Relying upon Oneself** • Fighting back • Praying • Being optimistic • Being assertive	**Calling upon Others** • Seeking social support (e.g., friends, classmate, deaf community) • Reporting to parents, teachers, classmates • Accommodations (e.g. use of braille, cellphone applications)

Challenges Faced by High School Learners with Disabilities

Results of analysis of narratives showed the following themes on the challenges the participants faced: Social Interaction or Communication Problems, Exposure to Bullying Victimization, and Academic Problems.

Social Interaction or Communication Problems

Social interaction was one of the areas where a participant had difficulty in. "I only have one classmate who helps me. I felt sad because others don't help" (Macy, blind, 16

years old). According to Macy, she felt alone in the classroom.

All participants who are deaf shared their difficulty in communicating with hearing individuals such as their classmates and teachers. For Ben (deaf, 17 years old), it was difficult for him to communicate with hearing classmates because there was no one to interpret for him. He couldn't understand others so he was called an 'idiot'. *"Hard to understand, hard to communicate, sign language only"* (as interpreted) (Ben, deaf, 17 years old).

Another participant (Cha, deaf, 20 years old) also found it difficult to communicate with other people especially with those who are hearing, and because of this, he only has few friends. He felt hurt, angry and he cries because he is deaf. Also, when interacting with the regular students and teachers, Cha (deaf, 20 years old) needs to write and show through actions in order for others to understand him.

There is a tendency for learners with disabilities to be more poorly accepted by their age-group (Nakken & Pijl, 2002). Moreover, the sign language skill deficiency of teachers is one of the many challenges faced by learners with disabilities especially those with hearing impairment (Ndhlovu, 2007). Participants in the study conducted by Ndhlovu (2007) suggested that every teacher must be competent in using sign language and auxiliary tools like braille.

It was also interesting to note that guidance counselors in one of the participating schools (inclusive school) in this study were not trained in sign language. This may have contributed for the reluctance of the high school learners with hearing impairment to visit the guidance office.

Exposure to Bullying Victimization

The participants experienced different types of bullying for the past three years. Various studies have mentioned that learners with disabilities face bullying more often than their age-peers (Blake et al., 2012).

Being different, the participants with disabilities experienced various victimizations from other people. Results of various researches suggest that the victimization types or categories are highly associated with each other, and that a person may experience victimization in numerous ways (Wang et al., 2010).

Verbal Bullying. Three of the participants have experienced some sort of verbal bullying. One participant, Ben (deaf, 17 years old), shared that others laughed at him and teased him "apa" or mute and other negative words such as stupid. Another participant, Cha (deaf, 20 years old), was repeatedly teased as deaf, and was called "bitch, fuck, and faggot" (as interpreted). While the other participant, Pao (with multiple disability, 14 years old), shared that he was teased as crazy, and he was also shown a "bad finger" (middle finger).

Learners with disabilities especially communication difficulties (e.g. hearing impairment, speech and language impairment) tend to have a higher likelihood of being victimized (Blood & Blood, 2004). On the other hand, learners with disability that have a co-existing conditions (i.e. multiple disabilities) reported more victimization by their peers. Findings of Humphrey et al. (2007) revealed that kids with coexisting ADHD and psychological disorder (particularly those with externalizing manifestations) tend to be victimized more by their age-peers.

Physical Bullying. Aside from verbal bullying, some participants also experienced physical bullying. One participant (Ben, deaf, 17 years old) experienced being punched by his classmate on his head, back and shoulders. Another participant (Leorio, blind, 19 years old) also shared that he was punched on his shoulders. Aside from being punched, Pao (with multiple disabilities, 14 years old) shared that a big ant was also placed on his back. He also experienced losing his things because of other people.

> I lost my bag… I also lost my water container… they said that my bag and
> water container were in the canteen… I asked the seller there but my things were not

there. They just fooled me. (Pao, with multiple disabilities, 14 years old)

Findings of Klomek et al. (2009) showed that boys tend to be more victimized by physical bullying (e.g. hitting, punching) while girls tend to be victimized by relational bullying (e.g. isolation or exclusion). Learners with disabilities may be more susceptible to bullying due to their attributes which may include problems in language or communication (Luciano & Savage, 2007), and inappropriate actions when interacting with others or problems in terms of establishing and maintaining satisfying interpersonal relationships (Fox & Boulton, 2005).

Social Bullying. Two of the participants experienced social type of bullying. These participants were excluded or isolated in the group activities. "I couldn't feel that I was in the regular (class)… we were not included in the group" (Macy, blind, 16 years old). Another participant, Ben (deaf, 17 years old), experienced being "separated like being discriminated" (as interpreted).

Results from the investigation led by Fekkes et al. (2005) revealed that 17.2% of learners shared that they experienced bullying where they were snubbed or not permitted to take part in activities. According to Blake et al. (2012), the bullying experiences that the learners with disabilities may have may be due to disability-associated issues such as discrepancies in social or communication skills, disability condition, and the discernment of their debility (Blake et al., 2012). Also, victims generally lack social skills and are either neglectees or are friends with those who are socially excluded (Swearer, et al., 2012).

Academic Problems

Academic demands may also pose as challenge to learners with disabilities. Often, learners with disabilities encounter more academic or school problems, and also have more problems handling situations related to interacting with others (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008).

All of the participants shared the problems they encountered in school. Being blind, it was difficult for two participants (Macy, 16 years old and Leorio, 19 years old) to understand and solve some Math problems or equations. According Leorio (blind, 19 years old) and Pao (with multiple disability, 14 years old), they had a lot of projects and assignments which they found difficult to do. For deaf participants (Cha, deaf, 20 years old and Ben, deaf, 17 years old), it was difficult to learn their lessons because no one interprets for them. Also, English was the medium they used in sign language. They found it difficult to communicate in other languages like Filipino.

Aside from deficiencies caused by their disability, the learners with disability/ies may find it difficult to access support services while attending school. The lack or inadequate essential facilities, accommodation, or services for learners with disabilities can "severely limit" their "independence" and "mobility" (Obiozor et al., 2013, pp. 127-130). Tugli et al. (2013) posited that the "lack of necessary support services" (p. 347) and the presence of "a number of physical, social and attitudinal barriers at various level of their education" (p. 347) can cause the learners with disabilities to be excessively reliant, and socially and academically isolated.

Coping Strategies Employed by High School Learners with Disabilities

The main themes which emerged on the narratives from the interview of the research participants when asked about their coping strategies were the following: Avoidance Coping Strategies and Approach Coping Strategies.

Each of the participants utilized different coping strategies that helped them cope with different challenges. Folkman and Lazarus (1985) referred to coping strategies as ever varying cognitive or behavioral approaches to address certain outer and inner demands which are assessed as stressful or beyond the individual's resources. Thus, coping refers to whatever

we do to manage an event or stimulus we perceive as threatening.

It is important to recognize the coping strategies used by learners with disabilities because it's one way to understand the extent of bullying victimization they've experienced. Various authors (e.g., Kristensen & Smith, 2003) discussed that coping is one important variable in understanding the effects of bullying from the victim's perspective.

Roth and Cohen (1986) developed classified coping behaviors into approach and avoidance (Donoghuea et al., 2014). Approach strategies are adaptive coping strategies and are linked to positive functioning (Carver et al., 1989). Avoidance strategies, on the other hand, are used when dealing with solvable or controllable stressors (Roth & Cohen, 1986). Considered maladaptive, avoidance strategies are linked to poor adaptation socially (Carver et al., 1989).

Avoidance Coping Strategies

Avoidance strategies involve avoiding the stimuli (Roth & Cohen, 1986 in Andrasik et al., 2015). They are "classified as distancing (e.g. acting as if nothing occurred), internalizing (e.g. keeping their emotions to themselves) or externalizing (e.g. taking their emotions out on others)" (Donoghuea et al., 2014, p.42).

Distancing. Distancing as one type of avoidance coping strategy includes ignoring and staying away from the bullies, and acting as if nothing happened.

Ignoring and Staying Away from the Bullies. Learners with disabilities also tried to isolate themselves in order to prevent being victimized. For two participants, staying away from and ignoring the bullies were good strategies in preventing and stopping bullying. "Just stay away and avoid joining others" (as interpreted) (Ben, deaf, 17 years old). For Leorio (blind, 19 years old), he just stayed away and didn't go near the bully.

Wolpert (2003) as cited in Anderson and Swiatowy (2008) shared the importance of teaching learners how to get away from a bullying situation. This is supported by New (2007)

who sees the "need to learn to walk away from the situation and not fight" (as cited in Anderson, & Swiatowy, 2008, p. 34).

Some researchers (e.g. Bourke & Burgman, 2010) discussed that isolation is common initial coping behavior used by victims to respond to bullying. Self-isolation is a defense mechanism intended to emotionally separate from, and physically avoid an unsafe, hostile environment (Rigby, 2012). However, the more the learners with disabilities become socially isolated, the more their social status decreases, and so does the potential support from their friends (Luciano & Savage, 2007). This can affect the possible protection that the learners with disabilities may have against those who bully them.

Acting as if Nothing Happened or Not Minding the Bullying. Feeling affected by bullying is important for some participants. One participant (Ben, deaf, 17 years old) would feel angry whenever he's teased but he would just forget about it. Another participant (Leorio, blind, 19 years old) shared that sometimes, he just acted as if he was not punched while he was walking. He also expressed the importance of not really minding the bullying experiences because according to him, they can cause depression and suicide. Learners commonly involved in bullying victimization tend to experience sadness, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, and fear of attending school (Gourneau, 2012).

Internalizing. Internalizing as one type of avoidance coping strategy includes "keeping emotions & experiences to themselves."

Keeping Emotions and Experiences to Themselves. Some participants (e.g., Cha, deaf, 20 years old and Ben, deaf, 17 years old) kept their bullying experiences and emotions secret. Later, the teacher would know that they were being bullied. One participant, Ben (deaf, 17 years old), was called an idiot by his schoolmates and he felt hurt, but he kept it a secret and did not tell his parents.

Learners with disabilities and low self-esteem tend to report less their bullying

victimization experiences (Smokowski, & Kopasz, 2005 as cited in Shetgiri, 2013). Also, learners usually do not feel comfortable when disclosing their bullying experience because they fear the retaliation of the bully, and they perceive teachers as unreceptive to the information (Dickinson, 2006). According to deLara (2012), there are various reasons why adolescents don't report incidents of bullying. These reasons include: (a) bullying action perceived as normal; (b) perceive self as helpless and that grown-ups cannot help out even if told; (c) apprehension about the reactions of adult regarding the allegation; (d) confidence in self that they can deal with the problem on their own; and (e) embarrassment as a consequence of asking for help. However, by not reporting to the school, learners with disabilities may not receive the support or assistance they need (Obiozor, 2009).

Approach-Oriented Coping Strategies

These strategies involve confronting the source of stress directly (Roth & Cohen, 1986 in Andrasik, Goodie, & Peterson, 2015). Approach-oriented or problem-focused coping aims to control or change the environment or the situation that is causing the stress to eliminate the perceived stressors.

Relying Upon Oneself. Relying upon oneself is one type of approach-oriented coping strategy and includes fighting back, praying, being optimistic or having positive outlook, and being assertive. According to Bosacki et al. (2006) as cited in Anderson and Swiatowy (2008), the most prevalent solutions to bullying include reporting to the teacher, developing friendship with the bully, and talking to or confronting the bully.

Fighting Back. To cope with bullying, some learners with disabilities decided to fight back. Anderson and Swiatowy, 2008, shared that it is necessary for learners to learn various strategies to "empower themselves and stand up to bullies" (p.34).

For three participants (Leorio, Ben and Pao), they chose to fight back against the bullies. Ben (deaf, 17 years old) also fought back by punching his classmate on the cheek and left shoulder. Pao (with multiple disabilities, 14 years old) shared his advice which is to "fight back."

Two of the participants (Ben, deaf, 17 years old, and Leorio, blind, 19 years old) verbalized that they learned to be strong and to fight back. According to Leorio (blind, 19 years old), one must be alert and ready always so that he or she can fight back.

Men are more likely to fight or confront a threat when under stress because of higher levels of testosterone (Girdler et al., 1997). According to Estell et al. (2009), victimized individuals with disabilities tend to become aggressors more probably because of a lack of emotional control and social skills needed to interpret the environment.

Praying. Prayers and having religious beliefs can help learners with disabilities cope with challenging, traumatic or stressful situations like bullying. Cha (deaf, 20 years old) prays as he hopes to be accepted by others. According to Pargament and Park (1995) as cited in Kowalski and Westen (2005, p. 412), people's "beliefs allow them to ascribe meaning to the event or strengthen their sense of closeness to the divine," thus helping them cope with these events.

Being Optimistic or Having Positive Outlook. Having a positive outlook was also an important copying strategy for bullying and other life and school challenges. "We need to be positive and we have to remember our rights despite our disability. We need to be included in group activities and be treated just like the regular [persons]" (Macy, blind, age 16).

Optimistic individuals are more prone to coping with bullying in a more constructive and beneficial manner, and not focus on its (bullying) undesirable aspects and messages (Fredrickson, 2001, as cited in Gordon, 2020). People who think positive often believe that other people (e.g. peers, teachers) are more inclined to help and assist them with the bullying

circumstance, and that the bullying will eventually terminate (Gordon, 2020). Optimistic individuals are capable of centering their attention to things they have control on such as their bullying reactions in order to cope or deal with the bullying situation (Gordon, 2020).

Being Assertive. Assertiveness is also an important coping strategy. One participant (Macy, blind, 16 years old) expressed that those with disabilities should assert their rights especially in terms of inclusion in socialization and in different activities.

> They wouldn't want to include me in the group but I insisted. I hope they realize that they should also include me in the activities. We should also join because it is our right. Nothing is impossible. I know I can also do things. (Macy, blind, 16 years old)

Being assertive means standing up for your rights and defending yourself or others comfortably against unfairness (Gordon, 2018). Assertive behaviors or responses are stated in a calm and confident manner or speech while giving respect to the other persons' needs and wants (Gordon, 2018). Assertiveness skills may help learners "get the voice they need without the aggression of a bully" (Anderson, & Swiatowy, 2008, p. 35).

Calling Upon Others. Calling upon others as one type of approach-oriented coping strategy includes seeking social support, reporting to parents, teachers, classmates, and making use of accommodations.

Seeking Social Support (e.g., friends, classmate, deaf community). For some participants, having friends that help mattered. Cha (deaf, 20 years old) shared that he had two friends who helped him. Another participant (Ben, deaf, 17 years old) shared that he also had good classmates who helped him by writing to him what was happening, and by telling him not to go to others who bully him.

Results of the study conducted by Kristensen and Smith (2003) among a sample of Danish children showed that asking for help from others and solving their own problems

were the most common responses to bullying. Also, the role of support system such as friends is vital to successful coping of learners with disabilities, and in defending themselves against bullying victimization. This is supported by studies by Card and Hodges (2008) and Kendrick et al. (2012) which stated that acceptance by age-peers, and having a lot of friends especially those who help have been shown to be protective against victimization. Kowalski & Westen (2005) suggest "people with supportive relationships are less likely to make a primary appraisal of situations as stressful, and they are more likely to perceive themselves as able to cope" (p. 415). Friends encourage and help the bullied child in processing his or her bullying experience by being there with him or her to talk and listen; and a friend is more likely to help and mediate on their behalf than another bystander (Gordon, 2018).

On the other hand, for two participants, working with groups and having friends help them cope with their academic tasks. According to Leorio (blind, 20 years old), his friends helped him with his assignments. Sometimes he didn't know what to do but with the help from his classmates, he was able to do his tasks. In order not to experience school difficulties, Pao (with multiple disabilities, 14 years old) worked with groups and his friends.

Cha (deaf, 20 years old), on the other hand, joined the deaf community to learn and become aware about the deaf. According to him, this community provided him with friends who accept and comfort him. He also has friends and best friends who teach him. Results of studies indicated that academic achievement is associated with the child's social interactions and friendships (Gordon, 2018).

Reporting to Parents, Teachers, and Classmates. Some of the participants told their teachers, trusted classmates, parents or relatives about the bullying they were experiencing. Two of the participants (Leorio, blind, 19 years old, and Pao, with multiple disabilities, 14 years old) shared that the victims of bullying should report to their friends, teachers, parents, relatives, or guidance counselor. Learners may "be encouraged to discuss any problems with

bullying" (Brown et al., 2005 as cited in Anderson, & Swiatowy, 2008, p.36).

Researches showed that bullying victims also seek help from others when being bullied. In a study conducted by Paul, Smith and Blumberg (2012), London students aged 11 to 13 were questioned about the manner they coped with victimization. Results showed that most students preferred to seek help and advice. In a comparative study conducted by Kanetsuna et al. (2006), Japanese and British students shared an advice to victims, which was to seek help from others, however, these students also shared that they are afraid of actually doing it.

Accommodations. Accommodations refer to variations in terms of instructional delivery, form of performance, or manner of giving assessment but do not considerably change the curricular content or level of difficulty (Hallahan et al., 2009).

For blind participants, they are brought in the resource room during examinations and the shadow teacher read to them the test questions. Leorio (blind, 19 years old) shared that there were teachers who were with them when they read. According to another participant (Macy, blind, 16 years old), the teachers were willing to help them. Aside from shadow teachers, "there were regular teachers who also helped me" (Macy, blind, 16 years old).

Technology such as cellphone applications and braille also helped the blind students to cope with their academic tasks. One blind participant (Macy, 16 years old) typed on her cellphone what her mother dictated or read to her. She also uses braille. A braille is a tool with dots raised allowing the blind to read using the tip of their fingers; it has a number of quadrilateral cells with one to six dots in each cell pertaining to certain letters or symbols (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2009).

Provision of accommodations such as reading the test questions to the blind during examinations, may positively influence the adjustment of the learner with disability in school, and thus be able to confront challenges successfully. Accommodations in the form of human resources and auxiliary materials may be provided to guarantee the independence and

effective functioning of learners with visual disabilities (Tugli, et al., 2013).

Development of an Anti-Bullying Survival Kit

The development of the Anti-Bullying Survival Kit was based on results of the study and on Knirk and Gustafson design model (1986). An instruction design model like that of Knirk and Gustafson shapes and gives sense to a problem, allowing designers to develop their task with greatest understanding (Ryder, 2001 as cited in Qureshi, 2004). This design model has three stages or steps: problem determination, design and development (Qureshi, 2004).

Problem determination step consists of the problem being recognized, and the goals being laid down. Also, goals are determined based on assessed needs, and analyzed tasks (Nimbkar & Sonali, 2013). For the development of the Anti-Bullying Survival Kit, this stage involves determining the needs of high school learners with disabilities which were identified in the findings of the study.

In the second stage (design stage), the objectives and strategies are specified (Sortrakul & Denphaisarn, 2009) to solve the identified problem. The researcher created an Anti-Bullying Survival Kit which aimed to help the learners (1) become informed of the extent, seriousness, and dynamics of bullying, (2) become aware of the roles students have in a bullying situation, (3) examine their beliefs about bullying, (4) differentiate submissive, aggressive, and assertive responses toward bullying, (5) be empowered and be equipped with necessary knowledge about effective strategies for preventing and stopping bullying, and (6) be informed on how other people (e.g. parents, teachers) can help control bullying.

Lastly, the materials are crafted in the development stage (Qureshi, 2004). This stage consists of construction of materials and final output (i.e., survival kit).

The Anti-Bullying Survival Kit was developed to help learners especially those with disabilities be informed on how to cope with and prevent bullying. The challenges

experienced and the effective coping strategies employed by the participants were presented in this kit. Designed in a way that accommodates the needs of learners with disabilities (e.g. printed in braille; printed with large font size; audio format), it contains strategies, activities, and resources to address bullying. Aside from information and activities for learners, information for parents and teachers were also provided.

The Anti-Bullying Survival Kit was evaluated using a valid instrument, and the overall mean given by the evaluators was 3.85 which means survival kit was very acceptable.

Table 1

Jurors' Evaluation of the Anti-Bullying Survival Kit in terms of Different Areas

CRITERIA	Evaluator 1	Evaluator 2	Evaluator 3	Evaluator 4	Mean
1. Objectives	3.75	3.75	3.75	4.00	3.81
2. Content	3.78	3.88	4.00	4.00	3.92
3. Technical Quality	4.00	3.67	4.00	4.00	3.92
4. Presentation & Organization	3.50	3.75	4.00	3.75	3.75
5. Assessment	4.00	3.33	4.00	4.00	3.83
Mean	3.81	3.68	3.95	3.95	3.85

Note. 3.41 – 4.00: Very acceptable; 2.81 – 3.40: Acceptable; 2.21 – 2.80: Moderately acceptable; 1.61 – 2.20: Barely acceptable; 1.00 – 1.60: Not acceptable

The comments given by the evaluators after evaluating the Anti-Bullying Survival Kit included: (a) "the survival kit is very well-presented and is a very useful material in the future" (Evaluator 1); and (b) "You are excited to see what's in the next page. The presentation and color combination are pleasing to the eyes. The content is comprehensive such that you become well informed and prepared to deal with bullying after reading it" (Evaluator 2).

Conclusions

Identifying various challenges that learners with disabilities experience as early as possible is important so that interventions and coping strategies can be planned, suggested and implemented sooner, and psychological problems can be prevented. It is therefore necessary to learn from learners with disabilities so that other people can learn from their challenges or experiences, and their best coping strategies can be shared to others. Hence, the researcher created an Anti-Bullying Survival Kit with information about the best coping practices of the participants to help other learners, especially those with disabilities, prevent, prepare for, and cope with bullying situations.

Implications for Theory

The findings of this study validated the Stress Coping Transactional Model of Lazarus and his associates. Learners with disabilities who experienced the same type of bullying may respond to the event in a different way. The strategies utilized to handle taxing circumstances are based on the discernment of the individual (subject) about any given circumstance (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When a person views the demands of the circumstance as beyond his or her ability to meet those demands, he or she will experience stress. Thus, the appraisal or evaluation depends on the individual's judgment of his or her own capability to manage the stressing circumstance or event. Thus, it is important that learners with

disabilities who are victimized are self-aware of how they view a particular event such as bullying.

The participants' stories described the challenges they faced and the type of coping strategies they employed. At the beginning, the participants' stories illustrated their powerlessness, their inability to change their situation, and thus they employed avoidance-oriented coping strategies. Those who believe that they have unchangeable situation (e.g. classmates calling them "idiot" or "crazy") tend to isolate themselves, while those who believe that their situation is something that can be changed tend to be more optimistic and assertive in promoting their rights. However, it was also interesting to note that they used multiple avoidance-oriented and approach-focused coping approaches but utilized more approach-focused approaches than avoidance-oriented ones. Also, they were able to adapt or adjust because they perceive their situation as manageable, and they utilized various coping strategies that aim to change their environment or themselves.

Implications for Practice and Recommendations

This study's findings have great implications for learners with disabilities. Teachers, parents, researchers, interventionists and policy makers, may attempt to hear the voices of these learners with disabilities and understand their needs, perceptions, and experiences.

Providing special support to learners with disabilities, especially those who were victimized, is indispensable in inclusive education. This support may be in the form of guidance, classroom accommodations, psychological counselling, assertiveness training, and stress debriefing.

It is necessary for schools to solve the persistent bullying problem. Multifaceted whole-school approach may be used in addressing the said issue. Teachers must be actively involved in preventing bullying. This may start with awareness of what is happening in the classroom and devising activities that will promote positive interaction among learners.

Classroom activities should be designed in a way that accepts diversity and accommodates the needs of learners with disabilities. The parents, on the other hand, should play an active part in school events, in making decisions, and in the formulation and implementation of the laws and policies related to their children. Anti-bullying policies must also be updated, implemented, monitored, and evaluated. Importantly, aside from disability awareness campaigns, anti-bullying and discrimination campaigns can also be done to inform people and schools of the detrimental bullying effects, and the effects of the labels we use for learners with disabilities. Addressing the issue of bullying is like a symphony orchestra; everyone has a role to play.

The development of the Anti-Bullying Survival Kit as an output of this study is an initial step towards achieving a bully-proof learning environment for learners especially those with disabilities. This kit may help schools, parents, teachers and learners to become more equipped in dealing with different bullying situations.

Furthermore, additional research is needed on evidence-based classroom intervention strategies, appropriate interventions for learners with special needs, factors linked to bullying victimization, and the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Survival Kit in minimizing or ending the pervasive issue of bullying.

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