

Article

# Against Bullying through Cultural Awareness: Establishing a School Environment that Promotes Respect and Inclusivity

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**Abstract:** Multifaceted forms of bullying, including physical, verbal, social, and cyber, significantly affect the general well-being and academic performance of student communities. In many educational institutions worldwide, persistent bullying remains a significant barrier, impacting the psychological, emotional, and physical well-being of students (Debarbieux, 2001; Guerra C. et al., 2011). Intentional injury is the willful or failure to act those harms individuals connected with the educational community, teaching staff, student body, and other staff members (Serrano & Iborra, 2005). The existence of bullying in educational institutions has multiple detrimental effects on the students who are subjected to it, therefore increasing the probability of students becoming disengaged from the learning process systematically. Failing to confront bullying appropriately may lead to its consequences impacting multiple facets. Incidents of bullying at educational institutions can lead to reduced academic achievement, increased levels of stress, and social or physical seclusion, finally resulting in suicide and death. Cultural awareness encompasses recognizing, demonstrating respect for, and valuing everyone's diverse cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Implementing cultural knowledge in educational environments is a crucial strategy to address and prevent bullying. Given the increasing variety within our educational institutions, fostering an environment that emphasizes respect and inclusivity is crucial.

**Keywords:** Bullying; Cultural Awareness; Respect and Inclusivity.



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## 1. Introduction

Considering the growing diversity in today's educational environment, dealing with and avoiding bullying remains crucial. The various manifestations of bullying, including physical, verbal, social, and cyber, have extensive impacts on the overall welfare and educational achievements of student populations. Even persistent bullying continues to be a significant obstacle in numerous educational institutions globally (Debarbieux, 2001; Guerra C. et al., 2011), affecting the psychological, emotional, and physical welfare of students. Intentional injury refers to deliberate actions or omissions that cause harm to those associated with the educational community, teaching staff, student body, and other staff (Serrano & Iborra, 2005). Given the increasing cultural diversity in schools, the urgency for implementing effective measures to combat bullying becomes even more pronounced. An efficacious strategy to address this problem is incorporating cultural consciousness into educational settings. Cultural awareness refers to the intellectual and emotional understanding and appreciation of the diverse range of cultures that students bring to the educational setting. Beyond mere recognition of diversity, it necessitates a profound involvement with and reverence for a wide range of cultural viewpoints and customs. Through implementing cultural awareness programs, educational institutions can establish a milieu that regards inclusiveness, diminishes biases, and eventually deters instances

of bullying. Cultural diversity impacts human behavior, attitudes, and cognitive processes, resulting in disparate usage, habits, norms, and even customs among individuals. If these distinctions are not comprehended effectively and embraced judiciously, then disputes (such as altercations among students) will readily arise within the educational setting and the society (Indrapangastuti, 2014). Learners exhibit critical cultural awareness by utilizing their cultural knowledge to assess critically and based on criteria, attitudes, practices, and goods in their culture and other cultures and countries (Porto, Byram 2015: 17). This article examines how cultural awareness in schools can create a more courteous and inclusive academic atmosphere.

## 2. Definition of Bullying

According to Kharis (2019), bullying is derived from the English term "bully," which denotes the act of intimidating, intimidating, or harassing another person or perpetrator towards the victim. This behavior leads to psychological disorders in the victim, manifesting as stress, trauma, or both. Consequently, bullying can be understood as a behavior that exerts control over repeated actions to disturb other children perceived as weaker than the bully. Bullying, as defined by Zakiyah (2017), is a deliberate manifestation of aggressive conduct involving coercion and psychological or physical manipulation of a vulnerable individual or group by those who perceive themselves as having authority.

Bullying is the act of exploiting the social standing of a person or group. As an illustration, a person or group with elevated social standing is pitted against an individual or group of inferior social standing. The environment tends to identify persons or organizations with significant power and social standing as those who will exploit others by bullying. The persistence of bullying against individuals or groups of low social standing might be attributed to their lack of power or social position acknowledged by their surroundings. In this scenario, a disparity exists between those belonging to high and low socioeconomic strata (Olweus, 1994; Bauman & Yoon, 2014).

## 3. The impact of bullying at school

Bullying may occur in schools as aversive behaviors endured by kids inside the school environment. The presence of bullying in educational institutions has several adverse consequences on students who are targeted, so leading to a consistent likelihood of students disengaging from the learning process. Failure to address bullying with due seriousness will result in its repercussions affecting several aspects. The occurrence of bullying in schools can result in diminished academic performance, heightened stress levels, and social or physical isolation, ultimately culminating in suicide and mortality.

Factors contributing to bullying behavior include 1) Insufficient oversight and ethical direction from teachers and school authorities; 2) Disparities and variations in economic and cultural backgrounds among students; 3) The presence of inflexible or insufficiently robust disciplinary systems, incomplete supervision, and inconsistent rules make youngsters susceptible to bullying and lack empathy towards peers who perceive themselves as powerful and have the freedom to attack others without restraint (Putri, 2018).

Psychological disorders and increased negativity in the lives of individuals who are bullied due to their lack of acceptance by their peers, detriment to academic performance, and social alienation among victims of bullying within their age group are the three main effects of bullying (Masdin, 2013). Hence, teachers at school must seriously contemplate the issue of bullying behavior. Bullying can have a detrimental impact on the psychological behavior of pupils during the instructional process. Engaging in bullying behavior at school can lead to reduced academic performance, heightened stress levels, and social and physical isolation, ultimately culminating in suicide and mortality.

#### 4. Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness refers to an individual's capacity to see and understand cultural values and customs that originate from beyond their own culture. Moreover, an individual can assess whether it is customary and permissible in their own culture or maybe atypical or impermissible in other civilizations. Hence, it is imperative to embrace many cultures and possess knowledge of their ideas and traditions, so enabling one to show respect towards them (Vacc et al., 2003).

Wunderle (2006) defines cultural awareness as the capacity to identify and comprehend the impact of culture on human values and conduct. Implications of cultural awareness on the recognition of the necessity to take culture into account, crucial aspects in handling specific circumstances. Fundamentally, cultural awareness refers to the acquisition of knowledge that imparts significance to humanity in understanding different cultures. The fundamental concept behind the process of acquiring cultural awareness is to gather knowledge about culture and then convert it by gradually enriching it with meaning as a comprehension of culture.

The significance of values that are crucial elements in human existence will also impact an individual's cultural consciousness (of the values embraced) and imbue them with meaning. Gaining cultural awareness is crucial for comprehending culture and identifying key elements that contribute to the development of cultural values, therefore shaping the character of a nation.

#### 5. The Role of Cultural Awareness in the Prevention of Bullying

The phenomenon of bullying is widespread and has an impact on persons of various age groups, genders, and cultural origins. Furthermore, bullying is a common occurrence in schools and has been a significant obstacle in numerous educational institutions worldwide (Debarbieux, 2001; Guerra C. et al., 2011). Instances of bullying can take many forms, including physical, verbal, social, and cyberbullying, all of which result in substantial psychological, emotional, and occasionally bodily damage. Underlying misconceptions or lack of knowledge regarding cultural disparities can frequently give rise to bullying in heterogeneous societies. Hence, the cultivation of cultural consciousness is essential in the mitigation of bullying. Gaining knowledge and valuing cultural distinctions can create more inclusive and compassionate climates, decreasing the probability of bullying incidents.

Learners exhibit critical cultural awareness by applying their cultural knowledge to assess critically and based on criteria, attitudes, practices, and goods that are present in their own culture and other cultures and countries (Porto, Byram 2015: 17). By incorporating critical cultural awareness into education, it is possible to mitigate preconceptions, prejudice, and subsequent cultural conflicts. It facilitates the establishment of a more inclusive atmosphere and empowers learners to engage with others compassionately and courteously.

Cultural awareness refers to the ability to acknowledge, exhibit respect for, and appreciate the varied cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic origins of every person. Within an educational context, this entails instructing students and staff on the varied cultures present in their community and fostering an atmosphere that values and commemorates all cultures. Wunderle (2006) defines cultural competence as the most advanced level of cultural awareness, characterized by a profound comprehension of a specific group, which enables a broader grasp of prevailing assumptions and prejudices (Bisri, 2016; Azizah, 2020). In an educational context, cultural awareness entails instructing students and staff on the varied cultures present in their community and fostering an atmosphere that values and commemorates all cultures. Sue (2003) emphasized that ethnic diversity,

gender, cultural background, geography, regional origin, race, physical condition (ability/disability), age, socioeconomic complexity, religion, personal traits, social skills, behaviour, habits, and intellectual abilities are now inherent aspects of daily life in the school setting. According to Fowers & Davidov in Thompkins et al. (2006), self-awareness regarding one's values, prejudices, and limitations entails self-exploration of culture until one realizes one's viewpoint is constrained, prejudiced, and influenced by one's background. The development of cultural awareness in humans is an inherent process. Nevertheless, recognition will be established using several elements, including diverse aspects such as perception and emotion.

The research conducted by Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al. (2019) and Annajih et al. (2017) emphasizes the need to rectify cultural bias in educational environments. Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al. (2019) found that educational inequality frequently manifests as ethno-cultural bullying, whereby pupils are subjected to exclusion or verbal mistreatment based on their cultural or ethnic heritage. The type above of bullying can have a profound effect on a student's feeling of inclusion and mental health. In contrast, Annajih et al. (2017) emphasize the need to cultivate cultural awareness in educational settings to encourage the development of persons who possess sensitivity and appreciation for various cultural origins. They contend that the promotion of cultural awareness can contribute to the development of more inclusive and supportive school communities, therefore fostering the formation of well-rounded, multicultural young people. Both findings emphasize the significance of educational institutions taking proactive measures to mitigate discrimination and foster cultural awareness to establish a more inclusive atmosphere for all students.

## 6. Conclusions

Integrating cultural knowledge within educational settings is an essential approach to combating bullying. Considering the growing diversity inside our educational institutions, it is imperative to cultivate an atmosphere that prioritizes respect and inclusivity. This is not only advantageous but also essential. The development of cultural awareness provides students, educators, and staff with the necessary skills to comprehend, value, and commemorate various cultural origins, diminishing the probability of biased attitudes and discriminatory actions that may result in bullying. Through the integration of cultural awareness into school practice, curriculum, and policies, we effectively tackle the underlying factors contributing to bullying and foster a school culture that is more inclusive and sympathetic. The implementation of educational programs that prioritize cultural awareness and sensitivity serves to deconstruct prejudices and establish a fundamental basis of mutual respect.

Moreover, educational institutions prioritizing cultural understanding are more adept at managing conflicts constructively, providing help to vulnerable students, and fostering a sound and inclusive environment. Adopting cultural awareness is a proactive and transformative strategy that mitigates bullying and enhances the educational experience for all pupils. Educational institutions that embrace this methodology cultivate atmospheres where each student has a sense of worth, comprehension, and security, facilitating a more balanced and fairer educational environment.

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