School Bullying In Southeast Asia Countries: Categories, Elements And Incidences

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Abstract – *UNICEF and The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are highly emphasisig the importance of students well-being. All schools need to take serious actions to prevent from ny violences and bullying incidences. This paper clarifies the category of bullying behaviour based on past reports. It also analyses reports on bullying incidences in six ASEAN members. A documentary analysis was used to examine statistics of bullying incidences in six countries based on official reports by UNICEF in Myanmar and the Philippines, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports in Singapore and Thailand, and the Report on Bullying Index in Malaysia. This comparative analysis is important to provide an overal picture of students wellbeing. Findings revealed that various categories of bullying often occur in schools, including physical bullying, psychological bullying, and cyberbullying. Results also show that bullying incidences are alarming in all countries and it requires strategic action plan to prevent it. Analysis also indicate that some school children experienced of bullying in all the six ASEAN countries. Although various prevention strategies have been proposed in the past, any preventive action strategies implemented are unique and may not always be effective in all situations in all cultures. Therefore, a comprehensive bullying prevention strategy that is compatible with the socio-cultural values needs to be formulated in each country; so that bullying incidences might be prevented. Creating a positive school environment to prevent bullying incidences, simultenously cretes a school as a safe and peaceful place are really needed.*

Keywords- *misbehaviour, violence, physical bullying, psychological bullying, cyberbullying*

I. INTRODUCTION

School is as a place for producing a good and balanced individual - physically, mentally and spiritually [1]. ASEAN populations place a great emphasise on human wellbeing. Formulating appropriate strategies and approaches to keep all schools away from bullying and gangsterism are importants to achieve that aims. Furthermore, the school is an institution that plays an important role in ensuring that the country's goals are achieved. Students are not only engaging in academic activities but also instilling them with moral values. This is to ensure the qualitity of future generation [2]. Education is one of the continuous efforts to improve quality of life. Ngang [3] also explained that students are supposed to have knowledge, skills, high moral values and social values.

Social misconduct among students is a universal problem. Its not a new phenomenon. Its existence occurs throughout the country regardless of the development status of the country [4]. A past study revealed that the majority of adolescents have exhibited various challenging baehaviour becouse of their psychological development [5]. The problem of discipline violations in schools has never been solved until now. This has led to dissatisfaction among all parties; including educators, parents and the government [6]. Reports of student misconduct have always been in the highlights in our country's newspapers. The school is supposedly a safe place for teaching and learning as expected by all [7].

Although various rules and discipline have been imposed by the schools, misbehaviour among students are still happening and are increasing from year to year. Among the problems that can be seen are related to deviant and delinquent

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behaviour among students. The ten types of criminal behaviours among primary and secondary school students are bullying, vulgarity, rudeness, self-loathing, truancy and others [8].

II.   BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

Bullying behaviour can be shown in different ways and forms regardless of gender. Two categories of bullying are physical bullying and psychological bullying. Olweus [9] categoried bullying behaviour into three that are physical, verbal and anti-social behaviour. Aggressive bullying behaviour either physically or verbally will affect students and the school environment negatively. Yahya [7] found that verbal bullying is the most dominant type of bullying incidences in school. A study carried out by Yaacob [10] and Khalim Zainal [11] in found that classrooms are no longer safe for students in certain schools. Their research shows that one of the most common disciplinary problems in schools is bullying incidences. The findings showed that 95.8% of secondary school, and 82.7% of primary school students committed psychological bullying meanwhile 65.3% of secondary school and 56% of primary school students committed in physical bullying. These figures are alarming require specific solving actions [11]. Another study carried out by Yusofboon et al [12] revealed that the frequency of bullying behaviour reported by secondary school students in one of the districts in Malaysia is generally at a moderate level. Verbal bullying has been reported to be the most common bullying behaviour occurred if compared to physical bullying [13].

OBJECTIVE

This study discusses cattegories of bullying behaviour based on previous studies. It also compares bullying incidences in six ASEAN members that are based on official reports published online – by UNICEF, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Malaysian Bullying Index.

III.   METHODOLOGY

This study reviews bullying behaviour concept and also analyses bullying incidences in schools occitred in South East Asian countries that are Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines. The rest of South East Asia (Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Timor Leste, and Vietnam) are not included due to the limitation to access the document online. UNICEF [14] reported the constrain to gain information on bullying casses from Indonesia due to low rate of response. Document analysis is utilised in this study by focusing on physical and psychological bullying behaviour. The analysis of bullying incidences in Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia was based on official report of PISA 2015 Results (Volumes III): Students' Well-Being, published by OECD [15]. The analysis of bullying incidences in Malaysia was based on Malaysian Bullying Index [12].

IV.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, statistics indicate that various types of bullying behaviour and diverse levels of bullying behaviour occured in most of ASEAN schools. Most bullying incidences have been found to occur in classrooms. Some students are reported to feel unsafe and uncomfortable in schools. Bullying incidences often occurred in playground, before entering a school compund and school corridors. Those areas are often exposed to bullying incidents [9].

BULLYING BEHAVIOUR CATEGORIES

Three categories of bullying behaviour discuss in this paper are psychological bullying, physical bullying and cyberbullying.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BULLYING

Psychological bullying includes a human action of mocking, slandering, teasing and boycotting others. Mahadi [16] found that the most common type of bullying incidences reported by students was psychological and verbal bullying,

which involved behaviour such as making fun of someone, calling someone names they do not like, and pranking friends in schools. In addition, psychological bullying also occurs through name calling with names or titles that students don't like. Calling names with names or titles that other students dislike has been found often occurred among students with poor socio-economic background [17]. Psychological bullying is one of the most difficult bullying to be identified by school management, unless the victim lodged a report to school management or other authority bodies [18]. Therefore, the school management should be sensitive and had a sreening system to detect the early signs of bullying. Any illegal and suspicious activities in school, the occurrence of ridicule and subsequently through any activity of illegal and suspicious activity in the community need to be able to trace at early stages [19].

PHYSICAL BULLYING

Physical bullying includes physical attacks such as punching, kicking, stealing and pushing [20]. A past study repored that many students expreinced of being physicallly bullying by senior students [20]. Yahaya et al [17] explained that these physical bullying situations occur frequently in secondary schools. A total of 664 or 47.6% respondents reported that they had experienced of being bullying more than once, 294 or 21.1% respondents reported that they had experienced of being bullying once, and 437 or 31.3% said they had never experienced such behaviour in schools [12]. Extortion has been found occured rarely. Stealing is found occurs frequently. Physical assault such as beating, although it is rarely occurred, it is very dangerous. Yahaya [21] states that a gang behaviour among teenagers is a global phenomenon and it is occurring in most schools worldwide.

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying occurreds when the internet, mobile phones or other devices used to send text or images are intended to harm or embarrass others (National Crime Preventional Council). According to CyberSecurity Malaysia (CyberSecurity), most of the cyberbullying offenders have a close contact with victims whether they are friends, ex-husbands and even former co-workers. Statistics released that 60 cyberbullying incidences occurred in Malaysia (Cyber Security Malaysia in 2007). Although, the number is considered to be isolated, these incidences keep on increasing from time to time. It has been reported that (Sinar Daily 24 February 2014) 389 cyberbullying incidences occurred nationwide. It was based on data collected from official reports by victims by Internet users through the Cyber999 Help Center. It is increasing 55.6% if compared to 250 incidences in 2012. A joint research on this matter has been carried out by ybersecurity Malaysia, the Ministry of Education and DIGI Telecomunications Sdn Bhd in 2013 involving 9,651 students from 459 primary and secondary schools across the country. It was found that 13% of respondents (with a total of 1,255 students) claimed to be victims of cyberbullying while 26% or 2,509 students claimed to have been victims of cyberbullying [22]; [23]. Cyber bullying offenders uses technology to bully others without having face-to-face session, so it occurs any time [24]. Malek & Kamil [25] explain that cyberllying occurs because many the Internet users have lack of maturity in understanding the implications of online activities. The offenders are involved in unhealthy activities, crimes and cyber crimes. In fact, Che Noh & Ibrahim [22] found that cyberbullying are also occurs among higher education institutions' students.

Mohd Hashim & Ibrahim [26] found that the major cause of disciplinary problems is the influence of electronic media factor towards individual life. Many cyberbullying victims spend more time to surf the Internet. Nowadays, Facebook has become an obsession among virtual users to upload photos or update one's status, and it becomes a new platform for bullying offenders to carry out their unhealthy activities. Misuse of the Internet invites other negative attitudes among students such as tardiness or truancy and not doing assignments seriously. In addition, a study carried out by Ghani & Ghazali [27] explained that cyberbullying among adolescents often occurs nowadays because of using the Internet or a smartphone by sending or posting pictures of specific individual with the intention of embarrassing others. Examples of

Cyberbullying are sending negative comments to other people, sharing other people's private images or uploading videos without permission, disseminating false information, posting embarrassing comments about someone, disseminating someone's personal information, cracking down on passwords, threatening others, sexual harassment and making inappropriate jokes on social sites. Cyber freedom has been misused by certain individuals to express feelings by mocking and using swearing. Thus, cyberbullying has been identified as a new threat that affects the psychological well-being of children and adolescents around the world. Offenders may be doing negative cyber activities without considering the consequences of their behaviour [23].

Precautionary measures need to be taken by many authorised agencies to overcome bullying incidences effectively. Specific control measures need to be designed and planned professionally. Past studies suggest the following actions may be able to prevent bullying incidences: providing facts about bullying behaviour to students, eradicating belief on students' aggressive behaviour, conducting assessments of bullying incidences in schools, developing student code of conduct, providing counseling services to the victims and the bully, engaging parents in intervention programmes, implementing intervention strategies for aggressive students, and further streamline their assessment and accountability systems [28].

BULLYING INCIDENCES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

Although statistics of bullying incidences in Malaysia have decreased from 3000 in 2015 into 4000 incidences in 2016, these misbehaviours are still occured. A survey carried out by Yusofboon et al [12] found that there were many incidences of physical bullying in Malaysia (Table 1).

Table 1: Physical Bully Incidences in Malaysia

Incidences	Never	Once	More than once
Kicking me	711 (51%)	261 (18.7%)	423 (30.3%)
Pushing me	505 (36%)	322 (23.1%)	568 (40.7%)
Forcing me to give money	1090 (78.1%)	161 (11.5%)	144 (10.3%)
Teasing me	403 (28.9%)	247 (17.7%)	745 (53.4%)
Hurting me	1051 (75.3%)	148 (10.6%)	196 (14.1%)
Menarik baju saya Pulling my clothes	559 (40.1%)	329 (23.6%)	507 (36.3%)
Cuba memukul saya Trying to hit me	**713 (51.1%)**	**268 (19.2%)**	**414 29.7%)**

Note: Total of respondents = 1395

Source: Yusofboon et al [12]

Statistics of bullying incidences in Singapore and Thailand are taken from the reports by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) through a survey of 540,000 15-year-old students in both countries in 2015. The survey is part of the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) survey and it was published in 2017. Prior to this study, recent statistics search of bullying incidences in bopth countries was not able to be accesed publicly. It is best to have the latest statistics; hence it becomes a limitation of this study. A survey of bullying incidences that was part of the PISA report revealed that 11% of students have been made of fun by others at least a few times per month, meanwhile 4% said they were hit or pushed around by other students at least a few times per month. According to the report, boys are victims of physical aggression more often than girls are. However, results from the survey reported that more incidents of psychological bullying including rumours of girls. 7.6% of boys were victims of nasty rumors at least a few times per month. Recently arrived immigrant students and low-performing students are more likely to be bullying victims. "Students frequently exposed to bullying reported a series of negative educational consequences including truancy and a weaker sense of belonging at school. On average, about 42% of students who are frequently bullied said they felt like

an outsider in school, against only 15% of students who were not exposed to bullying. Students in schools where bullying is frequent, score 47 points lower in science than students in schools where bullying occurs less frequently. Overall, victims of bullying report less satisfaction with life" [29].

Table 2: Bullying Incidences in Singapore and Thailand (2015)

Countries	Percentage of Students who reported being bullied at least a few times a month		
	Any Type of Bullying Act	Other Students made fun of me	I got hit or pushed around by other students
Singapore	25.1%	183%	5.1%
Thailand	27.2	19.9	7.1

Source: PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being (PISA 2017)

Official statistics of bullying incidences in Myanmar retrieved from UNICEF Report (2019) that detailed bullying incidences in the framework of violence against children.

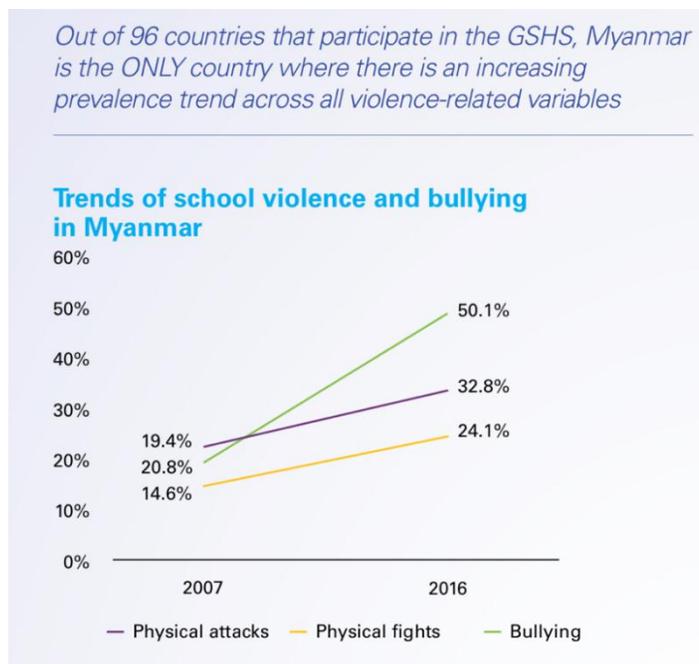**Figure 1.** Trend of School Violence and Bullying in Myanmar, UNICEF [30].

Figure 1 shows an increase trend of bullying incidences in Myanmar. There was an increase of more than 30% of incidences reported in 2016 compared to 2007. Bullying was seen to increase dramatically from 20.8% in 2006 to 50.1% in 2017. Although it is not clear how recent the statistics on bullying incidences are, the analysis for nearly 10 years have seen a tremendous increase. Physical attack has also for more than 10%. This shows the severeness of bullying in schools that requires immediate action.

Figure 2. Bullying Incidences in Myanmar, UNICEF [30].
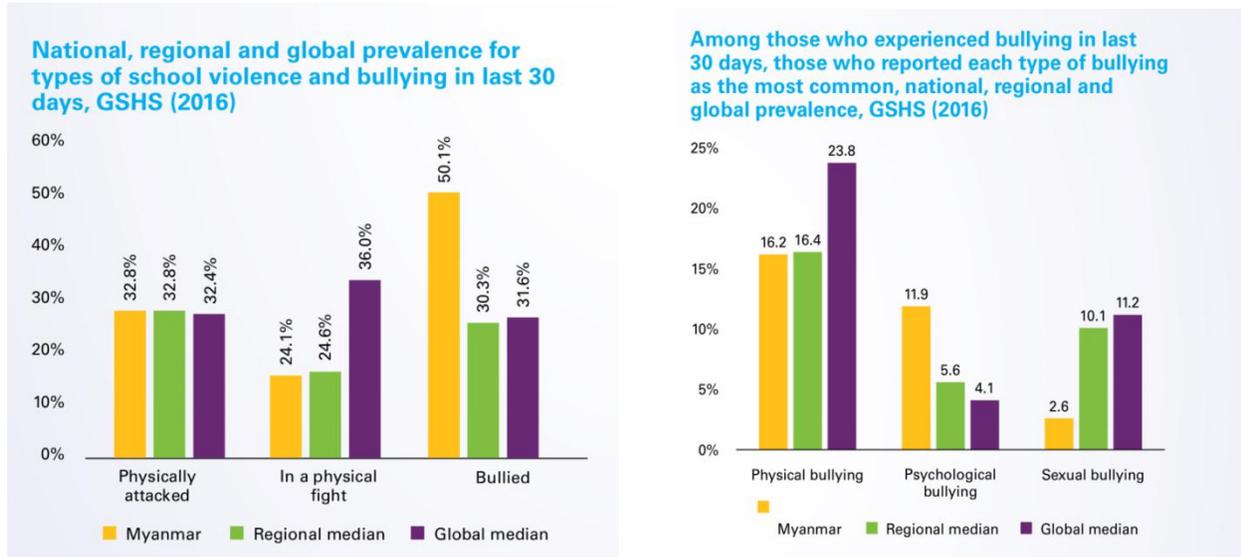
Source: National Baseline Study on Violence against Children – Philippines (Council for the Welfare of Children and UNICEF Philippines [31].

UNICEF [30] reports that children violence in Myanmar exceeds the median and global median data. It was reported that physical assault incidences among kids in Myanmar (32.8%) were higher than the global median (32.4%). Domestic bullying incidences were significantly higher (50.1%) compared to median (30.3%) and global median (31.6%) data. UNICEF [30] also analyzed the experiences of bullying in the last 30 years and found that the number of children being victims of physical and sexual bullying in Myanmar is lower than the median and global median. However, incidences of psychological bullying were still higher in Myanmar (11.9%) compared to the median (5.6%) and the global median (4.1%). This situation illustrates that Myanmar's strategy in Myanmar should also focus on aspects of psychological well-being in the prevention of bullying incidences.

The National Baseline Study on Violence against Children in the Philippines published by UNICEF [31] found that 66.3% of children in the Phillipines experienced any form of physical violence during childhood. More than 10 percent of those who attended school experienced physical violence in school. The most common forms of physical violence in schools are Pinching (32.5%), being hit with an eraser or chalk (31.5%), twisting ears (25.8%) as well as spanking with a bare hand, rolled paper or small stick (23.5 %). Children who had ever worked also experienced bullying in the workplace during childhood. There are children with romantic partners reported experiencing any form of physical violence during dating. More males (5.7%) claimed to have been physically harmed by their partners than females (3.1%).

Table 3:. Bullying incidences in the Philipines

TYPE OF VIOLENCE DURING CHILDHOOD	LIFETIME PREVALENCE DURING CHILDHOOD		
	Both	M	F
Physical neglect	10.1	11	9.1
Psychological neglect	**25.5**	**25**	**26**
Witnessing physical violence in the home	41.4	39.7	43
Witnessing psychological violence in the home	63.0	59.8	66.3
Overall child and youth physical violence	**66.3**	**66.6**	**62.5**
Overall child and youth psychological violence	62.8	65.2	60.4
Overall child and youth sexual violence	21.5	24.7	18.2
Severe physical violence	**2.3**	**2.8**	**1.9**
Severe psychological violence	7.9	7.9	8.0
Severe sexual violence during childhood	3.2	4.1	2.3
Peer violence/ Bullying	65.0	70.5	59.8
Cyber violence	43.8	45.3	42.2
Collective violence	7.8	8.6	7.0

Source: UNICEF [31].

UNICEF [31] reported that more incidences of physical violence in the Philippines are reported to occur in the family environment (60.4%) than in schools (14.3%), and in the residential community (14.3). It has also been reported that 6.2% of bullying incidences occur during a date among teenagers. Psychological bullying incidences were reported to be more prevalent in the family environment (38.1%). At school, such incidences were reported lower (23%) compared to psychological bullying in residential community areas (32.9%).

V. CONCLUSION

Overall, bullying and gangsterism have the potential to tarnish the image of educational institutions not only in Malaysia, but globally. Appropriate and drastic approach need to be taken immediately so that it will not continue to spread and ruin the teaching and learning environment at schools. Schools are also responsible to produce a balanced human capital physically, emotionally and spiritually. Due to various factors that determine the suitability and effectiveness of the strategies to overcome bullying, ever country ought to understand the socio-cultural, background and norm values of the society in order for the strategies to be highly appropriate. All parties, including parents, schools, and society need to play their role in creating an environment that can prevent bullying and gangsterism. The Ministry of Education, particularly in Southeastern Asia region, is responsible to keep schools safe and free from bullying as a continuous agenda because bullying (based on trend analysis) continues to occur.

There are many strategies to address bullying in schools that have been discussed by many researchers. However, all strategies do not always work for all situations and for all groups. Many factors need to be taken into account when dealing with bullying phenomena including socio-cultural aspects, beliefs, resources, education system, teacher's competency, student's background and a country's law. The diversity of these elements creates a diversity of views on bullying prevention strategies that resulting in the use of rattan and corporal punishment in school bullying prevention efforts.

Analysis of past research reports on bullying prevention can be summarised into two continuums, namely preventive action strategies and punitive action strategies. Preventive action strategies include working together to raise awareness of living together at school, respect for others, respect for the law, and adherence to school values and norms. Involvement of

various parties in preventive strategies include creating awareness by religious institutions, spiritualities, authorities and students' idols. Establishing a bullying case reporting system is also a precautionary measure in schools. Giving students exposure to the category of bullying and how to respond if they are at risk of being bullied are among the strategies for prevention. Revising the rules about zero bullying, and making promises to avoid being involved as a bully, and not being a victim of bullying are among the prevention strategies. The counseling strategy is seen as a precautionary measure because it uses a self-awareness approach to resent bullying.

Punitive action strategies are for students to be responsible for their behaviour. In schools, there is a set of disciplinary rules that guide and limit behaviour. The use of cane to punish disciplinary incidences is still practiced in 22 states in the United States. In fact, most Southeast Asian countries still hold caning punishment as an educational strategy to take responsibility for their behaviour - with the philosophy of "rattan to educate, not abuse". The Standard of Procedure to carry out the sentence is very thorough including the type of rattan used, witnesses, authorized individuals to carry out the punishment, consent letter from parents, and more. Punitive action strategies also involve student isolation such as detention classes and time-outs. Some also use demerit system to control student behaviour. The variety of this prevention strategy illustrates that bullying is a phenomenon that needs to be addressed. Proactive actions will reduce bullying incidences compared to reactive actions.

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