

## DEALING WITH BULLYING AMONG STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: SOURCES OF TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY

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### ABSTRACT

Scant attention has been paid to teachers' self-efficacy regarding bullying and what actually are their ability when they deal with this type of problem, particularly in Malaysia. There is also relatively little information about sources that have an impact on teacher self-efficacy regarding dealing with bullying in school, in the local context or probably in the international arena. The source of influence is predicted to be from behavior factors (i.e. mastery experience); environmental factors (i.e. vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and contextual climate) and personal factors (i.e. demographic information, and psychological arousal). The purpose of this study was to identify the overall source of influence that contributes to teacher self-efficacy and identify which sources of influence are significant predictors of teacher self-efficacy in dealing with bullying among students in secondary schools. This quantitative research utilizes a correlation method in order to examine the relationship between various sources of influence and teacher sense of efficacy when dealing with bullying among students in secondary schools. Based on the standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ s) indices of direct effects of each predictor variable on teacher self-efficacy in dealing with bullying among students, Mastery Experience contributed the highest direct effect or influence on teacher self-efficacy in dealing with bullying among students, followed by Verbal Persuasion and Contextual Climate. Although there is no documented record of local research that examine the sources of influence on teacher self-efficacy in dealing with bullying among students, one clear finding that arises from this study is that, mastery experience and verbal persuasion are prominent predictors of teacher self-efficacy in dealing with bullying among students in secondary schools. It is recommended that teacher preparation or teacher developmental programs regarding the issue of bullying among students in secondary schools, explicitly address these two influences with specific types of training and educational experiences that focus on mastery building through cognitive and meta cognitive strategies, cultivating self-regulation competencies, and establishing a social support system.

Key words: Teacher Self-Efficacy, Dealing with bully, Secondary school students, Source of influence, Mastery Experience

### Introduction

Bullying is a serious and pervasive problem in schools almost around the world. Surveys indicate that students are bullied in school at some point and bullying is still one of the major social concern in many parts of the world remains a topic often in the news, which highlights the ongoing public concern and continual need for anti-bullying work in schools (Cheng *et al.*, 2010; Farrington & Tofli, 2009; Shakoor *et al.*, 2012; Rigby & Smith, 2011). For those who are the targets of bullying, the incidents can be the most painful experiences of childhood, often leaving lasting scars. Victims can experience anxiety, fear, and even depression for years to come. The possibility of being bullied can cause students to live in a state of fear, focusing on little else. Despite the pervasiveness and potential seriousness of bullying, it is a problem that often escapes detection by teachers. But at the same time, we must acknowledge that students rarely bully victims in front of their teachers. As educators, whether they like it or not, teachers certainly have an important role to play in the prevention of bullying and intervening when incidents of bullying arise, work to combat the phenomenon of bullying. As bullying is a persistent problem, which continues to evolve, dealing with it effectively remains a considerable and complex challenge especially for the teachers.

### Statement of the problem

It is no doubt that, no matter what post the teachers are holding, they still play a crucial role in preventing and managing the widespread problem of bullying (Rigby, 2011; Rigby & Smith, 2011). Despite the increasing interest in teacher self-efficacy over the years, as far as the researcher is able to determine, there is no local or international published research that explores the interplay of sources and their influences on the development of teacher self-efficacy particularly regarding dealing with bullying in secondary school. There is also relatively little information about sources that have an impact on teacher self-efficacy regarding dealing with bullying in school, in the local context or probably in the international context. Henson (2001) stated that prior attempts to conceptualize teacher efficacy "have all but ignored these sources of information and their relationship to efficacy and ultimate behavior" (p.7). Much still remained to be explored, especially in the local culture and educational context. As efficacy sources especially regarding dealing with bullying in school may vary across different cultural and educational settings, and the development of self-efficacy is believed to be situation-specific (Pajares, 1992), the need to undertake a systematic empirical study in the Malaysian context is essential. This is because, with the understanding of