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EFFECTIVE ANTI-BULLYING INTERVENTIONS FOR PROMOTING SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IN MIDSALIP MUNICIPALITY: THEIR IMPACT ON LEARNERS' SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

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ABSTRACT

Bullying in educational settings undermines learners' emotional well-being, academic engagement, and interpersonal development, necessitating proactive and sustained school-level interventions. This descriptive-survey study examined the extent to which teachers in Midsalip Municipality, Zamboanga del Sur, practiced effective anti-bullying interventions and evaluated their perceived impact on learners' social adjustment during the second semester of School Year 2025–2026. Using purposive sampling, data were gathered via a validated 20-item questionnaire-checklist from 22 school administrators and 85 teachers with at least three years of teaching experience across public secondary schools in the district. Four core intervention dimensions were assessed: *helping kids understand bullying*, *keeping the lines of communication open*, *encouraging kids to do what they love*, and *modeling how to treat others with kindness and respect*. Weighted mean and independent t-test analyses revealed that all four intervention dimensions were "Always Practiced" by teachers (overall general mean = 3.66). Among the dimensions, *helping kids understand bullying* ranked highest ($M = 3.72$),

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followed by *keeping the lines of communication open* ($M = 3.67$), *encouraging kids to do what they love* ($M = 3.67$), and *modeling how to treat others with kindness and respect* ($M = 3.64$). Furthermore, the computed t-value (2.424) was below the critical tabular value (2.447) at the 0.05 level of significance, confirming no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of school administrators and teachers. The findings indicate that consistent, whole-school implementation of these anti-bullying strategies fosters safer learning environments and strengthens learners' confidence, empathy, and social adjustment.

Keywords: *Anti-bullying interventions, safe learning environments, learners' social adjustment, school administrators, descriptive survey, Midsalip Municipality*

INTRODUCTION

Bullying remains a pervasive challenge in educational institutions worldwide, manifesting in physical, verbal, social, and digital forms that compromise learners' psychological safety, classroom participation, and academic performance. Rather than being an isolated disciplinary issue, bullying represents a systemic threat to the core mission of schools: cultivating safe, inclusive, and nurturing spaces where learners can grow intellectually and socially. Exposure to repeated intimidation, humiliation, or social exclusion often leads to heightened anxiety, absenteeism, diminished self-esteem, and long-term interpersonal

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difficulties. Consequently, addressing bullying requires proactive educational leadership and sustained, preventative strategies rather than purely reactive punitive measures.

Effective anti-bullying frameworks rely on a whole-school approach involving administrators, educators, parents, and learners. Clear institutional policies, consistent enforcement, and active teacher involvement are essential in establishing behavioral norms and fostering mutual respect. Drawing upon established prevention guidelines (StopBullying.gov, n.d.), four foundational adult-led interventions play a critical role in deterring bullying and supporting learners' socio-emotional growth: (1) *helping kids understand bullying* by defining inappropriate behaviors and reporting mechanisms; (2) *keeping the lines of communication open* through active listening and confidential, supportive dialogue; (3) *encouraging kids to do what they love* by channeling learners' interests and hobbies into confidence-building peer interactions; and (4) *modeling how to treat others with kindness and respect* through daily adult conduct and conflict management.

In the rural municipality of Midsalip, a landlocked community in the province of Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines, where young dependents under 14 years of age comprise nearly 40% of the local population (PhilAtlas, n.d.), public schools serve as primary agents of socialization. While teachers and school heads regularly implement child-protection policies, empirical evaluation of how specific anti-bullying interventions are practiced—and whether school leaders and classroom teachers share aligned perceptions of these practices—remains essential for strengthening school-based child protection programs. Therefore, this study assessed the frequency of practice of the four anti-bullying intervention dimensions in Midsalip

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Municipality, compared the perceptions of school administrators and teachers, and examined how these practices contribute to learners' social adjustment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-survey research design (Padua & de Guzman-Santos, 1998) to systematically describe and compare existing anti-bullying practices among educators in public schools in Midsalip Municipality during the second semester of School Year 2025–2026.

Participants and Sampling

A purposive sampling technique (Calmorin & Calmorin, 1997) was utilized to select respondents who possessed substantial institutional experience. The sample comprised **107 respondents**: **22 school administrators** (principals, school heads, and teachers-in-charge) and **85 teachers** (out of 105 eligible teachers) with at least three years of teaching service in Midsalip District, covering Midsalip National High School, Buloron National High School, Matalang National High School, Golictop National High School, and Pisompongan National High School.

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Research Instrument and Validation

Data were collected using a researcher-developed, 20-item structured questionnaire-checklist grounded in established anti-bullying prevention frameworks. The instrument measured four variables, with five specific behavioral indicators per variable:

1. *Help Kids Understand Bullying* (Items 1–5)
2. *Keep the Lines of Communication Open* (Items 6–10)
3. *Encourage Kids to Do What They Love* (Items 11–15)
4. *Model How to Treat Others with Kindness and Respect* (Items 16–20)

Responses were recorded on a four-point Likert-type continuum: **4 (3.26–4.00)** = *Always Practiced (AP)*; **3 (2.51–3.25)** = *Often Practiced (OP)*; **2 (1.76–2.50)** = *Sometimes Practiced (SP)*; and **1 (1.00–1.75)** = *Never Practiced (NP)*. Content validity and item suitability were established through expert review by the thesis adviser and a dry-run pilot test conducted among master's-level administrators and teachers in the neighboring municipality of Sominot, Zamboanga del Sur, followed by final approval from the Dean of the Graduate School at Southern Mindanao Colleges.

Data Collection and Statistical Analysis

Following formal approval from the Schools Division Superintendent of Zamboanga del Sur and the Public Schools District Supervisor, the researcher personally administered the questionnaires to school administrators and distributed them to teachers following faculty

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meetings, ensuring respondent confidentiality. Data were analyzed using **Weighted Mean** and **Ranking** to determine the level and priority of each intervention indicator, and an **independent-samples t-test** (Freund, 1984) at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance ($t_{\text{crit}} = 2.447$) to test the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the responses of school administrators and teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Extent of Anti-Bullying Interventions Practiced by Teachers

Across all four dimensions, both school administrators and teachers consistently rated the implementation of anti-bullying interventions as *Always Practiced (AP)*:

- **Help Kids Understand Bullying:** This dimension achieved an overall average weighted mean of **3.72** (*Always Practiced*), with administrators rating it at 3.66 and teachers at 3.77. The highest-ranked indicator was *explaining the different forms of bullying to help learners recognize inappropriate behaviors* ($M = 3.75$; administrators = 3.64, teachers = 3.86), followed by *clarifying school policies and rules regarding bullying* ($M = 3.73$) and *guiding learners in identifying bullying behaviors in school settings* ($M = 3.72$). Discussing the harmful effects of bullying on victims, offenders, and bystanders ($M = 3.71$) and conducting awareness-raising classroom discussions ($M = 3.68$) were also consistently practiced. These results

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demonstrate that educators prioritize establishing shared cognitive awareness and explicit behavioral boundaries early on.

- **Keep the Lines of Communication Open:** This dimension obtained an average weighted mean of **3.67** (*Always Practiced*; administrators = 3.65, teachers = 3.69). *Listening attentively to learners who reported bullying-related concerns* ranked first ($M = 3.71$), followed closely by *maintaining confidentiality when handling reports* ($M = 3.69$), *creating safe opportunities for learners to discuss their feelings* ($M = 3.68$), and *communicating regularly with parents regarding bullying concerns* ($M = 3.68$). Fostering an expressive classroom atmosphere ranked fifth ($M = 3.58$) yet remained firmly within the *Always Practiced* range, underscoring teachers' commitment to psychological safety and home-school collaboration.

- **Encourage Kids to Do What They Love:** Rated as *Always Practiced* (administrators = 3.58, teachers = 3.65), this dimension was led by *supporting learners in participating in activities matching their interests and talents* ($M = 3.73$) and *motivating learners to pursue positive interests that foster personal growth* ($M = 3.66$). Assisting learners in setting aspiration-related goals ($M = 3.64$), discovering activities that build positive peer relationships ($M = 3.56$), and engaging in confidence-enhancing hobbies ($M = 3.50$) were likewise consistently observed. Channeling learners' energy into constructive pursuits builds self-efficacy and protective peer networks.

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- **Model How to Treat Others with Kindness and Respect:** This dimension garnered an overall average mean of **3.64** (*Always Practiced*; administrators = 3.59, teachers = 3.68). Top indicators included *reinforcing behaviors reflecting compassion and understanding* ($M = 3.72$), *treating all learners fairly regardless of background or ability* ($M = 3.67$), and *showing empathy toward learners experiencing difficulties* ($M = 3.64$), followed by *demonstrating respectful communication* ($M = 3.60$) and *encouraging peer kindness* ($M = 3.55$). Consistent with Rivera and Sembrano (1980) and De Guzman (1992), educator modeling establishes a classroom climate grounded in mutual respect and emotional rapport.

2. Comparability and Hypothesis Testing Between Administrators and Teachers

Table 1 summarizes the comparative rankings and t-test analysis across the four intervention dimensions between school administrators and teachers.

Anti-Bullying Intervention Variable	School Administrators (M)	Teachers (M)	Combined Mean	Verbal Equivalent	Rank
Keep the Lines of Communication Open	3.66	3.77	**3.72**	Always Practiced (AP)	1
Encourage Kids to Do What They Love	3.66	3.68	**3.67**	Always Practiced (AP)	2.5

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Anti-Bullying Intervention Variable	School Administrators (M)	Teachers (M)	Combined Mean	Verbal Equivalent	Rank
Help Kids Understand Bullying	3.65	3.69	**3.67**	Always Practiced (AP)	2.5
Model How to Treat Others with Kindness and Respect	3.59	3.68	**3.64**	Always Practiced (AP)	4
Overall General Mean	**3.64**	**3.71**	**3.66**	**Always Practiced (AP)**	—

(Note: Individual domain analyses also reflect high consistency across dimensions, with overall domain means ranging from 3.62 to 3.72.)

The independent t-test comparing the pooled responses of school administrators ($SD = 0.041$) and teachers ($SD = 0.051$) yielded a computed **t-value of 2.424**, which is lower than the critical tabular value of **2.447** at the 5% level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis was **accepted**. Similar to the findings of Alcasid (2016) and Lague (2005), this statistical alignment indicates that school leaders and teachers hold congruent perceptions regarding the consistent execution of school-wide behavioral and instructional practices.

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3. Impact on Learners' Social Adjustment

The sustained implementation of these four anti-bullying interventions directly supports learners' social adjustment—defined as their capacity to interact constructively, regulate emotions, and form healthy peer relationships. When teachers clearly define unacceptable behaviors, listen confidentially, nurture individual talents, and model empathy, learners experience reduced fear of victimization and greater interpersonal trust. These practices cultivate cooperation, peer respect, and smoother adaptation to school routines.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

1. Public school teachers in Midsalip Municipality consistently practice effective anti-bullying interventions across all four evaluated dimensions—*helping kids understand bullying*, *keeping the lines of communication open*, *encouraging kids to do what they love*, and *modeling how to treat others with kindness and respect*—all falling within the *Always Practiced* category.

2. Among the four variables, cognitive and communicative interventions—specifically *helping kids understand bullying* and *keeping the lines of communication open*—serve as the most prominent frontline strategies, while modeling kindness and encouraging talent-based hobbies remain consistently integrated into daily school life.

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3. School administrators and teachers share statistically similar perceptions regarding the frequency and implementation of these anti-bullying interventions ($t = 2.424 < 2.447, p > 0.05$), reflecting strong institutional alignment between school leadership and classroom instruction.

4. Consistent teacher-led anti-bullying practices contribute meaningfully to a safe learning environment that enhances learners' confidence, empathy, peer relationships, and overall social adjustment.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Explicit Anti-Bullying Education:** Teachers should continue conducting structured classroom discussions that clearly explain all forms of bullying (including cyberbullying), reinforce school child-protection rules, and empower learners to recognize and safely report inappropriate behaviors.

2. **Institutionalize Safe and Confidential Reporting Channels:** Schools should maintain accessible, confidential reporting mechanisms and attentive listening protocols so learners feel secure expressing concerns without fear of retaliation or judgment.

3. **Expand Interest-Based Co-Curricular Programs:** School administrators and teachers should broaden clubs, sports, arts, and hobby-based initiatives that match learners' talents and interests, thereby boosting self-confidence and positive peer bonding.

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4. **Sustain Adult Role-Modeling and Professional Development:** Educators and school heads should continuously model compassionate, fair, and respectful communication while integrating social-emotional learning and conflict-resolution training into regular In-Service Training (INSET) programs.

5. **Future Research:** Subsequent studies may incorporate direct learner self-reports and longitudinal behavioral metrics to further quantify the causal impact of specific school interventions on learners' academic and social outcomes.

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