



# Empowering Students to Report Bullying Behavior

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<https://cehs.unl.edu/empowerment>, <https://www.education.ne.gov/safety/>

## Introduction

- One way to decrease bullying behaviors is by improving school climate as it is malleable and affects student's outcomes academically, socially, and behaviorally (Wang & Degol, 2017).
- The US Department of Education found that 57% of bullying situations stop when a peer intervenes on behalf of targets (Hawkins, Pepler & Craig, 2001).
- For students who intervene, their motive for defending targets was because they believed the bullying would stop if they intervened (Pöyhönen et al., 2012). For students who did not intervene, they did not expect the bullying to improve even if they responded to it (Pöyhönen et al., 2012).
- This study examined why students do not report bullying behavior and whether or not a positive school environment may encourage students to report bullying.

## Methods

- Participants for this study were collected from an on-going research project ( $n = 261$ ); a Tier III, one-on-one, three-hour cognitive-behavioral intervention tailored to specific bullying referrals. The sample was comprised of students ages ranging from 7 to 18 years old ( $M = 11.45$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ), residing in a Midwestern city. White= 52.6% , Black/African American = 11.2%, Latino/Hispanic = 10.6%, Asian American and Middle Eastern = 2%, Native American = 5.3%, Biracial = 13.8%, other = 4.5%. (Males=161, Female = 101).

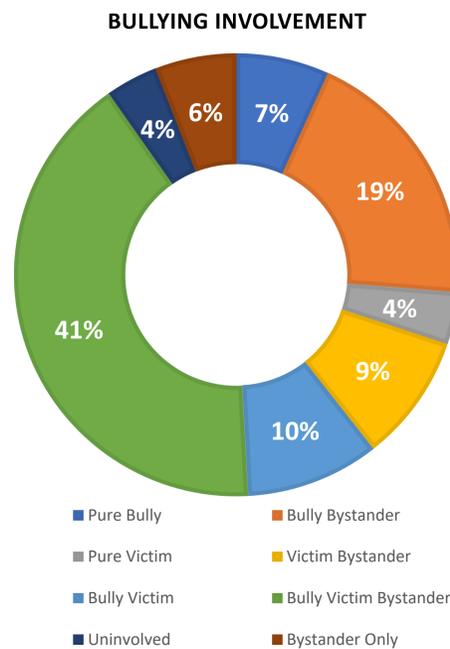
### Measures

- *Thoughts About School* (TAS; Song & Swearer, 1999): a 34-item measure of student's perceptions of school climate related to bullying. ( $\alpha = .80$ )
- *Bully Survey Student Version* (BYS-S): a four part, 46-question survey that queries students regarding their experiences with bullying, perceptions of bullying, and attitudes toward bullying (Swearer, 2001).

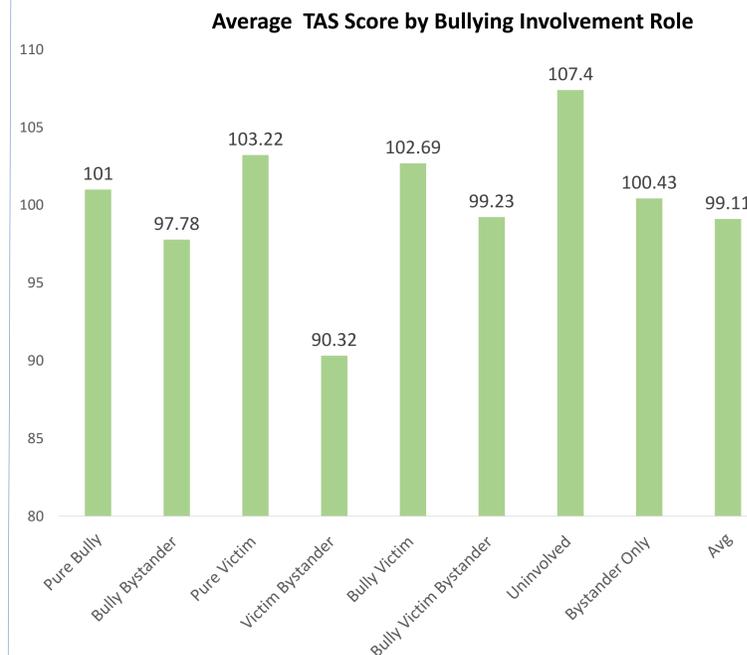
### Analyses

- Descriptive statistics were conducted to determine participants' views towards their school according to their role in the bullying dynamic (no involvement, bully perpetrator, bystander, or victim).
- Univariate analyses of variance were conducted to test for significant differences between attitudes towards bullying and their bullying roles. Post hoc mean comparisons were conducted to compare individual means.
- A regression analysis was conducted with students who witnessed bullying, their attitude towards school and how they responded.
- Participants responses were thematically analyzed and grouped into the following themes: Telling an adult, not taking action, talking to victim, confronting perpetrator, and reinforcing bully perpetrator.

## Results



**Figure 1.** Demographic breakdown by bullying roles.

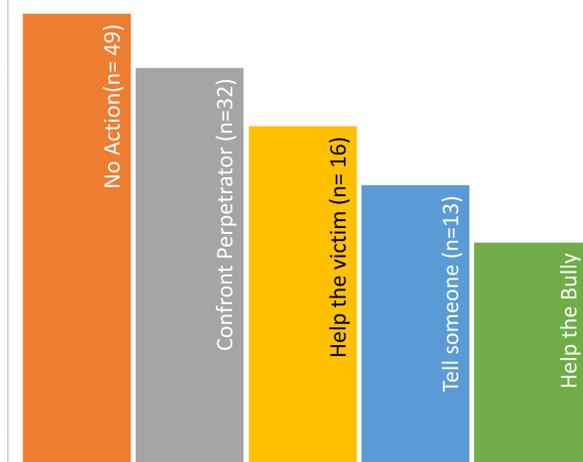


**Figure 2:** Univariate analysis of variance found significant differences between attitudes towards school and bullying roles with bystander information included ( $F(7, 228) = 2.73$ ,  $p = .010$ )

Bullying Status (with bystander info)		Mean Difference	SD	Sig.
Victim-Bystander	Pure Bully	-10.68	4.07	0.009
	Bully-Bystander	-7.46	3.21	0.021
	Pure Victim	-12.90	4.90	0.009
	Bully-Victim	-12.37	3.69	0.001
	Bully-Victim-Bystander	-8.91	2.92	0.003
	Uninvolved	-17.12	4.90	0.001
Uninvolved	Bystander only	-10.11	4.23	0.018
	Pure Bully	6.44	5.16	0.214
	Bully-Bystander	9.66	4.51	0.034

**Table 1:** Post hoc analysis were conducted to compare individual mean difference in average attitudes towards school and student involvement. Results indicate there were no significant differences in any comparisons beside victim bystanders. Victim Bystanders were significantly different in their average attitude towards school compared to every role.

### Qualitative themes and actions of students who witnessed Bullying



**Figure 3:** There was a significant relationship between student's average attitude towards school and the action they would take according to the five themes determined ( $F(4, 234) r = .42$ ,  $p = 0.031$ ).

## Results

- Results indicated that students who were not involved in bullying held the most positive attitudes towards school ( $M = 107.44$ ,  $SD = 9.13$ ).
- Students who reported witnessing bullying and being victimized held the most negative attitudes toward school ( $M = 90.31$ ,  $SD = 14.06$ ).
- Univariate analysis of variance found significant differences between attitudes towards school and bullying roles when bystander information was included ( $F(7, 228) = 2.73$ ,  $p = .010$ ).
- Post hoc mean comparisons revealed that average attitudes towards school were only significant for victim bystanders.
- There was a significant relationship between student's attitudes towards school and the action they would take in addressing the bullying they witnessed ( $F(4, 234) = .42$ ,  $p = 0.031$ ).

## Discussion/Implications

- Not taking action was the most common response taken by students who witnessed bullying. Results suggest a relationship between how students perceive their school and their likelihood of reporting bullying.
- Results from this study extend the existing literature on school climate and bullying by finding that positive perceptions of school impact students' decisions to report bullying.
- Results indicate that victim bystanders had the lowest perceptions of their school (TAS = 90.32) indicating a subgroup of the bullying dynamic that is not frequently studied, but critical to address.
- Future research should focus on specific subgroups like victim bystanders and outcomes associated with bullying. These students who are bullied and observe bullying may feel powerless in finding support or standing up. Further, these were the students who had the lowest perception of their school climate, indicating they may be the ones less likely to report and find support for bullying behavior.
- Other factors in addition to perceptions of school that contribute to a student's decision to report incidents of bullying should be explored such as gender identity, race, kindness and bravery, self-efficacy, confidence, or other possible contributing factors.

### Strategies for Educators:

- Build relationships with students using interventions such as "Check and Connect."
- Use an anonymous reporting system and screening system.
- Have a clear anti-bullying policy and response system.
- Apply policies and procedures fairly.