



Reasons why students perpetrate bullying and implications for intervention

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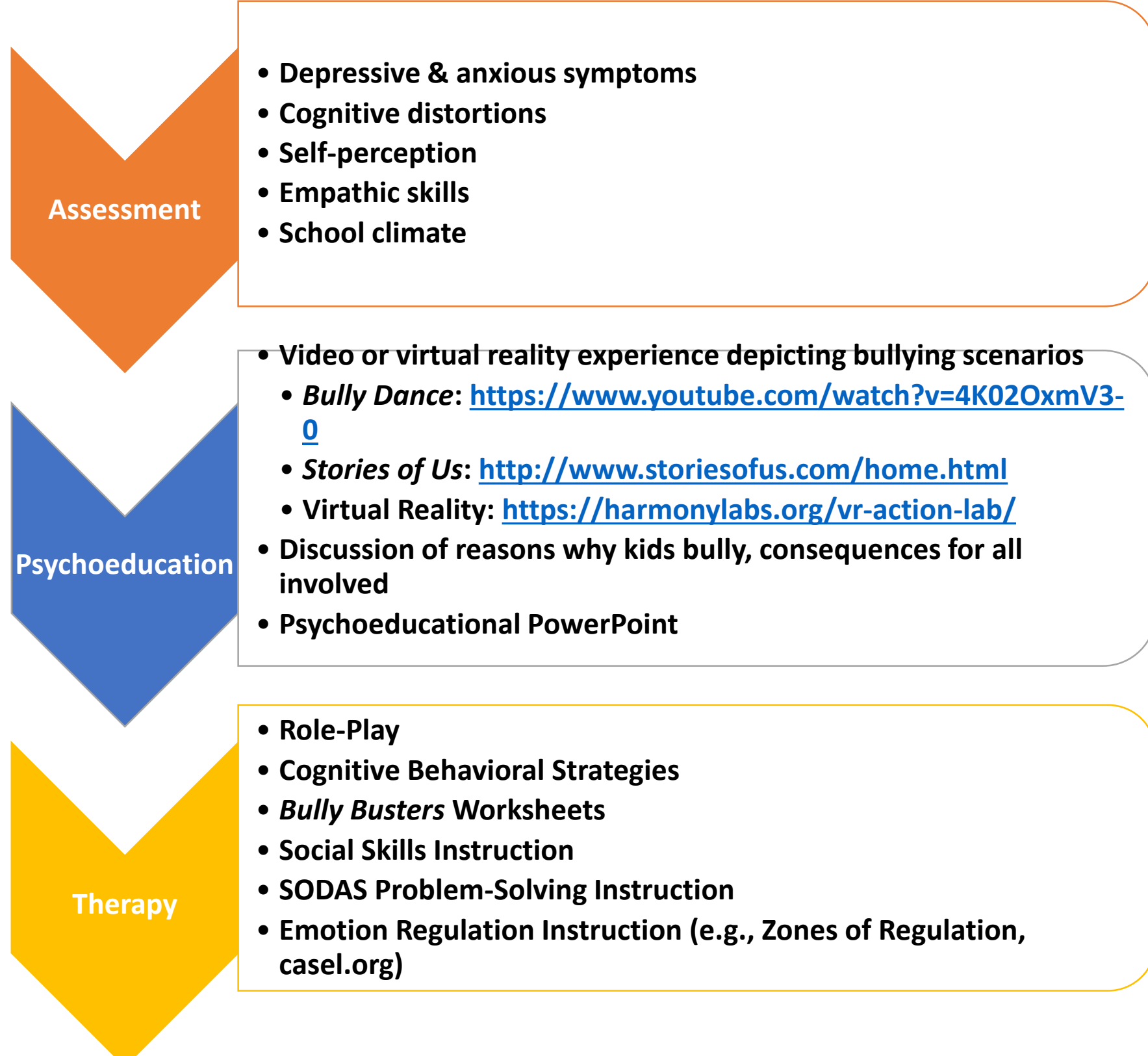
Introduction

- Many students are involved in the bullying dynamic in some capacity, with approximately 10-20% of students reporting victimization and 8-18% of students reporting bullying others (Swearer, Collins, Fluke, & Strawhun, 2012).
- The consequences of involvement in bullying can be serious for all involved, but are typically most severe for the perpetrators of bullying and can include negative behavioral, mental health, and social outcomes, which include a greater risk of involvement in antisocial behaviors (Swearer et al., 2001; Tfofi et al., 2001).
- With such serious consequences linked with bullying perpetration, understanding the reasons students report bullying others is important for both prevention and intervention.
- Rigby (2005) assessed a sample of Australian school children and found an association between self-reports of perpetrating bullying and negative attitudes towards victims. The present study builds upon these findings and analyzes responses from students who report bullying other students when asked to indicate all of the reasons they have bullied others, as well as the main reason for bullying others.

Method

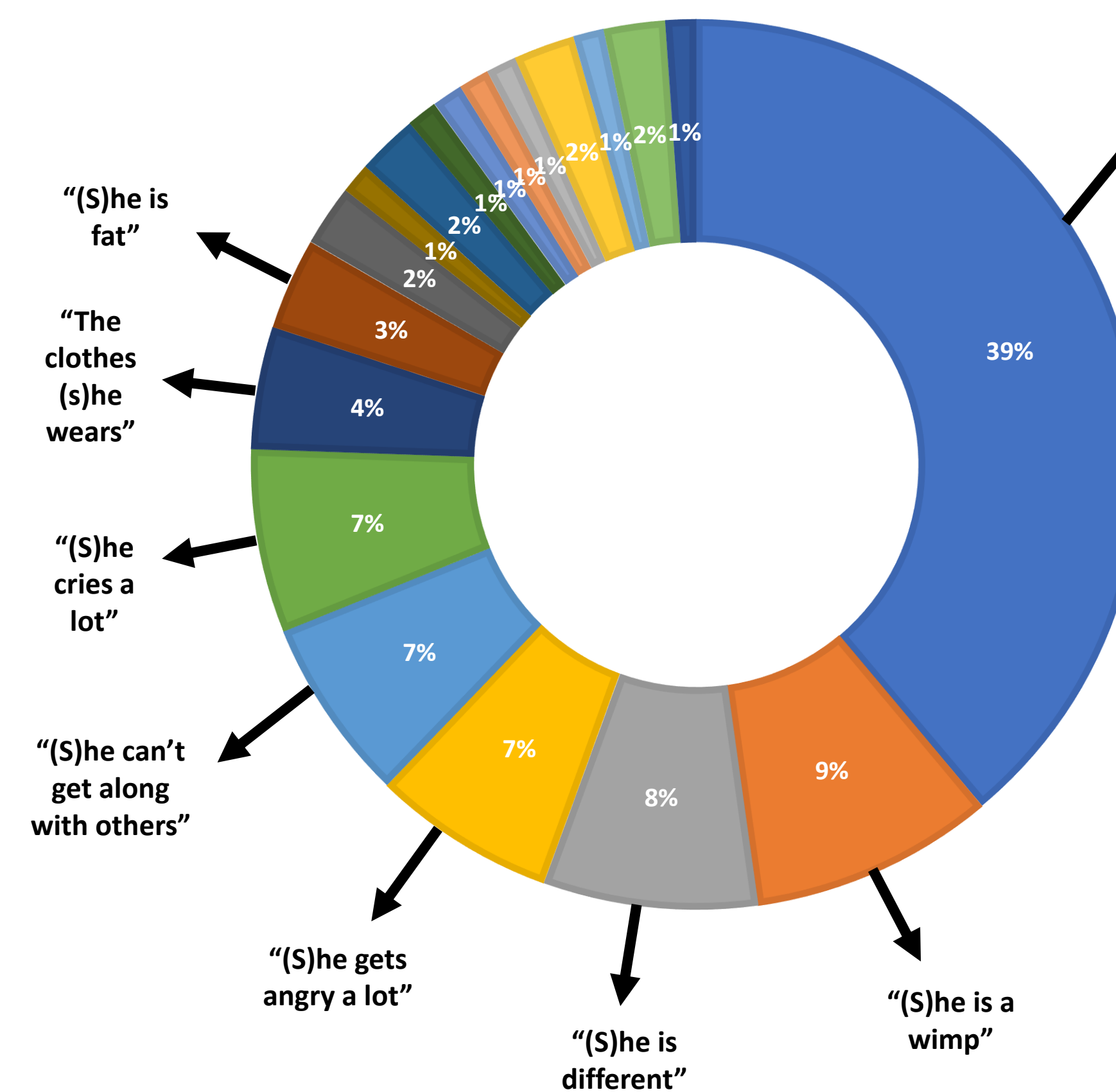
- The present study's sample consists of school-age students (2nd-10th grade, 61% male, 11.74 years old on average) referred to a Tier-III bullying intervention program for perpetrating bullying behaviors.
- The intervention program is assessment-driven and utilizes various measures to gather information from the participants.
- Participants were asked about their experiences as a victim, bystander, and as a perpetrator of bullying. The majority of participants identified both perpetrating and being the victim of bullying (i.e., bully-victim).
- After the intervention, the student, their guardians, teachers, and the interventionist meet to discuss assessment results and further recommendations.

Intervention Components



Results

SELF-REPORTED MAIN REASONS FOR BULLYING



"Other"

- **Victim did something the perpetrator did not like**
 - "He was saying rude things about other people"
 - "[They] talk stuff on me"
 - "She was bullying me first"
- **Victim possessed a quality the perpetrator did not like**
 - "They were being annoying"
 - "[They] are always trying to show off"
- **Perpetrator felt angry**
 - "I was just mad at them"
 - "[I was] taking my anger out on someone else"
- **Perpetrator thought the bullying was a joke**
 - "I thought we were friends and it was a joke"
 - "[There] wasn't a purpose, we were just messing around"

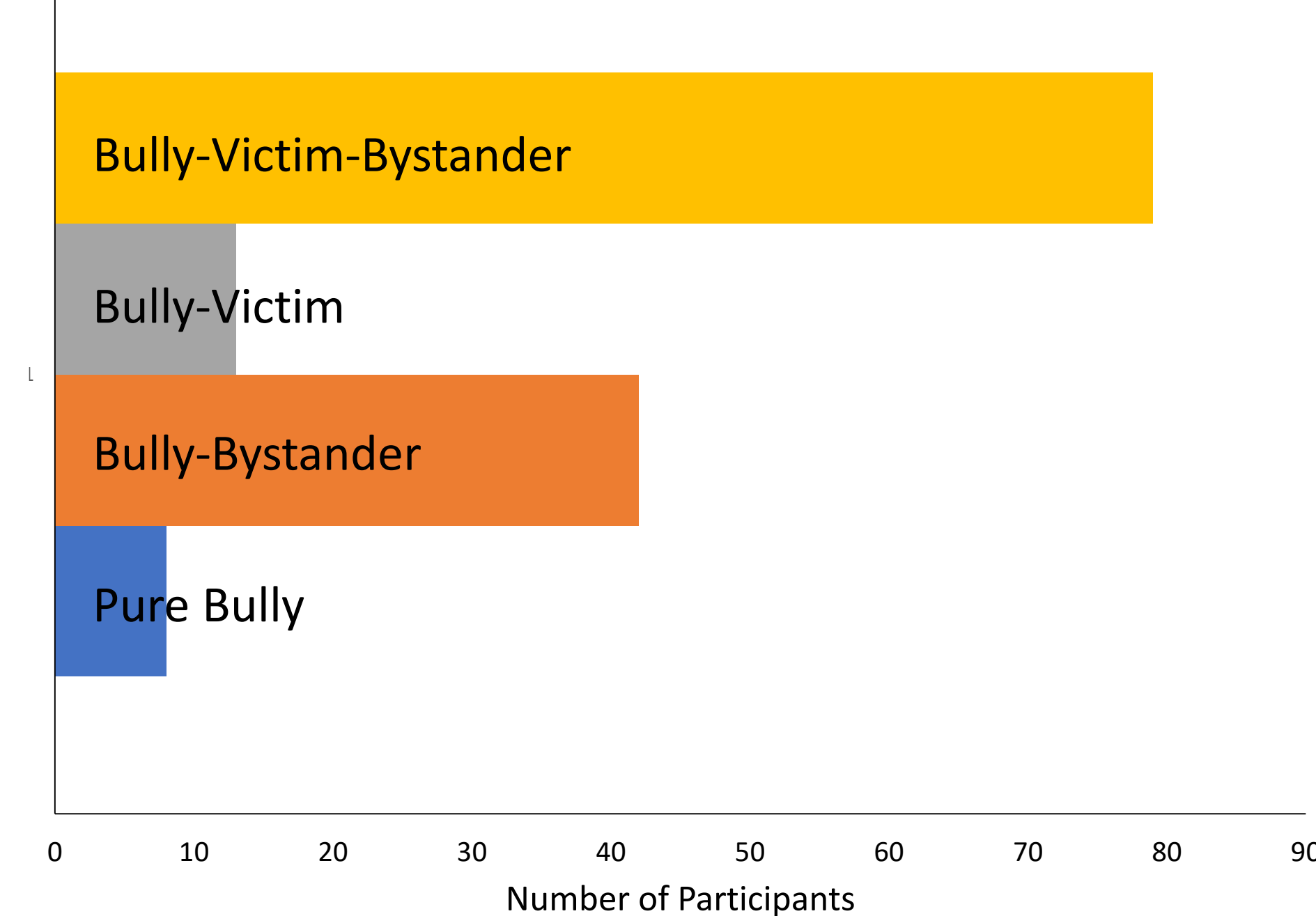
PARENT-REPORTED REASONS FOR STUDENT'S BULLYING

1. Child was sticking up for themselves
2. They get angry a lot
3. Child wanted attention
4. They can't get along with others

TEACHER-REPORTED REASONS FOR STUDENT'S BULLYING

1. They are different
2. They can't get along with others
3. They get angry a lot
4. Victim had special needs

SELF-REPORTED ROLE IN BULLYING



Implications

- These results are consistent with Rigby (2005)'s findings in that characteristics of the victim are often cited as the main reason for perpetrating bullying behavior.
- Additionally, the most frequently cited main reason for perpetrating bullying was the victim doing something mean. This is likely associated with the finding that the majority of participants identify as bully-victims.
- These reasons support the idea of individualizing bullying interventions in a school setting. A student who perpetrates bullying because they are seeking revenge may respond better to problem-solving instruction, whereas a student who is perpetrating bullying because the victim has a quality they do not like (e.g., they are annoying or "wimpy") may benefit from interventions that promote empathic skills.
- School staff can help students identify the reasons why they bully by processing with the student individually to reflect on incidents after they occur. It is important for staff to have good rapport with students and have these discussions in non-threatening ways.

