



# Bullying is in the Eye of the Beholder: Differences Between Student and Adult Attitudes

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## Introduction

- Approaching bullying prevention through a social-ecological perspective provides a multifaceted and theoretical approach to understanding the complexity of bullying involvement (Swearer et al., 2012)
- Studies have found individual factors such as cognitive bias towards bullying to be predictive of bullying involvement (Espelage et al., 2018).
- Studies also found parenting styles and teacher practices significantly predicted involvement in bullying (Lester et al., 2017).
- Using the social-ecological model as a framework, the current study investigated how teacher, parent, and student attitudes toward bullying were related to student bullying behaviors.

## Methods

- Participants for this study were part of a larger on-going study of a Tier III, one-on-one, three-hour cognitive-behavioral intervention.

**Table: 1** Participant Demographic Data

	Sex	Median Age	Sample Size
Student	Female (N=104)	12	276
	Male (N=172)		
Teacher	Female (N=198)	Median: 36-45	231
	Male (N=33)		
Parent	Female (N=157)	Median: 26-35	189
	Male (N=32)		
Total			695

### Measures

- The Bully Survey* is a four-part survey that queries students, parents, and teachers regarding their experiences with bullying, perceptions of bullying, and attitudes toward bullying. For this study Part D, *The Bully Attitudinal Scale (BAS)* was used to determine participants' attitudes towards bullying (Swearer & Cary, 2003).
  - (BYS-S; Swearer, 2001) Student Version ( $\alpha = .78$ )
  - (BYS-P; Swearer, 2001) Parent Version ( $\alpha = .75$ )
  - (BYS-T; Swearer, 2003) Teacher Version ( $\alpha = .72$ )

### Analyses

- Descriptive statistics were conducted to determine frequency of student involvement in bullying.
- Univariate analysis of variance were conducted to test for significant differences between attitudes towards bullying and bullying roles.
- Post-Hoc mean comparisons were conducted to compare individual means.

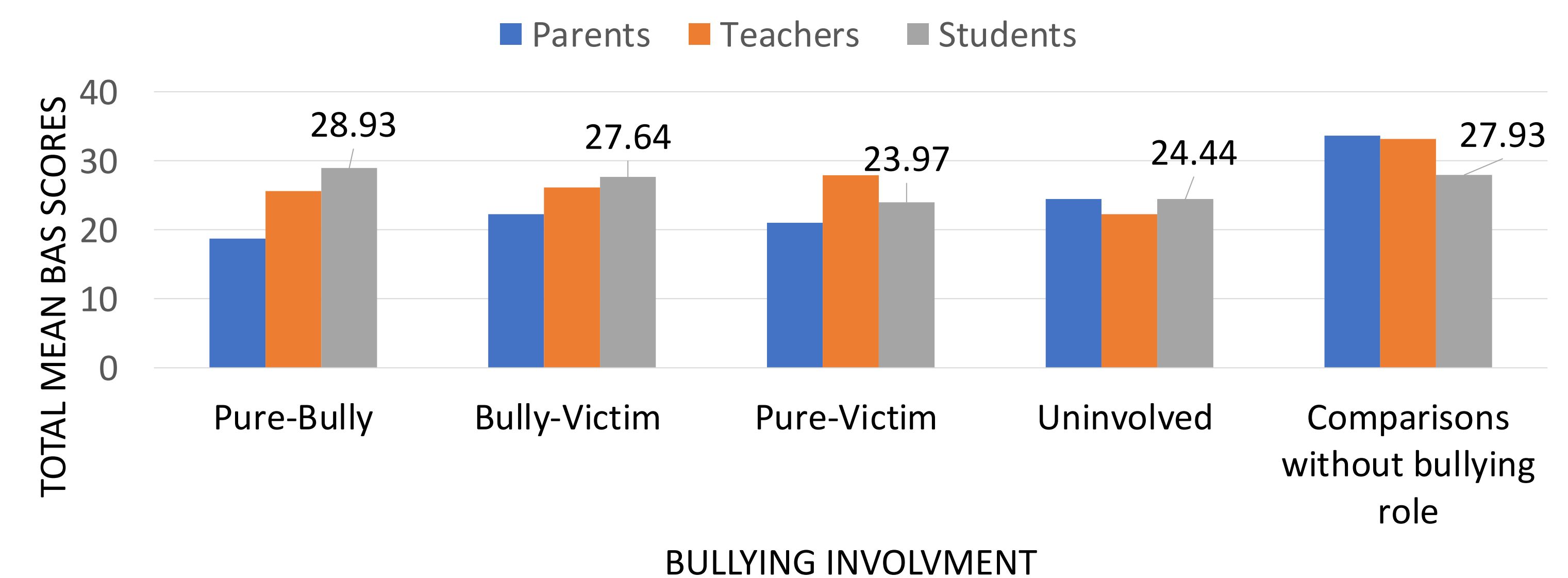
## Results

**Table 2:** Post-Hoc analysis of variance comparisons of mean BAS scores

Respondent		Mean Difference	SD	Sig.
Student	Teacher	-5.33	.48	<0.001
	Parent	-5.80	.50	<0.001
Teacher	Student	5.33	.48	<0.001
	Parent	-.464	.52	1.00
Parent	Student	5.79	.50	<0.001
	Teacher	.464	.52	1.000

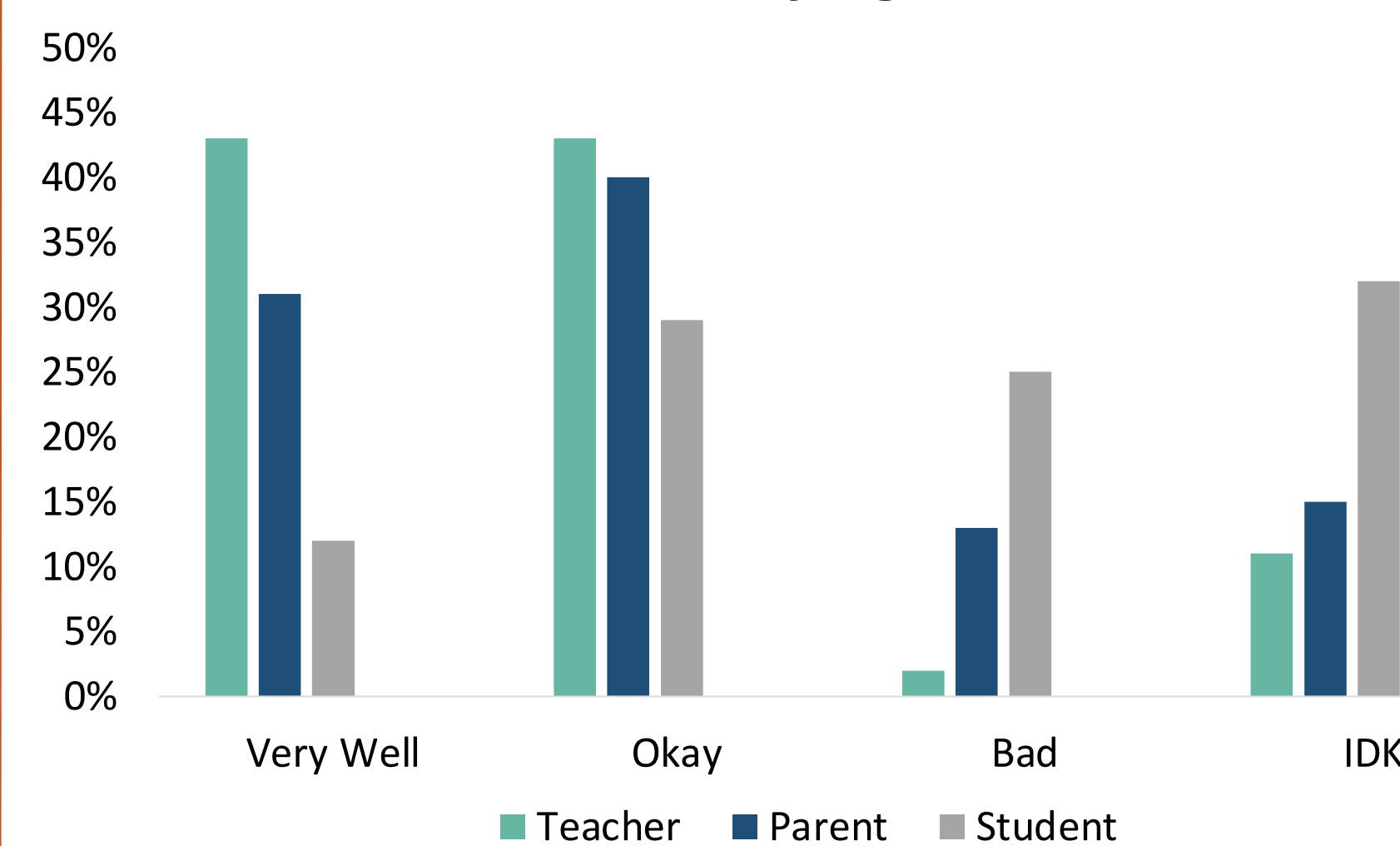
*Note:* Univariate analysis revealed significant differences in attitudes toward bullying,  $F(2,694) = 87.69$ ,  $MSE = 29.14$ ,  $p < .001$ . Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealed students' attitudes towards bullying ( $M=27.93$ ,  $SD = .658$ ) were significantly lower compared to parents' ( $M=33.63$ ,  $SD=3.78$ ) and teachers' ( $M=33.16$ ,  $SD= 4.96$ )

Comparisons of Mean BAS by Student Involvement



**Figure 1:** Univariate analysis of variance revealed that student attitudes towards bullying differed significantly based on their involvement,  $F(3, 268) = 4.67$ ,  $MSE = 59.13$ ,  $p = .003$ . Bonferroni post-hoc test revealed that pure bullies ( $M= 28.93$ ,  $SD= 7.20$ ) and bully-victims ( $M=27.64$ ,  $SD =7.52$ ) had significantly higher pro-bullying attitudes than pure victims ( $M=23.97$ ,  $SD= 8.84$ ) and uninvolved students ( $M= 24.44$ ,  $SD= 7.20$ ).

## How Well did the School Handle the Bullying?



**Figure 2:** Percentage of selected responses between parents', students', and teachers' perceptions when responding to the question, "how well did the school handle the bullying situation the student was involved in?" (IDK= "I don't know")

- When parent, student, and teacher attitudes towards bullying were compared, univariate analysis revealed significant differences in attitudes toward bullying,  $F(2,694) = 87.69$ ,  $MSE = 29.14$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealed students' pro-attitudes towards bullying ( $M=27.93$ ,  $SD = .658$ ) were significantly lower compared to parents ( $M=33.63$ ,  $SD=3.78$ ) and teachers ( $M= 33.16$ ,  $SD= 4.96$ ).
- Descriptive statistics found that 12% of bully-victims and 31% of their parents felt their school handled bullying situations well, compared to 30% of bully perpetrators and 31% of their parents.

## Discussion/Implications

- Results from this study support the extant literature by replicating that students' positive attitudes towards bullying are related to bullying perpetration.
- The results found that parents and teachers had significantly pro-bullying attitudes towards bullying compared to students.
- Differences in bullying attitudes between students, teachers, and parents suggest that current bullying intervention efforts should address differences in attitudes among adults and students.
- This study highlights the importance of education and training for parents and teachers.
- Consistent messages across adults and students may ensure consistent anti-bullying messages, which can reinforce the importance of creating healthy school environments.