



School Aggression and Bullying

National Research Report:

Pembroke Secondary, Santa Lucia Secondary, Cospicua Middle School, Naxxar Middle School

Funded by the European Union



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1. PROJECT BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

The incidence of violence and aggression in schools has been frequently debated in recent years and has become one of the most serious challenges faced by schools in Europe. Aggressive behaviour and bullying accompany the daily lives of a large percentage of school children, leaving lasting consequences for their future development, social interaction and growth. School bullying and aggression are phenomena that are not confined to one country or region, but are international in scope, making them a problem studied by scientists and experts from around the world. Dealing with the problem itself is a challenge that requires comprehensive action, targeting all participants in cases of violence, and collaboration at all organisational levels.

Although there have been numerous fruitful initiatives, the problem persists for a number of interrelated reasons, such as lack of coherent nation-wide policies, adequate training and support to teachers and parents, the absence of positive role models, legitimating effect of the media, unhealthy political climate, etc. New approaches are needed to render aggression unacceptable, to help children deal with their emotions, to create a culture of non - violence and to empower schools and societies by providing them with new conflict management methods.

Nevertheless, it is also worth noting the existence and application of various prevention programmes and initiatives, which can be labelled as good practices in the field. Awareness - raising campaigns, teacher-parent cooperation, capacity building initiatives for both school personnel and students, access to support services and counselling, etc., have all proved to be not only invaluable components of comprehensive prevention and intervention programmes, but have also pointed the way to a more positive school climate and a culture that is safe, fair, and stimulating for staff and students alike.

In 2015, three organisations from Hungary, Bulgaria and Malta joined forces to launch a pilot project with the **aim of developing and testing a community - based complex school programme for effective prevention and treatment of aggression and bullying, which is based on alternative conflict resolution methods**. The long-term goal of Partners Hungary Foundation, Partners Bulgaria Foundation and SOS Malta is to achieve cultural change in schools through the dissemination of non - violent solutions, the introduction of alternative conflict resolution practices, the prevention of bullying and school conflicts and a decrease in aggressive and other risk-related behaviour.

Special thanks and consideration goes towards the people at the Anti-Bullying Service in Malta, who collaborated and contributed actively in the implementation of this project and research.

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2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research being conducted for the final report will entail an initial base line and final end line assessment of the level and scope of aggressive behaviour and bullying in six pilot schools – one in Hungary, one in Bulgaria and four in Malta, which have expressed readiness to participate in the ASAP project and more importantly, to implement a model programme for prevention and effective management of incidents of bullying or aggressive behaviour. A starting point for this work was to examine the situation prior to the intervention, identifying the dimensions of the problem and collecting the opinions of teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents.

More precisely, the study in the target schools aims at:

- examining the overall climate in the participating pilot schools in Hungary, Bulgaria and Malta;
- gathering data on the prevalence and different forms of aggression and bullying in the schools;
- identifying the level of awareness of teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents of the problems at hand;
- examining the most common locations where incidents of aggression and bullying take place;
- gathering data on the level of and mechanisms for reporting of such incidents at school level and to what extent they are being used by students, schools staff and parents;
- outline the level of preparedness and capacity of those involved to prevent or intervene effectively.

This initial phase of the research serves as a baseline assessment that is later complemented with an end - line assessment as an attempt to capture the changes that will have occurred as a result of the implementation of the project and the model program to prevent and reduce bullying at school.

In addition to evaluating the project's impact, the research will provide data to compare results related to the scope of the problem and the perception and attitude of key stakeholders at school level across different school settings in three different countries. Therefore, the results should be helpful to the administration of the participating schools in shaping an effective response to bullying and should help the project partners in formulating evidence-based recommendations for policy improvement in the respective countries.

The proposed research methodology is designed to examine the variety of themes of interest to the project partners and school administration. Thus, the methodology designed by project

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partners can be promoted as a useful tool to other interested civil society organisations and teaching institutions, who may address the existence of similar situations of their own.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Definitions

When it comes to concepts such as aggression, conflict or bullying, there are various definitions; however, the ASAP project partners have decided to use concepts that are generally accepted by researchers and practitioners. Consequently, the working definitions for the research being carried out for this report are as follows:

Aggressive behaviour

Aggressive behaviour is identifiable through negative action, such as when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another. The generally accepted definition of aggressive behaviour is that ‘aggression is any behaviour enacted with the intention to harm another person who is motivated to avoid that harm’.¹ One characteristic of aggression would be the fact that it is an intentional behaviour and not accidental, as it is intended to hurt another person. As there are more than one person involved it also becomes a social behaviour.²

Types of aggressive behaviour:

- physical aggression, i.e. hitting, biting, kicking, stabbing;
- verbal aggression, i.e. screaming, yelling, swearing, name calling;
- relational aggression, i.e. when the behaviour is targeting another’s person reputation or relationships;
- direct aggression, i.e. when the targeted person is physically present
- indirect aggression, i.e. when the targeted person is not present.
- active aggression, i.e. when the aggressor reacts in a hurtful manner;
- passive aggression, i.e. when the aggressor fails to respond in a positive manner, such as intentionally not delivering an important message to the targeted person and withholding information;

¹ Wayne A Warburton and Craig A Anderson, ‘Social Psychology of Aggression’, *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd edition, Volume 1, p. 373, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.24002-6>.

² Brad J. Bushman and L. Rowell Huesmann, ‘Aggression’, *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 2010, DOI: 10.1002/9780470561119.socpsy002023.

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- displaced aggression, i.e. when a substitute target becomes the target of aggressive behaviour.³

Bullying behaviour

The most widely accepted definition of bullying behaviour was coined by Dan Olweus who is also the creator of the first prevention programme, Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme, in Norway. The definition proposed here revolves around three characteristics, which distinguishes bullying behaviour from other negative or unwanted behaviour: ‘a student is being bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students⁴ and there is an imbalance of power between the actors involved⁵’.

Negative action, such as when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another, falls under what was previously mentioned as aggressive behaviour. Thus, repeated bullying can be considered to be aggressive behaviour, also repeated over time and there is an imbalance of power between the persons involved.

As there are different categories of aggressive behaviour, bullying also can be classified in different categories, however all it often happens that an incident can be a case of verbal, physical or sexual bullying at the same time.

Types of bullying

a. Direct and indirect bullying

Direct bullying – bullying behaviour which involves a face to face interaction with the target.

Indirect bullying – bullying behaviour when there is manipulation of social relationships to hurt (gossiping, spreading rumours) or excluding the individual being victimised.⁶

b. Types of bullying behaviour

³ Johnie J. Allen and Craig A. Anderson, *Aggression and Violence: Definitions and Distinctions*, p. 11, <https://public.psych.iastate.edu/caa/abstracts/2015-2019/16AA.pdf>.

⁴ Dan Olweus, *Bullying at School What We Know and What We Can Do*, (Oxford:Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1993), p 9.

⁵ The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, ‘Research Study on Violence, Harassment and Bullying in Schools A qualitative perspective’, 2016, p. 11. <http://victimsupport.org/mt/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Report-Violence-Schools.pdf>.

⁶ Wendy Craig¹, Yossi Harel-Fisch, Haya Fogel-Grinvald, Suzanne Dostaler¹ et.al., ‘A cross-national profile of bullying and victimization among adolescents in 40 countries’, *International Journal for Public Health* 54 (2009), p. 217, DOI 10.1007/s00038-009-5413-9

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- Physical bullying includes any physical act which results in hurting or injuring the target or any of his possessions.⁷
- Verbal bullying occurs when the use of rumours, name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation and racist remarks are involved.⁸
- Cyber bullying includes all type of action conducted through the use of technology or social media, such as: flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, trickery or cyberstalking.⁹
- **Discriminatory bullying or racial and religious discrimination and sexual bullying.** This is defined by Esoh Elame as a form of abuse and victimisation linked to disability, gender, ethnic origin, religion and sexual orientation that occurs repeatedly over time by one or more companions. This definition encompasses as an umbrella term those types of bullying that are referred to as either religious and racial discrimination or sexual bullying which happens when ‘sexuality or gender is used as a weapon by boys or girls towards other boys or girls’.¹⁰

3.2. Thematic areas

Based on the objectives of the research, six important themes related to bullying and aggression have been identified and considered important to assess within the research framework, namely:

- School climate, including the quality of relationships between students and between the students and teachers; the perception of school atmosphere – safety, friendliness, respect for human rights and the availability of efficient conflict resolution mechanisms.
- Awareness of the existence of bullying and aggression at school, their level and scope and existing knowledge and understanding about the difference between them.
- Frequency, level and scope of aggressive behaviour and bullying at school.
- Reporting of cases of bullying and aggression.
- School support and response to bullying and aggression.
- Existing school capacity to deal with aggression and bullying and students and teachers needs in regard to prevention and more efficient management of bullying.

The design of the questionnaire included the following questions:

⁷ The Ministry for Education and Employment, ‘Addressing Bullying Behaviour in schools’ policy, 2014, p. 12

⁸ *ibid*, p. 12 .

⁹ Nancy Willard, ‘Educator’s Guide to Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats’, Center for Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet, p. 2,
<https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Other-Resources/School-Safety/Safe-and-Supportive-Learning/Anti-Harassment-Intimidation-and-Bullying-Resource/Educator-s-Guide-Cyber-Safety.pdf.aspx>

¹⁰ The NSPCC working definition of Sexual Bullying,
http://w1.qehs.net/moodle2/pluginfile.php/10744/mod_resource/content/1/Sexual%20bullying.pdf

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School climate

- What is the quality of relationships in the school? Does the school respect differences with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, etc.?
- Is the school environment perceived as positive and stimulating for both teachers and students?
- Do parents perceive the school as a safe place for their children?
- Do parents feel that their child is respected and valued at school?
- Do students feel safe at school?
- Do students feel respected and valued by adults at school?
- Do students feel respected and valued by other students at school?
- Are adults at school perceived as a role model for students in terms of respect, responsibility, cooperation, etc.?
- Are there positive and mutually beneficial conflict resolution models that are encouraged to be used at school?

Awareness

- Can students recognise aggression and bullying when they happen? Do students understand that aggression and bullying are a problem?
- Do students understand if their teachers are aware that bullying occurs at school?
- Are parents aware of aggression and bullying faced by their children at school?
- Do parents, teaching and non-teaching staff understand why some students engage in aggressive and bullying behaviour and their impact and consequences on the students and school climate?
- Do students understand why some students engage in aggressive and bullying behaviour and their impact and consequences on the students and school climate?

Frequency, level and scope of aggressive behaviour and bullying

- Is there bullying, aggression and conflicts in the school?
- How often do such incidents concerning students take place?
- What are the forms of such behaviour?
- Where does it happen?
- Who is involved in these incidents?
- Are teachers a target of aggressive behaviour at school?
- Are there bystanders and who are they? What are their reasons for not intervening?
- Where are children most vulnerable to aggressive and bullying behaviour at school?

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Reporting

- Do students report cases of aggression or bullying to their teachers or other school staff? Who are the people students feel comfortable to speak to about bullying?
- Do students inform their parents about cases of bullying at school?
- Does the school inform parents if their child is involved in bullying?
- Are there special occasions at school when teachers regularly discuss aggression and bullying with their students?

School support and response to bullying

- How are cases treated in the school after being reported?
- What is the way to intervene when adults at school witness bullying?
- Are teachers equipped with instruments and procedures to effectively address bullying incidents?
- Does the school implement an anti-bullying policy?
- How do parents respond if their child is involved in bullying, in each situation as victim, perpetrator or bystander?
- How do parents respond if their child is a bully?
- Are parents satisfied by the measures the school takes to address and prevent bullying?
- Can students get support, if they are faced with aggression/bullying?
- Where do they get it from?
- Are bystanders encouraged to intervene when bullying incidents occur?
- Do teachers feel supported to act accordingly when they need to address incidents of bullying at school?
- Does the school have a way to support the victims and to work with perpetrators?

Capacity

- What are the school staff's needs in relation to aggression/bullying?
- What are the students' needs and expectations in relation to the prevention of bullying?
- What support can be given to students who witness bullying behaviour at school?
- Do parents receive information or participate in school events that make them aware of aggression and bullying, diversity and intercultural communication?
- How can parents be encouraged to cooperate with the school in order to address the bullying behaviour?
- What positive models, policies and procedures of addressing bullying behaviour do the schools already implement?

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The questionnaires were common for all three countries and were administered in the pilot schools.

Each of these questionnaires have between 16 and 18 questions. In addition, demographic characteristics such as age, gender, child's grade, level of education and profession for adults' respondents are requested in the introductory part of the questionnaire. The questionnaire ends with an invitation to respondents to share additional comments, if they have any.

Most questions provide a multiple choice of answers and instruct the respondents to give one or, in some cases, more than one answer. A couple of open questions have been included in the questionnaire in order to provide the opportunity for free flowing answers and comments.

3.3. Research methodology

3.3.1. Baseline and end line research

In accordance with the rationale of the project the framework of the research includes a baseline and end line assessment in the target schools in Bulgaria, Hungary and Malta. In Malta, the research was carried out in four schools:

1. Thomas More College, Santa Lucia Secondary
2. Maria Regina College, Naxxar Middle School
3. Saint Margaret College, Cospicua Middle School
4. Saint Claire College, Pembroke Secondary

The baseline and endline assessment were conducted from December 2016 to April 2017 with the help of the Anti-Bullying Service, through: Lara Fenech, Katinka Zahra Lehtonen, Maria-Anna Micallef Grimaud and Joanna Buhagiar.

The baseline assessment aims to shed light on the existence and scope of bullying and aggression in the pilot schools by surveying the perception of students, teaching and non-teaching staff and parents. It provides valuable information regarding the occurrence and frequency of undesirable behaviour and incidents; looks into the capacity of those involved to intercept such incidents; and analyses their perception of the seriousness of the issue. On one hand, the baseline allows the pilot schools to become aware of the exact dimensions of bullying and aggression and on the other hand, it provides project partners with a clear picture of the starting point for the implementation of the model programme.

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Once the baseline research was conducted and analysed, the model programme was implemented within the four aforementioned schools. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the model programme, once implementation was complete, endline research was conducted. The following is the analysis and results of the endline research that was done in Malta. Unfortunately, however, one of the four schools was unable to partake in the endline research and has had to be eliminated from analysis. This means that while the baseline research and the model programme were carried out in the four aforementioned schools, the endline research had to exclude St. Margaret College Middle School, Cospicua.

Similar to the baseline research, questionnaires were distributed among staff, parents, and students of the three schools. Despite the exclusion of St. Margaret College Middle School, Cospicua, the data presented below still presents a relatively accurate evaluation of the effects of the model programme since analysis is based on percentages rather than raw numbers. Against this backdrop, as with the baseline research, it was still possible to ascertain the percentage of students, staff, and parents that feel that bullying and aggression are major concerns in schools. Within this scope, every effort was made to ensure that most respondents were the same people that answered the baseline questionnaire. Moreover, as with the baseline research, care was taken to anonymise all participant information in order to safeguard their identities. The method of data collection very much mirrored the data collection done for the baseline research. Similar questionnaires with minor amendments were distributed amongst participants and subsequently Survey Monkey and excel were used to compile the data for analysis.

Data collection

The data for the study was collected by means of a questionnaire. The entire baseline research consisted of three questionnaires one for students, one for parents, and one for teaching and non-teaching staff. As the working language for the ASAP Project is English, each questionnaire was written in English in collaboration with all three partner organisations. The students' and parents' questionnaires were subsequently translated into Maltese. The rationale for this was that in order to become a teacher or school staff member, one's English should meet minimum entry requirement for higher education and, therefore, as well to answer the questionnaire in English; on the other hand, parents and students might have variable standards of English and Maltese. Thus, parents and students were given the choice to answer the questionnaire either in English or in Maltese.

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In addition to the language consideration, researchers also had to deliberate on the medium by means of which to disseminate the questionnaires. As there was no guarantee that students and parents had access to computer technology, they were given hard copies of the questionnaires. SOS Malta liaised with the four schools through the Anti-bullying Service to ensure that teachers distributed the questionnaires in class. This helped to ensure that students both received and returned the questionnaires. Students were given the questionnaires for their parents in envelopes and were asked to take them home and return them the next day.

On the other hand, it was assumed that staff members would have access to computer technology and, therefore, the questionnaires were transferred to the online platform, ‘Survey Monkey’, and sent the link via the staff of the Anti-bullying service. Using this platform provided the most efficient means of data collection and analysis. Moreover, in order to make the analysis as comparable as possible the questionnaires collected in paper form from students and parents were subsequently input into Survey Monkey and analysed therewith.

The actual number of respondents who took part in the baseline assessment was as follows:

2017

School Type of respondents	Saint Claire College, Pembroke Secondary	Saint Margaret College, Cospicua Middle School	Maria Regina College, Naxxar Middle School	Thomas More College, Santa Lucia Secondary	No School Mentioned	Total
Teaching and non-teaching staff	39	71	62	12	30	214
Students	117	132	261	132	-	642
Parents of students	44	94	52	109	-	299

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2018

School Type of respondents	Saint Claire College, Pembroke Secondary	Saint Margaret College, Cospicua Middle School	Maria Regina College, Naxxar Middle School	Thomas More College, Santa Lucia Secondary	No School Mentioned	Total
Teaching and non-teaching staff	62		37	12	-	111
Students	121		282	140	3	546
Parents of students	50		102	58	1	211

3.4. Ethical standards

The administration of the questionnaires among students and adults was based on **ethical standards** and with the necessary sensitivity. The questionnaire was delivered for anonymous completion among children and adults, and did not contain names or other personal data, which would render surveyed individuals identifiable.¹¹

In addition to the questionnaires, all respondents were also provided with an information sheet detailing the project, the research aims and clarifying the fact that participation in the study was entirely voluntary, that participants were free to withdraw at any time, and that all data will be entirely anonymous. In fact, in order to ensure anonymity and data protection, no real names were used at any point during data collection. The Anti Bullying service provided each parent, student, and staff member with an index number. This number was used by each respondent as an identifier on their questionnaires. SOS Malta did not have the names of participants at any time during the data collection process or afterwards. Moreover, the use of index numbers helped to ensure that the same participants answered both the baseline and the end-line questionnaire, rendering the data fully comparable.

¹¹ Protection of the respondents' confidentiality, as well as ethical reaction in case of disclosure of sensitive information, is detailed in the **Ethical Code for conducting research with children**.

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Basic Guidelines to implement questionnaires among children

The Questionnaire for children consisted of 16 questions. It took 15 to 20 minutes to be completed in by students aged 11-18. This Questionnaire was delivered online or as a hard copy.

Data collection

There are three fundamental principles required for the process to work:

- ❖ Trust and security within the class setting when students completed the questionnaire.
- ❖ Students completed the questionnaire anonymously. They have to feel confident that their answers will not be linked with to them personally. The researchers and teachers who administer the questionnaire had to explain to the class that only group analysis of the information would be conducted.
- ❖ The researchers explained that the questionnaire data collection would permit a longer process of improvement in the school environment and that would be an end-line assessment in order to measure the results. Students were made aware that by completing the questionnaire they were contributing to this process.

The process:

The Questionnaire was designed to be completed in one sitting within 15-20 minutes. In case some students needed clarification of explanations, the teachers were to provide the necessary support.

It is essential to bear in mind that an atmosphere of trust is integral to the process allowing for an open and honest debate of existing strengths and areas to build upon.

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4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Baseline Research

4.1.1 Demographic characteristics

Staff

214 members of teaching and non-teaching school staff responded to the online questionnaire. 38.5% of them were from Saint Margaret College Middle School in Cospicua; 34% were from Maria Regina College Middle School in Naxxar; 21% were from St. Clare College Secondary School in Pembroke; and 6.5% were from St. Thomas More College Girls Secondary School in Santa Lucia.

The majority of staff who responded to the questionnaire were teaching staff (78%) whose subjects included Languages, Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Physical Education, Health and Personal Development, and Extra Curricular Activities. 14% of staff respondents formed part of the non-teaching staff members of the schools. These roles included Assistant Heads of School, Learning Support Assistants, Guidance Councillors, Lab Technicians, and IT technicians. Finally, 8% of staff respondents stated that were neither teaching nor non-teaching members of staff at the school where they work, although, most of them, in fact, can be included with the teaching staff, as the majority of staff that selected 'other professional' identified themselves as (Supply) Learning Support Assistants and Guidance Teachers.

Almost half the staff members participating in this study (46%) were between 25 and 34 years of age. The largest age group included staff aged 35-44 years old, with 29% in this bracket. 13% of staff members are aged 45-54 years old; 8% were within the 20-24 age-bracket; and, finally, 3% were 55-64 years old.

The majority of staff members identified as female (79%), while none identified as neither male nor female. Finally, the demographic information of the participants in this study revealed that the very large majority were Maltese (98%), with the remaining 2% identifying as mixed, including two Maltese-Canadians, one Maltese-American, and one Maltese-English individual.

Students

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642 students responded to the questionnaire. 20.5% were from Saint Margaret College Middle School in Cospicua; 41% from Maria Regina College Middle School in Naxxar; 18% from St. Clare College Secondary School in Pembroke; and 20.5% from St. Thomas More College Girls Secondary School in Santa Lucia.

The large majority of students who responded to the questionnaire (87%) were aged between 10 and 13. The remaining 13% of the students were aged 14-16. 46% of the students that responded to the questionnaire identified as male, and 53% identified as female. Although 1% of the students responding to the questionnaire identified as a gender other than male or female, this data had to be eliminated from analysis as they were filled in with invalid items. This left only two students identifying with non-binary genders in the analysis, one transgender and one non-specified.

Finally, 78% of the students who responded to the questionnaire were Maltese, while 13% were non-Maltese, whose nationalities include Albania, Bosnian and Herzegovinian, Bulgarian, English, Ethiopian, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Iranian, Libyan, Philippine, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Scottish, Serbian, Swedish, Syrian, Ukrainian and Venezuelan. Another 9% identified themselves as being of mixed nationality, including Maltese-Moroccan, Maltese- Afghan, Maltese- German, Maltese- Italian, Maltese- Libyan, Maltese- Russian, Maltese-Algerian, Maltese-Australian, Maltese-Bulgarian, Maltese-Canadian, Maltese-Chinese, Maltese-Czech, Maltese-Dutch, Maltese-Egyptian, Maltese-English, Maltese-Greek, Maltese-Irish, Maltese-Italian, Maltese-Lebanese, Maltese-Nigerian, Maltese-Norwegian, Maltese-Polish, Maltese-Thai, Maltese-Tunisian, and Maltese-Welsh.

Parents

299 parents responded to the questionnaire. 31% were from Saint Margaret College Middle School in Cospicua; 17% were from Maria Regina College Middle School in Naxxar; 37% were from St. Thomas More College Girls Secondary School in Santa Lucia; and 15% were from St. Clare College Secondary School in Pembroke.

The majority of parents (59%) who responded to the questionnaire were aged between 35 and 44; a further 23% were within the 45-54 age-bracket; 15% were aged between 25 and 35 years-old; and 2% were aged between 55 and 64 years-old. Only 0.70% were over 65 and 0.30% between 15-19. The large majority of these parents identified as female (86%), the remaining 14% identified as male. None of the parents identified as a non-binary gender.

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Similarly to students and staff, most parents who participated in the study (90%) identified themselves as Maltese and 8% identified as another nationality. These nationalities include: Australian, English, German, Hungarian, Italian, and Serbian. The remaining 2% identified themselves as being of mixed nationality, including: Maltese-Syrian, Maltese-English, Maltese-Moroccan, and Maltese- Canadian.

With regards to their level of education, the majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire (67%) stated that they had reached secondary level education. 27% had reached tertiary level education; 2% had reached primary education with the remaining 4% selecting 'other'. Parents who selected 'other' gave various alternatives to the options provided in the questionnaire, such as trade school, college, MCAST, post-secondary, and post-graduate. It is evident that some of these could be included in the above-mentioned groups (particularly secondary and tertiary education); however, as only 12 parents selected 'other' the difference is statistically non-significant.

4.1.2. School climate

The school environment appeared to be, at least, relatively safe. 46% of the students who responded to the questionnaire stated that they always feel safe at school; 47% stated that they sometimes feel safe (a total of 93%). Hence, it clearly needs to be established why more than half of these students do not always feel safe at school. Moreover, an additional, 4% stated that they rarely feel safe at school and 3% reported that they never feel safe. This means that a total of 346 out of the 642 students who responded to the questionnaire feel at risk, or at least, sometimes feel at risk at school. Given the topic of this research, this is hardly an insignificant number and this evident problem should be addressed with urgency.

These figures are somewhat corroborated by the parents' responses to a similar question. 63% of the parents who responded to the questionnaire stated that their child/children always feel safe at school and 33% believed that their child/children sometimes feel safe at school (a total of 96%). These figures show a small difference in the opinions of students and parents, and reveal a disparity between the perceptions of the students and that of the parents, whereby a higher percentage of parents believed that their children always feel safe at school compared to the figures corresponding to the students' opinion. Furthermore, 2% of parents reported that their child/children rarely feel safe at school and 2% reported that their child/children never feel safe at school. Similarly, this shows a slight difference in perception from the answers given by students. It should be noted that the largest difference of opinion can be seen in relation to

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‘always’ and ‘sometimes’. Perhaps parents become aware of repetitive bullying, but are not immediately alerted to occasional aggressive behaviours.

Similar trends are evident with regard to whether or not students feel respected *by adults* at school. 46% of students reported that they always feel respected at school and 47% reported that they sometimes feel respected (a total of 93%), while 72% of parents reported that their child/children always feel/s respected by adults and 25% report that their child/children sometimes feel/s respected by adults at school (a total of 97%). In addition, 5% of students reported rarely feel respected by adults at school and 2% reported that they never feel respected by adults at school, while 2.70% of parents reported that their child/children rarely feel/s respected at school and 0.30% reported that their child/children never feel/s respected at school. The relative figures, mentioned above, indicate that feelings of safety and respect may be closely linked and, therefore, attempts to improve one may also help to improve the other.

Responses varied somewhat when participants were asked whether or not they feel respected and valued by *other students* at school. 32% stated that they always feel respected by other students at school, while 58% of the students reported that they sometimes feel respected. An additional 8% of students stated that they rarely feel respected and valued by other students at school while 2% stated that they never feel respected and valued at school. These figures may suggest that, while staff show respect to students, the students themselves fail to show the same level of respect to each other. It would be useful to use qualitative testing (such as interviews or focus groups) to investigate how and why these students feel respected or disrespected. Further investigation could show that students measure levels of respect by different standards for staff and students, however, such a conclusion would be merely speculative at this stage. Again, the parents’ responses corroborate these findings as, similarly, the numbers drop in relation to students who feel respected and valued by other students. 46% of parents reported that their child/children always feel/s respected by other students at school (down from 72% in relation to perceived respect by adults in the schools) while 49% reported that their child/children sometimes feel/s respected by other students at school (up from 25% in relation to perceived respect by adults in the schools).

Any lack of respect may be due to a lack of awareness and education. Although the majority of students and parents agreed that school staff teach students to show respect to one another regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation etc., school staff had a slightly different perception. 68% of the students who responded to the questionnaire believed that adults at their school always teach them to show respect to one another and 26.5% believe that adults sometimes teach them how to show respect to one another. Similarly, 78% of the parents who responded to the questionnaire stated that staff at their child/children’s school

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always teach them how to show respect to one another, while 19% reported that staff sometimes teach them how to show respect. These figures differ from the responses given by school staff, 49.5% of whom *strongly agreed* that school staff teach students how to show respect to one another, while 49.5% were not willing to give such a strong response by merely stating that they *agreed* that staff teach students how to show respect to one another, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation etc. Although these responses are fairly positive and indicate that students are exposed to the concepts of respect and inclusion, they also illustrate the need for more direct and frequent education and training programmes that will immerse students in the fields of mutual respect and integrity. Interview data would be useful to confirm these conclusions and to allow respondents to give detailed information pertaining to their experience with education programmes related to mutual respect and integrity.

A similar trend emerges with regards to whether or not respondents felt that students were encouraged to solve conflict in a mutually beneficial way. The majority of students and parents agreed that this is always the case (55% of the students and 69% of the parents) fewer believed that this is sometimes the case (37% of students and 26% of parents); however these figures are more or less reversed for staff (38% strongly agree and 58% simply agree).

Finally, while the staff opinion of the school climate is encouraging, it is also evident that there is a need for further development of systems and training to enhance counter-bullying efforts in schools. 18% strongly agreed that the school environment is stimulating and encourages personal and professional growth, 73% just agreed, while 8% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed. Moreover, while 36% of staff respondents strongly agreed that adults in schools set a good example in terms of respect, responsibility, and cooperation, 61% did not feel so strongly about this and only agreed, while 3% disagreed. As stated, these figures are encouraging and indicate that school staff feel supported and have a generally positive view of the influence that adults have on students in their school. However, they also highlight the need to strengthen staff capacities and capabilities to address bullying.

4.1.3. Awareness

There were various questions in the questionnaire that sought to indicate the respondents' level of knowledge and awareness of issues pertaining to bullying. In this regard, respondents were asked why they think students engage in bullying behaviour. Although individual figures differ between each group of respondents (parents, students, and staff), similar trends are evident across the three groups. The highest rated reasons given by staff as to why students engage in bullying behaviour were because students want to attract attention or become more popular; because they want to demonstrate power; and because they have social emotional and

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behavioural difficulties. The trends for aggressive behaviour, according to staff, are very similar. The most common reasons for bullying according to the students differ slightly from the opinion of school staff. The highest rated reasons given by students as to why pupils engage in bullying behaviour were because they want to attract attention or to become popular and because they think they are better than others. Finally, when parents were asked why they think that students might engage in aggressive behaviour, the highest rated reasons given were similar to the responses of both school staff and students with regards to bullying behaviour. The highest rated reasons given by parents were because students want to attract attention or to become more popular; because they have social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties; and because they think they are better than others.

Although there are some differences in the highest rated reasons given for bullying behaviour, the figures of all three groups of respondents drop in relation to bullying on the basis of minority identities. All three groups rated minority identities as one of the least common reasons for students to engage in bullying behaviour (see figure 1-3 below), suggesting that either bullying on the basis of minority identities such as religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or nationality do not occur in schools, or that bullying on the basis of such identities is used as a pretext for another reason.

Other reasons for bullying indicated by participants include: being overweight, jealousy, because they do not fit in, because they want to belittle shy and bullied students, older students bully younger students, because they have parents that hurt them, because they think they are better than everyone else, to look cool, to show off, lack of respect, and because it is in their nature to show they are stronger.

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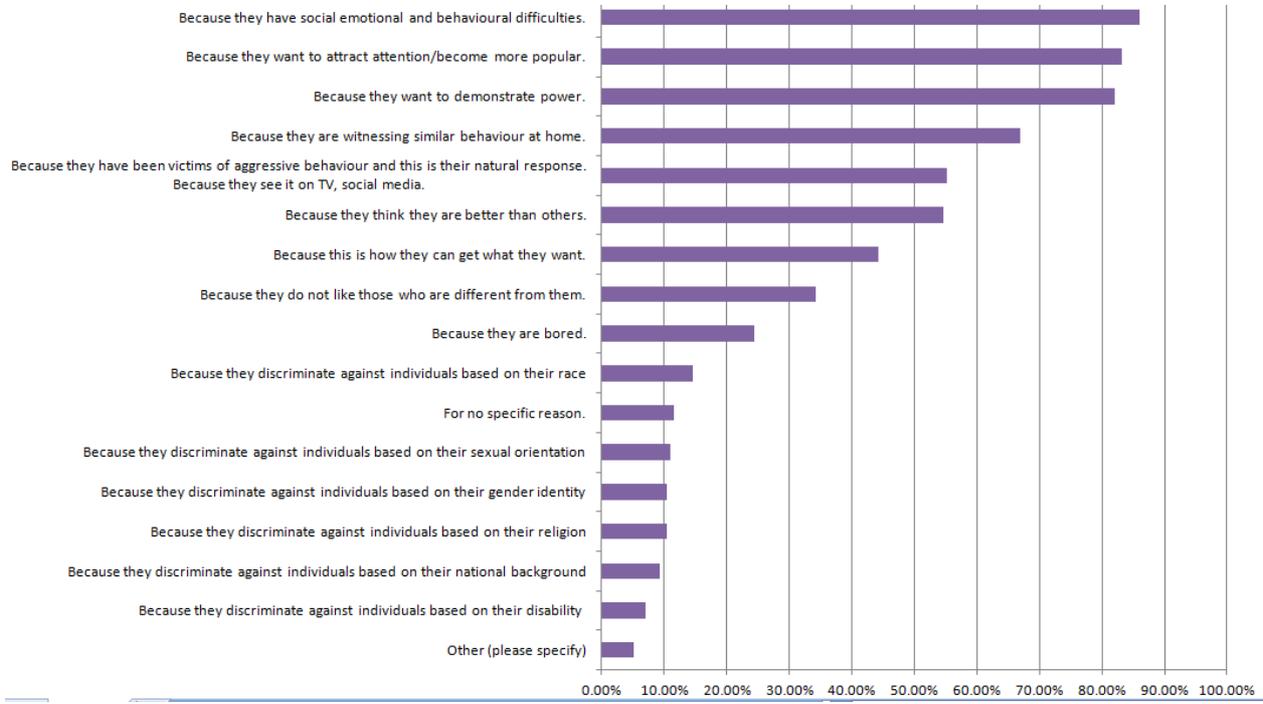
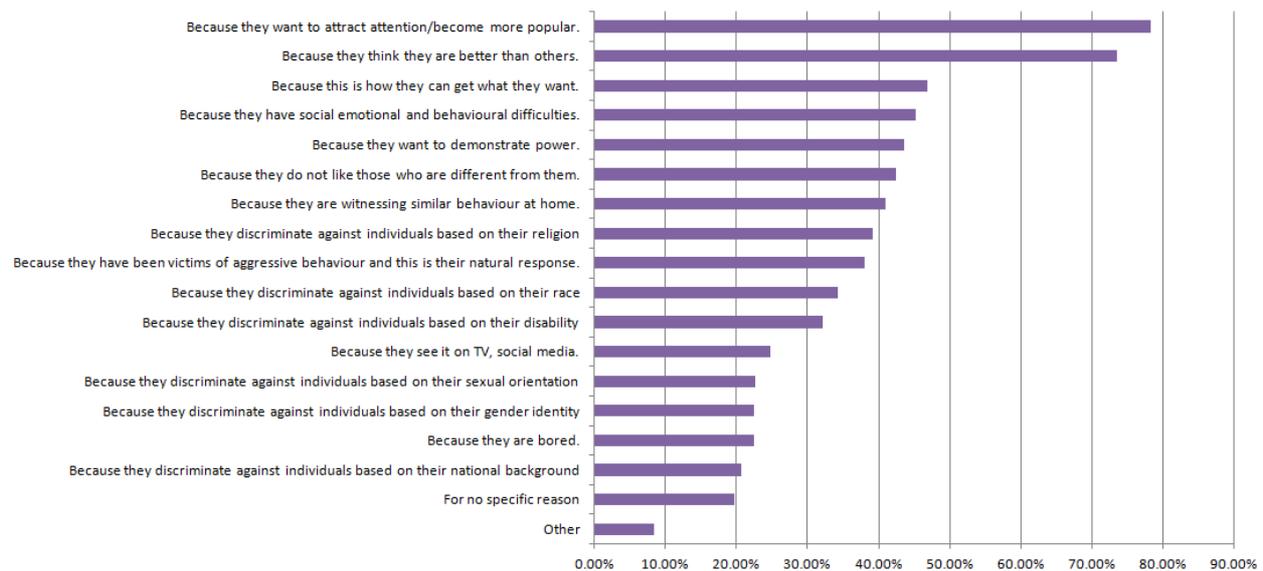


Figure 1: Teaching and Non-teaching Staff- Why do you think some students engage in bullying behaviour against their peers?



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Figure 2: Students-Why do you think some students engage in bullying behaviour against other students?

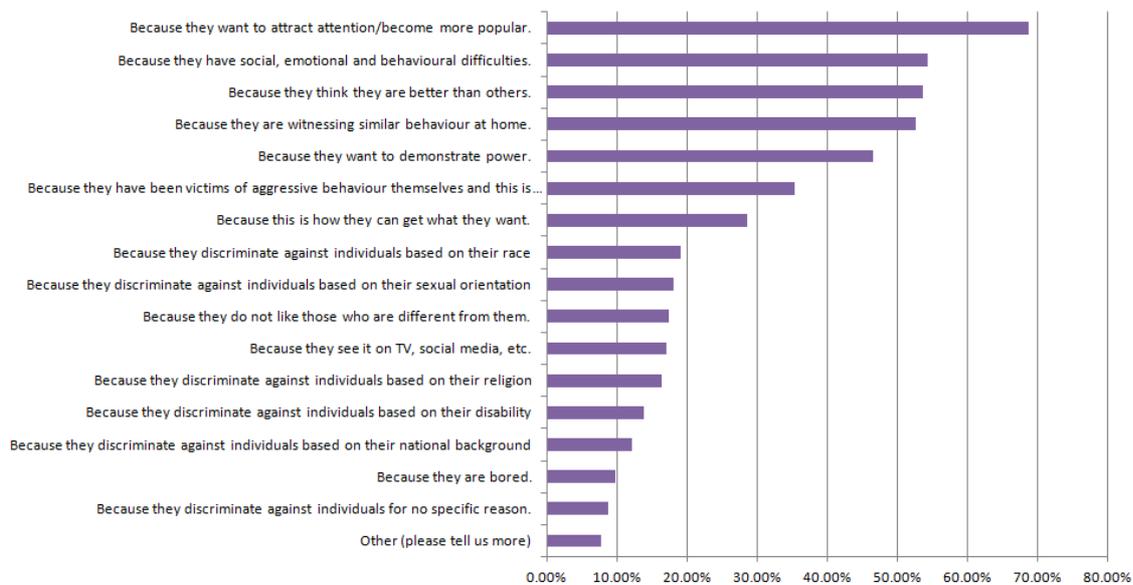


Figure 3: Parents-Why, in your opinion, do you think some students act aggressively at school?

There appears to be a gap between teachers’ perceived awareness of incidents of bullying and students’ opinions as to how often teachers become aware of incidents of bullying. While 24% of the students indicated that teachers always become aware of bullying incidents, 42% of school staff members believed that teachers always become aware of bullying incidents. Moreover, 56% of school staff members believed that teachers occasionally become aware of incidents, while 50% of the students stated that teachers occasionally become aware of bullying incidents and a further 26% stated that teachers almost never become aware of bullying behaviour in schools. These figures suggest that while teachers and school staff do become aware of many incidents of bullying, a number of bullying incidents still fall below their radar and are, therefore, not addressed appropriately. Such cases leave victims of bullying defenceless and prone to further victimisation.

Students were asked what they think are the most common ways that teachers become aware of bullying behaviour. The highest rated responses were that teachers become aware of bullying behaviour through reports made by other students and by actually witnessing it, with both of these rated as the most frequent way by 23% of the students. These figures then drop for the other reasons given as an option in the questionnaire, with, for example, only 11% reporting that the most common way that teachers become aware of bullying behaviour is by reports made by

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other adults. It is important to bear in mind, however, that in the relevant question students were asked to grade the most frequent to the least frequent way that teachers become aware of bullying behaviour and, although, 23% stated that teachers witnessing bullying behaviour is one of the most common ways that they find out about bullying, collectively, far more students reported that another student reports the bullying behaviour to the teachers. These figures show that, although a student claimed that teachers do indeed witness bullying, collectively, a higher number reported that teachers find out through reports made either by the target of bullying or by other students. In addition, the previous paragraph suggests that, at best, teachers only occasionally become aware of bullying behaviour. Therefore, one might conclude that school staff members need to be more vigilant when looking out for such behaviour, because the likelihood is they remain unaware of much of the aggressive and bullying behaviour that goes on beyond their view because it remains unreported. In addition, everyone should be strongly encouraged to report all incidents of bullying.

Similarly, 88% of parents stated that they did not think that they become aware of aggressive and bullying behaviour at their child/children's school, confirming observations above that adults need to be more vigilant in looking out for aggressive and bullying behaviour in schools. Moreover, 56% of parents believed that aggressive and bullying behaviour does occur at their child/children's school once a week or more, further acknowledging the fact that bullying behaviour exists even if they are not aware of it. In addition to the responses given by parents and staff, the students also acknowledge this gap in information between adults and students, as 47% of students acknowledged that parents only occasionally become aware of bullying behaviour.

4.1.4. Frequency, level and scope; types of bullying and aggressive behaviour

The majority of students stated that they have never been the victim of physical, verbal, social, cyber, or sexual bullying. As shown in the figure below few students reported that they experience any type of bullying more than once a week. These figures are indicative of a number of interesting observations. Firstly, they are encouraging because they show that despite the impressions above, bullying behaviour might not in fact be as widespread as originally thought. As by definition, bullying behaviour "is *negative actions* on the part of one or more other students directed *repeatedly* at a victim which includes an *imbalance of power* between the actors involved" (Colacel, Petkova, Basco, Vida, & Laszlo, 2016, p. 5), some of the aggression that respondents have experienced would not normally constitute bullying as the majority of students rarely experience these types of bullying. Having said that, it must not be overlooked that a substantial amount of students reported experiencing some sort of bullying during the school

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year and, although, according to this data, this is the exception and not the rule, the utmost effort must be put into making school a safe place for all students.

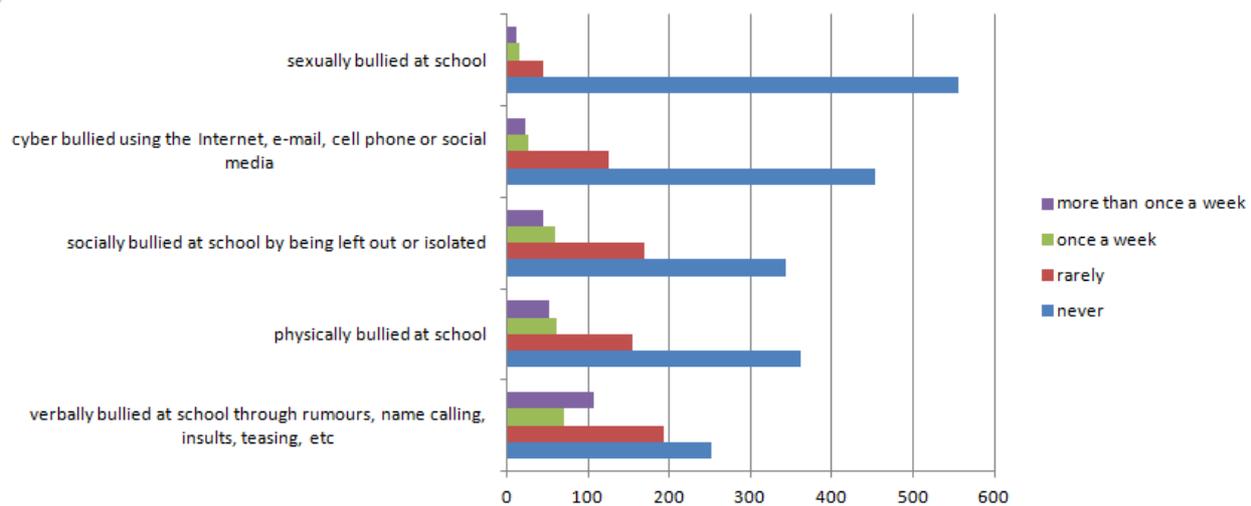


Figure 4: Students: In the last school year and this current year, have you been physically bullied at school; verbally bullied; socially bullied; cyber bullied?

Slightly more male than female students seem to be victims of all kinds of bullying. 10% of the boys reported being physically bullied more than once a week, compared with 7% girls; 18% of boys reported being verbally bullied at school more than once a week compared with 16% of the girls; 3% of male students reported being sexually bullied at school more than once a week compared with 1% of the female students. The data also showed that boys are more likely to use aggressive or bullying behaviour and are more often responsible for such behaviour.

The reports given by students detailed above, contrast with the reports given by teaching and non-teaching staff throughout the questionnaire. 91% of the staff members, for example, report that they have witnessed bullying behaviour, while the information described in the previous subsection states that most students believe that teachers only occasionally become aware of bullying behaviour, thus indicating that a lot more incidents occur than staff are become aware of.

Asked whether their child/children have been bullied in the last school year (see figure 5 below), parents' answers are very much in line with the students' answers. The figures consistently diminish from never to more than once a week for both students and parents. The only exception to this trend, with any statistical significance, is verbal bullying as reported by parents. 12% of the

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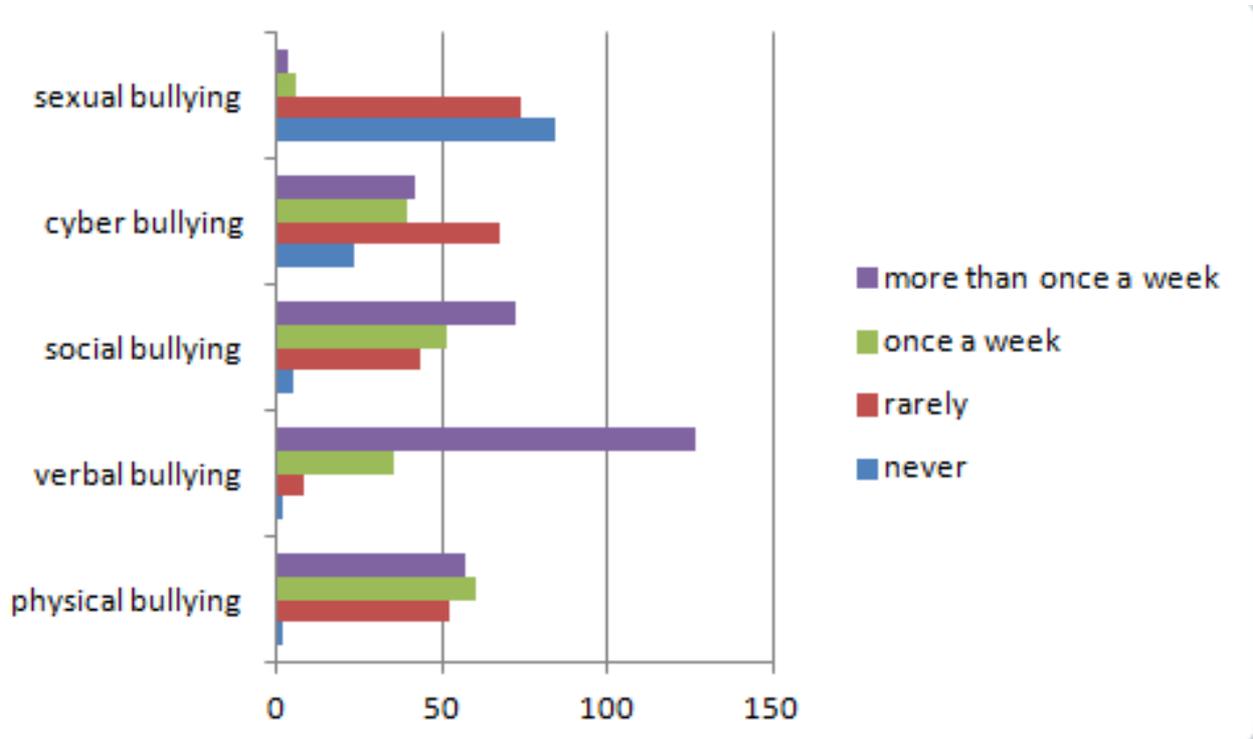


Figure 6: Teaching and Non-teaching Staff - How often do you think the following bullying behaviours occur in your school?

Aggressive and bullying behaviour is predominantly aimed at other students. 11% of the school staff stated that, in the last school year, they had been the targets of aggressive behaviour from students, 1% and 2% stated that they had been the target of aggressive or bullying behaviour by a teacher or parent respectively, and 86% reported that they had not been the target of such behaviour. Moreover, very few staff members reported any sort of bullying or aggressive behaviour directed at school teaching and non-teaching staff. At most, 6% of the staff respondents said that they always hear students gossiping about teachers and 2% said that they have heard students gossiping about non-teaching staff.

With regards to aggressive and bullying behaviour that students direct at other students, 10% of the staff members stated that they always hear students gossiping about other students and 11% stated that they always see students fighting back when someone else hits them first. 14% also stated that they always witness name-calling and students making fun of each other. Around 2% stated that they always witness any sort of physical aggression. However, although few members of the staff reported that they *always* witness such behaviour, many more responded that they *frequently* witness such behaviour. 58% of staff responded that they frequently witness students

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calling someone bad names; 52% said that they frequently hear students gossiping about each other; 60% said that they frequently see students making fun of each other; 45% reported that they frequently see students fight back when they are hit first; 27% said that they frequently see students encouraging other students to fight; 31% said that they frequently see students getting into a physical fight; 31% stated that they frequently see students hitting or kicking other students; finally, 27% reported that they frequently see students acting passive aggressively to one another.

These figures confirm the previous responses by parents and students that verbal bullying is the most widespread form of bullying. However, contrary to earlier information elicited, these figures also indicate that physical bullying is a phenomenon that is present in schools and that needs serious attention. It is suggested here that students may not be fully aware that physically aggressive behaviour constitutes bullying and questions whether students may be more reluctant to report physical bullying rather than verbal bullying.

In a similar question, students were asked if they had performed a number of actions 0 times up to 6 times. The action that they were asked about included teasing other students and fighting back when someone hits them first. From the entire list of aggressive behaviours given, the majority of students said that they had not once behaved aggressively in that week. According to the students, at most, they were engaged in such of behaviour, just once a week. 34% of the students admitted to getting angry with someone else once that week, 24% admitted to being angry for most of the day, and 20% said that they fought back when someone else hit them first just once that week. 6% of the students admitted to fighting back when someone else hit first six or more times during that week, 6% said that they became easily angry with someone more than six times that week, and 4% said that they were angry for most of the day for more than six times that week (therefore the entire school week at least). It is clear that the most common forms of aggressive behaviour that students admitted to allegedly entail less agency on their part (“someone else hit me first”, “someone else made me angry”). For this reason, a peer-mentoring programme may be beneficial for students to take a more active role in combating bullying.

Significant differences emerge from the responses given by male and female students in regard of this last question. 9% of the boys fought back when someone hit them first more than six times throughout that week, compared with only 3% of the girls. Also, 4% of the male students made fun of others in order to make other students laugh more than 6 times that week, while only 1% of the females did the same. And finally, 4% of male students got into a physical fight because they were angry more than six times that week, while only 1% of the girls did the same.

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With regards to the frequency of bullying behaviour, the responses of staff and students were similar. The highest proportion of both groups agreed that bullying behaviour occurs more than once a week (49% of school staff and 47% of students). ‘Once a week’ and ‘rarely’ elicited similar responses in each group (31% and 19% respectively for the staff and 23% and 27% respectively for students). Similarly, very few staff members or students agreed that bullying behaviour never occurs. The figures for parents were somewhat similar; however there appears to be a slightly larger gap between ‘once a week’ and ‘rarely’, 17% and 36% respectively. Although there was some disagreement between the three groups with regards to the responsibility for bullying behaviour, the majority of all three groups agree that bullying behaviour occurs at least once a week. As mentioned earlier, for aggressive behaviour to become bullying, it must be repetitive. The results of this part of the analysis indicate that it is likely that aggressive behaviour does indeed develop into bullying.

Finally, all three groups were asked where they think aggressive and bullying behaviour occurs most frequently. They were given a list of locations, such as the corridor and the schoolyard, and asked whether students are ‘never’, ‘occasionally’, ‘frequently’, or ‘all the time’, bullied there. All three groups agreed that the most frequent locations where bullying and aggressive behaviours occur are in the schoolyard, in the corridor, on the bus, and on social media. It can therefore be strongly recommended that adults should be highly vigilant in these areas, including online and on social media.

4.1.4. Reporting

Students were asked whom they might feel comfortable speaking to if they have been involved in bullying behaviour. An encouraging number (79%) stated that there are people at home with whom they feel comfortable discussing such incidents. Students identified parents (in particular the mother), step-parents, grandparents, and siblings as people with whom they share experiences of bullying. This is confirmed by parents, 80% of whom stated that they learnt about their child/children’s involvement in bullying from the children themselves. This is promising as it indicates that the majority of children do have good support systems at home largely composed of adults. However, this is not equally true in their school environment.

Although 60% of the students stated that they have people at school with whom they are comfortable discussing their involvement in bullying, many of the persons mentioned by students were, in fact, friends and peers. Though a number of students mentioned LSAs, teachers, heads of school, etc. as people they can go to, a large number of the examples given were other students. This may be a cause for concern as it may indicate that students, in particular bullied students, feel that they do not have a sufficiently strong support system at school to help them

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cope with bullying. Such a lack of openness between staff and students regarding bullying may be attributed to the fact that there are few occasions when bullying is actually discussed with the students (as will be elaborated further in subsection 4.1.6).

Besides adults and peers at home and at school, 34% of the students stated that they feel comfortable speaking to other people online about their involvement in bullying. However, this is simply an extension of the figures above, as only one student identified the support service kelimni.com as an online platform that they use for support. All other students identified friends and extended family as support that they look for online. Hence, with increase publicity directly in the classroom, kelimni.com can potentially have a much better impact on students.

4.1.5. School support and response to bullying behaviour

There appears to be a strong consensus among staff members as to how they handle bullying behaviour in school. When asked how they respond to bullying if they witness it, 90% of the school staff that responded to this question said that they would stop what is happening and speak to the students involved. 70% said that they would stop it and inform the form teacher or guidance teacher, 60% would do the same, but would contact the head of school, and 55% would stop what was happening and inform the person responsible for handling bullying behaviour at the school. Therefore it appears that the most common response by school staff, beyond stopping the actual bullying behaviour, would be to inform a more senior or qualified colleague, since the numbers make evident that many respondents picked more than one option. A similar pattern was also evident when school staff members were asked how they would respond if a student shared with them an experience (or allegation) of bullying. The majority of staff that responded to the question (87%) stated that they would involve the guidance teacher. 62% said that they would report it to the head of school, however 30% said that they would take action themselves with the students in question. Thus, although there seems to be a strong tendency to involve a colleague, some staff members prefer not to. There also appears to be a preference for staff to follow up on bullying incidents that they have witnessed, although this preference is not as strong as the aforementioned tendency to involve a colleague. 55% of respondents said that they would report a bullying event to another school professional, 47% said that they would report it to the head of school, and 39% said that they would try to resolve the incident with the student in question.

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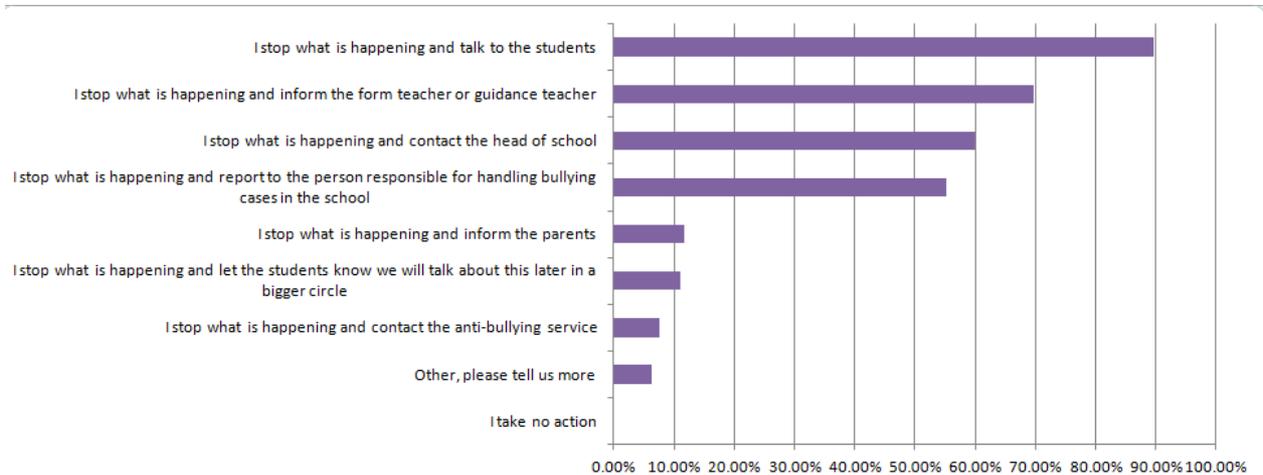


Figure 7: Teaching and Non-teaching Staff - How do you respond if you witness bullying behaviour?

Parents generally have mixed impressions of the way that the school staff in this study handles bullying behaviour and incidents. When asked whether they thought the school would do something if a child complained about being bullied 51% of the parents stated that they did not know, 29% said they did think the school would act, but a significant 20% stated that they thought that the school would not act.

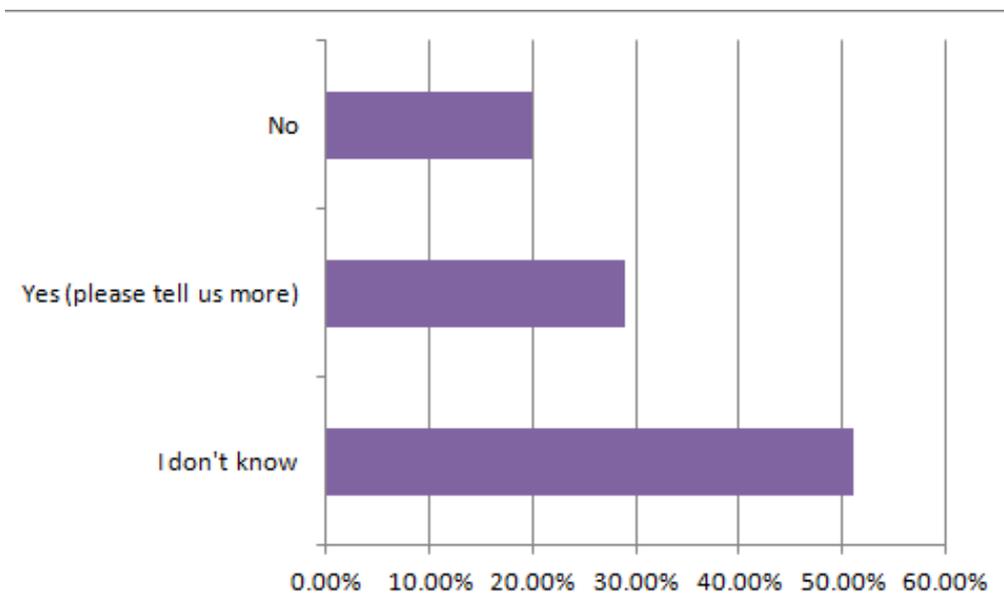


Figure 8: Parents - If a child complained to a school staff member about being bullied, would something be done about it?

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In retrospect, there appears to be a slightly more positive view of the way that the schools had handled bullying in the past. Parents were asked to rate the measures taken by their child/children’s school to address bullying behaviour. 50% of the parents said that the measures taken were good, 21% said that they were excellent and a similar number, 20%, believe them to be satisfactory, while only 9% deemed them to be bad. With regards to the parents’ reactions to bullying, there were very mixed responses. Some parents asserted that they would contact the school, often through of the head of school, while others stated that they would be angry or even sad.

Among students, there was a preference towards seeking the help of an adult when witnessing aggression or bullying (66%). 53% also said that they would try to stop the incident by talking to those who are involved; 37% said that they would want to help, but they are not sure how; 31% stated that they would want to help, but that they had also been bullied. Bearing in mind that student chose multiple answers, there seems to be uncertainty amongst students as to how to deal with incidents of bullying.



Figure 9: Students - How do you respond, if you witness aggression or bullying behaviour at school?

Emergent, this data indicates the need for better channels of communication between staff and students, as students appeared to be hesitant to involve adults in such circumstances. Moreover, the data also shows that many students try to step in or would like to step in to mitigate the situation, but are unable to do so adequately. Thus, it could be useful to have a strong peer-mentoring programme through which students are taught the skills necessary to support victims of bullying.

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4.1.6. Capacity

The schools involved in this study do have some policies and procedures in place to help them cope with bullying, according to 62% of the school staff. It is not clear, however, whether these systems are adequate to address the current level of bullying in the schools. 20% of the school staff said that they did not know whether their school has any formal anti-aggression or anti-bullying policies; 10% said that they did, but that those policies were only partially implemented; and 9% said that their school did not have any policies in place. Hence, it is clear that there is a need for enhancing and implementing policies, procedures and better staff training for all staff.

In addition, the 64% of staff members did not feel fully enabled and supported to handle aggressive and bullying behaviour. Only 30% of the school staff stated that there are special occasions when they discuss aggression, conflict, and bullying with students, while 70% stated that they do not hold such discussions, further demonstrating the need for better measures to facilitate communication between staff and students.

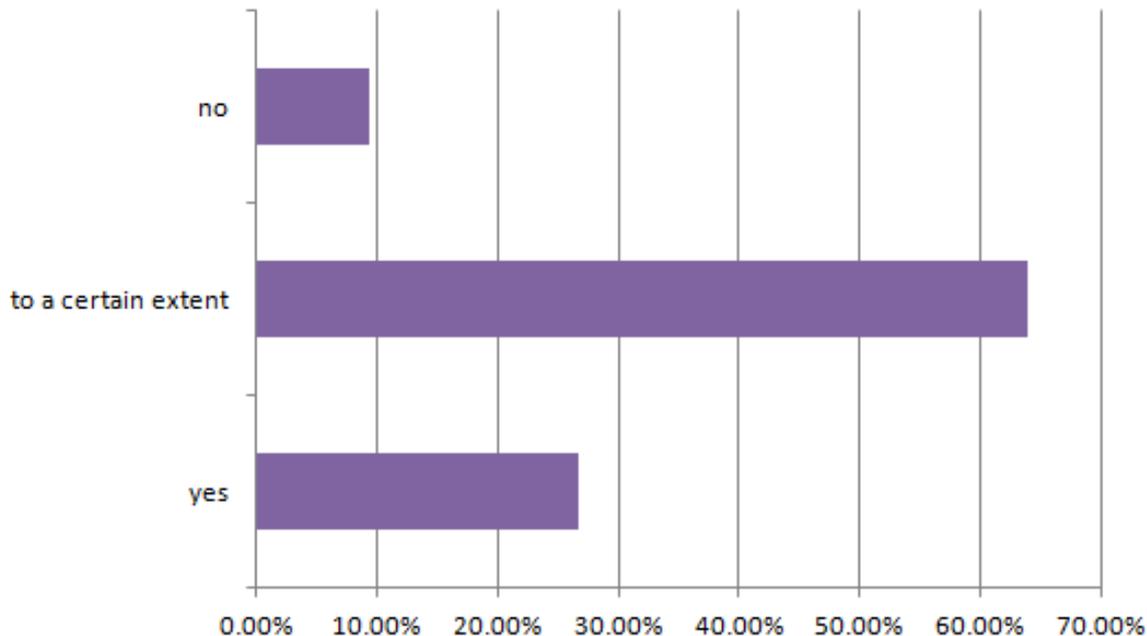


Figure 10: Teaching and Non-teaching Staff - Do you feel enabled and supported to handle aggressive/bullying behaviour (by means of school policies, training your school provides for you, techniques you learnt, etc.)?

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There also appears to be a need for better communication between schools and parents. Almost half of the parents (49%) reported that they are only in contact with the school when there is a problem, and a further 18% said that there is little contact. Only 19% stated that they communicate openly with the school about their child/children’s well-being and 14% reported that they have an equal partnership with shared responsibility. There is also lack of consensus among parents as to their level of participation in events organised by the school on the topics of bullying, aggression and intercultural awareness. 41% of parents the reported that they attend such events, 20% stated that the school does not hold such events and 39% stated they do not attend such events. Further research would be useful to establish why parents may not become aware of such school events and to address the reasons that deter some parents from attending.

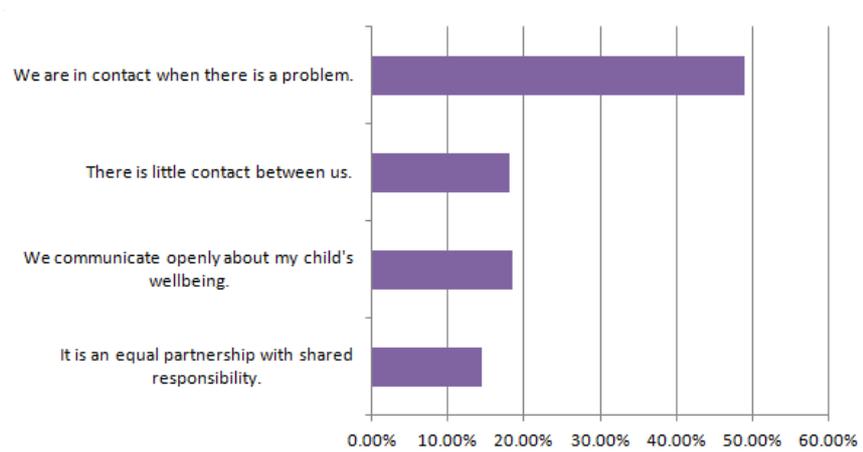


Figure 11: Parents - How would you describe your relationship with the school?

Students were asked what they thought could help their class/school to reduce aggression and bullying. Among the responses there seemed to be a strong call for action by school staff. Many students mentioned that teachers could be stricter; there should be more supervision during breaks and between classes; the school should punish bullies; the school should involve parents; there should be more guidance teachers, etc. There were also a number of very positive suggestions by students, such as, more activities that lead to friendship among them and that the school should talk more about equality.

4.1.7. Recommendations for the Model programme

The analysis above reveals, through empirical data, a number of pertinent issues related to aggression and bullying in Malta, and possible remedies for some of the drawbacks currently facing schools, parents, and students with regard to aggressive and bullying behaviour. As

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described earlier, the data was collected by means of a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire format enabled the collection of data from a large sample population, while also ensuring that the data was comparable across demographic groups (school staff, students, and parents) and country (Malta, Bulgaria, and Hungary). However, it became evident that the study could have benefitted from further qualitative data in order to expand and confirm some of the results that emerged from the questionnaire's responses. In particular, qualitative analysis could help to explain why some students prefer not to report aggression and bullying.

As stated, less than half of the students reported that they always feel safe at school. This means that more than half them, at some point or another, feel unsafe at school to some degree. Moreover, close to 7% stated that they never or rarely feel safe at school (a total of 40 students). This is worrying. Clearly, further investigation is necessary in order to discover why this is the case and in order to gain a better insight into the availability of effective solutions that would enable all students to feel safe at school. Although there were more students who reported that they are not bullied than are otherwise, there are other, more complex issues at play with regards to the safety of students, such as the relationship between safety and respect.

The data discussed in this study showed that feelings of safety and feelings of being respected are closely linked and, thus, the model programme should strive to address both, since one may have a beneficial affect on the other. The data also showed that teachers and school staff should be more vigilant in their awareness of aggressive and bullying behaviour. This may necessitate more resources with respect to staff presence at certain times, staff training, and educational programmes.

Verbal bullying appeared to be the most widespread type of bullying and, therefore, the model programme should address this aspect as a priority. This is not to say that physical bullying is completely absent in schools (as the teachers' responses illustrate) and should still be included in the model programme. It is clear from the analysis discussed above that there are few incidences of bullying directed at adults, and, hence, the relationship between students and staff cannot be taken as an indication of the level and scope of bullying in schools in Malta; this implies that the model programme should focus, above all, on the relationships between the students themselves across and within various age groups.

There appeared to be a strong tendency for students to try to handle bullying aggression on their own or among their peers, and not to involve adults, implying that better channels of communication are required between staff and students. In any event, a strong peer-mentoring programme in which students are given more autonomy and responsibility for their own well being and the well-being of their fellow classmates would be desirable.

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All three groups of respondents (staff, students, and parents) agreed that the most frequent hotspots for bullying are the schoolyard, the corridor, the bus, and social media. The model programme, therefore, should seek to address this and put in place systems whereby there is more adult presence and involvement in these areas.

According to the results of the questionnaire, parents do not have a very strong presence at school events that deal with issues of bullying and inclusion. Further investigation into the reasons for low attendance at such events would be beneficial and the model programme should seek to address this situation in order to enhance parents participation in their child/children's school life and to develop better and more open communication between the schools and the parents.

Students made a number of suggestions on the ways that they think their schools could help to reduce aggressions and bullying. Consequently, the model programme should include networking activities in order to foster an environment of friendship and support, as well as activities and events that promote equality and inclusion.

4.2 End line Research: observation of changes subsequent to implementation

4.2.1 Demographic characteristics¹

Staff

111 members of the teaching and non-teaching staff from the three schools responded to our questionnaire. Of these 111, 33% were from Maria Regina College Middle School, Naxxar, 11% from St. Thomas More College Girls Secondary School, Santa Lucia, and 56% were from St. Clare College, Pembroke Secondary.

Similar to the respondents of the baseline research questionnaire, the majority of staff that specified their role within the school were teaching staff (68%), whose subjects included: Music, English, Design and Technology, Ethics, Maltese, Guidance Councillors, and Italian. 10% of the staff respondents identified themselves as non-teaching staff, including one Assistant Head of School, and, finally, 22% identified themselves as other professionals. It is worth noting that within this group, four additional people identified themselves as Assistant Heads of School.

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The age range of the staff respondents was also similar to the baseline research. Almost half the staff members participating in this study (46%) were aged between 35 and 44 years of age (slightly older than the largest bracket that took part in the baseline research - 46% of whom were aged between 25 and 34). The second largest age bracket was 25 – 34 years of age (26%), followed by the 45-54 years age bracket (19%). Both the 20-24 age bracket and 55-64 age bracket were very small with 5% and 4% of staff members falling within these brackets respectively.

As with the baseline respondents the majority of staff members that took part in the endline research were female (73%). In addition, 98% of staff members identified as Maltese, while 2% identified as mixed (two of whom specified Maltese-Canadian and Maltese-Australian).

These similarities between the baseline and the endline demographics of respondents are not surprising since, as discussed, care was taken to recruit the same participants that partook in the baseline research. Hence, the same similarities are expected in the demographical information of both parents and students.

Students

546 students from the three schools responded to the endline questionnaire. Of these, 52% were from Maria Regina College Middle School, Naxxar, 26% were from St. Thomas More College Girls Secondary School, Santa Lucia, and 22% were from St. Clare College, Pembroke Secondary. Hence, it is evident that Maria Regina College Middle School, Naxxar provided more than half the respondents.

Unlike with the baseline research, there was more of an even distribution of the age range of respondents. 52% of the students that responded to the endline questionnaire were aged between 10 and 13, while the rest were aged between 14 and 17. There was also a relatively even distribution of students that identify as either female (54%) or male (45.5%), with only 0.5% identifying as neither female nor male.

The majority of students (68%) identified themselves as Maltese, while 19% identified their nationality as Other. From those that specified, nationalities include: African, Azerbaijani, Bosnian, British, Bulgarian, Chinese, Cypriot, Dutch, Egyptian, English, Filipino, French, Georgian, Ghanaian, Hungarian, Iranian, Irish, Italian, Kurdish, Libyan, Macedonian, Moldovan, Pakistani, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Scottish, Serb, Spanish, Syrian, Ukrainian, Venezuelan, and non-specified. In addition, another 13% identified as mixed including: English/Australian; English/Gozitan; Filipino/Maltese; half Bulgarian, Australian, and a bit Maltese; half Moroccan;

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half Ukrainian; Libyan/ Algerian; Libyan/Palestinian; Macedonian/Croatian; Maltese/ Egyptian; Maltese/English; Maltese/Australia; Maltese/Belarussian; Maltese/Brazilian; Maltese/Canadian; Maltese/Czech; Maltese/Dutch; Maltese/French/Norwegian; Maltese/German; Maltese/Italian; Maltese/Libyan; Maltese/Moroccan; Maltese/Nigerian; Maltese/Russian; Maltese/Scottish; Maltese/Sicilian; Maltese/Thai; Maltese/Tunisian; Maltese/Turkish; Maltese/Welsh; Nigerian/Italian; Spanish/Filipine; Spanish/Irish; Welsh/Scottish/Polish

Parents

Finally, 211 parents responded to the endline questionnaire of whom 48% had children at Maria Regine College Middle School, Naxxar, 28% had children at St. Thomas More College Girls secondary School, Santa Lucia, and 24% had children at St. Clare College, Pembroke Secondary.

The demographics of the parents that responded to the endline questionnaire are very similar to those of the baseline research. The majority of parents (61.5%) who responded to the questionnaire were aged between 35 and 44; a further 28% were within the 45-54 age-bracket; 8% were aged between 25 and 35 years-old; and 2% were aged between 55 and 64 years-old. Only 0.5% were over 65. The large majority of these parents identified as female (88%) and the remaining 12% identified as male. None of the parents identified as a non-binary gender.

Similarly to students and staff, most parents who participated in the study (78%) identified themselves as Maltese and 2% identified as another nationality. These nationalities include: African, British, British Cypriot, Bulgarian, Czech Republic, Dutch, Filipino, Hungarian, Italian, Libyan, Macedonian, Nigerian, Pakistani, Polish, Romanian, Serbian, Syrian, Venezuelan, and non-specified. The remaining 2% identified themselves as being of mixed nationality, including: Italian/Nigerian; Maltese/English, and mixed.

With regards to their level of education, the majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire (60.5%) stated that they had reached secondary level education. 30% had reached tertiary level education; 0.5% had reached primary education with the remaining 9% selecting 'other'.

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4.2.2. School climate

There appears to have been a decrease in the level of safety in schools in Malta. While the baseline research showed that 46% of the students who responded to the questionnaire stated that they always feel safe at school and 47% stated that they sometimes feel safe (a total of 93%). The endline research shows, however, that now only 38% of students reported that they always feel safe at school and 51% reported that they sometimes feel safe at school. This means that a total of 89% of students do feel relatively safe at school; not so different from the total figures of the baseline research. The number of students who rarely and never feel safe has also increased slightly (8% and 3% respectively from 4% and 3%), however, such a small increase is insignificant given the large number of students who responded to both questionnaires.

Hence, it clearly needs to be established why more than half of these students do not always feel safe at school. Moreover, an additional, 4% stated that they rarely feel safe at school and 3% reported that they never feel safe. This means that a total of 346 out of the 642 students who responded to the questionnaire feel at risk, or at least, sometimes feel at risk at school. Given the topic of this research, this is hardly an insignificant number and this evident problem should be addressed with urgency.

Since the most significant difference in the data described above is between ‘always’ and ‘sometimes’ feeling safe, the discrepancy may be due to the fact that there is greater awareness of issues of bullying and aggression amongst the student body. However, one cannot exclude the possibility that there has indeed been an increase in bullying incidents. This will be further explored in section 4.2.4 below.

A similar trend is also evident in the responses provided by parents. While in the baseline research, 63% of the parents reported that their child/children always feel safe at school, the endline research shows that only 56% of parents hold the same opinion. Despite this there was a rise in the number of parents who believe that their child/children sometimes feel safe at school (33% of parents in the baseline and 41% in the endline research). These changes may be reflective of parents’ increased awareness of bullying and aggression in schools, although this would be difficult to corroborate since there has been a notable decrease in parent participation in school events. While in the baseline research 41% of parents reported that they regularly attend events organised by the school on topics such as bullying behaviour, aggressive behaviour, intercultural awareness, and diversity, while only 30% of parents that responded to the endline questionnaire reported that they attend. Moreover, 20% of the parents that responded to the baseline questionnaire reported that they were not aware of such events, but this number rose to 34%.

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This may indicate that the model programme did not have a great effect on parents and in future could include more material and events for the benefit of parents.

With regards to students feeling respected at schools, there has also been a notable drop. While 46% of the students reported always feeling respected by adults at their school in the baseline research, only 30% reported feeling the same in the endline questionnaire. There was also a significant rise in students rarely feeling respected by adults – from 5% in the baseline to 11% in the endline. There was, however, a rise in students who reported sometimes feeling safe at school (47% in the baseline to 11% in the endline). The responses of students regarding whether or not they feel respected by other students at their school revealed the same trends (figure 1 below). Again, this may suggest a growing awareness of issues of bullying and aggressions, since, through the model programme, bullying has been discussed extensively. The possibility that there has indeed been a rise in aggressive and bullying behaviour will be discussed in section 4.2.4 below.

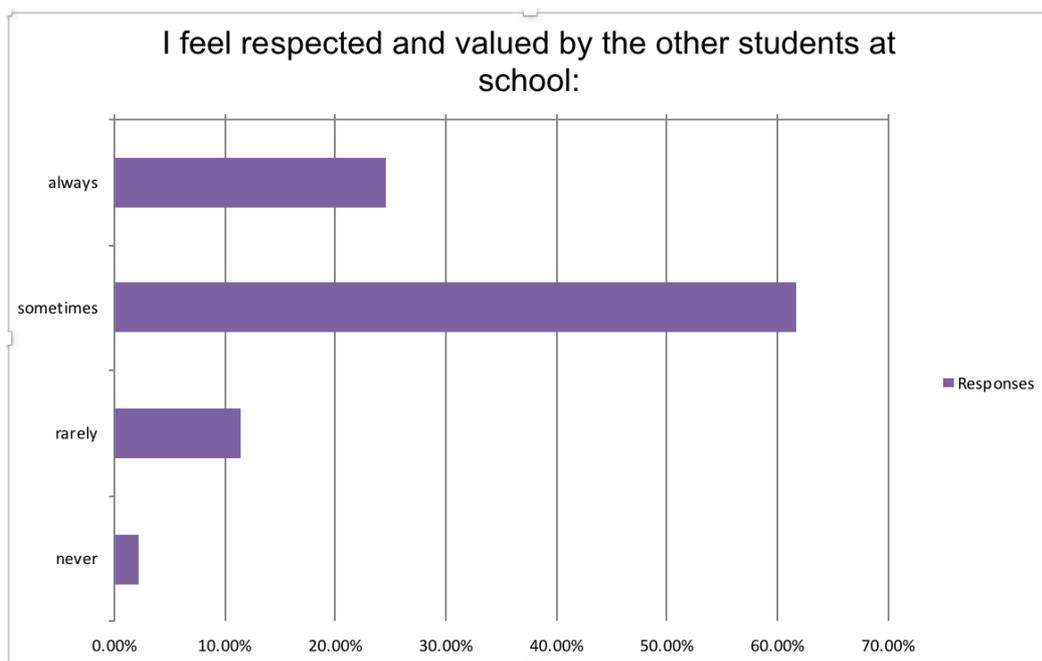


Figure 1: Students - I feel respected and valued by the other students at school.

According to parents, there is little change in their opinions as to whether or not their child/children feel respected by other students at school. However, there is a significant difference with respect to parents' impression of the respect shown their children by adults at school. As shown in figure 2 below, while the baseline research showed that 72% of parents

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believed that their child/children always feel respected by adults in their school, in the endline research this number dropped to 56%.

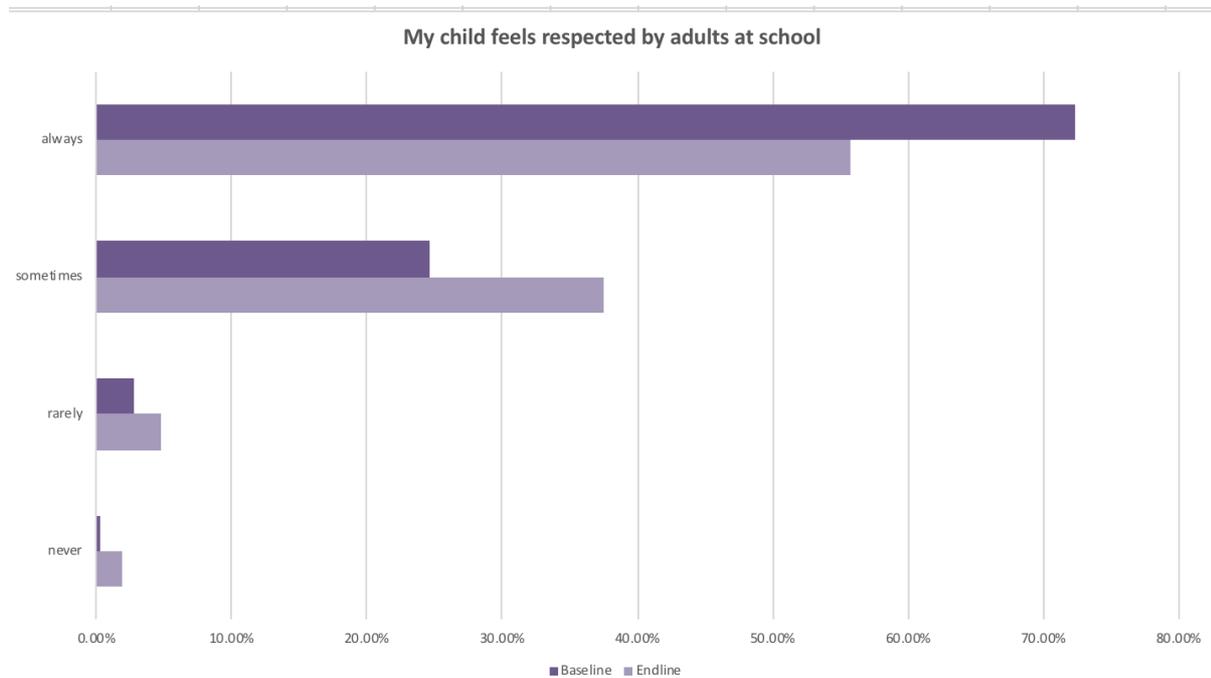


Figure 2: Parents – My child feels respected by adults at school.

It was stated above that there exists the possibility that the model programme may not have done enough to involve parents. However, the figures above imply better calibration in the opinions of students and parents, thus implying better communication between them on topics of bullying and aggression. Hence, more analysis is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the model programme did indeed have an impact on students, parents, and staff alike. Indeed, the staff responses strongly suggest a marked increase in the level of respect that school staff teach students to have toward one another with regards to each other’s differences. During the baseline research 49.5% of staff reported that they believe that the school always teaches students to show respect to one another, while after the endline questionnaire, this figure rose by 26.5%. this marked difference strongly suggests that the model programme has raised awareness amongst staff and had a direct effect on the way that they approach issues of bullying, aggression, and mutual respect.

In fact, the same trend was evident when staff were asked whether or not adults in the school encourage students to resolve conflict in a mutually beneficial way. While the baseline research

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showed that 38% of staff strongly agreed with this statement and 58% merely agreed, these figures reversed to 67% and 33% respectively during the endline, as can be seen in figure 3 below. Although this is true in the responses of staff, there is no marked difference in the responses of students and parents between the baseline and endline research for the same questions. Perhaps, however, in the coming years, the influence that the school interventions has had on school staff will snowball and later influence both students and parents.

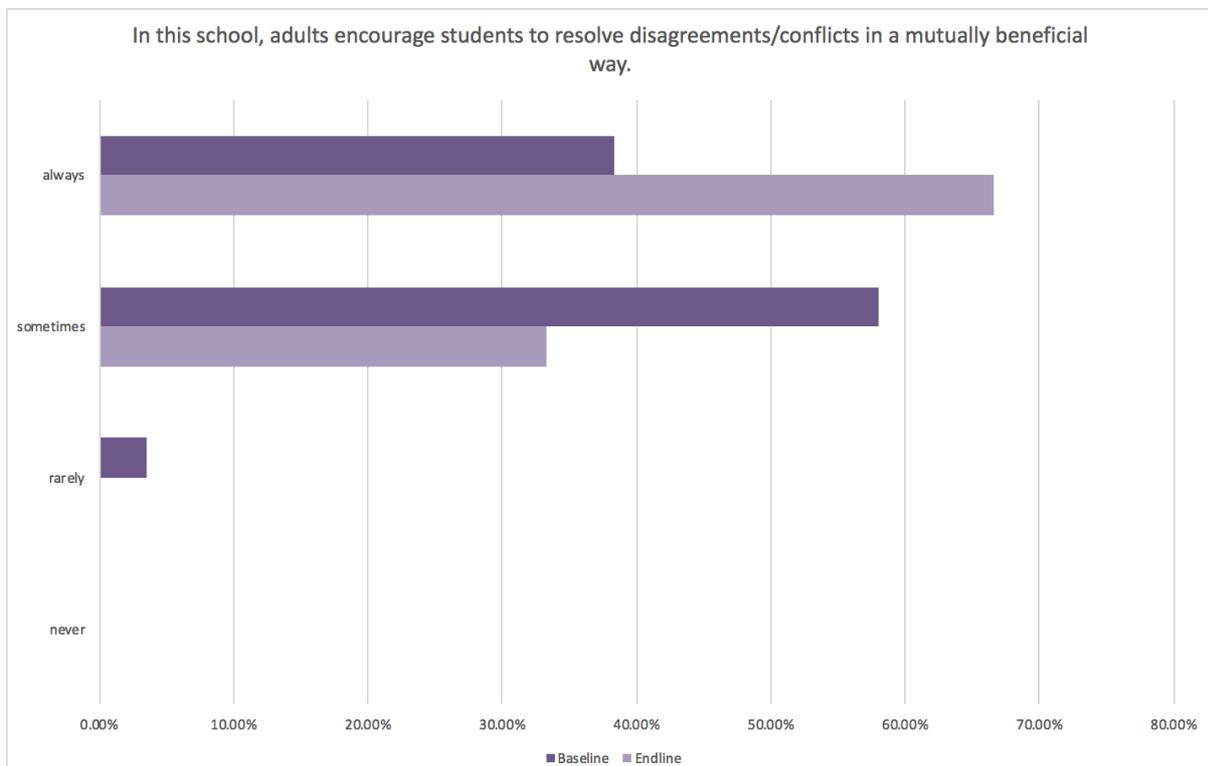


Figure 3: Teaching and Non-teaching staff - In this school adults encourage students to resolve disagreements/conflicts in a mutually beneficial way.

4.2.3. Awareness

As with the baseline questionnaire, the endline research contained numerous questions that sought to identify the respondents' level of knowledge and awareness of issues pertaining to bullying. In this regard, respondents were asked why they think students engage in bullying behaviour. There appears to be very little difference in the reasons identified by each group or participants (staff, students, and parents) between the baseline and the endline research. In fact,

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the top 10 reasons identified by each group remained more or less the same as can be seen in the tables 1-3 below.

Table 1: Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff – Why do you think some students act aggressively at school?

Why do you think some students act aggressively at school? (Teaching and non-teaching staff responses)			
Baseline		Endline	
<i>Answer Choices</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Answer Choices</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Because they have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties	91%	Because they have social emotional and behavioural difficulties.	80%
Because they want to attract attention/become more popular	85%	Because they want to attract attention/become more popular.	77%
Because they are witnessing similar behaviour at home	76%	Because they want to demonstrate power.	73%
Because they want to demonstrate power	70%	Because they are witnessing similar behaviour at home.	56%
Because they have been victims of aggressive behaviour themselves and this is their natural response	62%	Because they have been victims of aggressive behaviour and this is their natural response. Because they see it on TV, social media.	55%
Because this is how they can get what they want	46%	Because they think they are better than others.	48%
Because they see it on TV, social media, etc.	44%	Because this is how they can get what they want.	39%
Because they think they are better than others	41%	Because they do not like those who are different from them.	33%

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Because they do not like those who are different from them	23%	Because they are bored.	27%
For no specific reason.	22%	Because they discriminate against individuals based on their race	23%

Table 2: Students – Why do you think some students engage in bullying behaviour against other students?

Why do you think some students engage in bullying behaviour against other students? (Student responses)			
Baseline		Endline	
Answer Choices	Responses	Answer Choices	Responses
Because they want to attract attention/become more popular.	78.33%	Because they want to attract attention/become more popular.	88.33%
Because they want to demonstrate power.	43.66%	Because they want to demonstrate power.	58.89%
Because this is how they can get what they want.	46.87%	Because this is how they can get what they want.	52.59%
Because they have social emotional and behavioural difficulties.	45.26%	Because they have social emotional and behavioural difficulties.	53.52%
Because they do not like those who are different from them.	42.38%	Because they do not like those who are different from them.	45.93%
Because they think they are better than others.	73.52%	Because they think they are better than others.	77.04%
Because they are witnessing similar behaviour at home.	40.93%	Because they are witnessing similar behaviour at home.	50.93%
Because they have been victims of aggressive behaviour and this is their natural response.	38.04%	Because they have been victims of aggressive behaviour and this is their natural response.	43.89%

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Because they see it on TV, social media.	24.72%	Because they see it on TV, social media.	25.93%
Because they are bored.	22.47%	Because they are bored.	38.15%

Table 3: Parents – Why, in your opinion, do you think some students act aggressively at school?

Why, in your opinion, do you think some students act aggressively at school? (Parent responses)			
Baseline		Endline	
Answer Choices	Responses	Answer Choices	Responses
Because they want to attract attention/become more popular.	69%	Because they want to attract attention/become more popular.	88%
Because they have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.	54%	Because they think they are better than others.	77%
Because they think they are better than others.	54%	Because they want to demonstrate power.	59%
Because they are witnessing similar behaviour at home.	53%	Because they have social emotional and behavioural difficulties.	54%
Because they want to demonstrate power.	47%	Because this is how they can get what they want.	53%
Because they have been victims of aggressive behaviour themselves and this is their natural response.	35%	Because they are witnessing similar behaviour at home.	51%
Because this is how they can get what they want.	29%	Because they do not like those who are different from them.	46%
Because they do not like those who are different from them.	17%	Because they have been victims of aggressive behaviour and this is their natural response.	44%

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Because they see it on TV, social media, etc.	17%	Because they are bored.	38%
Because they are bored.	10%	Because they see it on TV, social media.	26%

The tables above show that there are only minimal differences between the baseline and endline research in the top 10 causes identified by participants for bullying and aggressive behaviour. In fact, the only difference that appear to be evident are in the ranking of some cause within each group of participants. Within this scope, the model programme seems to have little effect. In fact, the tables above suggest that participants never really had a problem with identifying the causes of bullying in general; the problem with bullying and aggressive behaviour must lie in the way that it is dealt with and approached by staff, students, and parents alike.

Within the scope of this discussion, it is worth investigating the impression that staff and students have of the number of occasions on which staff become aware of bullying and aggressive behaviour. Amongst the staff, there was an almost 10% increase in the number of respondents who reported that staff rarely become aware of aggression and bullying. Moreover, the number of staff that reported that they always become aware of aggressive or bullying behaviour dropped from 46% to 27%. These results were corroborated by students, 13% of whom stated that staff always become aware of such behaviour (a drop from 23% from the baseline research).

Similar trends are evident in the responses of parents and students pertaining to the number of times parents become aware of bullying behaviour. These results may be the outcome of increased awareness of these issues amongst the three groups of participants under investigation. If this is indeed the case, one would expect that over the course of the coming years, the model programme will leave an increasingly positive impact on students, staff, and parents.

4.2.4. Frequency, level and scope; types of bullying and aggressive behaviour

There has been a marginal decrease in the number of bullying incidents that students report being victim of. For example, during the baseline 8% of students reported being physically bullied more than 6 times a week at school, while only 5% reported the same during the endline research.

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It is possible that the above contradiction may also be a result of increased awareness of bullying and aggression amongst the student body. The model programme was implemented for a whole scholastic year and, while there has been a slight decrease in the number of students reporting falling victim of such behaviour, there has been a marginal increase in the number of students that report being perpetrators. It could be that perpetrators are now more aware of their behaviour and the effects it might have. In this regard, it would also be useful to ascertain whether or not there has been a difference in the number of referrals to the anti-bullying unit from before the implementation of the model programme to after its implementation. Moreover, in future, it may be useful for the model programme to have a larger focus on the perpetrators of bullying in order to address the behaviours and attempt to engage with the root of the issue.

This discussion is also somewhat substantiated by the responses given by parents in the endline questionnaire. Parents report a slight rise in their child/children being involved in bullying as a perpetrator (3% in the baseline to 4% in the endline), as a bystander (15% in the baseline to 20% in the endline), and as a victim (16% in the baseline to 20% in the endline). In addition, fewer parents are willing to say that their child/children has not been involved in bullying behaviour at all (56% in the baseline to 44% in the endline).

Similarly, all three groups of respondents report a minor rise in the frequency with which bullying and aggressive behaviour occurs. The figures below compare the baseline and endline reported frequencies with which bullying behaviour occurs according to each group of respondents.

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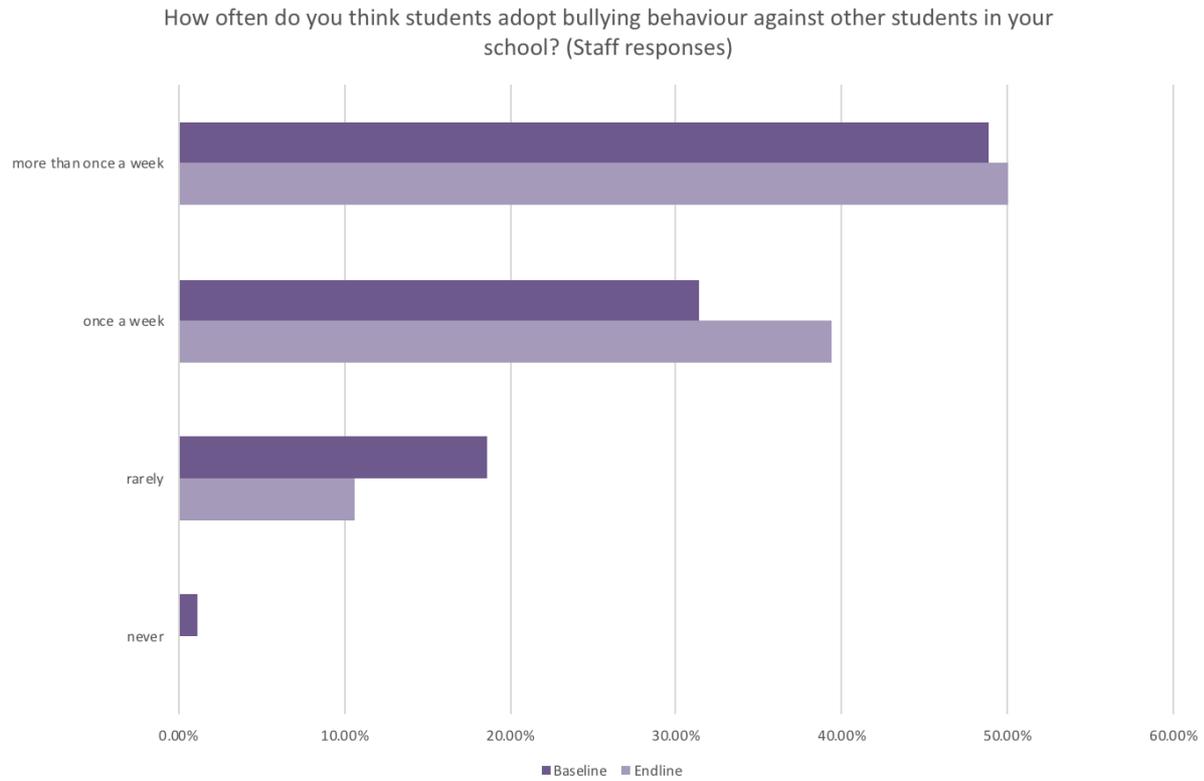


Figure 5: Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff - How often do you think students adopt bullying behaviour against other students in your school?

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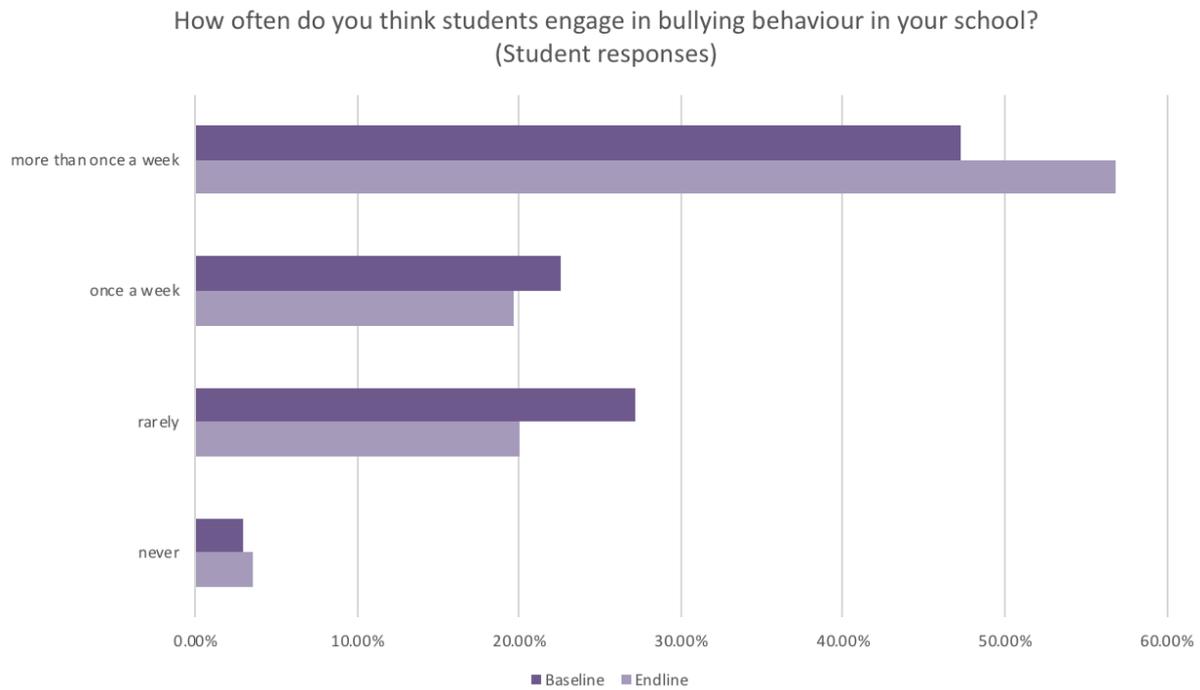


Figure 6: Students – How often do you think students engage in bullying behaviour in your school?

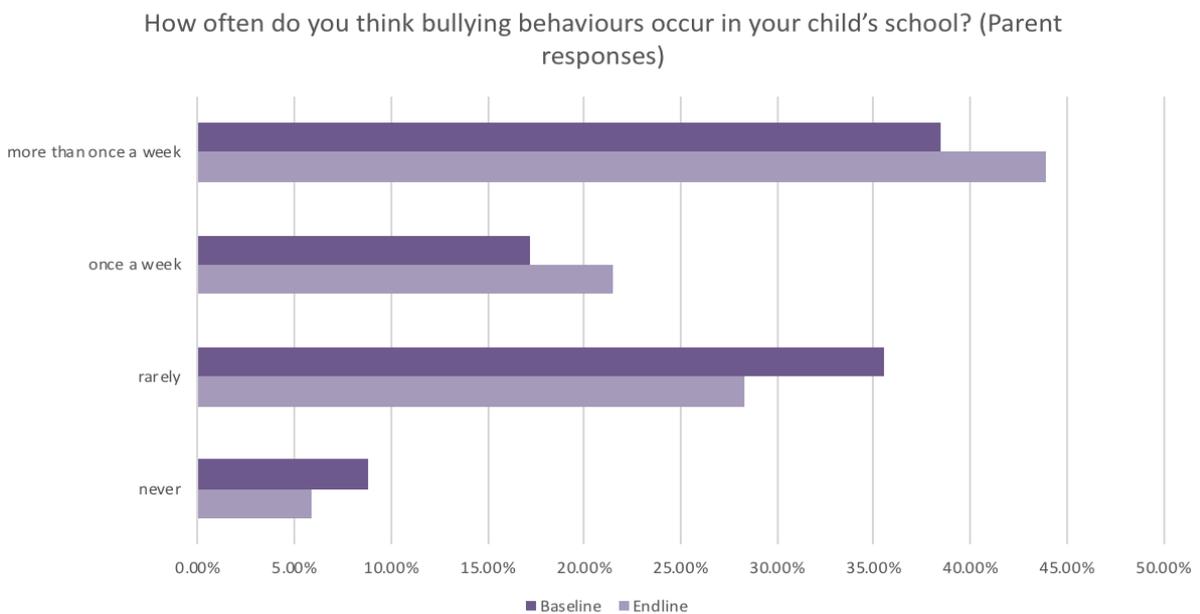


Figure 7: Parents – How often do you think bullying behaviours occur in your child’s school?

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Since the rise in frequency is only marginal, it is unlikely that there has been a noticeable increase in bullying behaviour. It is more likely a reflection of increased awareness of bullying and aggression, thus further suggesting that the model programme has indeed had a positive impact on schools and needs to move beyond raising awareness to better providing concrete and applicable methods of addressing bullying behaviour.

One striking difference between the baseline and the endline research is the number of staff who report witnessing bullying behaviour. As figure 8 below shows, the number of staff who report witnessing various types of bullying and aggressive behaviour more than once a week by students toward other students during the endline research far exceeds those that reported witnessing such behaviour during the baseline questionnaire. Not surprisingly, the figures for parents witnessing bullying behaviour has not seen such drastic difference. This is likely due to the fact that staff are on school premises for most of the day, while parents are not. Still, the substantial difference in figures reported by staff is surprising given the discussion above, which established that there has not been a drastic increase in the level of bullying that takes place in schools. Again, this can be explained by greater awareness of these issues. As bullying and aggression were ‘hot topics’ over the last scholastic year, with the implementation of the model programme, it seems perfectly plausible that the staff responses are not indicative of a greater frequency of bullying behaviour, but rather that they are more attuned to recognise such behaviour.

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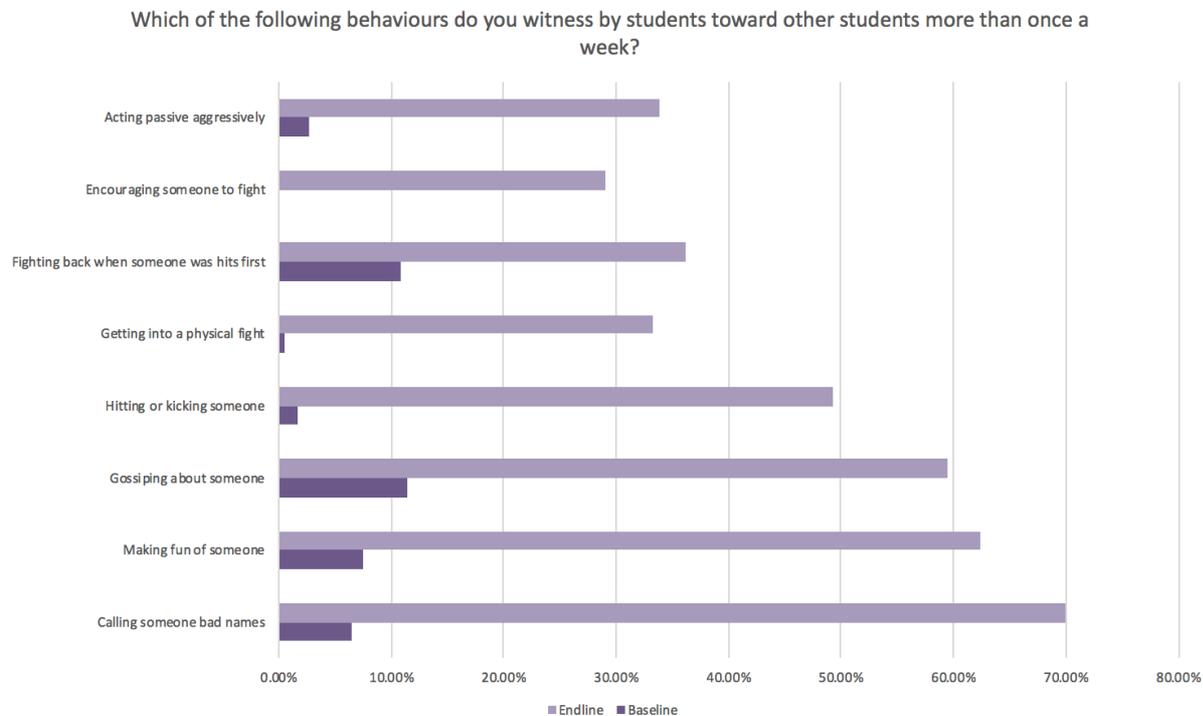


Figure 8: Teaching and Non-teaching staff – Which of the following behaviours do you witness by students toward other students more than once a week?

Turning to the question pertaining to where students are most vulnerable to bullying behaviour, one will observe that parents and students were always quite aware of these ‘danger spots’, since their responses have only marginally changed. For example, asked whether students encounter bullying on the school bus, 13% of parents reported that students frequently do during the baseline and 14% reported that they do during the endline. Similarly, 15% of students reported that they frequently do during the baseline and 17% reported that they do during the endline. On the other hand, the responses of staff show a much more significant change. During the baseline, 19% of staff responded that students are frequently vulnerable on the school bus, while in response to the endline questionnaire this number spiked to 41%.

It is evident from the discussion above, that the level and scope of aggressive and bullying behaviour has only changed marginally. However, it is evident that there has indeed been a significant increase in awareness of such issues, particularly amongst staff. This is encouraging since staff spend the greatest amount of time with students at school. As will be discussed in further detail below, with this increased awareness, more should now be done to better align the

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views of staff, students, and parents, so that they may work together to make schools a safer place for all.

Finally, it is worth noting that the endline questionnaire was distributed during the final exam period. Through our communication with the anti-bullying unit we learnt that this period is in fact one of their busiest, in which they receive the highest number of referrals. I should be kept in mind, therefore, that the timing of distribution may have had an effect on the results gained. In fact, it would be useful to repeat the endline research at the beginning of the next semester.

4.2.4. Reporting

When it comes to the reporting of bullying behaviour, both the responses of parents and students are encouraging. The ensuing discussion will take each of these in turn, using figures to illustrate the changes that have occurred.

Figure 9 below displays the changes in responses given by parents pertaining to how they find out that their child/children was involved in bullying behaviour.

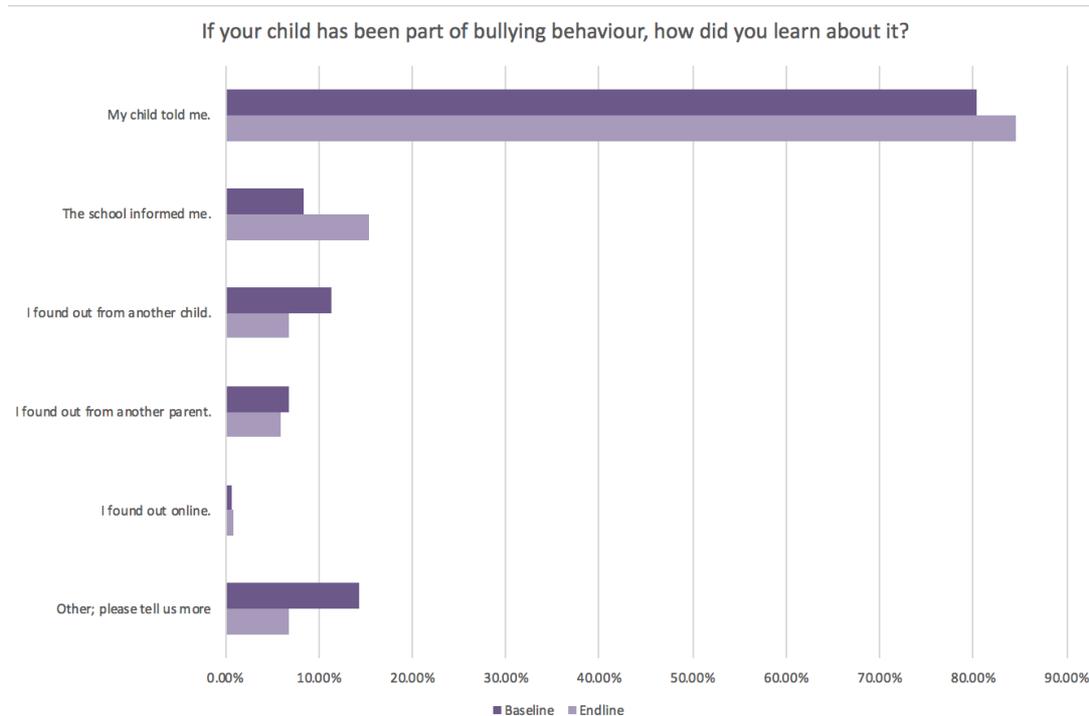


Figure 9: Parents – If your child has been part of bullying behaviour, how did you learn about it?

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4.2.5. School support and response to bullying behaviour

In both the baseline and the endline questionnaire, students were asked how they respond if they witness bullying behaviour. There has been very little change between the two questionnaires, as can be seen in the figure below.

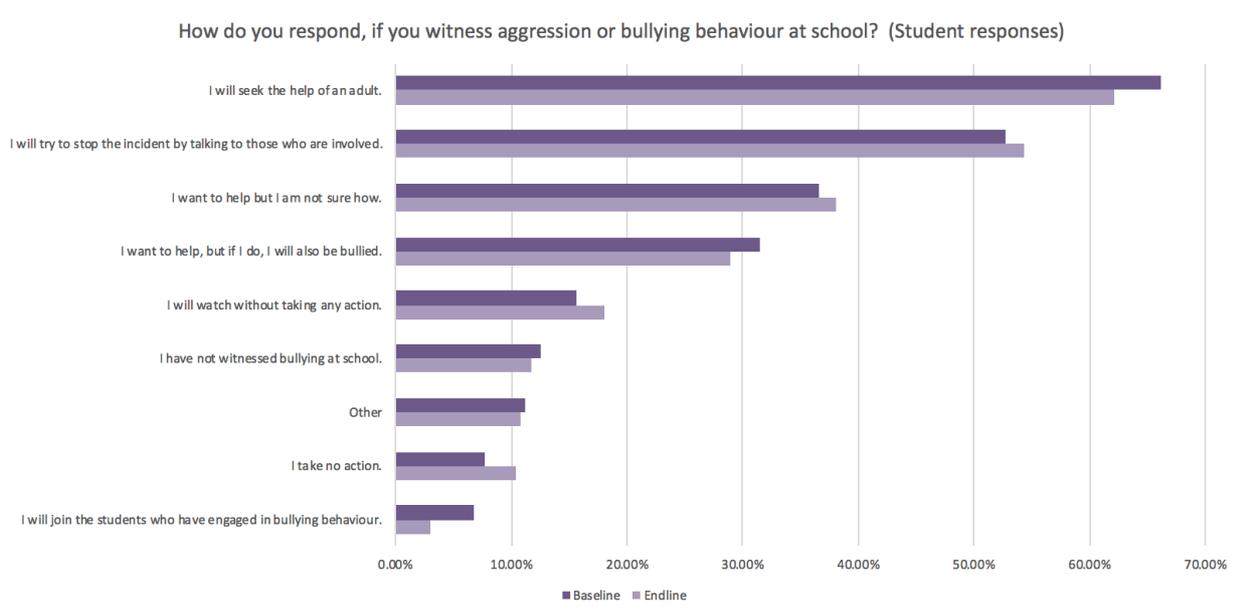


Figure 11: Students – How do you respond, if you witness aggression or bullying behaviour at school?

The figure above shows that there is very little difference in the way that students respond to bullying behaviour. Within the context of the discussion above, therefore, it is also clear that although the model programme has had an impact on awareness, more should be developed to equip students, parents, and staff, in particular, with practical and applicable tools that will better enable them to address bullying and aggressive behaviour if and when they witness it.

The responses given by staff for a similar question are more worrying. The figure 12 below shows that, subsequent to the model programme, staff are now less likely to report bullying to the person responsible for handling bullying behaviour at their school and they are less likely to contact the head of school. However, there is some optimism in these statistics since the model programme was implemented in the close collaboration of the Anti-Bullying Unit and, therefore,

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the prominence of the unit in dealing was such issues was made clear. As can be seen below, staff are now more likely to contact the anti-bullying services provide by the Ministry of Education.

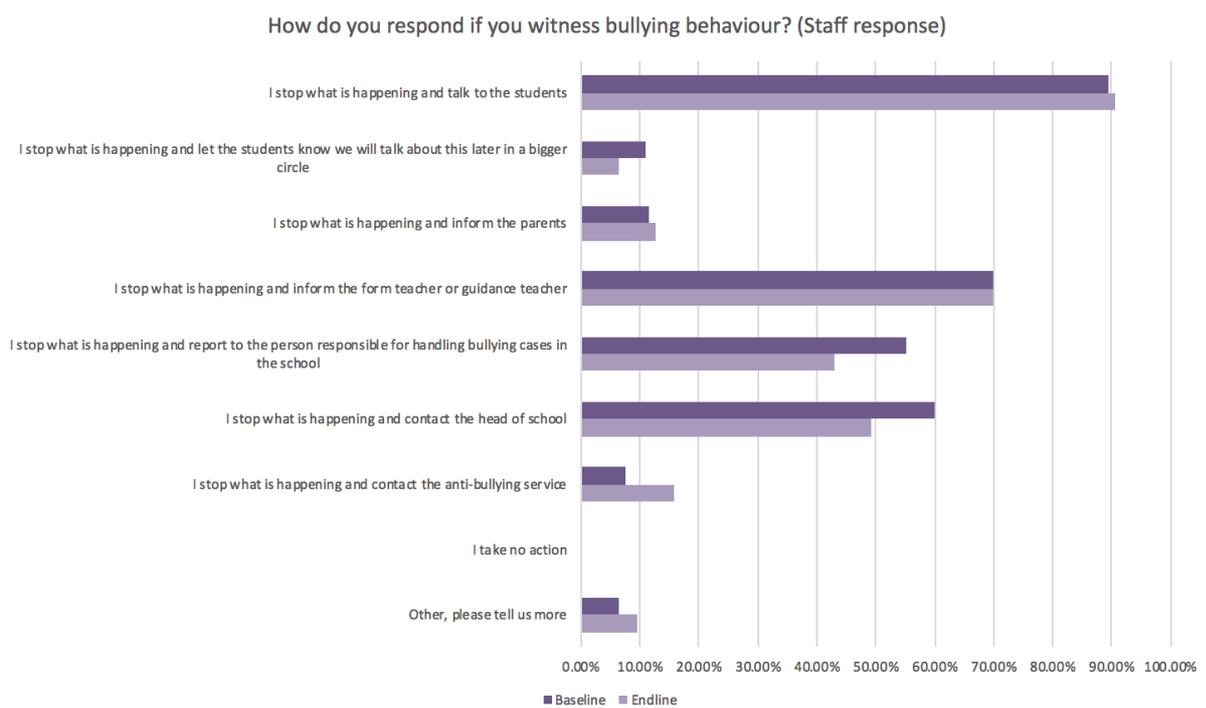


Figure 12: Teaching and Non-teaching Staff – How do you respond if you witness bullying behaviour?

Asked how they respond if a student shares that they have been bullied, staff also show higher inclination to contact the Anti-Bullying Services (11% in the baseline to 25% in the endline). Moreover, the endline research shows that staff are far more likely to take action themselves (30% in the baseline to 46% in the endline), suggesting that the model programme has indeed provided staff with a number of tools that better enables them to respond to bullying, although it is still only less than half of staff the who replied that they would take action. This substantiates the observations made above that the three groups under investigation (staff, students, and parents) will benefit greatly from more practical tools that they can use on the spot. In this regard, the organisation of workshops and courses is highly recommended.

The responses given by staff and discussed above are, however, are not corroborated by parents, who seem to have a very different impression of staff responses to bullying behaviour. The number of parents who believe that something will be done if a student complained to a staff

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member about being bullied dropped from 30% during the baseline to a mere 9% during the endline research. In contrast to this, however, the number of parents who responded that nothing would be done remained stable at around 19%. This seems contradictory, although it may be indicative of a loss of faith by parents in the schools’ reactions to bullying and aggression. Indeed, this may serve as further evidence of the observation made above that parents have a much higher awareness of bullying and aggressive behaviour; an awareness that they did not have before the implementation of the model programme.

On the other hand, asked what they think of the measures taken by the schools to address bullying and aggressive behaviour, parents’ responses are mixed. Moreover, figure 13 below shows that there has been a slight drop in the number of parents that rate such measures as excellent and a rather significant rise in the number of parents who rate them as poor.

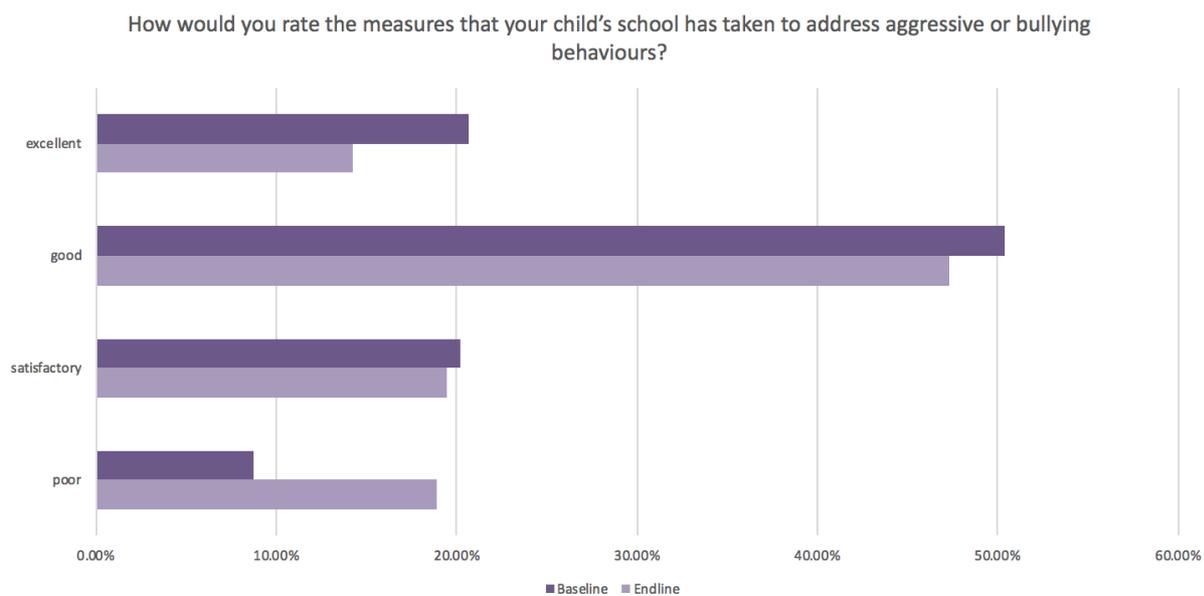


Figure 13: Parents – How would you rate the measures that your child’s school has taken to address aggressive or bullying behaviours?

As mentioned, the model programme was implemented in close collaboration with the Anti-Bullying Unit. Staff from the unit have commented that, in future, the model programme should do more to directly involve parents. The figures above may be indicative of this lack of involvement, since, as discussed above, school staff do generally feel better equipped to deal with issues of bullying. Hence, while parents are more aware of bullying as an issue, they are still

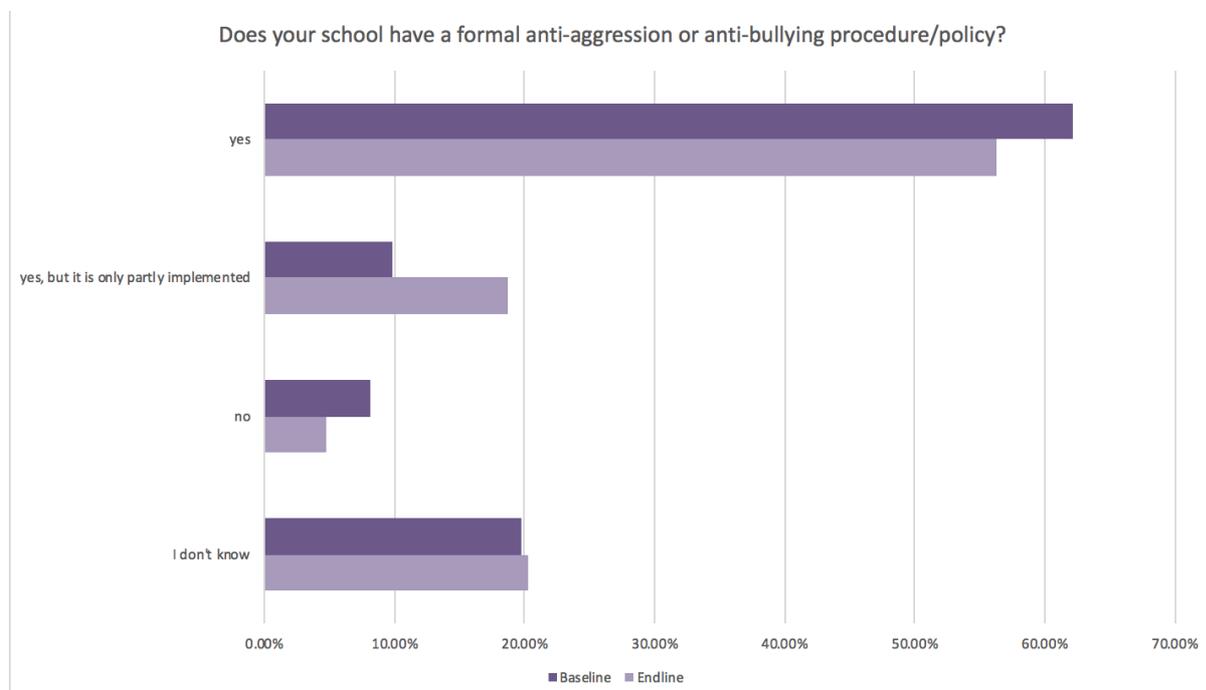
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somewhat uninformed in how to deal with it and what school are doing to address and prevent it.

4.2.6. Capacity

There were a number of questions in the questionnaires disseminated to parents and staff that aimed to ascertain whether, in their opinions, schools have the capacity to deal with bullying and aggressive behaviour, by establishing the sort of relationship that parents have with the school and the degree to which schools offer staff support and training in the field of bullying and aggression. The results of this section of the questionnaire are worrying.

As can be seen in figure 14 below slightly fewer staff report that the schools have any form of formal anti-bullying procedure or policy. Moreover, almost 10% more staff report that schools only have a partial policy during the endline research. In addition to this, fewer staff report having special occasion on which they discuss issues of bullying and aggression (30% during the baseline to 17% during the endline) and the number of staff who report specifically that school do not organise such events rose from 70% during the baseline to 83% during the endline.



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Figure 14: Teaching and Non-teaching staff: Does your school have a formal anti-aggression or anti-bullying procedure/policy?

Hence, at face value, according to the staff responses discussed above, the model programme has done very little in the way of establishing formal procedures and embellishing the infrastructure already in place at school. Again, this may be due to the fact that, due to the model programme, there is a much more heightened sensitivity to these issues, and that, therefore, in future, the model programme must strive to include much more practical solutions rather than mere awareness raising.

The responses given by parents are no more encouraging. As noted in section 4.2.2 there has been a decline in the number of parents who attend events organised by the school on topics of bullying and aggression. Moreover, there has been very little change in the level of contact that parents have with the school, with few parents reporting that they have regular communication with the school (14% in the baseline and 10% during the endline). Staff from the Anti-Bullying Unit also noted that it is notoriously difficult to draw parents to events organised at schools. Although speculations can be made as to why this is true, it is impossible to know for sure. The questionnaire disseminated failed to ask why parents might not attend. If, in future, similar research is conducted, the researchers would do well to include a question of this sort. Once the reasons are established, schools and organisation may work around these issues in order to better include parents in their child/children's educational development.

In sum, it appears that schools do not have an increased capacity to address issues of bullying and aggression, although there is reason to believe that there has been a substantial increase of awareness of these issues among staff, students, and parents alike. Within this scope, the next section will explore what effects that the model programme is believed to have had according to the three groups under investigation (staff, students, and parents) as establish a set of recommendations that model programme would benefit from in future.

It is worth noting here that the model programme was not the only activity carried out in the schools during the scholastic year under investigation. Indeed, the Anti-Bullying Service continued with their regular work, such as individual case management, class interventions, and groups interventions.

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4.2.7. Recommendations for the Model program

Finally, the endline questionnaire included a question directed at each group of participants in order to ascertain whether or not they believe that the model programme had a positive impact. The responses given are not encouraging.

Staff were asked whether or not they feel better enabled and supported to handle aggressive and bullying behaviours (by means of school policies, trainings at school etc.) as a result of the model program. 17% of the staff said that they did and another 17% reported that they did not. However, 66% reported that they did, but only to a certain extent, confirming the observation made above that the model programme did very well in raising awareness, but it needs to include more hands-on, practical tools and training.

Moreover, there appears to be some sort of a blaming game between parents and staff, which might explain the parents' lack of participation in school events, as discussed above. Some parents stated that children are not only bullied by other students, but also by adults in the school and that adults sometimes treat students unfairly despite policies put in place to prevent that. Parents also stated that there should be more of an effort made on the part of staff to understand students better. On the other hand, one teacher cited the opinion that bullying will not cease unless children are disciplined at home. Another staff member stated that parents and guardians need to be re-educated together with their children if bullying and aggression are to be suitably addressed.

Beyond this blaming game, staff also cited lack of resources and time as one reason for the ongoing prevalence of bullying and aggression. As one staff member put it “we need more manpower, our school is one of the biggest on the island and we are understaffed. We cannot cope with the worsening situation and we need help from the outside”. Other solutions include a permanent master of discipline trained to handle bullying and aggressive behaviour and a school anti-bullying policy. Other staff members cited the need for more training. Two other interesting suggestions by staff were the need for online materials and the need to start bullying awareness training with young children in kindergarten. Perhaps staff will be better access material online and go through training in their own time and at their own pace.

Asked whether or not they believed the model programme to have had a positive effect in schools 145 students stated that it did not, and 132 students stated that it did. Other students gave mixed answers. 27 students stated that they did not know whether it did or not; some stated that maybe it did, and others stated that it may have partially had a positive effect. Somewhat more pessimistic, a number of students stated that bullying will never stop and there is nothing that

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adults can really do to stop it. With regards to the events that were organised by means of the model programme, it was pointed out that many students do not pay attention because they are not interested. This strongly suggests that if any anti-bullying programme is to have a positive effect, the events and activities must be interactive. Another student stated that heightened security would be useful in the plight against bullying.

Hence, in view of the discussion above, it is clear that there has been a substantial increase in awareness of issues of bullying and aggression amongst all three groups of participants. However, the model programme falls short of providing the necessary skills and tools for staff, students, and parents to successfully combat bullying and aggression in schools.

In view of the above, the following recommendations are being made for future inclusion of the model programme. The Model Programme should include:

1. more vigilance, heightened adult presence;
2. more practical solutions for staff, students, and parents;
3. more hands-on workshops for all three groups;
4. open dialogue sessions between staff and parents;
5. open dialogue sessions between staff, parents, and students;
6. higher investment in the Anti-Bullying Unit and a stronger presence of the staff members of the unit in schools;
7. online anti-bullying training and materials for staff;
8. earlier anti-bullying awareness training for students as young as kindergarten age;
9. workshops and events for students should be interactive in order to ensure students are absorbing the contents;
10. practical and applicable alternative conflict resolution tactics, such as Restorative Practices;
11. better involvement of parents;
12. consistent and regular training for all three groups of participants;
13. the fostering of open dialogue between parents and schools;
14. improved channels of reporting such behaviour for students, whether anonymous or not.

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5. CONCLUSIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

It is apparent though the research conducted by means of the baseline and the endline questionnaires that the model programme developed for this project has had marginal positive effects. However, as discussed previously, the positive outcomes stemming from the implementation of the model programme are projected to grow over the coming years. The continuing implementation of the model programme in schools should further reduce bullying and increase awareness. As was put forth in section 4.2.7, a number of recommendations have been made with regard to the model programme in order to ensure its continuing success and growth, and ultimately to significantly reduce bullying.

In addition to these recommendations that were made on the basis of the local status of bullying in schools in Malta, a number of recommendations have also been made by the consortium on the EU level with the view of addressing bullying on a more global level. It is believed that with efforts put into the promotion of a culture of peace, human rights, democracy, and civility on the EU level, a more peaceful environment will subsequently be fostered in schools. Moreover, school curricular should strive to include a focus on social and emotional learning and conflict resolution management in addition to academic achievement. A focus on the social well-being students may have long-term positive effects on the school environment and may help address some of the root cause of bullying and aggressive behaviour. Against this backdrop, SOS Malta is currently on embarking on a new and exciting project with partners from 5 different EU countries that will ultimately develop an online accredited training course on Restorative Practices that will available to participants across Europe.

Beyond the local and transnational solutions that have been developed to address bullying and aggressive behaviour, schools must be ever vigilant and ready to address bullying behaviour. School should encourage staff to attend training in the area of bullying an aggression and promote an anti-bullying culture amongst students through the implementation of student mentors and training for students.

In conclusion, the model programme and the entire ASAP project has had a number of very positive outcome and has made a constructive first step in the way of addressing bullying and aggression in schools. As discussed, much work is still yet to be done, however, with the continuation of the model programme, positive effects should continue to be observed over the coming years.

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7. ANNEXES

Annex 1 - Thematic areas and research questions

Thematic areas	Teaching and non-teaching staff Questions number	Students Questions number	Parents Questions number
Demographic characteristics	<i>Introductory part – questions about profession, age and gender.</i>	<i>Introductory part – questions about age, grade and gender.</i>	<i>Introductory part – questions about age, gender, their child's grade, level of education and profession.</i>
School climate	<p>1. This school's environment is stimulating and encourages personal and professional growth.</p> <p>2. Adults in our school set a good example for students in terms of respect, responsibility, cooperation, etc.</p> <p>3a. In this school adults teach students to respect each other's differences with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.</p> <p>3b. In this school adults encourage students to resolve disagreements/conflicts in a mutually beneficial way.</p>	<p>1. I feel safe at school.</p> <p>2. I feel respected and valued by the adults at school.</p> <p>3. I feel respected and valued by the other students at school.</p> <p>4a. In my school adults teach us to respect each other's differences with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, etc.</p> <p>4b. In my school adults encourage us to resolve disagreements or conflicts in a mutually beneficial way.</p>	<p>1. My child feels safe at school.</p> <p>2. My child feels respected by adults at school.</p> <p>3. My child feels valued by other students at school.</p> <p>4a. At my child's school adults teach students to respect each other's differences with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.</p> <p>4b. At my child's school adults encourage students to resolve disagreements/conflicts in a mutually beneficial way.</p>

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	14. Where do you think children are most vulnerable to aggressive and bullying behaviours in your school?		or bullying behaviour at your child's school?
Reporting	17. Do you have a special occasion when you regularly discuss aggression/conflict/bullying with your students?	13. Is there anyone that you feel comfortable speaking to about bullying?	12a. If your child has been part of bullying behaviour, how did you learn about it?
School support and response to bullying	9. If you witness aggression or bullying at school, what is your most usual reaction? 11a. How do you respond, if you witness bullying behaviour? 11b. How do you respond, if a student shares with you that she/he was bullied? 12. If you have witnessed bullying behaviour and addressed the situation, what would be your next step?	15. How do you respond, if you witness aggression or bullying behaviour at school?	12b. If your child has had a role in a bullying case (either as a perpetrator or a victim), what was your reaction? 15. How would you rate the measures, which your child's school has taken to address aggressive or bullying behaviours? 13. If a child complained to a school staff member about being bullied, would something be done about it?
Capacity	16. Does your school have a formal anti-aggression or anti-bullying procedure/policy? 18. Do you feel enabled and supported to handle aggressive/bullying behaviours (by means of school policies, trainings your school provided you, techniques you learnt, etc.)?	16. What do you think can help your class or school to reduce aggression and bullying?	16. Do you participate in events organised by your child's school on topics such as bullying behaviour, aggressive behaviour, intercultural awareness and diversity? 17. How would you describe your relationship with the school?

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Annex 2 - Questionnaires

Annex 2a

Questionnaire for teaching and non-teaching staff

Before you begin, please read the following information.

Dear teachers/administrators,

You are asked to complete this survey as part of the Against School Aggression Partnership (ASAP) project, which aims to assess the level and scope of aggressive and bullying behaviour in your school. Your answers as a teacher/administrator will provide useful information to both project partners and school administration in order to improve the overall positive environment at school.

Remember

- All of your responses will be completely anonymised.
- All results will be reported to the school only in terms of how the surveyed groups responded. No individual responses will be made public.
- The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please respond to all statements.

You are **a**

- teacher; your subject and position: _____
- non-teaching professional; your role: _____
- other professional; please specify _____

Your age: ____

Your gender:

- male
- female
- other; please specify _____

1. This school's environment is stimulating and encourages personal and professional growth.

- strongly agree
- agree
- disagree

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strongly disagree

2. Adults in our school set a good example for students in terms of respect, responsibility, cooperation, etc.

- strongly agree
 agree
 disagree
 strongly disagree

3a. In this school adults teach students to respect each other's differences with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

- strongly agree
 agree
 disagree
 strongly disagree

3b. In this school adults encourage students to resolve disagreements/conflicts in a mutually beneficial way.

- strongly agree
 agree
 disagree
 strongly disagree

Before you continue with the survey please read the definition below:

Aggressive behaviour is identifiable with negative actions, such as when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another. Under the generally accepted definition of **aggressive behaviour**: 'aggression is any behaviour enacted with the intention to harm another person who is motivated to avoid that harm'. Please note that aggression and bullying may look behaviourally the same, but bullying is distinctively characterized by the abusive use of power of an individual or group that intentionally and repeatedly attacks, excludes or humiliates others.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned definition please respond to the following questions:

4. Which of the following behaviours do you witness by students?

Mark all and only those that are relevant to you.

	towards other students	towards a teacher	towards non-teaching staff

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	always	frequently	occasionall	never	always	frequently	occasionally	never	always	frequently	occasionally	never
a) calling someone bad names												
b) making fun of someone												
c) gossiping about someone												
d) hitting or kicking someone												
e) getting in a physical fight												
f) fighting back when someone was hit first												
g) encouraging someone to fight												
h) acting passive aggressively												
i) other; please tell us more: _____												

5. Why do you think some students act aggressively at school?

You can select more than one statement.

- Because they want to attract attention/become more popular.
- Because they want to demonstrate power.
- Because this is how they can get what they want.
- Because they have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Because they do not like those who are different from them.
- Because they think they are better than others.
- Because they are witnessing similar behaviour at home.
- Because they have been victims of aggressive behaviour themselves and this is their natural response.
- Because they see it on TV, social media, etc.
- Because they are bored.
- For no specific reason.
- Other; please tell us more _____

6. In the last school year have you been the target of aggressive behaviour from anyone in school?

- yes, by a student
- yes, by a teacher

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- yes, by a parent
- no

Before you continue with the survey please read the definitions below:

The most widely accepted definition for bullying behaviour is the one coined by Dan Olweus, which revolves around three characteristics, which delimitates bullying behaviour from aggression: 'a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time (1), to negative actions on the part of one or more other students (2)' and there is an imbalance of power between the actors involved (3).

As there are different categories of aggressive behaviour, bullying can also be classified in different types:

6. Direct bullying involves a face to face interaction with the target.
7. Indirect bullying, sometimes referred to as social bullying, involves manipulation of social relationships to hurt (gossiping, spreading rumours, etc.) or exclude the individual who is being victimized.
8. Physical bullying includes any physical act, which results in hurting or injuring the target or any of their possessions.
9. Verbal bullying occurs when the use of rumours, name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation and racist remarks are involved.
10. Cyber bullying are all the actions that are being conducted through the use of technology or social media, such as: flaming, harassment, denigration, trolling, impersonation, outing, trickery or cyberstalking.
11. Sexual bullying is a type of bullying and harassment that occurs in connection with a person's sex, body, sexual orientation or with sexual activity. It can be either physical and/or non-physical, it can involve making sexual comments to someone, inappropriate physical contact that makes the other person feel uncomfortable, distributing sexual material or sending someone messages or calls of sexual nature, etc.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned definition please respond to the following questions:

7. Have you ever witnessed a student adopting bullying behaviour against other students in your school?

- yes
- no

8. How often do you think students adopt bullying behaviour against other students in your school?

- more than once a week
- once a week
- rarely
- never

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9. How often do you think the following bullying behaviours occur in your school?

Please provide an answer to each type of bullying behaviour listed below.

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a) physical bullying | <input type="checkbox"/> more than once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> rarely | <input type="checkbox"/> never |
| b) verbal bullying | <input type="checkbox"/> more than once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> rarely | <input type="checkbox"/> never |
| c) social bullying | <input type="checkbox"/> more than once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> rarely | <input type="checkbox"/> never |
| d) cyber bullying | <input type="checkbox"/> more than once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> rarely | <input type="checkbox"/> never |
| e) sexual bullying | <input type="checkbox"/> more than once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> rarely | <input type="checkbox"/> never |

10. Why do you think some students engage in bullying behaviour against their peers?

You can select more than one statement.

- Because they want to attract attention/become more popular.
- Because they want to demonstrate power.
- Because this is how they can get what they want.
- Because they have social emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Because they do not like those who are different from them.
- Because they think they are better than others.
- Because they are witnessing similar behaviour at home.
- Because they have been victims of aggressive behaviour and this is their natural response.
- Because they see it on TV, social media.
- Because they are bored.
- For no specific reason.
- Other; please tell us more _____

11a. How do you respond, if you witness bullying behaviour?

You can select more than one statement.

- I take action:
 - I stop what is happening and talk to the students.
 - I stop what is happening and let the students know we will talk about this later in a bigger circle.
 - I stop what is happening and call the parents.
 - I stop what is happening and call the head teacher of the class.
 - I stop what is happening contact the person responsible for handling bullying cases in the school.
 - I stop what is happening and contact the school authorities.
 - I stop what is happening and contact external authorities.
- I take no action.
- Other; please tell us more _____

11b. How do you respond, if a student shares with you that she/he was bullied?

You can select more than one statement.

- I take action myself with the students in question.
- I contact the parents of the students in question.
- I report the event to the school authorities.
- I involve external professionals.
- I contact relevant authorities at community or national level.
- I take no action.
- Other; please tell us more _____

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12. If you have witnessed bullying behaviour and addressed the situation, what would be your next step?

You can select more than one statement.

- I follow up the event with the students in question.
- I follow up the event with other school professionals.
- I follow up the event with the school authorities.
- I follow up the event with the relevant external organizations.
- Once the event has been addressed, I allow it to dissipate.
- Other; please tell us more _____

13. In view of questions 11-12, would there be a difference in your answer if we ask about your reaction to an aggressive incident?

- yes; please tell us more _____
- no

14. Where do you think children are most vulnerable to aggressive and bullying behaviours in your school?

Mark all and only those that are relevant to you.

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a) In the classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> never | <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally | <input type="checkbox"/> frequently | <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| b) On the school yard | <input type="checkbox"/> never | <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally | <input type="checkbox"/> frequently | <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| c) In the corridor | <input type="checkbox"/> never | <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally | <input type="checkbox"/> frequently | <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| d) In the restroom | <input type="checkbox"/> never | <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally | <input type="checkbox"/> frequently | <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| e) On the school bus | <input type="checkbox"/> never | <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally | <input type="checkbox"/> frequently | <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| f) On the parking lot | <input type="checkbox"/> never | <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally | <input type="checkbox"/> frequently | <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| g) During field trips | <input type="checkbox"/> never | <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally | <input type="checkbox"/> frequently | <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| h) On social media | <input type="checkbox"/> never | <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally | <input type="checkbox"/> frequently | <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |

15. In your opinion how often do teachers become aware of aggressive or bullying behaviours at school?

- almost never
- occasionally
- almost always

16. Does your school have a formal anti-aggression or anti-bullying procedure/policy?

- yes
- yes but it is only partly implemented
- no
- I don't know

17. Do you have a special occasion when you regularly discuss aggression/conflict/bullying with your students?

- yes
- no

If yes, could you briefly describe it?

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Setting <i>(Where does this activity take place?)</i>	
Content <i>(What is the activity about?)</i>	
Duration <i>(How much time is devoted to this activity?)</i>	
Frequency <i>(How often does this type of activity take place?)</i>	
Delivered by <i>(Who prepares the necessary information materials and carries out the activity itself?)</i>	

18. Do you feel enabled and supported to handle aggressive/bullying behaviours (by means of school policies, trainings your school provided you, techniques you learnt, etc.)?

- yes
- to a certain extent
- no

If no, what would you need _____

Please share with us any other comments you might have:

Thank you!

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ANNEX 2b

Questionnaire for students

Before you begin, please read the following information.

Dear student,

You are asked to complete this survey as part of the Against School Aggression Partnership (ASAP) project, which aims to help teachers and other adults in our efforts to make your school a safer and nicer place. The questionnaire will ask you questions about how you feel at school and your perceptions of aggressive and bullying behaviour.

Remember

- All of your responses will be completely anonymised.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- All results will be reported to the school only in terms of how the entire group responded. No individual responses will be made public.
- The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please respond to all statements and questions.

Your age: ____

Your grade: ____

Your gender:

male

female

other; please specify _____

1. I feel safe at school.

always

sometimes

rarely

never

2. I feel respected and valued by the adults at school.

always

sometimes

rarely

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never

3. I feel respected and valued by the other students at school.

- always
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

4a. In my school adults teach us to respect each other's differences with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

- always
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

4b. In my school adults encourage us to resolve disagreements or conflicts in a mutually beneficial way.

- always
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

Before you continue with the survey please read the definition below:

Aggressive behaviour is identifiable with negative actions, such as when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another. Under the generally accepted definition of **aggressive behaviour**: 'aggression is any behaviour enacted with the intention to harm another person who is motivated to avoid that harm'. Please note that aggression and bullying may look behaviourally the same, but bullying is distinctively characterized by the abusive use of power of an individual or group that intentionally and repeatedly attacks, excludes or humiliates others.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned definition please respond to the following questions:

5. Think about what happened during the last 7 days, when you answer the questions below.

During the last 7 days:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
	times	time	times	times	times	times	times

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a) I teased students to make them angry.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
b) I got angry very easily with someone.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
c) I fought back when someone hit me first.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
d) I said things about other kids to make other students laugh.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
e) I encouraged other students to fight.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
f) I pushed or shoved other students.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
g) I was angry most of the day.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
h) I got into a physical fight because I was angry.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
i) I slapped or kicked someone.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
j) I called other students bad names.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
k) I threatened to hurt or to hit someone.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Before you continue with the survey please read the definitions below:

A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students and there is an imbalance of power between the children involved.

1. Physical bullying is when physical actions such as hitting, poking, tripping or pushing, are used to hurt and intimidate. Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying.
2. Verbal bullying involves the use of negative words, like name calling, insults or words used to intentionally upset someone.
3. Social bullying involves spreading rumours about someone, embarrassing them in public or intentionally leaving them out.
4. Cyber bullying is when technology is used to verbally, socially or psychologically bully another child. It can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones.

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5. Sexual bullying, whether physical or non-physical, involves making sexual comments to someone, inappropriate physical contact that makes the other person feel uncomfortable, distributing sexual material or sending someone messages or calls of sexual nature, etc.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned definition please respond to the following questions:

6. How often do you think students engage in bullying behaviour in your school?

- more than once a week
- once a week
- rarely
- never

7. In the last school year and this current year, have you been

Please provide an answer to each type of bullying behaviour listed below.

- a) physically bullied at school
 - more than once a week
 - once a week
 - rarely
 - never
- b) verbally bullied at school through rumours, name calling, insults, teasing, etc.
 - more than once a week
 - once a week
 - rarely
 - never
- c) socially bullied at school by being left out or isolated
 - more than once a week
 - once a week
 - rarely
 - never
- d) cyber bullied using the Internet, e-mail, cell phone or social media
 - more than once a week
 - once a week
 - rarely
 - never
- e) sexually bullied at school
 - more than once a week
 - once a week
 - rarely
 - never

8. In the last school year and this current year, have you been part of

Please provide an answer to each type of bullying behaviour listed below.

- a) physically bullying other students at school
 - more than once a week
 - once a week
 - rarely
 - never
- b) verbally bullying other students at school
 - more than once a week
 - once a week
 - rarely
 - never
- c) socially bullying other students at school
 - more than once a week
 - once a week
 - rarely
 - never
- d) cyber bullying other students at school
 - more than once a week
 - once a week
 - rarely
 - never
- e) sexually bullying other students at school
 - more than once a week
 - once a week
 - rarely
 - never

9. Why do you think some students engage in bullying behaviour against other students?

You can select more than one statement.

- Because they want to attract attention/become more popular.
- Because they want to demonstrate power.
- Because this is how they can get what they want.
- Because they have social emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Because they do not like those who are different from them.

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- Because they think they are better than others.
- Because they are witnessing similar behaviour at home.
- Because they have been victims of aggressive behaviour and this is their natural response.
- Because they see it on TV, social media.
- Because they are bored.
- For no specific reason.
- Other; please tell us more _____

10. In your opinion how often do teachers become aware of bullying behaviour at school?

- almost never
- occasionally
- almost always

11. How do teachers become aware of bullying?

Please rate your answers from 5 (most common) to 1 (least common).

- ___ They witness it.
- ___ Another student reports the bullying to the teacher.
- ___ Another adult reports the bullying to the teacher.
- ___ The student being targeted reports the bullying to a teacher.
- ___ They learn it from parents.
- ___ Other; please tell us more _____

12. In your opinion how often do parents become aware of bullying behaviour at school?

- almost never
- occasionally
- almost always

13. If you have been involved in bullying, is there anyone that you feel comfortable speaking to about it?

Please provide an answer where it is relevant to you.

- a) at home _____
- b) in school _____
- c) online _____
- d) other; please tell us more _____

14. Where do you think children are most vulnerable to aggressive or bullying behaviour at your school?

Mark all and only those that are relevant to you.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| a) In the classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> never <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> frequently <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| b) On the school yard | <input type="checkbox"/> never <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> frequently <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| c) In the corridor | <input type="checkbox"/> never <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> frequently <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| d) In the restroom | <input type="checkbox"/> never <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> frequently <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| e) On the school bus | <input type="checkbox"/> never <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> frequently <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| f) On the parking lot | <input type="checkbox"/> never <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> frequently <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |
| g) During field trips | <input type="checkbox"/> never <input type="checkbox"/> occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> frequently <input type="checkbox"/> all the time |

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h) On social media

never occasionally frequently all the time

15. How do you respond, if you witness aggression or bullying behaviour at school?

You can select more than one answer.

- I will join the students who have engaged in bullying behaviour.
- I will watch without taking any action.
- I will try to stop the incident by talking to those who are involved.
- I will seek the help of an adult.
- I want to help but I am not sure how.
- I want to help, but if I do, I will also be bullied.
- I take no action. (Why? _____)
- I have not witnessed bullying at school.
- Other; please tell us more _____

16. What do you think can help your class or school to reduce aggression and bullying?

Please share with us any other comments you might have:

Thank you!

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ANNEX 2c

Questionnaire for parents

Before you begin, please read the following information.

Dear Parents,

You are kindly asked to complete this survey as part of the Against School Aggression Partnership (ASAP) project, which aims to assess the level and scope of aggressive behaviour and bullying in your child's school. Your answers as a parent will provide useful information to both project partners and school administration in order to improve the overall positive environment at school.

Remember

- All of your responses will be completely anonymised.
- All results will be reported to the school only in terms of how the surveyed groups responded. No individual responses will be made public.
- The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please respond to all statements.

Your age: _____

Your gender:

- male
 female
 other; (please tell us more) _____

Your child's grade: _____

Your ethnicity: _____

What is your level of education?

- primary
 secondary
 tertiary

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other; please specify _____

What is your profession? _____

1. My child feels safe at school.

- always
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

2. My child feels respected by adults at school.

- always
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

3. My child feels valued by other students at school.

- always
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

4a. At my child's school adults teach students to respect each other's differences with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

- always
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

4b. At my child's school adults encourage students to resolve disagreements/conflicts in a mutually beneficial way.

- always
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

Before you continue with the survey please read the definition of below:

Aggressive behaviour is identifiable with negative actions, such as when someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another. Under the generally accepted definition of **aggressive behaviour**: 'aggression is any behaviour enacted with the intention to harm another person

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who is motivated to avoid that harm'. Please note that aggression and bullying may look behaviourally the same, but bullying is distinctively characterized by the abusive use of power of an individual or group that intentionally and repeatedly attacks, excludes or humiliates others.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned definition please respond to the following questions:

5. Has your child shared information about students adopting aggressive behaviour at school?

- yes
- no

6. How often have you yourself witnessed aggressive behaviour by students at your child's school?

- always
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

7. Why, in your opinion, do you think some students act aggressively at school?

You can select more than one answer.

- Because they want to attract attention/become more popular.
- Because they want to demonstrate power.
- Because this is how they can get what they want.
- Because they have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Because they do not like those who are different from them.
- Because they think they are better than others.
- Because they are witnessing similar behaviour at home.
- Because they have been victims of aggressive behaviour themselves and this is their natural response.
- Because they see it on TV, social media, etc.
- Because they are bored.
- For no specific reason.
- Other; please tell us more _____

8. Are you aware of other aggressive incidents at your child's school? For example, involving other adults – teachers, other parents, etc.?

- yes; please tell us more _____
- no

Before you continue with the survey please read the definitions below:

The most widely accepted definition for bullying behaviour is the one coined by Dan Olweus, which revolves around three characteristics, which delimitates bullying behaviour from aggression: 'a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time (1), to negative actions on the part of one or more other students (2)' and there is an imbalance of power between the actors involved (3).

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As there are different categories of aggressive behaviour, bullying can also be classified in different types:

- Direct bullying involves a face to face interaction with the target.
- Indirect bullying, sometimes referred to as social bullying, involves manipulation of social relationships to hurt (gossiping, spreading rumours, etc.) or exclude the individual who is being victimized.
- Physical bullying includes any physical act, which results in hurting or injuring the target or any of their possessions.
- Verbal bullying occurs when the use of rumours, name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation and racist remarks are involved.
- Cyber bullying are all the actions that are being conducted through the use of technology or social media, such as: flaming, harassment, denigration, trolling, impersonation, outing, trickery or cyberstalking.
- Sexual bullying is a type of bullying and harassment that occurs in connection with a person's sex, body, sexual orientation or with sexual activity. It can be either physical and/or non-physical, it can involve making sexual comments to someone, inappropriate physical contact that makes the other person feel uncomfortable, distributing sexual material or sending someone messages or calls of sexual nature, etc.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned definition please respond to the following questions:

9. Do you think bullying behaviours occur in your child's school?

- yes
 no

10. How often do you think bullying behaviours occur in your child's school?

- more than once a week
 once a week
 rarely
 never

11a. Has your child been involved in bullying?

- no
 yes, as a perpetrator
 yes, as a victim
 yes, as a bystander (i.e. Your child saw someone else being bullied.)

11b. In the last school year and this current year, has your child been

Please provide an answer to each type of bullying behaviour listed below.

a) physically bullied at school

- more than once a week once a week rarely never

b) verbally bullied at school through rumours, name calling, insults, teasing, etc.

- more than once a week once a week rarely never

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- c) socially bullied at school by being left out or isolated
 more than once a week once a week rarely never
- d) cyber bullied using the Internet, e-mail, cell phone or social media
 more than once a week once a week rarely never
- e) sexually bullied
 more than once a week once a week rarely never

11c. In the last school year and this current year, has your child been involved in

Please provide an answer to each type of bullying behaviour listed below.

- a) physically bullying other students at school
 more than once a week once a week rarely never
- b) verbally bullying other students at school
 more than once a week once a week rarely never
- c) socially bullying other students at school
 more than once a week once a week rarely never
- d) cyber bullying other students at school
 more than once a week once a week rarely never
- e) sexually bullying other students at school
 more than once a week once a week rarely never

12a. If your child has been part of bullying behaviour, how did you learn about it?

You can select more than one statement.

- My child told me.
 The school informed me.
 I found out from another child.
 I found out from another parent.
 I found out online.
 Other; please tell us more _____

12b. If your child has had a role in a bullying case (either as a perpetrator or a victim), what was your reaction?

13. If a child complained to a school staff member about being bullied, would something be done about it?

- yes; please tell us more _____
 no
 I don't know

14. Where do you think children are most vulnerable to aggressive or bullying behaviour at your child's school?

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Mark all and only those that are relevant to you.

- a) In the classroom never occasionally frequently all the time
- b) On the school yard never occasionally frequently all the time
- c) In the corridor never occasionally frequently all the time
- d) In the restroom never occasionally frequently all the time
- e) On the school bus never occasionally frequently all the time
- f) On the parking lot never occasionally frequently all the time
- g) During field trips never occasionally frequently all the time
- h) On social media never occasionally frequently all the time

15. How would you rate the measures, which your child's school has taken to address aggressive or bullying behaviours?

- excellent
- good
- satisfactory
- poor

If you think that your child's school's treatment of cases of aggression or bullying is less than satisfactory, what else would you expect them to do?

16. Do you participate in events organised by your child's school on topics such as bullying behaviour, aggressive behaviour, intercultural awareness and diversity?

- yes
- no
- The school does not organise such events.

17. How would you describe your relationship with the school?

Select only one answer.

- It is an equal partnership with shared responsibility.
- We communicate openly about my child's wellbeing.
- We are in contact when there is a problem.
- There is little contact between us.

Please share with us any other comments you might have:

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Thank you!

Annex 3 - Ethical Code for Researchers and Partners Staff

Researchers and partners staff involved in the project must never:

- 1/ act in ways towards children that can have negative effect on their development, including their social and relationships development;
- 2/ act in way that can set a negative example for any children present;
- 3/ have relations with a child that can in any way be considered exploitation, maltreatment or abuse;
- 4/ use language, make suggestions or offer advice that can be inappropriate or offensive;
- 5/ give money or goods to a child that go beyond parameters of purposes established by the project;
- 6/ participate in behaviors by children that is illegal, abusive or endangers their safety;
- 7/ act in ways intended to shame, humiliate or degrade children or participate in any form of emotional abuse;
- 8/ Discriminate against, show different treatment towards or favor particular children to the exclusion of others;

Researchers and partners staff involved in the project should always:

- 9/ keep in mind the best interest of children;
- 10/ identify situations that may place a child at risk and act accordingly to prevent any damage;
- 10/ inform children of the type of relationships they can expect to have with them and encourage them to report any concerns they may have;
- 11/ make full use of children skills and abilities and discuss with them their rights; what is acceptable and what is not; and what they can do if they have a problem;

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- 12/ maintain the highest personal and professional profile;
- 13/ respect children rights and treat them in a fair and honest way with dignity and respect;
- 14/ feel obliged to report any fact that can be related to a crime committed within the school that he/she will become aware of;
- 15/ encourage the participation of children so they can develop the ability to safeguard themselves.¹²

Annex 4 - Information Sheets and Dissent forms

Annex 4a

Jekk trid taqra dan il-dokument bil-Malti tista dawar il-karti il-kontra

Information sheet

Dear Participant,

Within our capacity at SOS Malta, a Malta-based NGO, we would like to invite you to participate in a study that seeks to address bullying in Maltese schools. In the framework of the ERASMUS + Programme, the Against School Aggression Partnership (ASAP) seeks to develop a model programme that will contribute to a reduction of school aggression and bullying, while establishing and strengthening cooperation between different institutions that deal with the student community, with the long-term goal to implement new conflict management methods and a culture of nonviolence in schools.

The ASAP project is a partnership between organisations in three European countries, namely, Malta, Bulgaria, and Hungary, who seek to develop and test a community-based complex school programme for effective prevention and treatment of aggression and bullying, which is based on alternative conflict resolution methods. The Malta-based research is being carried out by SOS Malta, a local voluntary organisation. SOS Malta works with both local and international partners to assist socially disadvantaged groups in improving their quality of life by providing support services and opportunities to implement development and change. SOS Malta encourages advocacy on behalf of social causes and promotes models of good care and practice. The organisation is a source of knowledge and advice about the role and contribution of volunteering and the benefits of civic engagement. SOS Malta stands on a number of pillars that encompass these objectives, namely: Social Solidarity; Volunteering; Overseas Development; and Research and Training.

Baseline and Endline Research component

¹² Adapted from Save the Children, Italy Code of conduct when working with children.

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Within the scope of the project, a model programme will be created and circulated with the view of instilling cultural change in schools by complementing existing practices with the dissemination of nonviolent communication, introduction of alternative conflict resolution practices, prevention of bullying, and a decrease in aggressive and other risk-related behaviour. As part of the research that will be carried out in order to achieve this, an initial assessment of the level and scope of aggressive behaviour and bullying in a number of pilot schools in the three participating countries will be conducted. The pilot schools have expressed readiness to participate in the ASAP project and, more importantly, to implement the model programme for the prevention and effective management of incidents of bullying or aggressive behaviour. Hence, the baseline research, which will be conducted in January 2017, will examine the situation prior to the intervention, identifying the real dimensions of the problem and collecting the opinion of teaching and non-teaching staff, students, and parents. Once the initial investigations have been conducted and the model programme has been designed and implemented among the pilot schools, the baseline research will then be complemented with an endline assessment as an attempt to capture the changes that will have occurred as a result of the implementation of the project. The endline research will take place in the first half of 2018.

In view of the above, the principle aims of the research being conducted under auspices of SOS Malta are:

- to examine the overall climate in the participating pilot schools in Hungary, Bulgaria and Malta;
- to gather actual data on the prevalence and different forms of aggression and bullying in the schools;
- to identify the level of awareness of teaching and non-teaching staff, students, and parents towards the problems at hand;
- to examine the most common locations where incidents of aggression and bullying take place;
- to gather data on the level of and mechanisms for reporting of such incidents at school level and how much are they being used by students, schools staff, and parents;
- to outline the level of preparedness and capacity of those involved to prevent or intervene effectively.

Both the baseline and the endline research will comprise of questionnaires disseminated to students, parents, and school staff (both teaching and non-teaching). In addition, in order to ensure that the data is fully comparable, we ask that if you choose to participate in the baseline research, that you also agree to participate in the endline research, which will be conducted in the next scholastic year. This will enable us to map the results and the impact that the model programme will have had during the implementation phase of the project.

Implementation of model programme

The model programme is a multi-level tool kit being developed to address bullying in schools. The aim of the model program is to provide assistance to secondary schools in recognising the various forms of bullying, aggression, conflict, and violence, as they arise in their school communities, and to either

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introduce appropriate tools for prevention and tackling of these behaviours, or support the existing structures that deal with such behaviour.

The model programme is comprised of three main components. There are:

1. *The process of implementation*

The process of implementation will include preparation and setting up, self-assessment for schools, the compilation of an action plan based on the outcomes of the self-assessment, the implementation of the action plan, and finally, the monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

2. *Areas and levels of intervention*

The model programme will consist of awareness raising, learning about the nature of conflict, aggression and bullying and the ways they appear in communities of children and teachers; individual case treatment; organisational development of the schools; and quality development, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, it will target individuals (parents, students, and staff), group and community, and organisational development as well as to make an impact at a system level, inter-organisational level, and in educational policy-making.

3. *Toolkit*

The interventions described above will be done in done through various forms and channels of the flow of information, including: information packs, campaigns, workshops, trainings, training of trainers, cooperative planning, open space, school project days, etc.

Interviews

One component of the programme involves interviews to be conducted for assessment and evaluation purposes. Although, this will be an informal part of the model programme once schools are able to independently use it, for the purpose of this study, we will be involved in the interviews, and thus use the outcomes of the interviews in this research. Audio recording equipment will be used during the interviews.

Video recording

A number of events will take place as part of the model programme. Events include school and classroom projects, training, and a national event that all participating schools will be invited to. For the purpose of documentation, as well as for future promotion, some of these events may be video recorded.

Participation in the research

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and participants are not obliged to take part. By accepting to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill in a questionnaire containing a series of questions pertaining to your experience with bullying. Your participation may help to shed light on the current school environment in Maltese schools as well as any gaps that can be addressed through the model programme being developed for the purpose of the ASAP project. As the project consists of three main phases, namely the baseline research, the implementation of the model programme, and the endline research, we ask that by agreeing to take part in the research that you agree to take part in all three phases in order for us to ensure that the information collected is accurate and comparable.

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In order to ensure anonymity a coding system similar to the MATSEC index number system will be used, whereby each participant is assigned a number and this will be their reference ID for the duration of the project. This is particularly crucial for students, who may be embarrassed to answer questions pertaining to bullying.

Contact information

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us at raluca.colacel@sosmalta.org or becky.vellamuskat@sosmalta.org. In addition, should you have any concerns about the way in which the study is being conducted, please contact the Anti-Bullying Service of the Ministry of Education at katinka.zahra.lehtonen@ilearn.edu.mt.

With thanks in advance for your interest and participation.

Yours faithfully,

Raluca Colacel and Becky Vella Muskat

SOS Malta
10 Triq il-Ward
Santa Venera
SVR 1640

Should you like to read this document in English, please flip over

Formula ta' dissens għal adulti

Għażiż Partecipant,

Fil-qafas tal-hidma tal-Programm Erasmus+, Is-Shubija Kontra l-Aggressjoni fl-iskejjel (The Against School Aggression Partnership, ASAP) qed tippjana li tiżviluppa programm mudell li ser jikkontribwixxi biex jitnaqqsu l-aggressjoni u l-bullying fl-iskejjel, filwaqt li tigi stabbilita u msaħħa kooperazzjoni bejn istituzzjonijiet diversi li għandhom x'jaqsmu mal-komunitajiet tal-istudenti, bil-għan li fuq perijodu ta' żmien twil jiġu implimentati metodi godda ta' ġestjoni ta' kunflitti u kultura ta' nuqqas ta' vjolenza fl-iskejjel.

Kif deskritt fuq il-fuljett ta' tagħrif mehmuż, fi hdan l-iskop tal-proġett, programm mudell ser jiġi maħluq u mdawwar bil-għan li jsawwar bidla kulturali fl-iskejjel. Bħala parti mir-riċerka li ser tkun qed titwettaq sabiex jinkiseb dan, ser tittieħed stima inizjali tal-livell u l-iskop tal-imġieba aggressiva u l-bullying f'għadd ta' skejjel pilota fit-tliet pajjiżi partecipanti. Din ir-riċerka tal-linja bażi, li ser issir fl-2017, ser teżamina s-sitwazzjoni qabel l-intervent. Għadarba l-istħarriġ inizjali ikun tlesta u l-programm mudell ikun tfassal u

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implimentat fost l-iskejjel pilota, ir-riċerka tal-linja bażi mbaġħad tkun tista' tiġi kkumplimentata bi stima tal-linja ta' riferiment aħħari bħala tentattiv biex jinqabdu l-bidliet li jkunu saru bħala riżultat tal-implimentazzjoni tal-proġett. Ir-riċerka tal-linja tal-aħħar ser issir fl-ewwel nofs tal-2018.

Kemm ir-riċerka tal-linja bażi u tal-linja tat-tmiem ser jikkonsistu minn kwestjonarji mqassma fost l-istudenti, il-ġenituri u l-persunel tal-iskola (kemm dawk li jgħallmu u dawk li ma jgħallmux). Barra minn hekk, sabiex jiġi żgurat li t-tagħrif ikun kompletament paragonabbli, nitolbuk li jekk tagħżel li tipparteċipa fir-riċerka tal-linja bażi, li taqbel ukoll li tiegħu sehem fir-riċerka tal-linja tat-tmiem, li ser issir fis-sena skolastika ta' wara. Dan ser jippermettilna nimmappjaw ir-riżultati u l-impatt li l-programm mudell ser ikun kellu waqt il-fażi ta' implimentazzjoni tal-proġett.

Parteċipazzjoni

Il-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek fir-riċerka hija kollha kemm hi volontarja u l-parteċipanti mhumiex obbligati jieħdu sehem. Meta taċċetta li tiegħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, inti ser tiġi mitlub timla kwestjonarju li jkun fi għadd ta' mistoqsijiet rigward l-esperjenza tiegħek mal-bullying, kemm għar-riċerka fil-linja bażi (2017) u kemm għar-riċerka tal-aħħar linja (bidu tal-2018).

Minbarra r-riċerka tal-linja bażi u tal-linja tat-tmiem, bħala parti mill-programm mudell li jkun qed jiġi żviluppat, l-iskejjel jistgħu jagħzlu li jagħmlu intervisti, li ser jiġu registrati bl-awdjo u uzati bħala tagħrif addizzjonali għal din ir-riċerka.

Il-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek ser tgħin titfa' dawl fuq l-ambjent attwali tal-iskola fi skejjel Maltin kif wkoll dwar kull spazju li jista' jiġi indirizzat permezz tal-programm mudell li qed jiġi żviluppat għall-iskopijiet tal-proġett ASAP.

Sabiex tiġi żgurata l-anonimità ser tintuża sistema kodifikata simili għas-sistema tan-numru tal-indiċi tal-MATSEC, fejn kull parteċipant ser jingħata numru u dan ser ikun in-numru ta' ID ta' riferiment tiegħu għal tul il-proġett. Ismek u d-dettalji tiegħek mhux ser jiġu ppubblikati b'xi mod, għamla, jew forma. Jekk tiddeċiedi li tiegħu sehem, ir-riżultati tar-riċerka ser ikunu kompletament kunfidenzjali u anonimi. L-informazzjoni kollha miġbura hija strettament kunfidenzjali u, bla preġudizzju għal-limitazzjonijiet legali, il-privatezza u l-anonimità ser jiġi żgurati fil-ġbir, il-ħażna u l-pubblikazzjoni tal-materjal riċerka. It-tagħrif iġġenerat fil-kors tar-riċerka ser jinżamm sikur fuq il-karta u f'għamla elettronika għal perijodu ta' għaxar snin wara t-tlestija tal-proġett ta' riċerka.

Jekk tkun tixtieq aktar tagħrif, jekk jogħġbok toqgħodx lura milli tikkuntattjana fuq raluca.colacel@sosmalta.org; jew becky.vellamuskat@sosmalta.org. Barra minn hekk jekk ikollok xi tħassib dwar il-mod kif l-istudju qed jitmexxa, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntattja s-Servizz ta' Kontra l-Bullying fi ħdan il-Ministeru tal-Edukazzjoni lil katinka.zahra.lehtonen@ilearn.edu.mt.

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Jekk tixtieq tibqa' informat dwar il-programm mudell u r-rizultati ta' din ir-riċerka, jekk jogħġbok tina l-indirizz elettroniku tiegħek u nżiduk fid-database tagħna.

e-mail: _____

Jekk **ma tixtieqx** tieħu sehem, jekk jogħġbok iffirma hawn taħt u rritorna l-iskola sa _____ (data)

Firma _____ Data _____

Isem u kunjom _____

Annex 4b

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET **Information sheet**

Dear Participant,

Within our capacity at SOS Malta, a Malta-based NGO, we would like to invite you to participate in a study that seeks to address bullying in Maltese schools. In the framework of the ERASMUS + Programme, the Against School Aggression Partnership (ASAP) seeks to develop a model programme that will contribute to a reduction of school aggression and bullying, while establishing and strengthening cooperation between different institutions that deal with the student community, with the long-term goal to implement new conflict management methods and a culture of nonviolence in schools.

The ASAP project is a partnership between organisations in three European countries, namely, Malta, Bulgaria, and Hungary, who seek to develop and test a community-based complex school programme for effective prevention and treatment of aggression and bullying, which is based on alternative conflict resolution methods. The Malta-based research is being carried out by SOS Malta, a local voluntary organisation. SOS Malta works with both local and international partners to assist socially disadvantaged groups in improving their quality of life by providing support services and opportunities to implement development and change. SOS Malta encourages advocacy on behalf of social causes and promotes models of good care and practice. The organisation is a source of knowledge and advice about the role and contribution of volunteering and the benefits of civic engagement. SOS Malta stands on a number of pillars that encompass these objectives, namely: Social Solidarity; Volunteering; Overseas Development; and Research and Training.

Baseline and Endline Research component

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Within the scope of the project, a model programme will be created and circulated with the view of instilling cultural change in schools by complementing existing practices with the dissemination of nonviolent communication, introduction of alternative conflict resolution practices, prevention of bullying, and a decrease in aggressive and other risk-related behaviour. As part of the research that will be carried out in order to achieve this, an initial assessment of the level and scope of aggressive behaviour and bullying in a number of pilot schools in the three participating countries will be conducted. The pilot schools have expressed readiness to participate in the ASAP project and, more importantly, to implement the model programme for the prevention and effective management of incidents of bullying or aggressive behaviour. Hence, the baseline research, which will be conducted in January 2017, will examine the situation prior to the intervention, identifying the real dimensions of the problem and collecting the opinion of teaching and non-teaching staff, students, and parents. Once the initial investigations have been conducted and the model programme has been designed and implemented among the pilot schools, the baseline research will then be complemented with an endline assessment as an attempt to capture the changes that will have occurred as a result of the implementation of the project. The endline research will take place in the first half of 2018.

In view of the above, the principle aims of the research being conducted under auspices of SOS Malta are:

- to examine the overall climate in the participating pilot schools in Hungary, Bulgaria and Malta;
- to gather actual data on the prevalence and different forms of aggression and bullying in the schools;
- to identify the level of awareness of teaching and non-teaching staff, students, and parents towards the problems at hand;
- to examine the most common locations where incidents of aggression and bullying take place;
- to gather data on the level of and mechanisms for reporting of such incidents at school level and how much are they being used by students, schools staff, and parents;
- to outline the level of preparedness and capacity of those involved to prevent or intervene effectively.

Both the baseline and the endline research will comprise of questionnaires disseminated to students, parents, and school staff (both teaching and non-teaching). In addition, in order to ensure that the data is fully comparable, we ask that if you choose to participate in the baseline research, that you also agree to participate in the endline research, which will be conducted in the next scholastic year. This will enable us to map the results and the impact that the model programme will have had during the implementation phase of the project.

Implementation of model programme

The model programme is a multi-level tool kit being developed to address bullying in schools. The aim of the model program is to provide assistance to secondary schools in recognising the various forms of

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bullying, aggression, conflict, and violence, as they arise in their school communities, and to either introduce appropriate tools for prevention and tackling of these behaviours, or support the existing structures that deal with such behaviour.

The model programme is comprised of three main components. There are:

4. *The process of implementation*

The process of implementation will include preparation and setting up, self-assessment for schools, the compilation of an action plan based on the outcomes of the self-assessment, the implementation of the action plan, and finally, the monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

5. *Areas and levels of intervention*

The model programme will consist of awareness raising, learning about the nature of conflict, aggression and bullying and the ways they appear in communities of children and teachers; individual case treatment; organisational development of the schools; and quality development, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, it will target individuals (parents, students, and staff), group and community, and organisational development as well as to make an impact at a system level, inter-organisational level, and in educational policy-making.

6. *Toolkit*

The interventions described above will be done in done through various forms and channels of the flow of information, including: information packs, campaigns, workshops, trainings, training of trainers, cooperative planning, open space, school project days, etc.

Interviews

One component of the programme involves interviews to be conducted for assessment and evaluation purposes. Although, this will be an informal part of the model programme once schools are able to independently use it, for the purpose of this study, we will be involved in the interviews, and thus use the outcomes of the interviews in this research. Audio recording equipment will be used during the interviews.

Video recording

A number of events will take place as part of the model programme. Events include school and classroom projects, training, and a national event that all participating schools will be invited to. For the purpose of documentation, as well as for future promotion, some of these events may be video recorded.

Participation in the research

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and participants are not obliged to take part. By accepting to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill in a questionnaire containing a series of questions pertaining to your experience with bullying. Your participation may help to shed light on the current school environment in Maltese schools as well as any gaps that can be addressed through the model programme being developed for the purpose of the ASAP project. As the project consists of three main phases, namely

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the baseline research, the implementation of the model programme, and the endline research, we ask that by agreeing to take part in the research that you agree to take part in all three phases in order for us to ensure that the information collected is accurate and comparable.

In order to ensure anonymity a coding system similar to the MATSEC index number system will be used, whereby each participant is assigned a number and this will be their reference ID for the duration of the project. This is particularly crucial for students, who may be embarrassed to answer questions pertaining to bullying.

Contact information

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us at raluca.colacel@sosmalta.org or becky.vellamuskat@sosmalta.org. In addition, should you have any concerns about the way in which the study is being conducted, please contact the Anti-Bullying Service of the Ministry of Education at katinka.zahra.lehtonen@ilearn.edu.mt.

With thanks in advance for your interest and participation.

Yours faithfully,

Raluca Colacel and Becky Vella Muskat

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Fuljett ta' tagħrif

Għażiż Parteċipant,

Fil-kapaċità tagħna għand SOS Malta, NGO bażata f' Malta, nixtiequ nistednuk tiegħu sehem fi studju li jfittex biex jindirizza l-bullying fl-iskejjel Maltin. Fil-qafas tal-ħidma tal-Programm Erasmus +, Is-Šhubija Kontra l-Aggressjoni fl-iskejjel (The Against School Aggression Partnership - ASAP) qed tippjana li tiżviluppa programm mudell li ser jikkontribwixxi biex jitnaqqsu l-aggressjoni u l-bullying fl-iskejjel, filwaqt li tiġi stabbilita u msaħħa kooperazzjoni bejn istituzzjonijiet diversi li għandhom x'jaqsmu mal-komunitajiet tal-istudenti, bil-għan fuq perijodu ta' żmien twil li jiġu implimentati metodi ġodda ta' ġestjoni ta' kunflitti u kultura ta' nuqqas ta' vjolenza fl-iskejjel.

Il-Proġett ASAP huwa šhubija bejn organizzazzjonijiet fi tliet pajjiżi Ewropej, jiġifieri Malta, il-Bulgarija u l-Ungerija, li qed ifittxu li jiżviluppaw u jipprovaw programm tal-iskola kumpless bażat fuq il-komunità għal prevenzjoni effettiva u t-trattament ta' aggressjoni u bullying, li hu bażat fuq modi alternattivi ta'

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riżoluzzjoni ta' konflitti. Ir-riċerka bażata f' Malta qed issir minn SOS Malta, organizzazzjoni volontarja lokali. SOS Malta taħdem kemm ma' msieħba lokali u internazzjonali biex jiġu assistiti gruppi soċjalment żvantaġġati sabiex il-kwalità tal-ħajja tagħhom tiġi mtejjba billi jiġu pprovduti b'servizzi ta' appoġġ u opportunitajiet biex jiġu implimentati żvilupp u bidla. SOS Malta tinkoraġixxi l-promozzjoni f'isem kawzi soċjali u tippromwovi mudelli ta' kura u prattika tajba. L-organizzazzjoni hija font ta' għerf u parir dwar ir-rwol u l-kontribuzzjoni tal-volontarjat u l-benefiċċji ta' impenn ċiviku. SOS Malta tistrieħ fuq għadd ta' pilastri li jkopru dawn l-għanijiet, jiġifieri: Is-Solidarjetà Soċjali; Il-Volontarjat; L-Iżvilupp Barra minn Xtutna; u Ir-Riċerka u t-Taħriġ.

Komponenet tar-Riċerka tal-Linja Bażi u tal-Linja tat-Tmiem

Fi ħdan l-iskop tal-proġett, programm mudell ser jiġi maħluq u mdawwar bil-għan li jsawwar bidla kulturali fl-iskejel billi jikkumplimenta prattiċi eżistenti bi tqassim ta' komunikazzjoni mhux vjolenti, introduzzjoni għal prattiċi alternattivi ta' riżoluzzjoni ta' kunflitt, il-prevenzjoni ta' bullying u tnaqqis fl-imġieba aggressiva u ta' riskju ieħor. Bħala parti mir-riċerka li ser tkun qed titwettaq sabiex jinkiseb dan, ser tittieħed stima inizzjali tal-livell u l-iskop tal-imġieba aggressiva u l-bullying f'għadd ta' skejjel pilota fit-tliet pajjiżi parteċipanti. L-iskejjel pilota esprimew rieda biex jipparteċipaw fil-proġett ASAP u, aktar importanti minn hekk, biex jimplimentaw il-programm mudell għall-prevenzjoni u ġestjoni effettiva ta' incidenti ta' bullying jew imġieba aggressiva. Għalhekk, ir-riċerka tal-linja bażi, li ser ssir f'Jannar 2017, ser teżamina s-sitwazzjoni qabel l-intervent, tidentifika d-dimensjonijiet reali tal-problema u tiġbor il-fehma tal-persunel li jgħallhem u li ma jgħallimx, l-istudenti u l-ġenituri. Galadarba l-istħarriġ reali ikun sar u l-programm mudell ikun tfassal u implimentat fost l-iskejjel pilota, ir-riċerka tal-linja bażi mbagħad tkun tista' tiġi kkumplimentata bi stima tal-linja ta' riferiment aħħari bħala tentattiv biex jinqabdu l-bidliet li jkunu saru bħala riżultat tal-implimentazzjoni tal-proġett. Ir-riċerka tal-linja ta' riferiment aħħari ser issir fl-ewwel nofs tal-2018.

In vista ta' dak imsemmi hawn fuq, l-għanijiet prinċipali tar-riċerka li tkun qed issir taħt l-awspiċi ta' SOS Malta huma:

- Li tiġi eżaminata l-klima globali tal-iskejjel pilota parteċipanti fl-Ungerija, Il-Bulgarija u Malta;
- Sabiex jingabar tagħrif reali fuq il-prevalenza u l-forom differenti ta' aggressjoni u bullying fl-iskejjel;
- sabiex jiġi identifikat l-livell ta' għarfien tal-persunel t'għalliema u mhux għalliema, l-istudenti u l-ġenituri lejn il-problemi imminenti;
- Sabiex jiġu eżaminati l-postijiet l-aktar komuni fejn iseħħu l-każijiet ta' aggressjoni u bullying;
- Sabiex jingabar tagħrif fuq il-livell u l-mekkaniżmi għal rapportaġġ ta' incidenti bħal dawn fil-livell ta' skola u kemm qed jintużaw minn studenti, persunel tal-iskola, u l-ġenituri;
- sabiex jiġi magħruf fuq fuq il-livell ta' thejjija u kapaċità ta' dawk involuti biex jipprevjenu jew jintervjenu b'mod effettiv.

Kemm ir-riċerka tal-linja bażi u tal-linja tat-tmiem ser jikkonsistu minn kwestjonarji mqassma lil studenti, ġenituri u persunel tal-iskola (kemm dawk li jgħallmu u dawk li ma jgħallmux). Barra minn hekk, sabiex jiġi

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żgurat li t-tagħrif ikun kompletament paragonabbli, nitolbuk li jekk tagħzel li tipparteċipa fir-riċeka tal-linja bażi, taqbel ukoll li tiegħu sehem fir-riċerka tal-linja tat-tmiem, li ser issir fis-sena skolastika ta' wara. Dan ser jippermettilna nimmappjaw ir-riżultati u l-impatt li l-programm mudell ser ikun kellu waqt il-fażi ta' implimentazzjoni tal-proġett.

Implimentazzjoni tal-programm mudell

Il-programm mudell huwa kitt ta' għodda fuq diversi livelli li qed jiġi żviluppat biex jindirizza l-bullying fl-iskejjel. L-għan tal-programm mudell hu li jipprovdi assistenza lill-iskejjel sekondarji sabiex jagħrfu l-forom diversi ta' bullying, aggressjoni, kunflitt, u vjolenza, kif jitfaċċaw fil-komunitajiet tal-iskejjel tagħhom, u sabiex jew jiġu introdotti għodod xierqa għal prevenzjoni u l-iffaċċjar tat-tipi ta' mġieba, jew sostenn tal-istrutturi eżistenti li jiffaċċjaw mġieba bħal din.

Il-programm mudell jikkonsisti minn tliet komponenti ewlenien. Dawn huma:

7. *Il-proċess ta' implimentazzjoni*

Il-proċess ta' implimentazzjoni ser jinkludi tnejn u l-istabbiliment ta', awtoevalwazzjoni, l-implimentazzjoni tal-pjan ta' azzjoni, u fl-aħħar nett, il-monitoraġġ u l-evalwazzjoni tal-programm.

8. *Żoni u livelli ta' intervent*

Il-programm mudell ser jikkonsisti filli jitqajjem l-għarfien, taġħlim dwar in-natura ta' konflitt, aggressjoni u bullying u l-modi ta' kif jidhru fil-komunitajiet ta' tfal u għalliema; trattament individwali f'kull każ; żvilupp organizzattiv tal-iskejjel; u żvilupp ta' kwalità, monitoraġġ u valutazzjoni. Minbarra hekk, ser ikollu fil-mira tiegħu individwi (ġenituri, studenti, persunal), gruppi u komunitajiet, u żvilupp organizzattiv kif ukoll li jagħmel impatt fil-livell ta' sistema, fuq livell interorganizzattiv, u fit-tfassil ta' politika edukattiva.

9. *Kitt tal-għodda*

L-interventi deskritti hawn fuq ser isiru permezz ta' diversi forom u kanali tal-influss ta' informazzjoni, li jinkludu: pakketti ta' tagħrif, kampanji, workshops, taħriġ, taħriġ għal trejners, ippjanar kooperattiv, spazji miftuħa, jiem għall-proġett fl-iskola, eċċ.

Intervisti

Komponent wiegħed tal-programm jinvolti intervisti li jridu jsiru għal skopijiet ta' stima u valutazzjoni. Għalkemm dawn ser ikunu parti informali tal-programm mudell għal darbha l-iskejjel ikunu kapaċi jużawh b'mod indipendenti, għall-iskop tal-istudju, aħna ser inkunu involuti fl-intervisti u għalhekk ser nużaw l-eżiti tal-intervisti fir-riċerka. Tagħmir ta' registrar bl-awdjo ser jintuża waqt l-intervisti.

Registrar bil-vidjow

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Għadd ta' avvenimenti ser isiru bħala parti mill-programm mudell. L-avvenimenti jinkludu proġetti fl-iskola u fil-klassijiet, taħriġ u avveniment nazzjonali li l-iskejjel parteċipanti kollha ser jiġu mistiedna għalih. Għall-iskop ta' dokumentazzjoni, kif ukoll għall-promozzjoni futura, xi wħud minn dawn l-avvenimenti jistgħu jiġu reġistrati bil-vidjow.

Parteċipazzjoni fir-riċerka

Il-parteċipazzjoni fir-riċerka hija kollha kemm hi volontarja u l-parteċipanti mhumiex obbligati jiehdu sehem. Meta taċċetta li tiegħu sehem f'dan l-istudju, inti ser tiġi mitlub timla kwestjonarju li jkun fih għadd ta' mistoqsijiet rigward l-esperjenza tiegħek mal-bullying. Il-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek ser tgħin titfa' dawl fuq l-ambjent attwali tal-iskola fi skejjel Maltin kif wkoll dwar kull spazju li jista' jiġi indirizzat permezz tal-programm mudell li qed jiġi żviluppat għall-iskopijiet tal-proġett ASAP. Peress li l-proġett jikkonsisti minn tliet fażijiet ewlenien, jiġifieri r-riċerka tal-linja bażi, l-implimentazzjoni tal-programm mudell, u r-riċerka tal-linja tat-tmiem, aħna nitolbuk li jekk taċċetta li tiegħu sehem fir-riċerka tagħmel hekk billi taċċetta li tiegħu sehem fit-tliet partijiet sabiex aħna niżguraw li t-tagħrif miġbur ikun preċiż u paragonabbli.

Sabiex tiġi żgurata l-anonimità ser tintuża sistema kodifikata simili għas-sistema tan-numru tal-indiċi tal-MATSEC fejn kull parteċipant ser ikun assenjat numru u dan ser ikun l-ID ta' riferiment tagħhom għat-tul tal-proġett. Dan hu partikolarment kruċjali għall-istudenti li jistgħu jiġu imbarazzati biex iwiegħbu mistoqsijiet marbuta ma' bullying.

Informazzjoni ta' kuntatt

Jekk tkun tixtieq aktar tagħrif, jekk jogħġbok toqgħodx lura milli tikkuntattjana fuq raluca.colacel@sosmalta.org jew becky.vellamuskat@sosmalta.org. Barra minn hekk jekk ikollok xi tħassib dwar il-mod kif l-istudju qed jitmexxa, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntattja s-Servizz ta' Kontra l-Bullying fi hdan il-Ministeru tal-Edukazzjoni lil katinka.zahra.lehtonen@ilearn.edu.mt.

B'ringrazzjament minn quddiem għall-interess u s-sehem tiegħek.

Dejjem tiegħek,

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¹ NB: It is important to bear in mind, as discussed, that St. Margaret College Middle School, Cospicua, did not partake in the endline research.