Chapter 5
DISCUSSION

“Other boys are more kind to me now. They tell me to come have lunch with them” – Student feedback

As this research study was carried out in three different phases with each having its own objectives and hypotheses, results obtained post analysis will be discussed according to the phases.

5.1 PHASE 1

The main objective in this phase was to determine the incidence of bullying, students attitude towards it as well the level of awareness that male students currently hold about bullying as a negative behavior.

The study was also interested in exploring whether factors such as - type of school, number of years a student has been in his present school, academic success, order of birth and type of family, affected incidence of bullying and student’s attitude towards bullying

5.1.1 Type of school

Analysis revealed that male students studying in all-boys schools report higher incidence of being bullied by other students both directly and indirectly, in comparison to male participants in co-ed schools. Direct bullying, in this context, refers to physical bullying, wherein students report experiencing being bullied by other students in a more direct way (Kicked me/hit me; beat me up; made me give money; hurt me; tried to break something of mine; tried to hit me). In this study, most male students reported being hit/kicked by others. With regards to where and by whom the bullying took place - students reported being bullied by a group of 2-3 students (25%) on the playground (53%), outside school (16%) and in the classroom when the teacher was not present in the room (14%). This finding is supported by other researchers, who suggest that bullying most often occurs where there is little or no adult supervision (Coloroso, 2010; Rigby, 2008).

Indirect bullying refers to students experiencing being bullied by others in a more indirect way. This kind of bullying behavior has been reported as more typical amongst girls (e.g. - Told a lie about me; laughed at me horribly). In the present study, ‘name calling’ was found to be the highest reported indirect form of bullying; this was followed by ‘laughed at me’ and ‘told a lie about me’. Each of these falls under the category of verbal bullying. Research studies conducted across the world have found that the most frequently reported types of bullying experienced by students, from most to least reported are as follows: verbal bullying, physical bullying, social bullying and cyberbullying. Safe @ School Provincial Initiative (2012) reports that verbal bullying is generally the most common type of bullying experienced by students.

With regards to student's acceptance of bullying/aggression, results obtained showed that children in all-boys schools feel it is okay to be mean/aggressive towards other children and thereby show a more favourable attitude towards aggression, compared to male participants of co-ed schools. Children who bully tend to be aggressive, have a positive attitude towards violence, and typically use it to solve their problems (Olweus, 1994)
Various studies have shown that boys tend to be more aggressive especially in the company of other boys. Jackson & Bisset (2005) reported that in single-sex male environments, aggressive behavior increases. It appears from the results obtained that the presence of girls seems to buffer the social environment in co-ed schools, thereby reducing the likelihood of boys teasing each other physically or verbally.

5.1.2 Number of years in present school

Results obtained show that students who have been in school for a shorter period of time are likely to admit to being victimized. Upon entering a school, a student's first priority is to ‘fit-in’ to his social environment, be popular, and be accepted by their peers. This makes them vulnerable and therefore easy targets for bullying. The need to fit-in, therefore, makes these students more submissive to their peers.

Olweus (1993a) in his study found that for the victims of bullying, being submissive in non-aggressive contexts triggers a chain reaction. It sets the victims up to be easy targets and in a way marks them for victimization at a later point of time. This tends to make them more submissive. Olweus also found that being victimized leads to student's feeling bad and anxious which then increases their vulnerability to further victimization. What is more damaging is that, these children tend to internalize the very negative view of themselves that others hold of them.

On the flip side, research shows that students who have been in school for longer periods of time tend to become more comfortable in their environment. Results obtained in the current study show that children who have been in the school for longer periods of time are less likely to admit to engaging in friendly/helpful behavior.

They are more familiar with their surroundings, teaching staff, administration and their peers. They therefore put less effort into ‘fitting-in’, and engaging in friendly interactions. Chan et al (2005) found that once students fit in and experience identity formation, they tend to also engage in less socially acceptable behaviors such as bullying. Behaving aggressively (or at least not being friendly) towards the target of bullying becomes like a trend, a way of “fitting in” and emphasizing one's belonging to the peer group (Garandeau & Cillessen, 2006). Students at this point start to think of physical bullying as a means of showing masculinity and power among peers. They tend to gain and maintain their social status by using aggression, alone or in combination with more pro-social behavior (Hawley, Stump, and Ratliff, 2011). Other studies have found that the desire for popularity, leadership, and power leads to the involvement of many students disruptive behaviors (aggressive acts), providing them the opportunity to construct the social reputation they desire (Buelga, Ravenna, Musitu, and Lila, 2006).

5.1.3 Academic Success

Marks obtained in the school exams were taken as the index for academic success. The study found links between academic success and friendly behavior. This implies that higher the percentage achieved by a child in his exam, the more likely is he to experience friendly behavior by other children. Academic success therefore makes a student enjoy friendlier interactions with his peers, and seems to coexist with popularity.

Children, especially adolescents, tend to take on the task of learning better only if they have sufficiently compelling reasons for doing so. Positive peer influence on academic performance depends on adolescent self-identity, self-esteem and self-reliance. Studies have
found that adolescents who are well-liked by many peers displayed higher levels of ego development and secure attachment, as well as better interactions with their best friends. When students feel that they are cared for and treated with respect by their teachers and peers, they are more likely to develop greater confidence in their academic abilities (Murdock & Miller, 2003).

It has been shown that having friends promotes individuals’ well-being and academic success (Wentzel, 2005). It seems like friendship interactions are particularly important with regard to social integration because adolescents are more likely to stay in school when they feel comfortable and connected to other adolescents with similar interests and aspirations. Helping students successfully navigate through their social environment during school is therefore vital in improving their academic functioning both concurrently and into the future.

Nansel, Haynie and Simons-Morton (2003) found significantly poorer school adjustment (e.g., doing well on schoolwork, getting along with classmates, following rules, doing homework) among students who were bullies, victims, or bully-victims as compared with students who were not involved.

With regards to acceptance of bullying as a negative behavior, it was found that students who think it is okay to be mean/aggressive towards other students, seem to be doing poorly in their academics. Academic successes on the other hand makes a student feel that it is not acceptable to bully and be mean/aggressive towards a fellow student.

Studies across the world have demonstrated links between involvement in bullying and poor academic performance.

It has been found that the combination of low levels of victimization and positive climate is consistently associated with high levels of school academic performance (Klomek et al., 2015; Espelage et al., 2013; Lacey & Cornell, 2016; McCoy et al., 2013). Improved academic performance has been found to lead to improvements in climate and school violence (Benbenishty, Astor, Roziner, and Wrabel 2016).

Victimization leads to negative psychological consequences which adversely impact a student’s emotional state thus hampering classroom participation, academic achievement, and other educational outcomes (Espelage, Hong, Rao, and Low, 2013).

Students who bully were found to be low achievers and exhibit poor school adjustment. Atik (2006) found that bullies are generally students who have low academic scores. Frequent victimization by peers has been found to be associated with lower grade point averages and achievement test scores (Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto, and Toblin, 2005).

Despite the common perception of bullies as being low achievers, some studies have revealed that they possess average to high levels of self-esteem, may be popular with both teachers and classmates, and may also do well in school (Shellard, 2002; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001; Olweus, 1993).

5.1.4 Order of birth

Considerable research has questioned the benefit of siblings. Bobbitt-Zeher et al (2013) found in their recent study that kindergarteners uncovered a potentially positive outcome—greater social skills—at least for those who have at least one sibling. In contrast,
Brophy (1988) through his studies identified that ‘only’ children seem to have better self-esteem and are higher achievers than children who have siblings.

Other studies, however, have reported that birth order was less likely to be an antecedent to bullying (Lopata & Nowicki, 2014).

The current study revealed that students who are ‘Middle’ born tend to report higher incidence of direct/physical bullying while children who are ‘Only’ children’ report lower incidence of physical bullying. This is an interesting finding because earlier research has shown that children with siblings have early exposure to social interactions and therefore more potential to develop social skills. Future research could explore the reasons behind this association.

The finding that ‘Only’ children report lower incidence of bullying is in line with Brophy’s (1988) earlier work. There is a possibility that ‘Only’ children develop more self-confidence, have better self-esteem and perform well in school. They may be popular and hence less bullied by other students.

5.1.5 Type of family

In the current study, three types of family structures were studied –

Nuclear family - made up of parents and one or more children living together.

Joint family – two or more nuclear families living together under a common shelter, and sharing a common hearth, and a common purse.

Extended Family - When the nuclear family is found to be extended on all sides by certain additions in the form of relatives (aunt, uncle, cousin’s) of both sides i.e. husband’s and wife’s sides

Researchers interested in understanding the contribution of familial factors in a student’s school life have identified various influences and connections.

In this study, we expected to find a difference in student reports of bullying as well as their attitude towards bullying, based on whether they came from a nuclear, joint or single-parent family. However, results obtained in this study found no significant links between type of family and experience as well as attitude towards bullying.

Other studies have identified links between family type and experience of bullying. Nordhagen et al (2005) found that children of single parents had increased risks of being bullied.

Connolly & O’Moore (2003) found that children who bullied demonstrated an ambivalent relationship with their siblings, mothers and fathers. The controlson the other hand displayed positive relationships with members of their family.

In a recent study Rigby (2010) found that the tendency to bully peers and the tendency to act prosocially were independently predictive of family functioning and attitudes toward, and relationships with, each parent. This association was found to be negative for bullying and positive for prosocial behavior. His study revealed that boys who reported being victimized in schools had a negative relationship with their absent fathers in their single-parent families.
Jablonska & Linberg (2007) found that students in single mother/father families were found to be at higher risk for risk behaviors, victimization and mental distress in comparison to their counterparts who came from two-parent families.

5.1.6 Summary:

Phase 1 analysis therefore revealed that boys studying in all-boys schools tend to report more direct and indirect bullying by their peers, in comparison, to boys studying in co-ed schools. The most reported form of bullying was direct - ‘hit/kicked me’. Most students reported being bullied by a group of 2-3 students (25%) on the playground (53%), outside school (16%) and in the classroom when the teacher was not present in the room (14%). ‘Name calling’ was found to be the highest reported indirect form of bullying. Children in all-boys schools show a more favorable attitude towards aggression, compared to male participants of co-ed schools.

Students who have been in school for a shorter period of time are likely to admit to being victimized. On the flip side, research shows that students who have been in school for longer periods of time tend to become more comfortable in their environment, and, are less likely to admit to engaging in friendly/helpful behavior.

Academic successes make a student enjoy friendlier interactions with his peers, and seems to coexist with popularity. Students, who think it is okay to be mean/aggressive towards other students, seem to be doing poorly in their academics. Academic successes on the other hand makes a student feel that it is not acceptable to bully and be mean/aggressive towards a fellow student.

Most ‘middle-born’ children tend to be bullied both directly and indirectly by other students. Only-children tend to be victimized a lot lesser in comparison to students from other family types.

No links were found between type of family and experience and attitude towards bullying.

5.2 PHASE 2

In phase 2 of the study, the main aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Second Step Violence Prevention Program, composed of psycho-education and social skills training, in enhancing student awareness of bullying as a negative behavior, bringing about a change in attitude as well as reducing existing bully-victim incidents, preventing the development of new incidents and fostering positive, friendly and pro social behavior among students.

It was expected that male students in the intervention school would demonstrate a change in their attitude, awareness and incidence of bullying, in comparison to boys in the control school, who would demonstrate no significant change.

5.2.1 Perceived Assertiveness

Prior to intervention it was found that students in the intervention school found it really hard to be assertive in situations where they were bullied by other students both in a direct and indirect way. These students even had a tendency to view bullying/aggressive behavior as being acceptable. Ando, Asakura and Simons-Morton (2005) in their study found that Self-assertive efficacy (i.e., a student’s ability to communicate assertively in a bullying situation) was associated indirectly through deviant peer influence to physical, verbal and indirect bullying.
However, significant changes observed in perceived assertiveness imply that after intervention, students seem to be more capable of showing assertive behavior in bullying situations. On the WSLFM, most students reported ‘not hard at all’ for items where they were asked how hard would it be for them to calmly ask students to stop when, they are pushed around (63%), ganging up on you (50%), teasing you (47%), telling lies about you (56%) and passing mean notes about you in class (45%).

An entire unit in the SSVPP was dedicated towards explaining to students what assertiveness implies and its benefits as a social skill. Lesson 5 from the chapter Empathy & Communication (SSVPP) focussed specifically on helping students distinguish differences between passive, assertive, and aggressive communication styles as well as identify the physical and verbal characteristics of assertive communication. Students were also given communication based practice activities to help them engage in more assertive interactions with their peers. Further application based discussions were also conducted. This seems to have had a productive effect on the students. Classroom observations made by the facilitators, during administration of the intervention, reveal that students seemed to enjoy the demonstrations and activities that were part of the lesson, and displayed high amounts of participation and engagement.

Camodeca & Goossens (2005) in their study on children's suggestions of useful interventions to stop bullying, presented students with four strategies – namely - opinion, retaliation, nonchalance and assertiveness, and asked them which one in their opinion was effective in stopping bullying. It was found that the strategy most frequently chosen by all children was to cope with bullying through assertiveness. Bullies did not consider assertive strategies as efficient in stopping the bully. Rather, they considered retaliation to be more effective, especially when they adopted the perspective of the victim or witness. Defenders, outsiders, victims and children not involved, on the other hand, were very much in favor of strategies aimed at solving the conflict through nonchalance or assertiveness, especially when they imagined being the bully.

Figure 1.12: A picture of the worksheet for one of the lessons in the student intervention package – SSVPP
In comparison, students in the control school continued to report finding it ‘really hard’ to be assertive in situations of bullying.

The above mentioned findings underline the importance of intervention programs and imply that social skills training has proven to be effective in helping students be more assertive when in situations where they experience bullying. Knowledge and practice availed during training could have helped students be more assertive in bullying situations experienced thereafter. Provision of social skills training in these schools is thus both necessary and vital for the social and emotional growth of students.

Similar findings were observed in a study conducted by Frey et al in 2005, wherein post intervention, male students showed a greater decline in the perceived difficulty of responding assertively to bullying, relative to male students in the control school.

Current intervention programs have already begun to focus on providing assertiveness training to students as a healthy and useful coping mechanism against bullying (Flanagan, 2013; Barratt et al, 2013; Park, Na & Kim, 2014).

5.2.2 Adult Responsiveness

Adult responsiveness refers to the tendency of adults to be aware, approachable and responsive about bullying in school. Adults here refer to personnel such as the school principal/head master, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and support staff.

Prior to skill training, no links were found between student perceptions of adult responsiveness.

Post intervention, students reported that they do feel that adults in their school are aware of the extent of bullying in the school premises, are approachable if a student wishes to share an experience of bullying and are responsive to such shared experiences of bullying in school. Most students felt that it was okay to tell an adult if they were being bullied (36%) for the item, ‘If I were being bullied I would ask an adult at school for help’, on the WSLFM tool. When asked if adults in their school were aware about students being bullied, 31% of them responded with ‘Very true’, and, for the item ‘Adults at my school stop kids from being bullied’, 43% of students selected the option ‘Pretty true’.

Figure 1.13: A picture of the discussion board during the workshop with the intervention students.
When asked via the questionnaire how the school could make them feel safe, apart from responding with ‘By putting cameras’ and ‘Keeping a spy or a special boy who reports to the Principal’, students also stated that ‘School can provide us with more good teachers who help and trust us’. Most boys in the intervention school reported that they did inform a teacher when in a situation involving bullying (n=36)

Other intervention programs have found similar results. Schroeder et al (2012) in their study found reductions in student self-reports of bullying others, and improvements in student perceptions of adults’ responsiveness, and students’ attitudes about bullying, post administration of the intervention program. In another study by Frey et al (2005) post intervention data analysis revealed a decline in bullying and argumentative behavior among intervention-group children compared to control-group children, increases in agreeable interactions, and a trend toward reduced destructive bystander behavior. Those in the intervention group reported enhanced bystander responsibility, greater perceived adult responsiveness, and decreased acceptance of bullying/aggression than those in the control group.

In the current study, students in the control schools reported that they do not feel that adults in their school are aware of the extent of bullying in the school premises; are approachable if a student wishes to share an experience of bullying; and, are responsive to such shared experiences of bullying in school. Though students felt that it was okay to tell an adult if they were being bullied (28%), most of them selected the option ‘Not true at all’ (28%) for the item, ‘If I were being bullied I would ask an adult at school for help’, on the WSLFM tool.

Various studies done across the world have demonstrated the importance of having responsive adults – both teachers and parents – in any form of anti-bullying work. Novick and Issacs (2010) in their study found that teachers play a pivotal role in combating bullying; and that both teacher preparedness and student reporting of being victimized, improve teacher responsiveness to bullying. Wang et al (2009) found that higher parental support was associated with less involvement across all forms and classifications of bullying. Totura et al (2009) found that increased student-reported adult monitoring decreased the likelihood for students to be characterized as bullies.

![Figure 1.14: A picture of the discussion board during the SSVPP workshop in the intervention school.](image-url)
In phase 3 of the current study, middle school teachers were individually interviewed to gain an understanding of their attitude and awareness with regards to bullying in their school. It was found that teachers stated that they had some idea as to what bullying was and how they could intervene while only a few teachers stated that they had no idea at all. Most teachers however felt they could benefit from more knowledge of bullying and how it can be dealt with. When asked by the researcher as to whether teachers intervened in a bullying incident, most teachers responded that they intervened ‘Most of the times’.

The above mentioned finding give us an understanding why some students feel that adults at school, especially teachers, are approachable and why most students would report a bullying incident to them or try and gain their help and support.

5.2.3 Bystander Responsibilities

Prior to administration of the intervention program, no significant associations were found between bystander responsibility and both incidence and student attitude towards bullying.

Post intervention, students appear to be unable to perform bystander responsibilities when in a situation where their peers or school mates were experiencing being bullied. On the WSLFM, most students reported ‘not true’ for items where they were asked whether they would inform an adult if they saw someone, being bullied by a group of students at school (38%) and being hit or pushed around (31%). Students reported ‘not true’ for items where they were asked if they would stop other students from, passing mean notes about another kid (36%), telling lies about another kid (31%), and teasing another kid (36%).

Figure 1.15 a&b: Pictures of the discussion board during the lesson ‘Bystander Power’ in the SSVPP package.

Similar results were found in a study conducted by Frey, Snell, Edstrom and Broderick (2005) wherein, post skills training, students in grades 5 and 6 reported less responsibility to intervene with friends who bully than did younger students. There appeared to be an erosion of control in student’s sense of responsibility to stop friends from bullying and of their perception of adult responsiveness.

This finding could also be a result of increased awareness of bullying as a negative behavior. There is a possibility that students who were initially unaware of bullying and its implications may now be consciously or unconsciously aware of it and therefore be a little
more apprehensive of intervening in a bullying situation. More follow-up would be needed to ascertain if the program was successful.

In the control school, students reported being unable to perform bystander responsibilities when in a situation where their peers or school mates are experiencing bullying. On the WSLFM, most students reported ‘not true’ for items where they were asked whether they would inform an adult if they saw someone, being bullied by a group of students at school (6%) and being hit or pushed around (17%). Students reported ‘not true’ for items where they were asked if they would stop other students from, passing mean notes about another kid (15%), telling lies about another kid (18%), and teasing another kid (12%).

These findings warrant the need of providing awareness and training to students, especially keeping in mind the powerful role played by that of a bystander in the bullying scenario. A bystander seems to have the potential to either magnify or diffuse the bullying situation based on their reactions and response to the same. Hence, effective training in this area can prove to be fruitful. However, since the training seemed to be ineffective with the students in the intervention school, extra care must be taken to sensitize students and provide them with the necessary support and encouragement so that they can take on this responsibility to the best of their abilities and without any fears.

5.2.4 Pro Social Behavior

In the current study, it was expected that post skill training, students that received the training would engage in more pro-social interactions with their peers. Various studies that have been conducted in the past have found social skills training to be beneficial to students, especially, when it comes to their social interactions. SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) based programs have been found to enhance student’s behavioral adjustment and be associated with increased prosocial behaviors (Durlack et al, 2011). Kilian et al, (2011) found that the intervention was effective in improving prosocial behavior and in increasing students’ appropriate and positive behavioral choices.

Interestingly, the current study found that prior to the intervention students in the control schools engaged in high amounts of prosocial behavior in comparison to the intervention group students. Post intervention, students in the control school, in comparison to the intervention school, continued engaging in significantly higher amounts of friendly/helpful behavior. The intervention program, therefore, does not seem to have a significant effect on increasing prosocial behavior as assessed by the questionnaire. Future research could explore this tendency in more detail and help us understand this finding and arrive at a clearer picture.

Kiaser-Ulrey (2003) also reported similar findings. Students that received the intervention reported higher incidence of victimization in comparison to the control group.
Figure 1.16: A picture of a drawing done by a student in one of their worksheets during the intervention

5.2.5 Bully-Victim Incidence

Keeping with the expectations of the study, it was found that students in the Intervention school reported lower amounts of bullying and being victimized in comparison to male students in the control school. This validates the findings put forward by previous research (Deniz & Ersoy, 2016; Espelage et al, 2015; Low & Espelage, 2013) that provision of social skills training can be effective in reducing bullying in schools.
Figure 1.17a&b: Pictures of drawings done by student in one of the lesson 6 worksheets during the intervention.
5.2.6 Summary:

Post intervention, students seem to be more capable of showing assertive behavior in bullying situations. In comparison, students in the control school continued to report finding it ’really hard’ to be assertive in situations of bullying. One unit in the SSVPP was dedicated to teaching student’s assertiveness and helping them both acquire and apply this skill. This seems to have been effective in reducing student inability to be assertive in bullying situations. This finding highlights the importance of intervention programs and implies that social skills training can be effective in helping students be more assertive and acquire helpful social skills.

Students in the intervention school reported that they feel that adults in their school are aware of the extent of bullying in the school premises, are approachable if a student wishes to share an experience of bullying and are responsive to such shared experiences of bullying in school. Students in the control school reported contradictory findings.

After training was provided, students appear to be unable to perform bystander responsibilities when in a situation where their peers or school mates were experiencing being bullied. This finding could also be a result of increased awareness of bullying as a negative behavior. There is a possibility that students who were initially unaware of bullying and its implications may now be consciously or unconsciously aware of it and therefore be a little more apprehensive of intervening in a bullying situation.
In the control school, students reported being unable to perform bystander responsibilities when in a situation where their peers or school mates experienced bullying. This finding warrants the need for intervention programs that provide students with knowledge and practise of bystander duties. However, administrators must be careful that the intervention be combined with ample support and encouragement as the role of a bystander can be challenging.

Interestingly, the current study found that prior to the intervention students in the control schools had engaged in high amounts of prosocial behavior in comparison to the intervention group students. Post intervention, students in the control school, in comparison to the intervention school, continued engaging in significantly higher amounts of friendly/helpful behavior. The intervention program, therefore, does not seem to have a significant effect on increasing prosocial behavior as assessed by the questionnaire.

Finally, as an effect of social skill training, students in the Intervention school reported lower amounts of bullying and being victimized in comparison to male students in the control schools.

5.3 PHASE 3

In phase 3 of the study, the primary aim was to review, 6 months after the intervention was administered, the effectiveness of the Second Step Violence Prevention Program in sustaining / enhancing student awareness of bullying as a negative behavior, bringing about a change in attitude as well as reducing existing bully-victim incidents, preventing the development of new incidents and fostering positive, friendly and pro social behavior among students.

In this phase, it was anticipated that male students in the intervention school would continue to demonstrate a significant difference in their attitude, awareness and incidence of bullying, in comparison to boys in the control school, who would demonstrate no significant difference from their pre assessment scores.

5.3.1 Perceived Assertiveness

6 months after intervention, students continue to report feeling more capable of showing assertive behavior in bullying situations. In comparison to post intervention, these students, at follow up, have scored lower, and therefore demonstrate more capability in showing assertive behavior in bullying situations. The intervention program seems to have been successful in providing students with social skills. On the WSLFM, most students reported ‘a little bit hard’ for items where they were asked how hard would it be for them to calmly ask students to stop when, they are pushed around (47%), ganging up on you (52%), teasing you (43%), telling lies about you (34%) and passing mean notes about you in class (45%). Teacher interviews conducted during the follow up also corroborate the fact that a shift was noticed in student behavior. Teachers reported that, “Behavior has improved. Especially in my class, there is a lot less fighting.”; “Before they would use vulgar words. I have received many complaints from the boys. Now, fewer complaints are brought to my notice.”

In comparison, students in the control school report high incidences of finding it ‘really hard’ to be assertive in situations of bullying. At follow up, students report feeling less capable of communicating in an assertive way with their peers. On the WSLFM, most students reported ‘really hard’ for items where they were asked how hard would it be for them to calmly ask students to stop when they were ganging up on you (35%), teasing you (43%), telling lies about you (40%). Students reported ‘pretty hard’ for items where they were asked how hard would it be for them to calmly ask students to stop when you are pushed...
around (39%), mean notes about you are passed in class (38%). Teachers report observing no change - “I feel there has been no change at all.”

**5.3.2 Adult Responsiveness**

With regards to the adult responsiveness, results obtained imply that students in the intervention school report that they feel adults in their school are aware of the extent of bullying in the school premises, are approachable if a student wishes to share an experience of bullying and are responsive to such shared experiences of bullying in school. On the WSLFM, most intervention students reported ‘very true’ when they were asked if adults in their school knew about kids being bullied (43%), and whether they would inform an adult if they were being bullied by students at school (57%). Students reported ‘pretty true’ when asked if adults in their school would stop kids from being bullied (50%), and whether they felt it was okay to tell an adult if a kid was pushing them around (45%). Teachers themselves have reported during the interviews conducted that “initially students were scared – now they are a lot free with the teachers.”

Post follow up, students in the control schools continue to feel that adults in their school are not aware of the extent of bullying in the school premises, are unapproachable if a student wishes to share an experience of bullying and are unresponsive to such shared experiences of bullying in school. Though students felt that it was okay to tell an adult if they were being bullied (39%), most of them selected the option ‘Not true at all’ when asked if adults in their school knew about kids being bullied (34%), whether they would inform an adult if they were being pushed around by students at school (39%) and if adults in their school would stop kids from being bullied (31%). Teacher on their part reported that “That is how our school is’ - I feel no matter how much teachers try - students are the same.”; “I feel rather than ordering - teacher needs to be kind and loving and close to them”; “Generally students only share with teachers who are friendly to them - and they will only be a few.” These statements made by the teachers confirm the finding that students tend to experience some sort of hesitancy in confiding with their teachers and hence it would be helpful if staff at schools provide a more supportive environment by being approachable, friendly, kind and trustworthy in their nature.

**5.3.3 Bystander Responsibility**

For bystander responsibility, it was found that at follow up, compared to students in the control schools, students in the intervention school report being able to perform bystander responsibilities when in a situation where their peers or school mates are experiencing bullying.

On the WSLFM, most students reported ‘very true’ for the item where they were asked whether they would inform an adult if they saw someone, being bullied by a group of students at school (45%). Students reported ‘pretty true’ when asked if they would intervene or get help if they saw someone being hit or pushed around (50%), if they saw their friends passing mean notes about another kid (52%), telling lies about another kid (50%), and teasing another kid (47%).

Students in the control schools continue to report being unable to perform bystander duties when in a situation where their peers or school mates are experiencing bullying. On the WSLFM, though most students reported ‘very true’ for the item where they were asked whether they would an inform an adult if they saw someone, being bullied by a group of students at school (35%), and when asked if they would intervene if they saw their friends
pass mean notes about another kid (39%) or tell lies about another kid (36%). However, students seemed hesitant to inform their adults or intervene and ask a student to stop if they were teasing another kid (30%) or if they saw someone being hit or pushed around (31%). Teachers report that “Boys generally misbehave plus some children learn from other naughty children and are supported by them.”

5.3.4 Acceptance of Bullying/Aggression

When asked about their attitude towards bullying and their acceptance of bullying and aggression, students in the intervention school feel it is not okay to be mean/aggressive towards others. Teachers have reported that “Earlier when there was no teacher in class, they would be very noisy. Now it is better, they behave well.” On the WSLFM, most students reported ‘agree some’ when asked if they felt it was okay to be mean to a kid who really makes them angry (47%). Students reported ‘agree a little’ when asked if they felt it was okay to say something mean to a kid who does something mean to them (48%), and to hit a kid who hits them first (43%). Interestingly, students reported ‘don’t agree’ when asked if it was okay when a kid made them angry, to say to that kid that they won’t like them anymore (52%). Information obtained from teacher interviews conducted during the follow up corroborate these findings - “though there has been no major change in behavior, I feel there has been an increase in their awareness, interest and their motivation to learn and change”; “Students are now better in comparison. They are not as mischievous or naughty as before”; “With regards to behavior, I see 75% change - they have learned to respect and mend their ways, b) more characterized now - becoming good in the way they communicate, c) awareness has increased - become better listeners, more patient and respectful, d) bad language has reduced”.

Over time, students in the control school report lower acceptance of bullying and aggression and feel it is not okay to be mean/aggressive towards other students. On the WSLFM, students reported ‘agree some’ when asked if they felt it was okay to say something mean to a kid who really makes them angry (37%) and who does something mean to them (38%). Students also reported ‘agree some’ when asked if they felt it was okay to tell a kid that makes you angry that you won’t like them anymore (37%), and if they felt it was okay to hit a kid who is pushing you around (34%). Interestingly, students reported ‘agree a lot’ when asked if it was okay to hit a kid who hits you first (41%). Contrary to our findings, teachers claim that there appears to be a basic problem with student attitude and express that “the boys have a ‘we don’t care’ approach. They are very aggressive with each other. Sometimes they can be very difficult to handle.”; “In class some boys play the fool and don’t pay attention in class. On the field many boys are very rough with each other. There is no sportsmanship. Even though we punish these students it makes no difference to them. They continue to misbehave.”; “I see all negative changes - they don’t turn to wish anymore - just ignore mostly. They are very proud of themselves. They are more troublesome and don’t listen to the teachers. They abuse each other (f’s and b’s) and show bad actions.”

5.3.5 Pro Social Behavior

Post intervention and at follow up, students in the control schools, in comparison to the intervention school, have continued to report engaging in significantly higher amounts of friendly/helpful behavior. Prior to the intervention as well, students in the control schools engaged in high amounts of prosocial behavior in comparison to the intervention group students. There appears to be a consistency and continuity, from the post intervention assessment phase, in their expression of positive behavior towards their fellow classmates. The intervention program, therefore, does not seem to have a significant effect on increasing prosocial behavior as assessed by the questionnaire.
On close observation of the data obtained from interviewing staff during follow up, it was found that a lot of teachers had been providing students with advice, talks and awareness/practice based sessions on respectful behavior, management of emotions and stress, etc. “Initially students were noisy. They had no patience to listen to teachers, hence this reduced their tolerance. However, with meditation, frequent engagement, advice and instructions, students have sobered. Now they pay attention and do work on time – overall 60% improvement”; “Some children have become more serious about their studies and their nature-change-especially after we spoke to them about how boys need to become gentlemen and not roadside rowdies. Other children continue to disturb the class and don’t respect teachers or their classmates.” Moreover, one of the schools had been engaging in the positive strategy of acknowledging good behavior in their students and reported benefitting from the same—“Daily, I would advise them to do such behavior during the first ten minutes of each class. During assembly, disciplined students would get praised. Those who never got it, tried hard. It is for this praise that they changed. Yes - more obedient, disciplined. Physical fights have reduced.”, “But as much as possible we teachers try and talk to them - give them good advice.”

Some teachers acknowledged puberty as the reason behind students exhibiting friendly behavior – “Most of the children experience puberty changes at this age - this makes them become more conscious and sober down their personalities.” Other teachers however, stated parental reasons behind student’s positive behavior -“Initially verbal fights were a lot - complaints and abuses. Now changed- they help, share and care. Few children fear their parents and so are quiet in class.”

Nevertheless, it was heartening to find that teachers seem to be aware of the positive change that they could trigger via their involvement and support – “I think it is helpful if we teachers talk to these boys regularly as that way they get to know what is not nice about them and how they can change it.”

At follow up, students in control schools continue to show an increase in the amount of their engagement in friendly/helpful behavior. Teachers, in the follow up interview, report that “most students who used to respond still respond. Those who are naughty and ill-behaved still continue to be so.” Other teachers reported that “Some students are obedient and good plus they listen.;”, “A big chunk of them are helpful and well behaved.” Based on teacher data, it can be seen that there has been a significant improvement in student attitude and behavior with regards to bullying - they appear to be more motivated and inclined to engage in friendly and helpful behavior on the whole. However, this finding also indicates that the intervention program does not seem to have a significant effect on increasing prosocial behavior as assessed by the questionnaire.

Just like in the post intervention phase, at follow up, students in the intervention school continue to show a decline in the amount of their engagement in friendly/helpful behavior. Teachers report that “Behavior has just worsened over time - but it is an expected thing.” “Some children have changed - become sweet and kind. Others are the same - naughty and rude.” Teacher reports have also helped in identifying possible reasons behind this decline, “For some boys, it’s a part of their nature. They are insensitive and unkind. This could also be because of their age group or friends outside school who influence them.”

5.3.6 Bully-Victim Incidence

As was expected by the study, students in the intervention school reported lower amounts of bullying, directly and indirectly, being victimized and experiencing negative events by other students, in comparison to male students in the control school.
6 months post intervention, intervention school students report lower amount of bully victim incidence. Students report lower amounts of bullying, directly and indirectly, being victimized and experiencing negative events by other students, in comparison to the post intervention phase wherein no significant changes were reported. During the post intervention follow up interview conducted with the teachers at the intervention school, one of them reported that “Fighting and bad language is generally high in middle school years. However, off late, though these complaints have been coming in, they are a lot lesser”.

Students in the control schools report higher amounts of bullying, directly and indirectly, being victimized and experiencing negative events by other students, in comparison to the post intervention phase wherein no significant changes were reported. Teachers corroborate this finding by mentioning during their follow up interview that, “No. I feel they were better in 5th and early 6th. Now I face a lot of difficulty.”; “Students show disrespectful behavior – without teachers knowledge they run out/walk out of class. Use the teacher to their advantage. Pass comments on students and teachers. They use vulgar and filthy language – in their local language. There has been some increase in physical/aggressive behavior.”; “behavior wise students find joy in troubling others – trip them and laugh. Filthy language is used by certain students. They wrestle with each other – show make bad gestures. Some students are much occupied with sex/love.”; “No change in the past 6 months. Boys are still the same.”; “Everyday some or the other child misbehaves and is sent to the principal. But this does not help because the behavior continues.”

Based on the findings obtained we can attempt to answer the research questions:

What are the demographic factors that influence incidence and attitude to bullying? – factors such as order of birth, academic performance, type of school (all boys v/s co-ed) and number of years in the present school were found to influence student attitude and incidence of bullying.

Will anti-bullying interventions be successful in reducing aggression in middle schools? – Based on our findings it can be stated that the SSVPP has been successful in lowering student engagement in bullying behavior; instances of being victimized by others at school; and increasing student’s ability to handle bullying situations assertively.

5.3.7 Summary:

With regard to perceived assertiveness, students in the intervention school, in comparison to the control schools, report being able to demonstrate more capability in showing assertive behavior in bullying situations. On the other hand, students in the control schools report finding it really hard to be assertive in situations of bullying.

For adult responsiveness, students in the intervention school report that they feel that adults in their school are aware of the extent of bullying in school premises, are approachable if a student wishes to share an experience of bullying and are responsive to such shared experiences of bullying in school.

Post follow up, students in the control school continue to report feeling that adults in their school are not aware of the extent of bullying in school premises, are unapproachable if a student wishes to share an experience of bullying and are unresponsive to such shared experiences of bullying in school.
At follow up, for the variable bystander responsibility, it was found that compared to students in the control schools, students in the intervention school report being able to perform bystander responsibilities when in a situation where their peers or school mates are experiencing bullying.

When asked about their attitude towards bullying and their acceptance of bullying and aggression, students in the intervention school report feeling it is not okay to mean/aggressive towards others. Interestingly, over time, control school students report lower acceptance of bullying and aggression and feel it is not okay to be mean/aggressive towards other students.

At follow up, students in the control schools, in comparison to the intervention school, have continued to report engaging in significantly higher amounts of friendly/helpful behavior. Prior to the intervention as well, students in the control schools engaged in high amounts of prosocial behavior in comparison to the intervention group students. There appears to be a consistency and continuity, from the post intervention assessment phase, in their expression of positive behavior towards their fellow classmates. The intervention program, therefore, does not seem to have a significant effect on increasing prosocial behavior as assessed by the questionnaire.

As was expected by the study, students in the intervention school reported lower amounts of bullying, directly and indirectly, being victimized and experiencing negative events by other students, in comparison to male students in the control school. Students in the control schools in contrast, report higher amounts of bullying, directly and indirectly, being victimized and experiencing negative events by other students.