

ABSTRACT

This dissertation sets out to explore the perceptions of bullying held by stakeholders in a primary school community in a suburb of Cork City. For the purposes of this dissertation the stakeholders are the teaching staff, children, parents and the board of management. There is a gap in the literature in the area of perceptions of bullying in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. O'Moore and Stevens state that the collective Irish response could at best be described as lukewarm (2013: 2). McGuckin, Cummins and Lewis also state that;

much of the research carried out in the Republic of Ireland has been sporadic in nature, focusing on the incidence, nature, and correlates of bully/victim problems. Similar methodological shortcomings were also apparent (i.e., definitions, measures employed, time-reference period and reporting of findings). (2013: 18)

The anti-bullying policy in place in the school under study needs to be updated and staff members called for assistance during last year's school based research project. The school has an anti-bullying policy in place (2014) and the school uses programmes and strategies to counter act bullying. The main research question therefore is "what are the opinions of stakeholders in relation to how this school is approaching bullying?"

In order to gain the opinions of the stakeholders, the researcher used questionnaires, interviews and focus group interviews. 143 surveys were returned from 256 distributed questionnaires. Once the questionnaires were collected, they were analysed in conjunction with the feedback from the 3 focus group interviews and the 3 individual interviews that were completed.

There is some evidence to suggest that the answer to the main research question ("what are the opinions of stakeholders in relation to how this school is approaching bullying?") is a positive one because the stakeholders want to participate in annual reviews of the policy, are willing to accept any training in this challenging area and have agreed to be part of an anti-bullying committee made up of teachers, children and parents. The data highlighted areas for improvement and there was some ambiguity around the procedures in place at present. The participants made practical suggestions in addressing these shortcomings such as a yard journal, termly meetings of an anti-bullying committee and a 'friendship week'. This project makes recommendations at school level and also identifies areas for further research.