

# **A Measure of the Experience of Being Bullied: An Initial Validation in Philippine Schools**

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Bullying in schools concerns parents, teachers, school administrators, counselors, and psychologists in most Philippine schools. Response to this problem needs to draw from a valid measure. Previous formulations of the experience of bullying indicated various forms, some of which are common across research contexts. The Personal Experience Checklist (PECK) by Hunt, Peters, and Rapee (2012) has four dimensions that were seen to be closer to the cases of bullying in Philippine schools. The present study aimed at validating the PECK among Filipino high school students. In the exploratory phase of the validation process, Exploratory Factor Analysis on the 32-item PECK extracted 3 factors from the responses of 231 high school students, namely: verbal-relational bullying, physical bullying, and cyber bullying. In the cross-validation phase, separate Confirmatory Factor Analyses were performed for the new 3-factor model from 443 public school students ( $\chi^2/df=4.01$ , RMSEA=.08, TLI=.90, CFI=.90) and from 201 private school students ( $\chi^2/df=2.36$ , RMSEA=.06, TLI=.95, CFI=.92). CFA generated a relatively acceptable validity evidence of the measure for the experience of being bullied in both private and public schools. Implications point to the use of the new 3-factor model measure of bullying in the Philippine schools, and future research direction to increase the generalizability of the measure.

*Keywords: Bullying, measure of bullying, high school students, Filipino*

Bullying is defined as a subtype of aggressive behavior (Olweus, 1993), initiated by an individual or group of individuals towards a less powerful person usually without provocation (Harris, 2004). The goal of bullying is to take control over the other person through physical force, verbal teasing, and exclusion from peers (Beale & Scott, 2001), and can also occur in a virtual setting through social networking via web sites and emails. Regardless of the form it takes or the medium it uses, the behavior of an individual is considered as bullying if it is intended to hurt another.

Bullying has been studied for so many years in some parts of the world and has remained a topic of several studies because of its present-time relevance. In the United Kingdom, for example, a longitudinal study conducted by Smith and Shu (2000) among students between 10 to 14 years old in 19 schools revealed that 32.3% were bullied once or twice. Likewise, in the United States, bullying is recognized as one of the pressing problems that plague schools (Garringer, 2008). In 2001, a survey given to private and public schools across the United States showed that bullying was experienced by 29.9% of the 15, 686 middle school to high school students who joined the survey (Nansel et al., 2001). These students experienced bullying either as bullies, victims, or bully-victims. Similarly, relatively recent studies conducted across 40 countries like Canada, Lithuania, Poland, Greenland, Israel depicted bullying as a growing concern in the academe. For instance, in one Canadian study, 26% of the adolescent participants [n=53,249] reported involvement in the action. In addition, among 38,000 Australian children surveyed, 1 in every 6 children is bullied in school; for a class size of 30, around 5 kids were bullied within the classroom setting (Peterson & Rigby, 1999).

Other studies have also shown that the impact of bullying goes beyond the physical and is more socially and psychologically profound (Olweus, 1984; Rigby & Slee, 1993; Smith, Bowers, Binney, & Cowie, 1993). Children who were victims of peer aggression displayed a wide range of physical, emotional, and psychopathological symptoms. Previous studies have underscored the fact that bully victimization results to higher rates of depression and anxiety (Nansel, et al., 2001), poor academic performance (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2000), and even school absenteeism (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Perry, 2003). Bullying was also found to be a significant predictor of suicidal behavior (Klomek, Marocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007). Likewise, children who were bullied experienced sleeping problems, headache, stomach ache,

bedwetting and depression (Williams, Chambers, Logan, & Robinson, 1996; Salmon, James, & Smith, 1998). Worst, its impact to the community cannot be underrated; Secret Service indicates that 71% of school shooters had been victims of bullying (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002).

The problem of bullying is not unusual to the Philippines. In fact, in the Asia-Pacific Regional Study on bullying, around 58% of the Filipino participants reported being made fun of by other kids, 45% being forced to do things, 36% being physically hurt, and 30% being left out of groups (Lai, Ye, Chang, 2008). In another study, it was found that the common forms of bullying among Filipino children include being ridiculed and teased by peers (Plan Philippines, 2008). Data from the Department of Education showed that, from 2010 to 2012, there have been several reported cases of aggression related incidents including bullying. The Department of Education is alarmed with the increase of bullying and peer victimization in schools all throughout the country that it has enforced monitoring of such occurrences through policies that protect students from discrimination, physical punishments and other violent actions (Hernando-Malipot, 2012).

Two important points may be drawn from the earlier reports on bullying. One, bullying is a prevalent phenomenon in schools worldwide, and the Philippine schools are no exemption; two, bullying has detrimental effects on the students, particularly in the victims' well-being and adjustment, and even in their academic engagement. Drawing from these two points, one can find a great need to investigate the nature of bullying experiences within and across schools, which is key to the understanding of the facets or forms of bullying experience that commonly take place, particularly in the Philippine schools. It is when we are able to define the experience of bullying in our schools can we design intervention programs that can adequately address its different forms. At present, we expect that teachers, school counselors, psychologists, and other practitioners in the helping profession need an instrument that measures the different forms of bullying experience among the students. In the literature, there are a few versions of the measure of bullying, and what the current research has seen as closer to the Filipino students' experience is the Personal Experience Checklist (PECK) by Hunt, Peters, and Rapee (2012), because its validation used a sample from a variety of ethnicities. The PECK is a self-report measure of the experience of bullying intended for children from 8 years and older. It measures four forms of bullying experience, namely: verbal-relational, cyber, physical, and cultural.

However, the main problem in using foreign-made instrument lies in the question of its validity, which set the direction of the current study to validate the PECK in the Philippine setting and to ascertain the psychometric properties of this instrument before this can be used in schools. Even with the understanding that the dimensions of bullying experience in the PECK may be universal, it was expected that the structure of the experience may slightly vary across countries, and that the items may work differently for the Filipino sample in terms of measuring the specific dimensions of bullying. Therefore, the current study undertook two phases of the validation of the PECK. The first phase was for the exploration of the factor structure of bullying experience in order to find manifest facets of the experience that may be generalizable to Filipino students. The second phase was for the cross-validation of the factor structure drawn from the results of the first phase. Cross-validation was intended to provide an initial evidence of the generalizability of the factor structure of bullying and establish confidence in the use of the measure in any Philippine school.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

For the exploratory phase of the current study, 255 high school students from a private school initially participated in the study. However, 24 were excluded from the final analysis due to their consistent report of absence of experience of being bullied, as indicated by their consistent response “Does not apply to me” in all the items in the questionnaire. For this phase, a total of 231 students comprised the participants for the exploration of the structure of the experience of being bullied, 130 of which were females (56%), and 101 (44%) males. Their ages ranged from 11 to 17 ( $M=13.96$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ). For the confirmatory phase, a total of 443 students from two public schools (male=218, or 49%; female=225, or 51%), and 201 from a private school (male=92, or 46%; female=109, or 54%) participated in the study. The ages of public school students ranged from 11 to 17 ( $M=14.04$ ,  $SD=1.26$ ). The ages of participants from the private school ranged from 11 to 17 ( $M=14.18$ ,  $SD=1.16$ ).

### **Measure**

The current study used the items of the Personal Experience Checklist (PECK) that measure the experience of being bullied, developed by Hunt, Peters, and Rapee (2012). It comprised 32 items measuring four dimensions, namely:

verbal-relational bullying (e.g., *Other kids tease me about things that are not true*), cyber bullying (e.g., *Other kids say nasty things about me by SMS*), physical bullying, (e.g., *Other kids hit me*), and bullying based on culture (e.g., *Other kids won't talk to me because of where I'm from*). These dimensions were drawn from a sample of 8 to 15-year-old students in Australia, and validated among a sample of age 9 to 16 students with varied ethnicities. For the current study, the original items were reworded, replacing the word "kids" with "students" because the latter is what is typically used in Philippine schools. A few other items with words less frequently used by Filipino high schools students were replaced with short definition to facilitate understanding of the statement. For example, the statement, "*Other kids shove me*" was phrased as "*Other students push me roughly*." Some items were rephrased in order to contextualize its contents. For example, the statement, "*Other kids say nasty things about me on an instant messenger or chat room*" was rephrased to "*Other students say offensive things about me on facebook chat, or YM*." The participants responded to each of the items on a 7-point scale from 1 = "*It has never happened to me*" to 7 = "*It has always happened to me*." The psychometric properties of this measure in the current study are reported in the Results section.

### **Data Analysis**

Prior to the main analysis of the data, Descriptive indices were obtained in order to examine the normality of the data. The exploratory phase of the current study used Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to identify the constellation of items into some dimensions of the experience of being bullied from a sample of Filipino students. For the confirmatory phase, separate Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used for the analysis of the public school and private school samples. STATISTICA 12 was used for both EFA and CFA.

### **Results**

It was the intention of the current study to validate the PECK as a measure of the experience of being bullied in youth, developed by Hunt, Peters, and Rapee (2012), across a variety of school settings in order to establish a measure of bullying among Filipino high school students. Mindful of the cultural and context-specificity of bullying experience, the current study made no assumption that the 4-factor structure of the original formulation of the measure was present in the Filipino sample. Therefore, the structure of the experience of

being bullied was studied in two phases. The exploratory phase was for the examination of the factor structure and the unique convergence of the items relative to Filipino students' context and experiences. The cross-validation phase was for testing the generalizability of the factor structure obtained from the exploratory phase through a confirmatory factor analysis. This phase was also intended to establish psychometric properties that will make the measure useful in various Philippine schools.

### **Phase 1: Exploration of the Structure of Bullying**

To examine the structure of the experience of being bullied, Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed on the 32-item PECK. Employing a Principal Component Method of factor extraction and Varimax rotation, different factor solutions were initially carried out, but a 3-factor solution was finally used, with reference to the eigenvalues, scree plot, and the meanings of the items that converged in the factors. Table 1 shows the eigenvalues of the three factors extracted from the original measure.

Table 1  
*Eigenvalues of the 3-Factor Measure of the Experience of Being Bullied*

Factor	Eigenvalue	Percent Total Variance	Cumulative Eigenvalue	Cumulative Percent Total
1	11.01	34.42	11.01	34.42
2	2.41	7.52	13.42	41.94
3	1.75	5.47	15.17	47.42

A factor loading  $\geq .40$  was set to determine the significant loading coefficient of the items on the 3 factors. This criterion helped in identifying the items from the original measure that significantly loaded in the new factors. As a result, 15 items loaded in Factor 1, 5 items loaded in Factor 2, and 8 in Factor 3. In sum, only 28 items from the original 32-item measure significantly loaded in the three newly extracted factors of the experience of being bullied. It was observed that some items in the original 4-factor measure of the PECK did not load in the same factor in the new 3-factor model. For example, some verbal-relational items in the PECK neither significantly loaded together with the other

verbal-relational items in one factor nor did they load significantly in the other factors of the new 3-factor model. This implies that some items in the PECK were not as functional to measure any of these dimensions of bullying among the Filipino sample.

Out of 11 items on *relational-verbal* bullying in the original measure, only 9 loaded together in Factor 1 of the new model. Added to these 9 items were the 4 items on bullying based on culture in the original measure, and 2 items on physical bullying. Looking closely at the items that loaded in Factor 1, it can be seen that all of these items have obvious verbal-relational element. It was not surprising that all the four items on cultural bullying in the PECK loaded together with most verbal-relational items in the new 3-factor model because these items indicate an apparent verbal and relational dimension. Additionally, the two items the on physical bullying in the PECK loaded together with verbal-relational items because the physical element of aggression in these items did not categorically indicate aggression toward the physical body of the victim, unlike the other items on physical bullying that indicated a direct bodily infliction of harm. The implicit nature of physical bullying in these two items may be the cause of their departure from all the other items on physical bullying. Given the verbal and relational nature of these items that loaded in the same factor in the new 3-factor model, the current study adopted the “verbal-relational” term used by Hunt, Peters, and Rapee (2012) as a label for Factor 1.

For Factor 2 of the new 3-factor model, only 5 out of 9 items on physical bullying from the original measure loaded significantly. These items all indicate a direct physical or bodily aggression towards the victim, hence Factor 2 is labeled as *physical bullying*, also adopting the term used in the PECK. Finally, all 8 items on cyber bullying from the original measure significantly loaded in Factor 3 of the present study. All these items indicate technology-mediated aggressive attack by the bully on the victim, usually through the internet or phones. Thus, Factor 3 is *cyber bullying*. Table 2 shows the factor loadings of the items.

**Table 2**  
*Factor Loadings of 28 Items*

Item ( <i>Original Factor</i> )	Factor 1: Verbal- Relational	Factor 2: Physical	Factor 3: Cyber
Other students say unkind things behind my back. ( <i>Rel-Verb</i> )	.64		
Other students make fun of my language. ( <i>Cult</i> )	.51		
Other students try to turn my friends against me. ( <i>Rel-Verb</i> )	.62		
Other students make fun of my culture. ( <i>Cult</i> )	.51		
Other students tease me about my voice. ( <i>Cult</i> )	.58		
Other students tease me about things that aren't true. ( <i>Rel-Verb</i> )	.62		
Other students won't talk to me because of where I'm from. ( <i>Cult</i> )	.54		
Other students ignore me on purpose. ( <i>Rel-Verb</i> )	.71		
Other students call me names because I'm a bit different. ( <i>Rel-Verb</i> )	.61		
Other students call me names because I can't do something. ( <i>Rel-Verb</i> )	.54		
Other students make fun of my friends. ( <i>Rel-Verb</i> )	.55		
Other students make rude gestures at me. ( <i>Rel-Verb</i> )	.62		
Other students tell people to make fun of me. ( <i>Rel-Verb</i> )	.71		
Other students destroy my things. ( <i>Phys</i> )	.41		
Other students play practical jokes on me. ( <i>Phys</i> )	.61		
Other students hit me. ( <i>Phys</i> )		.76	
Other students punch me. ( <i>Phys</i> )		.81	
Other students kick me. ( <i>Phys</i> )		.69	
Other students push me roughly. ( <i>Phys</i> )		.63	
Other students tell people to hit me. ( <i>Phys</i> )		.52	
Other students say offensive things to me by text messages. ( <i>Cyber</i> )			.60
Other students threaten me over the phone. ( <i>Cyber</i> )			.50
Other students send me offensive e-mails. ( <i>Cyber</i> )			.50
Other students harass me over the phone. ( <i>Cyber</i> )			.40
Other students say nasty things about me on websites. ( <i>Cyber</i> )			.77
Other students send me computer viruses on purpose. ( <i>Cyber</i> )			.46
Other students say offensive things about me on facebook chat or YM. ( <i>Cyber</i> )			.76
Other students make deceiving or tricky phone calls to me. ( <i>Cyber</i> )			.52

This new version of the measure for the experience of being bullied in youth comprised 28 items, measuring three dimensions of bullying, namely: relational-verbal, physical, and cyber bullying. The internal consistency of the items in each factor was established, and found to be adequately reliable as indicated by their Cronbach alpha coefficients shown in Table 3.



Table 3  
*Descriptive Indices of the 3 Factors*

Factor	No. of Items	Cronbach $\alpha$	M	SD
Factor 1: Verbal-Relational bullying	15	.89	3.33	.89
Factor 2: Physical bullying	5	.79	2.78	.85
Factor 3: Cyber bullying	8	.79	3.56	.86

### Phase 2: Cross-Validation of the 3-Factor Structure of Bullying

After adopting the 3-factor structure of the measure for the experience of being bullied, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted on the data from another sample of students of the same age range as those who participated in the exploratory phase. This confirmation was intended to test the generalizability of the three dimensions of bullying experience among high school students in order to increase its validity for use across schools in the Philippines. Because the experience of bullying may be sensitive to the context, the 3-factor structure was tested separately in public and private schools. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis showed that the model had a good fit to a private school sample, considering the four fit measures indicated in Table 4. When tested for model fit to a public school sample, RMSEA and CFI yielded fair fit indices. The TLI was slightly below the critical value for adequate fit which is  $>.95$ , and the  $\chi^2/df$  is above the critical value which is  $<3.0$ . In general, the 3-factor model was confirmed in both private and public school samples, and the items measuring each factor had acceptable to good internal consistency, with Cronbach alpha ranging from .76 to .92.

Table 4  
*Psychometric Properties of the 3-Factor Model from Public and Private School Samples*

Model	N	M	SD	Cronbach $\alpha$	$\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	TLI	CFI
Model from Public School	443				4.01	.080	.90	.90
<i>Verbal-relational</i>		3.90	.82	.82				
<i>Physical</i>		2.68	.73	.76				
<i>Cyber</i>		3.06	.88	.80				
Model from Private School	201				2.36	.063	.95	.92
<i>Verbal-relational</i>		3.24	.87	.92				
<i>Physical</i>		2.21	.80	.78				
<i>Cyber</i>		3.86	.82	.90				

## Discussion

Results of the current study indicate that the bullying experiences of Filipino high school students in public and private schools include three forms, namely: physical, verbal-relational and cyber bullying. From the developmental standpoint, the occurrence of these forms of bullying among the participants may be argued as a form of social dominance. Young people may engage in aggressive behavior, as in the case of bullying, in order to establish a sense of power and dominance over others (Dodge, Coei, & Lynam, 2006). Usually, this aggressive behavior is displayed through proactive and reactive functions, with proactive function relating to the physical form of bullying and reactive function indicating relational [and cyber] form of bullying (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Dodge & Coie, 1987; Little, Jones, Henrich, & Hawley, 2003).

Among Filipino high school students in both public and private schools sampled in the current study, verbal-relational and cyber bullying showed consistently higher mean scores than physical bullying. In the case of verbal-relational bullying, this pattern is similar to Wang, Iannotti and Nansel's (2009) research on adolescent bullying which indicated that the most popular relational bullying behaviors include fabricating and spreading false stories about peers, name-calling and intentionally ostracizing others from groups. In the current study, participants reported experiences of being ostracized through being ignored on purpose. Similarly, they reported experiences of being the object of name-calling, teasing and gossiping, which is prevalent among young adolescents.

Cyber bullying is another prominent experience among adolescents because this can happen even beyond the school setting. This form of bullying is expected to be more prevalent than physical bullying since the former has greater anonymity on the part of the bully, and the bullying phenomenon is less obvious to other people. Using the technology, school bullies may continue to perpetrate their aggressive behavior and harass other students through the internet and cellular phones. Previous studies also reported similar results where a substantial amount of cyber bullying experience among students at some point in their lives (e.g., Beran & Li, 2007). Considering that Filipino high school students generally use cyberspace to interact with other individuals (e.g., Gultiano, King, Orbeta & Gordoncillo, 2010), it is not surprising to find out that many of these students are victims of cyber bullying.

The dimension on physical bullying also emerged from the exploratory investigation of the factor structure of bullying, and was confirmed to be present in both public and private school students. The presence of the physical form of bullying indicates that physical aggression is still evident among the participants. However, physical bullying showed consistently lower mean scores in the two phases of the current study. We saw two possible explanations for this. One, this type of aggression among students is less obvious in high school than in the grade school, according to the developmental perspective of physical aggression. Juvonen & Witkow (2005) explained this case as a result of a widening of social understanding as students grow. Another reason for this is that high school students may take physical bullying as a more obvious form of bullying that makes the aggressive attack more observable by other people. Physical bullying is also more likely to leave visible marks that can be easily observed by the teachers and other school authorities, and are more easily subjected to investigation with reference to existing school policies.

In general, the 3-factor model of the experience of being bullied among high school students demonstrated relatively acceptable validity evidence. Thus, it can now be used to measure the experience of bully victimization that happen in various Philippine high school institutions. However, a continuing test of its validity will have to be greatly considered in future research. It must be remembered that, in the current study, the confirmatory indices from the public school sample were slightly weaker than the private school counterpart. More confirmatory studies may be done on this new measure to increase the generalizability of the 3-factor model, and to expand the usability of this measure to more schools in the country. Further validation may also consider gender of students. Although in the current study, the 3-factor model was tested in sample groups with a proportionate number of male and female participants, and the confirmatory results may suggest the generalizability of the model across gender, it should not rule out the possibility that specific forms of bullying may be stronger in males than in females. One may argue that the Philippine society, for example, has a patriarchal culture that attempts to see males as having more power than females. In order to maintain boys' dominance, they tend to exercise power over girls by oppressing the latter. In fact, previous studies have consistently shown that a higher percentage of girls claimed to be bullied by boys (Rigby, 1997). Thus, it is recommended for future research to look into specific typologies of gender-specific bullying experiences, and will be more insightful if

the research direction will soon take on a more straightforward argument from socio-cultural perspective.

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