

The Effect of Depression on Study Results of Public University Students in Thailand

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Abstract

The concept of bullying can be defined as the set of acts in which the students that are physically, mentally and socially strong put pressure on their weaker fellows and abuse them. In the same way, bullying has also been taken in the context that a student when repeatedly faces negative behavior from other fellow students, it will also be taken in the category of bullying. These types of bullies might impact the students in one way or the other. In the similar context, the researcher has designed this study to explore the three types of school bullying i.e. physical, verbal and relational bullying on the perceived academic performance of the students of universities in Thailand along with the mediating role of depression in the students. For analysis purpose, the researcher has collected data from the students of these universities through online questionnaire administration and the results have been obtained through statistical analysis. The results have shown that that all the independent variables have significant and negative impact on the dependent variable of the study. In other words, with the increase of physical, verbal and relational bullying, the academic performance of the students will be decreased dramatically. In addition to this, the mediating role of depression has also been found as significant in all three relationships.

Keywords: Physical, Verbal, Relational Bullying, Perceived Academic Performance, Depression, Thailand

1 Introduction

The research on the topic of bullying started in late 1970s in context of sociology and psychology studies in different countries such as Norway, Finland and Sweden etc. (Griffin & Gross, 2004; Rigby, 2007). These studies and researches have shown a decreasing trend in bullying behavior in schools and this is the reason why other educational institutes in other countries and regions have also been attracted to the addressing of bullying issues (Bauman, Rigby, & Hoppa, 2008). The concept of bullying can be defined as the set of acts in which the students that are physically, mentally and socially strong put pressure on their weaker fellows and abuse them (Altaf, Hameed, Nadeem, & Arfan, 2019; Besag, 1989). In the same way, bullying has also been taken in the context that a student when repeatedly faces negative behavior from other fellow students, it will also be taken in the category of bullying (Olweus, 2012). Similarly, Greene (2000) has indicated different conditions that are linked with bullying behavior. The first one is that the bullies might harm or threaten the bullying victims; the process of bullying is repeated, the victim does not cause the bully to show some aggression, familiar social groups have more tendencies to face bullying. The last condition is that the bully is more powerful physically, mentally or verbally than the victim. All these conditions point towards the bullying behavior. As far as types of bullying are concerned, a study in the past has mentioned some of the classifications of bullying in schools. These classifications include verbal bullying, physical bullying, seizure bullying, retention bullying, emotional bullying, racist bullying, destructive bullying, behavior bullying, sexual bullying etc. However, most of the studies have focused on the four main types i.e. physical, verbal, relational and sexual bullying (Coloroso, 2003; Smith & Thompson, 2017; Ifeoma, 2019). All

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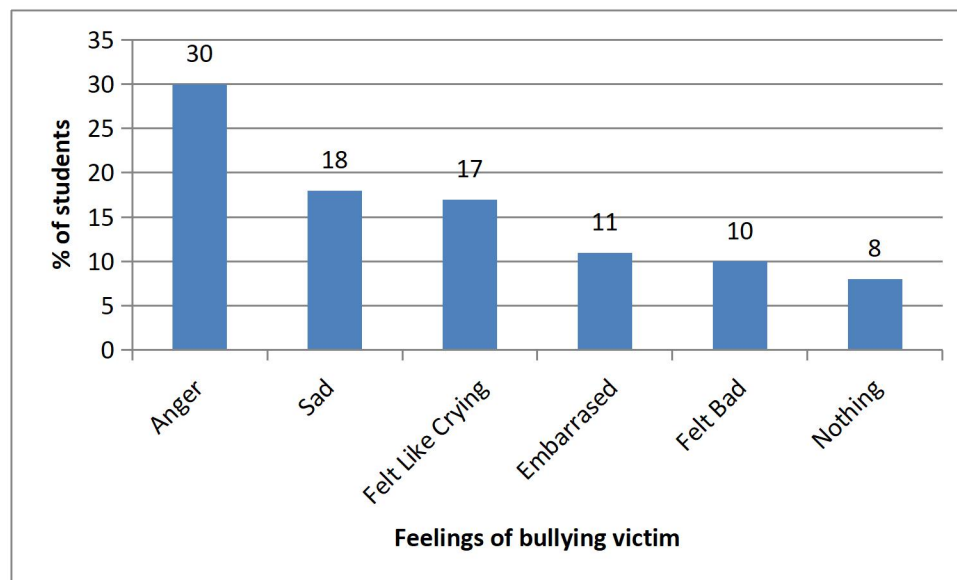
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these bullying types not only affect the mental condition of the victim and take him/her into depression but it also results in the declining of the academic performance of the victims.

Figure 1: Feelings of Bullying Victims (researchgate)



The policies and regulations regarding the control of bullying behavior have greater tendency towards the decrease in bullying behaviors faced in educational institutes. However, in the universities off Thailand, some incidents have been noted regarding physical, verbal and relational bullying that have apparently caused depression in students and have also impacted their education negatively. In the past, a number of studies can be found regarding the bullying behaviors that are linked to depression. In addition, some studies have also linked them to the academic performance of the students. However, studies regarding the aforementioned aspects in Thailand universities have not been found. Therefore, the current study has been conducted to fill this gap with the following objectives;

- To analyze the impact of physical bullying on the perceived academic performance of students of Thailand universities
- To analyze the impact of verbal bullying on the perceived academic performance of students of Thailand universities
- To analyze the impact of relational bullying on the perceived academic performance of students of Thailand universities
- To determine the mediating role of depression among students in the relationship between school bullying types and perceived academic performance

This study will be very significant for the universities of Thailand as they will be able to assess the situation of bullying behaviors in their institutes and will be able to take precautionary steps to control the situation by making strict policies and regulations.

Table 1: % of depressed people in Thailand (semantic scholar)

Years	% of People with depression
2009	5.1
2010	7.7
2011	19
2012	29.3
2013	33.3
2014	36.8
2015	44.1
2016	46.5

2 Literature Review

2.1 Impact of School Bullying on Perceived Academic Performance

In the past, a number of studies have discussed the types of bullying and their impact on the academic performance of the students who are the victims of the bullying behavior. The major types and the subject of this study are physical bullying, verbal bullying and relational bullying. Among these types, physical bullying is the most important one and has gained the attention of a number of researchers and this type usually involves violence. Verbal bullying involves the name calling by fellows and threatening in different contexts. The third type i.e. relational bullying has not been given much attention by the researchers and is considered to have the least adverse impacts on the students (Smith et al., 1999). It involves the damage of relationships with other fellows and society (Crick, 1996). It also involves the aspect of exclusion. In other words, in relational type, the bullies do not let the victims play with them, spread rumors about them and do not become friends with them. If these aspects are repeated with the victim; it comes under the category of relational bullying. Comparatively, relational bullying has more serious effects on the victim than the physical bullying in context of emotional disturbance, social and psychological issues, depression etc. (Espelage & Swearer, 2004; Howard, Horne, & Jolliff, 2001; Basiouni, 2020). There is a major conflict about the impacts of relational bullying between students and teachers. According to a study, it was found out that students think that relational bullying is the most worst form of bullying however in another study it was suggested that relational bullying is not be be worried about very much (Birkinshaw & Eslea, 1998; Sharp, 1995). Another different between physical and relational bullying was found out that physical bullying might decrease with age but the case of relational bullying is just the opposite (Crick, Grotpeter, & Bigbee, 2002). According to Vail (2002), most of the educational institutes pay more attention towards making of policies regarding physical bullying as compared to the other types. However, the negative impact in context of mental health and academic performance, relational bullying has more serious side effects (Van der Wal, De Wit, & Hirasing, 2003). It has been discussed in the past studies that most of the bullying occurs in schools and therefore teachers might play an important role to control bullying behavior (Kasen, Berenson, Cohen, & Johnson, 2004; Smith, Pepler, & Rigby, 2004). These studies have also suggested that the students and teachers are not well aware of the acts of bullying taking place in schools. In addition, the teachers of British and Canadian institutions do not consider relational bullying as important as physical and verbal bullying as far as their impact on education is concerned (Swearer, 2004). Similarly, relational bullying is not well noticed by people and in the same way the victims of this type of bullying also do not bother about informing someone about it (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001). One of the major reasons that students do not inform the school management or teachers about the bullying behavior of fellows is that they think that their teachers do not care enough and it will not help them in any way (Doll, Song, & Siemers, 2004; Agbejaye & Oke, 2018). All these types of bullying i.e. physical, verbal and relational bullying have been found to impact the perceived academic performance of the students in one way or the other. The students might increase their absences for the purpose of avoiding the bullying or may get emotionally hurt that they might not pay attention to their studies. This leads to the continuous decline in the academic performance of these students. This discussion leads to the following hypotheses;

H 1(a): Physical bullying has significance impact on the perceived academic performance

H 1(b): Verbal bullying has significance impact on the perceived academic performance

H 1(c): Relational bullying has significance impact on the perceived academic performance

2.2 Mediating Role of Student Depression

Different studies in the past have focused on the relationship between bullying and depression among students. It has been found out that direct bullying might result in serious depression and that may also lead to suicidal thoughts especially in girls with age 9 to 13 years. However, this tendency is lower in boys (Van der Wal et al., 2003). In the same way, it was also suggested that the bullying victims also show criminal or antisocial behavior as a result. In context of gender, it has been discussed that boys feel more hurt by physical bullying and this is because of the impact of male dominant societies as the boys feel that physical bullying impacts their ego of manhood (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). This is the reason why boys show more criminal or wrong behavior as compared to girls. The basic idea or result of the study was that the impact of bullying might differ in case of boys and girls (Baldry, 2004). Other studies have indicated that when teenagers face bullying behavior, it results in depression and it may also result in the violent behavior shown by the victims (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). In regard of the nature of bullies, it has been discussed that the bullies take the bullying behavior in positive sense as they think that it will solve their problems and might also get them what they want (Carney & Merrell, 2001). This is the reason why these bullies use bullying actions to maintain their dominance and do not have empathy for their fellows. It has been found out in the past studies that the bullies are also involved in other wrong acts such as drinking and smoking and this tendency is lower in the victims (Nansel et al., 2001). An interesting aspect has been shown

by the past literature that not only the victims get depressed due to bullying but the bullies are themselves depressed sometimes which make them show such bullying behaviors (Grennan & Woodhams, 2007). In turn, the victims might also get involved in showing the bullying behavior as coping strategy. According to the study by (Kumpulainen, Räsänen, & Puura, 2001), the bullies were found to have different disorders. One third of them had attention deficit disorder, 12.5% were facing depression and the same percentage of bullies was facing oppositional conduct disorder. This shows that in addition to the victims, the bullies are also facing different psychological issues. The depression caused by bullying leads towards depression in them and this ultimately impacts the perceived academic performance of the students, thus it can be stated that depression acts as a significant mediator in the study. The following hypotheses can be drawn;

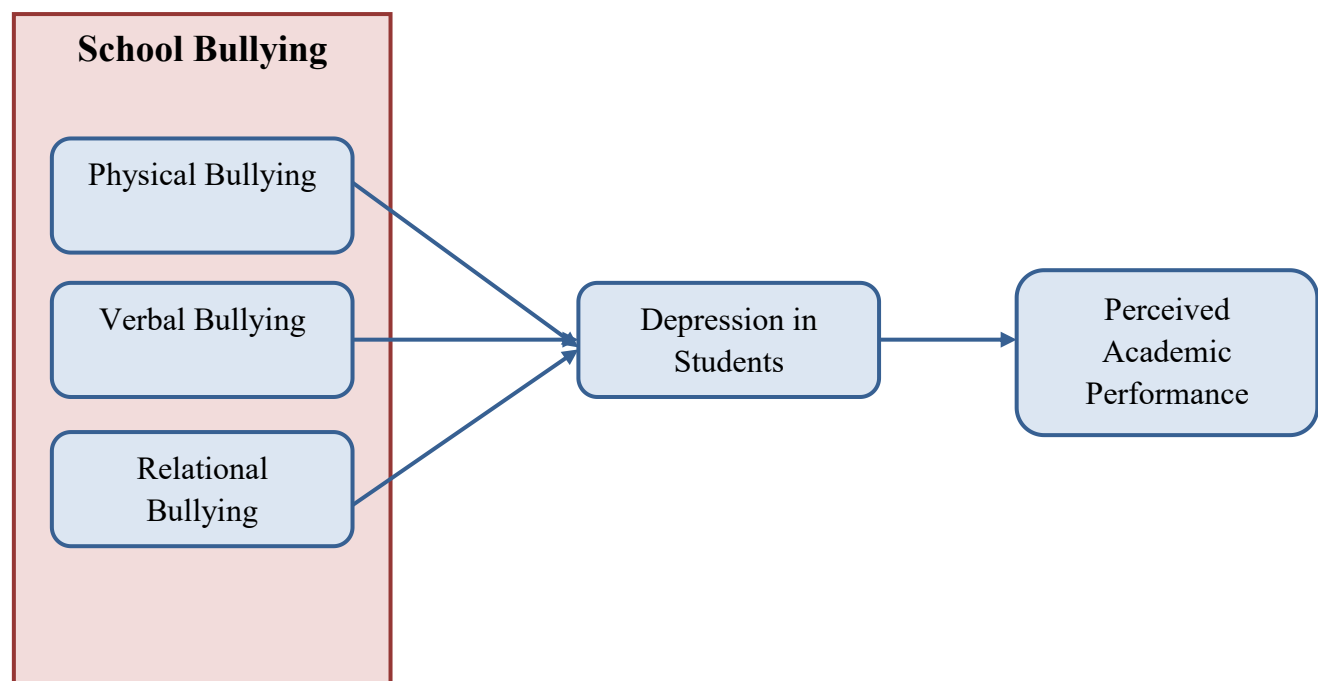
H 2: Depression in students plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between school bullying and perceived academic performance

H 2(a): Depression in students plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between physical bullying and perceived academic performance

H 2(a): Depression in students plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between verbal bullying and perceived academic performance

H 2(a): Depression in students plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between relational bullying and perceived academic performance

2.3 Theoretical Framework



3 Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

It has been quite clear as per the previous sections that the purpose of the researcher to conduct this study is to explore the three types of school bullying i.e. physical, verbal and relational bullying on the perceived academic performance of the students of universities in Thailand along with the mediating role of depression in the students. Based on this objective, the researcher has considered the students of universities of Thailand as the population of the study and the sample has been selected through purposive sampling technique so that the respondents can be selected who can provide the information required in the study such as the bullying types and its impact on mental health and academic performance of the students. The data is supposed to be collected through survey questionnaire administration and this survey activity will be conducted online by emailing the questionnaires to the students. The questionnaires are made professionally and cover all the aspects of the study effectively. Data from 387 respondents has been considered to be used in the analysis of the study based on their completeness and authenticity.

3.2 Measures

The measurement items related to all the variables of the study are discussed here in reference to the past studies from which they have been taken. All these items are measured on a five point Likert scale adopted by the researcher. The first independent variable, physical bullying has five measurement items. The next independent variable, verbal bullying is measured through six items. The last independent variable, relational bullying has been measured through five items. A past study is used as reference for these items regarding the types of school bullying (Tintorer, 2004). The dependent variable, perceived academic performance contains four items, developed in a past study (Margrain, 1978). One of the items is "My overall GPA is (blank)". In the last, the mediating variable of the study, depression in students is measured through two measurement items obtained from a past study (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1993). A sample item of this variable is given as "I felt that I had nothing to look forward to" and "I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything".

3.3 Analytical Tools

Approaches such as factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis; structural equation modeling, convergent and discriminant validity etc. have been applied through SPSS and AMOS for analysis purpose.

4 Results and Analysis

4.1 Demographics

The demographics of the study indicate that out of the total 387 respondents of the study, 55.3% were males and remaining 44.7% were females. In addition, it has also been estimated that most of the respondents are having the age from 25 to 35 years and least of the respondents are having more than 45 years. In context of their experience, it has been estimated that 42.6% of the respondents are having the experience of 2 to 5 years in the universities which makes up a huge amount of respondents.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics present the basic information about the collected data such as mean, standard deviation skewness etc. The table 1 shows these statistics according to which it can be concluded that the collected data is exhibiting normal distribution in the current study.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
StudDep	387	1.00	5.00	3.3053	1.01904	-.255	.124
VerbBull	387	1.00	5.00	3.4241	1.00295	-.428	.124
PhysBull	387	1.00	5.00	3.5700	1.15903	-.603	.124
RelaBull	387	1.00	5.28	3.4826	1.08935	-.570	.124
PAcPerf	387	1.00	5.00	3.6064	1.11421	-.598	.124
Valid N (listwise)	387						

KMO and Bartlett's Test

The results of KMO and Bartlett's test presented in table 2, show that the value of KMO is very close to 1 and the significance value of Bartlett's test is less than 0.05. Both these values indicate that the collected data is adequate and eligible for use in analysis.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.935
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	9144.822
	Df	231
	Sig.	.000

4.3 Rotated Component Matrix

As per the values of factor loadings for different indicators of the study presented in table 3 of rotated component matrix, it is quite evident that all these values are greater than 70%. These values point towards a good contribution of the indicators towards the variables of the study.

Table 4: Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
SD1					.806
SD2					.882
VB1	.850				
VB2	.729				
VB3	.759				
VB4	.836				
VB5	.810				
VB6	.855				
PB1		.882			
PB2		.838			
PB3		.843			
PB4		.860			
PB5		.881			
RB1			.802		
RB2			.826		
RB3			.811		
RB4			.837		
RB5			.846		
AP1				.772	
AP2				.807	
AP3				.844	
AP4				.832	

4.4 Convergent and Discriminant Validity

According to the results of convergent and discriminant validity reported in table 4, it is evident that the composite reliability value is greater than 0.7 while at the same time the value of average variance extract is greater than 0.5. Both these values confirm the validity of the constructs.

Table 5: Convergent and Discriminant Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	RB	SD	VB	PB	AP
RB	0.947	0.783	0.388	0.885				
SD	0.854	0.749	0.276	0.475	0.865			
VB	0.941	0.729	0.316	0.548	0.525	0.854		
PB	0.902	0.873	0.388	0.623	0.444	0.519	0.934	
AP	0.915	0.729	0.316	0.501	0.490	0.562	0.528	0.854

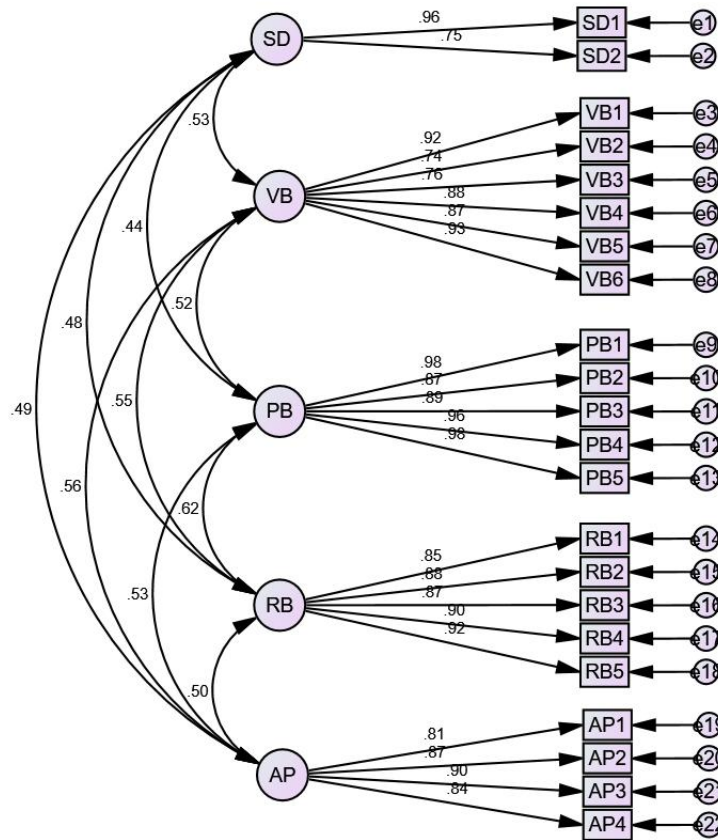
4.5 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The fitness of the model has been checked by using the confirmatory factor analysis the results of which can be viewed in table 5. These results make it clear that the observed values are in accordance with the threshold values, thus the model is fit for analysis (Hameed, Nadeem, Azeem, Aljumah, & Adeyemi, 2018; Ul-Hameed, Mohammad, & Shahar, 2018).

Table 6: Model Fit Indices

CFA Indicators	CMIN/DF	GFI	IFI	CFI	RMSEA
Threshold Value	≤ 3	≥ 0.80	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≤ 0.08
Observed Value	2.602	0.888	0.965	0.965	0.064

Figure 2: CFA



4.6 Structural Equation Modeling

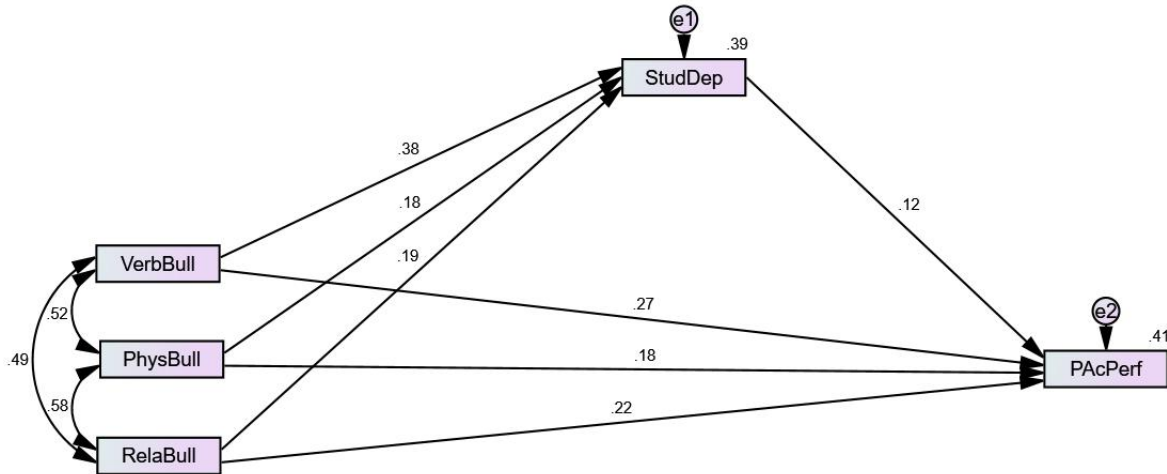
According to the results of structure equation modeling shown in table 6, it is evident that all the independent variables have significant and negative impact on the dependent variable of the study. In other words, with the increase in one unit of physical, verbal and relational bullying, the academic performance of the students will be decreased by 18.4%, 26.7% and 21.9% respectively. In addition to this, the mediating role of depression has also been found as significant in all three relationships.

Table 7: Structural Equation Modeling

Total effect	RelaBull	PhysBull	VerbBull	StudDep
StudDep	.187**	.179**	.379**	.000
PAcPerf	.241**	.205**	.314*	.122**
Direct Effect	RelaBull	PhysBull	VerbBull	StudDep
StudDep	.187**	.179**	.379**	.000
PAcPerf	.219**	.184**	.267**	.122**
Indirect Effect	RelaBull	PhysBull	VerbBull	StudDep

StudDep	.000	.000	.000	.000
PAcPerf	.023**	.022**	.046**	.000

Figure 3: SEM



5 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

The current study was designed with the aim to explore and investigate the impact of three types of school bullying i.e. physical, verbal and relational bullying on the perceived academic performance of the students of universities in Thailand along with the mediating role of depression in the students. The literature was reviewed and thus various hypotheses were developed. The first three hypotheses were regarding the significant impact of three types of bullying i.e. physical, verbal and relational bullying on the academic performance of the students. The results have shown this relationship as significant and thus these hypotheses have been accepted as a result. These results have been consistent with the studies conducted in the past (Albuhairan et al., 2017; Mundy et al., 2017; Zequinão et al., 2017). When the bullies in different educational institutions treat the other students and fellows rudely and bully them, this makes the victims scared and feared from the bullies. In this condition, they are unable to fully concentrate on their studies properly leading towards the decline in their perceived academic performance. The next hypotheses were regarding the mediating impact of depression in students and the results have also shown these hypotheses as true. These results can also be found in the previous literature (da Silva et al., 2020; Zhou, Liu, Niu, Sun, & Fan, 2017). The bullying action of the bullies directly impact the mental health of the victims due to which it becomes difficult for them to give attention to their studies.

5.2 Conclusion

As the results of the study have shown that the impact of school bullying on the academic performance of the students is significant and the mediating role of depression is also significant, the conclusion that can be made on the basis of the results obtained through the analysis of the collected data is that the university administration and management of Thailand universities must give attention and made appropriate policies and regulations in order to control bullying in the educational institutes. This will not only improve the mental health of the bullying victims but it will also help them improve their academic performance by giving proper attention to studies without the fear of being bullied again.

5.3 Implications and Limitations

The most crucial implication of the current study is for the university management of the universities of Thailand. These universities can take assistance and guidance from this study in order to give attention and made appropriate policies and regulations in order to control bullying in the educational institutes. This will not only improve the mental health of the bullying victims but it will also help them improve their academic performance by giving proper attention to studies without the fear of being bullied again. This study will assist them in understanding all these aspects in relation with one another. Moreover, the theoretical implication is that the researchers might use the contents of this study for further research in the same area.

The researchers are recommended to consider more types of bullying in their studies. They are also suggested to use other dimensions of mental health also because mental health is the most important.

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