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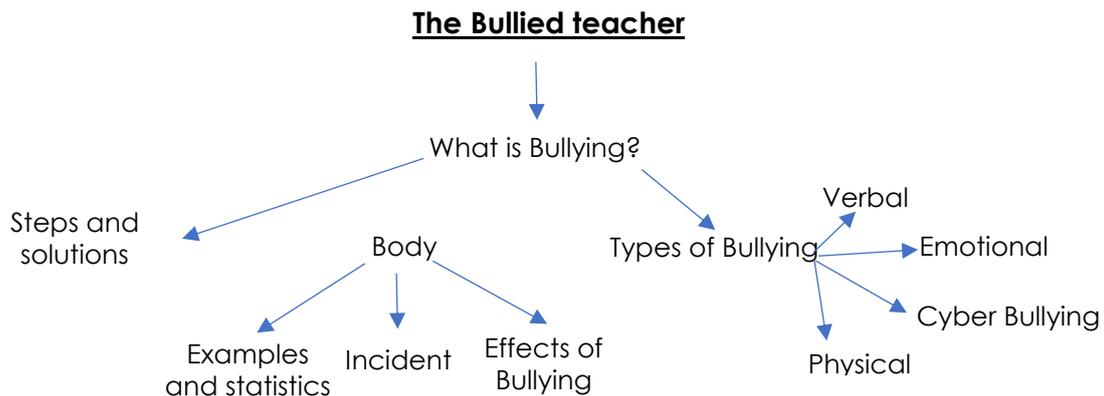
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BPT1501 - Assignment 2 – Case Study

Topic – The Bullied teacher

1. Mind Map



2. Article

SAN JOSE — Eagerly anticipating her English students delving into “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone,” Maimona Afzal Berta arrived early to school Sept. 11. Her classroom walls at Fischer Middle School depicted a London skyline; soon the room would also include the famous Platform 9¾, a Hogwarts sorting hat and hanging replicas of floating candles. But when she walked in she was stunned by a hateful reality. Anti-Muslim slurs and obscenities were scrawled on her classroom’s windows and door. Spray-painted graffiti also defaced other rooms and rooftop air-conditioning units at the San Jose campus. “It was devastating,” the special-education teacher said. “I felt completely targeted, and not even safe in a place I consider home.” The latest attack came after Fischer recorded multiple instances of harassment, with students making derogatory comments and threatening gestures during the spring semester at Berta, a classroom aide and an after-school supervisor, all women who wear a hijab, the Muslim head scarf. Berta — who has counted 15 incidents beginning in January — has filed a grievance and a formal complaint with the Alum Rock Union School District. Berta’s experience reflects the rising backlash against Muslims with schools mirroring what’s happening around the country, educators say. The FBI reported crimes against Muslims rose 67 percent in 2015, and 27 percent in 2016. Among the Southern Poverty Law Centre’s tally of reported harassment and intimidation in the first 10 days of the Trump administration, 37 percent were reported at K-12 or university campuses. Berta has taught for five years, but this is the first year she has encountered any sort of harassment, she said. With a president quick to deride critics and blame Muslims and immigrants, the White House example “creates a lot of chaos that is unnecessary,” said Fischer Principal Imee Almazan, “when you have a leader of country who is saying what he is saying.” The unceasing bullying at Fischer in East San Jose also reflects the challenge facing campuses, even those run by well-meaning adults. The school’s walls feature images and quotes from a panoply of civil-rights leaders, from Filipino founders of the United Farm Workers Union, to Pakistani girls’ advocate Malala Yousafzai and author and activist Maya Angelou. So far, several students have been disciplined with suspensions from lunch or school and one has been transferred to another school. But authorities haven’t identified any graffiti suspects. Fischer does not have surveillance cameras. “At the Alum Rock Union School District, we will never tolerate any behaviour that makes either our students or team members feel marginalized,” Superintendent Hilaria Bauer wrote Monday in a statement. She and other officials have expressed sympathy for Berta and outrage at the harassment. Administrators have spent hours investigating, counselling and discussing standards of behaviour in response to the incidents. Yet Berta, who grew up in East San Jose, now feels so insecure that her husband, also a Fischer teacher, escorts her to class every morning. Students have kicked her classroom door and yelled “shoot her,” labelled her a terrorist, accused her of working with ISIS and shouted to others that she was going to “kill us all.” Almazan said that two other victims, who no longer work at Fischer, confirmed they also had been bullied but had not reported it at the time. They could not be reached for comment. In response, Fischer has held assemblies on bullying, workshops on stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslims, and exercises in character-building. The school plans to train teachers Tuesday in an interactive curriculum offered by the Islamic Network Group. Berta, however, wants more timely and effective responses. She was incensed that after an Oct. 2 incident — when she heard banging on her door and windows and someone yelled “shoot her” — one student was given lunch detention, then 10 days later suspended for two days. The incident was reported to

police and the vice principal spent more than a day investigating, Almazan said. "Students will get lunch detention for wearing coloured shirts or not wearing their lanyard," said the 23-year-old Berta, who graduated from college at 18. "To put saying 'shoot her' in the same category as a dress code violation didn't make any sense to me." As for the delay in dealing with harassers, Almazan said investigation takes time. After the spring incidents the staff decided to craft some lesson plans to promote tolerance, but had to hold off because of state testing. In October, some response lagged because top Alum Rock district administrators were attending a labour-negotiations training in Massachusetts. But delayed response is not considered the best practice in dealing with bullying. "If a kid doesn't get pulled out immediately for egregious behaviour, word gets out fast," said Randy Barber, a Fischer music teacher and union representative. He blames large class sizes, up to 37 students in some cases, that allows behaviour to get out of hand. "You literally don't have a ratio of enough grownups to kids to keep a steady handle" on campus, Barber said. Almazan said she's been working on improving school culture. But that, she said, takes time. Establishing a norm that doesn't tolerate harassment is key, said Anne Ehresman, executive director of Project Cornerstone, a YMCA program that helps support students to live healthily and behave responsibly. With effective training, kids reinforce the culture and don't remain bystanders to bullying. This month, a student across the quad repeatedly gestured as if he were shooting a gun at Berta. In response, the district transferred him to another school and notified police, but somehow any follow-up fell through. "I'm tired of the lip service. You can't keep telling people that you care and want to stop hate," Berta said, "and yet you don't follow through with actions." She has turned down district offers to transfer her to another school. "That's not solving the problem," she said. "I feel personally responsible so that this doesn't happen to anyone else. No one should have to experience this. It's been terrible to go through, the level of anxiety I get walking onto campus."

Noguchi S (2017) **San Jose: Muslim teacher wearing head scarf repeatedly bullied by students**

Accessed from <https://www.mercurynews.com/2017/11/24/san-jose-muslim-teacher-wearing-head-scarf-repeatedly-bullied-by-students/> on 17/02/2018.

3. Summary and Solutions

We often hear about students being bullied by other students and sometimes even teachers. Various clubs and organisations have been formed all over the world to prevent such acts. But what happens when the tables are turned, and it is the teacher who is now bullied? Teachers can be bullied by any number of sources, namely administration, parents, colleagues, but more than often their own students.

Bullying is defined as an act of one person using superior strength or influence to intimidate another. It can take on various forms.

- Physical (Bodily harm or Vandalism)
- Emotional (behaviour that may result in psychological trauma)
- Verbal (name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks.)
- Cyber Bullying (Social media, email etc)

Students bullying teachers happens quite often. In 2005 a survey conducted by Canadian teacher's federation revealed that 35% of teachers had witnessed students physically assaulting or intimidating a teacher. The same study found 60% of teachers had seen a student verbally abusing a teacher at a level "more than just an angry exchange." (Robert Smol,2008). Obscene remarks, verbal threats and physical intimidation have become commonplace habits for student bullies. The presence of such students not only demeans the teacher as a person but also undermines their ability to carry out lessons by their misbehaviour and by encouraging others to do the same. Extreme cases have occurred where teachers have been physically abused, verbally harassed and appearances openly mocked at. Bullying of teachers has caused many teachers to become disheartened and in some cases has been linked to depression and anxiety. In some very rare cases teachers are afraid to even enter the classroom and require escorts after being threatened by bullies.

In the above article the teacher of an Islamic background had undergone various forms of harassment. From derogatory remarks, to having anti Muslim sentiments painted on her wall. The article sheds light on her plight as a teacher but also highlights the various issues that teachers like her face daily. The article also brings into question the effectiveness of administration and the ineffectiveness of the punishment being given. School administration has taken steps to ensure the safety of their teachers, however some may feel that such steps are inadequate. For example, an incident was reported by the teacher, steps were taken but no follow up occurred. Another example of poor administration, is many teachers think twice before reporting such incidents for fear of being victimised by the school body and having their authority brought into question. Such incidents have left teachers feeling humiliated and powerless. The punishments do not fit the crime. It is suggested by the teacher mentioned in the article that punishments given are mere "slaps on the wrist" and the student does not fully comprehend the consequences of their actions.

There are various steps and solutions that may help curb the problem of bullying.

1. Re-evaluate your classroom management. Explain acceptable and non-acceptable classroom behaviour and state class rules in positive terms.
2. Sit down with the troubled student and ask them some helpful questions to gain insight on their behaviour. Do not confront the bully in the presence of other students. Most often than not, bullies come from troubled backgrounds. This leads them to act out in varying ways. By asking questions such as: "What did you do? What did you want to achieve? Etc. We hopefully make the bully accept responsibility for their behaviour and in turn realise all actions have consequences.
3. Conducting classroom activities, workshops and specialised assemblies. By creating lessons, activities and exercises centred around bullying it may help the bully identify and rectify the behaviour in question.
4. Having an open line of communication with parents. Many parents play active roles in their children's lives. Establishing a line of communication can help combat bullying.
5. Setting an example of model behaviour. "Children are great imitators. So, give them something great to imitate." -Anonymous

In conclusion the life of a teacher is not an easy one. It is a road filled with many ups and downs. There are times when we will feel disheartened and depressed, but we should also remember all the good that comes from such a noble profession. We can shape and mould young minds to become the best they can be.

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