

# Influence of Social and Emotional Competencies on Bullying among Grade Six Pupils: Evidence from Consuelo Elementary School

\*Digal, Mary Sheila C., \*Cayogyog, Alvin O., Digal, Charles Jr. L., Pareja Alma Mae C., Ortiliano, Daniel Lawrence., & Daclan, Robert Joy.

Agusan del Sur State College of Agriculture and Technology

\*Corresponding Author

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## ABSTRACT

This study used a correlation research design to determine the factors affecting bullying among Grade Six pupils in Consuelo Elementary School. The respondents were 61 grade six students. A validated questionnaire and the Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ) were employed to measure students' social-emotional competence. The results demonstrated that social-emotional learning (SEL) is an effective and significant component in comprehensive bullying prevention interventions, aligning with findings that SEL interventions can improve student skills, reduce problem behaviors, and increase academic achievement. Notably, the relational abilities of Grade 6 pupils emerged as the strongest predictor of bullying, indicating that high levels of SEL can effectively reduce bullying incidents in educational settings. To address this issue, it is recommended that educational institutions prioritize comprehensive SEL programs tailored to students' needs from an early age. Furthermore, educators and school administrators should receive training in SEL strategies to effectively support students, and pupils should actively develop social and emotional competencies to better cope with everyday challenges. Future research should explore the long-term effects of SEL interventions on bullying prevention and identify best practices for implementation across diverse educational settings.

**Keywords:** Social Emotional Learning; Bullying; Self-awareness; Relationship Skills; Social awareness.

## INTRODUCTION

**Bullying: A Persistent Threat to School Safety and Student Well-Being.** It is a pernicious form of violence that plagues school environments, inflicting harm on young minds and compromising their emotional, social, and academic development (Vivolo et al., 2011). From relentless taunting and physical intimidation to the insidious realm of cyberbullying, this pervasive issue continues to cast a dark shadow over educational institutions worldwide (UNESCO, 2019).

On a global scale, bullying remains a pressing concern, with estimates suggesting that one in three students experience bullying at some point (UNESCO, 2019). It is a widespread issue across countries, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds, necessitating comprehensive interventions and policies. Cyberbullying has emerged as a significant threat, transcending geographical boundaries and making it challenging to regulate and monitor online harassment. The long-lasting effects of bullying, such as mental health issues, low self-esteem, and decreased academic performance, can have far-reaching consequences on the overall well-being and prospects of individuals worldwide.

In the Philippines, a nation grappling with its own set of challenges, the prevalence of bullying is alarming, with reports indicating that as many as one in four students have been victimized (DepEd, 2020). Despite

efforts to address bullying, incidents continue to occur in schools across the country, highlighting the need for more effective prevention and intervention strategies (Baliad et al., 2020; Taguibao et al., 2020). Cyberbullying has become increasingly prevalent, with the widespread use of social media and mobile devices among Filipino youth, posing unique challenges for educators and policymakers (Kowalski et al., 2014). Bullying can exacerbate existing socioeconomic disparities, as students from underprivileged backgrounds may be more vulnerable to victimization and have limited access to support resources (Elgar et al., 2013).

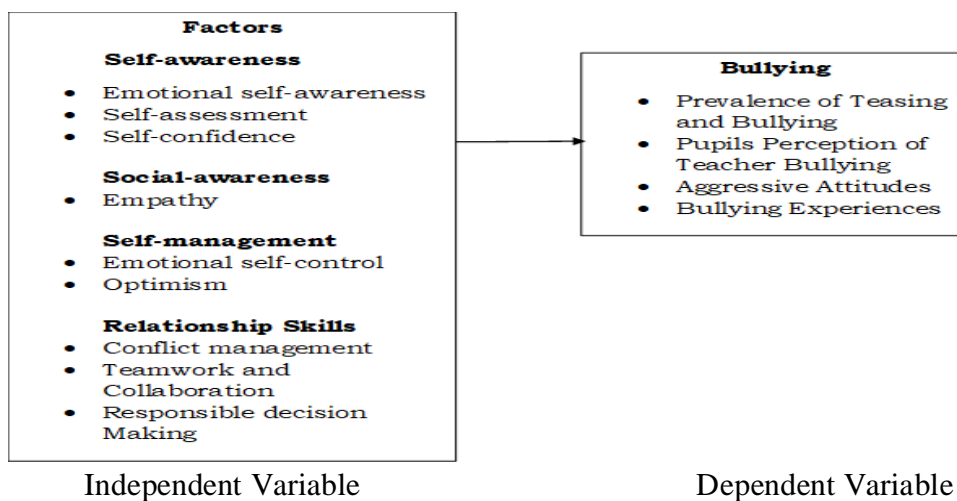
Locally, the problem persists at Consuelo Elementary School, where incidents of physical, verbal, and relational bullying have been reported, disrupting the learning environment and creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity (school records). The school has observed a potential link between bullying and academic underperformance, as well as increased absenteeism among affected students (school data). Limited resources and training for educators and staff members may hinder the effective implementation of bullying prevention and intervention strategies within the school setting (school administration reports).

Despite numerous efforts to combat this issue, a research gap persists in bridging the theoretical understanding of social-emotional learning (SEL) interventions and their practical implementation within school settings (Durlak et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012). This study aims to address this gap by examining the effectiveness of SEL interventions in mitigating bullying among grade six pupils at Consuelo Elementary School.

The urgency and necessity of this research cannot be overstated. Bullying has far-reaching consequences, ranging from diminished self-esteem and academic performance to increased risk of mental health issues and substance abuse (Gradinarui & Diac, 2022). By exploring innovative approaches to combat this pervasive problem, this study holds the potential to inform educational policies and practices, ultimately creating safer and more inclusive learning environments for students.

Anchored in the social-emotional learning (SEL) theory (Elias et al., 1997), this study examines the intentional development of competencies such as self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills. These competencies are believed to equip individuals with the necessary tools to navigate social challenges, including bullying while fostering academic, professional, and personal growth.

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between the independent variables (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills) and the dependent variable (bullying). It serves as a visual representation of the study's hypothesis, guiding the investigation and analysis of the findings.



In light of these pressing concerns, this research aims to answer the following questions: What are the levels of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills among grade six pupils at Consuelo Elementary School? What are the levels of bullying prevalence, perceived teacher bullying,

aggressive attitudes, and bullying experiences among grade six pupils at Consuelo Elementary School? Is there a significant relationship between self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and bullying among grade six pupils at Consuelo Elementary School? Is there a significant influence of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills on bullying among grade six pupils at Consuelo Elementary School?

The null hypotheses that were analyzed at 0.05 level of significance are the following:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the following factors and bullying among grade six pupils in Consuelo Elementary School, and H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant influence between the following factors on bullying among grade six pupils in Consuelo Elementary School.

By addressing these questions, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on bullying prevention and intervention strategies, ultimately paving the way for a safer and more nurturing educational environment for all students.

## METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a correlation research design. A correlational research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. A correlation reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two (or more) variables. The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative (Bahndari, 2023). Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to understand and manage life tasks such as cognitive learning. Forming relationships, and the flexibility to adapt to the challenges and expectations of a complex society (Elias et al., 1997). It is the intentional development of competencies such as self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills. People with strong social-emotional skills can better cope with everyday challenges like bullying and benefit academically, professionally, and socially.

The researchers used a universal sampling technique. Universal sampling refers to a method of discretization that allows for the approximation of integral norms of functions from a collection of subspaces. The study employed universal sampling where not all the people in the population have the same probability of being included in the sample and for each one of them, the probability of being selected is unknown (Richard & Margaret, 1990). The universal sampling technique was used where all the members of the two groups were taken as the respondents. It involves selecting several points from a given subspace to represent the integral norm of that subspace.

The respondents of this study were the sixty-one (61) grade six students of Consuelo Elementary School. The said school is located in Purok 5, Consuelo, Bunawan, Agusan Del Sur, Philippines. It's situated near to the Consuelo Barangay Hall. This school falls under the jurisdiction of the Bunawan municipality, in the Caraga region, and the Agusan Del Sur province.

We will follow a systematic data-gathering procedure to ensure the accuracy, rigor, and validity of the collected quantitative data. We first secure formal permission from the appropriate authorities of Consuelo Elementary School. After that, we will administer the survey questionnaire to the participants.

The researchers utilized a validated questionnaire adopted from Cornell, D., et.al (2015) entitled "Technical Report of the Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey: 2017 Results for 6th–8th Grade Students and School Staff" and Lindsay M. Lamb (2016) entitled "Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills", and an instrument Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ) developed by Zhou & Ee (2012), that was answered by the respondents. The instrument was employed to measure the students' social-emotional

competence of the students. It was adopted because of its applicability throughout various languages and settings applied in the study.

To establish the validity and reliability of the study's conclusions, we ensured they were trustworthy. The instruments that will be utilized are validated profoundly by the set of validators who are experts in the field of research. The data that will be collected will go through a thorough analysis. The researchers also ensure the presence of citations from other reputable sources will be indicated for the credibility and reliability of this paper.

The researchers observe aptly fairness and ensure that the objectives will be clear to the respondents. The data and information gathered from the respondents will be held with utmost confidentiality and anonymity. The respondents of the study will always be treated well and with respect. The area of the gathering of the data will be a safe environment for the respondents and is free from distraction.

Ensuing research ethics and rules will also be observed by the researchers to avoid future problems relative to plagiarism, intellectual dishonesty, and other issues that may void the validity and accuracy of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. The Level of Factors Affecting Bullying of Grade VI Pupils in Consuelo Elementary School

Factors	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Interpretation
<b>Self-awareness</b>			
Emotional Self-awareness	3.03	0.873	High
Self-assessment	3.24	0.774	Very High
Self -confidence	3.26	0.812	Very High
Overall weighted Mean	3.18	0.820	High
<b>Social awareness</b>			
Empathy	3.34	0.733	Very High
<b>Self-management</b>			
Emotional Self-control	3.04	0.910	Very High
Optimism	3.37	0.699	Very High
Overall Weighted Mean	3.26	0.805	Very High
<b>Relational Skills</b>			
Conflict Management	3.14	0.830	High
Teamwork and Collaboration	3.34	0.760	Very High
Responsible Decision making	3.37	0.796	Very High
Overall Weighted Mean	3.28	0.795	Very High

*1.00 – 1.75 = Very low, 1.76 – 2.50 = Low, 2.51 – 3.25 = High, 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High*

### Result

Table 1 presents the weighted means, standard deviations, and descriptive interpretations of the respondents'

self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relational skills levels among grade 6 pupils in Consuelo Elementary School. The overall weighted mean (WM = 3.18) indicates a high level of self-awareness among the respondents. Specifically, they demonstrated high emotional self-awareness (WM = 3.03; SD = 0.873), self-assessment (WM = 3.24; SD = 0.774), and self-confidence (WM = 3.26; SD = 0.812). Regarding social awareness, the respondents exhibited a very high level (WM = 3.34), particularly regarding empathy (WM = 3.34; SD = 0.733).

The respondents also displayed a very high level of self-management (WM = 3.26). They reported high emotional self-control (WM = 3.04; SD = 0.910) and very high optimism (WM = 3.37; SD = 0.699). Furthermore, the overall weighted mean (WM = 3.28) suggests that the respondents possess very high levels of relational skills. Specifically, they demonstrated high conflict management skills (WM = 3.14; SD = 0.830), and very high levels of teamwork and collaboration (WM = 3.34; SD = 0.760), as well as responsible decision-making (WM = 3.37; SD = 0.796).

## Discussion

The findings of this study align with previous research highlighting the significance of social and emotional learning (SEL) in promoting students' socioemotional competence (Weissberg et al., 2015). The high levels of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relational skills observed among the respondents suggest that they possess the necessary skills to navigate social interactions effectively and cope with challenges, including bullying (Elias et al., 1997).

The high levels of self-awareness exhibited by the respondents indicate their ability to recognize and understand their emotions, strengths, and weaknesses. This self-knowledge is crucial for managing emotions, building self-confidence, and making responsible decisions (Brackett et al., 2019).

Moreover, the respondents' very high levels of social awareness, particularly empathy, suggest that they possess the ability to understand and consider others' perspectives and emotions. This competency is essential for building positive relationships, resolving conflicts, and promoting a supportive school climate (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2022).

The respondents' very high levels of self-management, emotional self-control, and optimism further underscore their capacity to regulate their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively. These skills are crucial for managing stress, persevering through challenges, and maintaining a positive outlook, all of which contribute to academic and personal success (Durlak et al., 2011).

Additionally, the respondents' very high levels of relational skills, including conflict management, teamwork and collaboration, and responsible decision-making, highlight their ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships, work effectively with others, and make constructive choices (Ee et al., 2014; Suratno et al., 2019). These competencies are vital for fostering a positive school environment and mitigating bullying incidents.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of integrating SEL interventions into educational settings to equip students with the necessary socioemotional competencies to navigate the challenges they face, including bullying. By fostering self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relational skills, schools can create a supportive environment that empowers students to engage in constructive social interactions and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2022).

Future research should further explore the long-term effects of SEL interventions on bullying prevention and identify best practices for implementing such programs across diverse educational settings. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the impact of SEL interventions on academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being would provide valuable insights for policymakers and educators.

Table 2. The Level of Bullying of Grade VI Pupils of Consuelo Elementary School

Bullying	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Interpretation
Prevalence of teasing and bullying	1.99	0.913	Low
Pupils' perception of teacher bullying	1.51	0.568	Very low
Aggressive attitudes	1.52	0.513	Very low
Bullying Experiences	1.71	0.618	Very low
Overall Weighted Mean	1.68	0.653	Very low

$1.0 - 1.75 = \text{Very low}$ ,  $1.76 - 2.50 = \text{Low}$ ,  $2.51 - 3.25 = \text{High}$ ,  $3.26 - 4.00 = \text{Very High}$

## Results

Table 2 presents the weighted means, standard deviations, and descriptive interpretations of the respondents' levels of bullying, including the prevalence of teasing and bullying, pupils' perception of teacher bullying, aggressive attitudes, and bullying experiences among grade 6 pupils at Consuelo Elementary School.

The overall weighted mean (WM = 1.68) indicates a very low level of bullying among the respondents. Specifically, the prevalence of teasing and bullying was low (WM = 1.99; SD = 0.913), while pupils' perception of teacher bullying (WM = 1.51; SD = 0.568), aggressive attitudes (WM = 1.52; SD = 0.513), and bullying experiences (WM = 1.71; SD = 0.618) were all at very low levels.

## Discussion

The findings suggest that bullying incidents at Consuelo Elementary School are relatively infrequent, which aligns with previous research highlighting the positive impact of social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions on reducing problem behaviors, including bullying (Durlak et al., 2011; Farrington et al., 2021).

The low prevalence of teasing and bullying among the respondents may be attributed to their well-developed socioemotional competencies, as evidenced by the high levels of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relational skills reported in Table 1. These competencies equip students with the necessary skills to navigate social interactions effectively, resolve conflicts constructively, and empathize with others, thereby mitigating the risk of engaging in bullying behaviors (Brackett et al., 2019; CASEL, 2022).

Furthermore, the very low levels of pupils' perception of teacher bullying and aggressive attitudes among the respondents suggest a positive school climate and a culture of respect and non-violence. This environment, fostered by SEL interventions, can contribute to reducing bullying incidents and promoting healthy relationships among students and educators (Durlak et al., 2011; Farrington et al., 2021).

The very low level of bullying experiences reported by the respondents is a promising indicator of the effectiveness of SEL interventions in protecting students from victimization. As students develop social and emotional competencies, they become more resilient and better equipped to cope with challenging situations, reducing their vulnerability to bullying (Farrington et al., 2021).

Overall, these findings underscore the potential of SEL interventions in creating a positive and inclusive school climate, where students feel safe, respected, and empowered to engage in constructive social interactions. By addressing the root causes of bullying through the development of socioemotional competencies, schools can proactively prevent bullying incidents and foster a supportive learning environment that promotes the well-being and academic success of all students.

However, it is important to note that while the findings are encouraging, continued efforts and vigilance are necessary to sustain a bullying-free school environment. Regular monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of SEL interventions should be undertaken to ensure their effectiveness and relevance in addressing the evolving needs of the student population.

Table 3. The Correlation between the Identified Factors and the Level of Bullying

Indicators	Level of Bullying		
	<i>r</i>	p-value	Remark
Self-awareness	0.552	<0.001	Significant
Social awareness	0.607	<0.001	Significant
Self-management	0.359	0.005	Significant
Relationship skills	0.781	<0.001	Significant

\*Significant at 0.05 level of significance

## Results

Table 3 presents Spearman's rho correlation coefficients and corresponding p-values to assess the relationship between the identified factors (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills) and the level of bullying among Grade 6 pupils at Consuelo Elementary School.

The results indicate a significant positive relationship between self-awareness and bullying ( $r = 0.552$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), social awareness and bullying ( $r = 0.607$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), self-management and bullying ( $r = 0.359$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), and relationship skills and bullying ( $r = 0.781$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## Discussion

The positive correlations observed in Table 3 suggest that higher levels of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills are associated with higher levels of bullying among the Grade 6 pupils at Consuelo Elementary School. These findings contradict the existing literature, which suggests that strong social and emotional competencies are protective factors against bullying (Durlak et al., 2011; Farrington et al., 2021).

One possible explanation for this unexpected result could be related to the specific measures or scales used to assess bullying in this study. Some researchers have raised concerns about the potential limitations of self-report measures in accurately capturing bullying behaviors, as students may underreport or misinterpret certain experiences (Cornell & Bradshaw, 2015). Additionally, the wording or framing of the bullying-related questions could have influenced the responses, leading to potential biases or misunderstandings.

Another plausible interpretation could be that students with higher social and emotional competencies might be more attuned to and better able to recognize and report instances of bullying, resulting in higher reported levels compared to their peers with lower competencies. This heightened awareness and sensitivity to bullying behaviors could potentially explain the positive correlations observed (Espelage et al., 2016).

Furthermore, it is essential to consider the complex nature of bullying and the potential interplay of various individual, social, and environmental factors. While social and emotional competencies are crucial protective

factors, they may not be sufficient in isolation to prevent bullying incidents, particularly in the presence of other risk factors or enabling environments (Farrington et al., 2021).

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of these findings, future research should employ a multi-method approach, combining self-report measures with observational data, peer reports, and teacher evaluations. Additionally, qualitative investigations exploring students' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of bullying could provide valuable insights into the observed correlations.

Despite the unexpected findings, the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions in promoting a positive school climate and addressing bullying should not be underestimated. Continued efforts to foster self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills among students are crucial for their overall well-being and academic success (CASEL, 2022).

**Table 4: Significant Influence of the Identified Factors on Bullying among Grade Six Pupils in Consuelo Elementary School**

1. Indicators	Level of Bullying		
	Estimate	p-value	Remark
<b>Coefficient</b>	-0.412	0.414	Not Significant
<b>Self-awareness</b>	-0.202	0.336	Not Significant
<b>Social awareness</b>	0.142	0.257	Not Significant
<b>Self-management</b>	0.178	0.362	Not Significant
<b>Relationship skills</b>	1.028	< .001	Significant

## Results

Table 4 presents the results of the regression analysis, examining the influence of the identified factors (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills) on the level of bullying among Grade 6 pupils at Consuelo Elementary School.

The findings indicate no significant influence of self-awareness (estimate = -0.202,  $p = 0.336$ ), social awareness (estimate = 0.142,  $p = 0.257$ ), and self-management (estimate = 0.178,  $p = 0.362$ ) on the level of bullying experienced by the respondents.

However, a significant positive influence of relationship skills (estimate = 1.028,  $p < 0.001$ ) on the level of bullying was observed. The regression equation suggests that a 1% increase in the level of relationship skills is associated with a 1.028% increase in the level of bullying experienced by the Grade 6 pupils.

## Discussion

The non-significant influence of self-awareness, social awareness, and self-management on bullying levels contradicts existing literature, which suggests that these social and emotional competencies are protective factors against bullying (Durlak et al., 2011; Farrington et al., 2021). This unexpected finding could be attributed to several factors, such as measurement limitations, contextual variables, or the interplay of other risk factors not accounted for in this study.

The significant positive influence of relationship skills on bullying levels is particularly noteworthy and warrants further investigation. One potential explanation for this finding could be that students with higher



levels of relationship skills may be more attuned to and better able to recognize and report instances of bullying, leading to higher reported levels (Espelage et al., 2016). Additionally, the specific components or subscales of relationship skills measured in this study might provide insights into this counterintuitive result.

Another plausible interpretation could be that relationship skills alone might not be sufficient to mitigate bullying behaviors in the absence of other social and emotional competencies. A balanced development of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills is likely necessary to create a holistic protective barrier against bullying (CASEL, 2022).

Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the complex nature of bullying and the potential influence of various individual, social, and environmental factors not accounted for in this study. While social and emotional competencies play a vital role, they may not be sufficient in isolation to prevent bullying incidents, particularly in the presence of other enabling or risk factors (Farrington et al., 2021).

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of these findings, future research should employ a multi-method approach, combining self-report measures with observational data, peer reports, and teacher evaluations. Additionally, qualitative investigations exploring students' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of bullying could provide valuable insights into the observed relationships.

Despite the unexpected findings, the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions in promoting a positive school climate and addressing bullying should not be underestimated. Continued efforts to foster a balanced development of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills among students are crucial for their overall well-being and academic success (CASEL, 2022).

## **CONCLUSION**

The study findings suggest a generally positive school climate at Consuelo Elementary School, with high levels of social and emotional competencies among Grade 6 pupils and low reported levels of bullying incidents. However, the unexpected positive correlations and significant influence of relationship skills on bullying levels contradict existing literature and warrant further investigation. Moreover, while the development of social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies is crucial for promoting a positive school environment and reducing bullying, these findings highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of bullying. Social and emotional competencies alone may not be sufficient to mitigate bullying behaviors, as various individual, social, and environmental factors can interplay and influence the dynamics of bullying.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results and conclusion of the study recommended for the implementation of a comprehensive and balanced SEL program that fosters the development of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills among students. A holistic approach to SEL is essential to equip students with the necessary competencies to navigate social interactions and build resilience against bullying. It may help to conduct further research using a multi-method approach, combining self-report measures with observational data, peer reports, and teacher evaluations. Qualitative investigations exploring students' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of bullying could provide valuable insights into the observed relationships. It is also suggested to regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of SEL interventions and adapt them to address the evolving needs of the student population. Continuous improvement and tailoring of the programs are crucial to ensure their relevance and impact on bullying prevention. The schools may also consider implementing school-wide policies and initiatives to create a positive and inclusive school climate that promotes respect, empathy, and non-violence. This could include awareness campaigns, peer support programs, and clear reporting and response protocols for bullying incidents. The schools may involve stakeholders, including parents, teachers, school administrators, and community members, in the development and implementation of bullying prevention strategies. A collaborative approach can foster a shared

understanding and commitment to creating a safe and supportive learning environment. Professional development opportunities for teachers and staff may be provided to enhance their knowledge and skills in identifying, responding to, and preventing bullying incidents. Equipping educators with the necessary tools and resources is crucial for creating a supportive and responsive school environment. A mechanism may be established to encourage open communication and dialogue with students to understand their perspectives and experiences related to bullying. This can help identify potential risk factors, enabling environments, or areas that require additional support or intervention.

By implementing these recommendations and continuously evaluating and refining the approach, Consuelo Elementary School can work towards creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment that empowers students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

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