STUDENTS MAY BE HELD LIABLE UNDER THE ANTI-BULLYING LAW
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Nowadays, there is a widespread use of the word “bullying”. Based on English Oxford Living Dictionaries, bully means the use of superior strength or influence to intimidate someone, typically to force them to do something.\(^1\) Before, the word “bullying” is used to describe abuses that a student experiences from another student. Now, people have been using the word to describe any situation wherein a person will be subjected to abuses by another.

Under Republic Act No. 10627 or the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013, bullying refers to any severe or repeated use of by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at another student.\(^2\) The bullying must have the effect of actually causing or placing the victim-student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm or damage to his property. The bullying must create a hostile environment at school for the other student, or infringe on the rights of the other student at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.\(^3\) Thus, the word “bullying” under the law involves students only whether they are from the same school or from different school. What is important is that the perpetrator and the victim are both students.

The acts of bullying under the legal sense include any unwanted physical contact between the bully and the victim like punching, pushing, shoving, kicking, slapping, tickling, headlocks, inflicting school pranks, teasing, fighting and the use of available objects as weapons.\(^4\) Also any act that causes damage to a victim’s psyche and/or emotional well-being is an act of bullying.\(^5\) Moreover, any slanderous statement or accusation that causes the victim undue emotional distress like directing foul language or profanity at the target, name-calling, tormenting and commenting negatively on victim’s looks, clothes and body, and cyber-bullying or any bullying done through the use of technology or any electronic means are also acts of bullying under the law.\(^6\) These acts

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\(^1\) [https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bully](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bully)
\(^3\) [http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2013/ra_10627_2013.html](http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2013/ra_10627_2013.html)
of bullying are not the exclusive list. Any other acts that are similar to these prohibited acts are also considered bullying provided they create a hostile environment at school for the other student, or infringe on the rights of the other student at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

To address the existence of bullying, schools prohibits the acts of: (1) bullying on school grounds; property immediately adjacent to school grounds; at school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions or programs whether on or off school grounds; at school bus stops; on school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by a school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by a school; (2) bullying at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related and through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a school if the act or acts in question create a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringe on the rights of the victim at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school; and (3) retaliation against a person who reports bullying, who provides information during an investigation of bullying, or who is a witness to or has reliable information about bullying.\(^7\) In short, acts of bullying may take place within the premises of the school or outside the school. More so, bullying may also be committed against one who reported a case of bullying as an act of retaliation. To avoid further acts of bullying, the law mandates that the schools should impose disciplinary administrative actions against a perpetrator for bullying or retaliation which is commensurate with the nature and gravity of the offense.\(^8\) Moreover, the schools, in addition to the disciplinary sanctions, may require the perpetrator to undergo a school administered rehabilitation program.\(^9\) The parents of the perpetrator are encouraged to join the rehabilitation program.\(^10\) In addition, criminal charges under the Revised Penal Code may be pursued against the perpetrator.\(^11\)

Bullying is not a joke for this is a form of abuse. It is an abuse that must be prevented and avoided because it will only cause disadvantage to both victims and the perpetrators. The victims

\(^7\) [http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2013/ra_10627_2013.html](http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2013/ra_10627_2013.html)


of bullying may be affected drastically their lives for they may take the bullying in a negative or positive way depending on how the student will be able to cope up with the unfortunate situation. In the same way, the perpetrators will be affected by their bullying especially if they will not understand why they did the bullying in the first place. Thus, both of the lives of the victims and the perpetrators will be put at stake. This is one of the many reasons why the legislators enacted the anti-bullying law.