

Violence Against Teachers Among the 50 Largest U.S. School Districts: Predictors, Consequences, and School Responses

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Byongook Moon, Ph.D.
University of Texas at San Antonio

John McCluskey, Ph.D.
Rochester Institute of Technology

Guan Saw, Ph.D.
Claremont Graduate University

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Purpose of the Research

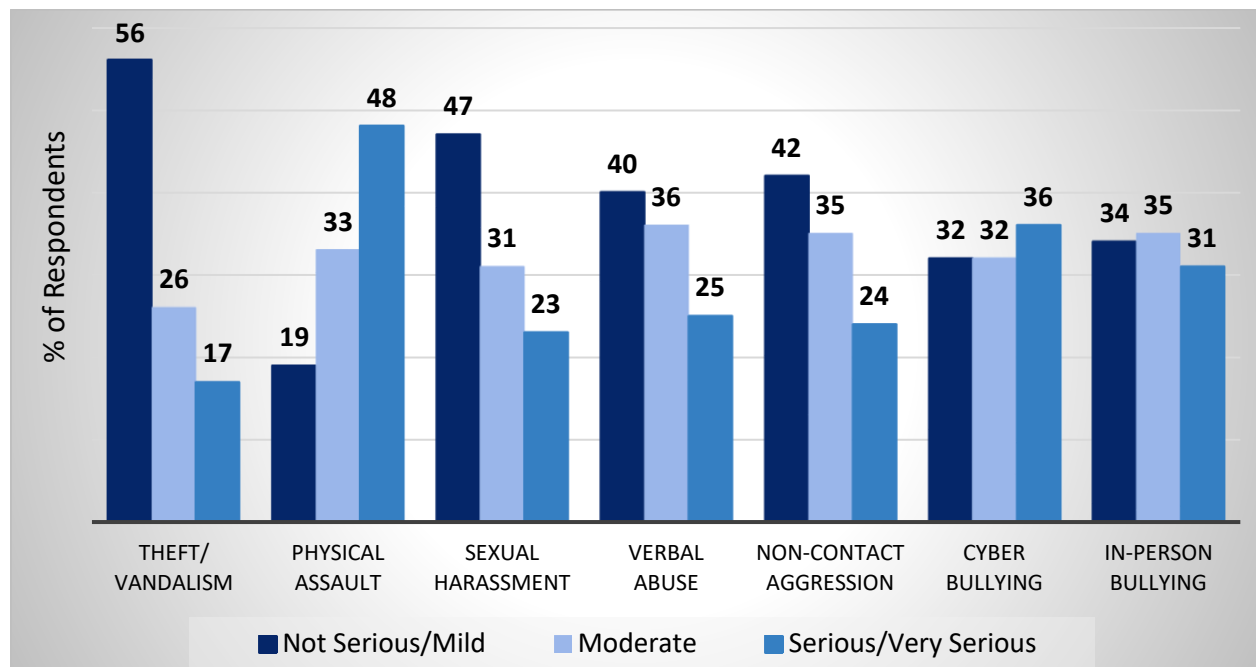
- There is a growing concern about violence toward and victimization of teachers across the United States, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. A growing number of empirical studies on violence against teachers suggest a high prevalence of teacher victimization by students at schools and negative effects on victimized teachers.
- Despite these impressions, there is no nationwide empirical study investigating the prevalence/risk factors and negative consequences of teacher victimization and how schools respond to violence against teachers after resuming in-person classes across the nation.
- To address this gap, the present two-wave longitudinal research, funded by the National Institute of Justice, has been implemented to understand the prevalence and predictors of seven different types of victimization against teachers at schools, negative effects of teacher victimization, and school responses to teacher victimization among the 50 largest U.S. school districts.
- This data brief reports findings from Wave I survey, with approximately 4,000 middle and high school teachers responding from among the 50 largest school districts across the U.S., which generate a comprehensive knowledge base about teacher victimization, and will be a resource for the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies to improve and enhance school safety, especially among teachers.

KEY FINDINGS

The severity of teacher victimization

- For each of the seven different types of victimization, victimized teachers were asked to rate the seriousness of their most recent victimization by students.
- As expected, physical assault victimization was rated as the most serious event of victimization, compared to other types of victimization by students. The findings in Figure 1 show that 48 percent of physical assault victims rated their victimization as serious or very serious, while 17 percent of victims of theft/vandalism reported their victimization as serious or very serious.
- Approximately one-fourth of victimized teachers on sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and non-physical contact aggression rated their most recent victimization as serious or very serious respectively.
- Interestingly, approximately one-third of victims of cyberbullying (36%) and traditional bullying (31%) by students reported that their victimization was serious or very serious incidents, higher than all other types of victimization (with the exception of physical assault victimization).

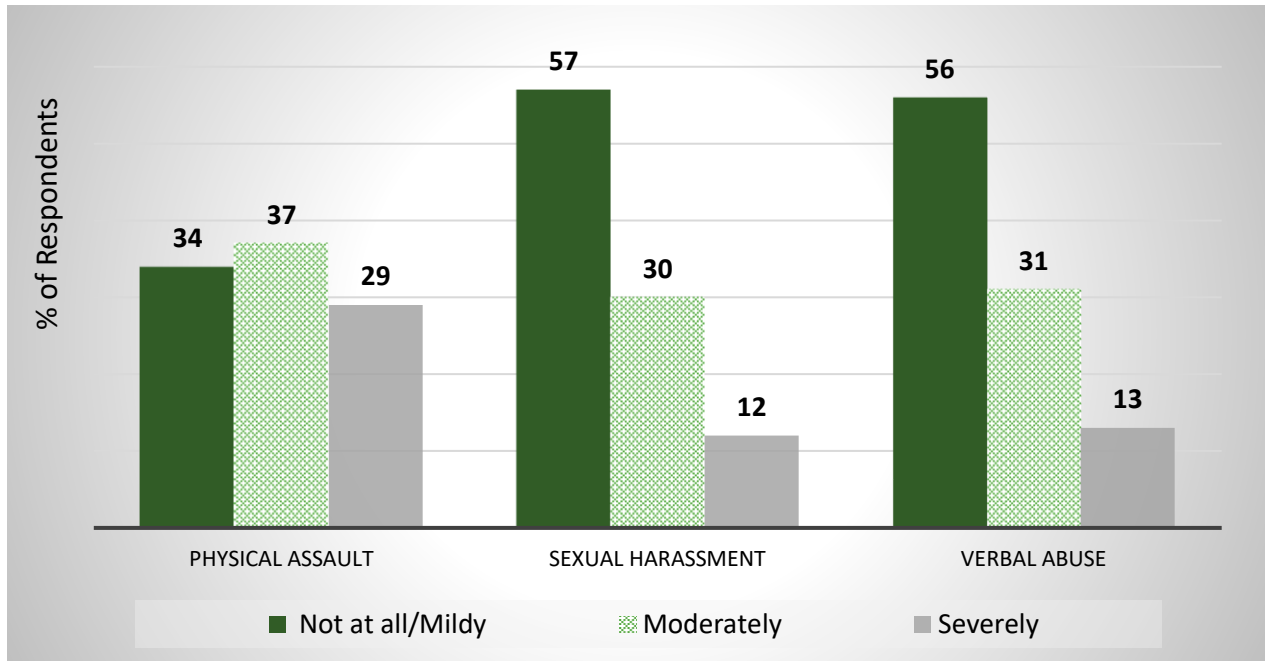
Figure 1: Severity of teacher victimization by a student(s) during the last 12 months



The impact of teacher victimization on victimized teachers’ distress

- For each of the seven different types of victimization, victimized teachers were asked how distressing it was being a victim of the most recent incident.
- The findings in Figure 2 (focusing on victimizations via physical assault, sexual harassment, and verbal abuse) show that 29 percent of physical assault victims rated the incidents severely distressing, while 37 percent of them rated their victimization moderately distressing.
- For sexual harassment, and verbal abuse victimization, 12 percent and 13 percent of victimized teachers rated their victimization experience severely distressing respectively.
- Fifty-seven percent of sexual harassment victims and 56 percent of verbal abuse victims reported that their victimization was not distressing at all or mildly distressing respectively.

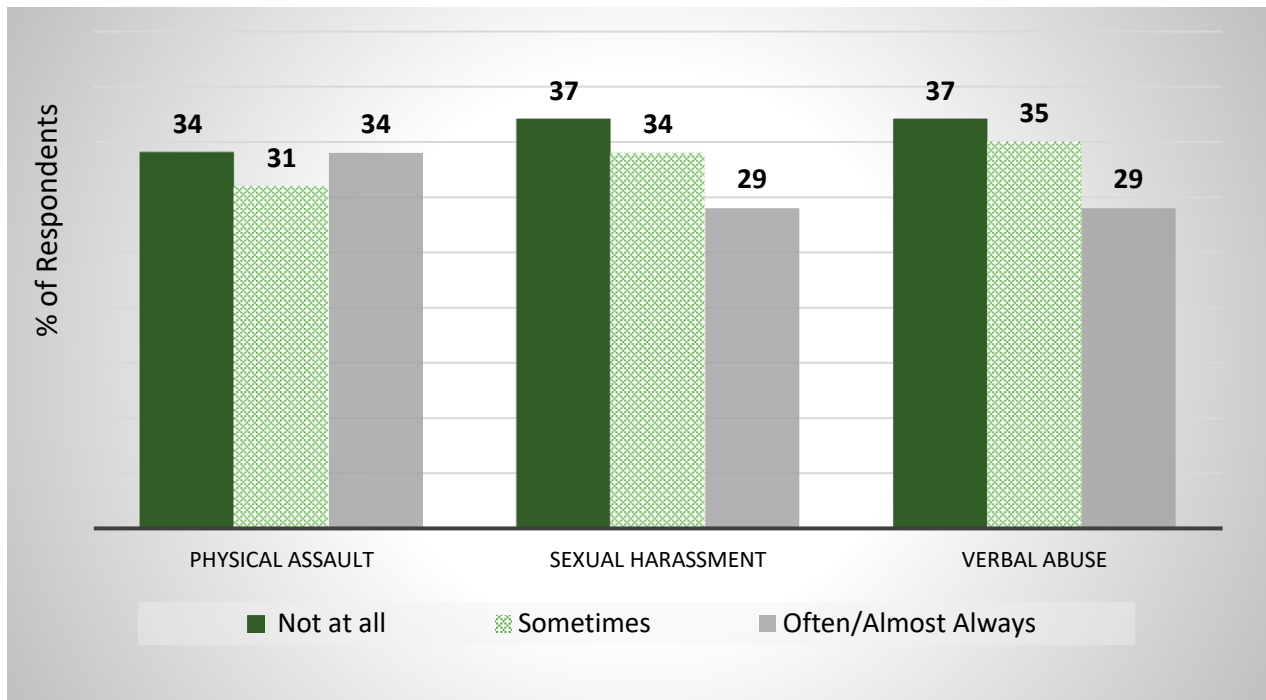
Figure 2: Negative impact of victimization on the level of victimized teachers’ distress



The impact of victimization on victimized teachers' distrust in students

- Teachers were asked whether they felt they could not trust students after the incident for each victimization.
- The findings in Figure 3 show that 34 percent of physical assault victims reported that they could not trust students often/almost always after the incident, while 31 percent of them sometimes felt distrust of students after the incident.
- For sexual harassment victimization, 29 percent of victims often or almost always felt their distrust of students, while 34 percent of them sometimes felt their distrust of students after the incident.
- Also, 29 percent of victims of verbal abuse reported that they could not trust students often/almost always, while 35 percent sometimes felt distrust of students after the incident.

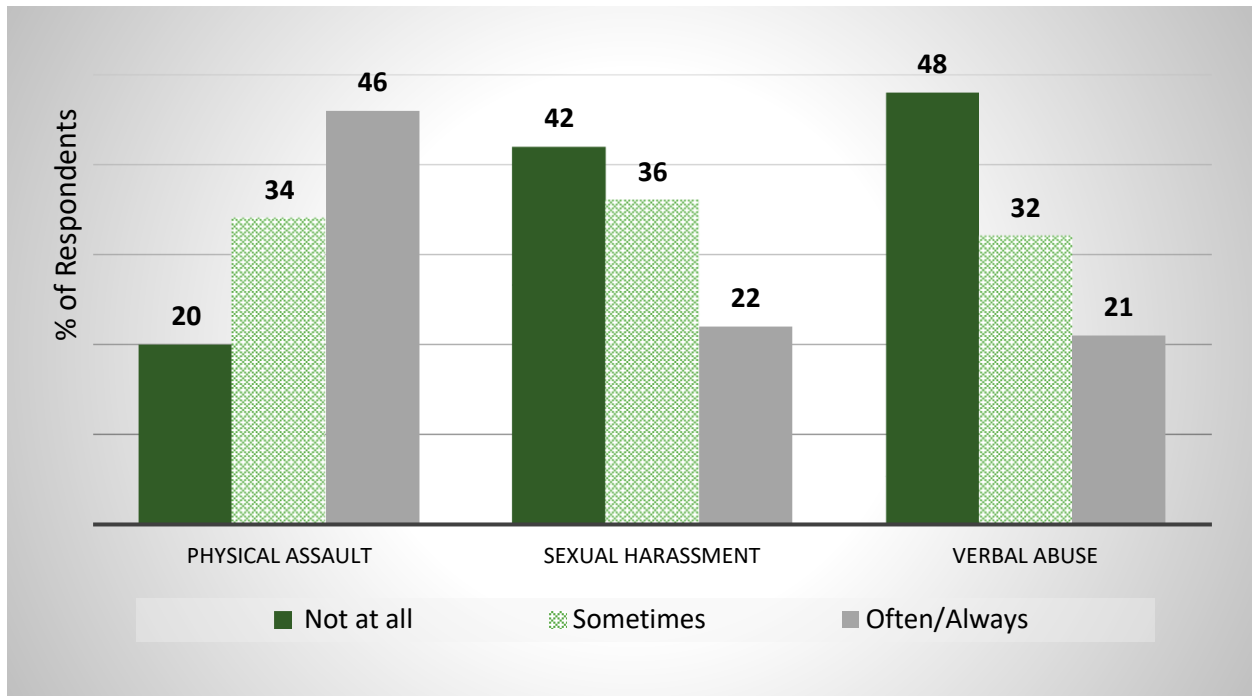
Figure 3: Impact of victimization on victimized teachers' distrust in students



The impact of victimization on feelings of being unsafe in school

- For each victimization, teachers were asked whether they felt unsafe in their schools after the incident.
- The findings in Figure 4 show that approximately half of physical assault victims (46 percent) reported that they often/always felt unsafe in their schools after the incident, while 34 percent of them sometimes felt unsafe in schools.
- For sexual harassment and verbal abuse victimization, 22 percent and 21 percent of victims respectively often or always felt their unsafe in their schools after the incident.
- Twenty percent of physical assault victims reported that the incident did not have any impact on their feeling of safety in schools, while 42 percent of victims of sexual harassment and 48 percent of victims verbal abuse indicate that their victimization did not have any impact on their feeling of safety in schools after the incident.

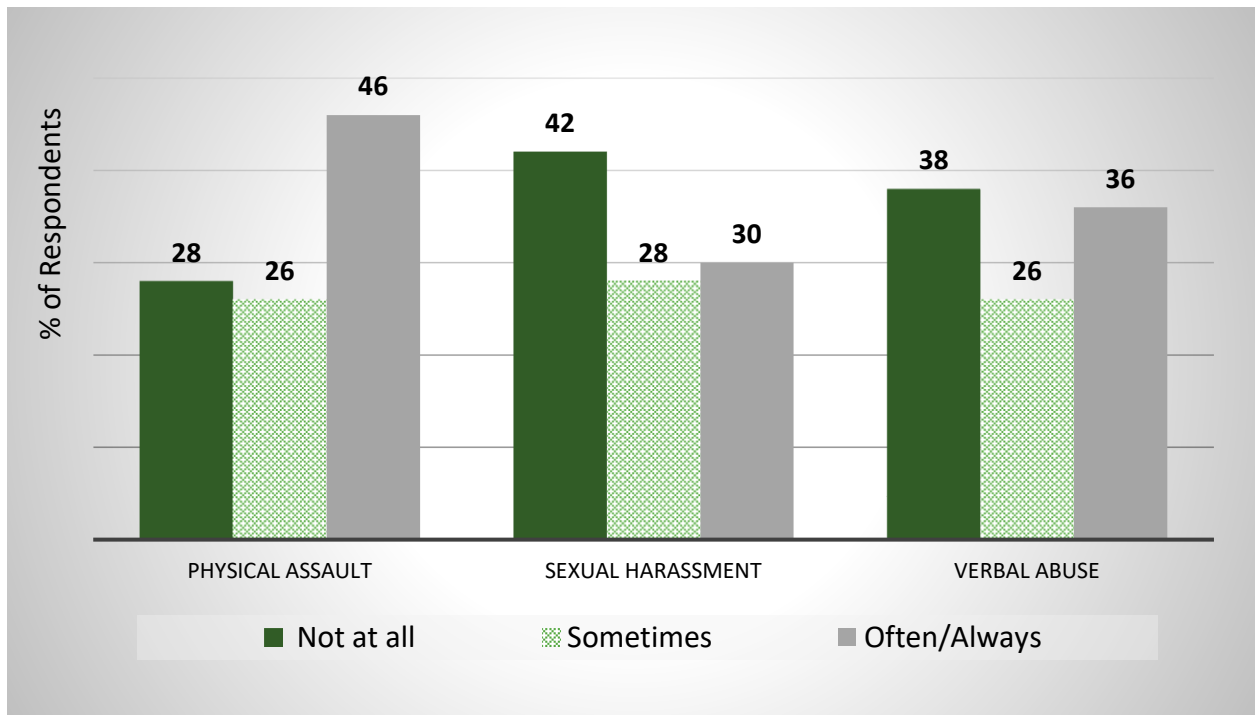
Figure 4: Impact of victimization on feelings of safety in school



The impact of victimization on victimized teachers’ thoughts about quitting

- For each victimization, victimized teachers were asked whether they thought about quitting their teaching career after the incident.
- The findings in Figure 5 show that 46 percent of physical assault victims indicate that they often/always thought about quitting their teaching career after the incident, while 26 percent of them sometimes considered quitting their teaching career.
- For sexual harassment victimization, 30 percent of victimized teachers often or always thought about leaving their teaching career, while 42 percent of them reported that they did not thought about leaving their teaching career after the incident.
- For verbal abuse victimization, 36 percent and 26 percent of victimized teachers often/always and sometimes considered quitting their teaching career after the incident respectively, while 38 percent of them did not considered quitting their teaching career.

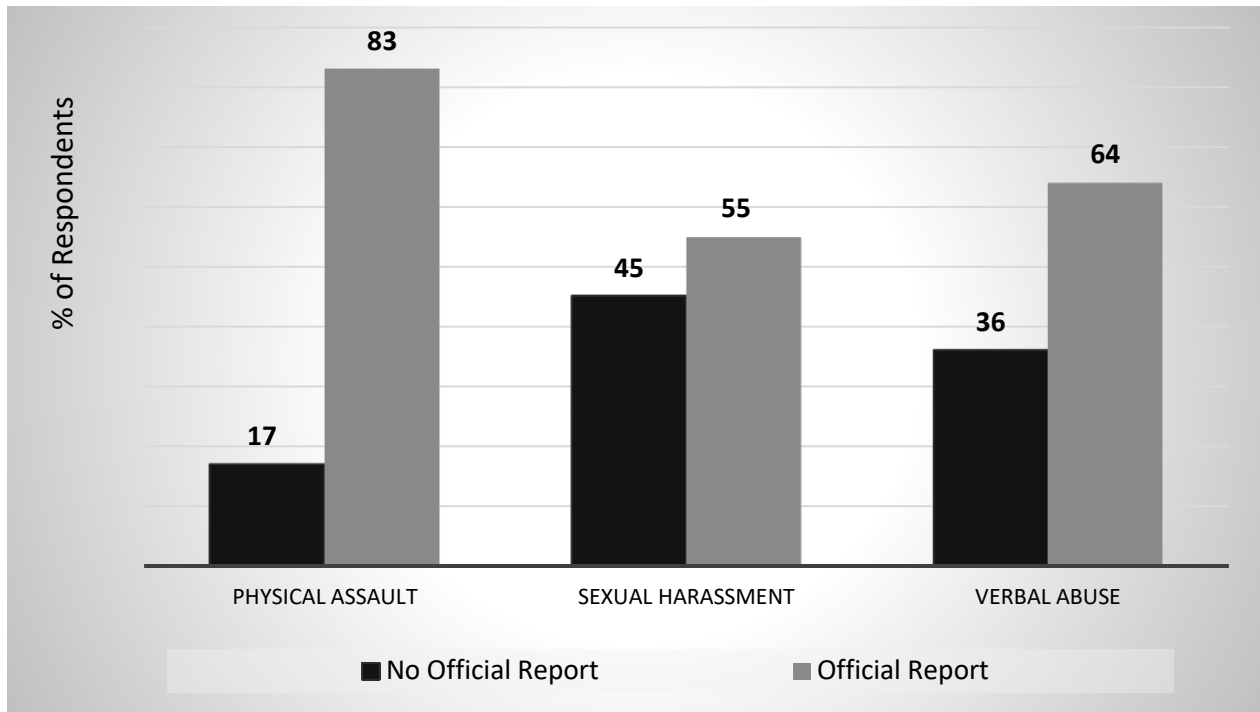
Figure 5: Impact of victimization on victimized teachers’ thoughts about quitting



Victimized teachers' reports to school administrators

- Teachers were asked, for each victimization type, whether or not they reported the most recent incident to school administrators (including school police).
- The findings in Figure 6 show that 83 percent of victims of physical assault reported their victimizations to schools, while 17 percent of them did not report their victimization to school administrators/school police.
- The results also indicate that 55 percent of victims of sexual harassment and 64 percent of victims of verbal abuse reported their most recent victimization to schools respectively.

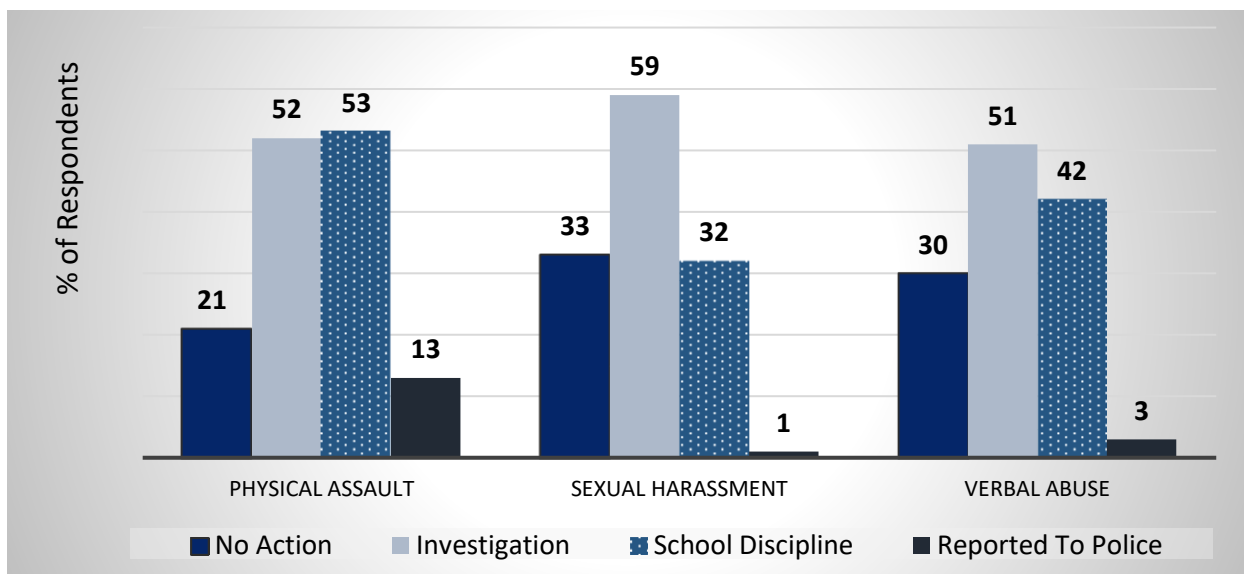
Figure 6: Teachers's reporting of their victimization to schools



School responses to teacher victimization

- Those teachers who reported their victimization to schools were asked how school administrators handled their incidents. The response options included items such as “no action”, “questioning offending students,” “disciplining offending students,” and “reporting the incident to police.” Respondents were allowed to select all school responses that applied.
- The findings in Figure 7 show that 21 percent of victims of physical assault reported that their schools did nothing or took no action in response to the incident, while 33 percent of sexual harassment victims and 30 percent of verbal abuse victims indicate that school administrators took no action.
- Fifty three percent of physical assault victims reported that their schools disciplined offending students (e.g., suspending, assigning detention, expelling), while 32 percent of sexual harassment victims and 42 percent of verbal abuse victims indicate that their school disciplined an offending student(s) respectively.
- The findings also indicate that 13 percent of victims of physical assault reported that their cases were reported to police by school administrators, while 1 percent of sexual harassment victims and 3 percent of verbal abuse victims indicate that their victimization cases were reported to police respectively.

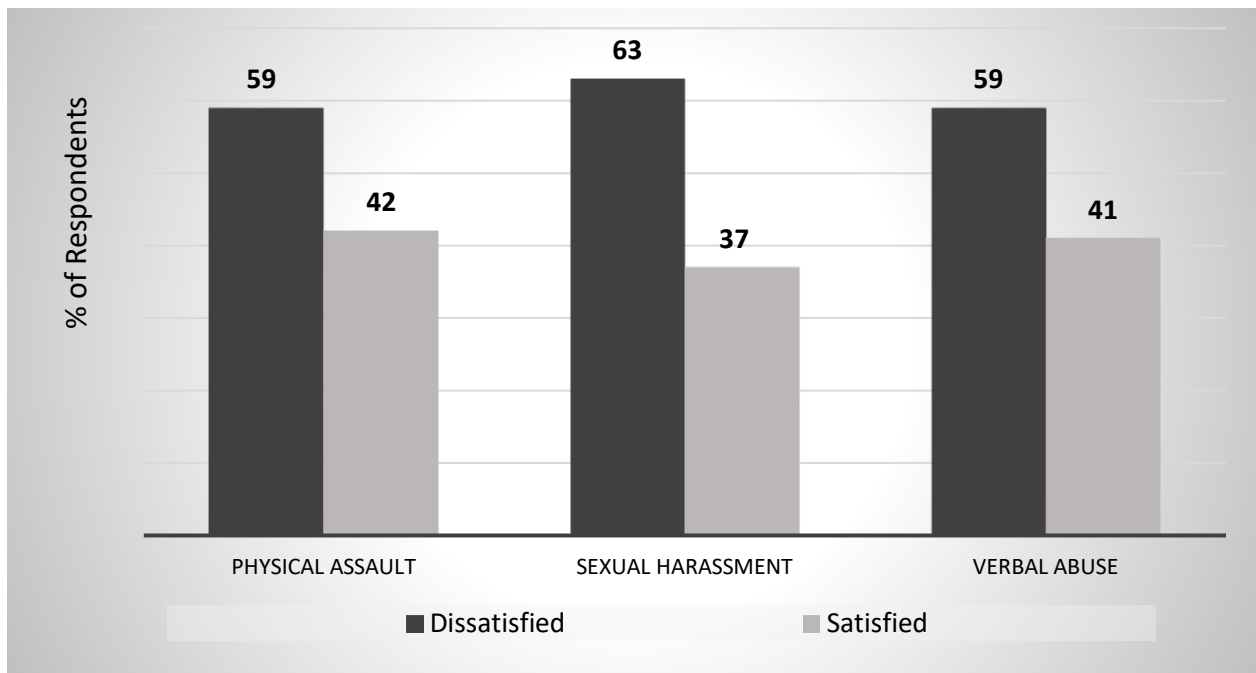
Figure 7: School responses to teacher victimization



Victimized teachers' satisfaction with school responses

- For each victimization reported to school administrators, victimized teachers were asked to rate their satisfaction with the school actions to their victimization cases.
- The findings in Figure 8 show that 59 percent of victims of physical assault were dissatisfied with schools' handling of their victimization incident, while 42 percent of them were satisfied with the school handling of their physical assault victimization incident.
- Similarly, 63 percent of sexual harassment victims and 59 percent of verbal abuse victims indicate that they were dissatisfied with schools' intervention with their victimization incidents respectively, while approximately 40 percent of victims of sexual harassment and verbal abuse reported their satisfaction with schools' handling of the incident.

Figure 8: Victimized teachers' satisfaction with school responses



Thank You!

- As the data collection and research continues, we expect to share more results. We are greatly thankful for the cooperation of the teachers who were surveyed and responded to our questionnaire.
- We hope that all respondents will consider continued participation in Wave II, which we anticipate will commence data collection in Spring 2023.