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Middle School Teachers' Perspectives of Classroom Bullying

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Sareta Brown

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Walden University
2014

Abstract

Middle School Teachers' Perspectives of Classroom Bullying

by

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EdS, Auburn University, 2001

MS, Auburn University, 1999

BS, Tennessee State University, 1976

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2014

Abstract

Teachers are faced with numerous interruptive bullying behaviors in middle school classrooms, which brought the quality of education into question. Bullying victims have shown decreased rates of academic success, measured by lower grades, compared to those not involved in bullying. The purpose of this basic interpretative qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of classroom bullying from the perspectives and experiences of 10 middle school teachers. The research questions examined teachers' experiences in witnessing bullying in their classrooms and the strategies they used to identify and effectively avert bullying in school. Bandura's theories of moral disengagement and social learning theory of aggression informed and provided a framework for the research process. Information was gathered from 10 purposefully selected middle school teachers through personal interviews. Data analysis included coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis. The resulting themes revealed that teachers and school counselors played the most important role in bullying prevention. Physical, verbal, and cyberbullying were perceived as the major types of bullying in the middle school. Teachers reported that more bullying professional development was needed. Given the negative short and long term outcomes associated with bullying, the bullying phenomenon merits serious attention for preventive intervention. Social change will be realized when teachers become more knowledgeable of specific school bullying policies and are able to respond effectively to bullying incidents in schools. Subsequently, students will be able to enter peaceful, productive classrooms and schools.

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Dedication

First, I dedicate my study to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to whom this would not have been possible. To my husband for his untiring support and encouragement through this journey. To my daughter, who believed in me and was my number one cheer leader. To my mother, who throughout my educational career was the most important person in my life. She taught me to not give up and always complete what you start. Through my difficult times, they kept pushing me to completion and never allowed me to give up on my dream. To my sisters, nieces, and cousins who cheered me along the way. To both of my dad's, one who passed away but always supported my educational endeavors, and to other who is still applauding my success.

This study is especially dedicated to my brother, the late Larry Adams, who up until his dying day continued to encourage me to keep on pushing to completion.

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A special thanks to the educators and administrators in my middle school who allowed me to interview you. Without your input, there would be no dissertation. You were and still are the wind beneath my sail.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	v
Section 1: Introduction to the Study	1
Background	2
Problem Statement	3
Nature of the Study	5
Purpose of the Study	6
Conceptual Framework	7
Research Objectives	8
Rationale of the Study	8
Operational Definitions	9
Assumptions, Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations	9
Significance of the Study	10
Transition Statement	11
Section 2: Review of Literature	12
Literature Search Strategy	12
Theoretical Framework	13
Literature Review	19
Classroom Management of Bullying	19
Teacher’s Experiences in Addressing Bullying	21
School and Staff Development Programs to Address Bullying	24
Cyberbullying	28

Peer Victimization	31
Bystanders in Bullying.....	32
Related Studies and Methodologies.....	32
Summary	36
Conclusions.....	38
Section 3: Methodology.....	40
Research Design and Rationale	40
The Role of the Researcher.....	41
Data Collection	42
Data Analysis	45
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	46
Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants.....	47
Section 4: Results.....	49
Data Gathering Process.....	49
System for Data Tracking.....	50
The Findings	51
The Interviews	52
Demographic Information.....	52
Interview Item Analysis.....	52
Summary of Findings in Relation to Patterns and Themes.....	62
Findings in Relation to the Research Questions	65
Discrepant Data.....	67

Evidence of Quality	68
Conclusion	69
Section 5: Conclusions, Discussions, and Recommendations	70
Interpretation of the Findings.....	71
Theoretical Implications	78
Implications for Social Change.....	79
Recommendations for Action	80
Recommendations for Further Research.....	81
Reflections on Researcher’s Experience.....	82
Conclusion	83
References	85
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	103
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form	104
Curriculum Vita	106

List of Tables

Table 1. Teacher Demographics 53

Table 2. Summary of Responses to Interview Questions 1 and 2 55

Table 3. Examples of Sources of Bullying 57

Table 4. Teachers Recommendations to Avert School Bullying..... 61

List of Figures

Figure 1. Student Bullying/Harassment Notice of Receipt Form 59

Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Bullying is a serious problem in American schools and is characterized by aggressive behavior, unequal power, and the intention to cause physical, social, or emotional harm to others (Glasner, 2010). According to a recent national survey, 23% of school age students were identified as being involved in the dynamics of bullying practices (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2011). Of the 23%, 13% appeared as bullies as opposed to 10.6% who appeared as victims, while the remaining 6.3% represented the category of bully-victims (NCES, 2011). Not only do these statistics highlight bullying in schools as a serious concern, but also underscores the shortcomings of the authorities entrusted with the responsibility to create and foster a constructive environment for students in their academics and social interactions.

Previous researchers have emphasized that bullying behaviors result in student low academic achievement and implies that school bullying must be continuously investigated in search for effective ways to prevent bullying and enforce anti-bullying in the school setting (e.g., Mavroveli & Sánchez-Ruiz, 2011). Drawing on the literature research, I explored the perceptions of teachers' views and responses to bullying. My aim was to develop a better understanding of how teachers manage bullying in middle school education.

Teachers want to make their classrooms safe, supportive learning environments. Administrators want positive school climates. Both are looking for tools to reach these goals (Goryl, Neilsen-Hewett, & Sweller, 2013). In Section 1, I presented an overview of

the bullying phenomenon beginning with the background, problem statement, nature of the study, purpose statement, rationale, and significance of the study.

Background

School bullying, often referred to as peer victimization or harassment, involves aggressive behaviors to different degrees of intensity (Ma, Phelps, Lerner, & Lerner, 2009, p. 879). Goryl, Neilsen-Hewett, and Sweller (2013) referred to bullying as physical or psychological aggression, typically repeated over time, intentionally aimed to cause hurt or harm to another child. Direct bullying behaviors may include slapping, name calling, pushing, and swearing; whereas in indirect bullying, such as gossiping, has an immense influence on others and causes harm to the victims (Beran & Lupart, 2009).

Some early childhood educators viewed bullying or aggressive behaviors as a normal part of child development and young children are incapable of such acts and therefore should escape the label of *bully* (Goryl, Neilsen-Hewett, & Sweller, 2013). However, with the recent increase in acts of bullying at all grade levels, schools and school districts are constantly reviewing strategies and policies to promote anti-bullying at all grade levels, particularly in middle schools. The popular view by researchers was that children of all ages and grade levels should not have to worry about being bullied when they attend school (Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Harris, & Petrie, 2002). The key premise is that most trauma resulting from bullying occurs during the middle school years. This is when young adolescents, who are in this unique development phase, feel a sense of isolation. Therefore, middle school educators were faced with the challenge to

establish a climate that fosters a sense of caring and enables youth to feel safe; thereby reducing bullying behaviors and incidents at school, the focus of this study.

Humphrey and Crisp (2008) argued that many times the teaching staff is completely unaware of bullying incidents until the parents or others bring the attention of their child's teacher. Furthermore, researchers discovered that teachers do not always identify or respond to bullying acts appropriately (Farrell, 2010). Having bullying education workshops, along with clear antibullying policies is important to provide guidance to educators and parents alike. This was to ensure the wellbeing and safety of children is maintained while attending school (Goryl, Neilsen-Hewett, & Sweller, 2013).

Goryl et al. (2010) examined early childhood teachers' understanding and attitudes towards bullying and investigated whether anti-bullying policies were utilized in early childhood services. The researchers found that 93% of the early childhood teachers believed young children were capable of bullying, and felt confident to identify and manage incidences of bullying. Results revealed a significant relationship between teacher education and perceived confidence in identifying bullying. Similarly, the present study will explore teacher perceptions, experiences, and strategies for addressing and preventing middle school bullying.

Problem Statement

Bullying is recognized as an important educational problem, particularly in middle schools (Cornell & Mehta, 2011). The problem that I describe in this study stemmed from the increased number of students bullied in a middle school in a southern state within the past 3 years. According to information from the school office, incidents

of bullying increased about 15% between 2010-2012. These behaviors included students teasing, arguing, fighting, and other types of disruptive behaviors. With the continuous climb in incidents of bullying, teachers were faced with numerous interruptive bullying behaviors in the classroom. Subsequently, the quality of education entered into question when this type of setting occurs too frequently in the classroom (e.g., Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

Victims of bullying suffer increased rates of anxiety, depression, and related social and emotional problems (Cornell & Mehta, 2011). Hinduja and Patchin (2009) claimed that students exposed to situations of bullying, eventually develop negative behaviors that include lying, violence, and irrational behavior. Consequently, these behaviors produce negative effects on the learning environment (Sela-Shayovitz, 2011). Students who are victims of bullying often exhibit higher rates of school avoidance, truancy, and overall academic difficulties (Cornell & Mehta, 2011).

Cornell and Mehta (2011) claimed that bullying occurs at all grade levels, but middle schools usually report the highest rates. DeVoe and Bauer (2010) reported that 36% to 43% of middle school students reported being bullied at school during an average school year. Although, the literature clearly demonstrated that bullying negative impacts students at all grade levels, more research is needed at the middle school level to further explore and better understand teacher awareness and involvement in the reduction of bullying.

Nature of the Study

The primary focus of this research was exploring and understanding the phenomenon of bullying in middle school from the perspectives of teachers. To study the problem and phenomenon of this study, the following open-ended research questions were addressed:

1. How do teachers describe their experiences in addressing and preventing bullying behaviors at the middle school level?
2. What strategies do teachers find most effective in averting and preventing bullying behaviors at the middle school level?
3. What type of professional development do teachers receive on bullying policies in the management of bullying?

This was a basic interpretative qualitative study designed to gain deeper insights into the problem and generate ideas about solutions. Merriam (2002) described the basic interpretative qualitative as the most common form of qualitative research found in education. It is a tradition used when the researcher is mainly interested in understanding how individuals construct their worlds and make sense of their lives and personal experiences (p.38). A key feature of the basic interpretative qualitative study is that it draws from the characteristics of all qualitative research in that researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences and the meaning they attribute to their experiences.

All qualitative research seeks to understand how people make sense of their lives and their worlds (Merriam, 2002; Stakes, 2010); however, some qualitative traditions

may have additional purposes. For example, the phenomenological study seeks to understand the *essence* or the participant's lived experience of the phenomenon. A grounded theory researcher seeks to build a theory to substantiate the phenomenon of interest, not just to understand it (Merriam, 2002)

. In this study, I analyzed data generated from two data sources: interviews and information gained from an in depth examination and analysis of current literature. The primary means of data collection were the audiotaped, semi structured interviews conducted with 10 teachers purposefully selected from a middle school situated in a small urban school district in Alabama. Data were analyzed using a constant comparative coding process. Stakes (2010) described coding as the process of classifying and sorting data according to topics, themes, and categories. A rich, descriptive account of the findings using references from the literature review were presented. A detailed discussion of distinct differences in the types of qualitative research and the methodology for this study are presented in Section 3.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, understand, and describe the phenomenon of classroom bullying in middle school from the perspectives and experiences of teachers. Previous researchers have indicated that victims showed decreased rates of academic success, measured by lower grades, compared with those not involved in bullying (Glasner, 2010). Given the negative outcomes associated with bullying, as well as the potential long-term negative outcomes for school youth, the bullying phenomenon merits serious attention for preventive intervention. Glasner (2010)

suggested that although parents should assume some responsibility and get training to recognize and understand acts of bullying, it is not enough. Glasner supports the idea that schools should take an active stance against bullying and this includes training teachers to recognize bullying signs and intervene.

Teachers are influential in students' daily lives, which include recognizing and responding to bullying incidents and implementing programs (Goryl et al., 2013; Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005). This study will add to the body of knowledge by focusing on teachers' perceptions and understanding of bullying incidents in middle schools. Teachers' perceptions of bullying and school policies will help determine the appropriate interventions necessary for teacher training.

Conceptual Framework

Bandura's (1999, 2002) theory of moral disengagement and Bandura's (1989) social learning theory of aggression were used to provide the conceptual framework for understanding bullying behavior among young adolescents, the focus of this study. Bandura described moral disengagement as the sociocognitive processes through which the average person is able to commit awful acts against others. Bandura's (1989) social learning theory of aggression suggested that individuals learn by observing others.

Bandura's theory suggests that children learn to become violent when exposed to violence in early life. Environment plays a part in the reactions of students (Bandura, 1989). With Bandura's theory used as a framework, this study will relate how students who are bullied or become bullies tend to imitate what they have learned, which teachers need to understand fully to address bullying behaviors in the classroom. Bandura (2002)

supported this study with the social cognitive theory, suggesting that adolescents often model their behavior on their friends' behavior. An in depth discussion is presented in the literature.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were formulated through reflecting upon the problem statement, identifying the basis of this study. The following were the main objectives of this research study:

- To determine middle school teachers' experience in identifying bullying activities at the middle school level, particularly in the classroom.
- To highlight the interventions that middle school teachers find effective in addressing bullying behaviors, including nonverbal confrontations.
- To ascertain the types of relevant professional development courses or training programs that middle school teachers complete regarding bullying prevention and what can be applied on a school-wide level to address bullying.

Rationale of the Study

A teacher's reaction to bullying in the classroom is difficult while normal classroom activities are underway (Williams, 2009). Bullying is still a widespread problem in the classrooms and in the society as a whole (Bellflower, 2010). There are many challenges that teachers face in the classroom on a daily basis: delivering instructions and imparting knowledge, managing the classroom, and monitoring students' progress among various other tasks and responsibilities. The prevalence of bullying,

suggests that teachers as well as other educators may well have experiences with bullying, either directly or indirectly. I conducted this research for the purpose of further exploring teachers' responses and interventions to bullying in the middle school. This research is a positive step to developing effective interventions by teachers to reduce school bullying.

Operational Definitions

Bullying: Bullying is an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim, physically or verbally harm another individual (Olweus, 1993).

Verbal Bullying: Verbal bullying is a direct form of bullying such as name calling and teasing (Olweus, 1993).

Physical Bullying: Physical bullying is direct contact with the victim. Physical bullying can be a form of hitting, shoving, pushing, spitting; in addition to inflict bodily hurt and pain on others (Olweus, 1993).

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online and through text messaging sent to cell phones. (National Crime Prevention Council, 2008)

Assumptions, Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations

One assumption that I made was that teachers are aware that bullying can affect students academically. Next, I assumed that teachers participating in this study would respond truthfully. The last assumption was that teachers will participate without any fear of bringing negative perceptions that involve their school and or community.

The scope of this study included teachers' understanding of bullying in the classroom with a particular setting in middle school where the population ranges from

640 to 665 students; each classroom has about 25-31 students. The study was limited to specific research questions and I did not address all areas of bullying. One of the delimitations in this study was that I conducted interviews in the middle school setting only. Another was that the school in this study was only one in a district of about 57. Finally, the grade levels were limited to six through eight.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the potential to help teachers and other educators to increase awareness of effective bullying practices; subsequently to diffuse, or prevent bullying from occurring or perhaps reoccurring. Teachers are influential in students' daily lives, which includes recognizing and responding to bullying incidents and implementing programs. This study will add to body of research by focusing on teachers' understanding of bullying and the factors that might influence how they recognize and respond to bullying incidents. There are few qualitative studies on the experiences of teachers. Qualitative research methodology can provide additional insight into teachers' personal views on bullying behaviors. The aim is to ultimately address and prevent bullying in classrooms and other school settings (Ihnat & Smith, 2013).

Social change will be realized when teachers as well as other professionals are able to respond effectively to bullying incidents in schools. Globally, students should be able to enter peaceful, productive classrooms and schools. I believe positive social change will become a reality when schools are able to create a climate that promotes the learning of appropriate social skills, so that positive behavior can emerge.

Transition Statement

This doctoral includes five sections: the introduction, literature review, methodology, data analysis and findings, and conclusion and recommendations. In the first section, I introduced the topic and referenced the background of the study, followed by the problem statement and purpose, which involves understanding of the phenomenon of bullying in middle school from the perspective of the classroom teacher.

In Section 2, I focus on my review of relevant literature to gain insight into the research findings delivered by earlier researchers. Section 3 includes the methodology in which the research design and method that were used to carry out this study are discussed. Subsequently, in Section 4, I discuss the data classification and analysis in which thematic concepts as indicated by the data gathered were analyzed to arrive at the dominant central themes related to the findings of the study. In Section 5, I conclude the study in which relevant recommendations and suggestions for further study are discussed.

Section 2: Review of Literature

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of how teachers respond to bullying behaviors in the middle school. The goal of this literature review is to provide a survey of scholarly journal articles, books, dissertations, and Internet sources and offer an overview of published literature on the classroom management of bullying. My aim was to find materials relevant to the topic of bullying and determine which body of literature makes a significant contribution to understanding the phenomenon. I organized the literature review around the following sections: theoretical framework, literature review, summary and conclusion. I address teachers and bullying, staff development programs, antibullying programs, and related methodologies on bullying.

Literature Search Strategy

In this literature search, I used multiple strategies. The process included accessing both online and land-based libraries. More than 75 peer-reviewed, scholarly journals and books were reviewed during the search. Online database searched were EBSCO host, ProQuest, Sage, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The following keywords aided the search: *bullying* and *social cognitive and social learning theory*, *bullying prevention programs*, *bullying in the classroom*, *cyberbullying*, *middle school student behavior*, *staff development on bullying*, and *teachers' perceptions*. The research literature consisted of articles reporting data collection methods or data sources, data analysis methods, and findings. The findings and conclusions from the pertinent literature are presented.

Theoretical Framework

Bullying behavior by middle school students in the classroom is a complex topic, and multiple theories exist to address such behavior. To fully understand and find an appropriate solution to reflect teachers' perceptions and to address bullying behavior, some of the theories most often used include Bandura's (1999, 2002) theory of moral disengagement and Bandura's (1989) social learning theory of aggression. Bandura described moral disengagement as the sociocognitive processes through which the average person is able to commit awful acts against others. Bandura's (1989) social learning theory of aggression suggested that individuals learn by observing others. Bandura's theory suggests that children learn to become violent when exposed to violence in early life. Additionally, Bandura (2002) social cognitive theory supports this study, suggesting that adolescents often model their behavior on their friends' behavior.

Many researchers have revised and explored these theories to implement new programs and to evaluate treatment options for the complexities of juvenile bullying behavior (Conway, 2009). In its original form, social learning theory is derived from Tarde's (1969) work. Tarde proposed that learning primarily occurs in the following four stages:

- Creating a brief understanding of the concepts
- Creating a close contact
- Imitation of superiors
- Developing a role model

Bartol and Bartol (2005) discussed the work of Tarde (1969), who believed that learning consists of three main components: observing, imitating, and reinforcing. In addition, Rotter (1954) theorized that human behavior is based on the type of reinforcement gained immediately following the behavior. Rotter claimed that positive behavior was more likely to occur if an individual believes that he or she would receive a positive reward or outcome and thus repeat the positive behavior. Rotter proposed that behavior was the result of environmental factors and not necessarily psychological factors.

Bartol and Bartol (2005) revealed that Bandura (1977) expanded Rotter's theories further, incorporating aspects of behavioral and cognitive thinking. Bandura believed that humans learn behavior by observing others and then modeling those behaviors. Bandura suggested that perceptions, thoughts, expectancies, competencies, and values need examination for understanding any criminal or other relevant behavior. Bandura introduced the concept of observational learning or modeling to support the theory, which involves a series of processes including attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation.

Learning experience is of pivotal importance in shaping people's overall attitudes and behavior, which forms the foundation of the research findings of Martin and Bush (2000). They indicated that people's behavior is directly related to and dictated by the learning and social experiences attained by individuals or consumers. Social learning theory is based on the principle that humans possess the ability to learn and modify their behavior predominantly learning through observation (Solomon, 2004). Social learning

theory divides the entire learning process into four prime stages: attention, retention, production, and motivation. These four stages depict the importance of teachers who could emerge as role models for the students, thereby helping them deliver academic performance and learn effectively. Teachers can use social learning theory to understand the consequences of bullying for students who have remained victim to such activities as exercised by group of dominant students.

When the student pays attention in the class and the more relevant, persuasive, and understandable the teacher is, the more likely it is for the student to retain the information. Such circumstances can result in student motivation and influence academic performance (Hayden, 2011). Through social learning theory, students develop their attitudes and behavior through exhibiting others' behaviors. Similar trends could occur if victims of bullying start to demonstrate the implications of social learning theory. This trend is generally popular among youngsters who get influenced more easily than their adult counterparts (Bender & Losel, 2011). Bullies in schools often belong to popular groups, which not only gives them enough clout to get their way among students, but also gives them undue power over others because others often aspire to the bullies' positions (Thunfors & Cornell, 2008). Thus, bullies can influence their victims into becoming bullies or being violent later in their lives (Bender & Losel, 2011). The victims not only see these circumstances as strengthening their self-view but also providing them with a greater focus to achieve what they want (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). This theory thus provides a comprehensive insight and explanation through drawing on relevant models

and instances, the dynamics of bullying in middle school as perpetrated by middle school students.

To expand social learning theory, Bandura (1989) developed social cognitive theory. Bandura's psychological theories of human development claimed that the growth of capabilities occurs rapidly during the formative years. Using this theoretical base, Bandura's theory suggested that children learn to become violent when exposed to violence in early life. Environment plays a part in the reactions of students. For example, when a child is exposed to violence at home, the child tends to display violent behaviors. With Bandura's theory as a framework, the study will address how bullied students can become bullies because they tend to imitate what they have learned.

Although the social cognitive theory can contrast with the social learning theory that indicates learning over a long period, the social cognitive theory is important for this study considering that social learning theory was introduced earlier. It took over a decade for Bandura to develop the social cognitive theory. Thus, using both theories will contribute significantly to this research study (McDaniel, Duchaine, & Jolivette, 2010). Social cognitive theory influences the functioning of humans along with the circumstances that reshape and appear in a changed state as a result of the alteration of human functioning. Such alteration is triggered by social conditions and diverse other practices characterizing various institutions (McDaniel et al., 2010).

In this research study, I considered these theories with the belief that they contributed valuable insight into the issue of bullying behavior along with newer ideas on future implementation of prevention programs. Social learning theory considers the

individual's perceptions, thoughts, expectancies, values, and competencies (Dilmac & Aydogan, 2010). Differential association considers the age at which interactions began, frequency of interactions, and the relationships of the individuals involved. Self-efficacy is a motivational construct based on the self-perception of competence rather than ability. Staff competencies begin with understanding of the need to change the culture of middle schools among various other grade schools, so that the staff has enough competence to handle and subsequently minimize the instances of middle school bullying behavior (Frey, Hirschstein, Edstrom, & Snell, 2010).

Moreover, many theories were based on male behaviors because historically, male offenders have dominated the juvenile justice system. These theories also can be used to explain issues such as the causes of delinquency, bullying, risk, and protective factors, gender differences, resiliency, prevention, and treatment interventions (Charmaraman, Jones, Stein, & Espelage, 2013; Glasner, 2010; Thunfors & Cornell, 2008; Viding, Simmonds, Petrides, & Frederickson, 2009).

Bullying is a diverse continuum. People describe bullying in different ways ranging from calling victims inappropriate and embarrassing names, humiliating them, and teasing them publicly to physically hurting them, ignoring them, and threatening and isolating them (Conway, 2009; Hazler, Hoover, & Oliver, 1992). Researchers have often applied social theories to explain the offensive behavior children and middle school students have demonstrated. Many human service professionals and researchers rely on these theories for explaining the behavioral changes among juveniles and children. This definition does not fully explain the diverse scope and context of bullying, but it does

form the major portion of elements revolving around bullying. Furthermore, in addition to the aforementioned descriptors, bullying includes abuses of other forms that predominantly incorporate neglect in addition to more prevailing physical, emotional, and social abuse (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007).

Because researchers have established many of the theories to explore and understand the realm of juvenile delinquency referred to in the theoretical framework, various types of bullying activities could also be recognized as criminal offenses. The foremost example is cyberbullying in which students use technology to intimidate others. For instance, under the provisions of the Computer Misuse Act in the United Kingdom, cyberbullying can be effectively recognized as a criminal offense, thereby making the bully a juvenile offender (Crowe & Watts, 2013). The law was passed in 1990 in the United Kingdom; however, even if it is not considered a specific criminal offense across the world or in the United States, the potential for it to be recognized as one in near future should not be overlooked. Educators have put some stringent policies in place in schools to cater to increasing numbers of bullying practices, which they follow vigilantly to provide a safe environment for children (Cref, Hesper, Gantwerk, Marty, & Vermeire, 2011). Such an environment can promote learning and is the responsibility of the school and its administration. Bullying primarily falls under the same domain as harassment, racism, and discrimination among several others, thereby reinforcing the credibility of the theoretical framework for this research study.

Literature Review

Bullying revolves around an unacceptable treatment that the bully uses to discriminate or scar the reputation of the subject. Sometimes described as the “abuse of power” by the bully, the bully usually enjoys harming and hurting others to gain enjoyment that involves inflicting pain upon others and embarrassing them. These behaviors can be complex and are most likely associated with the psychological composition of the bully (Olweus, 1980; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Scheithauer, Hess, Schultze-Krumbholz, & Bull, 2012). The sections that follow are based on the preceding definition of bullying and the research questions. The focus of the study is on how middle school teachers address bullying behavior and professional development regarding bullying and antibullying programs. In addition are sections addressing cyberbullying, peer victimization, bystanders, and related methodologies.

Classroom Management of Bullying

The purpose of the present study is to explore how middle school teachers can address, identify, and learn to prevent bullying. The key to minimize and subsequently eliminate bullying can only be found in effective classroom management practices (Allen, 2010). The lack of classroom management skills among teachers, particularly new teachers, has made classroom management an issue of significant concern. This issue highlights the lack of appropriate training, which leaves only the children as vulnerable, thereby not impacting the rate of bullying practices (Glasner, 2010). Even though bullying is not characterized as a criminal offense, as previously mentioned, harassment and threatening behavior could be criminal in nature (Beran & Li, 2005). Government

continues to introduce measures to ensure effective protection of children and young people from bullying and cyberbullying. It is in response to this need for protection that one government has released *Safe to Learn: Cyberbullying Guidance* (Department for Children, Schools, Families, 2007). Furthermore, the Office for Internet Safety formed an Expert Review Group to make sure that the guidelines formed by governmental bodies are properly implemented and followed to ensure effective protection of children and young people (Campbell, 2005).

It is important to explore the correlation between classroom management and school bullying in the middle schools by middle school students. Identifying and determining the correlation of classroom management and bullying practices can reinforce the existence of loopholes involving teachers and the school administration as factors that could be effectively associated with the prevalence of bullying. Bullying started to get significant attention after the event that took place in 1999 at the Columbine High School in Colorado, and has risen to such a level that it has led toward shooting incidences at schools, particularly in the United States (Toppo, 2009). Bullying, harassment, and teasing have been identified as the reasons behind such targeted school shootings found to have been occurring at numerous schools (Strohmeir & Noam, 2012). Discipline pertaining to students and overall management of student behavior defines classroom management if considered in a precise form. However, the definition could be further expanded considering that classroom management that primarily is attached to teaching could not solely revolve around behavioral control of students. Teachers must deliver education to the students on a wider level (Briggs, Simpson & Gaus, 2009).

Teacher's Experiences in Addressing Bullying

The adults with whom students spend the most time in school are the teaching and counseling staff; therefore, these adults play an important role in the bullying phenomenon. When students are training to become educators, universities tend to have affective courses in social justice and multiculturalism; however, Bowllan (2011) noted that the tough accountability standards are taking over teacher preparation to the point that in the shortened teacher preparation programs, teachers are focused more than before on content for standardized tests to the detriment of other important issues. Such circumstances leave the most opportunities for learning to the teacher-mentor relationship (Bowllan, 2011). If the administrators and other leaders do not expect zero tolerance toward bullying (e.g., toward lesbian, gay, and transgendered youth), then it is less likely that novice teachers will take the opportunity to address it themselves (Bowllan, 2011).

Still, Craig, Bell, and Leach (2011) posited that preservice teachers have a different take on bullying compared to regular teachers. According to many preservice teachers, the bullying is more harmful as well as distressful for the victims and would hamper their productivity in academics. Preservice teachers acquire specific attitudes and beliefs regarding many distinct features relating to intervention and violence present in schools (Craig et al., 2011). These attitudes and beliefs play a vital role in crafting anti-violence strategies that can be applied and executed effectively once the students graduate and decide to enter teaching.

Craig et al. (2011) evaluated the knowledge of teachers regarding school violence based on the Teachers' Attitude about Bullying Questionnaire (TAABQ). The TAABQ

was a 22-item questionnaire that measured pre-service teachers' perspectives on bullying. Pre-service teachers were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with each of the items on a 5-point response scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Items related to perceptions of system commitment, teacher commitment, concern, confidence, and level of preparation in managing bullying. The areas related to investigation about the factors affecting bullying included personal histories of the preservice teachers as well as the developmental focus central to the preservice education (Craig et al., 2011). The preservice education included checking education levels at the junior, intermediate, and senior academic levels. The education of preservice teachers provides a reflection on major differences in knowledge and understanding regarding the issue of bullying. The major step in ensuring violence-free schools is the willingness and confidence of the preservice teacher to make schools safe and more friendly for children to inculcate in them healthy productivity and growth.

The attitude of teachers toward bullying is often related to demographic differences like gender, which can play a significant role in determining perspectives on bullying. Mishna, Cook, Gadalla, Daciuk, and Solomon (2010) found that the various types of individual teacher characteristics play an important role in determining a teacher's attitudes as well as responses to violence. The outcome of the research reflected that the male teachers are more tolerant of the school children's bullying behavior than are their female counterparts. The female teachers were much less tolerant than the men and provided negative feedback regarding the bullying behavior of children. Teachers who have a steadfast attitude to counterfeit the dilemma of bullying in school children

adopt the approach of empathizing with the bully (Mishna et al., 2010). They often inquire about the feelings of the bullies that forced them to adopt the attitude of a bully. They assist the bullies in making them realize the impact of their destructive bullying behavior on the lives of the victims. The researchers also found out that the attitude of teachers played an utmost significant role in determining the sensitivity, nature, and awareness of bullying, all of which are important qualities for teachers who are engaged in addressing and preventing middle school bullying, as in the present study.

Mishna et al. (2010) also observed that many victims of bullies often end up not complaining about the culprits because they fear that the bullies will victimize them again. The victims tend to avoid asking their teachers for help out of the fear of the bullies' retaliation. Thus, victims fail to realize that the bullies have as much power as the victims: physical as well as mental. Victims in their fear fail to realize their own potential to fight back bullies and regain their own confidence and energy as well as self-esteem (Mishna et al., 2010), which makes it difficult for teachers to recognize bullying unless they are trained to do so.

Some researchers have suggested that a more affective curriculum would help to reduce bullying. Brewer and Harlin (2008) described how important it is to develop a justice, community, and human rights curriculum in the social studies program. They added that having universal participation in such material would build each student's self-image and importance in the school community. Moreover, Olweus and Limber (2010) discussed the characteristics of school bullying and its extent. Olweus' prevention program has had significant success in Norway in involving teachers in the reduction of

bullying and development of improved peer relations on all three school levels (elementary, middle, and secondary). However, even though there has not been consistency in the United States in the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP), in general, it has been positive in relation to the self-reported student involvement in antisocial behaviors. Middle school administrators need to study a number of bullying prevention programs to help develop their staff's effectiveness in preventing and addressing bullying behaviors.

School and Staff Development Programs to Address Bullying

Schools have adopted formal programs to prevent and reduce bullying or the staff has often expressed the need to establish a program. Many programs have been successful as long as they were maintained and address all types of bullying and victimization (e.g., Erwin-Jones, 2008; Frey, Hirschstein, Edstrom, & Snell, 2010; Glasner, 2010; Kyriakides & Creemers, 2013). An important focus of the research study is on teacher development programs to prevent bullying behaviors in middle school students. Although there are several studies on prevention programs in the literature, few have been about programs developed on the local level.

Teachers generally are willing to be engaged in bullying prevention; however, many have claimed that they lack training, which makes them reluctant to step in or even recognize when bullying is happening, especially when it is subtle. Barnes et al. (2012) indicated that these covert bullying behaviors are very hurtful to children, often as much as more overt forms. However, lack of training can make the behaviors unrecognizable by teachers. Thus, the bullying becomes almost invisible, especially when overt bullying

is not addressed as well. In their quantitative study, Barnes et al. surveyed the attitudes of 400 staff members in both elementary and secondary schools in Australia as well as their perceptions and ability to address the behaviors. Most of the participants agreed that they should intervene in incidents, but almost 70% of the staff agree strongly that they needed more staff development about the covert forms. Furthermore, less than 40% of the staff had a school policy to address covert bullying. Barnes et al. concluded that professional development programs need to be sustained so that the educators would have the skills, understanding, and self-efficacy to address bullying on a school wide level, through practice and policy.

Batthey and Ebbeck (2013) recognized the psychological and social consequences for not only bullies and victims, but also for those who have played both roles. For seventh grade middle school children, the Bully Prevention Challenge Course Curriculum uses a ropes course to make children aware of bullying behaviors. In this program, challenge activities connected to metaphors on bullying teach children to address and identify bullying, which aid their personal development. Batthey and Ebbeck conducted focus group discussions with the teachers, staff, and students who were in the program. The authors found positive themes regarding interaction, communication, and stronger trust both within themselves and with others, and more awareness than before of what behaviors can result in bullying. A final benefit of the program was common terms regarding bullying so that teachers and students could discuss bullying easily. Almost all of the participants indicated that they would like to continue the program. Such benefits

give a positive justification for the present study from the perspective of staff development.

Carter (2011) had a different conclusion about school-based programs to stop and prevent bullying behaviors. Although most of the research on bullying revealed that bullying is a continuing phenomenon, Carter argued that antibullying programs are not effective in removing power and opportunities for the bully because the information obtained in these programs does not change the actual practices. Carter claimed that the best way to intervene in bullying is for peers to nominate the bully and find methods to change the bully's behavior. Carter concluded that every stakeholder (teachers, administrator, nurses, parents, and mental health professionals) should use these interventions proactively and incorporate staff training.

Hoglund, Hosan, and Leadbeater (2012) examined a peer victimization prevention program known as the WITS Primary Program that was implemented in the first three years of elementary school. They studied peer victimization as reported by the students and their seeking of help as well as emotional and social adjustment as reported by teachers all the way to Grade 6, middle school age. Hoglund et al.'s study was a quasi-experimental quantitative one. Four hundred thirty two children were followed for 6 years in 11 programs and 6 comparison schools. Hoglund et al. found significant effects of WITS for relational victimization, physical victimization, and social competence. They only found small effects for physical aggression and no significant effects for seeking help and internalizing the victimization. When the children transitioned to middle school, the effects of WITS mostly lessened except for some high-risk subgroups. Hoglund et al.

concluded that the prevention program needs to be sustained so the success can continue through middle school. In the present study, staff training for antibullying initiatives was explored with the goal of preventing and stopping bullying and sustaining success.

An initiative in South Carolina known as the Safe School Climate Act was passed in 2006 to address renewed commitment by educators to understand and address the bullying culture that has been so prevalent in public schools (Terry, 2010). This legislation required schools to have policies regarding bullying, intimidation, and harassment by the beginning of 2007. Terry (2010) posited that the general failure of the act may have been due to failure to implement the provisions of the act sufficiently. Recent research reveals that the only ways to implement such programs effectively is with a commitment of the school to provide quality staff development in which the training is ongoing and new policies are publicized. Bullying has complex causes (Terry, 2010). Therefore, schools must develop prevention strategies for the long-term to decrease harassment, bullying, and intimidation, and harassment. The problem has not been solved via punitive and legal measures. It is essential for the present study regarding staff development, that teachers must all be involved in preventing and stopping bullying. Teachers must be trained not only to recognize overt and covert forms of bullying but also learn how to address such behaviors. Most important, any programs must be sustained over years because the research has shown that they lose their effectiveness over time if not set for the long term (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is gaining mainstream recognition rapidly, and many children are reverting to this form of bullying more often as opposed to conventional bullying practices. This form of bullying is particularly present in the middle school when less supervision is present than in the elementary school for these students. In the past few years, bullying is rarely mentioned without its cyber space counterpart, by which students harass each other outside of school grounds through social network sites, cell phone texting, and other electronic media. It is as a result of these recent phenomena that cyberbullying is usually discussed in detail alongside bullying. Children fall prey to such bullying practices with their ready access to advanced technology (Kowalski, 2008; Rigby & Bauman, 2007). The rise in cyberbullying can be attributed to the rising prevalence of the cyberworld and the risks to the children and young people are consistently increasing (Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber, 2007).

A recent survey from Europe indicates that 71% of the parents are worried about issues pertaining to Internet and cybersafety, ranging from privacy and safety risks to cyberbullying along with the unhindered accessibility to harmful and violent content (European Commission, 2008). In the last few decades, governments have enacted a diverse range of education acts and governmental initiatives as a way to promote safeguarding provisions against the bullying of children and young people (Allen, 2010; Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, 2011). The Education and Inspections Act (EIA; 2006) in the United Kingdom, for instance, is a provision that highlights and reflects on some legal powers that are of direct relevance to bullying practices. For example, school

staff is authorized by the law to confiscate such digital technological devices as mobile phones in an attempt to regulate the conduct of children and keep tabs on the incidence of cyberbullying even off-site.

Cyberbullying is common in middle school when children have more access to technology (Allen, 2010; Sbarbaro & Smith, 2011). Moore, Huebner, and Hills (2012) conducted a study on cyberbullying regarding middle school students, when bullying is supposedly at its peak though declining somewhat by high school. Moore et al. surveyed a large group of students in a big middle school in the southeastern United States measuring satisfaction with their lives and both electronic bullying and electronic victimhood. This survey was part of an even bigger study on school climate. Over 900 students got survey packets, and 855 surveys were completed. Students came from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Moore et al. found that 14% of the students regularly engaged in cyberbullying and 20% were victims of this bullying. Bullies had significant associations with parental marital status, gender, and grades whereas the victim had significant correlations with grade in school, SES, ethnic group, parental marital status, and grades. Generally, males were more likely to be victims and girl more likely to be bullies (Moore et al., 2012).

Cyberbullying is widespread, as can be found from statistics reported by the National Centre for Social Research (McQuade, Colt & Meyer, 2009). The research indicates that 47% of the young people testified being bullied as young as 14 (Coloroso, 2002). It was also found that almost half of the children in the age bracket of 12-15 have been through bullying of some sort (DCSF, 2011). It is also indicated that girls in the age

bracket of 12 to 14 years are more likely to be subject to bullying than are boys (DCSF, 2008). Not only children but young people also fall prey to cyberbullying, which is effectively reflected eventually in workplace politics and the inherent abuse of power, which can also manifest in the classroom when teachers bully students (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O-Brennan, 2007).

Seventy-one percent of the parents in a survey were worried about the safety of their children dwelling in the cyberspace, which explains the significance of safeguarding children and young people from cyberbullying (DeHue, Bolman, & Völlink, 2008). The abovementioned statistics indicate that this bullying issue is of immense significance. Thus, it is imperative for safeguarding policies and agendas to be put in place to ensure the provision of protection to the children and young people (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Middle school staff can play an important role in preventing cyberbullying. Kowalski (2008) claimed that middle school is a peak time for cyberbullying or becoming victims of cyberbullying, especially through instant messaging and texting, on which young adolescents rely on more than other forms of technological communication. One intervention Kowalski recommended for teachers is conflict resolution because it is likely that both victim and bully are partly to blame for the act. Kowalski revealed that in 2008, at the time the study was published, 36 states in the United States had passed bullying-specific legislation and six statutes were connected particularly to electronic bullying (Missouri, South Carolina, Idaho, Arkansas, Iowa, and Washington State). The author added that cyberbullying can lead to legal entanglement in the uncertain path between free speech and illegal abuse.

Peer Victimization

Considering one of the largest surveys that researchers primarily undertook to explore the dynamics of bullying among students studying in schools across the United States, it was found that 29.9% of the students are involved in bullying either through being the victim or the oppressor (Battey & Ebbeck, 2013; Bradshaw et al., 2007; Dracic, 2009). These statistics alone identify the bullying practice in the schools as of serious concern, if not addressed in due time. Coupled with cyberbullying, the situation could further worsen, highlighting this research study as timely. The bullying experience could be distressing for some students who find social aggressions humiliating; repeated exposure could enhance suicidal tendencies (Rosen et al., 2009).

Lohre, Ldersen, Paulsen, Maehle, and Vatten (2011) found that victimization as a result of bullying as reported by the victim, teacher and the parent usually lacks harmony. Hence the consistency is too low to determine appropriate strategies. Victimization is found to be quite common as extracted from the self-reports of children, the credibility of which could be confirmed by a study of Norwegian school children (Nuijens, Teglasi, & Hancock, 2009). Nuijens et al. (2009) reached their conclusion as a result of extensive comparisons between reports filed by parents and teachers. The latter formed one side, along with self-reports forming the other side. Considering that the reports or complaints made by various informants usually differ substantially from each other, such discrepancies could impact intervention or any other strategies by a significant magnitude (Nelson & Jolivette, 2009). Self-reports made by the victims of abuse or victimization relate strongly to emotional as well as somatic complaints. However, the ones filed by

teachers or parents are usually found to attract higher anxiety levels (Nelson & Jolivet, 2009).

Bystanders in Bullying

Reinforcers and defenders are the prime roles that bystanders usually assume. The reinforcers usually provide encouragement to the tormenter through laughing and bringing others to the crowd; encouraging them to watch, defenders assume a role contrary to the one depicted by the reinforcer (Kärnä, Voeten, Poskiparta & Salmivalli, 2010). Defenders are against the bullying behavior and make efforts to thwart the bully and stop the behaviors. Apart from reinforcers and defenders are assistants who in actuality are active participants and thus the accomplices of the tormentor, directly assisting the bully through catching and holding down the victim for the bully (Kärnä et al., 2010). It is as a result of the impact of these findings that educators have designed numerous intervention strategies to tone down the level of bullying in schools. They focus on trying to alter the role of bystanders or transforming them from reinforcer or assistant to defender (Frey, Hirschstein, Edstrom & Snell, 2010). The behavior of the bystander is more flexible than that of the bully; hence, the behavior could be shaped more easily than the efforts required to change the behavior of bullies. Therefore, such interventions are an effective approach aimed at minimizing bullying behaviors and practices in schools among children and adolescents (Kärnä et al., 2010).

Related Studies and Methodologies

Researchers who have studied bullying issues generally frame the phenomenon in the context of the school, where most overt physical and verbal as well as cyber bullying

takes place. Bibou-nakou, Tsiantis, Assimopoulos, Chatzilambou, and Giannakopoulou (2012) interviewed a total of 90 young adolescent children in 14 focus groups. The purpose of Bibou-nakou et al.'s research was to motivate the students to connect their social peers in school with home as well as relate their concept of bullying as it relates to school. Much attention has been given to bullying across the world; the public has been well informed about the issues with the goal of protecting children from bullying.

Bibou-nakou et al. (2012) claimed that bullying is unique compared to other acts of aggression and abuse not only by repetition but also by the victims' lack of personal power and unwillingness to speak out. They also claimed that most studies have relied on surveys and observations as opposed to qualitative work. Further, the few qualitative studies have not been from the analytical perspectives of young people. The focus of Bibou-nakou et al.'s study was on needs assessment related to bullying and raising awareness for students, educators, and parents as well as how secondary students connect bullying to school factors. Too much research has been on individual characteristics of bullies and victims but not on general student school experiences and relationships with teachers; as a result other relational and instructional factors are bypassed (Bibou-nakou et al. 2012).

Each of the focus groups was self-selected by the students, so they were truly peer groups. The students were the ages of upper middle school and early high school (age 13-15) from an urban area in northern Greece. Bibou-nakou et al. (2012) found that depending on the school/home context, young adolescents have different capabilities in constructing social order. Their relationships with their teachers and academic

competition and pressures are significant contributors to how students discuss bullying. Bibou-nakou et al. suggested that students would be better off if they are given the opportunity to speak up on bullying and report the reasons they are involved in bullying from a variety of angles.

In a similar study on bullying in Greece, Athanasiades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzis (2010) conducted qualitative research from the point of view of secondary students regarding how they interpret and have experienced bullying, yet their study centered on gender. The researchers justified their method by arguing that qualitative phenomenological research is best done when the focus is on complex, personal matters that may be controversial. Phenomenology is especially good for understanding psychological issues from a participant's perspective (Athanasiades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010). Like Bibou-nakou et al. (2012), Athanasiades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzis used focus groups with a total of 95 students, but the study was different in that students were purposively recruited from eight public schools all over Greece from urban, island, and suburban areas.

Rather than distinguish between victims and bullies, Athanasiades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzis (2010) focused on student experiences and conversations to represent the entire school culture in regard to bullying. Students were assured of complete confidentiality. They found that males and females had different ideas of how bullying is interpreted and what it means, which is important as far as real behavior is concerned. These students neither talk to their parents nor their teachers about bullying incidents because they describe their teachers as apathetic and not effective even if they were to

intervene. Consequently, Athanasiades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzis saw school culture as a place where bullying can thrive and thus should be formally prevented.

Not all researchers agree that bullying is increasing. The purpose of Rigby and Smith's (2011) study was to analyze studies on bullying. They argued that reports from almost 20 years (1990-2009) increased awareness of bullying around the world; however, reports from many nations have revealed a decrease that may have resulted from antibullying and other prevention programs. Many surveys taken in different countries involved bullying only at one time period. Very few studies have been done in a single place across a longer time period. Rigby and Smith examined several studies with the goal of discovering if bullying has increased, remained the same, or decreased.

Looking for global trends, Rigby and Smith (2011) concluded that bullying does not appear to be increasing in school settings and is likely decreasing. Rigby and Smith noted that it would be a mistake to see the problem as getting worse, and result in overreactive responses. On the other hand, if bullying is seen as decreasing, the opposite effect might occur, which could place less emphasis than previously on antibullying programs. After all, any decreases have been relatively small and not evident everywhere. Rigby and Smith warned that more needs to be studied about the best ways to intervene in bullying and address the growing issue of cyberbullying and more recent forms of bullying and how best to prevent bullying and intervene in incidents. The study was exploratory in nature, and according to the authors, has strong implications for not only students but also for parents and professionals in the human service field. These implications are particularly important because cyberbullying may start in school, but it

extends to the home where the parents are often not aware of it. If they were aware, they could help to prevent it.

Ideally, bullying behaviors should be prevented at the outset before they are exacerbated to dangerous levels. Moore, Huebner, and Hills (2012) emphasized the importance of developing preventive strategies and solutions to help those who are being bullied. Moore et al. reported that new evidence implies that those engaged in electronic bullying and those who are victims of such harassment have low life satisfaction levels and feelings of well-being. Connected to the increase in electronic technology is adolescent attachment to it; therefore, studies based on electronic bullying and its consequences are essential. Most of the studies address bullying from the perspective of students; more studies are needed from the teacher's perspective, especially from those who cope with addressing bullying in the classroom. Examining perspectives of bullying from all sides (students, parents, teachers, staff, and administrators) and all forms (cyberbullying, victimizing of peers, and lack of intervention to name a few) is an essential foundation to this qualitative study on classroom teachers' perspectives on middle school bullying.

Summary

To answer the research questions that involve how teachers address bullying behaviors in the middle school, this chapter reviewed several peer reviewed studies. To gain understanding of the topic for this qualitative study, five theories comprise the conceptual framework of the study. They include the social learning theory, social cognitive theory, deterrence theory, differential association, and the strain theory. Next,

the review addressed how teachers experience bullying and how they address it, which is mostly related to classroom management. Bowllan (2011) posited that without an example from the administration, preservice teachers will not know how to address bullying when they have professional jobs. Conversely, Craig et al. (2011) argued that preservice teachers have a better understanding of the side of the victim. Mishna et al. (2010) found that the attitudes of teachers depend on individual characteristics as well as their gender in most cases where male teachers tolerated bullying more than their female counterparts. Mishna et al. found that victims feared revealing their bullies to teachers. Furthermore, some researchers have claimed that modifying content area classes to be more affective might reduce bullying such as a social studies class with an emphasis on justice and human rights (Brewer & Harlin, 2008).

Several schools have instituted antibullying programs, but few function at the local level. One successful program in Europe is the OBPP; however, its application has inconsistent results in the United States. Still, as far as self-reported incidents, it has been more effective (Olweus & Limber, 2010). Researchers such as Frey et al. (2010) and Kyriakides and Creemers (2013) have posited that antibullying programs can reduce victimization on the condition that they are consistent and ongoing and address every type of victimization and bullying behavior. One successful program at the middle school level is a ropes program that not only connects challenge activities to bullying metaphors, but it also strives to help children grow personally. In focus groups, the researchers found out that all stakeholders reported positive benefits (Battey & Ebbeck, 2013).

Finally, I have presented several studies related to bullying with an emphasis on cyberbullying, victimization by peers, and how bystanders take on different roles from enabling to defending. I have also presented studies conducted in schools from a variety of perspectives. For instance, Bibou-nakou et al. (2012) claimed that most studies place too much emphasis on bullies and victims, but few include the entire school population as was done in that study. In general, from the 14 focus groups of a total of 90 students, Bibou-nakou et al. found that the students felt that they would like to be given the opportunity to openly express their feelings on bullying and the reasons behind it.

All in all, the literature review was connected to the three research questions that involved teachers' experiences in addressing bullying at the middle school, the interventions they found most effective, and what professional development in preventing bullying behaviors. Although many studies were conducted in the past on bullying, few were on prevention programs at the local level and how the classroom teacher addresses the phenomenon.

Conclusions

In my literature search, several potential themes and perceptions emerged. Among them were cyberbullying, classroom management of bullying, teacher perceptions of bullying, staff development and prevention programs, cyberbullying, peer-victimization, and bystanders in bullying. Although these topics were found to enhance my knowledge of school bullying, there was a scarcity of literature relevant to understanding the teachers' perspectives of classroom bullying in middle school. Additionally, teaching strategies and professional development to counter bullying or prevention were limited in

scope. Most studies are quantitative in nature wherein tens or hundreds of people have answered questions regarding bullying or being bullied (Kauppi & Pörhölä, 2012; Moore et al., 2012). Qualitative studies have been done, but mostly involved several focus groups where students were interviewed together (Athanasziades & Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, 2010; Bibou-nakou et al., 2012). Few studies, however, were discovered from the perspective of teachers addressing bullying in their own classroom. Therefore, additional research is warranted to address this literature gap.

Section 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, understand, and describe the phenomenon of classroom bullying in middle school from the perspectives and experiences of teachers. Given the negative outcomes associated with bullying, as well as the potential long-term negative outcomes for school youth, the bullying phenomenon merits serious attention for preventive intervention. Teachers are influential in students' daily lives, which include recognizing and responding to bullying incidents and implementing programs (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005). Teachers' perceptions of bullying and school policies will help determine the appropriate interventions necessary for teacher training.

In this section, I present the methodology and research approach that I used to carry out this study. The key components of this section are the research design, role of the researcher, sample selection, and data collection and analysis procedures. The following research questions were addressed:

1. How do teachers describe their experiences in addressing and preventing bullying behaviors at the middle school level?
2. What strategies do teachers find most effective in averting and preventing bullying behaviors at the middle school level?
3. What type of professional development do teachers receive on bullying policies in the management of bullying?

Research Design and Rationale

The research design selected for this study was a basic interpretative qualitative design. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is about exploring and understanding the meaning individuals and groups attribute to a social or human problem (p. 4). Qualitative research relies on nonnumerical data such as videos, pictures, images, and uses a wider lens to examine behavior holistically (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The interpretivist approach of qualitative research was the preferred method because it is concerned with meaning and seeks to understand people's definitions and understanding of a particular situation (Merriam, 2002). Conducted in a natural setting, with the researcher (myself) as the instrument, this study evolved around themes, patterns and clusters of information.

Merriam (2002) described the basic interpretative qualitative study as a tradition which exemplifies the characteristics of all forms of qualitative research because the researcher is primarily interested in understanding how participants make meaning of the phenomenon. In essence, the researcher is interested in understanding the worldviews and perspectives of the people involved. Given the variety of qualitative approaches, I chose to organize this study around this design because allowed me the flexibility to obtain information and an in-depth understanding of bullying from the perspectives of the teachers in their natural setting.

The Role of the Researcher

The role of the qualitative researcher is extremely important. In a qualitative study, the researcher is the subject matter expert who must ensure that the research

proceeds according to accepted research standards, ethical principles and procedures. In essence, I had the responsibility to explain, in great detail, what was discovered from the data collected and provide new insights about the topic under discussion (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Questions often reflect the interests of those who create them. To manage this, I set aside any preconceived ideas or notions about the outcomes, a process called bracketing.

Data Collection

In this study, I gathered information from 10 purposefully selected middle school teachers who will provide valuable information about the study topic. Sample size, in qualitative research, varies with the nature of the study (Creswell, 2009). Creswell posited that because of the large amount of data generated and the complexity of analyzing qualitative data, there is no set sample size for qualitative studies. The aim is to continue to gather data until saturation occurs or no new information is obtained. According to Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013), a sample size, in qualitative research, must be based upon an expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study and researcher's interest. The objective of this research was to select enough participants to ensure that enough data and information was obtained to provide valuable insight about student bullying.

Purposeful sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique that is useful in qualitative research when the researcher seeks to select a target sample because of a similar characteristic that is of particular interest to the researcher (Trochim, 2006). The criteria for selecting teachers was based primarily on their roles and responsibilities in the

classroom and the student's daily lives. The major aim was to generate a sample that was homogeneous and appropriate to the context of the study. The participants were 10 teachers who meet the following inclusion criteria:

- Over 21 years of age or over
- Presently certified as a teacher and work in a middle school
- Willing to share information about their experience and concerns with bullying in the classroom.
- Participate voluntarily

I recruited all participants based on the study inclusion criteria and participant's knowledge and experiences with bullying. The participants were teachers who taught a variety of subjects in the school system. It is important to note that my professional relationship was limited to knowing and working with participants, however, I had no supervisory relationship or power over the participants. There was open and honest communication with the participants in this study. Personal biases were controlled to ensure proper steps were taken to bracket any feelings or personal perspectives that might provide inject bias in the interpretation of the participants' perspectives.

Upon IRB approval, I invited the participants through the use of email or telephone. The recruitment letter included the following information: (a) an introductory paragraph with a description of the study purpose, (b) a brief description of participation, (c) the projected length of time to complete the interview(s), (d) any risks and inconveniences, (e) benefits, and (f) a privacy statement describing how the data and information were protected including the participant's confidentiality. If participants

agreed to participate, they were asked to sign an informed consent form. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes and was scheduled at a mutually agreed location. The participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data were collected through in-depth face-to-face interviews. Using face-to-face or direct interviews, I was able to adapt and clarify the questions as necessary. I was also able to pick up nonverbal cues from the respondent. I used semistructured interview questions to allow new ideas to be discussed during the interview based on what the participant states and provides an opportunity for themes to be explored. All questions were open-ended designed to help engage the participants and get them talking about their experiences and perceptions of bullying. There were nine prepared interview questions aligned with the research questions (see Appendix A). Examples of the interview questions were:

1. How would you describe acts of bullying that you have identified or acts of bullying reported to you by students in your classroom or in the school environment (i.e cafeteria, PE)?
2. How often do you believe these acts occur?
3. What actions did you take when these acts occurred? Were they effective?
4. Can you explain the school policies (if any) for teachers handling and reporting bullying?

To get the interview started and to ensure that participants met the inclusion criteria, opening demographic questions were asked. For example, How long have you

been teaching in middle school? This line of questioning was followed by the prepared questions. Depending upon the participant's response, each interview may last for approximately 45 minutes or longer. Field notes were made during the interviews of statements that may require additional follow up questions. Additionally, I used field notes to keep track of questions asked and the order of the interviews. I reviewed and transcribed all data as soon as possible following each interview.

Data Analysis

According to Hatch (2002), data analysis is a systematic approach for examining, organizing, and categorizing data in search for meaning. This process allowed me to see patterns, draft explanations for the problem of the study, make interpretations, and develop relationships. After the interview is completed, I will listen to the interview tapes to ensure that the information is complete and error free. I will look for common themes, shared beliefs, significant statements, and commonalities. Some researchers like to interpret and describe the meanings of the significant statements by making a list of the meanings (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

All transcripts were saved in Microsoft Word and uploaded into Atlas ti 6.0. qualitative software for management and storage. Atlas ti 6.0 is a powerful software tool designed to assist researchers in handling large amounts of textual, graphical, audio, and video data. Atlas ti 6.0 helps researchers to explore complex phenomena hidden in the textual and multimedia data. The qualitative software also includes the capability for storing, indexing, coding, and annotating data (Atlas ti 6.0 User's Guide, 2004). The process for analyzing data using Atlas ti 6.0 may vary with the researcher. The main

objective is to create a project called a hermeneutic unit (HU) that allows all files, findings, and codes are stored under an assigned name. I coded, categorized made sense of the essential meanings of the data.

There is no standard for identifying or discovering themes or coding schemes. The assigned codes should be consistent to minimize chances for error and reduce the reliability of the data. I used coding to separate the interview data and rearrange it into categories to be compared for commonalities and inconsistencies (Merriam, 2002). Common themes were identified using a several steps. First, I read and reread the transcripts in search of key words, phrases, and similarities. Patterns, categories, and emerging themes were identified. All discrepant data were noted for future consideration or for follow up interviews.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Research needs to be valid and consistent to be considered reliable (Merriam, 2009). Research data should also be credible and transferable to avoid the researcher from reaching an incorrect conclusion about a relationship in your observations (Trochim, 2006). The trustworthiness of a study is dependent on the credibility of the researcher. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Trochim, 2006). From a qualitative perspective transferability is primarily the responsibility of the researcher who is doing the generalizing. The researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough job of analyzing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research (Trochim, 2006). Transferability measures will include member checking, peer

review, and audit trail. With member checking, the participants were provided the opportunity to review a summary of their transcribed interpretations for accuracy of their observations. In addition, I requested a peer review of the transcripts and asked a peer to provide honest feedback on the findings. Any discrepancies found warranted revisions made to the statements. I also worked with the dissertation committee members who serve as peer reviewers and followed their recommendations and suggestions regarding the study.

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

A researcher has the responsibility of conducting ethical research in a manner that meets the highest standards outlined by the school and comply with any federal regulations for the protection of human participants in qualitative research. As such, I followed and complied with the guidelines established by Walden's to ensure that all risks to participants were minimized. All participants were required to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B). Measures were taken to protect the data and privacy of the participants and maintain the confidentiality of the data. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

All transcripts, notes, and tape recordings were properly stored in a secured area and protected area for the duration of the study. Backup copies of all research data were made in the event of damage or loss of information. Any documents stored on the researcher's computer was password protected and was accessible to the researcher only. Field notes, audio recordings, transcripts, and electronic data will be maintained for a period of 7 years after which all will be later destroyed. To further protect the

participant's privacy and confidentiality, the public middle school location and actual name of participants will not be identified in the study. In the event that questions of ethics should arise, the issues in question were reported immediately to the school IRB and members of dissertation committee.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in this section, I focused on the methodology for this study. The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to gain deeper insights into the problem of bullying with middle school students from a teacher's perspective. The key areas of the section focused on the research design, role of the researcher, criteria for selecting participants, data collection, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and measures of ethical protection of participants. Section 4 will include a description of the research study results and findings.

Section 4: Results

In this section, the results from the study and the procedures used to carry out this study are presented. The key components of this section are the data gathering process, the system used for keeping track of the data, the findings relevant to the research questions, discrepancy data, and a summary of the themes. The research design that I selected for this study was a basic interpretative qualitative design. The purpose of this study was qualitative research is exploring and understanding the meaning people attribute to a social or human problem (e.g., Creswell, 2007). Based on the study, six themes emerged.

Data Gathering Process

The research setting for this study was a middle school situated in a small, urban southern school district. Data were generated from primarily two sources, interviews and information gained from an in-depth examination and analysis of current literature. Participants were 10 teachers purposefully selected from the middle school who met the criteria for participation. The primary objective of this research study was to explore and determine how teachers describe their experiences in addressing and preventing bullying behaviors at the middle school level.

The data gathering process for this study began with seeking approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to the conduct study. Upon approval from IRB (Approval number 09-18-14-0042746), I notified the site administrator and informed her that I was approved and ready to launch the study. In addition, I explained to the administrator that all information gained from the teachers

would be valuable to improve a positive climate in the school. I was granted permission to contact teachers, invite them to participate, and arrange for the interviews on the school site.

All of the participants were invited to participate in the study via email or telephone. The letter of invitation included a brief introduction describing the purpose of the study, the projected length of time to complete the interview, and what to expect during the interview, and if they agreed to participate, they were required to sign a read and sign a written consent form. The participants were told that the interviews would be recorded. The interviews took place immediately following school hours in my office or in school library with no distractions and privacy was afforded.

System for Data Tracking

With the recent advances in computer technology and software, it was convenient for me to manage and store information more efficiently. The digitally recorded interviews were uploaded and saved on my password protected computer for easy access and transcribing. The recorded interviews were saved and labeled as audio files. All transcribed interviews were saved as Word documents and uploaded to Atlas ti 6.0 qualitative software for easy management and storage. I kept handwritten fields notes during the interviews to keep track of important points and to note statements that required additional follow up. The field notes were also helpful to keep track of the order of the interviews and the fictitious names assigned. All data from the interviews were reviewed and transcribed as soon as possible following the interviews.

The Findings

The findings of this study were predicated on the problem and research questions of this study. Central to the problem of this study was a gap in research which explored, and described the phenomenon of classroom bullying in middle school from the perspectives and experiences of teachers. The research question asked the following:

1. How do teachers describe their experiences in addressing and preventing bullying behaviors at the middle school level?
2. What strategies do teachers find most effective in averting and preventing bullying behaviors at the middle school level?
3. What type of professional development do teachers receive on bullying policies in the management of bullying?

To address the problem and research question, I used a qualitative interpretative research design as described in Section 3. This approach was preferred because it allowed me the flexibility to search for meaning and an in-depth understanding of bullying from the perspectives of 10 middle school teachers in their natural setting. The primary data source was the interview. This study evolved around themes, patterns, and clusters of information. I used the process of open coding beginning with reading and rereading through the transcripts and highlighting information that indicated common themes, patterns, and similarities. This was done in order to acquire a sense of the content of the transcripts and to make sure that information was properly transcribed.

The Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 10 purposefully selected middle school teachers from one small southern middle school with a student population of 350 students. The semistructured interviews were comprised of nine open-ended questions on the perceptions of school bullying from the perspectives of middle school teachers. The questions were designed specifically to address each research question. In addition to the interview questions, I asked for demographic information pertaining to gender and number of years of teaching experience.

Demographic Information

The sample in this study was comprised 90% ($n = 9$) females and 10% ($n = 1$) males. Two of the participants reported working in the district for less than 5 years, while seven participants reported working in the district for 6-10 years, and one participant reported working in the district for 15 years or longer. Each participant name was changed to protect his or her identity and confidentiality (see Table 1).

Interview Item Analysis

In the first questions of the interview, I asked for demographic information, name, grade taught, and years of experience, and those results were presented in Table 1, as shown in Table 1, 90% of the teachers were considered veteran teachers with greater than five years of teaching experience at the middle school grade level ranging from sixth through eighth. Ethel had only 2 years of teaching experience. With regard to gender, only one male teacher participated in the study. In fact, the present study site had only one male teacher.

Table 1

Teacher Demographics

Participants	Gender	Grade taught	Years of experience
April	Female	6	12
Betty	Female	6	6
CeCe	Female	7	9
Donna	Female	8	15
Ethel	Female	6	2
Fay	Female	6	8
Gail	Female	7	8
Harry	Male	6	7
Ida	Female	7/8	6
Joyce	Female	7/8	8

In the next line of questions (see Appendix A), I asked participants: What acts of bullying had they personally identified or were reported by students in their classroom or school? I also asked, what actions did they take when these acts occurred? Their responses varied widely. Seventy percent ($n = 7$) of participants stated that they had witnessed mainly physical and verbal bullying. Thirty percent ($n = 3$) said they had witnessed name calling the most. For example April (pseudonym) replied:

I have seen both physical bullying and verbal bullying. I've also been shown some cyber-bullying by various student over the past 4 or 5 years. This year I've had four reports of physical bullying and about five or six acts of verbal bullying

Continuing on, April explained that she compiled a list of the various types of bullying to make sure that her students could identify the varies types of bullying, "We go over the main types of bullying. A lot of them don't want to report it [bullying]"

because they think it is snitching.” April noted that she did this at the very beginning of the school year and have the students write a paper on bullying. “I do let them know that if bullying is reported to me, I will immediately report it to the counselor.” April said that she had reported several incidents of bullying to the counselor. Other actions taken by April included speaking with the students accused of bullying, reporting the incident to school security, and asking the assistant administrator along with law enforcement to speak to her class. April said that most times, her actions seemed to avert bullying but acknowledged that sometimes her strategies were not effective. “I was told recently there was an incident of bullying by the same student and I know for a fact that I’ve spoken with her and the administrators have spoken with her, as well as law enforcement.”

Betty claimed that she had witnessed name calling, students posting things on social media outlets, and picking fights. “I confronted the student(s), conferenced with them, referred to counselor or administrator, and contacted the parents. Betty said most of the time the problem was resolved. Similarly to April and Betty, CeCe said she had witnessed physical bullying, verbal bullying, and was told of instances of cyberbullying. She said when these acts occurred, she would talk to the student first to make sure he/she was okay. Then said she immediately referred the student to the school counselor for further assistance. She claimed that her actions were usually effective.

In summary, most of the participants had very similar responses to the first two interview questions. A summary of their responses are shown in Table 2 that follows:

Table 2

Summary of Responses to Interview Questions 1 and 2

Participants	Acts of bullying witnessed	Actions taken
April	Physical and verbal bullying; told of cyberbullying	Reported bullying to the counselor; speaking with the students accused of bullying, reporting the incident to authorities (school security, assistant administrator); invited school administrator and law enforcement to speak to class.
Betty	Name calling, students posting things on social media outlets, picking fights	Confronted the student(s), conferences, referred to counselor or administrator, contacted the parents.
CeCe	Physical bullying, verbal bullying, told of instances of cyberbullying.	Talked to students involved; immediately referred the student to the school counselor for further assistance.
Donna	Physical: hitting, fighting, shoving, and pushing	Refer student to school counselor
Ethel	Identified “mean girls behavior”- students being teased about their parents, grades, and their attire.	Document the behavior, alert the counselor of such behaviors, talk to each student involved about what they can do if they are being bullied.
Faye	Physical and verbal bullying	talk with the bully and the victim; refer both to the guidance counselor
Gail	Name calling	Verbal warnings, parent phone calls/conferences, and office referral.
Harry	Hitting, pushing, tripping Slapping, spitting, stealing destroying possessions,	Show support to the student, talk to the victim report to school administrators
Ida	Name calling	Sent the young man or young lady to the guidance office
Joyce	Verbal and physical	Reported to the case manager, the assistant principal, and the school counselor

As shown in Table 2, physical and verbal bullying were the main forms of bullying personally witnessed by the participants. All of the participants reported the acts of bullying to the school counselor. When I asked how effective the actions taken were, the responses varied. The majority (80%) felt that the actions were effective in averting the bullying behavior of the individual student involved in bullying at that time. However, two teachers seemed to think that it was just a temporary fix to the bullying problem of some of the students. For example April said:

I was told last week that there was an incident of bullying by the same student. I know for a fact that I've spoken with her as well as the school administrators, law enforcement, and the counselor have spoken with her several times.

Joyce noted that contacting the administrator and school counseling was effective. She said a behavior plan was established for the student and a case manager is working to provide incentives for the bully. However, she believed stricter consequences should be the first step in resolving the issue.

I understand the bully has issues that are documented in his behavior plan, but that should not excuse his behavior. Someone has to protect the students who he chooses to kick, punch, or spit on.

The next three interview questions (see Appendix A) addressed the teachers' perceptions of the source of bullying and school policies. I asked the teachers what they believed was the major source of bullying in the school. The responses varied widely. Some examples reported are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Examples of Sources of Bullying

Participants	Sources of Bullying
April	Home environment, feeling insecure, peer pressure; not taught how to socially interact and how to resolve conflict
Betty	Kids trying to fit in or be cool
CeCe	Unsupervised Internet access
Donna	Too much playing
Ethel	Cannot deal with inner issues; learned behavior
Fay	Students view violence in a positive light; students tend to gravitate to bullies
Gail	No knowledge of how bullying affect others
Harry	No home discipline
Ida	Students have low self esteem
Joyce	Students do not understand the consequences of their actions

As shown in Table 3, the participant responses on the major source of bullying in school ranged from students feeling insecure to simply not understanding the impact their actions had on others. It appeared that 50% of the participants felt that students were insecure as a result of low self-esteem. CeCe felt that many students lacked the proper Internet supervision. She said:

I believe more students are unsupervised and participating in social communities that allow them to hide behind screens and tease other students. Technology has opened the door for students to bully without consequences. They do not feel like they are breaking any rules, because they are not on the school property when these acts of harassment take place (CeCe, 2014).

In addition to identifying the home environment as a source of bullying, April said, “Many middle school students become bullies because they have been bullied and they are simply tired of it. Instead of handling it in a more positive way, they just turn into what they hate.” (CeCe, 2014).

When I asked about school policies, the majority (80%) of the teachers stated there was a school policy in place. April explained:

To my knowledge, our policy is to first address it with our students, then of course to report it any incidents to our school counselors, school administrators and allow them to deal with it. We do have the option as teachers to complete bullying and harassment form and report it directly to the school board.

Continuing, April explained that the school has a no tolerance zone for bullying and most of the teachers understand that policy. Bullying that was reported to the proper authority was handled according to the policies that are set in place. April also noted that the bullying authorities included the counselors, school administrators, and law enforcement if needed. On the question of school policy, Betty claimed that teachers were to report any forms of bullying to appropriate staff members and that all students were required to sign a bullying and harassment form. Proof of this form was obtained by

me from school counselor. (See Figure 1). Continuing, she explained that the guidance counselor provides non-bullying comprehensive guidance lessons to incoming sixth graders and provided prevention and intervention lessons for students. In sum, all of the teachers indicated they were required to report and did report any incidents of school bullying to school administrators immediately or school counselors.

NOTICE OF RECEIPT FORM	
<p>I _____, a student enrolled in _____ (Student's name) _____ (Name of School) <u>and my parent/guardian hereby acknowledge by our signatures that we have received, read, and understand, and/ or had read to us and understand, the 2014-2015 Code of Student Behavior. We understand that these policies and laws apply to all parents and students enrolled in [REDACTED] Public Schools, and at all activities and events, including school buses, sponsored or supervised by [REDACTED] school officials.</u></p>	
<p>_____</p> <p>Student Signature</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p>
<p><i>NOTE: If the student lives with both parents/guardians, both are to sign the statement. If the student only lives with one parent, only one signature is required. Failure to return this form does not absolve student or parent from the requirements stated in this Code of Student Behavior.</i></p>	

Figure 1. Student Bullying/Harassment Notice of Receipt Form

Contrary to the majority of the participant responses of the other teachers on school policies, two participants said they were unaware of the school's policy on bullying. Faye claimed she was not aware of any particular policies in place geared towards the management of school bullying. Similarly, Joyce said that she knew that

teachers attended a professional development workshop recently on bullying, but was not aware of the school's bullying policies.

The last three interview questions focused on the professional development and training the teachers had received for addressing bullying and the actions they would recommend for teachers and students to avert or prevent bullying. When I asked the participants about their professional development and training, 70% (n=7) reported that they had received no school provided professional development or bullying training of any type. Three of the 10 teachers said they had received some professional development on their own. For example, Faye said, "I have taken several school counseling courses that helped me identify and handle bullying. However, I have not received any professional development." Harry noted, "There are webinar series for educators, parents and youth-serving professionals supported with funding from the Highmark Foundation. Each session provides information on the most current research or relevant topics to the field of bullying prevention." Harry had attended this webinar. In spite of the lack of training and professional development by most of the teachers, all (100%) provided recommendations for teachers and students to avert or prevent bullying. The essence of their responses are shown in Table 3 that follows:

Table 4

Teachers Recommendations to Avert School Bullying

Participants	Recommendations for teachers	Recommendations for students
April	Take a stand in the classroom; team with the counselor, administrators, and law enforcement; professional development	Report bullying at school and on the school bus.
Betty	Stop and address acts of bullying immediately	Report problem immediately; Stay away from the bullies
CeCe	Create a bully free climate; set the peaceful tone in classroom	Tell an adult immediately
Donna	Open communication between staff members	Be proactive. Students are encouraged to avoid social media activities.
Ethel	Incorporating the teaching of non-confrontational skills; Create an open environment in the classroom where students feel comfortable to discuss bullying	Recommend that students frame their action with “Is what I am doing making this person better?”
Fay	No tolerance of bullying; Team with counselor, administrators, and law enforcement	Report observed acts of bullying to others and self
Gail	Be aware of their surroundings; get to know the students on a deeper level, other than academically; arrange an assembly on bullying prevention	Report bullying to authorities
Harry	Educate students and remind them how bullying affects others.	Recognize the signs of bullying and report it to an adult
Ida	Open classroom discussions with students about bullying	Do not be afraid to report bullying to proper authorities
Joyce	Know your students and encourage positive behavior	Pick friends wisely; Tell the proper adult when bullying occurs

As shown in Table 4, the participants' bullying recommendations for teachers varied widely. However, an overwhelming majority (n=8) of the participants recommended that students should report any acts of bullying immediately to the proper authority. Open communication and discussions were key recommendations among all of the participants.

Summary of Findings in Relation to Patterns and Themes

In this entire qualitative research process, I focused on learning the meaning that the participants held about the problem of bullying collected from interviews with 10 middle school teachers. The participants' analyzed data revealed several distinct similarities and commonalities, which led to the following seven emerging themes:

- The teachers play an important role in bullying prevention
- School counselors' role in bullying intervention and prevention
- Physical and verbal bullying are the most witnessed acts in middle school
- Social media and Internet communities influence school bullying
- Teachers' lack bullying professional development and training
- School policies in the management of bullying
- Classroom level interventions

Teachers play an important role in bullying prevention. The first theme emerged was based solely on the similarities in responses from the teachers. The findings suggested that all (100%) of the teachers had observed or encountered some acts of school bullying often reported to them by students. Although the teachers may have used different interventions to avert or prevent bullying, they were required to report any

incidents and student to the proper authority, which was usually the school counselor.

Other interventions reported by the teachers included documenting the bullying incident, open class discussions on bullying, and encouraging students to report observed acts immediately to their parents or school administrators.

School counselors' role in bullying intervention and prevention. The school counselor's name was mentioned more than 40 times during the interviews. All of the participants said they reported bullying to the school counselor. The findings indicated that the school counselors often visited the classroom to speak with students about bullying behaviors and ways to combat bullying. It was unclear how often school counselors visited the classrooms throughout the year; however, Betty explained that the guidance counselor provided non-bullying comprehensive guidance lessons to incoming sixth graders and provided prevention and intervention lessons for students upon request from the teachers.

Physical and verbal bullying are the most witnessed acts in middle school. All of the teachers claimed they had witnessed some forms of physical or verbal bullying. This was a pattern throughout the interviews. Physical acts reported as shown in Table 2 included acts such as pushing, fighting, kicking, and shoving. The most prevalent verbal acts were name calling and teasing.

School bullying is influenced by social media and Internet communities. Most of the teachers believed that the most frequently occurring bullying in middle school was cyberbullying and verbal bullying, such as name calling and teasing. The teachers felt that cyberbullying was more prevalent at the middle school level because the

students often have unsupervised access to a computer, cell phone, and the Internet in general with the presence of Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets.

Professional development in bullying intervention. A majority (n=7) of the teachers claimed they had received no professional development or bullying training. However, in spite of the teachers not having school sponsored training, three participants had received training from other sources. These included web and Internet sources and elective training offered during summers.

School policies in the management of bullying. Another theme related to school policies on bullying. An overwhelming majority (80%) of the teachers said the school had written school policies on the management of bullying and teachers were required to follow the guidelines. Two of the teachers claimed they were unaware of the school policies. All of the teachers said that they were required to report bullying in a referral if observed, or if reported by a student, contact an administrator and/or counselor. The teachers said that a full investigation is then conducted through the counselor's office. On follow up, the two teachers acknowledged that they had forgotten about the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy that is included in the 2013-2014 *Code of Student Handbook* (MPS, 2014).

The *Code of Student Handbook* (MPS, 2014) clearly stated that the bullying policy applies to any student behavior that occurs on school property, which included school buses and any school-sponsored events on or off campus. The handbook also applies to off campus behavior that significantly impacts the educational environment, including the use of social media, and electronic communications.

Classroom level interventions. Classroom level interventions were identified as a theme as participants described their recommendations for teachers. The establishment of classroom rules, regular class discussions on bullying, and parent conference were actions taken by several of the teachers to prevent bullying. School counselors and law enforcement were often invited in to speak with the students. As previously shown in Table 2, the teachers said they intervened in nearly every instance of bullying. Five of the teachers mentioned that they incorporated some form of bullying prevention/intervention information into their class discussions from time to time. Their goal was for the students to learn what bullying was and how they should react to bullying situations. In the process, they invited the school counselor, school administrators, and law enforcement to speak with to their class.

Findings in Relation to the Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do teachers describe their experiences in addressing and preventing bullying behaviors at the middle school level?

Based on the findings, the teachers' experiences with student bullying and how they addressed bullying varied, but were similar in nature. The majority of the teachers described most acts of bullying in middle school as cyberbullying and verbal bullying. Ethel noted that cyberbullying was on the rise. The feeling was that Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets give students a false sense of security and superiority behind a computer screen. Although the majority of teachers reported fighting as the main type of physical bullying, verbal bullying was described as mainly name calling.

The teachers believed that most middle school bullying behaviors stemmed from the home environment, peer pressure, feelings of insecurity, and low self-esteem. Aside from these factors, cyberbullying was believed to result from a lack of parental supervision when participating in social media communities. As one participant noted, “Technology has opened the door for students to bully without consequences. The feeling was that students do not realize they are breaking any rules, because they are not on school premises when these acts of harassment take place.

Research Question 2. What strategies do teachers find most effective in averting and preventing bullying behaviors at the middle school level?

The majority of the teachers used classroom level interventions to prevent bullying behaviors. These included open classroom discussions, reporting incidences of bullying immediately to school counselors, office referrals, and parental phone conferences. Other actions included proper documentation, and team support involving the school counselor, some administrators, and law enforcement. These strategies seemed to curtail bullying, but did not appear to stop the bullying as expressed by April, who reported 4 acts of physical bullying and 5 or 6 acts of verbal bullying since the beginning of the school. All of the teachers encouraged students to report any form of bullying observed.

Research Question 3. What type of professional development do teachers receive on bullying policies in the management of bullying?

The findings indicated that the majority (70%) of the teachers at the school had no professional development and training. Three of the participants stated they had some

professional development on bullying from the Internet based Webinar and through counseling workshops. April explained:

We are informed that we do have a no tolerance policy in our building. We are given information from the school counselor as far as ways to handle bullying situations, as well as the administrator. Like I said, I've had the administrator to come to my classes and speak with all of my student to get so that they would have a clear meaning that we are a no tolerance school when it comes to bullying.

Continuing April said that during faculty meetings bullying is mentioned by the counselor. "It is not as in-depth and I would like for all of our teachers to be informed understand what bullying is, the varies types of bullying because of cyber-bullying." April felt she needed a lot more professional development as to what bullying is and more effective ways the school could eliminate it in the schools and in the classrooms.

Discrepant Data

Despite the number of similarities and commonalities generated from the findings, the findings indicated some discrepancy or misinforming information. I was surprised to learn that two of the participants (Faye and Joyce) were totally unaware of any school policy in force on the management of school bullying. I was equally as surprised to learn that only three of the teachers had received some form of professional development. I checked with the school counselor and verified that the school does have a written policy on the management of bullying, and I obtained a copy.

A copy of the *2014- 2015 Student Code of Conduct Handbook* revealed and confirmed most of what the teachers had stated. There was a section on page 42 which clearly defined bullying and harassment. The policy stated that:

Teachers and other school staff who witness acts of bullying or receive student reports of bullying are required to promptly notify the school principal or his/her designated staff. Reports should be made on the Bullying/Harassment Complaint Form- attached in the Code of Student Behavior handbook. The report may be mailed or personally delivered to the principal or his or her designee. The school principal or his or her designated administrator is required to accept and investigate all reports of harassment or bullying. The school principal or designated administrator is required to notify the parent or guardian of a student who commits a verified act of harassment or bullying of the response of the school staff and consequences of the verified act and/or the consequences that may result from further acts of bullying (MPS, 2014).

Evidence of Quality

As the primary instrument of this study, I have the responsibility of conducting this study in a manner that meets the highest standards of quality expected by the school and community partners. In qualitative research, some responses may contradict or run counter to any particular category or specific pattern. That was the case in this study as mentioned in the previous section. I properly noted and addressed the discrepant data to create the inference of trustworthiness and quality.

To enhance quality, I included measures such as member checking, peer review, and made field notes during data analysis. When the data were transcribed, I asked three of the participants to review a summary of the transcripts for accuracy in interpretations. They confirmed that the statements were an accurate summary of their accounts. A qualified peer reviewer examined four of the transcripts and provide feedback on her interpretations of the findings. Moreover, I continued to work with the dissertation committee members and follow their recommendations regarding the study.

Conclusion

This purpose of this qualitative study was to address the problem of middle school bullying from the perspectives of 10 middle school teachers. All of the teachers interviewed believed bullying takes place during school, after school, and on the computer through cyberbullying. Most bullying witnessed by the teachers was verbal bullying, such as name calling. Teachers believed that more adult supervision is needed at home to decrease bullying behavior. Based on the finding, seven major themes emerged relevant to the teachers' perception. (a) teachers play an important role in bullying prevention; (b) school counselors role in bullying intervention and prevention; (c) social media and Internet communities influence bullying; (d) teachers' professional development and training; (e) school policies in the management of bullying, and (f) classroom level interventions. This study will continue in Section 5 with a discussion, recommendation, and conclusion.

Section 5: Conclusions, Discussions, and Recommendations

The focus of this basic interpretative qualitative study was exploring and describing the phenomenon of school bullying in middle school from the perspectives and experiences of 10 purposefully selected middle teachers. The general problem of this study was the rise in bullying within a southern middle school. Bullying behaviors included students teasing, arguing, fighting, and other types of disruptive behaviors. Subsequently, the quality of education came into question.

In-depth face-to-face interviews and field notes provided the data for the study. Information was gathered from 10 purposefully selected middle school teachers who provided valuable information about the study topic. The research questions examined middle school teachers' experiences in bullying and strategies used to identify and effectively counter bullying in school. Data analysis included coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis.

The results of the study revealed seven major themes relevant to the teachers' perception: (a) teachers play an important role in bullying prevention; (b) school counselors role in bullying intervention and prevention; (c) physical and verbal bullying in middle school; (d) social media and Internet communities influence school bullying; (e) teachers' lack bullying professional development and training; (f) school policies in the management of bullying, and (g) classroom level interventions. The following section presents a discussion on the findings and the relevant literature that supports the findings.

Interpretation of the Findings

Research Question 1: How do teachers describe their experiences in addressing and preventing bullying behaviors at the middle school level?

Teachers play an important role in bullying prevention was a major theme developed from the patterns and similarities during analysis of the teachers responses from the interviews. Consistent with the findings, Mishna, Cook, Gadalla, Daciuk, and Solomon (2010) noted that the attitude of teachers play a significant role in determining teacher's level of awareness of bullying and how they engaged in addressing and preventing middle school bullying, as in the present study. Because of the amount of teacher contact with students, perceptions of teachers regarding student bullying forms was determined to be an important first step in minimizing or averting this type behavior. The outcome of the research revealed that all of the teachers were greatly aware of the bullying problems within their school. Many researchers reported that teachers sometime have difficulty distinguishing between school bullying and peer conflict (Strohmeier & Noam, 2012). That was not the case for these teachers. They were aware of different types of bullying and expressed interest in averting bullying behaviors in the middle school.

Based on the findings, the teachers' perceptions and experiences with student bullying, and how they addressed bullying varied but were very similar in nature. The teachers perceived physical and verbal bullying as the most common forms of bullying witnessed in the middle school, which gave rise to this theme. Acts of verbal aggression in this study were reported by the teachers as mainly name calling and teasing. Although

some researchers reported that verbal bullying is the most common type (Goldweber, Waasdrop, & Bradshaw, 2012), it is inconclusive as to which form is more prevalent. The *Code of Student Behavior Handbook* (2014) described bullying as:

Any repeated and pervasive verbal, written, or electronic expression, physical act or gesture, or a pattern thereof, that is intended to cause distress upon one or more students in the school, on school grounds, in school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, or at school activities or sanctioned events, whether on or off school property. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, hazing, harassment, intimidation or menacing acts directed at a student which may, but need not be, based on the student's race, color, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, mental, physical or sensory disability, socioeconomic background, age, or sexual orientation (MCS, 2014, p. 4).

Although the majority of teachers in the present study reported fighting as the main type of physical bullying witnessed, verbal bullying done in cyberbullying was believed to be more prevalent. The general feeling was that Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets gave students a false sense of security and superiority behind a computer screen. According to (NCES, 2013), cyberbullying can take many forms, which includes but not limited to: (a) sending mean messages or threats via email account or cell phone; (b) spreading rumors online or through texts; (c) posting hurtful or threatening messages on social networking sites or web pages, and (d) sexting, or circulating sexually suggestive or explicit pictures of another person (Bullying statistics, 2013).

The teachers believed that most middle school bullying behaviors stemmed from the home environment, peer pressure, feelings of insecurity, and low self-esteem. Aside from these factors, cyber bullying was believed to result from a lack of parental supervision when participating in social media communities. As one participant noted, “Technology has opened the door for students to bully without consequences.” The findings from the study were clearly supported by the literature. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that nearly a third of all students aged 12 - 18 have been bullied at school (NCES, 2013). There was noticeably more bullying in middle school (grades 6, 7, and 8) than in higher grade levels. Emotional bullying was reported as the most prevalent type of bullying, involving acts such as pushing and shoving. In the present study, most teachers reported name calling.

The NCES (2013) listed cyberbullying as the least prominent type of bullying for the middle grade levels; whereas, in the present study, the teachers believed cyberbullying was more prevalent, although they did not personally witness this form of bullying. Perhaps, this could be explained because this type of bullying usually occurs after school hours via Internet. The ever increase in use of mobile technology, such as cell phones and iPads, may explain the difference (Allen, 2010; Sbarbaro & Smith, 2011).

In summary, cyberbullying is widespread and the literature does support the findings that cyberbullying is common in middle school when children have more access to technology (Allen, 2010; Sbarbaro & Smith, 2011). Moore, Huebner, and Hills (2012) conducted a study on cyberbullying regarding middle school students, when bullying is

supposedly at its peak though declining somewhat by high school. Moore et al. found that 14% of middle school students regularly engaged in cyberbullying and 20% were victims of this bullying. Bullies had significant associations with parental marital status, gender, and grades whereas the victim had significant correlations with grade in school, SES, ethnic group, and parental marital status. Generally, males were more likely to be victims and girls more likely to be bullies (Moore et al., 2012).

Middle school teachers can play an important role in preventing cyberbullying. Kowalski (2008) claimed that middle school is a peak time for cyberbullying or becoming victims of cyberbullying, especially through instant messaging and texting, on which young adolescents rely on more than other forms of technological communication. One intervention Kowalski recommended for teachers is conflict resolution because it is likely that both victim and bully are partly to blame for the act. Kowalski revealed that in 2008, 36 states in the United States had passed bullying-specific legislation and six statutes were connected particularly to electronic bullying (Missouri, South Carolina, Idaho, Arkansas, Iowa, and Washington State).

Research Question 2. What strategies do teachers find most effective in averting and preventing bullying behaviors at the middle school level?

Most teachers felt their actions were effective, at least temporary. The only bullying-related activities conducted by most teachers (80%) involved serious talks with the bully and victims of bullying when the situation arose, referrals to school counselor, and office referrals. Bullying prevention literature confirmed that effective bullying prevention activities must involve an entire team approach (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

Teachers must be trained not only to recognize overt and covert forms of bullying but also learn how to address such behaviors. Most important, any programs must be sustained over years because the research has shown that they lose their effectiveness over time if not set for the long term.

The majority of the teachers used classroom level interventions to avert or prevent bullying behaviors. These included open classroom discussions, reporting incidence of bullying immediately to school counselors, office referrals, and parental phone conferences. Other actions included proper documentation, and team support involving school counselor, administrators, and law enforcement. These findings are consistent with the literature. Classroom management and open classroom discussions put a focus on the issue highlighting the lack of appropriate training, which leaves the children vulnerable, thereby impacting the rate of bullying practices (Glasner, 2010).

One of the key strategies that teachers reported was referral of student bullying to the school counselor, which gave rise to the theme of *school counselor's role in bullying intervention and prevention*. School counselors contributed to the academic success of all students in their academic, career, and social development (Cornell, & Mehta, 2011). Because school counselors work with the entire middle school population, they may be more aware of school bullying issues due to their unique role. Cornell and Mehta (2011) noted that school counselors are trained to address bullying concerns and are experts in interpersonal communication skills. Given this skill set, counselors are prepared to respond to bullying in schools and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to implement effective programs and interventions.

The findings suggested that school counselors have become increasingly involved with bullying prevention efforts; however, their role in these interventions were not fully explained. Two teachers said that school counselors spoke to the entering six grade class at the beginning of each school on the topic of bullying. However, it was unclear as to what happened when students were referred to school counselors for bullying. Cornell and Mehta (2011) noted that counselors should not assume that a student who self-reports being bullied is actually a victim. The premise is that some students can misconstrue some forms of peer conflict as bullying and should not be presumed to be victims without some inquiry. Counselors must approach the subject of bullying with students in a careful and supportive manner.

One of the responsibilities of school counselors is to disseminate information to students, parents, teachers, and school administrators (Cornell & Mehta, 2011). As the findings indicated, school counselors are positioned to use their leadership skills to impart fundamental knowledge relevant to school bullying that can lead to change in the behaviors of students and advance the knowledge of teachers. This may include inviting parents and teachers to attend group sessions related to bully prevention. This may give them guidance on how to address this topic with their children at home and in school. Comprehensive bully prevention plans, information on indicators of bullying within school environments, along with anti-bullying curricula for students can be accessed from several allying organizations (Cerf, Hespe, Gantwerk, Martz, & Vermeire, 2011).

Research Question 3. What type of professional development do teachers receive on bullying policies in the management of bullying?

The findings indicated that the majority (70%) of the teachers at the school had no professional development and training. Three of the participants stated they had some professional development on bullying from the Internet based Webinar and through counseling workshops. Professional development about bullying is needed to prepare teachers to deal effectively. Research suggested that although schools are providing in-service training on many subjects, they often do not cover the topic of bullying (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & O'Brennan, 2013). School districts may consider providing in-service training regarding the specific antibullying policies of the district and how teachers are expected to participate in interventions. Targeted training for school personnel can improve their knowledge of bullying intervention skills, use of these skills.

Literature reviewed and additional research supported the claim by one of the participants that webinars on bullying are available for educators. One online webinar offered by Center for Safe Schools (2014) was entitled *Best Practices in Bullying Prevention: Components of Effective Practice at the School Level*. The Center for Safe Schools provides schools bullying prevention resources for effective implementation, sustainability, and evaluation of bullying prevention programs that contribute to changes in student attitudes and behaviour. The Center offers professional development trainings, web-based courses, community-learning opportunities, and support to school personnel.

Many schools have adopted formal programs to prevent and reduce bullying and were deemed successful (Erwin-Jones, 2008; Frey, Hirschstein, Edstrom, & Snell, 2010;

Glasner, 2010). However, this was not the case for this school. Teachers generally expressed willing to engage in bullying prevention; however, as previously mentioned, many claimed they lacked training, which may make them reluctant to step in or even recognize when bullying is happening, especially when it is subtle. Barnes et al. (2012) suggested that teachers lack of training can make the behaviors unrecognizable by teachers. The key tenant is that the attitudes of teachers and how they perceived bullying may be directly related to their level of training. It is a foregone conclusion that professional development programs need to be sustained so that the educators can be better equipped with the skills, understanding, and self-efficacy to address bullying on a school wide level through practice and policy (Barnes et al., 2012).

Theoretical Implications

A key finding in the study was some of the teachers' belief that a child's home environment, feeling insecure, peer pressure, and not being taught at home how to socially interact were the main sources of bullying. These findings were supported by Bandura's (1989) social learning theory, which suggested that individuals learn by observing others. The social learning theory emphasized the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Consistent with the teachers' beliefs, Bandura's theory supports the idea that certain factors influence a child's behavior. These include the following:

1. Children learn by modeling the behavior of others and the outcome of those behaviors.
2. Children inherit behavior traits from their parents.

3. Social factors influence how children act because of their desire to be accepted by peers.
4. Teasing and other bullying actions are often manifested by children who do not have secure home and/or school surroundings (Bandura, 1989).

Bandura's theory (1989) further suggested that children learn to become violent when exposed to violence in early life. Environment plays a part in the reactions of students. With Bandura's theory used as a framework, it helped explain teachers' beliefs about the source of students' behaviors who become bullies. The premise is that children tend to imitate what they have learned, which teachers need to understand fully to address bullying behaviors in the classroom.

Implications for Social Change

This study focused on an issue that is prevalent in the schools today - bullying. The findings brought to the forefront that bullying does not occur in a vacuum. Unless teachers come to the classroom with skills that allow them to establish a culture that minimizes or avert student bullying behavior, there is likely to be an environment that is predisposed to bullying problems. As the findings suggested, bullying is often mistakenly perceived as only a problem between two individuals, but in reality it is a broader issue; it is rooted in social values that allow or even promote ostracism and victimization. Teachers are well positioned to spearhead social change that can reduce this damaging behavior by addressing the underlying causes. The best ways to deal with bullying are to create a climate of inclusion and to promote the learning of appropriate social skills, so that positive behavior can emerge.

The Department for Children, Schools, Families (2007) called for a united effort to address and prevent bullying. As the teachers indicated, it takes an entire school community to create an inviting school climate where everyone feels that they belong and are safe. Working together, administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, and students can help avert bullying in schools and make school a community of learning and positive socialization.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations for actions are suggested. The findings indicated that teachers encouraged students to report all instances of bullying. This was a positive approach. Teachers and students should continue to speak up. The premise is that victims of bullying do not always report when they have been attacked, so teaching children to report any bullying they witness is important.

The present study revealed that at least three of the interviewees were not aware of bullying policies in the school or even in the district. The others believed that the policies should be discussed and or reviewed other than just at the opening of the school year. With that in mind, in order to help with bullying in the classroom, teachers need more professional development to be able to recognize bullying before it became a major problem. By placing bullying on the school's agenda throughout the school year and maybe in the district's professional development agenda this will help not only the classroom teacher, but it would help to educate the district and parents alike.

Recommendations are intended to support the academic success of students and reduce bullying behaviors in the middle school population. In light of the findings, it may

be important to involve key stakeholders in a positive dialogue to incorporate insights and recommendations resulting from this study. With the permission of the school administrator, I will disseminate the findings of this study among school counselors and other teachers in an open forum (inservice education) to present teacher's perceptions on school bullying. Teachers and other school personnel need to have a general understanding of bullying and how to uniformly address the issues. All teachers should be knowledgeable about any existing specific school policies regarding bullying, its prevention, and current and updated information. Ideally, school districts should provide training about such policies prior to the start of each school year.

Recommendations for Further Research

DeVoe and Bauer (2010) reported that 36% to 43% of middle school students reported being bullied at school during an average school year. Although, the literature clearly demonstrated that bullying negative impacts students at all grade levels, more research is needed at the middle school level to further explore and better understand teacher awareness and involvement in the reduction of bullying. In addition to this, more research is needed to fully explore the extent of teachers' roles in providing the appropriate interventions. The teachers in the study noted there were some instance of bullying repeated by the same students. More studies are needed from the teacher's perspective, especially from those who cope with addressing bullying in the classroom. Examining perspectives of bullying from school counselors is needed, especially since the study revealed that students were referred to school counseling in every instance of classroom bullying.

Research literature was lacking in several other key areas, which included topics on teacher and student bullying. Research is needed to explore student to teacher bullying and teacher to student bullying and how these dynamics contribute to bullying in the classroom. The premise is that much more needs to be known about teachers who bully students and students who bully teachers. The challenge will be to find schools, administrators, and teachers who would welcome capturing the experiences of students and teachers in this topic.

Reflections on Researcher's Experience

Throughout this research process, insights were gleaned on the importance of adequate research preparation, the role of the researcher, and being confident enough to explore the unknown. Completing this dissertation using qualitative research was a very rewarding task, yet presented a number of challenges beginning with sorting through hours and hours of transcripts and notes. The main task was wondering whether I was following the right qualitative procedures trying to make sense of a lot of information. Specifically, what I learned was there was no clear cut manner and exact method set for reporting findings in qualitative research. My primary focus was to produce a quality body of research and ultimately understand the underlying experiences and perceptions of middle school teachers related to bullying behaviors of middle school students.

One of the most challenging tasks I experienced was conducting the data analysis and dealing with personal bias. As the process continued, I learned to set aside any preconceived ideas and thoughts in order to allow the participants' voices to be heard. Coding and developing categories and themes provided a framework for the data analysis

process. I learned that to do it very well takes a lot of experience, not to mention time and effort. However, the tasks were so rewarding and worthwhile as the findings began to unfold.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic interpretative qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of classroom bullying in middle school from the perspectives and experiences of 10 teachers. The research questions examined middle school teachers' experiences in bullying and strategies used to identify and effectively counter bullying in school. Bandura's theories of moral disengagement and social learning theory of aggression guided and informed this qualitative research. Information was gathered from 10 purposefully selected middle school teachers who provided valuable information about the study topic. Data analysis included coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis.

The literature and the findings suggested that school bullying is a long-standing problem with potentially severe consequences. Because teachers spend the most time with students while at school it is imperative for teachers to have knowledge and an understanding of effective bullying prevention and intervention programs. In addition it is important for school districts to regularly provide training to support teachers in such bullying prevention and intervention roles.

Although all teachers would benefit from bullying prevention and intervention training, the school district may want to focus more on providing training for the middle school teachers. As many of the teachers in the study have done, it is important to incorporate bullying prevention/intervention information into the curriculum so that

students learn what bullying is and how they can efficiently react to the bullying situations themselves. If both students and teachers become well educated about bullying prevention and schools provide consistent consequences for bullying incidents, school bullying may be reduced. Social change will be realized when teachers as well as other professionals respond effectively to bullying incidents in schools and students are able to enter peaceful, productive classrooms and schools.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Sareta Brown

The following interview questions will be used to guide the line of interview questioning:

Thank you for participating in this interview.

1. What acts of bullying have you personally identified or were reported to you by students in your classroom or school?
2. What actions did you take when these acts occurred? Were they effective?
3. What types of bullying do you believe are more prevalent in middle school?
4. What do you believe is the major source of bullying?
5. Can you explain the school policies (if any) for teachers handling and reporting bullying?
6. What type of bullying policies are in place at your school in the management of school bullying?
7. What type of professional training or development have you had on the topic of school bullying?
8. What actions would you recommend for teachers to avert or prevent bullying?

What action would you recommend for students to avert or prevent bullying?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of the *Teachers' Perspectives of Classroom Bullying in Middle School*. You were chosen for the study because of your knowledge and experience on the subject matter. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Sareta Brown, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study is to explore and understand the perspectives of phenomenon of bullying in middle school from the perspectives of teachers.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Meet with the researcher at a mutually agreeable location for a duration of approximately 1 hour.
- Participate in an informal and conversational interview
- Feel free to refuse to answer any given question.
- Participate in an interview that will be audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis, and in which the researcher will take field notes.
- Agree to discuss the results of research with the researcher, either by telephone or in person.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will be respected and no one at Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study, or for any other reason, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal or, for whatever other reason, you decline to answer.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. Say here, too, that information on each person will be reported in the aggregate. You will want to quote people, but can do that by using fake names or number designations. Tell what you will do and how you will do it here. This means that you cannot list specific job titles, either.

You also need to write on this form (and in the body of your proposal) that you will protect all electronic data and notes in a locked file cabinet in the closet of your home office (or wherever you decide), and that you are the only person who will have access to the key. Say, too, that it will be locked for a period of seven years, at which time it will be destroyed.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-xxx-xxxx, extension xxxx. Walden University's approval number for this study is: _____
The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By insert signing below, I agree to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Date of consent _____

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature _____

Researcher's Written or Electronic* Signature _____

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Curriculum Vita

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Walden University
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August 2002
Auburn University Montgomery
Administrative Certification

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Ed.S in Elementary Education

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Auburn University Montgomery
Alternative Master Program
M.Ed. in Elementary Education

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

August 2013- Present
Middle School Teacher (6th Grade – Social Studies)
Georgia Washington Middle School
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August 2012 – September 2013
Curriculum Instructional Assistant
Georgia Washington Middle School
Montgomery Public School System
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September 2011- August 2012
Elementary Math Coach (K-6th)
Floyd Elementary School
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August 2011-September 2011
Morningview Elementary School
Fifth Grade Social Sciences Teacher
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August 2007- May 2011
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