2021

Teachers Support for the Bullied Population of Students Through Positive Culture Initiatives in the Classroom

Sandra Davis
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Sandra Davis

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Michelle McCraney, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Lynne Orr, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Paula Dawidowicz, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2021

Abstract

Teachers Support for the Bullied Population of Students Through Positive Culture Initiatives in the Classroom

by

Sandra Davis

MA, University of North Florida, 1998

BS, University College of Belize, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Curriculum, Instructions, Assessments and Evaluations

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

Despite the efforts of many, bullying behaviors continue to be on the rise in schools. However, limited research has been conducted to support the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. The conceptual framework was based on ecological systems theory related to bullying involvement and classroom initiatives, as well as the portion of the role construction theory focused on positive communication and relationships. This study was conducted in a school district in the Southwestern United States. Data were collected from individual interviews with 14 experienced teachers with at least three years of teaching experience teaching one of the main disciplines within the curriculum. Data analysis involved open coding and categorization to identify patterns and themes. Results revealed that teachers are genuinely interested in utilizing positive classroom initiatives in creating a classroom that is conducive to learning. Further, results indicated that it would be useful to conduct more studies to explore teachers' support for bullied students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. This study contributes to social change by providing instructors and educational leaders with a deeper understanding of the pedagogy teachers employ in the classroom to support bullied students by using positive classroom initiatives and how they can create positive classroom environments.

Teachers Support for the Bullied Population of Students Through Positive Culture Initiatives in the Classroom

by

Sandra Davis

MA, University of North Florida, 1998

BS, University College of Belize, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Curriculum, Instructions, Assessments and Evaluations

Walden University

May 2021

Dedication

This study is dedicated to the memory of my Mom and Dad – Selvin and Matilda Davis, who always exhibited their unfaltering love and patience in teaching me resilience and perseverance. To my oldest sister, Dorla, my best friend, confidant and my biggest fan who suddenly departed this side of the earth. I love you and I miss you dearly.

To the rest of my brothers and sisters – Gloria, Beatrice, Clifton, Clinton, Yvonne, Eleanor, Yolanda and Glenford, who always check up on me in my absence and encouraged me along the way. Thank you all for your invaluable support. You truly exhibit the nexus of a family. To my husband Peter, thank you for all the support you have shown me during this journey. Thanks for picking up the pieces where I left off.

To the multitude of my other extended family members, close friends, and colleagues too numerous to mention. To my workgroup - Ansina, Renee and Desiree, who comforted and encouraged me on to run to the finish line – I thank you so much. To my #1 fan who always check to see how I am progressing – I thank you.

Most and foremost and of course not in the least, to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is the source of my inspiration, who brought peace and calm in the time of turmoil.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Walden University and all the faculty who have crossed my path on this journey. You have all played a part in shaping my career and allowed me to reach this juncture in my academic journey. Thank you so much for all the help, meaningful advice and encouragement you have given me. They have fallen on fertile soil and I will use them to make a difference in the lives I encounter.

To Dr. Michelle McCraney, my chair. You have been an integral part of my journey and I don't have the words to express my gratitude to you. Thank you so much for all you do. I am truly grateful and appreciative of your prompt replies and the energy you dedicated to seeing me through this journey. You are truly one of a kind and you surely stand out from the rest.

I also would like to acknowledge Dr. Lynn Orr, my second committee member and methodologist who has been so diligent in providing me with valuable feedback, and for being a part of my committee. To Dr. Paula Dawidowicz, my University Research Reviewer who has been instrumental in returning invaluable feedback and perfecting my writing throughout this dissertation process. I would like to acknowledge my academic advisor, Dr. Anna Grelson, who provided me with tremendous academic guidance. Thank you

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Given the prevalence of bullying and its potential impacts, preventing all types of bullying has become a priority for schools (Acosta et al., 2019). This phenomenon is an underreported safety problem on American school campuses. Contrary to popular belief, bullying occurs more often at school than on the way to and from there (Sampson, 2016). Once thought of as simply a rite of passage or relatively harmless behavior that helps build young people's character, bullying is now known to have long-lasting harmful effects, for both the victim and the bully (Sampson, 2016).

There is growing national awareness of the negative and long-term consequences associated with bullying (Hart-Barnett et al., 2019). For the school, the costs of bullying are countless hours consumed in tackling a problem that is resistant to change, truancies, reduced student retention, low teacher morale, negative perceptions of the school by the wider community, and parent hostility (American Society for the Positive Care of Children, 2018). The school campus becomes a place where many students are marginalized and where no-one feels safe (American Society for the Positive Care of Children, 2018). As a worldwide problem, bullying can occur in any school and is not restricted to any specific school. School is, therefore, one of the main contexts where bullying is most felt since it is a place where many children come together (Augusto, 2020). Bullying is sustained harassment over time by one or more students of other individuals who are viewed by the bullying individuals as especially vulnerable and who may have difficulty defending themselves. Bullying can take physical or psychological forms and have negative consequences on the victims to varying degrees (Gil Villa,

2020). Students who bully others have different motives for doing so. One of the reasons it is so difficult to prevent bullying is that bullying is an effective behavior. Bullying is relatively easy to learn and can be 'traded' for power, control, respect, status, a sense of belonging, and other desired outcomes. At the same time, teachers are believed to exert considerable influence on the tone of their classrooms, and their influence on bullying may result from interactions with students as a group or individually (Ertesvåg, 2016).

There is no single factor that puts a child at risk of being bullied or bullying others. Bullying can happen anywhere in cities, suburbs, or rural towns. Among school-aged children, bullying can be viewed as part of a social dynamic, with varying levels and bully role behavior among individuals within the same learning environment. Research has identified several role behaviors in the bullying situation including:

- being victimized by bullying,
- engaging in bullying others,
- assisting or reinforcing the bullying behavior joining in or laughing along,
- defending the victim, and
- outsider behavior such as witnessing bullying behavior but choosing not to act in any way (Malecki et al., 2020).

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2019), about 20% of students ages 12–18 reported being bullied at school during the school year. Of students ages 12–18, about 13% reported being the subject of rumors; 13% reported being made fun of, called names, or insulted. 5% reported being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on; and 5% reported being excluded from activities on purpose. Additionally, 4% of students

reported being threatened with harm, 2% reported that others tried to make them do things they did not want to do, and 1% reported that their property was destroyed by others on purpose (see Table 1).

Table 1

Types of Bullying.

Types	Percent		
	Female	Male	Total
Bullied at School	23.8	16.7	20.2
Subject of Rumors	17.5	9.3	13.4
Made Fun of, Called Names or Insulted	15.8	10.3	13.0
Pushed, Shoved, Tripped, or Spit on	4.4	6.1	5.3
Excluded from Activities on Purpose	6.9	3.5	5.2
Threatened with Harm	3.6	4.2	3.9
Tried to Make do Things did not Want to do	1.9	1.9	1.9
Property Destroyed on Purpose	1.5	1.3	1.4

Note. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2018 (NCES 2019-047), Indicator 10

The recognition of school bullying as a pervasive and harmful phenomenon has given rise to the development of numerous antibullying interventions in the last three decades. However, even successful programs have failed to produce large declines in bullying behavior and their effectiveness may be limited to bullying perpetrators who are not highly popular and to childhood or early adolescence (Garandeau & Lansu, 2019). Often, teachers and administrators can be unaware of bullying, making it difficult to

develop appropriate policies that are proactive instead of reactive (Waters & Mashburn, 2017). Bullying and violence, which can bring detrimental effects, are situations that young people faced in their process of development (Eadaoin et al., 2017).

A growing body of literature suggests that belonging may act as a buffer for bullying perpetration (Slaten et al., 2019). Other studies imply that social contexts can either attenuate or exacerbate the effect of individual characteristics on bullying behavior (Menesini, 2019). Young people are rarely bullied because they are perceived to be like everyone else. Rather they are often bullied because they stand out in the environment for being different from their peers' incidents (Norman & Sullivan, 2017). Research has shown that children with disabilities are bullied three times as often as children without disabilities (Espinoza et al., 2019). However, there are no bullying prevention programs that address the unique requirements of this population (McNicholas et al., 2017). Given that the ethnic composition of schools is one critical feature from which adolescents derive their sense of acceptance and belonging at school, ethnic ingroup representation is a particularly relevant factor to consider when examining the school-related adjustment of victimized youth and bullying (Espinoza et al., 2019). Bullying harassment can occur in the absence of an imbalance of power, or it may occur in a way that would be inconsistent with the repetitive, or potentially repetitive, nature of bullying based on race, national origin, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, or religion (Whisman & West Virginia Department of Education, 2017).

Background

Bullying prevention remains a major focus for schools yet prevention programs have yielded limited efficacy (Eadaoin et al., 2017). While there are many programs in the literature, such as the "Olweus Bullying Prevention Program," as well as various models and skill-learning programs that are designed to reduce bullying, bullying studies generally confirm that bullying continues to exist and point to the importance for developing effective bullying prevention programs (Albayrak et al., 2016). A review of bullying intervention programs suggests that intervention may be most successful at the individual student level where students are taught the self-assertion skills, helping to deal with their negative emotions arising from being bullied, helping the bullies to develop empathy for the victims, and forming a support group involving the victims and the bystanders (Eadaoin Hui et al., 2017). Intervention and prevention strategies are crucial for reducing bullying in schools; therefore, these plans have generally included:

- having teachers work with students to develop class rules,
- the presence of cooperative learning activities,
- reducing social isolation, and
- increasing adult supervision. These suggestions call for an increase in practices and policies that promote a positive school climate (Farina, 2019).

Doumas and Midgett (2019) have found that certain school climates are associated with bullying-related behaviors. When students perceive the school climate as positive and supportive, bullying-related attitudes and bullying behaviors tend to

decrease. Further, when students perceive adults at school as supportive, students are more likely to ask for help with bullying and threats of violence. On the other hand, when students perceive a school climate as negative, they are more likely to engage in bullying and students are less willing to seek help when bullying occurs (Doumas & Midgett, 2019).

Within the school environment, teachers can positively impact the school climate by modeling appropriate attitudes and behaviors, such as caring, empathy, and appropriate interactions among and between teachers and students. Teachers' behaviors and interactions with students are considered critical because they influence the social dynamics in the classroom. Studies have examined how poor teacher-student relations affect victimization and how teachers' responses to bullying are affected by their gender and experience (Banzon-Librojo et al., 2017). When a teacher displays a high level of concern for students, they tend to foster positive climates, including high levels of a sense of school belonging among their students and a greater peer willingness to defend targets of bullying. Further, teacher confidence in handling bullying incidents, empathy toward targets of bullying, and emotional expressiveness are associated with teacher beliefs about bullying victimization, which in turn are related to bullying victimization in the classroom (Doumas & Midgett, 2019).

Understanding teachers' capacity to prevent and manage student bullying behaviors is critical for ensuring the success of schools' antibullying initiatives. Many teachers reported they felt that they are not prepared well enough to deal with bullying behaviors. Consequently, they felt they lacked the skills to prevent and respond

effectively to incidents of bullying, specifically in covert and cyberbullying behaviors. Teachers wanted to better understand the complexities of the behavior and be exposed to curriculum learning resources (Lester et al., 2018). Since bullying is influenced by individual, peer, family, and school contexts, respect and regard for others are required to be taught from an early age and continued throughout the schooling process (Waters & Mashburn, 2017).

The students are not the only ones who require bullying education. Teachers and administrators are required to be trained and provide continuous support to enhance their abilities to manage bullying dilemmas (Waters & Mashburn, 2017). Research studies have demonstrated that students' perception of school satisfaction is related to supportive teacher-student relationships, teacher support, and a caring and supportive school climate (Nie et al., 2019). Students benefit when teachers take an active stand against bullying, are effective in decreasing bullying, and support antibullying norms. Teachers have both the authority to address inappropriate behavior and the moral obligation to keep students safe (Farley, 2018). However, not all teachers perceive bullying as serious, know how to intervene and prevent bullying, or have the confidence to manage disruptive behavior. This points to the importance of educating teachers about bullying and strengthening teachers as support in the school settings (Nie et al., 2019).

Danielson and Jones (2019) stated that many students who seek out teachers for help when getting bullied in the classroom report receiving unhelpful support. This highlights the teacher's role in modeling and setting norms for acceptable behaviors in the classroom. Social isolation of school children is increased when teachers feel unable to

respond to children's reports of witnessing or experiencing aggression at school. Teachers can find it difficult to respond adequately to children who report aggression when the aggression is deliberately hidden from the teacher by the perpetrator (Banzon-Librojo et al, 2017). Perceived conflict with teachers has been shown to have a significant positive effect on students' engagement in active bullying for students. Social status and student-teacher relationships integrate and shed light on which roles are taken by young adolescents in school bullying (Longobardi et al, 2018). In a study conducted by Nelson et al. (2019), they found that most teachers understand the importance of children's social development and child-teacher relationships and that the social environment of the classroom is integral to children's learning outcomes, happiness, and professional identity of teachers. However, the increasing complexity of aggression and bullying places a burden on teachers as they seek to meet the social demands of children along with curriculum demands. Despite the attention given to the issue by academics and the popular press, it has been suggested that teachers' influence on peer relationships and peer aggression is understudied (Nelson et al, 2019).

Research suggested that student perceptions of teachers' efforts to intervene in bullying situations are related to levels of school-related bullying. How students perceived teachers' antibullying behavior as related to bullying, however, is unclear. Given the relationship of a sense of school belonging to both teacher attunement toward victimization and bullying victimization, a sense of school belonging may serve as the link between students' perception of a teacher's stance toward bullying and bullying victimization (Doumas et al., 2019). Involving teachers in delivering guidance programs

addressing bullying has further benefits. Teachers may integrate antibullying themes within the school developmental guidance programs and values education programs so that nonviolence and tolerance can be presented as a consistent message to all students and highlighted as the ethos of the school. Also, teachers act as role models for students. Supportive teacher-student relationships will encourage students, whether victims or bystanders to seek help. Teachers may foster attitudes such as acceptance, respect, tolerance, and forgiveness and relate their importance to interpersonal relationships and social harmony (Eadaoin et al., 2017). These initiatives can help in showing support for the bullied population of students and create a positive culture within the classroom.

School policies enabling of good practice and providing teachers with specific guidance on how to engage in prevention and intervention where bullying may occur is essential. The methods that can be used to prevent the bullying are primarily positive, warm, sincere. In addition to these methods, including loving environments in which parents, teachers, and administrators actively cooperate and act as role models, reinforcing positive behaviors, and openly controlling unwanted behaviors by consistently applying rules that do not include physical punishments all have shown some impact on bullying prevention (Akay, 2019). Preventing school bullying and promoting the values of harmony and forgiveness in schools develops school culture and serves as a way of combating school bullying.

There are many opportunities across the curriculum to challenge students to think about their attitudes, correct misinformation, and raise awareness about bullying incidents (Norman & Sullivan, 2017). The effectiveness of antibullying interventions has shown

that the incidence of bullying cannot be reduced by implementing the curriculum alone but an integrated whole-school approach to bring together those who are bullies or victims as well as families. It is not to develop strict policies towards bullies in schools but to develop strategies that are low and ineffective, contrary to what is believed (Akay, 2019). Strategies that are believed to be effective in preventing bullying and are important in creating school and home activities for behavioral change include establishing a moderate, compassionate school policy or school culture that combats bullying and includes all staff and families. Research indicates that involving families in school efforts to prevent and manage bullying behavior is essential to success. Parents can influence their children's involvement in bullying situations by modeling positive social behavior, offering advice about appropriate responses to bullying, and encouraging help-seeking behaviors (Lester et al., 2017). The program or policy to be formed may be conducted by a team led by the school guidance service, where teachers, administrators, and parents are given training on bullying and where experts are also involved. The methods and strategies to be used to prevent bullying are required to include an effective assessment as well as prevention and intervention (Akay, 2019).

Reductions in bullying prevalence in schools can be achieved using evidence-based whole-school approaches, drawing upon effective proactive and reactive strategies. This involved the contribution of agreed and well-implemented antibullying policies, preventative action employing social and emotional learning, bystander intervention, peer support, and the use of appropriate antibullying intervention methods (Nickerson & Rigby, 2017). Hence, at the center of a whole-school approach is the creation of positive

school culture. This fosters respect for students who are economically disadvantaged, who are racial and ethnic minorities, who are disabled, or have other conditions that may deem different by other students. School culture influences every aspect of school life and is the determinant factor in the success of schoolwork in addressing bullying (Norman & Sullivan, 2017). Attention is drawn to a variety of resources that have become available to promote a deeper understanding of school bullying and to address the problem more effectively (Nickerson & Rigby, 2017).

Research supports the effectiveness of whole-school models that include students, administrators, teachers, and support staff if bullying programs are to be effective (Letendre et al., 2016). The schoolwide teaching and reinforcement of the skills that prevent and intervene in bullying behaviors are an important part of any program development for dealing with peer victimization. The importance of teacher knowledge and skill development and the willingness to intervene in bullying situations are important factors in decreasing aggression and bullying behaviors in schools. When teachers show a willingness to use interventions to help victimized youth, there is less peer victimization and greater willingness to help other students by peers (Letendre et al., 2016). Increasing awareness about bullying and teaching methods to intervene better prepare teachers and staff to prevent or decrease the interactions that are hurtful to children. When school staff are included in bullying prevention efforts and have access to resources, they are more likely to feel comfortable intervening. It is important therefore to engage teachers and staff in the development, modification, and evaluation of bullying prevention programs if the programs are to be effective. Support staff can provide

guidance and resources that will help teachers to reinforce the behaviors that have been taught. Given that teachers and school staff are often the primary implementers of the schoolwide interventions, we understand their perspectives to determine the factors that contribute to the success and barriers that interfere with effective schoolwide interventions (Letendre et al., 2016).

One study found that teacher behaviors are more important in 'bullyproofing' than an official school policy (Brewer, 2017). Therefore, positive teacher and peer support predicted the reduced probability of bullying victimization among students overall, but low support levels among students can negate this effect. Interventions to address covert bullying of students is important to focus on whole-school approaches that reduce opportunities for the victimization of students (Moffat et al., 2019). In efforts to prevent bullying in schools, all school stakeholders are essential for involvement in strategies for success. A comprehensive program involving all elements will be more effective at preventing bullying and improving school safety than focusing on some students through an individual approach (Dardiri et al., 2020). While there is current research examining the issue of bullying in schools, there is little research that focused on teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom.

Problem Statement

Little is known about teachers' support for the bullied population of students specifically through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. Bullying has been conceptualized as a phenomenon that focused mainly on individuals and individual

behavior (Juva, et al., 2020). How teachers understand and perceived student behavior have influenced their reactions and interventions when responding to aggression. In particular, the perceptions and understanding teachers have regarding bullying have shaped how bullying is addressed in schools and classrooms (Rose et al., 2018). Successful approaches for decreasing bullying among youth hinge on the competence of teachers, yet teachers' perceptions of bullying often differ from those of students (Rose et al., 2018). This is the reason, when students have concerns or problems, they often turn to each other for support instead of consulting with parents, teachers, counselors, or administrators (Carter, 2019). This kind of peer influence may be the strongest single motivational force in a student's life. Though students can exert negative influences on one another, they can also be strong positive forces (Carter, 2019). They can act as positive role models, demonstrate appropriate social behavior, and listen to and understand the common frustrations and concerns of other students. This peer support can be a valuable social support for many students who felt socially alienated (Carter, 2019). According to Ertesvåg (2016), students who bully others have different motives for doing so. One of the reasons it has been so difficult to prevent bullying is that bullying is an effective behavior. Bullying is relatively easy to learn and can be 'traded' for power, control, respect, status, a sense of belonging, and other desired outcomes. At the same time, teachers are believed to exert considerable influence on the tone of their classrooms and their influence on bullying may result from interactions with students as a group, class, or individually (Ertesvåg, 2016).

Despite decades of research into school bullying and the subsequent implementation of antibullying policies and programs in schools, large numbers of school-aged students continued to report they are routinely subjected to bullying from their peers (Horton, 2019). Research indicated that environmental and psychosocial factors may play an important role in the change to minimize bullying behaviors in schools (Slaten et al., 2019). Findings from largely cross-sectional investigations have suggested that classroom practices, teachers' attitudes, and the broader school environment played a critical role in understanding the nature and prevalence of aggression, bullying, and victimization which is described as the character and quality of the school culture (Espelage et al., 2019).

Bullying behavior is an intentional act of aggression directed towards students who have less status or power and unfortunately can result in academic deficits, inter-parental violence, and detrimental psychosocial outcomes (Slaten et al., 2019). Students who are of normal intelligence, whose academic background, home environment, and collective identity, may be vulnerable to bullying (Carter, 2019). These conditions may include emotional or behavioral problems, truancy, low academic performance, showing a lack of interest in academics, and expressing a disconnection from the school environment which may make them vulnerable to bullying and future academic failure (Carter, 2019).

Austin, Reynolds, and Barnes (2016) found that bullying activity increased in elementary school, peaked in middle school, and began to decline in high school, and according to their report, bullying overall is increasing. They emphasized the importance

of administrators to develop a school-wide bullying program that was based on school policies. These programs prepared teachers to prevent or decreased bullying interactions by increasing awareness about bullying and intervention methods. They also helped students to think ahead to determine more appropriate behavioral strategies in potential bullying situations (Ostrander et al., 2018).

A national study conducted by Save the Children (2016) showed that 17% of 11-year-olds have acknowledged that they bullied other students at least three times in the previous month, the percentage of 13- and 15-year-olds, respectively, being 23%. The data revealed: 1 in 4 children was repeatedly humiliated at school, in front of their colleagues; 1 in 6 children was repeatedly beaten; 1 in 5 children repeatedly humiliated another child at school; 3 out of 10 children are excluded from the group of colleagues; and 73% of the children witnessed bullying in the school environment. This phenomenon of aggressive actions usually takes place within the school, appeared to be universal, and can be observed in almost all classrooms. In short, bullying is aggressive behavior, manifested through a set of negative actions that aimed to cause physical or emotional distress to one or more students who are unable to defend themselves (Meszaro et al., 2020).

All students in a school are impacted by bullying and when bullying is more frequent students have a lower sense of safety (Austin et al., 2016). They also found that when students perceived teachers to be fair and the school to be a welcoming safe place the probability of bullying is lowered. Bullying decreased the sense of safety at school and created emotional stress for all students. School personnel are required to be aware of

the emotional impact of bullying on witnesses and engage in practices to promote positive behavior, increase empathy, and negate the stress of witnessing bullying. Therefore, a school-wide program based on school policy in which teachers and staff are active participants is important to protect all students (Austin et al., 2016).

School climate and culture can be discrepancies among students and staff concerning awareness of problematic peer behavior and teacher willingness to intervene (Armstrong, 2018). The ethically undesirable results of bullying can be perceived in the everyday dilemmas of teachers as they seek to negotiate the often-unpalatable recommendations about how to respond to student behavior in school (Armstrong, 2018). At a basic level, teachers often have discrepant perspectives on bullying rates in comparison to their students (Espelage et al., 2019). Many teachers are unaware of how serious and extensive the bullying phenomenon is within their schools and are often ineffective in being able to identify bullying incidents (Espelage et al., 2019).

The bullying phenomenon has become a serious relationship problem in which children used power through frequent acts of aggression to intimidate and control others and made others feel powerless in their relationships (Lai & Kao, 2018). To date, numerous individual factors have been identified that can place children and adolescents at risk for involvement in bullying behaviors including sex, age, low self-esteem, and social anxiety (Lai & Kao, 2018). For example, for students with disabilities, the risk for direct bullying involvement may be far greater than for students without disabilities. Bully-victimization rates are 1 to 1½ times higher than the national average for children with disabilities (Blake et al., 2016). Individual factors, including race, have also been

identified to date that may place children at risk for bullying involvement (Larochette et al., 2010). The importance of the school's environment on bullying behaviors has also been highlighted, as most of the bullying occurs at school (Lai & Kao, 2018).

Schools represent important institutions that have the potential to shape the nature of social relationships and bullying behaviors amongst peers. An emerging body of evidence suggests that ethnic congruence in school, which is the numerical representation of same ethnicity peers, reduced the level of risk for bullying (National Academies of Sciences, 2016). To tackle adolescent bullying and identify students most vulnerable to being bullied, it was essential to examine both occurrences of bullying behaviors and students' likelihood of reporting bullying (Lai & Kao, 2018). Sustained implementation of evidence-based practices in schools are necessary for providing the academic and behavioral supports students to be successful and safe (Nese et al., 2016). Research has shown that all students, and specifically students with or at-risk of emotional and behavioral concerns benefited from learning environments that are consistent, predictable, positive, and safe (Nese et. al., 2016). Each student and teacher have a role in making school a safe and considerate environment that fostered learning and beneficial social-emotional relationships (Hart-Barnett et al., 2019). Research also showed that school culture has an important effect on the prevalence of peer bullying and has been a problem present in schools all around the world and met by students and teachers daily (Pečjak & Pirc, 2017).

Bullying prevention remained a major focus for schools yet prevention programs have yielded limited efficacy. This suggested that efforts to make the programs more

salient for youth may result in greater reductions in bullying behavior (Ybarra et al., 2019). Teachers are encouraged to address bullying from a positive youth development paradigm, stressing the importance of competency building where students learn appropriate social skills, emotional management skills, and the ability to understand others' emotions, to appreciate and forgive others. Teachers are also encouraged to incorporate antibullying elements in the form of classroom curriculum to be delivered in the schools' regular curriculum (Nese et al., 2016). Enhancing students' knowledge about bullying and positive ways of handling it through classroom discussions and activities is more effective as an intervention strategy (Nese et al., 2016). How teachers support bullied students through classroom interventions is a vital area of research (Nese et al., 2016). The whole-school approach to reducing bullying is in the spotlight. Although studies have addressed contextual factors such as classroom norms and school climate, a specific characteristic of teachers has not been investigated yet (Song et al., 2015). Therefore, to understand teachers support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom, it is important to conduct a study to understand teachers support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom (Nese et al., 2016).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. As an international phenomenon, school bullying occurred at similar rates in disparate cultures, countries, and educational settings. There is growing national awareness of the negative

and long-term consequences associated with bullying (Hart-Barnett et al., 2019). Although few school climates studies have used student self-report and aggregated student data at the school level, informants approached that considers both student and teacher perceptions of perpetration and victimization is less common in the extant literature (Espelage et al., 2019). Although negative and long-term consequences associated with bullying have been examined, there is little evidence about teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. This basic qualitative study was conducted through interviews with teachers who work with students.

Research Question

Given that school climate is a multidimensional construct, reflecting different social contexts, it is important to unpack the most salient aspects of a school culture that are associated with peer aggression and victimization. This requires the use of measures that yield reliable and valid indexes of school culture and multilevel statistical approaches that model the nested nature of students in classrooms and schools (Espelage et al., 2019). To study the problem and phenomenon, the following research questions were addressed:

Research Question 1: How do teachers support the bullied population of students through positive classroom interventions?

Research Question 2: How do teachers create opportunities within the curriculum to determine positive support for the bullied population of students in the classroom?

Nature of the Study

The primary focus of this research study was to provide an in-depth understanding of teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. The study took on a basic qualitative design that predominantly focused on the element of a social phenomenon. To accentuate a problematic phenomenon to determine teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom, the use of interviews with 14 teachers in middle schools was used. Identifying teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom can reduce bullying behaviors and trust in the school, improve school culture, and increase student self-esteem through a bullying intervention curriculum (Cipra & Hall, 2019).

Definitions of Terms

School bullying is a pervasive problem found in elementary, middle, and high schools across the United States and around the world that negatively affects school mindfulness and academic performance (Tekel & Karadag, 2019).

A Bystander is a student who witnesses a bullying incident. Bystanders may actively or tacitly encourage the bully, defending the victim, or intervene in the situation (Coker et al., 2016).

Bully refers to a student who deliberately and systematically intimidates and/or harasses another child who is weaker (Sangalang et al., 2016).

Bullying is deliberate and continual harassment or intimidation inflicted by a stronger peer on a weaker peer at school (Sangalang et al., 2016).

School Culture is defined as the affective and cognitive perceptions regarding social interactions, relationships, values, and beliefs held by students, teachers, administrators, and staff within a school (Rudasill et al., 2018).

Bullying Behavior refers to any type of rough behavior that is "deliberately aggressive" such as name-calling, hitting, mocking, slander, and social isolation. It is an obstacle to the right to education, which is one of the basic universal human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various United Nations Conventions (Cornu, 2016).

Bullying prevention programs are school-based programs implemented in schools designed to improve peer relations and make schools safer in reducing and prevent bullying at school (De La Rue et al., 2017).

The Bullied Population of Students are students who are economically disadvantaged, racial and ethnic minorities, low-income children, children with disabilities, and any other conditions that may deem different by other students (Williams et al., 2018).

A whole-school approach defines the entire school community as the unit of change and involves coordinated action between three interrelated components:

- curriculum, teaching, and learning.
- school ethos and environment.
- family and community partnerships (Goldberg et al., 2019).

Assumptions

This study assumed that teachers were honest and forthcoming in their interviews about bullying. It was assumed that teachers could reflect on their experiences as educators and helped to answer the research questions through interviews. It was also assumed that process of being interviewed would help evoked memories of collective experiences about bullying. Finally, it was assumed that teachers would be motivated to reflect on their classroom practices and student behaviors based on their association with bullying.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study included teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in middle school. It included 14 teachers selected from 4 middle schools within the district. This district was one of the largest districts in the state with a student population of approximately 31,000 and a staff of about 1,500. It covers 46 square miles and stretches across five cities. It had a student ratio of approximately 26 to 1. As classroom sizes are on the rise and what is considered too many students in a classroom is questionable, it is important to understand what strategies individual teachers used that worked for them to help counter bullying of students in the classroom and positive culture initiatives used to help reduce bullying in the school.

Most students get their education in a public middle school, therefore; it is important that the school become a place where students feel safe and the culture of the classroom becomes one where every student can thrive, and everyone is valued. One

delimitation in this study was that I have conducted interviews with 14 teachers from an approximate total of 1,500 potential participants, and thus only from a few of the middle schools in this district setting. Another delimitation is that I gathered responses from teachers in the middle grades to determine the support for bullied students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom.

Limitations

One limitation the study looked at was how teachers support the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in middle school within this district only. Another limitation was limited to two specific research question which guided the entire study. The limitation also came in the form of the sample size; as only 14 teachers were interviewed, considering that there are 8 middle school campuses and about 1,500 teaching staff within the district.

Another potential limitation was my potential bias concerning the topic as this is one that I am passionate about. Since I had experience in observation and classroom teaching experience, I brought bias to the data collection process. In addressing this bias, I allowed my experience as a teacher to help me to understand the teachers' perspectives on their support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom while simultaneously stayed attuned to the participants' responses. I kept a researcher's journal throughout the course of the project study, to identify and record any personal biases, thoughts, feelings, and insights. I used this journal to minimize bias as much as possible. I wrote in the reflective journal following personal interviews, when I had questions during the research process, whether those questions

were/were not answered, how answers were derived, and during the transcription and coding processes. I also questioned my assumptions to ensure my interview questions were appropriately managed. I referred to my researcher's journal to record my biases as I redirected my focus.

Significance

The significance of this study was to fill the gap in determining teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. Research has shown the lasting consequences when students experience bullying as well as when students bully others and teachers, parents, education funders, and students grapple with this shifting landscape (Youth Truth, 2019). School culture is related to school bullying and students are at a greater risk of engaging in bullying acts if in their school there are often conflicts or low morale among students and teachers (Youth truth, 2019). Research findings point to the significance of promoting a harmonious school culture as a means of preventing school bullying (Eadaoin Hui et al., 2017).

The importance of this study brought awareness to teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. Its findings benefitted Curriculum, Instructions, Assessments, and Evaluation leaders as they develop initiatives to incorporate within the curriculum used to inform instructions. The study had great positive social implications and brought awareness to the bullying phenomenon and bullying victimization among students in schools. To help students and schools conquer the bullying situations, no matter what part they play, teachers, administrators, parents, and students ought to ban together and create a network of

support and encouragement (Waters & Mashburn, 2017). Because bullying has been on the rise as research has shown a considerable surge, it has become a significant issue in schools and created a nationwide debate regarding bullying in public schools and the lack of effectiveness within educational programs in addressing the issue (Orange & Corrales, 2018).

Transition

In Chapter 2, I present the literature review which informed my study. I discuss the literature search strategy followed by the conceptual frameworks. I also provide an analysis of the empirical literature about key factors of the study. I have identified the gaps in the literature and describe how this study fulfills a gap in the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to provide an in-depth understanding of teachers support the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. I conducted this literature review through the examination of scholarly journal articles, books, dissertations, and internet sources which provided a thorough an understanding of teachers' support of the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. The use of relevant materials made a significant contribution to understanding this phenomenon.

Studies to date have predominantly been cross-sectional or have failed to reflect the social-ecological framework in their measurement or analytic approach. Thus, there have been limited efforts to parse out the relative contribution of the student, classroom, and organizational-level factors (Espelage et al., 2019). Existing scholarship suggested that classroom practices, teacher attitudes, and the broader school environment have played a critical role in understanding the rates of student reports of aggression, bullying, and victimization as well as correlated behaviors. A more accurate understanding of the nature, origins, maintenance, and prevalence of bullying and other aggressive behavior requires consideration of the broader social ecology of the school community (Espelage et al., 2019).

Literature Review Strategies

As I conducted the literature review, multiple strategies resulted from using different sources. The strategies included accessing both Walden's online library and

local land-based libraries. More than 125 peer-reviewed, scholarly journals, and books were reviewed during this process. Online database searches from EBSCO host, ProQuest, Sage, ERIC, and Google Scholar as well as the school district's database on classroom initiatives and classroom bullying were utilized. The following keywords assisted the search: *bullying in schools, bullying behaviors, bullying prevention programs, bullying in the classroom, bystanders, middle school student behavior, staff development on bullying, teachers' perceptions and support, bullied students, school culture,* and *classroom initiatives*. The research literature provided pertinent data collection methods or data sources, data analysis methods, and findings to understand this phenomenon.

Conceptual Framework

Understanding the relationship between youths' belonging and bullying behaviors was modeled after Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory to bullying involvement. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory to bullying involvement looks specifically at interventions that focus on increasing positive peer-level interactions, coupled with a stronger sense of school community, or belonging, is used to provide the conceptual framework for understanding teachers support of the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. It offered a social-ecological theoretical framework for understanding ways to address bullying and victimization, which included individual, family, peer group, school, community, and societal factors that refer to the complex relations between the individual and their immediate setting.

Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasizes the importance of studying children in multiple environments, also known as ecological systems, to understand their development. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977), children typically find themselves enmeshed in various ecosystems, from the most intimate home ecological system to the larger school system, and then to the most expansive system which includes society and culture. Each of these ecological systems inevitably interacts with and influence each other in all aspects of the children's lives. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977) views a person's environment as comprising five parts, each contained within another. These five parts are often illustrated as a system of concentric or nested circles. At the center is an individual who is affected by characteristics such as age, gender, and health, which are items that are specific to that individual. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model is ideal in integrating segmented parts into understandable pieces and allows for a more complete analysis of social-environmental factors that impact human behavior.

The Microsystem

The first layer is the microsystem. The most direct influences are within the micro-system level, which consists of individuals or groups of individuals with whom the person has interactions. Bronfenbrenner (1994) depicts the microsystem as a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the individual in a direct setting such as family, with physical, social, and symbolic features that would invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex

interactions with the immediate environment (Hong et al., 2010). In this circle are those people closest to an individual with whom they interact face-to-face, such as parents, siblings, fellow students, teachers, and friends. Bronfenbrenner (1994) argued that children learn their habits, temperaments, and capabilities at this level. Three micro-system-level factors, in this case, are individual characteristics, the parent-child relationship, and peer victimization. The micro-system-level analysis suggests that bullying assessment should consider the individual's relationships with parents and peers (Hong et al., 2010). Because teachers and school staff members have the most frequent contact with youth, teachers' support for the bullied population of students is important in the school context as a student, teacher, and school staff involved in peer conflict resolution is crucial.

Individual Characteristics

Individual Characteristics covers socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and race or ethnicity, which are frequently examined predictors of bullying behavior in school (Espelage, 2014). Many studies report that boys, in general, are more likely to engage in bullying than girls. Research also supported the notion that girls are socialized to exercise more relational forms of aggression or social bullying, yet boys engage in multiple forms of aggression (Espelage, 2014).

What, perhaps, is more important than gender differences is the notion that bullying is a gendered phenomenon where youth are targeted by either same- and other-sex peers in attempts to gain social status (Faris & Felmlee, 2011; Rodkin & Berger, 2008) or to marginalize lesbian, gay, bisexual, and gender-nonconforming youth

(Espelage et al., 2008; Robinson & Espelage, 2011). Further, developmental trends indicate that bullying is a precursor to the use of homophobic epithets, which is, in turn, associated with sexual harassment during middle school (Espelage et al., 2012; Espelage & De La Rue, 2013) and is associated with teen dating violence in high school (Espelage et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2013).

Parent-Child Relationship is one of the most important relationships in a child's life. Strong parent-child relationships can potentially be a protective factor against violence. Unfortunately, few studies have specifically examined the association between parent-child relationships and violent behavior (Hong et al., 2010). Negative parent-child relationships may result in negative peer relationships in school, which potentially result in violent behavior. Several researchers reported that a negative parent-child relationship or the lack of such a relationship is significantly associated with violent and suicidal behaviors among youth (Hong et al., 2010). Therefore, teachers and school administrators to encourage parents to be involved in their children's school activities and provide an arena in which parents can meet with teachers and other youth. School administrators is responsible to establish networks where parents can be aware of their children's academic and social life in school (Hong et al., 2010).

Peer Victimization is a problem among children and adolescents worldwide that negatively impacts youth development and holds the potential for long-term emotional harm as damage can follow individuals into adulthood. Peer victimization is the receipt of peer aggression or intentional harm aimed at a peer. Peer victimization can include physically violent acts, verbal assaults, relational, social, or indirect aggression, covert

behavior meant to harm one's reputation or social relationships, property damage, or a combination of these forms (Ting-Lan et al., 2019).

This Micro-level system of behavior sometimes encompasses bullying, a specific form of peer victimization that includes an imbalance of power between the aggressor and victim, and repetition of the phenomenon (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). To address bullying and peer victimization, school-based intervention programs may include a component aimed at increasing defending, in hopes that more prosocial bystander behavior will lead to less peer victimization (Ting-Lan et al., 2019). Theoretically, individual differences (e.g., empathy) and factors in a child or adolescent's ecology (e.g., political climate) may influence how they react in peer victimization situations.

Studies report that overweight and obese youth of both genders are at increased risk of peer victimization in school (Espelage, 2014). Studies found that children with depressive symptoms were significantly more likely to be victimized by their peers than children without a history of depression. Disability status is a significant predictor of peer victimization. Students with disabilities have been consistently overrepresented within the bullying dynamic as bullies, victims, and bully-victim (Espelage, 2014). Health status and psychological functioning can also place youth at risk for experiences of Health status and psychological functioning can also place youth at risk for experiences (Espelage, 2014).

The social-ecological perspective of youth development (Espelage & Swearer, 2004), based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), places

individuals and their biology, cognition, and behaviors at the center of the model. Peer networks are factors that may also affect the development or interact with individual differences. This model suggests that behavior occurs through interactions between the individual and the individual's environment (Ting-Lan et al., 2019).

The Mesosystem

The second layer is the mesosystem, where relationships from multiple microsystems connect. This layer is important for analyzing the strength of interactions. Mesosystem encompasses interrelations among two or more microsystems, each containing the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). These interactions are between and among family, peers, and schools. Relations among students, teachers, and administrators matter. If a teacher and parent are in frequent communication, then they can make sure that good habits are practiced in both home and school. However, if the teacher and parent never speak, they might be teaching the child contradictory lessons. According to the ecological systems theory, even contradictions over small things, such as taking shoes off when entering a home, can cause confusion and frustration for a young child. There is no doubt that teachers and school officials can influence students') relationships with their peers and their perceptions of the school environment (Espelage, Polanin, & Low, 2014).

The Ecosystem

The third layer is the ecosystem. This layer encompasses factors that the child does not cause or affect. This includes the neighborhood, local community, health and social services, business, and mass media (Ecological Systems Theory, 2018). The

ecosystem comprises aspects of the environment beyond the immediate system containing the individual, including neighborhoods. Because schools are embedded in neighborhoods, an unsafe neighborhood environment can influence bullying behavior due to inadequate adult supervision or negative peer influences. Despite the documented relationship between community violence and externalizing behaviors such as to conduct problems, delinquency (Bacchini et al., 2009; Espelage et al., 2000), there are relatively few studies that have investigated how bullying is influenced by experiences in environments outside of school, such as neighborhoods. There is a strong reason to postulate links with both perpetration and victimization, given the disruption in adaptive peer relations and behavioral control that may be associated with features of community violence exposure (Espelage et al., 2000).

The Macrosystem

The fourth layer is the macrosystem. This consists of the culture, subculture, social class, ethnic group, and religious tradition in which the child lives. This is the broadest layer and can contain many different groups. The macrosystem changes over time, and the child might play a small part in those changes. These changes also affect the child's values and opportunities in life (Ecological Systems Theory, 2018).

The macrosystem level is regarded as a cultural blueprint that may determine the social structures and activities that occur in the immediate systems level (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bullying, like other forms of aggression, varies across cultures and contexts (McConville & Cornell, 2003). Sociological theorists assert that school norms can

perpetuate inequality, alienation, aggression, and oppression among the students about their race or ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic background (Espelage et al., 2014).

The Chronosystem

The last and largest layer is the chronosystem, a concept Bronfenbrenner articulated in 1986. The chronosystem is the temporal, or time-based layer, consisting of changes or continuity in the pattern of an individual's social interactions. Here the types of friendships, responsibilities, and conflicts that a person has changed depending on the student's biology as the students are better able to solve complex problems. According to the Ecological systems theory, environmental changes are also affected by the child's relationships and their perceived impact on others (Ecological Systems Theory. (2018).

The chronosystem level includes consistency or change such as historical or life events of the individual and the environment over the life course like family structure changes. Studies have documented that changes in life events such as divorce can result in negative youth outcomes, such as peer aggression (Breivik & Olweus, 2006). According to Hetherington and Elmore (2003), preadolescent children in divorced or remarried families exhibited higher levels of aggression, noncompliance, disobedience, inappropriate classroom conduct, and decreased level of self-regulation (Espelage et al., 2014).

Furthermore, this study will also look at further contributions from the theoretical framework of Siris and Osterman (2004) whose cognitive processes are justly linked to students' emotional, psychological, and physical health as it aims to provide a broader understanding of bullying and developed strategies to address these issues within the

curriculum. According to Siris and Osterman (2004), bullying is an inevitable part of growing up but is hurtful and debilitating for the victims. Many eventually escape with only painful memories; for some, however, the repeated slights, harassment, rejection, and sense of isolation lead to violence oftentimes against themselves or others. As seen with the Virginia Tech shooting incident, analysis indicates, the risk factors among racial and ethnic minorities as identified in the Virginia Tech case are complex and multifaceted (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). The victim spoke very little to his parents and avoided eye contact. Although his parents urged him to open, he isolated himself from his family, which generated a high level of family stress. The lack of a parent-child relationship was attributed to the fact that both victim's parents worked long and extended hours at their dry-cleaning business. Such situations can create child-rearing difficulties and decrease parent-child interactions. Both the victim and his sister reportedly felt isolated due to a lack of interaction with their parents (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Because different configurations of risk factors are associated with behaviors, identifying, and understanding these factors can inform effective and relevant intervention and prevention strategies.

Additionally, the theoretical frameworks of socioemotional learning and Bloom's taxonomy as it was designed to reduce bullying behaviors, foster a greater sense of community cohesion and trust in the school, improve school climate, and increase student self-esteem through a bullying intervention curriculum. Additionally, the theoretical frameworks of socioemotional learning and Bloom's taxonomy as it was designed to reduce bullying behaviors, foster a greater sense of community cohesion and trust in the

school, improve school climate, and increase student self-esteem through a bullying intervention curriculum. Establishing a safe school environment that promotes a sense of belonging would decrease the likelihood of youth violent behavior. Providing students with social activities is important for developing and maintaining friendships and social support networks (Hong et al., 2010).

Conceptual Framework

The study also highlighted the theory of Hoover-Dempsey and Sanler's (1997) conceptual Role Construction Theory which emphasized that positive communication, involvement, and expectations lead to more positive relationships with the schools. A continuum of evidence-based academic and behavioral practices provides a framework for schools to improve academic and social behavior outcomes for all students.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Conceptual Role Construction Theory

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1977) of the parent involvement process suggested that family engagement is a process that begins with families' decision-making about being involved and culminates with student outcomes. The cognitive component of involvement decision-making includes role construction for involvement and self-efficacy for helping children succeed in school. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler suggest that parents' attempts to support children's learning can be classified into one or more of the following categories: involvement through encouragement, involvement through modeling, involvement through reinforcement, and involvement through instruction.

Literature Review of Related Key Factors

Bullying Behaviors in Schools

Hazeltine (2018) suggested that bullying behaviors can have lasting adverse consequences for teachers, victims, offenders, and bystanders. Teachers are often not prepared with the knowledge required for appropriate interventions. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory which holds that individuals' influences are impacted by various environmental systems around them, the leading section of this study focused on teachers' support of the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom (Hazeltine, 2018).

Bullying is commonly understood as a subtype of aggression, directed toward a weaker or relatively less powerful peer. It can take different forms and involves both direct behaviors, such as hitting and name-calling, and indirect behaviors, such as spreading rumors or socially excluding someone. Bullying episodes seldom include only one victim and one bully; they typically also include bystanders who take on different roles (Bjärehed, Thornberg, Wänström & Gini, 2020). Ogurlu and Sarıçam (2018) stated that individuals who bully others were more inclined to delinquent behaviors, impulsive, dominating, depressive symptoms, and suicidal ideation but less empathetic than non-bullies. On the other hand, victims had some common characteristics such as physical weakness, tendency to have internalizing behaviors, self-perceptions of low social competence, and tendency to be silent about their distress.

Previous research in the West has indicated that bullying among school-aged children is not uncommon. For instance, 29.9% of children in Grades 6 through 10 in the

United States have reported moderate or frequent involvement in bullying either as a bully (13.0%), as a victim of bullying (10.6%), or in both roles (6.3%). A recent study showed that 15% to 30% of the same cohort reported having been bullied in the United States (Zhang et al., 2019).

According to Bjärehed et al. (2020) there are four main bystander roles, namely outsiders, defenders, assistants, and reinforcers. Outsiders remain passive or withdraw from bullying situations, whereas defenders support the victim in different ways. Assistants take part in the bullying and assist the bullies, whereas rein forcers show their approval such as, laughing or cheering on the bullying. The latter two actively take the perpetrator's side. These students are referred to as pro-aggressive bystanders.

Teacher Support of School Bullying

Given the harmful nature of the experience of bullying and victimization, the way teachers respond or not could affect moral disengagement, similarly, to how parental daily management of harmful experiences affects children's moral cognitions (Campaert et al., 2017). Much of the existing literature related to school bullying is focused on the experiences and actions of students. Yet, bullying prevention efforts are not limited to students, and may include teachers, administrators, parents, and community members (Farley, 2018). However, only relatively recently has research begun to explore the role of teachers in school bullying. This may be because bullying is seldom studied across ecological systems and therefore fails to provide a "holistic view of bullying advocates for the study of school bullying across ecological systems, including school administration and staff (Farley, 2018). Students benefit when teachers take "an active

stand against bullying," are effective in decreasing bullying, and support antibullying norms. Teachers have both the authority to address inappropriate behavior and the moral obligation to keep students safe. However, teachers report limited resources to address bullying and have difficulty monitoring bullying in addition to their normal duties (Farley, 2018). Although most teachers realize the seriousness of bullying and try to intervene, some take a passive stance, while others take active action. However, several studies have shown that teachers experience significant difficulties in effectively dealing with bullying situations (Song et al., 2018).

Teachers are the key actors involved in bullying intervention and prevention efforts. In a national study, 92% of teachers indicate that bullying was problematic to some degree in their schools, and 98% of teachers agreed that it was their responsibility to intervene in bullying incidents. However, almost half (45%) of the teachers had not received training on school bullying rules and procedures (Hall & Chapman, 2018). Indeed, many educators have reported not feeling comfortable intervening or not knowing how to intervene in bullying. Several barriers to educators addressing bullying have been identified, including lack of time, resources, and training. Besides, teachers frequently felt pressured to address student academic desires and exhausted from the demands associated with their many roles, which interfered with their capacity to effectively address bullying (Hall & Chapman, 2018).

Teachers can establish a strong relationship with each student, provide students with opportunities to internalize prosocial norms, and set a positive classroom climate which potentially has a great influence on the students' behaviors (Song et al., 2018).

However, several studies have shown that teachers experience significant difficulties in effectively dealing with bullying situations. For example, teachers may fail to recognize the seriousness of bullying when it does not take the form of physical aggression (Song et al., 2018). Teachers can play a key role in addressing the problems of school bullying and peer victimization; they are the adults most likely to witness peer victimization and are authorized to act to limit instances of peer victimization (Gregus et al., 2017). Although they may recognize the bullying incident, some teachers tend to ignore bullying for fear of exacerbating the situation for the victims because of their inappropriate intervention. Students often express skepticism about their teachers' capability to successfully intervene in bullying. Students even attested that the situation often worsens when a teacher intervenes (Song et al., 2018). Teachers who think that they are not prepared to handle bullying appropriately take a passive stance toward bullying. However, when students thought their teachers were actively acting, less victimization as well as taking part in bullying was reported. Furthermore, students who perceived strong support from their teachers were more likely to seek help for bullying (Song et al., 2018).

For teachers who do not or rather passively intervene in bullying situations, professional education and training are necessary so that they can actively act against bullying. Appropriate strategies against bullying include effectively working with the victim and bully such as helping the bully achieve self-esteem and encourage the victim to be more assertive, enlisting other adults such as contacting parents, asking the school counselor, and disciplining the bully. Passive teachers may not adequately endorse these

behaviors while active teachers frequently use effective strategies when confronted with bullying situations (Song et al., 2018).

Bullying Intervention Programs

School is a key context for implementing universal prevention programs based on the influence of peers, teachers, and other school staff on youth development. The middle school represents an opportune time to address risk and protective factors for youth aggression. Development in social cognition during early adolescence is associated with increased capabilities for social problem solving, perspective-taking, and empathy (Sullivan et al., 2017). While bullying is a serious concern for students and educators alike, empirically tested interventions are necessary (Cipra, & Hall, 2019). A systematic review of school-based interventions aimed at reducing bullying revealed that only 40% of curriculum-based interventions were effective in reducing youth aggression and bullying. Furthermore, some interventions produced an increase in bullying among certain populations.

One such intervention, COREMatters, was designed to reduce bullying behaviors, foster a greater sense of community cohesion and trust in the school, improve school climate, and increase student self-esteem (Cipra, & Hall, 2019). This program was taught an integrated model where findings suggest that the COREMattters program positively impacted the school climate or the student perception of school climate. Students in the intervention group reported less teasing of other students based on categories such as clothing, appearance, and race among students (Cipra, & Hall, 2019).

Another bullying intervention program that is widely practiced in schools is the implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. This program is the oldest and one of the most researched bullying prevention programs in the world. It represents a whole-school comprehensive approach that includes schoolwide, classroom, individual, and community components (Limber et al., 2018). The program is focused on both short-term and long-term changes that will create a safe and positive school environment. The overarching goals of this program are to reduce existing bullying problems among students, prevent new bullying problems, and achieve better peer relations. These goals are pursued by restructuring the school environment to reduce opportunities and rewards for bullying behavior and to build a sense of community (Limber et al., 2018).

School-based prevention programs are advantageous as they occur in a key setting for youths' social and emotional development. High prevalence rates of aggression during adolescence and associated adjustment difficulties for perpetrators and victims highlight the importance for effective violence prevention programs (Sullivan et al., 2017). Nearly all states have passed laws related to bullying, many of which legislate the use of programs to prevent bullying. Although societal views regarding bullying have evolved, changing the dynamics of bullying is challenging and requires teachers and other school personnel to increase their awareness and intervention efforts, develop clear school policies, and coordinate procedures to track and respond to reports of bullying (Smith-Adcock et al., 2019).

Although considerable progress has been made in developing and evaluating school-based efforts for preventing aggression (Matjasko et al. 2012), there is growing

evidence of differences in the impact of interventions across subgroups of youth (Farrell et al. 2013). This underscores further work to examine the extent to which current programs meet the specific subgroups of adolescents, especially those at increased risk. For example, some research suggests that youth with disabilities may be at higher risk for exposure to peer-based aggression when compared to peers without disabilities. Thus, it is important to identify universal prevention approaches that may best serve middle school students, including youth with and without disabilities to decrease exposure to aggression and enhance social outcomes (Sullivan et al., 2017).

School Culture and Climate

School culture has often been defined as the shared beliefs, values, and assumptions that shape interaction, drive the behavior of student life and learning, and are shared in varying degrees by members of a school community (Marsh, 2018). It is the social atmosphere of the "learning environment," and includes multiple aspects such as perceived clarity of rules, the fairness of discipline, classroom management as well as safety-related practices (Farina, 2019). It is also in this environment that bullying has both a negative and long-lasting impact on students (Farley, 2018).

The school climate, on the other hand, is the overall climate of the school and the classroom climate is a part of the school climate that varies across classrooms. Classroom climate can be defined as 'the sum of all the group processes that take place during teacher-student and student-student interactions. It includes interpersonal relationships and level of teacher control (Thornberg et al., 2018).

Although classroom climate is associated with academic achievement, the question of whether classroom climate may be linked to bullying victimization and bystander behavior in bullying is still overlooked in the research literature, with a few exceptions (Thornberg et al., 2018). One previous study found that a poor class climate, in terms of student-student relationships at the classroom level, was associated with greater victimization. Findings from a more recent study suggest that peer victimization is less likely to occur in classrooms characterized by positive, warm, fair, and supportive relationships among students and between teachers and students (Thornberg et al., 2017). A multilevel study conducted by Thornberg et al. (2017), found that positive, warm, and supportive student-student relationship patterns at the classroom level were associated with more frequent defender behaviors, while students exposed to bullying have poor social outcomes. Involvement in bullying, both as a target and as a perpetrator, is associated with negative behaviors such as drinking, smoking, theft, damage to property, and violations of parents' rules. Those who perpetrate bullying are at increased risk for criminal offending later in life (Farley, 2018).

Bullying has received increased attention from academics, scholars, and the media over the past decade and a half (Farina, 2019). The effects of bullying can be devastating and long-lasting for victims and bullies alike. Recent prevention efforts and research have focused on the school environment. There has been increased attention to the effects of bullying, particularly in school settings. Although bullying crosses the school sector, the National Center for Education Statistics suggests that bullying occurs more frequently in public schools (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). Because bullying has detrimental short- and

long-term consequences such as substance abuse, delinquency, social isolation, and academic failure, it is essential to recognize how factors, such as school climate and school sector, affect children's and adolescents' life trajectories (Farina, 2019). An effective plan for preventing bullying and a positive classroom culture will include individual classroom approaches as well as school-wide initiatives (Lawrence, 2017).

Although there is a lack of consensus about how to define and measure school climate (Wang & Degol, 2016) reiterated that shared beliefs, values, and attitudes shape interactions between students, teachers, and administrators set the parameters of acceptable behaviors and norms for the schools. As a construct, school climate often includes the quality of teacher-student and student-student relationships, orders, rules, discipline, school safety, as well as school connectedness and belongingness aggregated at the school level. A positive school climate can be considered as a protective factor because it has been associated with less aggression and fewer behavioral problems including bullying perpetration and victimization

Classroom Initiatives – A Whole-School Approach

The most effective strategies for combating school bullying utilize a whole-school approach, meaning they seek to change the social dynamics of the entire school, rather than just those between the bully and his or her victim (Goldberg et al., 2019). A whole-school approach aims to integrate skill development into daily interactions and practices using collaborative efforts that include all staff, teachers, families, and children (Goldberg et al., 2019). Antibullying policies and guidelines are thought to be one strategy as part of a whole-school approach to reduce bullying (Chalmers et al., 2016).

This approach is important to involve a coordinated set of activities across curriculum teaching, school ethos and environment, and family and community partnerships (Goldberg et al., 2019). Effective curriculum teaching and learning involve teaching skills through the implementation of evidence-based programs, as well as modeling social-emotional competencies, and providing continuous and consistent opportunities to practice these skills during everyday classroom situations (Oberle et al., 2016). Whole-school approaches are more successful than single-component approaches when they include socio-ecological strategies delivered in the classroom, school, home and at the individual level (Cross et al., 2018).

A whole-school intervention program by Olweus incorporated teachers to provide support on the whole-school level by identifying bullying incidents, providing increased supervision in secluded areas, coordinating with parents, school staff and students (Espelage et al., 2019). On the classroom level, teacher support includes establishing class rules against bullying, setting consequences for violating the rules. However, just setting rules or a one-off discussion in the classroom or on the whole school level is not sufficient (Espelage et al., 2019). Teachers may respond to bullying behavior in a variety of ways including disciplining students who bully, enlisting other adults to help, working with perpetrators or targets, or ignoring the incident. How teachers respond is important as a teacher's response to a bullying incident impacts the likelihood of future bullying by the student who perpetrated the bullying behavior (Doumas & Midgett, 2019).

To build up a meaningful and successful educational context, there are two elements to consider: the learners and the teachers. The former may be encouraged to

become autonomous and have the willingness to take greater responsibility for their learning, the latter being major catalysts for change to possess an active teaching practice via an unending round of professional development strategies to keep the currency of their knowledge updated (Zaghar, 2019).

The role of teachers has grown immensely. In the current times, they go through a vast array of practices from being the major source of knowledge, leaders, managers, and educators to supporters and facilitators; they are expected to be tech-savvy, computer literate and at the cutting edge of education. Their task is to cope with the 21st –century learners; then have a repertoire and reservoir of instructional techniques, effective teaching methodologies, and robust directional capabilities in such a way that they can foster their students' interest and creativity, and elevate their motivation (Zaghar, 2019).

As teachers understand the nature of school bullying problems, they can integrate antibullying content into their classroom lesson plans, and further educate students about school bullying. When teachers set firm limits on bullying behaviors, they act as role models for the student population. They understand that positive school culture predicted less reporting of bullying incidents (Farina, 2019). Cook et al. (2018) stated that evidence suggests student externalizing behaviors become increasingly resistant to change over time. Therefore, it is imperative to support teachers to deliver evidence-based classroom management practices that effectively prevent externalizing behaviors and promote behavioral engagement in the classroom. Effective teaching requires the delivery of evidence-based practices to successfully manage classroom behavior and promote high rates of engagement in learning. However, a significant proportion of teachers are

unaware of and are not adequately trained to manage student behavior (Cook et al., 2018).

The acknowledgment of bullying's negative impact has led to an increased focus on schools. Researchers have suggested that intervention and prevention strategies are crucial for reducing bullying in schools. These plans have generally included: having teachers work with students to develop class rules, the presence of cooperative learning activities, reducing social isolation, and increasing adult interventions. These suggestions call for an increase in practices and policies that promote positive school culture and climate (Farina, 2019).

Bullied Population of Students

Students and parents ought not be afraid to of the school environment. However, that is exactly the situation today for many individuals (Webber, 2017). The fact that bullying has driven individuals to what we would like to think is unthinkable, namely, suicide is indicative of the seriousness of this issue and the urgency that it be vigorously addressed. Elementary and secondary schools have instituted curricula addressing bullying and with its mission to create safer social climates (Webber, 2017). While bullying is a major challenge at all levels, the frequency of bullying appears to hit the highest point in middle school (Shriberg et al., 2017). This challenge has caused bullying prevention and intervention literature to grow considerably. Both the short-term and cumulative impact of bullying is troubling. Shriberg et al. (2017) found that reports associated with the involvement of bullying are associated with a higher risk for suicide-related behavior for this population of students.

Bullying can also have a negative impact on the emotional and social development of students (Zhao & Chang, 2019). Studies have shown that family support, peer relationships, and teacher fairness have a negative influence on school bullying. Family support, peer relationships, and teacher fairness affect one's risk of being bullied by influencing learning motivation (Zhao & Chang, 2019). Without the support of their peers, adolescents may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of conflict. Bullying behavior normally reaches a peak at the early stage of adolescence, as adolescents start to with their companions and romantic partners to be socially supported (Zhao & Chang, 2019). Children and adolescents develop an understanding of moral matters from their direct experience of harm and unfairness, from the observation of harm and unfairness caused to others, and from other people's communication highlighting the experience of harm. Students are likely to observe teachers' behavioral reactions to bullying and victimization and to make a sense of it, which can contribute to their understanding of the moral matter of bullying. Different teacher reactions may be interpreted differently because they focus on specific aspects (Campaert et al., 2017). When they deliver support to the target and start a mediation process to solve the conflict, they are likely to focus more on the consequences and the harm afflicted on the target. When they conduct a group discussion the focus may differ and depend on teachers' attitudes and knowledge of the dynamics. When teachers do not intervene in bullying, students may think their teachers tolerate it, at least under certain circumstances. In other words, specific teachers' responses may affect moral disengagement in different ways (Campaert et al., 2017).

Summary and Conclusion

There are a variety of both long- and short-term consequences related to bullying. Research has shown that as bullies progress through puberty and adolescence, they are more at risk for severe problems such as delinquency, substance abuse, truancy, dropping out of school, loneliness, and loss of friends (Farnia, 2019). Significant gaps in the bullying research literature remain, calling for an urgent empirical studies across several areas. These included studies to address conceptual, definitional, and measurement issues; the social and psychological processes related to the development and persistence of bullying; and the intersection of bullying perpetration and bullying (Hanish et al., 2013). Students spend a large portion of their time within school walls. As such, it is extremely important to highlight how schools can provide a safe environment for their students as perceptions of safety are inextricably linked to overall well-being and to the ability to learn (Farnia, 2019). Creating a safe environment that is conducive to learning and where students can get an education without the lingering of fear is critical to their development.

Bullying and violence are situations that many young people faced in their process of development, whether as bullies or victims or bystanders (Eadaoin et al., 2017). A more proactive way to prevent bullying is to adopt a developmental guidance approach to strengthen young people's skills and competencies in inter-personal relationships and bonding (Eadaoin et al., 2017). Schools are required to adopt a positive youth development paradigm and implement it as a classroom developmental guidance curriculum are a proactive approach to counter bullying. Cultivating a school

environment that cherishes forgiveness and harmony, endorses respect, non-violence, tolerance, and compassion is another important strategy (Eadaoin et al., 2017). This requires a systematic approach to strengthen teachers and peers as social support and will involve the entire school community on the policy, management and, implementation levels to promote a caring school culture as a proactive way to tackle bullying (Nese et. al, 2016).

Research supports a multisystem approach to bully prevention. At the most basic level, all adults in schools participated in professional development opportunities to understand bullying, and how to recognize and intervene to support youth. Also, staff members and students worked together to gain knowledge and skills to reduce bullying and promote prosocial behaviors (Espelage, 2014). However, simply working with staff members and students will not bring about real changes in bullying behaviors. School staff and administration partner with others to impact the ecology. Schools are required to coordinate with parents and adopt other innovative approaches such as creating newsletters and e-mail blasts to communicate with parents and community members. Partnering with community agencies and organizations to address bullying and to make sure youth and their families know where they can seek help is another strategy to help in addressing the bullying phenomena. Some schools hold events on the topic of bullying at family recreational centers, museums, and street festivals. School administrators also work closely with local media to highlight their bully-prevention initiatives and to promote community involvement as well as having youth leaders actively engaged in bully prevention efforts to create effective bystander intervention (Espelage, 2014).

Sustained implementation of evidence-based practices in schools is necessary for providing the academic and behavioral support students to be successful (Nese, et. al, 2016). Teachers are part of a student's support network and are an important potential source of support for students. Teacher support, when helpful, is associated with reduced student distress and fewer depressive symptoms (Danielson, & Jones, 2019). Research has shown that all students, and specifically students with emotional and behavioral concerns benefit from learning environments that are consistent, predictable, positive, and safe (Nese et al, 2016). When there is a gap between the desired and received support, it can impede the effective processing of bullying experiences (Matsunaga, 2011) and can also lead to what Wright and Miller (2010) refer to as reciprocity failure. Conducting a basic qualitative research study by gathering data through interviews with middle school teachers can highlight teachers' support and the pedological approaches was used in creating a positive classroom culture for the bullied population of students in the classroom.

Summary and Transition

In Chapter 2, I presented the literature review that supported the gap in my study that little is known about teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. I began with an introduction to the literature review followed by a literature search strategy. I then presented the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the study followed by an analysis of the empirical literature about key factors of the study. Finally, gaps in the literature were identified and described to further examine how this study could fulfill a gap in the research.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to understand teachers' support of the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. This study was chosen because it allowed me to understand the ways that people see, view, approach, and experience the world and made meaning of their experiences as well as a specific phenomenon within it. This chapter addressed the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher as well as the methodology and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that qualitative research is the essential guide to understanding, designing, conducting, and presenting a qualitative research study. Basic qualitative research design seeks a rich, thick description of the topic under study. Qualitative research design collects data without advanced assumptions or hypotheses, though researchers use their viewpoints or framework when examining their research questions. Qualitative research further requires the researcher to collect data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study. On the other hand, the quantitative research method is based on the hypothetical-deductive and postpositivist traditions of science. It relies on statistics to represent the occurrence of phenomena testing predictions based on deductions from existing research and theory (Burkholder et al., 2016). Quantitative research requires the use of standardized measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can be fitted into a limited number of

predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned (Patton, 2015), therefore, the quantitative method would not have worked for my study. Since the objective of this study was to understand teachers' support of the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom, a basic qualitative design was used. This approach was appropriate because it described the pursuit of understanding the ways that people saw, viewed, approached, and experienced the world and made meaning of their experiences as well as a specific phenomenon within it (Ravitch and Carl, 2016).

Other types of qualitative designs considered for this research study were case study and phenomenology. Like basic qualitative research, case study research also employs data sources such as interviews; however, the focus of case study involves a detailed and intensive analysis of an event, situation, organization, or social unit and has a defined space and time frame (Burkholder et al., 2016). I did not select this research design because the focus of this study is not the development of cases that extends to other cases and defined space. Similarly, phenomenology study tends to be interested in a collection and analysis of people's perceptions related to a specific definable phenomenon. Perceptions include the lived experience, how people relate and understand a phenomenon, and the meaning people give a phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2016). While this project study included understanding teachers' experiences that may play a role in developing their perceptions and support for the bullied population of students, it did not focus on creating opportunities within the curriculum to develop positive culture

initiatives in the classroom. For this reason, phenomenology was not chosen as the research design for this study.

Aten and Denney (2019) stated that qualitative studies collect data from interviews and observations to discover what people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them. This type of research study will be an exploratory methodological approach to study complex phenomena by collecting and analyzing nonnumerical data. Qualitative study is a field of inquiry and involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Additionally, Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that a qualitative study seeks to discover and describe in narrative reporting what people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them.

Role of the Researcher

The role of any researcher is to collect and interpret data (Burkholder et al., 2016). This process requires adherence to the scientific method, ethical standards, and an abundance of creativity. The researcher ensured that both positionality and social location are central to understanding the researcher's role in every stage of the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). My role as the researcher was to maintain the credibility and transparency of the study. Biases encountered during the interview process were recorded in the researcher's journal. This helped to alleviate any prejudice that occurred due to previous experience working with victims of bullying who had problems with depression, poor school attendance, and low self-esteem. The researcher's role also consisted of

gathering data by interviewing teachers and transcribing and analyzing the data. Information was gathered from the thoughts and feelings of the study participants who worked in another school district, by asking participants to talk about things that may be very personal to them through the interview process. All aspects of the study were clearly stated to be transparent with the participants, including the goals of the research, expectations of them, what the process and timeline entailed, and their roles and related responsibilities in the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Confidentiality was demonstrated in showing respect by being straightforward with the expectations and process of the interview as well as honored any promise made to the participant. There were no harm or pressure implied in eliciting answers from the participants. Also, the standards of credibility, dependability, and transferability were applied to reduce bias by using the researcher's journal to record any bias encountered.

Teachers who were interviewed may or may not have had similar classroom experiences, therefore, collaborating about classroom strategies of the bullied population of students had the potential to cause researcher bias. These are teachers who worked in an adjacent county in the public-school district, and I had no affiliation with the teachers or the district. It was beneficial to understand their classroom interaction with students, therefore remaining unbiased in the process is essential. I kept a researcher's journal reflecting on possible responses to the data collection.

Methodology

The methodology section discussed the sample of participants and identified the questions that guided the interview protocol. The procedures for the recruitment of the

participants and discussed instrumentation along with data collection are also explained. Additionally, this section discussed the data sources and collection and its data analysis plan as well as issues of trustworthiness.

Participant Selection Logic

Determining the appropriate sample size for this study was essential as it is important to gather enough data until theoretical data saturation has occurred (Burkholder et al., 2016). Qualitative studies seek to obtain a range and depth of perspectives and meaning. Thus, the sample size tends to be smaller compared with quantitative studies (Tong & Dew 2016). A purposive sampling strategy is generally recommended whereby researchers select "information-rich" participants who can articulate perspectives relevant to the research question. Tong and Dew (2016) stated that qualitative interview studies have typically reported a minimum participant sample size of 20. However, the number of participants usually depends on feasibility; the scope of the research question; and theoretical or conceptual saturation, defined as when no new concepts are being raised in subsequent data collection (Tong & Dew 2016).

The sample size for this study was 14 middle school teachers from various middle schools within the district. This is a relatively small sample size, however, a small sample size of 14 participants is appropriate if the sample is relatively homogeneous, the participants possess cultural competence or a certain degree of expertise about the domain of inquiry, and the objectives in the research are narrow (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who have unique abilities to answer the research questions. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that purposeful sampling

entails that individuals are purposefully chosen to participate in a research study for specific reasons that stem from the core constructs and context of the research question. The inclusion criteria by which participants were selected specified that participants be currently employed as a teacher in the chosen district, who were experienced classroom teachers at the middle school, teaching one of the main disciplines within the curriculum, and had at least three years of teaching experience and is knowledgeable of the phenomenon of interest and representative of the larger target population. They also reported having experience with bullying as a teacher in the school setting. These participants were identified through liaison with the administrators and researcher.

Instrumentation

In a qualitative study, the researcher is considered the first primary instrument of the research throughout the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The primary focus of this research was to understand teachers' support of the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. To study the phenomenon, supportive semi-structured and open-ended research questions were addressed, based upon the frameworks of the study.

The instrumentation to collect data was semi-structured and probing interview questions which were used to interview participants in the study and guided the participants and researcher throughout the interview process. Two research questions guided the interview protocol, eight sub-questions, and 11 probing questions. Questions were developed based on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and the reviewed literature relevant to the topic with the assistance of my committee chair. For example,

the first research question was, “positive classroom interventions to ensure students feel safe in a classroom conducive to learning.” With the help of my chair, questions were developed and tested with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). The second research question explored, “how teachers created opportunities within the curriculum to determine positive support for the bullied population of students in the classroom.” This question was also developed, tested, and proved with the help of SMEs. Eight sub-questions supported the research questions. Each sub-question had one to three possible probing questions to use for participants to elaborate on an answer to a semi-structured interview question.

Procedures for Piloting

Semi-structured and open-ended questions were used in the interview process. Semi-structured and open-ended interview questions were developed by the researcher using the theoretical frameworks within the reviewed literature as well with the assistance of SMEs. Questions were tested with SMEs after which, a few were edited to open-ended question formats. Questions were then discussed with my chair and later tested with SMEs again for content validity. Questions and probes were aligned with the two research questions (See Appendix B).

RQ1: How do teachers support the bullied population of students through positive classroom interventions?

RQ2: How do teachers create opportunities within the curriculum to determine positive support for the bullied population of students in the classroom?

These interview questions were used primarily to gather data to understand teachers' support of the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. All questions were asked in the same manner. Participants' responses measured attitudes and perceptions toward different bullying incidents as well as classroom initiatives in promoting a positive classroom culture.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Upon approval from Walden's International Review Board, the schools' administrators were contacted by emailing a letter of permission (Appendix D) and participation (Appendix C) that included the study topic and interview questions. They were also presented with a copy of the letter of cooperation obtained from the district for approval in collecting data (Appendix G). Participants were recruited who met the criteria outlined in the inclusion measures, which specified that participants be currently employed as a teacher in the chosen district, who are experienced classroom teachers at the middle school, teaching one of the main disciplines within the curriculum, have at least three years of teaching experience, and is knowledgeable of the phenomenon of interest and representative of the larger target population described, to participate in the study. A letter of participation along with the consent form was sent to participants through email when identified (Appendix E). An interview was then scheduled at a time convenient to participants. Interviews were scheduled through Zoom; due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, as soon as contact was made with participants. It was anticipated each interview would take approximately 45 minutes. The snowball sampling strategy was used to obtain additional participants for the study.

Participants were asked for names and contact information of their colleagues who met the inclusion criteria, to see if they were interested in participating in the study. Those participants were contacted and informed that someone suggested their participation and asked their willingness to partake in the study. An interview was then scheduled at their convenience. Each participant was emailed a consent form (Appendix A) for their review and returned via email with the words "I consent," indicating that they volunteered to partake in one interview (Appendix B). All participants returned the form consenting to take part in the study. Information was collected and reviewed and ensured the consent forms were completed and signed. Permission was granted to record the interview, as well as to contact them via telephone if there were additional questions or clarifications. The researcher's journal was used to record non-verbal actions that were important in responding to the research questions during the interview process.

Data was collected and recorded in the researcher's journal. A consent recording of interviews was used to record the responses of respondents. Each participant was reassured of their confidentiality, thanked for their participation in the study, and was given a $10 gift card for their participation. A follow-up letter (Appendix F), as well as a copy of their signed consent form, was sent to participants, thanking them for their participation in the study.

Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative data analysis captured the breadth and depth of the data collected. It provided comprehensive, trustworthy, and compelling insights pertinent to the research

question. It also demonstrated, to some extent, the transferability of concepts and theories to other contexts and settings (Tong & Dew 2016).

The role of any researcher is to collect and interpret data (Burkholder et al., 2016). For this study, semi-structured interviews were used as the method of data collection. Once the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed from audio to text and stored on a Microsoft Word document. Turning the spoken words into written words was a vital aspect of this qualitative study as such form is amenable to closer analysis (Ravitch and Carl, 2016). Participants' names were replaced with a pen name pseudonym to protect their identities and ensured confidentiality.

In analyzing the data, semi-structured and open-ended questions were used to understand teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. A thematic analysis process was conducted after analyzing data from the individual interviews. To be familiarized with the data, time was allotted reading and re-reading transcriptions, noting ideas and comments about the research questions.

Using a thematic data analysis approach, codes that served as indicators of the meaning of each segment of data were identified. In using open coding, categorized codes that shared similar characteristics became the beginning of a pattern (Saldaña, 2016). This allowed the classification and categorization of the individual pieces of data that created patterns among the data that point to the key concepts contained within the data collected (Babbie, 2017). Data was collected from personal interviews and fully analyzed and coded after all interviews were completed. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated

that to facilitate retrieval of what was said on each topic, you code the data, that is, mark on a copy of the transcript a word or phrase that represents what you think a given passage means.

Words and phrases generated from the nodes were highlighted after reading through interview paragraphs. Next, a tentative label was assigned to each section based on the meaning initially determined. This process was repeated for each transcribed interview. After the open coding process was completed, a list of open codes was generated. After each data set was analyzed, a second level of coding known as axial coding was conducted, to determine the most important codes that were relevant to answering the research questions. The raw data were then grouped into categories based on commonalities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Categories and sub-categories were developed from the recurred patterns that emerged from the secondary coding process. During the process of axial coding, categories were reviewed, reorganizing the data, deleting redundant codes, combining axial codes, and aligning codes to research questions. Key concepts and patterns were examined to further develop categories. Categories were reviewed to determine patterns that emerged as subthemes and are useful in describing the phenomena of instructional coach and in answering each research question. Data were continuously reviewed, searching for repeated ideas among the categories. Finally, the data was further condensed by creating groupings of connected categories until themes emerge. Data was reviewed multiple times until no new themes emerge, which is considered saturation.

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016) triangulation can be achieved by comparing multiple data sets, gaining multiple perspectives on a common topic, or confirming information with a participant to ensure the description of the perspective is accurate to get the most valid and trustworthy data possible. I used methodological triangulation to establish credibility. To establish quality control and credibility, codes were compared from one data set with the others to corroborate findings. Codes from each data set were listed in a spreadsheet and were used in the recursive process of determining themes. During the analysis process, data that did not fit a pattern, does not provide an understanding of the data, or an alternative viewpoint that contradicts any emergent themes was eliminated (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). These discrepant cases are reported in my analysis summary.

Lastly, member checking was conducted. Ravitch and Carl (2016) termed member checking as the process by which the researcher checked with participants to confirm the accuracy of their transcription data. Participants were asked to provide feedback affirming or denying the accuracy of their data. Three participants responded saying the data was accurate and one participant responded saying that some of the grammar had shifted, but it was okay. Those grammatical errors were corrected during the analysis.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers adhere to a set of different standards or criteria to access validity or trustworthiness. These standards included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba 1981). Qualitative researchers ensured these

standards aligned with the research questions, goals, and contexts of the study (Ravitch and Carl, 2016). Trustworthiness is expected upon the successful implementation of these standards in which both researcher and participant are involved.

Credibility

Credibility is the researcher's ability to consider all the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained (Guba, 1981). The researcher draws meaningful inferences from the researcher's study design and the instruments that measure what they intend to measure in the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Credibility established that the results of the study are believable as they focused on the richness of the findings from the participants rather than the amount of data collected. To establish credibility, triangulation, reflexivity, and member checks were used.

Data triangulation provides accuracy. Data triangulation according to Ravitch and Carl (2016) used different sources or methods to confirm a set of interpretations. It looked at different perspectives from more than one vantage point to form themes and categories in the study. The researcher's journal, as well as interviews of the participants to examine data to enhance the validity of the study were utilized. These research strategies refer to the use of multiple data sources and participants to develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Reflexivity was also used to establish credibility in eliminating any bias that may occur. According to Schwandt (2015), reflexivity obliges the researcher to document in journals any self-critical analyses of biases and responses to the research process, and any

adjustments made to the study based on ongoing analysis. For this reason, careful attention to the researcher's thought process, and pre-assumptions of oneself, other people, and the surroundings were vital to the research.

Another method used in qualitative research to provide accuracy to study data is the use of member checks. According to Creswell, in member checking the researcher reports findings back to participants of the study and asks them to review the accuracy of the information. For this study, a summary of the findings was provided to each participant interviewed. The participants were asked to review the findings for accuracy, completeness, and fair representation in the responses (Creswell, 2013). The participants' feedback was documented, and the study findings were reviewed for accuracy based on this feedback.

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the concepts and theories are relevant to other settings. The research can be transferred to other contexts and can be compared to similar familiar situations. This was demonstrated by showing that the sample represented the target population as well as by showing that the sample participants had the knowledge, experience, or expertise necessary to provide information that the discipline or field and the target population would find meaningful concerning the topic. Researchers can compare their results with studies conducted in different contexts, regions, or populations; position their findings with other theoretical frameworks, and describe the study setting and participant characteristics in detail so readers can judge the transferability of the findings to their context (Tong & Dew 2016).

Transferability entails that the researcher is bounded contextually as descriptive, context-relevant statements (Guba, 1981). The theorist stated that the study is applicable and transferable to the larger context while maintaining its purpose. I utilized my journal notes that connoted thick description to understand and build a clear picture of the participant in the context of their setting, describing the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations, that characterized the role of the participants during the interview sessions. A variation in participant selection was used to ensure that participants have classroom experience, are knowledgeable about classroom initiatives and bullying intervention strategies.

Dependability

Qualitative studies are required to meet a standard of dependability. Dependability according to Burkholder and Cox, (2016) means that there is evidence of consistency in data collection, analysis, and reporting. It also means that any adjustments or shifts in methodology, which can occur in qualitative studies, are documented, and explained in a publicly accessible fashion. Dependability is demonstrated by providing clear, detailed, and sequential descriptions of all procedures and methods, such that another researcher could repeat each of them faithfully. It refers to the stability of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

This component entails that the researcher has a reasoned argument for how the data is being collected and that the data is consistent with the argument. To ensure dependability, triangulation was used which included an ongoing data analysis through the researcher's journal and interviews to cross-validate to increase credibility. The

researcher's journal provided an ongoing detailed data collection process as well as any thoughts, questions, ideas, and experiences that would eliminate bias and deepen my thinking about the research process. The interview process was documented, and the data produced was kept in the researcher's journal (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using the appropriate method such as triangulation can confirm that the researcher created the appropriate data collection plan given the research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability demonstrates how the research findings are supported by the data and establishes whether the researcher is being biased during the study. Because the researcher is the primary instrument in the research and brings a unique perspective to the study, it is important to achieve confirmability by implementing triangulation strategies, and external audits throughout the study to demonstrate how each decision was made. The researcher's positionality and bias are important aspects that are required to be scrutinized (Guba, 1981).

Reflexivity was used to obtain confirmability by allowing the interview questions as a guide when asking probing questions until saturation is reached. The researcher's journal was used to engage in self-reflection to eliminate any bias that surfaced. All the interview notes were reviewed to confirm the data. A consent form was provided to each participant to ensure their willingness to participate in the interview process. Participants were informed of their role in the interview where they are free to withdraw from the interview for any reason, they deemed important to them.

Ethical Procedures

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) was responsible for ensuring that all Walden University research complies with the university's ethical standards as well as U.S. federal regulations. IRB approval was required before the collection of any data, including pilot data. Walden University does not accept responsibility for research conducted without the IRB's approval, and the university will not grant credit for student work that failed to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research. As a requirement, the IRB application will be completed by all students and faculty members who are conducting research projects of any scope involving the collection or analysis of data. All the requirements established by the Walden Institutional Review Board were adhere to. This assured that proper methodology was used, and all participants were protected in the study. Therefore, before data collection, all documents were submitted, which included the letter of cooperation that was presented to schools asking permission to conduct interviews, the letter of participation eliciting participants for my study, and the consent form which included identification of the researcher, purpose of the research, benefits for participating, risks to participants, confidentiality of the participant, and assurance that the participant can withdraw at any time during the interviews.

As a researcher, I had access to tangible data, therefore I ensured that data was securely locked in a filing cabinet at a home office. I secured data on my computer in a separate file using study codes on the document that identified the data solely by the researcher. The folder has been password-protected and is kept for 5 years after which

will be destroyed by shredding the raw data and deleting the electronic data and recordings. Because of the strict code of ethics of the researcher, interview participant names are required to be anonymous, therefore, I use pseudonyms to identify the participant's as I analyzed transcript and coded data and share it with my committee members. All participants were aware that they can end the survey or interviews at any time. Finally, all participants understood that it was the researcher's job to protect their privacy by following a strict code of ethics, therefore, I was socially responsible on all levels of the design and data-collection process

Conclusion

As with all types of research, qualitative studies are required to be conducted using a rigorous approach, and they are required to be comprehensively reported. By following well-established principles, qualitative studies generate rich understandings of people's attitudes, motivations, goals, expectations, and beliefs. They, therefore, have the potential to make unique and valuable contributions to research practice (Tong & Dew 2016). This basic qualitative study examined teachers' support of the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. Because the researcher was the primary instrument in qualitative research, the role of the researcher was a central consideration in qualitative research. Avoiding bias during both the data collection and data analysis process was important as participants can change their answers based on their perceptions of the researcher's bias (Burkholder et al., 2016).

Getting the depth and not the breadth was important in this qualitative study, therefore, in determining the appropriate sample size, the goal was to obtain enough data

appropriate to form a sufficient number and variety of participants (Burkholder et al., 2016). It was important to use the appropriate instrument in data collection, therefore, semi-structured and open-ended questions followed by probing questions were used for interviews with participants. Once data were collected, they were analyzed. Transcribing recorded interviews allowed the researcher to accurately translate spoken words to written words. This allowed for a variety of themes to emerge and the use of coding by identifying themes and patterns that existed within the data.

To ensure quality in a qualitative study, the researcher is required to acquire the participant's consent to record the interviews and collect enough data for the study. It is important to use multiple data sources to build a complete picture of the participant's perceptions (Burkholder et al., 2016). Using member checks and external audits such as ongoing observation and fieldnotes are methods to ensure trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

The principal purpose for conducting this qualitative study was to understand teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. In Chapter 4, data collection, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness are discussed. Additionally, the results of the data using open coding analysis concerning systematic theory construct and themes are presented. Two main research questions guided the interview protocol as well as sub-questions and probing questions used for this study. The two main research questions are as follows:

Research Question 1: How do teachers support the bullied population of students through positive classroom interventions?

Research Question 1: What classroom initiatives exist within the curriculum to support the bullied population of students in the classroom?

Setting

This study took place in one of the largest school districts in the southwestern part of the United State. This district also supported the community through adult education programs and special education programs for handicapped students. Additionally, it provided vocational instruction through a transportation academy and a building industry trade association academy. The district also provided programs in music, art, and athletics and touts many local and nationwide academic accomplishments and prestigious awards that exemplify excellence in education. The school setting was unique because it attracted students from five feeder schools in the perimeters of the district.

During the time of the study, the district shifted to a virtual platform where teachers and instructional staff began to plan for distance learning programs. This is in response to school closures to address the COVID19 emergency and the major impacts of the closures on students and families. This altered the personal delivery of documents to administrators that included the study topic and interview questions as well as a copy of the letter of cooperation obtained from the district indicating approval to collect data. It also eliminated the face-to-face interviews with participants. This required interviews to be conducted through Zoom, a web-based conferencing platform, instead. This influenced the study, as it was difficult to fully observe participants' actions and gestures during the interview sessions. It was also difficult to recruit teachers who were willing to consent to an interview, after a time when they are required to follow a virtual schedule that mirrored their regular schedule for live and real-time meetings with students through synchronous meetings. Burkholder (2016) stated that it is preferable to conduct face-to-face interviews because it created a personal presence and enhanced the establishment of rapport, allowing the researcher greater access to subtle body language cues from the interview and permitted the researcher greater control over the interview environment. Interviews were conducted with 14 participants through Zoom in between and after instructional times. Participants were given the option to choose a time and date that was most convenient to them. All participants met the inclusion criteria which stated participants are selected who were currently employed as a teacher in the chosen district, who were experienced classroom teachers teaching one of the main disciplines within the curriculum, had at least 3 years of teaching experience, was knowledgeable of the

phenomenon of interest and representative of the larger target population. Of the 14 participants, two are music teachers, one is a Spanish teacher, two teaches in the AVID program, two are English teachers, three science, two special education and two are math teachers.

Demographics

The methodology included interviewing 14 participants. All participants consented to by returning the emailed consent form. To secure enough participants, the snowballing strategy was applied where participants were asked for contact information of their friends and colleagues who they felt would be interested and met the inclusion criteria. As shown in Table 2 below, all 14 participants were educators teaching in the school district, with classroom experience ranging from 4 to 30 years.

Table 2

Participants' Identification, and Length of Service in the School District

Participants' Identification	Length of Service
Participant 3 (P3) Participant 4 (P4) Participant 7 (P7) Participant 8 (P8) Participant 10 (P10)	4 to 10 Years of Teaching
Participant 2 (P2) Participant 5 (P5) Participant 6 (P6) Participant 9 (P9) Participant 12 (P12)	11 to 20 Years of Teaching
Participant 1 (P1) Participant 13 (P13)	21 to 30 Years of Teaching

Participant 11 (P111) Participant 14 (P14)

The criteria for inclusion was indicative of teacher participants who agreed to participate in the study. Participants agreed to participate by returning the consent form with the words "I Consent:" as instructed. The exclusion criteria were indicative of those who choose not to participate in the research study and those who did not participate in collaboration about teachers' initiatives for the bullied population of students in the classroom. Participants excluded from the study consisted of those who were not classified as teachers.

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who had unique abilities to answer the research questions. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that purposeful sampling entails that individuals are purposefully chosen to participate in a research study for specific reasons that stem from the core constructs and context of the research question. Participants were identified through liaison with the school's principals and selection through the district's website. Participants responding to the emails received a letter of participation and the consent form that explained the purpose of the study, background, procedures, sample questions, the nature of the study, risk, and benefits of being in the study, payment, privacy, and contact information. I intended to seek participants from across all school campuses, however, participants were recruited from four of the school campuses within the district.

The rationale for seeking participants from all campuses was to get a holistic view of classroom initiatives teachers used for the bullied population of students in the

classroom. A holistic approach involves the development of knowledge, skills, and values which enabled learners to become active, democratic, and responsible citizens capable of making informed decisions (Badjanova & Iliško, 2015). Getting a holistic view; looking at initiatives teachers employ on campuses across the district, would bring an awareness of the way learning takes place and an understanding of how students learn. It was beneficial in highlighting the learning approaches of students and to bring about a change in the perceptions that students have about learning.

The researcher is required to protect the privacy of the participants, therefore, pseudonyms were used to safeguard the identity and kept information confidential within the limits of the law. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic of classroom initiative for the bullied population of students, and eliciting responses from participants, there was the possibility that information given may lead to the neglect and abuse of minors. As a mandatory reporter, under the state's "mandatory reporting law," I could be asked to provide information to authorities if court-ordered that requires the mandatory obligations to inform of actual or suspected instances of abuse and neglect of a minor. There were, however, no instances during the interview process of any reported neglect or abuse of minors. Personal information was not used for any purposes outside of this research project nor have participants' names, school identity or, anything else was identified in the study report, as doing so jeopardizes participants' anonymity.

There were more than 800 emails sent out and 14 participants consented to join the study. I originally planned to recruit 15 teachers; however, I was unable to do so despite my efforts in resending emails and collaborating with principals. I also planned to

have a face-to-face meet and greet with principals to introduce myself and inform them of my study, but due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, schools were forced to close and reverted to distance learning. This caused a major change in recruitment, as teachers were not as receptive.

Data Collection

Upon receiving IRB Approval Number 09-21-20-0978658 to complete the research, schools within the district were immediately contacted to find the best way to reach out to principals of schools, as schools were closed due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Accessing the school's website and calling the school's office to contact principals were the two options given. Principals were difficult to locate; therefore, messages were left with the school's clerk and most times with the senior administrative secretary to the principal, who suggested that the letter be emailed to the Principals. Two principals responded via email and two responded via telephone. Of those principals, three offered to assist in sending a mass email that included the "Letter of Invitation" to the participants and the "Consent Form" to their staff informing them of the research. One principal suggested emailing the teachers individually. The remaining 4 principals were contacted using emails from the school's website. It was difficult getting started with collecting data as participants were unresponsive. More than 800 individual emails were sent out to prospective participants with no response in the first week. After the second week, emails were resent to participants, after which, four participants were recruited. The snowball sampling strategy was applied to obtain additional participants. Two participants provided the names and contact information of their colleagues who met the

inclusion criteria. Those participants were contacted via email letting them know that someone suggested their participation and asked if they were willing to partake in the study. The letter of consent was also included in the email for their review. After the consent form was sent back, an interview was scheduled with each participant. This procedure continued until 14 participants were recruited. Interviews were held during participant's breaks throughout the day, in the evenings outside instructional times, and on the weekends, which did not interfere with the participants' instructional duties.

In building rapport with participants, a brief introduction was conducted introducing the researcher and research study. Participants were thanked for agreeing to participate in the research study and shared the purpose of the research. Participants shared the length of time they had been teaching, the discipline or subject they were teaching and one special memory of being a teacher over the years. They were once again informed of the research topic after which I was given permission to record the interview via zoom and take notes in the researcher's journal. All participants agreed, however, one participant inquired how the recording will be used. That participant was assured as per the consent form, that the identity of the school, as well as names of the participants and responses will be kept confidential. The participant was also informed that the researcher will not use personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. The researcher will not include names or any other information that could identify the participant in the study reports.

Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that when conducting interviews, the researcher is clear and transparent about all aspect of the study with the participants, including the

goals of the research, the expectations of them, what the process and timeline will look like and entails, and what their roles and related responsibilities included. It was anticipated the interviews would take 45 minutes; however, some interviews took approximately 30–45 minutes. Before interviewing each participant, they were recapped about their consent to the interview, informed about the basic questions and goals about the study, the timeline, as well as the researcher's responsibilities during the interview. This created a supportive, non-confrontational, and soothing manner between the interviewer and interviewee that lasted throughout the interview process. Body posture, language, voice, and tone remained neutral during the interviews which allowed participants to respond more freely and express their opinions. The avoidance of linguistic communication displayed a neutral judgment that did not lead the participant (Burkholder, 2016). Participants' responses were reciprocated by the responsive relationship between the interviewer and the participant. Participants were friendly, cordial, and presented themselves professionally as they appeared to answer questions honestly. It was assumed that most participants viewed questions beforehand since samples were provided on the consent form as their responses were fluent and well presented. When participants answered questions indirectly or provided information that seemed to follow a different path, the order of the interview or probing questions were adjusted. Careful attention and attentive listening to capture responses were given to responses to questions so as not to repeat questions or probes, as well as nonverbal cues which were recorded in the researcher's journal. Participants' responses were measured attitudes and perceptions toward different bullying incidents as well as classroom

initiatives in promoting a positive classroom culture. Probes were used which helped to clarify or requested participants to elaborate more in eliciting additional responses. However, there were a few times when a probe was not used if that question was answered in a previous response. All questions were asked in the same manner and order for all participants and allowed open discussions throughout the interviews.

The data collection process was completed within six weeks. After conducting interviews, they were transcribed and reviewed by listening to the recordings for clarity. Notes recorded in the researcher's journal were also used for clarification of information. A copy of the transcribed interviews was sent to each participant to obtain transcript validation. They were asked to respond with any corrections or comments they may have from the interviews. Four participants responded: three agreed that the transcripts were accurate and one mentioned that some of the words were changed a little, but it was alright. The other 10 participants did not provide any feedback as they did not respond.

Data Analysis

In adherence to the scientific method and an abundance of creativity, the responsibility of the researcher was to collect and interpret data (Burkholder et al., 2016). Interviews were conducted and transcribed from an oral to a written mode structured conversation into a form that is amenable to closer analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The interview transcripts were read several times for content familiarity and to confirm insights recorded in the research's journal, after which open coding of the data in which segments of text were identified and labeled. This was done by reviewing the data line-by-line giving attention to specific words, sentences, or sections of text. This was

followed by conducted axial coding, which allowed the clustering of repeated patterns that were used to develop categories. Once the initial analysis of the data was completed, the transcribed interviews were uploaded to the NVivo 12 plus software for windows files, where a closer coding process began. Since the same set of questions were asked of all participants and transcripts were structured and designed in a prescribed format, the automatic coding process was applied (Dhuria & Chetty, 2017). The transcripts were subsequently auto-coded based on paragraph style where they were organized in heading styles and a numbered code was generated for each paragraph. The interview questions were formatted into heading style 1 and answers in, 'Normal' font before importing the documents for organization purposes. Nodes were created from connections in the transcripts where 33 nodes were generated. Nodes were examined several times for similarities after which they were labeled according to categories. Each node was placed into a category based on relationships. Five main categories and one redundant category were developed from the generated nodes. Table 3 below displayed the related categories and redundant nodes generated from the interview questions.

Table3

Categories of Essential and Redundant Nodes

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Redundant Nodes
Bullying	Bullied	Professional Development	Interventions	Positive culture	Card
Behaviors	population		Capturing Kids		Good
		Training	Hearts	Class	
Students	Bullied				Grade
		Teachers	Social contracts	Initiatives	

Period	Cyber	School year	Social media	Personal	Kids
Low Self-Esteem	students			Classroom	Level
Aggressive	Population				Little bit
Withdrawn	Verbal				Name
School					Science
Other					Things
Inadequate					year

The nodes identified under Categories 1, 2, and 3 are aligned with RQ1 while those under categories 3 and 4 are aligned with RQ2. Since the nodes were sorted by questions, locating the paragraphs that contained a specific node's folder generated through the automatic coding process was made easier. Once connections to the data were made, 5 themes and 7 subthemes emerged. These themes were responsive to the purpose of the research and the research questions, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested themes be exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitive to the data, and conceptually congruent. Three themes were identified that aligned with RQ1. These themes identified were: (a) Bullying Characteristics that portrayed traits associated with bullying behaviors, (b) Differentiating Bullied Students that is associated with the types of bullying behaviors and (c) Positive Classroom Initiatives that provided insight into the different options teachers used in the classroom in preventing bullying behaviors. The two themes associated with RQ2 were: (a) Bullying Training through Professional

Development which examined the types of training received in dealing with bullying in the classroom, and (b) Creating Positive Classroom culture which looks at positive classroom initiatives.

The interview transcripts as well as the researcher's journal were revisited to reinforced insights and in finding common codes throughout the analysis process. The codes were reviewed to ascertain that the most important codes relevant to answering the research questions were assembled. After the information was grouped into categories based on emerged nodes and commonalities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), the redundant codes were deleted. This process continued until no new themes or categories emerged, which indicated that saturation was reached as the codes kept repeating themselves in all data sources. There were no discrepant data reported within this data set.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility, according to Guba (1981) is the researcher's ability to consider all the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained. To establish credibility, the interview questions were developed from the literature review and tested in a trial run with Subject matter Experts, colleagues, family, and friends. Interview questions were aligned with the research purpose and research questions. Data triangulation, reflexivity, interview probes, and member checking were used to provide accuracy and to further establish credibility to ensure the research study was conducted ethically, and that the findings would adhere to trustworthiness. Data triangulation according to Ravitch and Carl, (2016) used different

sources or methods to confirm a set of interpretations. It involves looking at different perspectives from more than one vantage point to form themes and categories in the study. Probes were used during the interview and responses were documented and recorded verbatim in the journal using questions generated from the interviews. Interview transcripts were sent for participants to view, validate, and make any changes necessary. Reflexivity was used to establish credibility as it obliged me to document in the Researcher's Journals any self-critical analyses of biases and responses to the research process, and adjustments made to the study based on ongoing analysis in eliminating bias that occurred (Schwandt 2015). Familiar experiences were recorded in the researcher's journal when similar points of view were made during the interview.

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the concepts and theories are relevant to other settings and consist of the research findings. This study demonstrated that the sample represented the target population of the study as well as showing that the sample participants had the knowledge, experience, and expertise necessary based on the meaningful information provided concerning the classroom initiatives for the bullied population of students. It also demonstrated the school setting in terms of its location within the state as well as the school's population of students and teachers. In this way, researchers can compare their results with studies conducted in different contexts, regions, or populations and position their findings with other theoretical frameworks while describing the study setting and participant characteristics in detail so readers can judge the transferability of the findings to their context (Tong & Dew 2016).

Guba (1981) stated that transferability entails that the researcher is bounded contextually as descriptive, context-relevant statements. The study showed its applicability and transferability to the larger context while maintaining its purpose. The researcher's journal notes were utilized which connoted thick description to understand and build a clear picture of the participant in the context of their setting, describing the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations, that characterize the role of the participant during the interview sessions. A variation in participant selection was used to ensure that participants have classroom experiences, are knowledgeable about classroom initiatives and bullying intervention strategies.

Dependability

Qualitative studies meet a standard of dependability. According to Burkholder and Cox, (2016) dependability requires evidence of consistency in data collection, analysis, and reporting. It also means that any adjustments or shifts in methodology, which can occur in qualitative studies, are documented, and explained in a publicly accessible fashion. To ensure dependability, triangulation was used which included an ongoing data analysis by using the researcher's journal and interviews to cross-validate to increase credibility. The researcher's journal provided an ongoing detailed data collection process as well as opportunities to record thoughts, questions, ideas, and experiences that eliminated some bias and deepened thinking about the research process. The data collection process and analysis procedures were explained in detail. Additionally, reflexivity was used to maintain dependability by providing an effective and impartial analysis. As an educator, examination acknowledged assumptions and preconceptions

that were brought into the research process that had the possibility of shaping the outcome were examined. Notes and documentation about my thinking in my field notes were placed throughout the research process. The interview process was documented, and the data generated through observations were kept in the researcher's journal (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using this appropriate method such as triangulation confirmed that the appropriate data collection plan was created given the research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The process of placing notes and documentation, and the thinking process were consistent throughout the research process for each participant to established consistency. The data analysis and synthesis of the data were followed in the same manner throughout the research.

Confirmability

Confirmability demonstrated how the research findings are supported by the data and established whether the researcher is being biased during the study. As an educator for over 35 years, and the primary instrument in the research, I brought a unique perspective to the study, therefore, it was important to achieve confirmability. Triangulation strategies and external audits throughout the study were used to demonstrate how each decision was made. Guba (1981) stated that the researcher's positionality and bias are important aspects that are required to be scrutinized. Reflexivity was also used by allowing the interview questions to guide in asking probing questions until saturation was reached. In referring to the researcher's journal and engage in self-reflection, eliminated bias that surfaced. Interview notes were reviewed to confirm the data. A consent form was provided to each participant to ensure their willing participation

in the interview process. Participants were informed of their role in the interview where they were free to withdraw from the interview for any reason deemed important to them. The study's findings were objective because of the diligent and accurate portrayal of the participants' responses. Information was constantly clarified by referring to the researcher's journal notes for self-reflection.

Results

Thematic Findings

The analysis of the findings from the study is discussed in this section. Using a thematic data analysis approach, codes were identified that served to indicate the meaning of a segment of data. It was revealed that some of the participants responded to interview questions that were interconnected to other interview questions. It was necessary to follow the flow of their thinking rather than just try to stick rigidly to the order of my interview questions. Probing questions were also used to allow participants to get back on track with the flow of the interview.

Themes and Subthemes Aligned to Research Questions 1

In analyzing the data, five major themes and seven subthemes emerged that are aligned with the research purpose and research questions. Three themes and four subthemes were aligned with research question one and two themes and three subthemes were aligned with research question two. The first three themes and four subthemes are portrayed in Table 4 below. These themes and subthemes are in alignment with the first research question. Also included in Table 4 are the codes that are connected to the first three themes and subthemes in the first research question.

Table 4

Themes, Subthemes, and Codes Aligned to Research Question One

RQ1: How do teachers support the bullied population of students through positive classroom interventions?		
Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Theme 1 Bullying Characteristics	*Types of Bullying in the Classroom*	bullied students, bullying, shy or outspoken, "other". Low self-esteem. classroom, population, behavior bullying, behaviors, school, aggressive behavior, withdrawn, inadequate
Theme 2 Differentiating Bullied Students	*Types of Bullying on Campus* *Dealing with Bullying on Campus*	bullied population bullied students, Population, bullying, classroom, verbal, cyber, population, behavior,
Theme 3 Positive Classroom Initiatives	*Capturing Kid's Hearts And Social Contracts*	classroom initiatives, positive, school initiatives, teachers, intervention, period personal, students, schoolyear, capturing kids' hearts, social contract

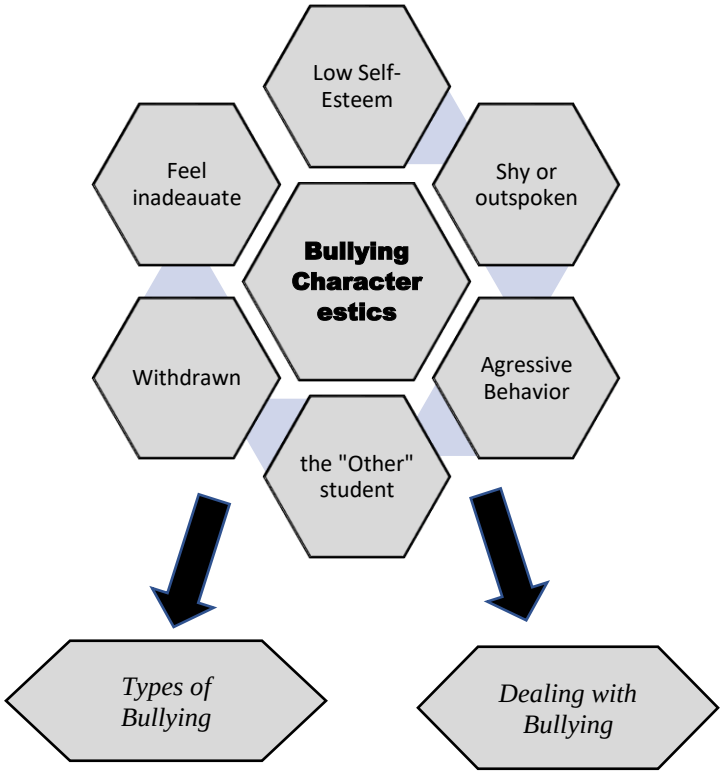
Bullying Characteristics

The first recurring theme that emerged after coding and categorizing the data was bullying characteristics. This first theme portrayed the different traits that are associated

with bullying behaviors. To answer this question, I asked participants to reflect on the behaviors of students and share their characterization of the characteristics of a bullying student. I used probes when necessary, which helped to solicit, clarify, or request more elaboration which allowed for a more open discussion. Figure 1 below, depicts characteristics experienced by participants of students on campuses.

Figure 1

Bullying Characteristics Experienced by Participants



There were different views from participants on their characteristics of bullying behaviors. From this theme emerged one subtheme which is *Types of bullying in the classroom.* Participants rated these behaviors from being reserved or shy, to loud and aggressive. For example, P8 said these students would be those who tend to be reserved

and keep guarded in terms of their personal information but are very big on identifying faults in others. P6 mentioned these are students who normally showed aggressive behaviors and are not afraid to speak. They have self-confidence, which he identified as a good thing but can be used negatively and sometimes tend to be malicious.

Participants mentioned they associated with bullying on campus and in the classroom. These behaviors are associated with negative connotations. P10 mentioned these students are loud, demands attention, and insecure. P1, P4, and P13 cited that these are students who are considered "other", which they referred to as students who may come from a less wealthy background. They love to laugh at the mistakes other students made, are socio-economically challenged, have emotional challenges, and seemed to be the most deprived in the group. P13 commented:

> In my experience, usually, the bullies are the most deprived students who come with baggage and very difficult backgrounds. Typically, it seems they generally have one parent, oftentimes, they have no parents, and they are being raised by a family member. They have a lot of social-emotional issues and oftentimes they have experienced trauma on many different levels. However, most times it is misdirected rage, because of the baggage they have. It has also been my experience that students are looking for someone to correct them even though they push back. Eventually, they come around and expressed their gratefulness for the patience shown.

P9, P5, P2, and P3 described bullying characteristics they observed with their students. They cited examples that reflected the themes that emerged from question one. P9 mentioned:

> I guess my concern will be when students try to put other students down. Sometimes they make fun of another student. Sometimes a student would make fun of their friend.

P5 believed that bullying is always changing. This is equated to the changing times of the influence of technology. P2 indicated that it could be anything from students laughing at other students and calling them nicknames while P3 stated that these students are those who would shove, push, and roll their eyes on others.

Types of Bullying in the Classroom

This subtheme derived from the first theme and is aligned with the first research question. Participants were asked to identify the different types of bullying they encountered in the classroom. The data revealed that verbal and cyberbullying were the most types of bullying experienced. However, verbal bullying is most seen in the classroom. P2 mentioned that she has seen students bullying and when she does, she nips it in the bud as best she can. She has also seen students making fun of others. P1 said he has seen verbal bullying within various groups but not on a regular and widespread basis. P4 and P9 have also experienced verbal bullying in their classrooms. They have experienced students making comments about someone's hair or the clothes they are wearing. P11 and P13 believed there is a cultural divide where students picked on each

other to show their authenticity. P1 and P6 have experienced bullying with male counterparts due to their sexual preferences. P4 commented:

> I have seen some verbal bullying, but mostly with boys that act a little effeminate. They tend to get bullied. However, generally in my classroom, it is not a big issue, but I have heard inappropriate comments.

Findings revealed that bullying is very common among students in the classroom. P14 reported that name-calling has been the number one form of bullying she encountered in the classroom. Though most classrooms have gone to a collaborative seating arrangement, participants revealed they have seen students try to bully other students by exclusion, by muttering under their breath, by writing terrible things on a table, and by rumors and hearsay. Participant 12 reported that bullying happened in the chat in their virtual classroom.

Differentiating Bullied Students

The second theme, Differentiating Bullied Students is aligned with the first research question. It asked how to identify a student who is at risk of being bullied in the classroom. From this theme emerged two subthemes namely *Types of Bullying on Campus* and *Dealing with Bullying on Campus.* Participants were asked to identify students who are at risk of being bullied. Findings revealed that these students are identified as low academic achievers who exhibited low self-esteem, are from low socioeconomic status families, are withdrawn and shy, have gender identity issues, and exhibited some form of disability. P7 mentioned:

> They are usually a lot quieter. They are timid and do not like talking much and stick to themselves. They are a little bit more reserved than our average population.

P4 said those students would be students who are withdrawn, shy and are not as social as others. P12 mentioned that she identified a student who has been bullied as students who are academically challenged thus, having low self-esteem. They generally, feel inadequate, do not fit in, or do not feel good about themselves.

During the interview P7, P8, and P9 identified students as being shy, but do not have many friends and are afraid to participate in a whole-class discussion or even in a group activity who are being at risk of being bullied. P5 described students with disabilities, those students with a language barrier, students who are homeless and poor, to be students who are often at risk of being bullied because they do not have the social skills to interact or are afraid to participate. P4 commented:

> They might have a disability such as autism or Asperger's, where they might say something without thinking, and people automatically assume that they are not like other kids or they are asking inappropriate questions, and then they might get picked on. So, I think there are all different kinds of things. It is not just one specific characteristic; they can also be the outspoken kid who is not aware of the social norms or the cues.

P10 mentioned that students who are at risk of bullying are usually withdrawn and lacking in social skills. Both P1 and P6 felt that gender issues and personal hygiene

played an important part in student's lives and can be targets for bullying. P1 commented with the following:

> Bullying can take on different forms, and it just depends on how you want to look at it. It can be a student sitting there very quietly, it can be a part of racism, and can also be a part of gender discrimination. It can look like all those things.

P3 equated her attentiveness to her motherly skills. She exercised her skills by identifying students who seemed to be victims of bullying. When asked if she was able to identify a student who might not come forward to report a bullying incident but is the victim of bullying by his/her peers, she responded:

> I usually because I am a mom. I tend to have that sixth sense of feeling things and just perceiving things. I have spoken to students when I noticed something is not right. I would pull them outside the classroom and speak to them just to make sure they are okay. Normally, they will say it is okay. I cannot cast doubt because it is what they say, but I noticed this and try to find or dig in there. My intention is to let them know that I do realize something is not right when I pull them aside. I let them know that I am here if they ever want to talk to someone or their counselors.

Types of Bullying on Campus

This subtheme derived from probes that aligned with the second theme of the first research question. Participants were asked what types of bullying encountered if any in the classroom or on campus. Participants revealed that they have encountered some form of bullying. The findings showed that bullying does happen in the form of verbal bullying through name-calling and online by cyberbullying. P11 believed that bullying

happened in general, and all students are targeted for some form of bullying. P3 mentioned that:

> Cyberbullying has been prevalent, and students have been posting things about each other online thinking it is untraceable. What makes it easier is that there are apps that students can download.

P7 mentioned that she has seen students used social media to post pictures of other people without permission and she would be alerted by another student of its occurrence. P1 mentioned that he has not seen any types of bullying on campus, P8 stated that she has seen but it is not blatant and P7 mentioned that it is hard to differentiate if it is bullying behaviors or just playing around. In any case, she would intervene.

Dealing with Bullying on Campus

This subtheme also derived from probes from the second theme in the first research question which asked what strategies were used to deal with bullying on campus. Participants described different approaches that materialized from their many years of experiences. P6 went through restorative practices and mindfulness training where he learned how to moderate situations when two students are having issues and tackle behavioral or learning issues as they arise. P11 learned through her many years of experience to solve issues in a calming and reassuring manner by not making a big deal about issues in front of her students because they try to take advantage of the situation. These issues are addressed individually with students allowing them to be aware of their unacceptable behaviors. P13 established a zero-tolerance policy with her students:

> I am open with my kids and I tried to establish an environment where they know that all are welcome. They know they can confide in me. It is difficult for me at times to identify bullying behaviors because I have many students. I have a zero-tolerance policy and I would let them know that. However, in recent years, I noticed that many students felt comfortable enough to confide in me. I encourage them to be an upstander and to report any instance of bullying because I will call them out and handle it. Most of the issues at our school concerning bullying, take place outside of the classroom, mostly between passing periods. That becomes a challenge because our campus created plenty of opportunities and space for bullying to take place.

Participants believed that setting standards from the beginning helped alleviate bullying behaviors on campus. Participants used various methods in dealing with bullying issues. P12 commented that whenever she heard a mean comment, she pulled the student aside and addressed it. She believed that her identity which is associated with a large majority of the student body played an important role in dealing with bullying. She can relate to the language, tradition, and culture which she used to her advantage. P2 reflected on her online experience where she is doing distance learning. One of the ways she kept the community of students intact is to revisit their social contract. She also utilized their conferencing app where she would collectively reflect on acceptable behaviors in chat rooms. P9 used the school resources to deal with most of her bullying encounters.

> We started building our counseling team very well. Previously, there were just academic counselors, but now we have an on-site social worker appointed by the

> district. We have a school psychologist and college interns who are also part of the counseling team. I think we have a team that is very well equipped to deal with these issues.

Participants recognized the importance of dealing with bullying issues, but findings revealed that not all participants actively participate in curbing the behavior on campus. P4 believed that some teachers do not actively participate in disciplining students. P4 realized that for much progress to be made, there be a community effort to do so. When asked how teachers deal with bullying on campus, P4 replied:

> There are teachers who get to know their kids and build the communities and have conversations with them and discuss appropriate behaviors. Then other teachers may just pretend they do not hear anything, so they just do not say anything. This might cause students to turn on each other. So, in those instances, everybody has just got a green light to pick on each other.

P6 also does not feel that all participants are involved in curbing bullying behaviors. He stated that he used awareness to teach students to be accepting.

> Teaching awareness allowed students to be more appreciative of their fellow students. This is so because they become self-conscious of their actions and in turn would be more understanding of others. I think what happens sometimes a teacher may ignore it probably because they have too much to deal with. They would quietly tell a kid to “suck it up” so they may ignore it because teachers are always running around.

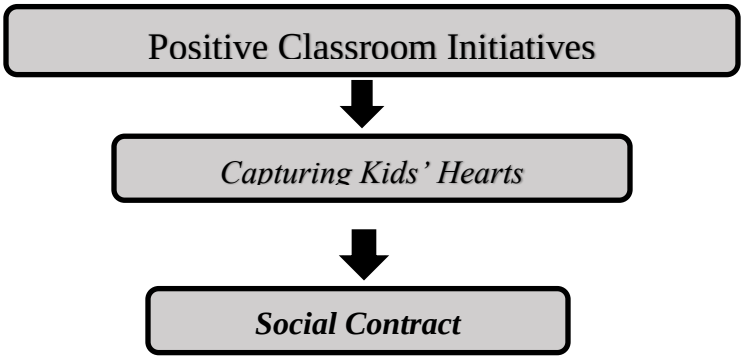
P9 mentioned that it becomes difficult to recognize at times, therefore, have a hard time dealing with the issue. P1 mentioned that he does not see many issues of bullying, therefore, does not have any issues on campus. P3 revisits their social contract and P11 generally addresses the issue once she sensed that bullying is happening or is told that it is happening.

Positive Classroom Initiatives

The third theme is Positive Classroom Initiatives. This theme provided insight into the different options teachers used in the classroom in preventing bullying behaviors. Through this theme emerged two subthemes which are *Capturing Kids hearts and Social contracts*. This theme is also aligned with the first research question in which participants were asked to describe classroom initiatives used, if any, in preventing bullying behaviors in the classroom. Figure 2 below depicted the most used initiatives participants used in the classroom to create a positive environment conducive to learning.

Figure 2

Positive Classroom Initiatives Used in the Classroom



Findings showed that participants presented various positive initiatives used in the classroom. Participants mentioned the importance of building rapport with their

students. While participants reverted to the most used “Social Contract”, others reverted to individual classroom strategies. P13 adopted a zero-tolerance policy across the board with her students at the very beginning of the school year. She utilized an app to encourage her students to report any incident of bullying behaviors. This established rapport with her students where they feel free to confide in her. P11 connected with her students by building a culture of care where she meets with students individually to review their grades. She provided advice and whatever support, or resources to help students thrive and feel more connected. P1 utilized games and other interactive activities to create rapport and establish an environment that is conducive to learning. P6 used awareness and restorative practices to establish rapport and a positive classroom environment and P4 build a collaborative community through honest discussion in his classroom settings.

Capturing Kids Hearts/ Social Contract

Capturing Kids Hearts and Social Contract were combined because they contained elements that are related. These themes are a set of processes intended to create healthy relationships between adults and youth and to support high-achieving learning environments. Participants found it beneficial because it established, maintained, and restored positive relationships with students. During the interviews, participants were asked to share their positive classroom initiatives used to help the bullied population of students in their classrooms.

Participants mentioned that they used a social contract with their students. While the method varied in implementation, this theme was the most common and favored

among participants. P3, P12, and P14 had similar experiences in using the social contract. They established a social contract with their students. They do lots of team building and go through questions which they keep revisiting. P2 created motivational activities for students to enjoy. She does distance learning and finds creative ways to engage her students. She used the social contract and other classroom activities to create lots of opportunities for discussions in her classroom. In addition to the social contract, P5 used different initiatives in the classroom such as check-in circles which she encouraged students to share their struggles as she builds rapport. P7 used the social contract and gave students opportunities to have personal choices such as seating arrangements and choosing work and group partners. P8 created several daily contracts. She allowed her students to develop individual rules. P10 does not specifically like to go through the social contract steps and framework with her class, therefore she models everything for her students. She believed it is built into her lessons as an unwritten understanding of how to conduct her classroom.

Capturing Kids Hearts and Social Contract was administered by the school district. It is expected that all teachers utilize this program, however, some participants reverted to their individual strategies. P4 believed that the social contract would be beneficial if there is consistency in its implementation. P8 commented:

> We were all trained in it therefore, it is the expectation that all teachers have a social contract with their students. There is, however, has been a pushback between some teachers, but for the most part, I would say that the whole school does not, but I think it is essential.

Themes and Subthemes Aligned to Research Question 2

The second research question asked what classroom initiatives exist within the curriculum to support the bullied population of students in the classroom. From this question, two themes and two subthemes were developed. The first theme for this research question was, 'Bullying Training through Professional Development, and the second was Creating Positive Classroom Culture'. Below in Table 5 are Themes, Subthemes, and Codes Aligned to Research Question Two. Also included in Table 5 are the codes that are connected to the two themes and subthemes in this research question.

Table 5

Themes, Subthemes, and Codes Aligned to Research Question Two

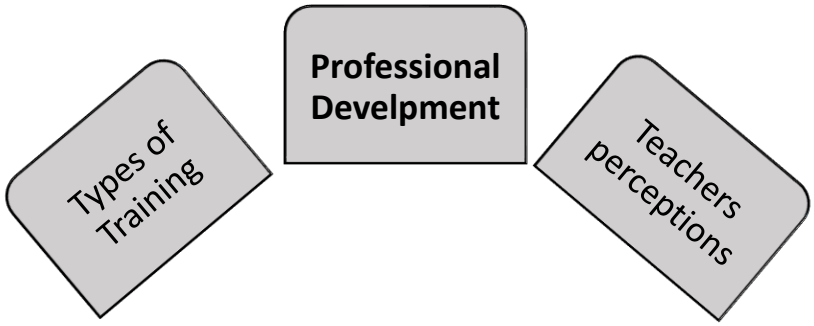
RQ2: What classroom initiatives exist within the curriculum to support the bullied population of students in the classroom?		
Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Theme 4: Bullying Training through Professional Development and Creating Positive Classroom Culture	*Types of Training Programs* *Teachers' perception about Bullying training*	professional development, training, teachers, school year, social media
Theme 5: Creating Positive Classroom Culture		positive culture, intervention, class, personal, period, school, students, school year, teachers, classroom

Bullying Training Through Professional Development examined the types of preparation teachers are given to combat bullying in the classroom. From this theme emerged two sub-themes which are *types of training program* and *teacher's perception.*

These themes and subthemes are in alignment with the second research question. Figure 3 below presented the first theme and subthemes in the second research question.

Figure 3

Professional Development Training and Teachers Perceptions



Bullying Training Through Professional Development

The findings of this theme indicated that participants have not experienced any direct professional training addressing bullying with the district. Participants believed that other training such as Capturing Kids Hearts and self-directed personal training assisted them in this area. Participants felt that professional development is essential and would be beneficial to them. P11 and P13 stated that they have always been advocating for teachers to get more professional development. P9, P3, P4, and P10 cannot recall receiving any professional development training. P5 mentioned it is an area of necessity. During the interview, P14 talked about her bullying training.

> I have not received any training that is specific to bullying. I think something that is close to it has been the Capturing Kid's Heart, but I do not think it is necessary to combat specifically bullying. So, I do not.

Types of Training

Participants are committed to curbing bullying behaviors but lack the skills necessary to do so. They sought outside training to help combat this behavior. P13 has become deeply involved with social-emotional training and doing lots of mindfulness. She believed that those go hand in hand where the students searched within themselves to figure out why they are feeling the way they do and identify the triggers. P6 also had coaching in mindfulness training, awareness, and restorative practices, but not on a recurring basis. He has limited exposure in this area and has not really had any intense bullying training.

> Those trainings are valuable and helpful even though it does take time to resolve a simple issue. I went through mindfulness training with another district. While I know it is not bullying, it allowed you to be aware of yourself, such as how to breathe properly and calm yourself down which does seem to help when I use it with my students. Because I have used mindfulness strategies in my classroom, it really set a calmer tone and avert that rambunctious bullying environment. It also eliminated classroom management issues.

P9 mentioned that she took a personal day off to go to an educational event and happened to be at a program where bullying was addressed. She felt that she was fortunate to be a part of that event. She used the skills learned to create an inclusive classroom for her students. Participants developed individual strategies to combat bullying issues. Some develop their own strategies to use in the classroom. This is seen with P11 who commented:

> The thing that I do is something I have designed with my colleagues. We have designed units, especially at the beginning of the school year. We have used the bully documentary from Netflix for several years now in our department. We would watch clips of it and then have discussions right at the start to help with the overwhelming transition from elementary to junior high. I do, however, wished we had more professional development sessions.

P8 cited her teacher training education as her very first set of professional development opportunities. She believed that courses such as understanding child psychology, understanding how people work and understanding student emotions can help. She mentioned she took a couple courses in classroom management in another district which alerted her on behavioral diversion within the classroom especially diverting from a negative situation.

Participants reverted to the Capturing Kids Heart training offered by the district. This training, however, is a voluntary and self-directed implementation. There are no set guidelines in the execution of the Capturing Kids Heart program. Teachers are free to develop individual classroom strategies. Because of this, P4 believed that the program is not as effective. He believed that having teachers develop their classroom strategies created confusion as there is no consistency in dealing with bullying within the classrooms. Participants agreed that professional development that addresses bullying would be beneficial. P4 alluded that he would love if the district could have at least one presentation a year for the students about different topics, and bullying would be a perfect one.

> We have people who come and give us trainings during our staff meetings. This happens maybe once a year for about 15 to 20 minutes. They would talk about what are the signs of unacceptable behaviors, but not directly about bullying. We did have a weeklong training, that was called Capturing Kids Hearts, building the community in the classroom, and getting to know your students. I do, however, felt that indirectly, it helped curb the bullying behaviors.

Teachers' Perception About Training

This subtheme developed from the question probe which asked about the effectiveness of professional development programs received from the district. Findings suggested that many participants have partaken in the Capturing Kids Heart training session but not all participants are implementing the strategies in their classrooms. Findings revealed that participants reverted to individual strategies in their classrooms. P1 used games to decompose his students in class and used icebreaker questions to create collaboration. P4 used mindfulness training.

Findings indicated that the use of the social contract derived from the Capturing Kids heart program is the most used among participants. The social contract that has been a useful strategy in classroom control is a voluntary strategy introduced by the district. Participants are expected to create and implement a social contract with their students. It was stated that there has been a pushback between some teachers about using the social contract in the classroom. This is because every teacher can create their individual classroom social contract and at times caused confusion. Findings indicated that

participants surveyed are aware of and using the contract in some form, it was reported that many participants declined to use the contract.

P5, P6, and P7 believed that having professional development specific to bullying will increase awareness in both staff and students. P8 believed that "if everybody comes together, and everybody just believes in curbing bullying behaviors it can be effective. There are times people just do but they do not believe in it, so if it is not genuine then there will not be buy-ins".

Creating Positive Classroom Culture

The second theme that emerged from this second research question is the theme of 'Creating Positive Classroom Culture'. It explored the behaviors teachers displayed in modeling personal actions in demonstrating the desired behaviors of their students in the classroom. This theme answers the interview question of strategies used to create a positive classroom culture which was developed from research question two. Findings concluded that teachers involved their personal experiences in the classroom to generate empathy with their students. Findings also suggested that participants generated creative ways in creating a classroom conducive to learning and building rapport with their students.

P2 indicated that her number one rule is to garner respect from and for all students. She made herself visible for students to always recognize her presence. She checked in with students regularly and have them work in different groups for classwork and assignments so that students interact with other students. P3 tried to get her parents involved in the learning process. She mentioned, "When students are aware of their

parent's involvement, they become more aware of their behaviors". She created lots of dialogue with her students and assisted with school support staff. P4 stated that the number one thing he does to create a positive classroom culture is to get to know his students. He gave them opportunities to voluntarily discuss current events such as sports, athletic activities, and their weekend pursuits during their daily morning discussion. This created rapport and allowed teachers and students to make connections by getting to know each other. P5 capitalized on her creative writing skill by having students involved in a variety of activities in the classroom. She remarked:

> We do a lot of storytelling, and I model it for them. Students get a chance to share their lives through stories. I start each day with a digital poll asking a pop-up question. In this way, students can make a connection and find common grounds to connect. I too share in this connection so that students can see that culturally, we are all different but are the same in many ways. It opens a conversation where kids are learning about each other in a positive way. I always start the week with something positive that happened over the weekend. This is important because teenagers often tend to focus on the negative, especially now when they are stuck at home during the pandemic and do not have the freedom to hang out with their friends.

Making connections through building rapport with students is a recurring occurrence with all participants in this theme. It was discovered that participants explored different ways to connect with their students. P4 motivated and pay close attention to his students because of his mindfulness training. P6 developed the interest of her students

through the learning process as every minute of her lesson plans is thought out for her class. P13 developed a zero-tolerance policy but is approachable, helping, and understanding to her students. P11 cared, respected, and appreciated her students by allowing them to bring their cultural background and their cultural heritage to the classroom. P1 built a close relationship with his students and developed interesting learning activities and keeping students engaged through games. P6 welcomed everyone to his class and always encouraged them to share during discussions. He tried to include elements that benefit all students in his inclusion class and positively addressed all suggestions. P7 allowed her students their choice of seating, greeting them in the morning and afternoon and always smiles with them and created an environment where students were free to shake hands and give high fives.

Sharing personal experiences is widely practiced with participants. In creating a positive classroom culture P5, P8 and P14 revealed that they share their personal stories with their students to allow them to see their humanity. P13 commented by saying:

> Students have to feel like they are humans, therefore I created a classroom where I bring out their personal experiences to let students see that side of me as their teacher as it humanizes me to them.

P5 mentioned that she created opportunities for lots of dialogues, conversations and writing sessions. She designed lessons that are very strategic which opened themselves to getting personal and sharing about real-life experiences. This created a positive cultural classroom environment.

Summary

Chapter 4 described the emerging themes from the data analysis. Data were analyzed using recorded interviews via zoom with teachers from the same school district. Chapter 4 explained the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results, as well as presented the findings of each research question. In response to RQ 1, the findings of this data analysis related to classroom initiatives that are related to the bullied population of students indicated that participants use varied methods to support the bullied population in the classroom. The findings also indicated that all participants experienced bullying behaviors both in the classroom and on campus. They can differentiate different types of bullying and used different techniques to work with students in dealing with this behavior. Participants utilized the social contract initiatives in their classroom where through this contract students can participate in the designing and are held responsible for their behaviors. Participants used other techniques that worked best for them in the classroom. Participants reported they do not tolerate bullying and find ways of dealing with this behavior.

In relation to RQ 2, the findings indicated that professional development specific to bullying has not been a priority in the district. Participants relied on their experiences or get additional training outside of the school district to deal with bullying behaviors. They agreed that professional development specific to bullying and would be beneficial to both students and teachers. Participants also strived to create a classroom that is conducive to learning. They employed their creativity and modeled behaviors in the classroom in creating a positive classroom culture.

Chapter 5 discussed the interpretation of the research findings. Also discussed are the limitations of this study and recommendations for future study. Additionally, the recommendations for action and implication for social change are presented along with the conclusion of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. I explored two research questions which asked the following: How do teachers support the bullied population of students through positive culture, classroom interventions? And what classroom initiatives exist within the curriculum to support the bullied population of students in the classroom? The essential findings emerged from participants' descriptions of classroom initiatives, the identification of students at risk of bullying, and the positive classroom cultures employed by the participants. The key findings also led to recommendations for actions in collaboration with participants' knowledge and pedagogy employed in their classrooms. This chapter will cover the interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, recommendations for action, and social change implications.

This section will address how the study's major findings are related to the literature review and themes discovered. The study's major findings depicted five major themes and seven subthemes that emerged from the two research questions.

Interpretation of the Findings

Bullying Characteristics

According to Hellström and Lundberg (2020), bullying characteristics can be expressed in different ways and includes aggressive behaviors that can be direct or indirect and physical, verbal, or relational. These bullying characteristics are aligned to the outcome of the results of the study. Based on responses from participants, students

belittle others, exhibited aggressive and threatening behaviors, and engaged in name-calling. This is supported in the literature by Merrin et al. (2018) who stated that bullying behaviors included physical harm, repeated name-calling, and relational forms of aggression like excluding someone from a group or spreading rumors.

During the interviews, participants revealed that students with low self-esteem, who are shy and or withdrawn, and who felt inadequate exhibited aggressive behaviors and came from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This finding is aligned with the literature by Vitoroulis and Vaillancourt (2018) who stated that children who bully others tend to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

According to Siris and Osterman (2004), bullying is an inevitable part of growing up but is hurtful and debilitating for the victims. Cyberbullying has revealed to be widely experienced on school campuses and is just as evident during distance learning. This supported the claim of Autin and Agoratus (2019) who stated that cyberbullying added the component of making the bullying widely "public" via social media. Findings indicated that students report instances of cyberbullying when they are victims of such bullying behaviors.

Positive Classroom Initiatives

This theme's findings revealed that using the social contract which is a component of the Capturing Kids' Hearts program is widely utilized and is favored among participants within classrooms. Pecker (2020) found that social values and interactions play a large role in individual decision-making. This validated the results of the study which indicated that participants who applied the social contract established

rules and consequences that were based on values and principles that guided students in their activities and interactions together. Findings indicate that the social contract allowed for building rapport, respect and curbing bullying behaviors as students are held accountable for their actions. This is in alignment with the ecological system theory (1977) that served as a symbol of teamwork, cooperation, community building and respect as students are reminded of their roles as individuals in their class.

Sullivan et al. (2017) indicated that school-based prevention programs are advantageous as they occur in a key setting for youths' social and emotional development. Results of the study showed that not all participants utilize the social contract but reverted to other strategies they felt worked best in their classroom setting as the social contract is generated at the discretion of the teacher and student and does not build consistency. This contrasts with the literature of Goldberg et al. (2019) who stated that the most effective strategies for combating school bullying utilized a whole-school approach, meaning they seek to change the social dynamics of the entire school.

Bullying Training Through Professional Development

Findings from the study revealed that professional development specific to bullying would be beneficial. The benefits of professional development were cited by Dilshad et al., (2019) who stated that effective professional development programs engaged teachers in learning events that are comparable to those they may employ with their students. Participants recalled partaking in a schoolwide program called Capturing Kids Hearts which included strategies on how to build meaningful, productive relationships with students and create a safe, effective environment for learning. This is

in alignment with the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program which represents a whole-school comprehensive approach that includes schoolwide, classroom, and individual (Limber et al., 2018).

Song et al. (2018) recognized that teachers realized the seriousness of bullying and try to intervene, some take a passive stance, while others take active action. Participants in the study claimed that the lack of adequate skills in dealing with bullying caused them to sometimes ignore the situation or referred the students to the school counselors who they feel are more equipped to deal with such behaviors. This also aligned with Hall & Chapman (2018) who indicated that not all teachers received training on school bullying rules and procedures.

Participants revealed that they sought bullying training outside their district. The study revealed that they reverted to creativity and years of strategic teacher training techniques, while some utilized the social contract which is introduced in the Capturing Kids Heart Program sponsored by the school district. In keeping with Bloom's Taxonomy, when teachers receive professional development, students benefit because their behaviors improve, and learning takes place as they reduce bullying behaviors and improve the school climate. Participants indicated that professional development is essential as they provide opportunities to develop, master, and reflect on new approaches to working with children. This aligned with Smith-Adcock et al. (2019) who recognized the changing dynamics which required teachers and other school personnel to increase their awareness and intervention efforts, develop clear school policies, and coordinate procedures to track and respond to reports of bullying.

Creating Positive Classroom Culture

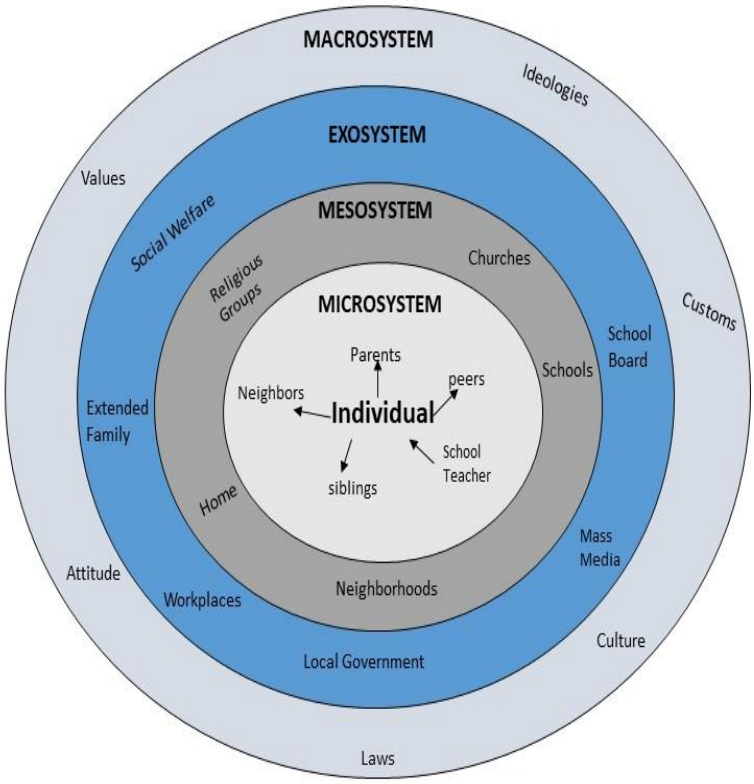
The findings of this theme parallel that of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler which suggested that learning takes place through categories of involvement through encouragement, involvement through modeling, involvement through reinforcement, and involvement through instruction. The study indicated that participants used their personal, cultural and classroom experiences to model positive classroom behaviors to create a caring and productive classroom community where students feel safe, and learning takes place. This aligned with Prins et al. (2019) who stated it is important for teachers to value the diversity in today's classrooms and recognize the contributions of these differences to themselves and their learners. Participants indicated that students felt respected when they can take part in creating the rules through their social contracts or other classroom techniques and sharing and respecting each other's cultural practices. The study revealed that students learn better, feel safer, and have better attitudes toward school which is aligned with the idea of Prins et al. (2019) who declared that a culturally responsive learning environment required disciplinary practices that respect the unique culture of each learner.

Conceptual Framework Alignment

The interpreted findings of this research were viewed from the perspectives of the conceptual frameworks of Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory (1977) to bullying involvement as seen in figure 4 below.

Figure 4

Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory to Bullying Involvement



Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory to bullying involvement looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex "layers" of environment, each influencing a child's development. Each layer is connected so that changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers. The results from this study can be

applied to these layers emphasizing the support participants give to students regarding the classroom initiatives used to create a positive learning environment.

The Microsystem has factors that influence the student and teacher relationships. Participants are closest to the students and can influence them. Results revealed that participants strive to create rapport with their students. They allowed for class discussions and peer interaction within groups. This flowed over to the Mesosystem where parents are involved in the life of the students and school. It was revealed that participants reached out to parents on occasions by sending cards and notes to connect the parent and student to the classroom. Participants also revealed that they shared their personal experiences and connected with students culturally in the classroom.

Limitations of the Study

While the purpose of my study was accomplished, the following limitations could affect the interpretation of the results. The first limitation ensued because of the Covid-19 pandemic which forced schools to shut down abruptly, therefore, it was impossible to conduct face-to-face interviews as originally planned. As teachers were grappling with the many challenges of conducting distance learning, it was difficult to recruit teachers as I had to use the individual emails of the teachers as my recruitment tool. This became problematic because teachers were bogged down with many other important emails pertaining to distance learning. Teachers were also struggling with time management issues.

The second limitation resulted from recruiting participants from only four schools in the district. Participants who responded to the email or were recruited through the

snowballing procedure. Participants who were recruited through the snowballing procedures were mostly from the same school campuses, therefore had similar experiences when answering the research questions.

The third limitation came because of conducting this research with a small group of participants. There are over 1,500 teachers in this district and interviewing 14 participants may not be a valid representative of the schools in the district as qualitative interview studies have typically reported a minimum participant sample size of 20. The number of participants in this instance depended on feasibility; scope of the research question; and conceptual saturation (Tong & Dew 2016).

Finally, I was limited to my personal bias as an educator as I have experience in observation and classroom teaching management. I allowed my experience as a teacher to help to understand the teachers' perspectives and referred to my researcher's journal to record my biases as I redirected my focus. I reflected on my recordings to ensure that my bias does not affect the findings of the research in any way.

Recommendation for Future Research

In my review of this study's findings, the limitations of this study, and the literature review, I concluded several recommendations for future research. First, I would conduct research to explore the impact of classroom initiatives on learning. Although the impact on learning was not a factor, student behavior is a determinant as to how learning takes place and the impact it makes in the classroom.

Next, I recommend that the research extend to include a larger population of representatives from each school in the district. The findings of this study are

representative of participants' views of the four schools represented only and may not be that of the entire district. Findings of a study of this nature could be beneficial to schools as bullying is a recurring dilemma in classrooms and on school campuses.

I also recommend that research draws attention for teachers to maintain a focus on students' behaviors offline, as well as online. When it comes to early adolescence, antibullying efforts targeting bullying in school settings are priority. At this critical stage of the adolescent period, students must be comfortable and safe to participate in the learning process.

Finally, I recommend that attention be drawn upon the relationship between the ethnicity or the socio-economic context, religion, and gender preference of students. These relationships change over time, and the student might play a small part in those changes which can affect the values and opportunities in life (Ecological Systems Theory, 2018). Understanding these relationships can create a positive teacher-student relationship, promote academic success, help to develop self-worth, and improve interpersonal and professional skills.

Recommendations for Action

We encourage our students to think for themselves and to avoid peer pressure and vogue thinking. We want them to have the skills necessary to listen, analyze and interpret the information that will be a constant part of their lives. To meet such accomplishments, it is important to provide the necessary abilities to prepare them to succeed in life, academically and socially. This might seem like an impossible task, however, with collaboration and effective training, the task can be achievable. My goal was to explore

classroom initiatives used to support the bullied population of students through positive classroom interventions, and as a result, I propose five recommendations from the findings of this research for others to consider when utilizing this research.

The first recommendation is related to Professional Development Training. I would recommend Professional Development Training for participants specific to bullying across campuses where this study has been conducted. The importance of such training has been cited throughout this study and is recommended by all participants. This may allow for more insight into the gap or lack of gap as participants at these school campuses revealed they have not had any recent formal training on how to identify nor handle bullying behaviors. This will provide teachers with adequate training skills specific to bullying and as a result, will provide new teaching strategies to improve the quality of instructions. Also, a further recommendation is to explore an effort employed through these schools' campuses where participants would receive certified mandatory training on bullying behaviors. This is in keeping with a whole-school approach as well as providing consistency among staff supported by Goldberg et al. (2019).

A second recommendation is to explore the possibilities for participants to make connections with others through networking to establish collaboration about bullying whether it is online, via skype, or in person. Teachers can collaborate on issues in a more detailed manner and networking can help those to collaborate when school is dismissed. Participants mentioned that most of the issues concerning bullying, take place outside of the classroom, mostly between passing periods. That becomes a challenge as there are plenty of opportunities and space for bullying to take place. When teachers collaborate,

they fill the gap and bounce their ideas off each other and help each other think through their thoughts.

A third recommendation is to establish a consistent process for dealing with classroom strategies on bullying. Findings showed that the social contract seemed to be favored and an excellent opportunity for dealing with bullying behaviors. Findings also revealed that teachers have the flexibility to create their individual contracts with their students. Participants seemed to be confused about this process and opt to follow their individual strategies. Consistency creates accountability and builds trust between team members. It can help to create a common language amongst teachers and or counselors and help to eliminate or reduce bullying behaviors. When students know that their actions have the same consequence, they understand that their behaviors will not be overlooked.

I would recommend providing a curriculum specific to antibullying that is readily available to teachers and counselors for immediate and consistent use. It would help to fight and prevent bullying while raising awareness of its existence through education and discussion. Participants recognized the changing environment due to technology. There has been a consensus among participants that cyberbullying is prevalent among students and participants mentioned that they sought strategies in dealing with this issue.

Finally, I would recommend that everyone is trained in utilizing the curriculum. Bullying has evolved and is changing rapidly therefore it is important that teachers and other school personnel increase their awareness and intervention efforts, develop clear school policies, and coordinate procedures to track and respond to reports of bullying (Smith-Adcock, Swank, Greenidge, & Henesy, 2019).

Implication for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include building on our strengths to create much better results. Teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom is important in bringing awareness to the classroom strategies employed by teachers to create an atmosphere for learning for this population of students. Results have shown that teachers are genuinely interested in creating a classroom that is conducive to learning, however, lack the skills in some areas to adequately deal with the situations. It was revealed that although most teachers would apply techniques and consciously work with students to curb bullying in the classroom and on campus, some teachers would just ignore the situation or revert to school personnel for assistance. This research study helped to fill the gap in bringing awareness to teachers' attitudes and pedagogy employed in the classroom.

Bullying has been on the rise as research has shown a considerable surge. It has become a significant issue in schools and created a nationwide debate regarding bullying in public schools and the lack of effectiveness within educational programs in addressing the issue. Teachers are not prepared with the knowledge required for appropriate interventions. To help students and schools conquer the bullying situations, no matter what part they play, teachers, administrators, parents, and students need to create a network of support and encouragement (Waters & Mashburn, 2017). Since teachers and other school personnel work directly with students, they can precisely address the bullying problems directly.

The result of this study recommended that teachers engaged in professional development that is specific to bullying behaviors. This will enable teachers to become more aware of behaviors and will be able to adequately work with students in reducing or eliminating this behavior. They would be able to collaborate on ideas and create consistency with the staff when dealing with bullying behaviors.

The benefits of this study may also contribute to the existing classroom initiatives utilized by participants. The results suggested that all the participants apply strategies and find ways to address bullying by following the social contract or apply other techniques based on their experience in the process. While it was revealed that none of the participants tolerated bullying, some participants do not know how to handle certain situations when they arise.

It was recommended that participants become aware of technology to allow for networking among themselves. This is important as teachers can work together for a common purpose while building trust and confidence with each other. This will also create consistency in dealing with bullying behaviors. Such a strategy will also be beneficial to students as they will be able to learn expectations and better engage in learning. This will also facilitate a positive classroom community and presents fewer behavioral problems.

Conclusion

This study explored teachers' support for the bullied population of students through positive culture initiatives in the classroom. The results of the study depicted participant's responses as they described initiatives, they applied for the bullied

population of students in their classrooms using rich descriptions of their experiences and provided details that assisted with the research study. Participants allowed us to understand the ways they saw, viewed, approached, and experienced the bullying phenomenon as they make meaning of their experiences.

Participants presented several different viewpoints on how the support of the bullied population of students is addressed through positive classroom initiatives. The general agreement is that these students seemed to have a plethora of issues which when addressed using effective intervention strategies can be productive for learning and created a positive school environment. Bullying comes in many different forms and alternatives to alleviate bullying behaviors aimed to keep students engaged in the classroom and allowed learning to take place in an environment that is safe and conducive to learning. To mitigate the negative impacts of bullying behaviors in the classroom and on school campuses, implementing alternatives that are accessible to teachers will keep students in school and improve the overall school climate. These strategies aimed to address student misbehavior by building strong and healthy relationships and improving engagement in the learning environment. While the strategies differed in content and implementation, the collective aim is to create a positive classroom environment for students.

The results indicated that all participants perceived bullying as a negative act and expressed their disregard for such behavior. They strived to find ways to address bullying behaviors by adopting strategies such as the social contract where students and teachers collaborated on classroom rules and consequences, or by reverting to techniques that

stem from their years of experience in dealing with such behaviors. Whatever strategies they applied, it was obvious that they are very much concerned and are interested in alleviating or eliminating bullying behaviors both in the classrooms and on campuses. At times, participants are unaware of, and are not adequately trained to manage student behaviors.

The literature review indicated that understanding responses to bullying behaviors contribute to reducing bullying and students benefit when teachers take an active stand against bullying. The results indicated participants were invested in their efforts to reduce and or eliminate bullying, however, they feel that a collaborative strategy is essential in doing so. It is evident that when school staff is engaged in a collaborative effort on bullying prevention strategies, they are more likely to feel comfortable in intervening. It is important therefore to involve teachers and staff in the development, modification, and evaluation of bullying prevention programs if the programs are to be effective.

The results of this study revealed participants experienced many types of bullying both in the classrooms and on campuses. It was revealed name-calling and cyberbullying were the two main types of bullying behaviors evident in the school. While participants are aware of these occurrences and addressed them as they occurred, there is no collaborative effort by the school or district to directly address these issues. The literature review indicated collaboration amongst staff helped participants to make connections with their students. The results of this study suggested that participants worked to build rapport so that students feel comfortable in reporting bullying issues.

Although the focus of this research was to determine initiatives teachers used in support of the bullied population of students, results indicated that students' academic achievement improved when they feel safe and achieved empathy from their teachers. The literature revealed that the groups with whom the individual interacts permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interactions with the immediate environment (Hong et al., 2010). Results also indicated that teachers presented themselves as role models in the context of their classroom, modeling positive behaviors for students to emulate, simultaneously setting firm limits on bullying. Modeling behaviors by using personal experience and true personal stories of participants engaged students and create a positive classroom environment.

Furthermore, the results of this study suggested teachers are interested in enhancing their knowledge regarding reducing bullying in their schools through frequent professional development training. There is a consensus among participants about the importance of learning new strategies to improve the quality of instructions for the bullied population of students through teacher professional development programs. Professional development programs specific to bullying would provide teachers with the flexibility to make changes in the way they teach their students, in incorporating innovative teaching methods, and creatively implement initiatives within the classroom. It was revealed that professional development specific to bullying is lacking and has not been directly addressed for several years. Action is required to provide adequate training for staff to address bullying behaviors is essential as it allowed for collaboration on classroom initiatives as they expand their knowledge and staying organized and

consistent. Acting on this issue helped to fill the gap regarding the classroom initiatives teachers used to support the bullied population of students.

My utmost goal in conducting this research was to bring awareness to classroom initiatives employed to support the bullied population of students because all students must be given a chance to achieve equal opportunity at learning. Students feel safe and protected in an environment that is conducive to learning. When teachers are adequately prepared, they are empowered with strategies to become agents of change, therefore, empowering their students with 21st-century skills to contribute to social change.

References

Acosta, J., Chinman, M., Ebener, P., Malone, P. S., Phillips, A., & Wilks, A. (2019). Understanding the relationship between perceived school climate and bullying: A mediator analysis. *Journal of School Violence, 18*(2), 200–215. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2018.1453820

Akay, Y. (2019). The effect of emotional awareness activities improved for primary school students on preventing peer bullying. *Education & Science / Egitim ve Bilim, 44*(200), 205–227. https://doi.org/10.15390/EB.2019.8093

Albayrak, S., Yıldız, A., & Erol, S. (2016). Assessing the effect of school bullying prevention programs on reducing bullying. *Children & Youth Services Review, 63*, 1–9. https://doi:10.1016/jchildyouth.2016.02.005

Augusto, V., C. (2020). Antibullying games. The perception of Portuguese teachers and educators. *Pedagogía Social, 35*, 47–59. https://doi.org/10.7179/PSRI_2020.35.04

American Society for the positive care of children. (2018). Causes of bullying. https://americanspcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Bullying-Causes-of-Courtesy-of-nobullying.pdf

Armstrong, D. (2018) Addressing the wicked problem of behavior in schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 22*(9), 997-1013. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1597183

Austin, S. M., Reynolds, G. P., & Barnes, S. L. (2016). School leadership and counselors working together to address bullying. *Reading Improvement, 53*(4), 188–194. https://search-ebscohost-com/login.aspx

Autin, D. M., & Agoratus, L. (2019). Bullying and prevention strategies for children with special needs. *Exceptional Parent, 49*(9), 34–35.

Babbie, E. (2017). *Basics of social research* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Badjanova, J., & Iliško, D. (2015). Holistic approach as viewed by the basic schoolteachers in Latvia. *Discourse & Communication for Sustainable Education, 6*(1), 132–140. https://doi-org/10.1515/dcse-2015-0010

Barboza, G. E., Schiamberg, L. B., Ochmke, J., Korzeniewski, S. J., Post, L. A., & Heraux, C. G. (2009). Individual characteristics and the multiple contexts of adolescent bullying: An ecological perspective. *Journal of and Adolescence, 38,* 101-121. https://doi-org/10.1007/S10964-0089271-1

Bjärehed, M., Thornberg, R., Wänström, L., & Gini, G. (2020). Mechanisms of moral disengagement and their associations with indirect bullying, direct bullying, and pro-aggressive bystander behavior. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 40*(1), 28–55. https://doi-org/10.1177/0272431618824745

Benner, A. D., & Graham, S. (2007). Navigating the transition to multi-ethnic urban high schools: Changing ethnic congruence and adolescents' school-related affect. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 17*(1), 207-220. https://doi-org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2007.00519.x

Betts, L., Spenser, K., & Gardner, S. (2017). Adolescents' involvement in cyber bullying and perceptions of school: The importance of perceived peer acceptance for female adolescents. *Sex Roles, 77*(7–8), 471–481. https://doi-org/10.1007/s11199-017-0742-2

Blake, J. J., Zhou, Q., Kwok, O.-M., & Benz, M. R. (2016). Predictors of bullying behavior victimization, and bully-victim risk among high school students with disabilities. *Remedial & Special Education, 37*(5), 285–295. https://doi-org/10.1177/0741932516638860

Blank, L., Baxter, S., Goyder, E., Naylor, P., Guillaume, L., Wilkinson, A., & Hummel, S. (2010). Promoting well-being by changing behavior: A systematic review and narrative synthesis of the effectiveness of whole school behavioral interventions. *Mental Health Review Journal, 15(2),* 43–53. https://doi-org/10.5042/mhrj.2010.0371

Banzon-Librojo, L. A., Garabiles, M. R., & Alampay, L. P. (2017). Relations between harsh discipline from teachers, perceived teacher support, and bullying victimization among high school students. *Jo/urnal of Adolescence, 57,* 18–22. https://doi-org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2017.03.001

Bradshaw, C. P. (2013). Preventing bullying through positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS): A multitiered approach to prevention and integration. *Theory into Practice, 52*(4), 288-295. https://doi-org/10.1080/00405841.2013.829732

Bradshaw, C., Sawyer, A., & O' Brennan, L. (2009). Bullying and peer victimization at school: Perceptual differences between students and school staff. *School Psychology Review, 36,* 361–382. https://doi/10.1080/02796015.2007.12087929

Brewer, S. L. (2017). Addressing youth bullying through the whole child model. *Education, 138*(1), 41–46. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.

/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=125376917&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist, 32*, 513–531. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp./login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsovi&AN=edsovi.00000487.197707000.00001&site=eds-live&scope=site

Burkholder, G. J., Cox, K. A., & Crawford, L. M., (2016). *The scholar practitioner guide to research design*. Baltimore, MD. Laureate Publishing

Bush, M. D. (2011). A quantitative investigation of teachers' responses to bullying. Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania. http://dspace.iup.edu/bitstream/handle/2069/179/Michael+ Bush.pdf?sequence=1

Campaert, K., Nocentini, A., & Menesini, E. (2017). The efficacy of teachers' responses to incidents of bullying and victimization: The mediational role of moral disengagement bullying. *Aggressive Behavior, 43*(5), 483–492. https://doi-org/10.1002/ab.21706

Carly M. Danielson & Susanne M. Jones (2019) "Help, I'm Getting Bullied": Examining Sequences of Teacher Support Messages Provided to Bullied Students, *Western Journal of Communication, 83*:1, 113-132, https://doi-org/10.1080/10570314.2018.1490451

Chalmers, C., Campbell, M. A., Spears, B. A., Butler, D., Cross, D., Slee, P., & Kift, S. (2016). School policies on bullying and cyberbullying: perspectives across three Australian states. *Educational Research, 58*(1), 91–109. https://doi-org/10.1080/00131881.2015.1129114

Cipra, A., & Hall, L. (2019). COREMatters: A bullying intervention pilot study. *Research in Middle-level Education Online, 42*(4), 1–13. https://doi-org/10.1080/19404476.2019.1599244

Coker, A. L., Bush, H. M., Fisher, B. S., Swan, S. C., Williams, C. M., Clear, E. R., & DeGue, S. (2016). Multi-college bystander intervention evaluation for prevention. *American journal of preventive medicine*, *50*(3), 295-302. https://doi-org/10.1016/j.amepre.2015.08.034

Cook, C. R., Fiat, A., Larson, M., Daikos, C., Slemrod, T., Holland, E. A., … Renshaw, T. (2018). Positive greetings at the door: Evaluation of a low-cost, high-yield proactive classroom management strategy. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 20*(3), 149–159 https://doi-org/10.1177/1098300717753831

Cornu, C. (2016). Preventing and addressing homophobic and transphobic bullying in education: A human rights–based approach using the United Nations convention on rights of the child. *Journal of LGBT youth*, *13*(1-2), 6-17. https://doi-org/10.1080/19361653.2015.1087932

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cross, D., Shaw, T., Epstein, M., Pearce, N., Barnes, A., Burns, S., Waters, S., Lester, L. & Runions, K. (2018). Impact of the friendly schools whole-school intervention on transition to secondary school and adolescent behavior. *Journal of Education*, *53*(4), 495–513. https://doi-org/10.1111/ejed.

Danielson, C. M., & Jones, S. M. (2019). “Help, I’m Bullied”: Examining sequences of

teacher support messages provided to bullied students. Western *Journal of Communication, 83*(1), 113–132.https://doi-org/10.1080/10570314.2018.1490451

Dardiri, A., Hanum, F., & Raharja, S. (2020). The bullying behavior in vocational schools and its correlation with school stakeholders. *International Journal of Instruction, 13*(2), 691–706. https://doi-org/10.29333/iji.2020.13247a

De La Rue, L., Polanin, J. R., Espelage, D. L., & Pigott, T. D. (2017). A meta-analysis of school-based interventions aimed to prevent or reduce violence in teen dating relationships. *Review of Educational Research, 87*(1), 7-34. https://doi-org/10.3102/0034654316632061

DeLay, D., Hanish, L., Zhang, L., & Martin, C. (2017). Assessing the impact of homophobic name calling on early adolescent mental health: A longitudinal social network analysis of competing peer influence effects. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 46*(5), 955–969. https://doi-org./10.1007/s10964-016-0598-8

Dhuria, Divya, & Priya Chetty (2017, Jun 16). *Understanding auto-coding in Nvivo.* Knowledge Tank; Project Guru. https://www.projectguru.in/processing-auto-coding-nvivo/

Dilshad, M., Hussain, B., & Batool, H. (2019). Continuous professional development of teachers: A case of public universities in Pakistan. *Bulletin of Education & Research, 41*(3), 119–*13* http://pu.edu.pk/home/journal/32

Doumas, D. M., & Midgett, A., (2019) The effects of students' perceptions of teachers' antibullying behavior on bullying victimization: Is sense of school belonging a mediator? *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 35:*1, 3751,

https://doi-org/10.1080/15377903.2018.1479911

Eadaoin K. P., Hui, Tsang, S. K. M., & Law, B. C. M., (2017). Combating school bullying through developmental guidance for positive youth development and promoting harmonious school culture. *The Scientific World Journal, 2266.* https://doi-org/10.1100/2011/705824

Ertesvåg, S. K. (2016). Students who bully and their perceptions of teacher support and monitoring. *British Educational Research Journal, 42*(5), 826–850. https://doi-org/10.1002/berj.3240

Espelage, D. L., Low, S. K., & Jimerson, S. R. (2019). Understanding school climate, aggression, peer victimization, and bully perpetration: science, practice and policy. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *29*(3), 233237. https://doi-org/10.1037/spq0000090

Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, S. M. (2004). *Bullying in American schools*: *A social–ecological perspective on prevention and intervention.* L. Erlbaum Associates

Espelage, D. L. (2014). Ecological theory: Preventing youth bullying, Aggression, and victimization. *Theory into Practice, 53(*4), 257–264. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.

Espinoza, G., Schacter, H., & Juvonen, J. (2019). Peer victimization and school adjustment among ethnically diverse middle school students: Does ethnic ingroup representation matter? *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, *39*(4 499–519. https://doi-org/10.1177/0272431618770829

Farley, J. (2018). Teachers as obligated bystanders: Grading and relating administrator

support and peer response to teacher direct intervention in school bullying. *Psychology in the Schools, 55*(9), 1056–1070. https://doi: 10.1002/pits.22149

Farina, K. A. (2019). Promoting a culture of bullying: Understanding the role of school climate and school sector. *Journal of School Choice, 13*(1), 94-120. https://doi-org/10.1080/15582159.2018.1526615

Farris, P. J. (2015). Terrific teaching tips. *Illinois Reading Council Journal, 43*(2), 35–37. https://search-ebscohost com.ezp.

Flippen Group. (2016a). Capturing Kids' Hearts 1 Overview. Retrieved from https://flippen group.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CKH1_Flyer.pdf

Gaal, J. S. (2014). Making the case for structured professional development: Will it positively impact student outcomes at the post-secondary level? *International Journal of Vocational Education & Training, 22*(1), 93–103, https://web.b.ebscohost.com/

Garandeau, C. F., & Lansu, T. A. M. (2019). Why does decreased likeability not deter adolescent bullying perpetrators? *Aggressive Behavior, 45*(3), 348–359. https://doi-org.ezp./10.1002/ab.21824

Georgiades, K., Boyle, M. H., & Fife, K. A. (2013). Emotional and behavioral problems among adolescent students: The role of immigrant, racial/ethnic congruence, and belongingness in schools. *Journal of youth and adolescence, 42*(9), 1473-1492. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1007/s10964-012-9868-2

Gregus, S. J., Rodriguez, J. H., Pastrana, F. A. Craig, J. T., McQuillin, S. D., & Cavell, T.

A. (2017). Teacher self-efficacy and intentions to use antibullying practices as predictors of children's peer victimization. *School Psychology Review, 46*(3), 304–319. https://doi-org.ezp./10.17105/SPR-2017-0060.V46-3

Gil Villa, F. (2020). Bullying's mythologies: False profiles of victims and aggressors. *Pedagogía Social, 35*, 21–31. https://doi-org.ezp.10.7179/PSRI_2020.35.02

Goldberg, J. M., Sklad, M., Elfrink, T. R., Schreurs, K. M., Bohlmeijer, E. T., & Clarke, A. M. (2019). Effectiveness of interventions adopting a whole school approach enhancing social and emotional development: a meta-analysis. *European of Psychology Education*, *34*(4), 755-782. https://link.springer.com/

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiry. *Educational Resources Information Center Annual Review Paper, 29*, 75- 91 https://www.scribd.com/document/371515055/Guba-E-1981-Criteria-for-Assessing-the-Trustworthiness-of-Naturalistic-Inquiries.

Hall, W. J. & Chapman, M. V. (2018). The role of school context in implementing a statewide antibullying policy and protecting students. *Educational Policy*, *32*(4), 507–539. https://doi-org.ezp.10.1177/0895904816637689

Hart-Barnett, J. E., Fisher, K. W. O'Connell, N. N., & Franco, K. (2019). Promoting upstander behavior to address bullying in schools. *Middle School Journal, 50*(16–11. https://doi-org.ezp./10.1080/00940771.2018.1550377

Hazeltine, C. S. (2018). Understanding teachers' perceptions of bullying for teacher detection and intervention. Scholar works. https://searchebscohost-com/login.aspx?direct=true&

Hellström, L., & Lundberg, A. (2020). Understanding bullying from young people's perspectives: An exploratory study. *Educational Research, 62*(4), 414–433. https://doi-org.ezp./10.1080/00131881.2020.1821388

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved their children's education? *Review of Educational Research*, (1), 3. https://search-ebscohost-om.ezp

Horton, P. (2019). School bullying and bare life: Challenging the state of exception. *Educational Philosophy & Theory*, *51*(14), 1444–1453. https://doi-org.ezp./10.1080/00131857.2018.1557043

Juva, I. Holm, G., & Dovemark, M. (2020). "He failed to find his place in this school" re-examining the role of teachers in bullying in a Finnish comprehensive school. *Ethnography & Education*, *15*(1), 79–93. https://doi-org.ezp./10.1080/17457823.2018.1536861

Katie A. Farina (2019) Promoting a culture of bullying: Understanding the role of schoolclimate and school sector, *Journal of School Choice*, *13*:1, 94-120, https://doi-org/10.1080/15582159.2018.1526615

Lai, T. & Kao, G. (2018). Hit, robbed, and put down (but not Bullied): Underreporting of bullying by minority and male students. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 47*(3), 619–635. https://doi-org.ezp./10.1007/s10964-017-0748-7

Larochette, A.-C., Murphy, A. N., & Craig, W. M. (2010). Racial bullying and victimization in Canadian school-aged children. *School Psychology International, 31*(4), 389–408. https://doi-org.ezp.10.1177/0143034310377150

Laura D. Hanish, Catherine P. Bradshaw, Dorothy L. Espelage, Philip C. Rodkin, Susan M. Swearer & Arthur Horne (2013) Looking toward the future of research: Recommendations for research and funding priorities, *Journal of School Violence, 12:3, 283-295*,https://doi-org/10.1080/15388220.2013.788449

Lawrence, T. D. S. (2017). Bullying in secondary schools: Action planning using positive behavior intervention and support framework. *American Secondary Education*, *45*(2), 85–92.

Lester, L., Pearce, N., Waters, S., Barnes, A., Beatty, S., & Cross, D. (2017). Family involvement in a whole-school bullying intervention: Mothers' and fathers' communication and influence with children. *Journal of Child Family Studies, 26*(10), 2716–2727. https://doi-org.ezp./10.1007/s10826-017-0793-6

Lester, L., Waters, S., Pearce, N., Spears, B., & Falconer, S. (2018). Pre-service teachers: Knowledge, attitudes, and their perceived skills in addressing student bullying. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, *43*(8), 30. https://doi-org/10.14221/ajte.2018v43n8.3

Letendre, J., Ostrander, J. A., & Mickens, A. (2016). Teacher and staff voices: Implementation of a positive behavior bullying prevention program in an urban school. *Children & Schools, 38*(4), 235–243. https://doi-org/10.1093/cs/cdw032

Limber, S. P., Olweus, D., Wang, W., Masiello, M. & Breivik, K. K. (2018). Evalustion of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: A large scale study of U.S. students in grades 311. *Journal of School Psychology, 69*, 56–72. https://doi org.ezp.

10.1016/j.jsp.2018.04.004

Longobardi, C., Iotti, N. O., Jungert, T., & Settanni, M. (2018). Student-teacher relationships and bullying: the role of student social status. *Journal of Adolescence*, *63*, 1-10. https://doi-org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2017.12.001

Low, S., Van Ryzin, M., J., Brown, E. C., Smith, B. H., & Haggerty, K. P. (2014). Engagement matters: Lessons from assessing classroom implementation of steps to respect: A bullying prevention program over a one-year period. *Prevention Science, 15*(2), 165-76. http://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-012-0359-1

Malecki, C. K., Demaray, M. K., Smith, T. J., & Emmons, J. (2020). Disability, poverty, and other risk factors associated with involvement in bullying behaviors. *Journal of School Psychology, 78*, 115–132. https://doi-org.ezp.10.1016/j.jsp.2020.01.002

Marsh, L. T. S. (2018). Symbolic Violence: School-Imposed Labeling in a "No-ExcusesCharter School. *Perspectives on Urban Education, 15*(1), 1–8 https://urbanedjournal.gse.upenn.edu/

Matsunaga, M. (2011). Underlying circuits of social support for bullied victims: An appraisal-based perspective on supportive communication and post bullying adjustment. *Human Communication Research, 37*(2), 174–206 https://doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2010. 01398.x

Meszaros, A., Goian, C., Vlaicu, F. L., & Balauta, D. S. (2020). A comparative analysis between the perceptions and attitudes of students in two high schools with different status regarding the phenomenon of bullying in schools. *Journal Plus Education / Educatia Plus, 26*(1), 308–325.

https://doi-org/10.24250/JPE/1/2020/AM/CG/FLV/DSB

McCormac, M. E., & Snyder, S. (2019). Districtwide initiative to improve tier 1 with evidence-based classroom lessons. *Professional School Counseling, 22*(1) doi: http://dx.doi.org.ezp. 10.1177/2156759X19834438

McNicholas, C. W., Sears, K., & Orpinas, P. (2017). 73 School-related victimization among children with disabilities. *Injury Prevention, 23,* A27. https://search-ebscohostcom.ezp/login.aspx

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Merrin, G. J., Haye, K. de la, Espelage, D. L., Ewing, B., Tucker, J. S., Hoover, M., & Green, H. D. (2018). The co-evolution of bullying perpetration, homophobic teasing, and a school friendship network. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 47*(3), 601–618. https://doi-org/10.1007/s10964-017-0783-4

Mires, C. B., Lee, D. L., & McNaughton, D. (2018). Every child that is a foster child is marked from the beginning: The home-school communication experiences of foster parents of children with disabilities. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 75,* 61-72. https://doi.org/10.1016/j. chiabu.2017.07.023

Moffat, A. K., Redmond, G., & Raghavendra, P. (2019). The impact of social network characteristics and gender on covert bullying in Australian students with disability in the middle years. *Journal of School Violence, 18*(4), 613–629. https://doi-org./ 10.1080/15388220.2019.1644180

Musu-Gillette, L., Zhang, A., Wang, K., Zhang, J., & Oudekerk, B. A. (2017). Indicators

of school crime and safety: 2016. Washington, DC: U.S. Department Education. Institute of Education Sciences. National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017064.

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2016). *Preventing bullying through science, policy, and practice*. Education Week, 31. National Academies Press. https://doi-org/10.17226/23482.

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2016). Four consequences of bullying behavior. Preventing bullying through science, policy, and practice. Washington, DC: *The National Academies Press*. https://doi-org10.17226/23482.

National Center for Education Statistics (2019). Fast facts. Bullying. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=719

Nelson, H. J., Kendall, G. E., Burns, S. K., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Kane, R. T. (2019). Development of the student experience of teacher support scale: Measuring experience of children who report aggression and bullying. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention, 1*(2), 99-110. https://doi-org/10.1007/s42380-019-00015-9

Nese, R., McIntosh, K., Nese, J., Hoselton, R., Bloom, J., Johnson, N. & Ghemraoui, A., (2016). Predicting abandonment of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports. *Behavioral Disorders, 42*(1), 261–270. https://doi-org/10.17988/BD-15-95.1

Nickerson, A., & Rigby, K. (2017). Understanding and Responding to Bullying in the School Setting. In Handbook of Australian. *School Psychology* (pp. 521-536).

Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-45166-4_26

Nie, Q., Teng, Z., Bear, G. G., Guo, C., Liu, Y., & Zhang, D. (2019). Hope as between teacher–student relationships and life satisfaction among adolescents: A between- and within-person effects analysis. *Journal Happiness Studies*, *20*(7), 2367-2383. https://doi-org/10.1007/s10902-018-0052-6

Oberle, E., Domitrovich, C. E., Meyers, D. C., & Weissberg, R. P. (2016). Establishing systemic social and emotional learning approaches in schools: a framework for schoolwide implementation. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *46*(3), 277–297. https://doi-org/10.1080/0305764X.2015.1125450

O'Brennan, L., Waasdorp, T., & Bradshaw, C. (2014). Strengthening bullying prevention through school staff connectedness. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 106*, 870–880. https://doi-org/10.1037/a0035957

Ogurlu, U., & Sarıçam, H. (2018). Bullying, forgiveness and submissive behaviors gifted students. *Journal of Child & Family Studies, 27*(9), 2833–2843 https://doi-org/10.1007/s10826-018-1138-9

Orange, A., & Corrales, A. (2018). A case study of bullying in an urban charter school. *Charter Schools Resource Journal, 12*(2), 56–81. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=129994588&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Ostrander, J., Melville, A., Bryan, K. J., & Letendre, J., (2018) Proposed modification of a school-wide bully prevention program to support all children, *Journal School Violence, 17:3*, 367-380, https://doi-org/10.1080/15388220.2017.1379909

Ortiz-B., Y., & Yeunjoo L. (2018). Educating the educators: Facilitating bullying education with inservice special education teachers. *Journal of the International Association of Special Education, 18*(1), 41–48

Patton, M. Q. (2015). Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. https://journals-sagepub-com/doi/full/10.1177/1098214016689486

Pečjak, S., & Pirc, T. (2017). Bullying and perceived school climate: Victims' and bullies'perspective. *Studia Psychologica, 59*(1), 22–33. https://doi-org/10.21909/sp.2017.01.728

Peker, H. (2020). The Effect of cyberbullying and traditional bullying on English Language Learners' national and oriented identities. *Bartin University Journal of Faculty of Education, 9*(1), 185–199. https://doi-org/10.14686/buefad.664122

Prins, C., Joubert, I., Ferreira-Prevost, J., & Moen, M. (2019). Disciplinary practices in the early grades: Creating culturally responsive learning environments in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education, 39*(3), 1–7. https://doi-org/10.15700/saje. v39n3a1633

Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual theoretical, and methodological.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rose, C. A. Monda-Amaya, L. E. & Preast, J. L. (2018). Pre-service special and general educators' perceptions of bullying. *Exceptionality Education International, 28*(233–54.

Rudasill, K. M., K. E., Levinson, H., & L. Adelson, J. (2018). Systems view of school

climate: A theoretical tramework for research. *Educational Review, 30*(1), 35–60. https://doi-org/10.1007/s10648-017-9401-y

Saldaña, J. (2016). The coding manual for qualitative researchers (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. https://doi-org/10.1108/QROM-08-2016-1408

Sampson, R. (2016). Bullying in schools. U.S. department of justice office of community-oriented policing services. Problem-oriented guides for police problem-specific guides series guide No. 12

Sangalang, C. C., Tran, A. G., Ayers, S. L., & Marsiglia, F. F. (2016). Bullying urban Mexican-heritage youth: Exploring risk for substance use by status as a bully victim, and bully-victim. *Children and youth services review*, *61*, 216-221 https://doi-org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.12.019

Shim-Pelayo, H., & De Pedro, K. T. (2018). The role of school climate in rates of depression and suicidal ideation among school-attending foster youth in California public schools. *Children and Youth Services Review, 88,* 149– 155 https://doi-org/10.1016/j.childyouth. 2018.02.033

Shriberg, D., Burns, M., Desai, P., Grunewald, S., & Pitt, R. (2015). A multiyear investigation of combating bullying in middle school: Stakeholder perspectives. *School Psychology Forum, 9*(2), 143-161. https://ecommons.luc.edu/educationfacpubs

Shriberg, D., Brooks, K., Jenkins, K., Immen, J., Sutter, C., & Cronin, K. (2017). Student voice to respond to middle school bullying: A student leadership approach. *School Psychology Forum, 11*(1), 20–33. https://eric.ed.gov/

Siris, K., & Osterman, K. (2004). Interrupting the cycle of bullying and victimization in the elementary classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *86*(4), 288–291. https://doi-org/10.1177/003172170408600409

Slaten, C. D, Rose, C. A., & Ferguson, J. K. (2019). Understanding the relationship between youths' belonging and bullying behavior: An SEM Model. *Educational & Child Psychology*, *36*(2), 50–63. https://search-ebscohost-com. login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=136549255 &site=ehost-live&scope=site

Smith-Adcock, S., Swank, J., Greenidge, T., & Henesy, R. (2019). Standing up or standing by? Middle school students and teachers respond to bullying: A responsive program evaluation. *Counseling Outcome Research & Evaluation, 10*(1),49–62. https://doi/10.1080/21501378.2018.1438809

Song, K., Lee, S., & Park, S. (2018). How individual and environmental factors influence teachers' bullying intervention. *Psychology in the Schools, 55*(9), 1086–1097. https://doi-org/10.1002/pits.22151

Sullivan, T. N., Sutherland, K. S., Farrell, A. D., Taylor, K. A., & Doyle, S. T. (2017). Evaluation of violence prevention approaches among early adolescents Moderating effects of disability status and gender. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 26*(4), 1151– 1163. https://doi-org10.1007/s10826-016-0629-9

Tekel, E., & Karadag, E. (2019). School bullying, school mindfulness and school academic performance: A structural equation modelling study. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools, 1*-17. https://www.researchgate.net/

Thornberg, R., Wänström, L., Hong, J. S., & Espelage, D. L. (2017). Classroom relationship qualities and social-cognitive correlates of defending and passive bystanding in bullying in Sweden: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of School Psychology, 63,* 49–62. https://doi-org.10.1016/j.jsp.2017.03.002

Thornberg, R., Wänström, L., & Jungert, T. (2018). Authoritative classroom climate and its relations to bullying victimization and bystander behaviors. *School Psychology International, 39*(6), 663–680. https://doi-rg/10.1177/0143034318809762

Thwala, S. K., Okeke, C. I., & Tshotsho, N. (2018). Adolescent girls' behavioral characteristics and their vulnerability to bullying in Manzini high schools. *South African Journal of Education, 38,* S1–S9. https://doi-org.ezp/10.15700/saje.v38ns1a1604

Ting-Lan, M., Wei-Ting, C., Meter, D. J., & Yen L. (2019). Defending behavior of peer victimization in school and cyber context during childhood and adolescence: A Meta-Analytic Review of Individual and Peer- Characteristics. *Bulletin, 145*(9), 891–928. https://doi-org10.1037/bul0000205

Tong, A., & Dew, M. A. (2016). Qualitative research in transplantation: Ensuring relevance rigor. *Transplantation, 100*(4), 710-712. https://doi-org/10.1097/TP.0000000000001117

United States Department of Health and Human Services. (2014). *Laws, policies & regulations*. http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html

VanZoeren, S. & N. Weisz, A. (2018). Teachers' perceived likelihood of intervening in bullying situations: Individual characteristics and institutional

environments. *Journal of School Violence*, *17*(2), 258–269. https://doi-org/10.1080/15388220.2017.1315307

Veenstra, R., Lindenberg, S., Huitsing, G., Sainio, M., & Salmivalli, C. (2014). The role of teachers in bullying: The relation between antibullying attitudes,efficacy and efforts to reduce bullying. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 106*, 1135–1143. https://doi-org/10.1037/a0036110

Vitoroulis, & Georgiades, K. (2017). Bullying among immigrant and non- early adolescents: School- and student-level effects. *Journal of Adolescence, 61*, 141–151. https://doi-org/10.1016/j.adolescence. 2017.10.008

Vitoroulis, I., & Vaillancourt, T. (2018). Ethnic group differences in bullying perpetration: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research on Adolescence 28*(4), 752–771. https://doi-org/10.1111/jora.12393

Wang, M.-T., Degol, J. L. (2016) School climate: A review of the construct, measurement, and impact on student outcomes. *Educational Psychology 28*: 315–352. https://doi-org/10.1007/s10648-015-9319-1

Waters, S. & Mashburn, N. (2017). An investigation of middle school perceptions on bullying. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, *8*(1), 1–34. https://search-ebscohost-comlogin.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=123580596&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Webber, M. A. (2017). Bullying: University students bring a moral perspective to middle school students. *Journal of Education and Learning, 6*(3), 157–168. http://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n3p157

Wells, M., Mitchell, K. J., Jones, L. M., & Turner, H. A. (2019). Peer harassment among youths with different disabilities: Impact of harassment online, in Person, and in mixed online and in-person incidents. *Children & Schools*, *41*(1), 17–24. https://doi-org.ezp/10.1093/cs/cdy025

Whisman, A., & West Virginia Department of Education. (2017). A descriptive analysis of harassment, intimidation, or bullying student behaviors: 2015-2016. West Virginia Department of Education Office of Research, Accountability, and Data Governance. West Virginia Department of Education Office of Research, Accountability, and Data Governance. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.

Whitaker, M.C. (2019). The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of the involvement process. In the Wiley handbook of family, school, and community relationships education (edsS.B. Sheldon and T.A. Turner-Vorbeck). https://doi-org/10.1002/9781119083054.ch20

Williams, S., Schneider, M., Wornell, C., & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, J. (2018). Student's perceptions of school safety: It is not just about being bullied. *The Journal of School Nursing*, *34*(4), 319-330.

Wonho J., & Minjin K. (2020). Victims' Characteristics, Coping Strategies, and Problem Resolution in Picture Books for Young Children on Bullying. Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education, 14(2), 159–178. https://doi-org.ezp/10.17206/apjrece.2020.14.2.159

Ybarra, M. L., Espelage, D. L., Valido, A., Hong, J. S., & Prescott, T. L. (2019). Perceptions of middle school youth about school bullying. *Journal*

Adolescence, *75*, 175–187.https://doi-org.10.1016/j.adolescence.2018.10.008

Yamauchi, L. A., Ponte, E., Ratliffe, K. T., & Traynor, K. (2017). Theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in research on family-school partnerships. *School Community Journal, 27*(2), 9–34. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.

Youn Ah Jung. (2018). What makes bullying happen in school? Reviewing contextual characteristics surrounding individual and intervention programs on bullying. Ilkogretim Online, 17(1), 1–6. https://doi-org.10.17051/ilkonline.2018.413817

Youth Truth, (2019). Learning from student's voice: Bullying today. https://youthtruthsurvey.org/bullying-today/

Zaghar, E.-A. W. (2019). Incorporating Professional Initiatives in EFL Classrooms: Way Treat Pedagogical Solitude. *Arab World English Journal, 10*(1), 56–63. https://doi-org/10.24093/awej/vol10no1.5

Zhang, H., Zhou, H., & Tao, T. (2019). Bullying behaviors and psychosocial adjustment among school-aged children in China. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *34*(11), 2363–2375. https://doi-org/10.1177/0886260518780777

Zhao, R. B., & Chang, Y.-C. (2019). Students' family support, peer relationships, and learning motivation and teacher's fairness have an influence on the of bullying in middle school of Hong Kong. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, *5*(1), 97–107. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Questions

Interview Questions

RQ1: How do teachers support the bullied population of students through positive culture, classroom interventions?

Interview Question 1: What characteristics do you associate with bullying in the classroom?

Possible Probe: What type of bullying have you encountered if any?

Interview Question 2: How do you identify a student who is at risk of being bullied in the classroom?

Possible Probe: What do you do when you see such bullying characteristics?

Interview Question 3: What classroom initiatives do you use if any in preventing bullying behaviors in your classroom?

Possible Probes:

a. Is it an effective strategy?

b. why or why not?

c. What do you feel that it is an effective strategy or why do you feel that it is not an effective strategy?

RQ2: What classroom initiatives exist within the curriculum to support the bullied population of students in the classroom?

Interview Question 4: What type of professional development have you received to assist you with combatting bullying in the classroom?

Possible Probe:

a. Do you feel that this has been effective? Why or why not?

	b. Do you feel that the PD you have received is sufficient or what would you recommend as sufficient professional development training?
Interview Question 5:	How do teachers support students who the observe or feel may be targets for bullying in the classroom?
Interview Question 6:	How do you think teachers avert and prevent bullying behaviors in the classroom?
Possible Probe	**a.** Can you describe what you do in these types of situations?
	b. What outcomes have you noticed if any?
Interview Question 7:	What strategies do you utilize to create a positive classroom culture?
Possible Probe	**a.** How effective is your strategy?
	b. Can you describe the method you use?
Interview Question 8:	Is there anything else you would like to share in regard to classroom initiatives and the support of bullied high-risk students in the classroom?

Appendix B: Alignment of Interview Questions to Research Questions

Interview Questions	Research Question or Strategy
1. What characteristics do you associate with bullying in the classroom? *Possible Probing Question* a. What are some types of bullying behaviors encountered if any?	RQ1—Qualitative: **How do teachers support the bullied population of students through positive culture, classroom interventions?**
2. How do you identify a student who is vulnerable to bullying in the classroom? *Possible Probing Question* a. What do you do when you see such bullying characteristics?	RQ1—Qualitative: **How do teachers support the bullied population of students through positive culture, classroom interventions?**
3. What classroom initiatives do you use if any in preventing bullying behaviors in your classroom? *Possible probing Questions* a. Why do you use strategy? b. Why do you feel that it is an effective strategy or c. Why do you feel that it is not an effective strategy?	RQ1--Qualitative: **How do teachers support the bullied population of students through positive culture, classroom interventions?**
4. What types of professional development have you received to assist in creating opportunities within the curriculum to combatting bullying in the classroom? *Possible probing Questions*	RQ2--Qualitative: How do teachers create opportunities within the curriculum to determine teachers' positive support for the bullied population of students in the classroom?

a. Why do you feel that this has been effective? b. Why do you feel this strategy has not been effective? 5. How do you think teachers create a positive classroom environment through classroom initiatives? 6. How do you teachers avert and prevent bullying behaviors to create positive classroom culture? *Possible Probing Question* a. Please describe what you do in these types of situations?	RQ2--Qualitative: How do teachers create opportunities within the curriculum to determine teachers' positive support for the bullied population of students in the classroom? RQ2-- How do teachers create opportunities within the curriculum to determine teachers' positive support for the bullied population of students in the classroom?
b. What outcomes have you noticed if any? 7. What strategies do you utilize to create a positive classroom culture? *Possible Probing Questions* a. How effective is your strategy? b. Can you describe the method you use? 8. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding creating opportunities within the curriculum to determine positive support for the bullied population of students in the classroom?	RQ2-- How do teachers create opportunities within the curriculum to determine teachers' positive support for the bullied population of students in the classroom? RQ2-- How do teachers create opportunities within the curriculum to determine teachers' positive support for the bullied population of students in the classroom?