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Intra-Racial Bullying Among African American Female Students in Middle School

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Abstract

Intra-Racial Bullying Among African American Female Students in Middle School From

The Perspectives of Teachers, Administrators, and Hallway Monitors

by

Lashaunda Renee Cunningham

MA, University of Illinois at Springfield, 2015

MS, Eastern Illinois University, 2011

BA, Eastern Illinois University, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Intra-racial bullying is increasing within the African American population, especially

middle school. This specific form of bullying can be difficult for administrators to

investigate as it is unlike the typical forms of bullying that school officials observe or

witness daily. There was a gap in the literature regarding limited research that has

examined intra-racial bullying from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and

hallway monitors. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the patterns,

trends, characteristics, and reasons that result in intra-racial bullying among African

American female students in middle school from the perspectives of adults who work in

schools. In addition, Bronfenbrenner's ecological system was used to explore the human

and social development approach which included an emphasis on various types of

environments and how these environments could affect and influence children. Three

participants, a teacher, an administrator, and a hallway monitor, were interviewed to

gather information about their lived and shared experiences regarding intra-racial

bullying of African American female students. After analyzing participant interviews,

four major themes emerged from the data: (a) perceived intra-racial bullying, (b)

perceived characteristics of intra-racial bullying, (c) lived and shared experiences, and (d)

school policies and procedures. This research may be instrumental with improving

general knowledge that can be a resource for school officials, teachers, and parents, to

possibly address and prevent intra-racial bullying and engender social change.

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Dedication

This project study is in dedication to my late grandmother, Jettie Rhodes, who was instrumental in helping to raise and nurture me to be the best human being that I could be and instilling character, integrity, advocating for others who do not have a voice to speak up for themselves, and always trusting God in all circumstances despite the outcome. Your guidance and support continues to live in me and for everything that I have been able to accomplish in life.

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To my Chair, Dr. Eric Youn, thank you for taking on the role to supervise me through this entire study. Your vision, expertise, support, constructive feedback, and encouragement has truly helped me get to this milestone. You made sure that I stayed on track and held me at a higher standard for accountability and reminding me to take a break when I needed to and know that it is fine to do so. One thing that I will always remember is at the beginning of our journey, you told me to "be the best you that you can be and that you know your research better than anyone else." I will always hold on to this piece of advice. To my Committee Members, Dr. Douglas McCoy and Dr. Richard Rogers, thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study and providing your expertise for the methodology and reviewing each section to ensure my work was top notch. You, too,

have been patient and understanding from the beginning. I appreciate your constructive

feedback and challenging me to look at suggested recommendations through a different

lens.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Each year, the excitement of fifth graders transitioning to middle school is a rewarding experience as this is the beginning of new experiences, a variety of coursework, extracurricular activities, and opportunities to foster new friendships (Farmer et al., 2015). However, along with these new experiences comes an increasing amount of physical and verbal bullying towards new students transitioning into middle school. While there are various forms of bullying, intra-racial bullying continues to increase in the number of incidents within the African American population, especially, middle school (Zimmerman et al., 2015). This specific form of bullying can be difficult for administrators to investigate as it is unlike the typical forms of bullying that school officials observe or witness daily. This includes physical or verbal bullying that normally happens in front of bystanders (McDade et al., 2018).

Intra-racial bullying has been known to be characterized as physical or verbal bullying dating back to the onset of slavery in the 1800s up to the present. Known antecedents include living in low-income housing neighborhoods and being exposed to crime and violence, resulting in mimicking behaviors that are observed by watching parents, neighbors, and peers who identify within this same phenomenon (Ybarra et al., 2019). In addition, these behaviors may contribute to physical and verbal behaviors towards their peers in middle school creating a less rewarding experience for students, especially, African American female students (Letendre et al., 2016).

Problem Statement

The experience of bullying in middle school has been well documented (McDade et al., 2018; Zimmerman, Varela & Stoddard, 2015). As Farmer et al. (2015) noted, 25% of African American student's experience bullying during their first year of middle school. Intra-racial bullying among African American female middle school students is taking place outside the classroom more so than any other ethnic group McDade et al., 2018). Outside the classroom could mean hallways, locker rooms, bathrooms, or cafeterias where perpetrators cannot be visibly seen bullying others (Migliaccio et al., 2017; Powers & Socia, 2019). African American girls bully within their own race and gender, by pressuring girls to join specific girls' groups, taking personal items, blackmailing, and other forms of bullying, including physical bullying, that tend to take place outside the classroom (Farmer et al., 2015). Current research focused on intra-racial bullying has centered around context issues such as trauma, parenting, distinguishing culture factors, socioeconomic statuses, and more; however, the research has not been specific to bullying among African American middle school girls (Farmer et al., 2015; Zimmerman et al., 2015).

Although the aforementioned research regarding intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspective of teacher's illuminates' important findings, there is limited research that has examined intra-racial bullying from the perspectives of the many adults who witness this phenomenon, including teachers, but also administrators and hallway monitors (Grant et al., 2019; Rice et al., 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore the patterns, trends, characteristics, and reasons that result in intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspective of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors. Intra-racial bullying encompasses betrayal, pressure, and loyalty to those of the same race (Gomez, 2019). This study will explore common areas, outside the classrooms which includes hallways, locker rooms, bathrooms or cafeterias which are also known as unidentified or unknown locations (Gomez, 2019). A study of this kind may help teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors gain a better understanding of the difficulties African American females in middle school face when struggling to foster positive friendships within their own race (Rhee et al., 2017). Additionally, a study of this kind may lead to further discussions to increase support for bullies and the bullied.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this qualitative study regarding intra-racial bullying among African American females in middle school is that it can be a resource for school officials, teachers, and parents to help increase awareness and knowledge of intra-racial bullying (McDade et al., 2018). In addition, the study may encourage school officials to ensure there is supervision in various locations, within the school, where these incidents are known to happen. When bullying incidents occur internally, school officials can control these incidents by being proactive and physically present to intervene sooner rather than after the incident has occurred (Grant et al., 2019). Moreover, this study is also designed to educate school officials and teachers with improving student

relationships affected by intra-racial bullying in hopes of implementing and increasing awareness of prosocial behavior as a positive step to minimizing these incidents (McDade et al., 2018; Shriberg et al., 2017).

Implications for Social Change

This research may be instrumental with improving general knowledge that can be a resource for school officials, teachers, and parents, to possibly address and prevent intra-racial bullying (McDade et al., 2018). In addition, the study did not only provide insight regarding pattern of trends and characteristics within this student population, but assisted with understanding the culture, feelings, and attitudes of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors when observing students outside the classroom. When bullying incidents occur internally, school officials can control these incidents by being proactive and physically present to intervene sooner rather than after the incident has occurred (Grant et al., 2019). Moreover, this research was also designed to assist with improving student relationships affected by intra-racial bullying, in hopes, of implementing and increasing awareness of prosocial behavior as a positive step in minimizing these incidents (McDade et al., 2018; Shriberg et al., 2017). Additionally, this study may assist school administrators, teachers, and hallway monitors to be change agents by creating safe spaces and healthier relationships (Walden University, n.d.).

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Background

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African American female students may have a difficult time trusting others, compared to other demographics, which means it is imperative that school administrators, teachers, and hallway monitors establish a foundation and level of trustworthiness with

this group, especially when these girls are transitioning from elementary school to secondary school (Connelly, 2016). One of many challenges that African American females in middle school experience during this transition is externalizing and internalizing behavior which result in perpetrators or victims of bullying (Farmer et al., 2015). Cultural betrayal trauma identified within this specific group contribute to intra-racial bullying which more than half of the student population experience this form of cultural bullying (Gomez, 2019). More important, intra-racial bullying occurs within families and peers where there is an increase in family violence which can lead to individuals likely becoming bullying perpetrators (Gomez, 2019; Grant et al., 2019).

Teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors can assist with creating safe spaces and healthier relationships by being proactive in this form of cultural bullying by working with African American females to educate them upon the importance of prosocial behavior (Gomez, 2019; McDade et al., 2018). This form of behavior exemplifies making good choices, obtaining good grades, and participate in extracurricular activities. In addition, teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors also become more aware of the individuals that are the perpetrators and victims of bullying which will also provide insight of common locations where bullying most likely occurs ad areas where perpetrators are less likely to be visibly seen by others. These areas include hallways, locker rooms, bathrooms, or cafeteria (Migliaccio et al., 2017).

As a result of becoming more aware of these behaviors and locations, school officials can better understand the reasons intra-racial bullying incidents occur and reasons African American girls cause more harm to each other, within their own race and

gender; these incidents occur more among this group than any other racial or ethnic group (Powers & Socia, 2019). In an effort to create healthier relationships, it is imperative to include students when implementing intervention and prevention programs in schools and to encourage students to take on a leadership approach to use their voices and ideas for intervention and prevention ideas to help minimize bullying incidents (Shriberg et al., 2017). This approach allows students to feel valuable and encourages students to become change agents by promoting growth and unity (Shriberg et al.; Walden University, n.d.).

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study will be based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system which encompasses a human and social development approach including an emphasis on various types of environments and how these environments can affect and influence children (Farineau, 2016). There are five environmental systems that are included within Bronfenbrenner's ecological system. This includes the micro system (groups that have direct contact with and has influence on the child), meso system (groups between the child and the first system which can include parent/child or teacher/child), exosystem (groups or people that have indirect contact with the child but can affect the child's development), macrosystem (groups that affect the child culturally such as religious groups or cultural values), and chronosystem (the last stage of the theory which reflects the stage when a child experience issues that affect them directly) (Farineau, 2016).

Because this theory addresses how children's behavior changes by observing, imitating, or modeling their parents and the actions of others, this theoretical framework

aligns with the study. Concepts explored will include patterns and trends, characteristics and reasons intra-racial bullying behaviors occur, based on the teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors perceptions (Rosen et al., 2017). In addition, these concepts will explore locations intra-racial bullying takes places outside the classroom and how these concepts align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological system regarding behaviors being a result of direct experience that is learned by observing (Miller & Morris, 2016). The approach will provide details on the effects various environmental settings contribute to intra-racial bullying among African American females in middle school (Rosen et al., 2017). Further, subsequent research and application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system offers a variety of environmental systems which describes the changes in behavior children due to various environment settings which includes home and school (Miller & Morris, 2016).

Grounded theory will also be implemented into the study to analyze the data to find common themes, patterns, trends, characteristics, reasons, key phrases, and words by categorizing and coding the data to determine if a profound theory can be identified. Additionally, this theoretical framework may provide answers to the proposed research questions in this research study (see Connelly, 2016).

Research Question

RQ-Qualitative: What are the lived experiences of intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors?

Subresearch Questions:

1. What are the themes found in the perceived causes of intra-racial bullying?

2. What are the themes found in the perceived characteristics of intra-racial bullies and the bullied?

3. What are the shared experiences of teachers, hallway monitors and others regarding the phenomenon of intra-racial bullying?

Nature of the Study

This study was qualitative with a generic qualitative approach (Kahlke, 2018). Qualitative research is consistent with understanding underlying reasons and provides insight into the problem statement, which was the focus of this dissertation. This approach allows the ability to understand the phenomenon and personal experiences, values, beliefs, interactions, and relationships with African American females that are being observed (Kahlke, 2018). In addition, a generic qualitative approach allows various methods for collecting data such as interviews, observations, or focus groups (Kahlke, 2018). Fieldnotes also allows the researcher to describe and reflect upon the experiences with the participants, as well. Moreover, this approach is not limited to a specific design (Kahlke, 2018).

This qualitative study also allowed me to ask questions that will engage in dialogue and provide insight about their environment outside the classroom. Also, the study provides insight that indicates whether the participants have observed patterns or trends that determine the victims or aggressors of intra-racial bullying among this specific phenomenon. Additionally, the results from coding the participants responses clarifies

how teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors define their interpretation of the physical bullying actions that are observed (Powers & Socia, 2019). From this study, five questions were answered.

RQ-Qualitative: What are the lived experiences of intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors?

Subresearch Questions:

4. What are the themes found in the perceived causes of intra-racial bullying?

5. What are the themes found in the perceived characteristics of intra-racial bullies and the bullied?

6. What are the shared experiences of teachers, hallway monitors and others regarding the phenomenon of intra-racial bullying?

Role of the Researcher

A researcher's credibility is crucial to gaining and ensuring you have the trust of the participants who have agreed to participate in the study. In addition, while asking questions to encourage the participants to engage in conversation and sharing their experiences, it is also important to protect and safeguard the data and information that is shared in all aspects of the study (Rosen et al., 2017). In addition, Trustworthiness, confidentiality, honesty, and anonymity are some ethical procedures to take into consideration when working with participants (Connelly, 2016). Participants are more willing to engage and open to interviews when they can trust the researcher, ensuring

what they say and any information shared remains confidential and anonymous (Connelly, 2016). To address this, this study explained my role in the research process and explained all phases of the research study. This allowed participants to feel comfortable and gain a better understanding of how their shared experiences will be helpful for other teachers, administrators and hallway monitors who have experienced or witnessed intra-racial bullying (Connelly, 2016)

Potential Study Participants

This study included interviews of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors in urban middle schools. In addition, written responses from teachers, administrators and hallway monitors who have been involved or have witnessed intra-racial bullying incidents were included. Written responses also gave the participants an opportunity to review the transcript and make edits from the initial interview before it is finalized. Since transcription can take some time to complete, some of the participants could potentially forget how they responded to the interview questions. Also, should the transcript be shared with the building principal or administrators, it is imperative the participants agree with their responses, as well (VanZoeren & Weisz, 2018).

The sample size for this study was anticipated to be 10 to 12 participants from one local middle school. However, due to recruitment issues related to the pandemic, the final sample was three participants. Participants included school officials who are employed as teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors for Grades 6 through 8. The target group identified was selected based on their experiences through their work and observation of this specific phenomenon outside the classroom. This sample size was appropriate to

allow participants to share their personal experiences and was thought to be easier to recruit and schedules may be more flexible to work with (Van Riinsoever, 2017). More importantly, thematic analysis is one form of data analysis that was used to follow the themes and characteristics for this qualitative study (Rosen et al., 2017), including, following themes until there is no more data that will lead to additional information.

Data Collection

Data for this study included interviews of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors in urban middle schools, who have witnessed acts of bullying that describes intra-racial bullying. Also, participants were tape recorded using semi structured interviews after the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from Walden University, as required, is approved. The approval was based on the nature of the study and the participants that were interviewed for the study. Additionally, approval from the school district that has been identified was also required.

A digital recorder was used to record each interview session separately. At the beginning and at the end of each interview, the date and start time was announced. Each interview recording was downloaded to a PC and transcribed using the NVivo Software Program. Again, the study involves teachers and administrators which the possibility of the school district requiring a copy of the transcript is possible. However, this gives the participant an opportunity to review the transcript and make edits before it is finalized. Initially, implementing focus groups seemed ideal for this study, however, ensuring participants are comfortable and can share their experiences individually without feeling silenced became my priority.

Face-to-face interviewing allows the researcher to actively listen and pick up on cues, such as demeanor. If someone is uncomfortable or becomes tiresome, having visual eye contact clues the researcher to either shorten the question, interview, or allow a break in between (Connelly, 2016). Also, face-to-face interviews allow the interviewer to engage with the interviewee by keeping him/her focused on the actual interview and without other distractions. For example, if a survey were sent via email to the interviewee, there could potentially be other individuals in the room talking among themselves, television sounds, or other distractions (Connelly, 2016).

Limitations, Challenges, and/or Barriers

Potential barriers include having access to participants at local urban middle schools to interview teachers, administrators and hallway monitors and availability to meet on specific dates and times to facilitate interviews. In addition, personal biases towards the participants due to knowing them personally or mutual acquaintances could potentially affect trustworthiness, confidentiality, honesty, and anonymity of their responses to the interview questions. Also, responses to the sources of data could potentially be inaccurate due to memory recall of bullying incidents.

Summary

The data gathered in this study draw attention to perceptions, characteristics, reasons and witnessed intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors. Specifically, I designed this study to expand the above faculty position's understanding of how intra-racial bullying in their school is increasing and taken place and being

mistaken as "horse play". My study will assist the middle school with mitigating the risk of further issues and unfavorable publicity that may influence future employment, student populations of this kind, and the potential success of intervention and prevention programs in the future.

In Section 1, I described intra-racial bullying as a form of bullying that is increasing among African American female students in middle school. In this section, I reviewed historical information for intra-racial bullying and discussed the definition of bullying. In addition, I reviewed current literature that described intra-racial bullying in middle schools from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a more in-depth context for the study applying research regarding intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school. The review of literature encompasses a summary of current findings regarding the forms of intra-racial bullying, patterns, trends, characteristics, themes, and shared experiences (Grant et al., 2019). Additionally, the review of current literature reflects the reasons that result in intra-racial bullying from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors (Shriberg et al., 2017). More important, the review of literature contains information that entails various types of environments, which also contribute to intra-racial bullying and locations where this form of bullying regarding this specific phenomenon tends to occur (Grant et al., 2019). Also, this chapter is comprised of information that can educate school officials and teachers with improving student relationships affected by intra-racial bullying (Shriberg et al., 2017). Researchers have shown that when students can build trustworthy friendships and foster relationships with school officials, in turn, this allows them to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon's cultural background and know what signs to look for when this form of bullying is initiated (Zimmerman et al., 2015).

Background of Intra-Racial Bullying

Intra-racial bullying dates to segregation which continues to plague African American women and girls (Willingham, 2018). This phenomenon shares experiences of oppression and years of being raped, enslaved, and abused (Ramirez & Palancia, 2016). These characteristics are an array of emotions and feelings of culturally betrayed and

cultural responses that vary from generation to generation (Gomez, 2019). Additionally, behavioral, social, emotional, and psychological responses stem from oppressing one another within the same ethnic group described as "intra-racial" (Ramirez & Palancia, 2016). Since slavery, intra-racial bullying continues to plague this phenomenon (Grant et al., 2018). Society has stereotyped African American women and girls as angry, insensitive, and violent (Willingham, 2018). Further, this perception has caused Black women and girls to internalize these stereotypes, which also has led to this same phenomenon to turn against their own racial and ethnic group.

Intra-Racial Bullying

Intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school has increased and become a significant problem. Transitioning from primary to secondary school can be challenging. However, when bullying begins among this specific phenomenon, it is not uncommon for victims to internalize their emotions for fear of retaliation from their aggressor (Farmer et al., 2015). Twenty-five percent of African American students' experience bullying during their first year of middle school. Currently, research regarding intra-racial bullying centers around context issues such as trauma, parenting, distinguishing culture factors and socioeconomic statuses; however, these factors are not specific to bullying among this specific phenomenon (Zimmerman et al., 2015). Intra-racial bullying encompasses betrayal, pressuring girls to join specific groups, taking personal items, and other forms of bullying, including physical bullying, that tend to take place within their own race and outside the classroom (Farmer et al.,

2015). These findings include hallways, locker rooms, bathrooms, or cafeterias, which are also known as unidentified or unknown locations (Gomez, 2019).

Most students are unaware they are being targeted by another student and consider school to be a haven away from home. This means, prior to the bullying, they may fee safe from any potential threat due to any form of violence that is a result of bullying (Bowser et al., 2018). However, aggressors are strategic with targeting their victims, which often begins by harassment that leads to verbal and physical bullying. Research has shown that intra-racial bullying incidents among African American females in middle school has increased in numbers more than any other ethnic group (McDade et al., 2018). Often, factors of this form of bullying include marginalized groups and come from lower socioeconomic statuses who prey upon others within their own ethnic groups (Gomez, 2019). Bullying aggressors tend to respond to others based on their home environment and mimic the actions of others based on their experiences outside the classroom (Rhee et al., 2017). More officials are seeking answers to minimize the number of intra-racial bullying incidents; however, they are not able to identify or be proactive when these incidents transpire. This is due to a lack of understanding the characteristics and small incidents that lead to verbal and physical bullying outside the classroom (Migliaccio et al., 2017). It is imperative for teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors to have a better understanding of the patterns, trends, characteristics, and reasons that result in intra-racial bullying among this specific phenomenon (Farmer et al., 2015). This knowledge will also allow the faculty staff to help minimize the onset of incidents before they are initiated.

Physical and Verbal Bullying

Physical and verbal bullying within African American middle school girls consists of taunting, name calling, shoving, pushing, spreading rumors and sometimes shaming victims in front of a group of people to cause embarrassment (Farrell et al., 2018). These acts of bullying within this phenomenon tends to take place outside of the classroom. Also, these forms of bullying are often minimized by school officials, including, teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors (Migliaccio et al., 2017). From their perspectives, bullying can be confused with hoarse play, normal playing behavior, releasing energy and other actions that school personnel call bullying (Powers & Socia, 2019). Additionally, school officials are in denial when reports of bullying are suspected as most bullying incidents are not reported right away. Victims of any forms of bullying are fearful of retaliation from their bullying aggressor and will often suffer in silence (Wood et al., 2017). Internalizing the pain and not communicating the bullying incidents often leads to other social and emotional stressors, such as fear, anxiety, feeling silenced, excuses of no longer desiring to attend school, and sometimes death. Physical and verbal bullying within one's own ethnic group, especially African American females, is challenging to detect.

Bulliers within this phenomenon often stem from low socio-economic backgrounds and neighborhoods that have medial to low income housing, gang activity, increased crime rates, pregnancy, and single parent households (Powers & Socia, 2019). The lack of finances to afford materialistic items, such as clothing, electronics and hairstyles, results in jealousy towards other girls within the same ethnic group (Rhee et

al., 2017). Further, bulliers will prey upon the bullied by observing their every move and befriending them, only to use the victims to their advantage (Evans et al., 2017).

African American rarely prey alone when seeking their victims which is unique to African Americans. Other girls who associate themselves with bulliers have been bullied and fear retaliation, should they no longer desire to assist bulliers, who cause harm to the innocent (Sullivan et al., 2017). Bulliers often carry out negative behavior that reveals some form of physical or verbal neglect by a parent or caregiver at home (Ramirez & Palancia, 2016). This behavior is a result of children observing, imitating, or modeling their parents and the actions of others, which can also explain why their behavior changes (Rosen et al., 2017). Additional behavior changes include not feeling accepted, encouraged, attention seeking and other characteristics that are overlooked by teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors (Grant et al., 2018). Researchers have conducted studies centering around bullying in various forms, which includes boys, girls or even workplace bullying. Yet, there are limited studies in which researchers focus on intra-racial bullying (Gomez, 2019). Specifically, intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school (Grant et al., 2018). Though, intra-racial bullying is a different form of bullying, it is an issue that is continuing to increase (Powers & Socia, 2019). Girls and boys bully each other in various forms, which includes physical and verbal towards all groups (Zimmerman et al., 2015). However, intra-racial bullying is inclusive and occurs within the same ethnic group (Grant et al., 2018). African American girls engage in physical and verbal bullying among each other, which is more indirect and in locations where there is no supervision or cameras (Gomez, 2019).

Middle School Bullying

Transitioning to middle school can cause a variety of emotional stressors, which includes anxiety, inability to focus and stay on task or meet new friends (Studer & Mynatt, 2015). Also, bullying tends to reach its peak as students are transitioning into a new school, adjusting to classroom sizes and separation of friendships in elementary school that were once cherished (Shriberg et al., 2017). Further, if friendships were strained and challenging to retain in elementary school, this also makes transitioning to middle school unnerving (Donoghue et al., 2015). This feeling leads to vulnerability and befriending classmates who appear genuine, also, known and perceived as bulliers to others who have experienced negative encounters with those bulliers (Willingham, 2018). For African American middle school girls, transitioning to middle school is more intimidating as the need and desire to be and feel accepted by girls within their own ethnic group can sometimes be disheartening (Farmer et al., 2015).

African American middle school girls who bully rarely act alone when seeking to victimize other girls, especially, those who are transitioning into middle school or have been in middle school for the length of time that is required (Willingham, 2018). More important, African American girls who bully observe their victims and plan their attacks in locations and other areas, outside the classrooms and discretely to prevent drawing attention to teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors (Gomez, 2019). These acts of bullying are often mistaken and appear to be horse play or students having fun, which students are told to "knock it off" by school officials, who are observing and monitoring in areas outside the classrooms (Migliaccio et al., 2017). Unknowingly to school officials,

this is not horse play or students having fun, however, this is a form of bullying that is overlooked and leads to more verbal and aggressive behavior over time (Grant et al., 2018).

This form of bullying within the same ethnic group known as "intra-racial" is continuing to increase at a rapid rate (Rhee et al., 2017). Because intra-racial bullying is misinterpreted for characteristics that align with more of the context issues of bullying, it is overlooked (Bowser et al., 2018). Therefore, it is difficult to know when the victim needs school support that encompasses methods of intervention or prevention programs (Zimmerman et al., 2015).

Intra-Racial Bullying Characteristics

Intra-racial bullying is like the differentiating characteristics of bullying defined by researchers who also have conducted and continue to research this topic (Farrell et al., 2018). Some characteristics of bullying are often described as aggressive, however, encompasses a variety of ethnic groups and not specific to one homogenous group (Rhee et al., 2017). Intra-racial bullying means within a specific group and within this study, the focus is centered around African American females in middle school (Gomez, 2019). The characteristics that separate intra-racial bullying from the vague term "bullying" are neighborhoods where bulliers reside which have been classified as low-income and violent, females who have experienced an array of abuse which includes physical and verbal and continue to experience mental health issues (Kruger et al., 2016; Sweet, 2017).

These characteristics result in aggressive behavior towards other African American females that have been fortunate to benefit from a lifestyle that affords them to

have a more elaborate wardrobe, up-to-date electronics, or hairstyles (Kruger et al., 2016). Further, bullies are less likely to reside in homes that encompasses two parents, however, a single parent or an adult who is the bully's legal guardian (Sweet, 2017). Though, some African American girls grow up in a single parent household, they are disproportionately classified as bullies by teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors based on their shared and lived experiences (Esposito & Edwards, 2018).

Shared & Lived Experiences

The term "bullying" is used interchangeably among teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors (Eriksen, 2018). Some describe the term as aggressive behavior, an action that is observable, or verbally taunting another individual in a demeaning manner. Others defined specific groups as more aggressive, poor, and underprivileged (Wun, 2018; Kruger et al., 2016), without realizing, the increasing acts of bullying by African American girls. Resulting in anger, repeated violence, broken and inconsistent friendships, and stressed home life which is taken out on other girls within the same ethnic group (Kruger et al., 2016). These inappropriate behaviors appear to be more complex issues than underlying issues that lead to aggressive and emotional problems for innocent black girls (Shamsi et al., 2019).

Sadly, bullying occurs within proximity which is easily mistaken as "horse play" or occurs in locations outside the classroom and in areas that lack supervision (Wun, 2018). Because teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors attend school trainings which sometimes encompass bullying and is often defined vaguely, this definition is not inclusive to "intra-racial bullying (Malecki et al., 2020). Due to a lack of understanding

of intra-racial bullying and the cultural background of African American groups, aggressive and emotional behaviors are often undetected (Esposito & Edwards, 2018; Kruger et al., 2016). While teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors have similar shared and lived experiences, it is crucial to have the knowledge base and understanding of intra-racial bullying. Knowing how to identify and detect these acts will help to minimize this form of bullying (Migliaccio, 2015; Wun, 2018).

Mikulec (2015) also described the teachers' lack of knowledge due to not having worked with diverse populations. Additionally, preservice teachers were challenged to step out of their comfort zone to work with students which allowed them to gain a better understanding of being culturally aware and learn how to respond to populations different their own ethnic group (Mikulec, 2015, p. 480 – 481). Further, research has shown that teachers' who have been attacked by students in the past become withdrawn and will not intervene in any physical or verbal altercations that are visible (Anderman, 2018). Intra-racial bullying is not a form of bullying that is easy to detect, however, is a form of bullying which warrants a response from teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors (Migliaccio, 2015). Before a response can be made, there needs to be a clear definition of intra-racial bullying, homogeneous group involved, and intervention and prevention methods of support to better assist African American females in middle school (Eriksen, 2018).

This literature was created using databases SAGE, Academic Search Complete, and PsycINFO, as well as in a Thoreau multidata base using keywords including *bullying, middle school, African American, intra-racial, females, blacks,* and

perpetrators. It will review research on the role of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors play when observing acts of bullying that is identified as "horse playing" based on perception versus intra-racial bullying among African American females in middle school.

This literature review will also consider perceived causes and characteristics of intra-racial bullying, shared, and lived experiences, and educate school officials and teachers with improving student relationships affected by intra-racial bullying. Additionally, this literature review will consider common core areas outside the classroom where intra-racial bullying takes place and ways to increase awareness of prosocial behavior as a positive step to minimizing bullying incidents. More important, teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors will have a better understanding of the cultural background of this homogeneous group and be prepared to respond to acts of bullying that is mistaken as "horse play." Finally, this literature will serve as a blueprint for future researchers to continue to build upon a topic which has limited research.

This study uses Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological System which encompasses a human development approach and an emphasis regarding various types of environments and how these environments can affect children. Because this theory addresses how children behavior changes by observing, imitating, or modeling their parents and the actions of others can also explain why their behavior changes. For example, if this specific phenomenon lives in an environment where taunting, verbal, physical, or any form of negativity that is considered normal living, this behavior can affect children in environments outside the home (Farineau, 2016). In this case, when children leave home

environments that are negative this establishes a behavior that can result in intra-racial bullying leading to betrayal, pressure, and loyalty to those of the same race (Gomez, 2019).

Physical and verbal abuse that is often confused with horse playing or normal behavior when this is the onset of bullying by perpetrators (Migliaccio et al., 2017). More important, victims of these perpetrators or any form of bullying internalize their pain by not communicating their fears to their parents or school officials for fear of retaliation by their perpetrators (Wood et al., 2017). For African American females in middle school, intra-racial bullying can be difficult for teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors to detect. Bronfenbrenner's five ecological systems aligns with the stages that are interrelated to the development of the child based on the various environments that contribute and impact their patterns of behavior at school resulting from imitating behaviors from others within their home environment (Farineau, 2016; Wood et al., 2017). Also, societal influences related to power and dominance ideologies within the African American culture. For example, African American families and communities often send messages that one should fight back, or it is a sign of weakness.

Other areas of discussion will include intervention and the bully prevention in positive behavior support (PBIS) programs, which trains teachers, school staff, and administrators to provide positive reinforcement towards children to minimize bullying among groups (Ostrander et al., 2018).

Intervention & Prevention

Most studies regarding middle school bullying discuss the negative impacts that acts of bullying can have on bulliers and the bullied, bullying victimization, and intervention and prevention programs that curtail the entire student population, however, none are specific to intra-racial bullying among African American females in middle school (Doumas & Midgett, 2019; Gaffney et al., 2019; Letendre et al., 2016; Mellizo, 2017; Ostrander et al., 2018; Rudasill et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2020). Letendra et al., (2016) examined the bully prevention in positive behavior support program at an urban middle school. After facilitating a focus group, which included teachers, administrators, and other school staff, it was founded that PBIS helped to minimize the number of bullying incidents to a certain point but additional information and resources was necessary to handle the bullying incidents outside the classroom (p. 243).

Additional resources include funding to also support the psychological effects due to being bullied and coping mechanisms that would help to alleviate various stressors that also affect the ability to focus on school academics (Bruening et al., 2018). Further, providing adequate training for teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors to provide the necessary tools to ensure they are fostering a positive school environment to help minimize bullying incidents (Doumas & Midgett, 2018). Also, addressing barriers that prevent African American females from speaking out about their bullying experiences and school officials gaining a better understanding of the influences that attribute to intra-racial bullying (Farrell et al., 2015). Gibson and Decker (2019) suggests the needs of

African American girls are often overlooked by school officials, whereas proper training regarding this homogeneous group is necessary.

Refinement of School Support Programs

Every school around the world have policies, procedures, and support programs that many will state are effective and beneficial when working with students who have been identified as bulliers, victims of bullying, and exposed to some form of violence (Gummelt, 2018; Kruger et al., 2016; Melecki, 2020). Teachers, school officials, and hallway monitors often reflect upon their own experiences regarding bullying, however, have not received sufficient training regarding cultural sensitivity among intra-racial bullying among African American females in middle school, ability to identify these groups within the school, or realize the importance of managing this form of crises that has increased in numbers (Mellizo, 2017; Migliaccio, 2015, Mikulec, 2015; Miller & Morris, 2016; Ostrander et al., 2018; Rice et. al, 2015; Sullivan et. al., 2017; Van Ryzin & Roseth, 2018; VanZoren & Weisz, 2018; Xu et al., 2020).

Refining current intervention and prevention programs or implementing a new form of support program that encompasses cultural sensitivity training will prepare them to know how to identify patterns of behavior among this homogeneous group (Goncy et al., 2018). Additionally, teachers will understand the importance of school environments and the effects it can have should the school fail to meet the needs of this homogeneous group, especially, when there is a teacher the bullied is comfortable with speaking to about being bullied (Rudasill et al., 2018; Thornberg & Delby, 2019). Further, teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors will be able to work with other African American

female middle school students to educate and provide them with the resources to show more sympathy for one another with regards to intra-racial bullying (Waasdorp et al., 2019).

Bullying Reporting System

In addition to refining intervention and prevention programs it is imperative for schools to implement an effective bullying reporting system that is inclusive and culturally sensitive to all students, especially, African American females in middle school (Lai & Kao, 2018). Research has shown that African Americans are less likely to report being a victim of bullying to teachers, administrators, or hallway monitors due to perceived stereotyping of this homogeneous group (Lai & Kao, 2018). These stereotypes include perceived behaviors of being loud, obnoxious, unruly, and consistently instigating incidents that leads to acts of bullying towards others (Ybarra et al., 2019). Often, these behaviors are directed towards others within the same ethnic group and it is not uncommon for African Americans to be held to the "snitch code," which is breaking the silence and informing a school officials about being a victim of bullying (Lai & Kao, 2018).

For African American females there is a sense of feeling tough or acting as if they can stand up against their bullies when internally they are afraid and do not want to appear "weak" or classified as a "snitch" by their peers or bullies (Ybarra et al., 2019). When teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors have been trained to identify these characteristics and patterns within this homogeneous group, proper intervention strategies and coping mechanisms can be incorporated to ensure needs are being met to overcome

the stereotypes, which teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors classify and reporting acts of bullying will become worthy of listening (Lai & Kao, 2018; Ybarra et al., 2019).

More important, creating a school environment and providing programs that works towards student-friendly programs that resonate with African American female students will be encouraging and build trust with school officials, which will also help those students feel comfortable with sharing information (Lai & Lao, 2018). It is important for teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors to understand the disparities of the number of bullying incidents and know that when acts of bullying transpire within this homogeneous group and it is reported, there is a serious issue taking place and warrants the action of school officials (Gaffney et al., 2019). Open communication within this specific group when it comes to bullying and following up with those who are being or have been bullied will be instrumental in ensuring intervention and prevention programs remain effective (Letender et al., 2016).

Partnerships with Families

Including parents in the process of addressing issues and concerns that affect their children with regards to intra-racial bullying can be challenging (Ostrander et al., 2018). African American females in middle school often stem from low socio-economic neighborhoods and rarely reside with both biological parents in the household on top of having the desire to feel like they belong. When there is no sense of belonging at home or at school, African American females tend to take their frustrations out on other females of the same ethnic group due to jealousy (Doumas & Midgett, 2019). Frustration also

leads to further acts of bullying, including aggressive and verbal. Another way to help minimize these acts of bullying is to foster relationships with the students' parents (Xu et al., 2020). Moreover, working with parents to identify risk factors that affect African American females at home and understanding how these risk factors lead to bullying, especially those within the same ethnic group, can potentially lead to positive relationships (Xu et al., 2020).

Letendre et al., (2016) also suggests training teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors to be better equipped to explain the effects of bullying acts and how this also affects social, academic, and emotional environments, both at home and school. Further, when teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors work collaboratively with parents, there is a deeper appreciation of the teacher/parent partnership of understanding bullying experiences better and encourages informal dialogues that builds trusting relationships (Mikulec, 2015). When students see these positive interactions between their school and parent(s), there is a greater chance to decrease intra-racial bullying among African American females in middle school (Migliaccio, 2015). More important, teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors will engage in an experience that becomes personal rather than stereotypical and intra-racial bullying versus 'horse play' outside the classroom will be easier to identify (Goncy, 2018).

Summary

This literature review has explored the issue of intra-racial bullying among African American females in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors. In general, this literature has found that intra-racial

bullying among African American females in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors is a form of bullying that needs further discussion and training that should be implemented in annual trainings and workshops. If teachers are not aware or do not understand intra-racial bullying among African American female students outside the classroom, then lived and shared experiences and perceived themes and characteristics lessen the possibilities of school officials addressing this issue in middle school.

The issue of students not speaking out or entrusting teachers, administrators, or hallway monitors due to not fostering positive relationships with school officials and not wanting to be viewed as a 'snitch' by their peers within the same ethnic group for fear of retaliation continues to have a stronghold on those who have been bullied. This literature review also considers refining current and existing intervention and prevention programs and implementing new ones to help them become more effective. Also, ensuring to include students and their parents in the process to address the cultural barriers that will encourage African American females to speak up and to educate everyone who is involved in the process.

More important, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems (1979) can provide insight for school officials and help them to be more aware of patterns of behavior and environments that contribute to bullying behavior especially among African American females in middle school who bullying within their own ethnic groups (Gomez, 2019). Chapter 3 presents the methods, design and analysis used in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore the patterns, trends, characteristics, and reasons that result in intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspective of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors. The nature of this inquiry was a generic qualitative study. This chapter includes details about the study design, the procedures that were used to carry out the research study, data collection, and data analysis. The research questions that guided the study along with the ethical procedures are also included. The interviews for the study were the primary source of data. The in-depth interviews were used to capture the teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors lived experiences regarding intra-racial bullying to identify themes regarding perceived causes and perceived characteristics of intra-racial bullying, and to identify shared experiences of intra-racial bullying.

Finding participants with relevant experience was critical in making the results credible. Results from this research study provides insight for school officials and may assist the district with exploring intervention and prevention programs that could address this specific phenomenon and this form of bullying. The research study explored bullying that occurred in common areas, outside of the classrooms, which included hallways, locker rooms, bathrooms, and cafeterias which are also known as unidentified or unknown locations (Gomez, 2019).

Research Questions

Primary Research Question-Qualitative: What are the lived experiences of intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors?

Subresearch Questions:

1. What are the themes found in the perceived causes of intra-racial bullying?

2. What are the themes found in the perceived characteristics of intra-racial bullies and the bullied?

3. What are the shared experiences of teachers, hallway monitors and others regarding the phenomenon of intra-racial bullying?

Research Rationale

This research study examined the question: What are the lived experiences of intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors? A generic qualitative study approach was utilized to understand the experiences of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors in middle schools and the difficulties African American females in middle school face when struggling to foster positive friendships within their own race.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this research study was to interview and record the teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors employed at a local middle school who had witnessed acts of bullying that describes intra-racial bullying. I did not interview

African American female students who were considered vulnerable populations.
Additionally, I implemented member checking to establish credibility and trustworthiness
of the research findings and provided a summary of the responses from the research
participants. The study involved teachers and administrators and as such, the school
district might require a copy of the transcript Though this did not happen, the potential of
having to share the transcript meant that I provided the participants an opportunity to
review the transcript and make edits before it was finalized. The inclusion of teachers,
administrators, and hallway monitors expanded the experiences that faculty observe and
witness daily.

Setting

The parameters of the middle school identified for this study is the accessibility,
location, parking, and location of classrooms and other private areas that served as areas
to facilitate interviews. The setting for this research study was an urban middle school
located in an urban city in Illinois. The school chosen for this study aligned within the
parameters that was an ideal location for the participants that were interviewed for this
research study. The total enrollment for this middle school was almost 1000 students. The
racial breakdown for the school was 36.5% African American, 31.2% White, 16.5%
Hispanic, and 15.8% with two or more races (Schooldigger, 2020). The school was also
ranked 1,033 out of 1,380 Illinois Middle Schools and 70.9% of the student population
receives free/discounted lunch (Schooldigger, 2020).

The focus of this research study was teachers, administrators, and hallway
monitors who observe students outside the classrooms where intra-racial bullying was

likely to occur. Findings from this research study may assist the staff with understanding the causes, themes, characteristics, and shared experiences of intra-racial bullying regarding this phenomenon. Also, the data provided can be shared with other schools within the school district to reveal an urgent need for additional trainings and intervention programs that need to be implemented or updated in school trainings and workshops.

Participants

The participants in this generic qualitative research study encompassed stakeholders from a local middle school. The participants included teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors who consistently observe students outside of the classrooms daily. 10 to 12 stakeholders was the goal to be individually interviewed. The reason for choosing this number of stakeholders to sample was to prevent the study from being oversaturated. This sample size was also appropriate to allow participants to share their personal experiences, it would have been easier to recruit, and schedules would have been more flexible to work with to schedule the interviews (Van Riinsoever, 2017).

The sampling method for this research study was thematic analysis. The purpose of thematic analysis was to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning within this qualitative study. Also, thematic analysis provided an interpretation of the stakeholder's responses to determine if there was a pattern. This pattern was helpful for the school district to identify future trainings and workshops that will help educate and support all faculty employees who observe or witness intra-racial bullying incidents (Van Riinsoever, 2017). The participants that were interviewed for this qualitative study had limited knowledge of intra-racial bullying among African American females in middle

school and the patterns, trends, characteristics, and the reasons that resulted in intra-racial

bullying (Rosen et al., 2017). The experiences of teachers, administrators, and hallway

monitors was the focus of this qualitative study.

Data Collection

Generic qualitative research focuses on descriptions and people experiences as it

relates to a specific phenomenon (Kahlke, 2018). Two methods were utilized during this

qualitative research study. The researcher used the following data source: semi-structured

interviews. Initially, the researcher intended to meet with the stakeholders in a private

location and setting that would allow the stakeholders to feel comfortable sharing their

experiences, values, and beliefs that was perceived as intra-racial bullying (Grant et. al,

2018), however, Covid-19 restrictions prevented the researcher from meeting with the

stakeholders face-to-face. The target population was teachers, administrators, and

hallway monitors that work with vulnerable populations. This required the researcher to

approach each stakeholder differently depending on their comfort level as their

experiences are shared (Grant et al., 2018). The researcher also compared the

stakeholder's responses to the school's reporting of bullying to determine if the responses

identified and aligned with the perceived characteristics, patterns, trends, and reasons that

result in intra-racial bullying. Archival data from the urban middle school also assisted

with determining if intra-racial bullying has ever been discussed and if the number of

reported bullying incidents aligned with the number of intra-racial bullying that may have

not been reported due to the lack of knowledge of understanding intra-racial bullying

versus "horse playing" (Gomez, 2019).

Research Method

Data for this study would have been face-to-face and in-person, however, Covid-19 restrictions prevented this method from happening which the researcher redirected the intended method to email interviews and follow-up phone calls with the teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors in the urban middle school that have witnessed acts of bullying that described intra-racial bullying. Structured interviews also allowed the researcher to concentrate on the accuracy of the responses, in hopes, of generating reliable results (Doumas & Midgett, 2018). The study involved teachers and administrators which the possibility of the school district requiring a copy of the transcript was possible. However, this gave the participants an opportunity to review the transcript and make edits before it was finalized (Kahlke, 2018). Initially, implementing focus groups seemed ideal for this study, however, ensuring participants were comfortable and could share their experiences individually without feeling silenced was priority.

Face-to-face, in-person, and email interviews that are structured while asking open-ended questions with collecting data from the participants allows the researcher to actively listen and pick up on cues, such as the participants demeanor. If the participant becomes uncomfortable or tiresome, having visual eye contact would clue the researcher to either shorten the question, interview, or allow breaks in between. Also, face-to-face, and in-person interviews allows the interviewer to engage with the interviewee by keeping him/her focused on the actual interview and without other distractions (Rosen et

al., 2017). Further, this sets the interview up for success by keeping an open dialogue and effective communication between the researcher and the participants.

Procedures

The researcher conducted interviews with teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors to address the research questions for the study. The questions were answered through interviews which will allowed participants to provide insight about their lived experiences, perceived causes, characteristics, and shared experiences regarding intra-racial bullying among African American females in middle school. Interviews were initially to be conducted in person at a private location within a local middle school upon approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the school district, however, Covid-19 restrictions prevented face-to-face contact per state guidelines. Additionally, an email invite to participate in the study was sent due to the participant being unable to meet in person and recorded follow-up interviews to clarify responses to the interview questions that were vague. The aim was to generate a sample that was appropriate to the context of the study. The participants were 3 teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors who meet the following inclusion criteria:

- 18 years or older

- Teacher, administrator, or hallway monitor

- Has witnessed perceived bullying outside the classroom among African American female students in middle school

I recruited the above participants based on the study inclusion and who responded with an interest to participate. The recruitment letter included the following information:

(a) an introductory paragraph with a description of the purpose of the study, (b) a brief description of participation, (c) the proposed length of time to complete the study, (d) any risks or inconveniences, (e) benefits, and (f) privacy statement describing how the responses would be protected including the participant's confidentiality. If participants agreed to participate in the study, each participant had to sign an informed consent. Each participant was also informed about the process of transcription and follow-up interviews that would all be recorded.

Data were collected through email interviews due to Covid-19 restrictions and state guidelines and follow-up interviews that were recorded was used for the purposes of clarifying each participants response and for responses that were vague through the email interviews. I used semi-structured interviews during the follow-up interviews based on the participants written responses to allow new ideas to be shared during the follow-up to provide an opportunity for new themes to be explored. All of the follow-up questions were open-ended questions, as well, to engage the participants to delve deeper into conversation to get them to share more about their experiences. Example of some of the interview questions were:

1. How long have you been a teacher, administrator, or hallway monitor at the middle school?

2. What is your experience in working with middle school students?

3. How would you describe intra-racial ("intra" meaning within the same ethnic group)?

4. How would you describe your experience(s) when witnessing bullying

incidents outside the classroom?

The interview questions also allowed me review the responses to the interview

questions to determine if the potential participant met the inclusion criteria. Additionally,

field notes were made by the questions that may require additional follow-up questions. I

reviewed all responses to each interview question and follow-up question and transcribed

all data upon the completion of each interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was used to examine, organize, and categorize the data to search for

common themes and patterns and to search for meaning. This process assisted with

identifying and make interpretations through the interviewee's responses. Additionally, I

listened to all of the interview recordings to ensure that each word and sentence was free

from errors. More important, I looked for similarities and beliefs, common themes,

verbiage, tone, voice, and content that described meanings when teachers, administrators,

and hallway monitors observed African American female students in the hallway.

All transcripts will be saved in Microsoft Word and uploaded into NVivo

qualitative software for management and storage. NVivo is a software system that is

designed to manage interviews, focus groups, surveys, social media, and journal articles.

NVivo also can playback audio, as well as import notes and citations. The qualitative

software also has the capability to assist with identifying common themes and present

effective outcomes to help draw conclusions. More important, this qualitative software

program can import data and provides a tool that can assist with coding to assist with

identifying the relationship of those codes. As the study progresses along the emergent codes become apparent and common codes and themes will occur. The various categories should assist with minimizing errors and identifying key words, phrases, sentences, themes, patterns, and other similarities (NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis, n.d.).

I assigned all participants a node code, such as P1, to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of personal information. After transcribing the data, I returned the data to each participant to review for accuracy and to make changes, if necessary. I gave each participant three weeks to review, make changes, and return the interview transcripts to me through email. Any changes that were made during this member checking process was finalized. The member checking took some time due to Covid-19 and the participants having to transition their work to working remotely from home. All email and recorded follow-up interviews and transcribed files remained secured in a laptop that was password protected and locked inside my personal bedroom to main confidentiality of each participant.

I used NVivo qualitative data analysis software to assist with managing the data collected from the email and recorded interviews. Once all of the transcribed data was coded in NVivo, I sorted the responses from each participant by codes that assisted with identifying emerging themes and patterns which would later provide insight to the research questions. Once the codes were identified such as years taught at the middle school, definition of intra-racial bullying, characteristics of bullying, affected or involved with any altercations that involved bullying, these codes were reviewed in the NVivo qualitative data analysis software to identify emerging themes and patterns. Once I

identified and interpreted the themes and patterns I analyzed my interpretation of what was identified to see if this would provide insight to the research questions.

Generating Codes

During the initial process of generating codes, I had to read and re-read all of the participant's responses to gain a better understanding of what the participants were trying to convey as it took some time to address the research questions. I used the word query to generate a word cloud while also taking notes to extract key words to identify common themes with the participants responses (Connelly, 2016). Upon completing and organizing the codes, I organized the data into themes using the data and my interpretation of the results. Boyatzis (1998) described the initial code process as an easier way to interpret raw data and to better assess the phenomenon within the study.

Organizing Codes into Themes

Data from each of the participants was protected by using codes such as P1, P2, and P3 to their privacy would not be compromised. After reviewing each of the responses, I made note of words and phrases that were relevant to the overarching research question (Connelly, 2016). After organizing the words and phrases, I looked for themes that appeared to be repetitious and appeared to provide meanings that may provide answers to the research questions. Additionally, during the recorded follow-up interviews, I listened closely to the tone of each the participants, especially, at moments when participants seemed hesitant to delve deeper into their personal testimonies (Anderman et al., 2018).

During this phase of the analysis, I began highlighting words and phrases in the NVivo qualitative data analysis software that were relevant to the overarching research question and then the sub-questions under the overarching research question. This allowed me to review those words and phrases to identify themes and look for relationships that appeared to have some form of relationship. This process took some time due to having to read a few lines at a time to ensure every word or phrase was captured as I was analyzing the data and making notes to prepare for my findings (Boyatzis, 1998).

Upon completing the coding phase, I eliminated themes that were broader and presented themes that would provide a more substantive description to support the findings from this research study. Data that were analysis of this research study will be transcribed in Chapter IV. A narrative summary will be included to detail the finding within this research study. Any data that has discrepancies will be noted for future considerations.

Transferability

The current study can be used and can be a resource for school officials, teachers, and parents, to help increase awareness and knowledge of intra-racial bullying (McDade et al., 2018). A study of this kind may also help teachers, administrators and hallway monitors gain a better understanding of the difficulties African American females in middle school face when struggling to foster positive friendships within their own race. In addition, the study can encourage school officials to ensure there is supervision in various locations, within the school, where these incidents are known to happen. When

bullying incidents occur internally, school officials can control these incidents by being proactive and physically present to intervene sooner rather than after the incident has occurred (Grant et al., 2019).

Moreover, this study is also designed to educate school officials and teachers with improving student relationships affected by intra-racial bullying in hopes of implementing and increasing awareness of prosocial behavior as a positive step to minimizing these incidents (McDade et al., 2018; Shriberg et al., 2017).

Dependability

The researcher kept an audit of each individual interview and field notes for each participant. Additionally, the researcher treated each participant with respect and ensured them that their responses would be kept confidential and ethically safe. Also, the researcher used member checking to provide participants an opportunity to review their transcripts from their interviews and validate their responses (Kahlke, 2018). Further, the researcher used multiple resources and analyzed multiple perspectives of the data to determine if this data supported the research questions. The reliability and validity of this data established trustworthiness (Shriberg et al., 2017). Also, member checking to establish credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings, participants were provided a summary of the responses from the research participants. In addition, member checking was used to ensure accuracy of the transcription and increased the credibility of the data that was collected (Gibson & Decker, 2019).

More important, each follow-up interview ensured reliability as this provided a detailed step-by-step of the interview and research process. To increase dependability, the

researcher provided each interviewee with a copy of their transcribed interview by emailing each of the participants.

Confirmability

The researcher reviewed the research on a frequent basis and reflected upon the interviews and field notes to document any new analysis. Also, the researcher provided both a copy of the interview and field notes to show how the data aligned with all four research questions. More important, the research determined that the findings were unbiased and that these findings can be confirmed by others.

Informed Consent

This study was conducted within the parameters set forth by Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the guidelines of ethical procedures were being followed. All steps to ensure each participant was aware of his/her rights of this research and protection was also communicated as one of the responsibilities of the researcher, as well. Participants within this research study also work with and around vulnerable populations which a letter of cooperation needed to be obtained. Also, the researcher sent copies of the informed consent, interview questions, and letter of cooperation for the school district to partner with Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once permission and approval were granted from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), data collection began with the participants. The researcher communicated with the participants to get permission to conduct an audio-recorded interview for about fifteen minutes. Additionally, the researcher informed the participant's that each of their interview recording and transcript would be available upon

request. Transcripts with identifiers redacted was shared with the university faculty along with the researcher's analysis. The researcher also informed the participant's that their interview recording, and transcript would be saved securely.

Ethical Procedures

The participants in the study were advised of the risks involved. The study involved minimal risks such as communicating the interview was voluntary, being in this interview would not pose any risks beyond daily life and there would be no benefits to the participant's for participating. The information provided would be kept confidential and personal information would not be shared other than for the purposes of the research study. The research data that was maintained in the NVivo software was also protected. The researcher reminded the participants that this interview was voluntary should the participant's take part now, they could still change their minds later. More important, the researcher was the only one with access to the data throughout this research study.

Summary

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore the patterns, trends, characteristics, and reasons that result in intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspective of teachers. Intra-racial bullying encompasses betrayal, pressure, and loyalty to those of the same race (Gomez, 2019). The researcher used the following data collection methods: interviews, field notes, and member checking which the data was stored and saved in NVivo. The researcher used NVivo to identify patterns, trends, and characteristics through categorizing and coding that answered the four research questions for this study. This generic qualitative study

encompassed 3 participants from a local urban middle school. The study was also conducted in accordance with Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethical standards and contact information for a Walden University representative was included on the consent form should the participant's had a desire to talk to a representative privately about their rights as an interviewee.

Chapter 3 included research questions and rationale, role of the researcher, setting, participant's, data collection, instrumentation, procedures, data analysis, transferability, dependability, confirmability, informed consent, ethical procedures, and summary. Whereas, Chapter 4, includes the introduction, data collection, results, and a summary and Chapter 5, includes the introduction, interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion.

Chapter 4: Results

In this section, the results from the study and the procedures used to carry out this study are presented. The critical components of this section are the data gathering processing, the system used for keeping track of the data, the findings as it pertains to the research questions, and a summary of themes. The research design that I selected for this study was a generic qualitative design. The purpose of this study was qualitative research and to explore the patterns, trends, characteristics, and reasons that result in intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspective of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors. Intra-racial bullying encompasses betrayal, pressure, and loyalty to those of the same race (Gomez, 2019).

Data Gathering Process

The research setting for this study was a middle school located in a small, urban school district. Data were generated primarily through interviews through email communication along with follow-up interviews that were recorded and transcribed. Unfortunately, the timing of data collecting occurred when the country was experiencing a pandemic. The study sample size goal was initially 10 to 12 participants who met the criteria for participation; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, saturation was reached after the three subjects were interviewed for this study. Saturation was reached because of the perpetual cycle of asking questions, reviewing responses, and asking follow-up questions for clarification. The primary objective of this research study was to explore and provide a deeper understanding of how teachers, administrators, and hallway

monitors perceived intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school.

The data gathering process for this study began with seeking approval from Walden University IRB to conduct the research. Upon approval from IRB (Approval number 12-09-20-0693649), I notified the partnering organization and informed the program coordinator for the school that I was approved and ready to begin the study. Also, I explained to the program coordinator that teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors, who met the criteria, would be valuable to delve deeper into this topic. The school district permitted me to conduct the study and directed me to the middle school principal. He assisted by sending out a mass email, along with my email invitation, to all faculty who were employed within the middle school.

The participants who met the criteria were invited to participate via email or in-person, but again, the pandemic and COVID-19 prevented face-to-face interviews from taking place. I sent email interview questions sent directly to teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors who responded with interest in participating in the study. Once the participants returned their responses to the interview questions, the responses were reviewed and added to an Excel spreadsheet and listed as an alternative name to protect the identity of each participant, and both the spreadsheet and the returned individual responses in Word documents were saved into individual folders on my laptop and were password protected. I uploaded the interviews into NVivo qualitative software for additional management and storage. All of the data were reviewed and confirmed with each participant. I took precautions to ensure that each participant's name was protected

and renamed them with a different name. After re-reviewing and analyzing the data from each participant, there were some responses that needed further clarification as the responses were either one answer or vague. I emailed each of the participants to schedule a time to speak with them over the phone to clarify some of their responses and reminded them that the responses would be recorded and uploaded into the NVivo Software System. Once all of the interviews were completed and emailed back to me, I thanked each teacher, administrator, and hallway monitor via email. I also mailed them a thank you card and a $5 McDonald's gift card as a token of my appreciation.

Findings

The findings of the study were based on the problem and research questions of this study. The problem was a gap in the research that explored intra-racial bullying from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors. The research question asked the following:

RQ-Qualitative: What are the lived experiences of intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors?

Subresearch Questions:

1. What are the themes found in the perceived causes of intra-racial bullying?

2. What are the themes found in the perceived characteristics of intra-racial bullies and the bullied?

3. What are the shared experiences of teachers, hallway monitors, and others regarding the phenomenon of intra-racial bullying?

A generic qualitative design was used to address the problem and research questions. I utilized this approach because it allowed the ability to understand the phenomenon and personal experiences, values, beliefs, interactions, and relationships with African American females from the perspectives of three teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors (Kahlke, 2018). As a result of the pandemic, teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors worked remotely from home. They did not have access to their students compared to working and having students in the classroom.

The pandemic became life-changing for many, requiring staff to adjust to facilitating lesson plans and teaching online. The team became more anxious, took leave of absences, and working remotely did not appease many as it felt as if workloads quadrupled. More importantly, the target phenomenon identified in the study did not have access to the necessary technology, and the school district's learning platform to complete homework assignments, tests, quizzes, or attend classes daily (see Will, 2021). All local urban middle schools experienced the same issues with their teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors, including high turnover rates due to staff leaving school districts. The pandemic affected everyone in different capacities that led to an array of emotions which included mental, physical, psychological, and emotional stressors that also affected their work ethics (Will, 2021).

Also, the pandemic has affected all local urban schools in some capacity; changing partnering organizations would also change the study's focus as all school

districts are experiencing the same issues. This has also affected recruiting participants for this research study even after several email attempts and communication with the organization's coordinator. During these unprecedented times and with the number of issues that teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors are experiencing, it was evident that having the energy to participate in a research study was not a priority. There were struggles to manage their everyday workloads changed the focus of my research study to its entirety.

This study revolved around perceived causes and characteristics of intra-racial bullying and lived and personal experiences of intra-racial bullying. Interview questions were emailed to the participants; I conducted member checking by following up with each participant to confirm their follow-up responses and verify if any of the responses needed to be edited before uploading their information into the NVivo qualitative software program. I also used Microsoft Word to keep track of all of the transcriptions.

The Interviews

Interviews were conducted with three full-time employees selected from a local urban middle school. The interview comprised twelve open-ended questions regarding the perceived themes and characteristics of intra-racial bullying and lived and shared experiences of intra-racial bullying from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors. These questions were designed to align and address each research question. The only semi-demographic question that I asked was the years of teaching experience for each participant.

Demographic Information

The sample in the study was comprised of two females and one male. All three of the participants have worked in the district for a combined total of 10 years. Two of the participants have worked at the middle school for three years, while one participant has worked at the school for four years. Each participant's name was omitted and changed to protect his or her identity (Table 1).

Interview Analysis

For the first question of the interview, I asked years of being employed at the middle school, and those results are posted in Table 1. Two Participants have been employed for the same number of years, while another participant has been employed a year longer than the other two participants.

Coding Procedure

After evaluating all of the transcriptions on each participant, I decided to choose coding categories to help identify themes, patterns, and transparency for the data analysis. Additionally, using a coding procedure increased validity, decreased bias, and provided insight that represented the data and the participants' personal experiences behind it. Also, coding helped to help represent with confidence that these findings represented the feedback from the participants'. I applied eleven codes that aligned with the interview questions that were asked. These codes were categorized as awareness, characteristics, the definition of intra-racial, employed at middle school, initiates bullying, lived experiences, patterns of behavior, policies, and procedures, shared experiences, themes, and training. I noticed fewer codes for participants one and three, which indicated that I

had reached saturation. I then applied the codes to look for common themes among the words and phrases that each participant used when responding to the interview questions in the NVivo qualitative software program.

Words such as bullying, African, females, school, many, describe, students, district, incidents, outside, racial, group, aggression, learning, social, feel support, and other words that were not said using word cloud within the software program. The interview question responses were uniquely similar using the exact phrasing, lived and shared experiences, perceived characteristics, patterns, and themes.

Trustworthiness

It was crucial for me to the necessary and prudent steps to ensure the data collection and analysis would show and help to improve the credibility and reliability of the results. This study implemented several measures to ensure this process was carried through from beginning to end. This approach allows the ability to understand the phenomenon and personal experiences, values, beliefs, interactions, and relationships with the phenomenon that are being observed (Kahlke, 2018). Also, this qualitative approach ensures the interpretation of the data aligns with the research questions asked due to no numerical data involved. As with trustworthiness, member checking was also imperative to this study.

Member Checking

Member checking ensures and increases credibility to the study. Each participant received a copy of their interview transcript to review to check for accuracy and make any last-minute edits or feedback. All three participants confirmed their responses, and no

modifications needed to be made. More critical, member checking allows the researcher to also re-confirm the accurate interpretation of the participant's transcripts and responses. Failing to conduct member checking could potentially be interpreted and assumed that the researcher is biased and did not consider the responses from the participants. Though, each participant did not want to make any modifications to their transcripts, after re-reviewing and analyzing the data from each participant, there were some responses that needed further clarification as the responses were either one answer or vague. I decided to reach out to each participant to rephrase some of the interview questions to determine if the responses would expand upon their previous responses and provide additional data that would be helpful to the research study. I emailed each of the participants to schedule a time to speak with them over the phone to clarify some of their responses and reminded them that the responses would be recorded and uploaded into the NVivo Software System.

Results

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore the patterns, trends, characteristics, and reasons that result in intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors. A generic qualitative design was utilized to support the purpose and methodology for this study (Kahlke, 2018). The focus was to analyze data from teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors within the local middle school. The participants responded to their perspectives, including shared and lived experiences of a specific phenomenon. During this process, data was generated, gathered, and uploaded into the

NVivo qualitative software program to better understand intra-racial bullying from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors at the middle school level. The data initiated through the participant's interviews were checked for accuracy and returned to the researcher.

During the transcription process, data was copied and paste from the interview questions and responses, analyzed in NVivo qualitative software program, and saved on a password-protected laptop. I incorporated an overarching research question and three additional subresearch questions incorporated into the findings.

RQ-Qualitative: What are the lived experiences of intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors?

Sub Research Questions:

1. What are the themes found in the perceived causes of intra-racial bullying?

2. What are the themes found in the perceived characteristics of intra-racial bullies and the bullied?

3. What are the shared experiences of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors, and others regarding the phenomenon of intra-racial bullying?

The data analyzed were collected from a semistructured interview. The school administrator sent out 100 questionnaires to teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors in a local middle school. Three employees that met the study's criteria

participated in the study. There were 12 interview questions for each participant in the study.

Interview Responses by Question

The following questions were asked and below are the responses to those questions:

Question 1: How long have you been a teacher, administrator, or hallway monitor at the middle school?

Participant 1: "This will be my 4th year teaching at Urbana Middle School. I taught 1 year additionally at Rantoul J.W. Eater Middle School."

Participant 2: "This is my third year at UMS. I started working here July 2018."

Participant 3: "I been working in the Middle School setting for almost 3 years."

Question 2: What is your experience in working with middle school students?

Participant 1: "I work as a PE / Health teacher. I have taught co-ed PE and Health for grades 6-8."

Participant 2: "I have worked with teens for 19 years. Both in a school setting and with community health."

Participant 3: "My experiences working with middle school students has been a life changer for me. As a support staff I played an important role in ensuring that students were learning in a safe and supporting learning environment. The greatest thing was I fostered Positive and Trusting relationships with students and by improving the school's climate by encouraging parents/family's involvement in education."

Question 4: How would you describe intra-racial ("intra" meaning within the same ethnic group?

Participant 1: "Of the same race (skin color), but I feel that economic background and social standing play a large role in the social group as well as gender identity."

Participant 2: "Inrta-racial what? Bullying? Intra-racial bullying to me is aggression towards a person within your same ethnic group. Obtaining a feeling of power to make another person you feel is less powerful than you Having a preconceived idea of the way a person should be and do."

Participant 3: "I would say that some who is bi-racial having a conversation with a black person."

Question 5: How would you describe your experience(s) when witnessing bullying incidents outside the classroom?

Participant 1: "A lot of what I see is very personal and purposeful. That is, it is targeted to a select person, not generalized. It is used to take a specific person down or elevate the bully above the person being bullied specifically. It is usually also public in some way so that a lot of people know it's happening so there's a lot of theater also involved."

Participant 2: "I have often seen students taunted in the hallway during passing periods this is where many of our fights occurred at the middle school. The majority of the fights were due to relational aggression among African-American female students. Many were upset about something that occurred on social media, someone looking at another student, talking about a student (or perceived), or someone did not like another

student because of an altercation with another friend. A student would be called a name

or be a part of a digital burn list or "ugly girls at UMS, etc." Male students would mask

the bullying as playing. Students would get slapped in the back of the head as hard as

they could until they would cry. Then the student would be teased even more for crying

because it hurt. Staff at UMS many time had to be like security guards to deter students

from getting into altercations in the halls.

Participant 3: "The experiences I've had when it comes to bullying is definitely

on social media, I believe not only in schools, but social media plays a big part in

bullying or as it's called cyber bullying."

Question 6: What do you think are the elements that initiates the bullying?

Participant 1: "Jealousy of what a person has socially, popularity, friends, and the

"it" crowd. Social standing. A slight against the bully, either real or perceived. A third

party coming in to stir drama either for their own purposes or because it's fun for

them. Old things in the past that one or both parties cannot move past. When a sibling or

other family member is in a dispute, so are other family members (capulet / montague

sort of feud)."

Participant 2: "Perception. What people do not understand is that a students'

schemas determines how their response or reaction will be. Many issues have occurred

because students misunderstood information received from a friend, foe, looks, distant

glares, conversations, or social media interactions. Self-hate and a negative sense of self.

Many students have been victimized and/or traumatized in their lives and want others to

feel their pain. Feeling disrespected. Historically African Americans females have been depicted as having very negative qualities that is manifested in day-to-day interactions.

Participant 3: "When I think of bullying, I believe the 3 elements would be: repeated acts of verbal or physical intimidation, Coercion, and aggression."

Question 7: Have you ever been involved in any physically bullying incidents between African American females?

Participant 1: "Yes."

Participant 2: "Yes. Unfortunately many times. Typically trying to stop them. We implemented restorative practices at the middle school two years ago. Since then the students have learned to trust support staff and utilize our support a lot more. We went from multiple fights a day to a few a year. Although the bullying continues, students try to resolve their issues with restorative practices first."

Participant 3: "No, I have not."

Question 8: Have you ever been directly or indirectly injured during bullying incidents?

Participant 1: "Yes."

Participant 2: "Directly injured, but not serious. I was pushed up against a locker and sprang an ankle. Indirectly, I feel pain when I see students with so much hurt and anger. As a mental health professional I know it is more to what is seen. I see the pain and want to help them understand themselves so they can begin to heal from the inside.

Participant 3: "No, I have not."

Question 9: How would you describe the school district's policies and procedures regarding bullying?

Participant 1: "Lax. They try to sort things out before the bullying happens, and try to mediate resolution, but stray from any sort of punitive action. I think this has been both helpful and hurtful. The students, especially ones with repeated incidents, know how to game the Restorative Justice system and only do and say the things to get them out of trouble, leading to the bullying victims to feel more intimidated, scared, and resentful towards teachers. On the other hand, in isolated incidents, I have seen it resolve a lot of issues, mitigating a situation, or giving second chances.

Participant 2: " If a student reports an incidence of bullying, a form must be completed. Only if the student reports it as "bullying". The policies are Insufficient. I do not feel that there is a concise and consistent use of procedures. Procedures are not clear as to what to do to

support the students. Not all staff are trained to know what to do. There are no current policies specific to any minority group. This is needed. One method does not work for all.

Participant 3: "The district's policy has zero tolerance, or will not tolerate in harassing and intimidating conduct, or bullying that would interfere with a student's education performance or creates a hostile educational environment. The policy also Prohibits bullying, intimidation, and or harassment based on the actual basis of Race, Color, Religion, Sexual Orientation, Sex, Gender-related Identity and many more.

Question 10: How would you describe the school district's training or employees regarding bullying?

Participant 1: "We teach and practice Restorative Justice very well, it just isn't as effective as we'd like it to be."

Participant 2: "There is no training. I knew what to do because I had professional training. When I started, there were not any trainings specific to my position. I was unaware of the bullying form until someone told me about it."

Participant 3: "I know that every so often every staff and faculty in the district are required to watch training videos on bullying and what you should do or advocate if a student reports to that staff or teacher that they have been experiencing bullying."

Question 11: How would you describe the patterns of behavior among African American females compared to other ethnic groups outside the classroom?

Participant 1: "Our ESL Latinx group, male and female, tend to bully via cutting the victim out or socially isolating the person being bullied. Exclusionary. White female groups tend to put others from outside their social group down inside their own social groups. African American females in our building want bullying to be noticed on a large scale and in front of others. It is a very publicized event, and it often ends up with two groups becoming involved rather than two people. It's almost like a team sport. You choose who's side you want to be on and then there's bad blood between everyone in the two groups."

Participant 2: "African-American females tend to display a lot of relational aggression within the ethnic group. They tend to say negative things about each other and

display a consistent division of relationships from other girls who do not share their same mindset. These girls also tend to favor social status and do whatever it takes not to seem week. Many of the girls also shares the mindset of there is no other way to deal with situations without physical aggression."

Participant 3: "I would say that what comes to my mind, about African American Females would be the body language, in terms of the head movement, hands on the hips. Also rolling their eyes and yelling. And I think with the other Ethnic groups are Calmer and quite in my opinion."

Question 12: What are some suggestions for increasing awareness to your colleagues and administrators when intra-racial bullying occurs outside the classroom?

Participant 1: "Besides just telling them? I'm not sure. Keeping them updated on the gossip I inevitably hear in halls and classes. In the gym, there can be up to 5 of us teaching at once, and we communicate to each other if we know a possible situation is imminent."

Participant 2: "Schools need to have a better understanding of the African-American culture and how relationships are formed and viewed. Understand generational expectations of who African-American females are told to be. Consistent equity training specifically to understanding minorities. Implement EFFECTIVE programs with SUFFICIENT funding to maintain the functionality of the programing for years to come.Hire staff who are trained in working with African- American youth, with andunderstanding of trauma in the Black community. Develop trauma informed procedures and a way of functioning in the school, address racism against minority

students with the staff on a regular biases, and ACTIVELY make changes as needed.
Being more understanding instead of persecutory with physical aggression shown.
Identify and address stereotypes of minority students and work towards solutions

Participant 3: "I would say giving more priority to students that are vulnerable as a result of race ethnicity. Or maybe starting or creating a bullying prevention program. That can help students that are being bullied or have been in the past that can help overcome that trauma in their lives."

Question 13: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Participant 1: "No."

Participant 2: "A lot more program development and funding needs to be allocated to programs for African American males and females. If this is not done we will continue to fall into the viscous cycle of intra-racial aggression. Planning has to also include family and support systems. Teaching youth about identifying their talents and skills helps them understand their purpose. Many students do not live past today, therefore they can not envision themselves in the future."

Participant 3: "Bullying is a big problem in our schools, I have experienced bullying when I was in school and it's not fun. My heart goes out to our students that are dealing with this and I would do my best to help them become happier buy guiding through the trauma of bullying."

Emergent Themes

After analyzing the data, there were some responses from some of the interview questions that did not appear as useful to the research questions as other responses. These

responses did not afford opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of their personal experiences to be able to convey through or summarize key words that would imply additional thoughts to paint a story. However, there were at least four themes that evolved within the remaining interview questions that did align with the research questions for this study. These themes included (a) themes of perceived intra-racial bullying, (b) themes of perceived characteristics of intra-racial bullying, (c) lived and shared experiences.

Theme 1: Perceived intra-racial bullying.

Understanding the form of bullying behavior among a specific phenomenon and having a clear understanding of the meaning is imperative. The first theme was based on describing the term intra-racial. As I read over the responses, it became clear that most participants had an idea of what this term meant; however, one participant who did not identify as a teacher or administrator did not understand the word at all. Gomez (2019) defines intra-racial bullying as encompasses betrayal, pressure, and loyalty to those of the same race (Gomez, 2019). Intra-racial bullying is also known as having aggression or feeling empowered to control others who identify with the same race and gender.

Teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors need to understand and be able to identify intra-racial bullying behaviors before these aggressive behaviors occur. Also, teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors need to be able to educate other teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors to define this term and report these bullying behaviors to the building administrator.

Question 3: How would you describe intra-racial ("intra" meaning within the same ethnic group)?

Participant 1: "Of the same race (skin color), but I feel that economic background and social standing play a significant role in the social group and gender identity."

Participant 2: "Intra-racial what? Bullying? Intra-racial bullying, to me, is aggression towards a person within your same ethnic group. Obtaining a feeling of power to make another person you feel is less powerful than you. Having a preconceived idea of the way a person should be and do."

Participant 3: "I would say that some who is bi-racial having a conversation with a black person."

Theme 2: Perceived characteristics of intra-racial bullying.

Jealousy, popularity, third parties, past experiences, perceptions, foes, glares, social media, verbal or physical intimidation, aggression, or coercion were some of the perceived characteristics that teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors identified as reasons that initiate bullying. Each participant agreed that these forms of aggressive behaviors often stem from either being victimized or bullying aggressors against the force were due to the aggressor finding joy in hurting someone else. Teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors explained their perspectives of what initiates bullying.

Participant 1: "Jealousy of what a person has socially, popularity, friends, and the "it" crowd. Social standing. A slight against the bully, either real or perceived. A third party coming in to stir drama either for their own purposes or because it's fun for them. Old things in the past that one or both parties cannot move past. When a sibling or other

family member is in a dispute, so are other family members (capulet/Montague sort of feud)."

Participant 2: "Perception. What people do not understand is that a students' schemas determine how their response or reaction will be. Many issues have occurred because students misunderstood information received from a friend, foe, looks, distant glares, conversations, or social media interactions.

Self-hate and negative sense of self. Many students have been victimized and/or traumatized in their lives and want others to feel their pain."

Feeling disrespected. Historically, African American females have been depicted as having very negative qualities that is manifested in day-to-day interactions.

Participant 3: "When I think of bullying, I believe the 3 elements would be: repeated acts of verbal or physical intimidation, coercion, and aggression."

Theme 3: Perceived lived and shared experiences of intra-racial bullying among African American female middle school students from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors.

Two participants have directly and indirectly been involved in the middle of physical bullying incidents among this phenomenon. While one participant did not want to go into great detail about the extent of being caught in the middle of physical bullying, the other participant expressed their experiences. However, one participant never experienced being caught in the middle of any physical or verbal incidents. Teachers, administrators, or hallway monitors confirmed their involvement in physical bullying incidents among African American females in middle school.

Participant 1: "Yes."

Participant 2: "Yes. Unfortunately, many times. Typically trying to stop them. We implemented restorative practices at the middle school two years ago. Since then, the students have learned to trust support staff and utilize our support a lot more. We went from multiple fights a day to a few a year. Although bullying continues, students try to resolve their issues with restorative practices first. Directly injured, but not serious. I was pushed up against a locker and sprang an ankle. Indirectly, I feel pain when I see students with so much hurt and anger. As a mental health professional, I feel there is more to what is seen. I see the pain ad want to help them understand themselves so they can begin to heal from the inside."

Participant 3: "No."

Theme 4: School district's policies and procedures regarding bullying?

Teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors gave their perspectives regarding the school district's policies and procedures.

Participant 1: "Lax. They try to sort things out before bullying happens, and try to mediate resolution, but stray from any sort of punitive action. I think this has been both helpful and hurtful. The students, especially ones with repeated incidents, know how to game the Restorative Justice system and only do and say things to get them out of trouble, leading to the bullying victims to feel more intimidated, scared, and resentful towards teachers. On the other hand, in isolated incidents, I have seen it resolve a lot of issues, mitigating a situation."

Participant 2: "If a student reports an incidence of bullying, a form must be completed. Only if the student reports it as "bullying." The policies are insufficient. I do not feel that there is a concise and consistent use of procedures. Procedures are not clear as to what to do to support the students. Not all staff are trained to know what to do. There are no current policies specific to minority group. This is needed. One method does not work for all."

Participant 3: "The district's policy has zero-tolerance, or will not tolerate in harassing and intimidating conduct, or bullying that would interfere with a student's education performance or creates a hostile environment. The policy also prohibits bullying, intimidation, and or harassment based on the actual basis of Race, Color, Religion, Sexual Orientation, Sex, Gender-related identity and many more."

As I continued to evaluate this responses from the participants and looking back at some of the responses that were vague, I decided to follow-up with each participant again to see if I could ask the questions in a different way to get the participants to expand upon their responses. I emailed each participant to schedule a time and date that would work for them to answer a few more questions. When speaking to each participant, I reminded them that the conversation would be recorded and saved in a password protected laptop in a folder that is not accessible to anyone else besides myself. Also, if their information needed to be shared, this information would only be shared with my Chair, Committee Member or Walden University. Once this information was communicated to each of the participants, I began asking my follow-up questions.

Follow up to Question: Have you ever been caught in the middle of any physical bullying incidents between African American females?

Follow-up interview questions with Participant 1

Researcher: "You responded "Yes." Can you elaborate further on what that situation looked like?"

Participant 1: "Um, unfortunately, there's many situations in which I've been involved in both physical bullying between African American individuals. What kind of like answer are you looking for or like? What can you repeat the question again on screen?"

Researcher: "Sorry, yes. Have you ever been caught in the middle of any physical bullying incidents between African American females? When you were caught in the middle of those situations or those incidents, what were your immediate inclination of being involved in a situation like that between this particular group?"

Participant 1: "Between these two individuals, my first inclination was just to stop and separate the two because they were punching, shoving, and I could see it was going to escalate and it was escalating before my eyes. So my first inclination is just to stop and separate me and other teacher involved my principal actually. A man stepped in between the two and the other one backed off cause she recognized that, you know it's over right now or whatever and the other one was just very still caught up in her emotions and that moment and we have a I didn't restrain her person, but it just kind of like one arm hug way and once she was away from the situation, she was a lot easier to talk with and communicate with, but not instance where you know, like it was also in the cafeteria so

it was in front of everyone so I'm sure she didn't want to look like she like punked out or back down there's a lot of like saving face happening at the time and I think that's in one of my later questions. That's where a lot of the bullying. The biggest issue is it's usually a state and event so to speak. That…that's my first inclination I guess is remove the parties from the situation because in front of everybody it's gonna get physical, especially the rest of the audience comes up. You know chanting, screaming, shouting, like trying to further hype it up because I mean for the students it is uh entertainment value. Unfortunately, like it's exciting or fun to watch."

Researcher: "Alright, and then the other question that I asked was how would you describe the school district meeting or employees regarding bullying and you responded, "we teach and practice restorative justice very well. It just isn't as effective as we like it to be. Can you expand on that answer just a little bit? When you say it just isn't as effective as we like it to be. "

Participant 1: "The restorative justice works in isolated incidents that is not bullying, in my opinion. If someone says or does something unintentionally or accidentally and it causes hard feelings, I think justice works very well. Like, if you and I said something, smarted off to each other and then we had a mediator come help us explain our feelings to each other and work so much better because then we have a mutual understanding. But when it's bullying and it's more intentional, I feel that the restorative justice practices don't necessarily work because students who are doing the bullying know in a way, exactly what to say and do to get out of like trouble."

Follow-up interview questions with Participant 2

Researcher: "Ok, so the second question that I asked you was, what is your experience working with middle school students? And I know that you stated that you worked with teens for 19 years in a school setting with community help. Can you just expand upon that just a little bit further?"

Participant 2: "Yeah, so I've worked in um in a school setting and providing um like school psych services. So I was doing testing as well as providing counseling to students and then I also worked in community mental health and I was doing basically the same thing doing psychological testing."

Researcher: Ok, and in your experience with working with predominately middle school students, what would you or how would you compare that?

Participant 2: "To what?"

Researcher: "To working with other student groups?"

Participant 2: "For me, this is just for me, cause it's not the same with everybody else. For me, it's they're more moldable, um at the middle school. Um sixth graders, um listen more. Um…they do look for feedback I understand through…um..disrespect and attitudes, so I don't think that personally was easier for me to, you know, address things with them. Seventh graders, you know, developmentally they had a place where you know they "smelling" themselves, but they still speaking out for support. Eighth grade is kind of like they think they know it all, but again they still…if you have built a good relationship with them they are still seeking out, too. You know for feedback and help and support, and they're listening though they don't act like they listen. They are

listening with the other age groups. I think I feel like younger when you in elementary. Uh…before middle school I think it's a little bit more challenging because there are certain skills that have not been developed yet, and so even with middle school but it's...I…I feel like it's a little bit more challenging because it's if you're meeting a student at a crisis. You have to help with the skilled based. The basic skills level first before they can build upon that in order to use the skills educational." That makes sense, you know. So even though there are middle school students who have not, you know, reached the basic level of skills and you know emotionally at some point sometimes. Yes, most of them are, many of them have you know and uh middle schoolers are influenced by their peers. Even with learning new things, whereas, elementary, you know, they tend not to be as influenced as their friends and ..and so it's harder to say, hey, you know, once you bring your friend with you, you know, and then it's learning together."

Researcher: "Uh huh."

Participant 2: "Mm-hmm. Yeah. You know?"

Researcher: "Mmmm. Ok."

Participant 2: "Others who work consistently with elementary might disagree, but it's just been my experience some of the younger kids. I don't know, just for me, it's just you know, uh, more challenging to help them learn. You know these skills, yeah."

Researcher: "Right. Ok, thank you for that."

Participant 2: "You really had to start early. You know, saying like sort of like Pre-K you know kindergarten so you know so you can start and start building from there, you know."

Researcher: "Absolutely. Ok. Thank you for that and just one more clarification, so um..another interview question that I had asked was have you ever been directly or indirectly injured during bullying incidents and you said directly injured but not serious. You were pushed up against a locker and sprained ankle and directly you felt pain when you see student with so much hurt and anger as a mental health professional. You know it's more toward the scene. You see the pain and ant to help them understand themselves so they can begin to heal from the inside. Can you expand upon that just a little bit further…so describe…uh…you know..you said you weren't seriously injured but described the pain that you indirectly feel? Can you expand upon that a little bit further?"

Participant 2: "Yeah, I think it's because I know um…what's underneath. The physical aggression that they show uh…um…and some students I've worked with and I've seen them get into fights and things like that. I know they're hurting you know and it's …it's a fight or flight reflex that they have, you know, and why somebody might happen. And I know and I….you know, and technically can conceal the hurt that they're going through. You know nothing, and so I try so hard you know, even when I'm working with students. I've worked with students like for a year before, you know, and then the next year they get into a fight. I'm like, you know,,,,,I've learned so much about them, and I know the hurt and the pain. You know the isolation. I understand like what they're going through and this is a reflection, a result of them not knowing what to do. You know, even through, you know, learning coping skills, even…even through all of these things, they revert back to what they know so when they're pushed up against the wall…you know…they cry …you know, because they're angry and hurt. It's not just that

their prices for it because it got to fight but not because they're angry. You know they feel disrespected. It's like nobody cares about them and this is what is unpacked, you know, after they get into these physical fights….you know we unpacked all these things and I know these things about these kids didn't hurt me so bad. Seeing them so lost so hurt you know…you know….seem like they feel like there's nowhere else to go nothing else to do besides physically fighting. So that's why…you know..yeah it …it…it just hurts me to see them…..you know, so much pain and …and not now what to do even through everything that we do for them and help them with….and you know his heart…yeah."

Follow-up interview questions with participant 3

Researcher: "Hey [Name of Participant], how are you?"

Participant 3: "I'm doing good, how are you?"

Researcher: "I'm doing well. Thank you. I wanted to follow-up with you with regards to the interview questions that I sent you, and there's a couple of clarifications, more so a couple of questions that had like a short answer, more like a close-ended response and I just wanted to see if I can get you to expand upon it a little further? So one of the questions that I asked you is, have you ever been caught in the middle of any physical bullying incidents between African American females and you said you had not. Have you been in proximity of any of those incidents?"

Participant 3: "I would say I have been in police situations, you know, not just with females but I would say I've had a mixture of students that come to me to tell me that they have been bullied. Uhh..but I would say there were females, but I would say it's

been more males than females so…..that has come to me and explains to me how they've been bullied and how they are asked and stuff like that. So I would say it would be more emails. There were some females, but it was more males that have come to see that have recognized themselves as people leader."

Researcher: "Ok….and you also said that you have not been directly injured during the bullying incidents. Um….have you witnessed or observed other teachers, administrators, or hallway monitors that have been?"

Participant 3: "I was and I hope this will help, but I was involved my first year at the middle school. I was involved in a fight. I was trying to help the principal break up a fight and actually that fight that I had there was with two eighth grade males and it was the fight that occurred. It was in the cafeteria during lunch and it was just that fight was just horrible. It was so horrible. It has been almost two years ago. It was just really emotional because one of the students was one of the students on my caseload and it was actually one but got me down because I tried to help her to stay out of trouble. You know that makes sense. You know I tried to help her stay out of trouble and despite that occurred in the cafeteria with, you know the principal breaking up because it was just the principal involved in that fight. So I mean, I couldn't. I couldn't let him….you know….do that by himself. You know what I mean so I think they just want to help you know. I would say that's one of the worst situations I've been in since I was eleven years old in the middle school batch altercations. I had helped another administrator so and so yea, no."

Researcher: "So with that being said, how….after all of everything had settled after the incident was over, what was the feeling or the mood? Either with the other faculty or other administrators or hallway monitors that were around after the incident and can you just like share the outcome? Like, after everything as over with, you know….was there you know ….even more stressful situation or what? What was that moment like?

Participant 3: "Active too…. you know…. that is heard a lot of staff were surrounded in the building and I guess they couldn't believe what happened. I know for being a principal, I don't think my style guides. I was very emotional. I was almost in tears and my anxiety was just really on high, if that makes sense. Like I was so shooting at myself because I mean, that was like a traumatic experience and that makes sense. You know that was a traumatic experience for me. I believe the principal looked very upset. I'm sure he was kind of hurt in a way as well but I felt a lot of other staff feeling that they were frightened they were fighting now and they didn't know what to do 'cause this this fight was…this was huge. This was a huge fight, you know, and I think with two girls. But you know, it's like everyone was trying to jump in and help you know what that makes sense, you know. And this was what it was it was two males. It was too much, so I was taking all I would say all teachers and staff, which is frightening. When it was all over, there was no..... I just I felt like it just continue to be stressful and that makes sense. There was no….. there was no good that came out of it. It was it was bad to be honest with you. It was bad. It was hurtful. Those fearful. It's not alright."

Researcher: "And do you know what initiated the altercation?"

Participant 3: "To my knowledge, it was a lot of drama that these two girls had from second grade, you know, over a boy or something like that and it's starting to be other issues that's gross and I think they're holding their anger for so long they don't make fun and it as hard. In a bad way it was. It was time to release that ad then this would happen. It's…..it's really sad. It was…yeah it was."

Thematic Analysis

Several patterns emerged within the data that all participants agreed that bullying takes place among this phenomenon; however, it is clear these teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors do not fully understand the term "intra" regarding intra-racial bullying. Also, more than half of the participants have been directly or indirectly involved in physical incidents that caused harm to one of the participants. More importantly, the data revealed the school district's policies and procedures are lenient and need to be reviewed. The school district implemented a tactic geared towards helping to minimize bullying incidents through mediation. However, the participants agree this tactic has been challenging. Students will cheat the system by saying things that sound good to their victims only to repeat the same bullying incidents. Three participants recounted their lived and shared experiences of their perspectives of intra-racial bullying.

The researcher found detailed descriptions of patterns, trends, characteristics, and reasons for intra-racial bullying throughout the data coding and analysis of each participant. All felt they had a good understanding of the perceived characteristics that initiates bullying but were not quite sure if their perception was correct. Patterns and themes also showed that the majority of the participants had experienced physical

incidents directly and indirectly. More critical patterns and themes were consistent with the school district needing to re-evaluate the current policies and procedures regarding bullying as a whole. Although, one of the participant's appeared to be completely off the mark, there was overall pleasure and mutual understanding of the characteristics of bullying and the shared experiences that each participant shared confidentially.

Including a bullying policy that reflects and is specific to various ethnic groups as the current policy does not apply to all groups. Also, teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors need to have better training to handle various forms of bullying and be able to identify these forms of bullying by being proactive when these incidents occur rather than reactive.

<p style="text-align:center">Summary</p>

As a researcher, I was delighted with my findings and all that I learned in this study. As I read each participant's responses, it became clear that while each participant interacts with students on various levels, there are mutual feelings regarding intra-racial bullying among this phenomenon. Intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors has a willingness to help minimize these bullying incidents with additional training and changes within the school district's policies and procedures. Each participant also agreed that further program development and funding needs to be allocated to more programs that will support African American students. Also, teachers, administrators, hallway monitors, family, and support systems need to plan these programs.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The analysis of this qualitative study addressed the research questions that I postulated. It managed my topic regarding intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors. Three participants volunteered to be interviewed for this generic qualitative study whose identity has been protected for their privacy. Data were uploaded into the NVivo qualitative software program and used to examine the perceived themes, characteristics, shared, and lived experiences of intra-racial bullying. Data was also reviewed constantly, which was also in coding certain words taken from portions of the research questions. The 12 interview questions are in the appendix, and findings for this generic qualitative study are detailed in the following sections below.

Interpretation of the Findings

The participant's perceptions of intra-racial bullying were vaguely correct. The majority of the participants defined "intra-racial" as being of the same race; however, another participant characterized it differently and perceived this term for having the same meaning as bullying.. Overall, I found that the participants did not have a gainful understanding of this form of bullying. They have been involved in physical altercations while not realizing who provoked the incident or the group involved. Due to their lack of knowledge of this form of bullying, their judgment could potentially decrease the efforts of minimizing intra-racial bullying incidents. The 12 interview questions the participants responded to showed me and painted a clear picture of what has been happening in the middle school. Also, it is concerning that the current bullying policy has not been

effective. Staff who have been injured due to these physical incidents are receptive to training, reformed policies, and gaining more support from the school district and administrators. After data collection, data analysis, coding, and identifying perceived themes, characteristics, and lived and shared experiences of intra-racial bullying, these are my findings based on the responses from teachers, administrators and hallway monitors. However, if improvements are not made in the above areas, the next step would be seeking employment elsewhere.

During my initial interviews with each of the participants, everyone understood the term bullying and somewhat understood the term "intra-racial;" however the term was not clearly understood. In fact, the participants' themes during the first phase described "intra-racial" as having the *same color*, *economic backgrounds*, *aggression towards a person within the same ethnic group*, *feeling powerful over someone else*, *jealousy*, *third parties*, *past experiences*, *verbal or physical intimidation*, *coercion*, *groups*, *trauma*, *outside the classroom, racial*, *environment*, *experiences*, *race* and *social media*. This finding is aligned with the literature by Gomez (2019) who stated intra-racial bullying encompasses betrayal, pressure, and loyalty to those of the same race and validated the results.

Results of the study also revealed the participants have been directly and indirectly involved in physical bullying related to this specific phenomenon, however, seemed reluctant to elaborate further in some of their responses to the interview questions. While each participant felt strongly about describing the term "intra-racial", their weakest responses resulting in "yes", "no", or two to three word responses indicated

that I needed to ask follow-up questions and reword some of the interview questions that were asked to delve more to get more solid responses to those specific questions.

During the follow-up interviews (Phase 2) for the questions that needed further clarification, I worded those questions a little different which resulted in more in-depth responses for those specific interview questions. The questions pertained to the participants lived and shared experiences after being involved directly and indirectly in physical bullying altercations. Each participant opened up about their feelings, the difficulties of being able to do their jobs in a safe environment, mental and emotional scars from those incidents for which they receive therapy, and all three participants had officially resigned from their positions, as a result, and had accepted new opportunities outside of the school district to no longer be working with students.

The interpreted findings of this research study were viewed from the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977). The results from this study can be applied to the layers of this theory based on the support the participants can provide to the students in a positive learning environment. Teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors work closely with the students and can be influential, be more involved in the lives of students, and can reach out to students and families outside the classroom by sharing their personal and lived experiences that can potentially related to this specific phenomenon.

Teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors need additional training to identify this form of bullying behavior and be more proactive in understanding what to look for and how quickly bullying incidents can spiral out of control if this form of

bullying behavior is not resolved. There needs to be better communication between the administrators and the staff and actively listening to staff who deal with students more than school administrators. Teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors have expressed feeling afraid, anxiety has increased, lack of desire to go to work each day, have sought counseling and therapy, or have left the school district entirely to seek other professions that do not involve working with school age children. It is also understood that African American students are expelled more than any other ethnic group in the school, which can also be perceived as a willingness not to provide this specific phenomenon the same disciplinary measures.

Although this was a small study with three participants at a relatively large middle school, I feel the limitations did meet the study's success, however, the study could have had a better outcome if more participants were in the study. I would have liked to see at least the minimum number of ten participants that would have been ideal. The pandemic became life-changing for many, requiring staff to adjust to facilitating lesson plans and teaching online. Staff became more anxious, took leave of absences, and working remotely did not appease many as it felt as if workloads quadrupled. This research study's target population did not have access to the necessary technology, and the school district's learning platform to complete homework assignments, tests, quizzes, or attend classes daily.

All local urban middle schools experienced the same issues with their teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors, including high turnover rates due to staff leaving school districts. More important, the pandemic has affected everyone in different

capacities that have led to an array of emotions which include mental, physical, psychological, and emotional stressors that have also affected their work ethics.

This has also affected recruiting participants for this research study even after several email attempts and communication with the organization's coordinator. During these unprecedented times and with the number of issues that teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors are experiencing, it was evident that having the energy to participate in a research study is not a priority when many struggles to manage their everyday workloads. As a result of the continued issues at the middle school, two of the participants have chosen to leave the school district entirely to focus on another profession not involving school age children. Moreover, this changed the focus of the research study to its entirety.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations in this study included the number of participants that participated, method of inviting participants, and the data collection. The study collected data from three participants' that reside in Champaign County and are comprised of a teacher, administrator, and hallway monitor. Consequently, the data that has been provided is limited and only covers a small portion of the population in the study. All of the participants came from one school district in Illinois. This created a data saturation after only three interviews. Additionally, I conducted interviews using a semi-structured interview protocol. This provided a list of interview questions to use as a guide throughout each interview with the participants. The three participants provided short descriptions of their shared and lived experiences regarding intra-racial bullying.

However, there were some questions that needed further clarification and other questions were elaborated few in detail. These responses contributed to the themes formed in the data.

Recommendations

Suggestions from the findings are that school administrator's update the bullying policy and implement additional training that will help all teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors learn how to identify the characteristics of intra-racial bullying and to be able to be proactive when it comes to this form of bullying that can be helpful with minimizing bullying incidents with this phenomenon. Re-evaluating the current use of restorative practices where the majority of African American students have figured out how to manipulate this method of protocol and bullying incidents are not decreasing with this method in place, More critical, identifying strategies to minimize the exhaustion that teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors have experienced that contributes to their feeling of a lack of support and departure to seek employment in another district or county. I believe the teachers need to feel supported by the phenomenon's parent or legal guardian, especially those who continue to initiate this form of bullying behavior while at school.

Implications

I attended this middle school and have a gainful understanding of the school's operation. Some things have changed, and there have been newer and newer staff hired each school year. Other local middle schools have successfully implemented additional training, become even more inclusive, and have revamped programs and resources that

identify with African American students and parents. This school, in particular, has been through several significant challenges; however, they have always found ways to diffuse problematic issues briefly. The implications of addressing this form of bullying have not been addressed. Improvements are necessary to ensure teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors this issue is taken more seriously, employees are retained, and this phenomenon has an opportunity to improve their behavior by participating in support programs that can potentially decrease bullying incidents.

Conclusion

Reviewing the problem statement, purpose statement, and findings regarding intra-racial bullying among African American female students in middle school from teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors helped me achieve the necessary conclusions for the posed questions. The study helped me realize and have a better understanding of the struggles within the school that has been ongoing for quite some time. There is intra-bullying taking place. Still, teachers, administrators, and hallway monitors do not have a good understanding of what transpires when this specific phenomenon is causing this form of bullying within their ethnic group. As I read each participant's response, I felt their experiences as if I was also experiencing the same struggle.

When the themes and patterns began to emerge and review the data over and over, the answers and analysis answered for my study were not only answered, but the three participants were unaware of the term intra-racial. The themes also revealed they have been involved in these bullying incidents and hurt in the process. Not only does the

school need to be aware, but the teachers, administrators, hallway monitors, and any support staff need to know that with additional training, policy and procedure updates, and support, this form of bullying can be potentially be justified from this study. The implications of the problem place a greater responsibility on the school district to be receptive to such bullying behaviors and identify strategies and implement new practices that can be implemented to reduce this form of aggressive bullying.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

- How long have you been a teacher, administrator, or hallway monitor at the middle school?

- What is your experience in working with middle school students?

- How would you describe intra-racial ("intra" meaning within the same ethnic group)?

- How would you describe your experience(s) when witnessing bullying incidents outside the classroom?

- What do you think are the elements that initiates the bullying?

- Have you ever been caught in the middle of any physically bullying incidents between African American females?

- Have you ever been directly or indirectly injured during bullying incidents?

- How would you describe the school district's policies and procedures regarding bullying?

- How would you describe the school district's training or employees regarding bullying?

- How would you describe the patterns of behavior among African American females compared to other ethnic groups outside the classroom?

- What are some suggestions for increasing awareness to your colleagues and administrators when intra-racial bullying occurs outside the classroom?

- Is there anything else that you would like to add?