

2023

## Former High School Bullying Victim Perceptions of Support to Prevent Bullying Incidents

Aaron James John Woods  
*Walden University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

---

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu](mailto:ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu).

# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Aaron Woods

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

Review Committee

Dr. Amy White, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty  
Dr. Michelle McCraney, Committee Member, Education Faculty  
Dr. Timothy Lafferty, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

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

Walden University  
2023

Abstract

Former High School Bullying Victim Perceptions of Support to Prevent Bullying

Incidents

by

Aaron Woods

MA, Arkansas State University, 2017

BS, Belhaven University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2023

## Abstract

Bullying was a pervasive issue affecting high schools in the United States despite anti-bullying programs. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of former high school bullying victims about why anti-bullying programs have not reduced incidents of bullying. The conceptual framework that supported this study was Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development, a theory that assumes an individual's development is affected by the changing environment and the larger social context in which the environment resides. The research questions were designed to find out why anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective in preventing bullying incidents and what participants believe is needed to prevent incidents of bullying. A basic qualitative research design was used to capture the insights of purposefully selected 10 former high school bullying victims through semistructured interviews. Emergent themes were identified through open coding, and the findings were developed and checked for trustworthiness through member checking, rich descriptions, and researcher reflexivity. The findings revealed shared perceptions regarding the reasons bullying programs were not perceived as effective and the types of efforts needed to prevent bullying; these findings suggest that anti-bullying efforts were ineffective and anti-bullying programs were nonexistent. Future research should explore the reasons anti-bullying efforts are ineffective to gain additional knowledge from all aspects. This study can impact positive social change by providing information that leads to improved outcomes for students who are victims of bullying.

Former High School Bullying Victim Perceptions of Support to Prevent Bullying  
Incidents

by

Aaron Woods

MA, Arkansas State University, 2017

BS, Belhaven University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2023

## Dedication

This study is dedicated to all my former students. I've been an educator and high school basketball coach for 10 years. As a coach, there have been several students that I have that have attempted to make the basketball roster but have been unsuccessful in their efforts. Due to them not making the roster, some chose other paths that were detrimental to their lives. Bullying is a serious issue and if students are unable to learn, co-exist with their peers, and "fit in" in a school setting, it will negatively impact their lives. The impact of bullying makes it difficult for students to focus on their education and they ultimately put all their time and effort into combatting bullies. I've seen several students go the wrong route for acceptance and to stop being bullied. I hope my study opens the eyes of everyone about the importance of antibullying programs and effective coping strategies.

## Acknowledgments

This study is dedicated to my committee and family. Dr. Ken McGrew has been the best. He has encouraged me the entire time I've been under his tutelage. Without his direction, this would not be possible. Dr. Michele McCraney has always been encouraging and has motivated me to push forward. Thank you for always being positive and never giving up on me. My family has been my motivation and my "why." To my wife Ryan, thank you for pushing me to create the best version of myself. To my son Lincoln, you can do anything you put your mind to if you put God first. Basketball is temporary, but your education and the skills you obtain from school will last a lifetime. To my daughter Lola, keep working hard and putting your education first. The sky is the limit for you. The nights when I was up late writing and the days when I had to pass on attending family engagements has paid off.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	iv
Background .....	2
Problem Statement .....	5
Purpose of the Study .....	6
Research Questions.....	7
Conceptual Framework for the Study.....	7
Nature of the Study .....	9
Definitions.....	9
Assumptions.....	10
Scope and Delimitations .....	10
Limitations .....	12
Significance of the Study .....	13
Summary .....	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	15
Literature Search Strategy.....	16
Conceptual Framework.....	17
Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables.....	21
Prevalence of Bullying.....	22
Defining and Understanding Bullying Behaviors.....	23



Warning Signs of Bullying .....	26
Stakeholders' Roles in Bullying .....	28
Coping Strategies used to Combat Bullying.....	38
The Roles of Anti-Bullying Programs in the School Setting.....	40
Bullying Prevention Programs in the United States .....	42
Student Perceptions of Anti-Bullying Programs.....	50
Summary .....	52
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	55
Research Design and Rationale .....	55
Role of the Researcher .....	56
Methodology .....	56
Participant Selection .....	57
Instrumentation .....	58
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	59
Data Analysis Plan.....	60
Trustworthiness.....	61
Ethical Procedures .....	62
Summary .....	63
Chapter 4: Results .....	64
Setting .....	64
Data Collection .....	64

Data Analysis .....	65
Results.....	65
Research Question 1 .....	68
Research Question 2 .....	75
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	80
Summary .....	81
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	82
Interpretation of Findings .....	82
Limitations of the Study.....	91
Recommendations.....	92
Implications.....	93
Conclusions.....	94
References.....	96
Appendix A: Inclusion Questionnaire .....	121
Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Protocol.....	122
Appendix C: Codes and Themes.....	124

## List of Tables

Table 1. Overview of Codes Organized into Emergent Themes .....	67
---	----

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Bullying is a serious issue within schools. It is a common form of torment in the United States (Arango et al., 2018) with consequences that range from academic decline (Gomes et al., 2020) to suicidal ideation (Klomek et al., 2018) among bullying victims. Numerous anti-bullying programs exist within school systems in the United States with varying degrees of effectiveness (Limber et al., 2018; Ossa et al., 2021). Despite the implementation of anti-bullying programs and enforcement of bullying policies by school administrators and staff, bullying is still on the rise in school districts in the United States (McNamara, 2021). Current research suggests the implementation of anti-bullying programs has been effective at reducing bullying by only about 15–30% (Gaffney et al., 2019; Kennedy, 2020b). Assessing the reasons anti-bullying programs are not preventing bullying from the perspective of the bullying victim is important (Hutson, 2018).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of former high school bullying victims about why anti-bullying programs have not reduced incidents of bullying. This study was conducted to encourage the creation of solutions to pervasive bullying. Qualitatively assessing bullying prevention efforts from the point of view of the bullying victim provided in-depth information about whether strategies worked and why. This study contributes to positive social change by highlighting deficits in anti-bullying efforts and strategies that positively impacted school districts by reducing and preventing bullying, leading to improvements in academic outcomes and mental health issues. This chapter proceeds by providing the background, problem statement,

purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework for the study, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, significance, and summary for the current research study.

### **Background**

Bullying may be defined as an attack on a victim by the perpetrator using physical, verbal, and psychological tools to intimidate the victim with the motivation of triggering fear, distress, and harm. Bullying is considered an epidemic in the K-12 educational school setting in the United States (Serwacki et al., 2022). An attack on a victim is classified as bullying if it is intentional, systematic, and involves an imbalance of power (Olweus & Limber, 2019). An estimated 20% (24,650,000) of students ages 12–18 in Grades 6 through 12 have reported being bullied at school (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). School bullies have exhibited bullying behaviors throughout the school setting including hallways, staircases, corridors, bathrooms, playgrounds, classrooms, school bus stations, school buses, and outside the school building. Bullying victims have experienced psychosomatic distress which impairs learning and student achievement (McNamara, 2021). Bullying victimization has been linked to a decrease in academic performance, increase in adolescent suicide, and an increase in homicide (Kennedy, 2020; World Health Organization, 2022).

Researchers present a variety of coping strategies that have been used by bullying victims to combat bullying. Bullying victims use coping strategies to defend against bullying (Hong et al., 2020), such as distraction, problem solving, cognitive distancing,

retaliation, seeking connection, independence, aggression, claiming status among peers, supportive teacher, talking to a friend, talking to a family member or adult, crying while alone, conflict resolution, revenge-seeking, support-seeking, prosocial behavior, and tough demeanor (Erath et al., 2019; Hong et al., 2020; Mischel & Kitsantas, 2020; Serwacki et al., 2022). Despite the use of coping strategies by bullying victims, bullying incidents continue to occur in the school environment.

Principals, school counselors, teachers, and parents are important stakeholders in combatting bullying in the school system. Principals set the climate for the school environment and are expected to promote an environment that fosters differences and promotes equality (Food et al., 2020). School counselors often play the role of the anti-bullying specialist (Arcuri, 2018) and work within the school district to stimulate harmony and reduce bullying (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Teachers are often the first line of defense for bullying victims (Wachs et al., 2019) and must be able to recognize and address bullying incidents (van Verseveld et al., 2021). Parents spend the most time with their children and can identify and report bullying behaviors (Hanson et al., 2020). However, though school district administrators, principals, and teachers have enforced bullying policies to prevent and reduce bullying, school bullies have continued to exhibit bullying behaviors (Olweus et al., 2019).

In addition to administrators' roles, anti-bullying programs have been implemented in schools to prevent and reduce bullying. Some of these anti-bullying programs include Safe School Ambassadors, Second Step, Positive Action,

Peacebuilders, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, and Bully Prevention in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (BP-PBIS; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018). Despite the implementation of these anti-bullying programs in schools via a collaborative partnership with school principals and staff, these programs have varying degrees of success (Limber et al., 2018; Younan, 2019) and many have not been evaluated in recent years. Thus, despite such efforts, bullying continues to be a pervasive problem in the school system in the United States (Kennedy, 2020b).

Bullying prevention efforts have been assessed throughout the United States to determine why bullying remains an issue. Research suggests a whole school approach, anti-bullying policy, classroom rules, information for parents, informal peer involvement, work with victims, co-operative group work, and mental health approaches were effective in preventing school bullying (Gaffney et al., 2019, 2021). But the implementation of anti-bullying programs encompassing all or most of these items has not been widely replicated. Many school districts implement anti-bullying programs while missing key elements needed for successful implementation including collaborative partnerships, funding of anti-bullying programs, and hiring of competent personnel to implement and manage programs (McNamara, 2021; Haugen et al., 2020). Some reasons for this may be that interventions can be costly regarding money and time commitment from school staff (Gaffney et al., 2021).

Research centered around former high school bullying victims presents opportunities to explore and discover solutions to the pervasive bullying problem in

school systems. Students' perceptions of bullying have been assessed using several quantitative tools including Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (Ossa et al., 2021), Delaware School Climate Survey – Student (Yang et al., 2021), and Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (Khan & Bhutto, 2020). However, these tools lack a qualitative assessment component to provide in depth information about the reason for responses, why existing approaches may not have been successful from the perspective of victims, or suggestions for improvements in anti-bullying programs. Relying on quantitative assessment negates the exploration of the emotional harm experienced by bullying victims and asserts that qualitative methods may be better at examining perceptions of bullying experiences (Hutson, 2018). Students possess a repertoire of experiences that can be shared with school officials and researchers who seek solutions to prevent and reduce bullying incidents (McNamara, 2021).

This study was needed to explore the perceptions of bullying victims regarding anti-bullying efforts in order to obtain their insights into why anti-bullying efforts often fail and what might help to prevent and reduce bullying. Despite efforts to implement anti-bullying programs, bullying remains a pervasive problem in schools and affects effective teaching and efficient learning among students (McNamara, 2021). Insights from former victims may shed light on the gap in practice in the implementation of anti-bullying efforts.

### **Problem Statement**

Bullying is a pervasive issue affecting high schools in the United States despite



anti-bullying programs. Among high school students in the United States, 15.7% report being bullied electronically and 19.5% report being bullied on school property (Kennedy, 2020; Serwacki et al., 2022). Bullying has negative implications regarding the safety, well-being, and development of children who are victims (Arango et al., 2018; Klomek et al., 2018). Victims of bullying may suffer from changes in appetite, trouble sleeping, drop in grades, decreased self-esteem, and self-harming behaviors (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). While this is a persistent issue, anti-bullying programs have been effective in reducing bullying incidents by only about 15–30% (Gaffney et al., 2019; Kennedy, 2020). When examining students' perceptions of the implementation and effectiveness of anti-bullying programs, quantitative tools and methods have been developed and used to assess school climate and bullying victimization (Arif et al., 2019; Olweus et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2018). But qualitatively assessing anti-bullying efforts from the bullying victim's point of view allows for in depth discussion regarding the reasons anti-bullying efforts have not worked. These insights may shed light on the gap in practice in the implementation of anti-bullying efforts. The current research is one of few studies to seek the perspective of the bullying victim on why existing strategies and interventions may not work to prevent incidents of bullying.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of former high school bullying victims about why anti-bullying programs have not reduced incidents of bullying. The questions address the purpose of the study exploring why

bullying victims believe anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective in preventing bullying incidents. The questions also explore what the bullying victims believe is needed to prevent bullying incidents.

### **Research Questions**

This study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ 1: Why do bullying victims believe anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective in preventing bullying incidents?

RQ 2: What do they believe is needed to prevent incidents of bullying.

### **Conceptual Framework for the Study**

I explored the perceptions of high school bullying victims on anti-bullying strategies through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development theory. This theory is used to understand and explain human development through interconnections between a growing human and the environment in which they exist (Crawford, 2020). Under the theory, it is assumed that the environment is always changing, and these changes affect the growth and development of the individual. Bronfenbrenner (1994) proposed that human development happens within five ecological systems: (a) The microsystem includes the individual's direct environment, (b) the mesosystem includes multiple microsystems and the ways in which they interact, (c) the exosystem consists of multiple microsystems in which one of the microsystems is not directly related to the individual, (d) the macrosystem includes the overarching patterns of cultures and subcultures, and (e) the chronosystem includes time as it relates to the

individual's age and period of existence (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Bullying within the school system relates to the ecology of human development as the student exists within the ecosystem of the school environment. As it relates to school bullying, the microsystem may be reflective of the peer relationships at school (Qui, 2020). The macrosystem may be reflective of the teacher and the peer relationships interacting. The exosystem may be reflective of the peer relationships, teacher relationships, and elements of the individual's home environment such as violent video games. The macrosystem may include cultural norms and beliefs within the school system (Qui, 2020). The chronosystem may include the age and time period in which the child is a developing adolescent (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Within each ecological system, there are opportunities for bullying intervention (Qiu, 2020).

The current study focuses on how high school bullying victims perceive the roles of stakeholders, coping strategies, implementation, and enforcement of anti-bullying programs, and their perceived effectiveness in preventing and reducing bullying in the school environment. Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development model has previously been used to explain and explore bullying (Analisa & Indartono, 2019; Brown et al., 2020; Gradinariu, 2021; Qiu, 2021) and bullying prevention measures (Rana et al., 2021). Research using Bronfenbrenner's theory identifies the school as an environment of human ecological development (Gaffney et al., 2021a; McNamara, 2021). Stakeholders, including principals, school counselors, teachers, parents, and students individually serve as microsystems contributing to the child's growth and development

(Qiu, 2020).

### **Nature of the Study**

This was a qualitative research study focused on former high school bullying victims as participants. A basic qualitative research design was selected as this research focused on a group of recent high school graduates who self-identify as bullying victims from one high school in a public school district. A basic qualitative study design has been used to identify risk factors associated with school bullying (Qian et al., 2020) and to explore therapeutic treatments of bullying victimization (Park et al., 2021). Participants include former high school bullying victims that were recruited via a flyer sent from the high school to recent graduates. Data were collected via individual interviews that were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

### **Definitions**

*Anti-bullying programs:* Anti-bullying programs are intended to prevent, reduce, and stop bullying incidents in the school environment (Kennedy, 2020b).

*Bullying:* Bullying is an act of aggression directed toward a person by an aggressor that resulted in causing harm (Sparks, 2022).

*Bullying behaviors:* Bullying behaviors are intended to harm the bully victim. These behaviors are manifested in different forms such as physical aggression, relational aggression, teasing, gossiping, relational aggression, name calling, rumors, and social exclusion (Martinez & Temkin, 2021).

*Bullying victim:* Bullying victim is a student who is targeted for bullying and is

being or has been bullied continually by a bully or bullies. During the bullying period, the student experiences harm supported by psychological, mental, emotional, and/ or physical maladjustment to the environment (Malgorzata & Wojciech, 2021).

*Victimization:* Victimization is the state during which a person experiences sustained harmful effects of bullying (Serwacki et al., 2022).

### **Assumptions**

This research study was predicated on the following assumptions. First, I assumed that former high school bullying victims can describe their experiences with bullying and provide insight on why anti-bullying efforts were not effective. I also assumed that participants provided a truthful account of experiences with bullying in high school, describing their experiences with bullying and why anti-bullying efforts were not effective. These assumptions were necessary to ensure data related to high school bullying victims and anti-bullying methods exists and is available for collection.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this study was limited. This study explored the perceptions of bullying victims on specific aspects of anti-bullying strategies, including the role of stakeholders, coping strategies, implementation of anti-bullying programs, and enforcement of anti-bullying policies. In this research, stakeholders include principals, school counselors, teachers, parents, and students. These stakeholders were chosen because research suggests they have an impact on the cultural climate of the school (Grissom et al., 2021), implementation and enforcement of anti-bullying policies (Lie et

al., 2019; van Verseveld et al., 2019), and may be effective in preventing and reducing bullying incidents (Huang et al., 2019; Zambuto et al., 2020). Coping strategies are an important part of how bullying victims deal with the act of being bullies. But it is important to explore which strategies students perceived as effective against bullying. The target population included individuals who graduated from high school in the past 5 years, self-identify as a bullying victim, are age 18 years or older, and agreed to discuss their previous experiences with bullying. This research excluded individuals who were less than 18 years of age, did not self-identify as a bullying victim, did not graduate high school within the past 5 years, were not willing to discuss their experiences with bullying, or were my previous students.

Empowerment theory was a conceptual framework mentioned in current literature that was related to the research study but not used. This framework was used in previous research to develop anti-bullying strategies (Rana et al., 2021). It was not investigated for use in this study because it did not provide a framework capable of exploring bullying in the school environment from the perspective of bullying victims, but rather focused on guiding people toward specific actions.

Due to limited sample size and limited scope of this research, transferability may be limited to high schools. Since bullying remains a pervasive problem in high schools (Klomek et al., 2018), information obtained from individuals willing to share their experiences regarding bullying incidents added new information that can be integrated in existing anti-bullying programs in high school settings to the current body of knowledge.

By assessing and improving anti-bullying programs with the help of individuals who have experienced the negative effects of school bullies, anti-bullying programs may be transformed into a more effective system in the United States (Martinez & Temkin, 2021). Current developments show that bullying is on the rise in the school districts in the United States. Therefore, individuals who have experienced bullying were needed to share information to help build new models for the transformation of anti-bullying programs that will be instrumental in helping children escape bullying victimization (McNamara, 2021).

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, findings may be subjective, and results cannot be verified. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data and determine findings. This qualitative data analysis method relies on the researcher to remain objective in identifying key words and coding data. Data were also collected via interviews, which cannot be verified, as information is based solely on the interpretations of the experiences of the individuals included in the research study.

To encourage objectivity, I clearly defined the focus of the study, clearly identify variables to be explored, and outline all steps used. Though information collected via interviews may not be verifiable, it is assumed that the perceptions of high school bullying victims are the truthful recollections of events in the lives of participants. Findings are also not generalizable, but it was important to perform this research to identify the perceptions of bullying victims. Findings provided key insights on ways to improve anti-

bullying programs and strategies in school districts in the United States.

Another limitation is that I am a high school teacher and coach. Having a close relationship to students, some who may be bullies or bullying victims, I may have had close ties to this research. However, I remained objective in interactions with participants, data collection, and data analysis. Individuals who are current or past students were not included in this study.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study was significant in that it addressed a gap in practice that schools have been unable to prevent bullying despite anti-bullying programs. The results shed insight on the support needed to prevent and reduce bullying incidents. Anti-bullying programs have been measured using several quantitative tools examining quantitative findings (Ossa et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021), relating the effectiveness of the programs to reduction in suspensions, decrease in violence, and decrease in bullying incidents (Chou et al., 2020; Limber et al., 2018). While this is important research, it was also important to explore the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs qualitatively from the perspective of the bullying victim. This allowed the collection of in-depth information on the support needed to prevent incidents of bullying from the perspective of the bullying victim.

Findings from this study have the potential to advance the way anti-bullying programs are implemented and the types of support included in intervention strategies to prevent bullying incidents in the school system. Findings may also encourage the inclusion of bullying victims as a regular part of evaluating anti-bullying efforts and



determining what support is needed for students. This can lead to implementation of more effective anti-bullying programs, reduction in bullying incidents, and increased support for bullying victims.

### **Summary**

Bullying has become common within schools. It is a serious problem in the United States (Serwacki et al., 2022). This study aimed to explore the perceptions of former high school bullying victims about why anti-bullying programs have not reduced incidents of bullying. Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development theory was used as a framework to guide this study. Participants included individuals who graduated from high school within the past 5 years, self-reported as a victim of bullying, are 18 years of age or older, and agreed to share their experiences about bullying in the school system. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to lead individual interviews, and data were analyzed via thematic coding. Findings from this study provide in-depth information about how stakeholders, coping strategies, and anti-bullying programs are perceived by former bullying victims. This may lead to strategies for improving anti-bullying efforts and encouraging safer school environments. Chapter 2 contains the review of literature related to the prevalence of bullying, defining and understanding bullying, warning signs for bullying, stakeholders' roles in bullying, coping strategies used to combat bullying, roles of anti-bullying programs in the school system, bullying prevention programs in the United States, and student perceptions of anti-bullying programs.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Bullying is a serious problem in U.S. It has had negative implications within schools regarding the safety, well-being, and development of children who are victims (Arango et al., 2018, Klomek et al., 2018). Deficiencies in bullying prevention efforts within the school system include lack of teacher's knowledge and skills to recognize and address bullying incidents (Luca & Menesini, 2019; van Verseveld et al., 2021), principals lacking resources needed to address bullying incidents adequately and consistently (Brown et al., 2020), and the child's home life situations leading to bullying behaviors at school (Arango et al., 2018; Gomez-Ortiz et al., 2019). Evidence-based bullying prevention programs have been shown to reduce instances of bullying and violence (Limber et al., 2018; Young 2019). However, they have only been effective in reducing bullying incidents by about 15–30% (Gaffney et al., 2019; Kennedy, 2020a). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of former high school bullying victims about why anti-bullying programs have not reduced incidents of bullying. It is assumed that to understand and prevent bullying, it is important to understand the context in which it occurs, and the stakeholders involved (Gradinariu, 2021).

Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development theory was used as a framework to guide this research. Quantitative analysis tools have been developed to allow students to self-report behaviors and observations related to bullying (Coelho & Dell'Anglio, 2019; Eastman et al., 2018; Limber et al., 2018). However, research that

qualitatively assesses the perceptions of school bullying victims on the implementation and effectiveness of anti-bullying efforts is limited in current literature (Hutson, 2018). This review of literature explored the prevalence of bullying, defining, and understanding bullying. It also highlighted the warning signs for bullying, the stakeholders' roles in bullying, and roles of anti-bullying programs in the school system. The bullying prevention programs in the United States will benefit from the former bullying victims' perceptions of anti-bullying programs.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Academic Search Complete was the database used to find peer-reviewed articles. Google Scholar was also used to find peer-reviewed articles, other publications, and books. Institutional websites for The National Center for Education Statistics, Institute for Educational Statistics, Harvard School of Health, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) were used to find statistics and general information regarding the prevalence and effects of bullying. In Academic Search Complete and Google Scholar, the key terms and phrases that were initially explored in the literature search included *theories to explain bullying behavior, prevalence of bullying, types of bullying behaviors, social acceptance in school aged children, stakeholder roles in combatting bullying, and bullying prevention programs*. Upon reviewing a broad scope of literature, keywords and phrases were refined to include (a) *theory of ecology of human development and bullying*, (b) *explain bullying behavior*, (c) *gender differences and bullying*, (d) *coping strategies for bullying*, (e) *bullying programs*, (f) *stakeholders and bullying in schools*, (g) *signs of*

*bullying, (h) perceptions of anti-bullying programs, (i) perceptions of school bullying prevention program, (j) effectiveness of anti-bullying programs, and (k) effectiveness of bullying prevention programs.*

Each search was performed with parameters that allowed only peer-reviewed, full-text sources published between the years 2018 and 2022. If fewer than 10 usable results were found, the search criteria were extended to allow publications from earlier years. Articles were excluded if they were related to adult bullying, workplace bullying, articles in a language other than English, and preschool aged children. Cyberbullying was a recurring theme in research, but the current study did not explore this concept. Empowerment theory and personal and social responsibility model were explored but not included in this research. The final review of literature includes 93 sources, which will be discussed in the Literature Review section.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development theory was used to guide this research. Bronfenbrenner (1977) defined the ecology of human development as a scientific study of the interactions between a growing human and the environment in which they exist. The theory explains that the environment is always changing, and the individual's development is affected by this changing environment and the larger social context in which this environment resides. Originally the ecology of human development consisted of four systems that impacted human development, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner later

added the chronosystem to capture the impact of time on human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This theory implies that a child develops in five ecological systems to realize growth and development. These systems interact with one another to sustain the growth, development, and productivity of the child in their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

As mentioned, the ecology of human development consists of five ecological systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem consists of the individual's direct environment including the places and people the child interacts with directly (Crawford, 2020). For a child, the microsystem may consist of school, daycare facility, family members, and peers. Interactions within the microsystem are theorized to affect the psychological and mental development and affect behavioral changes of the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000).

This provides evidence that suggests the school environment presents the child the opportunity to develop mentally and behaviorally. This also implies the family environment offers the child opportunities to learn new knowledge, skills, behaviors, and habits. The mesosystem consists of multiple microsystems and how they interact (Crawford, 2020). It is theorized that these systems may interact positively or negatively within the individual's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

For a child, the interactions between the school and family environments create a mesosystem. A parent may interact with teachers at the school regarding the performance of the child. A child may attend school with siblings. A child may regularly visit their

sibling's classroom at pick-up time and interact with the sibling's teacher. These situations are examples of scenarios that exist within the mesosystem. The mesosystem offers an amalgamation of interactions between individuals, especially between teachers and students (Chou et al., 2020).

This presents evidence that suggests the interactions between people and environments affect the growth and development of the individual. The exosystem consists of the interactions between microsystems, but within at least one of the microsystems, the individual is not at the center (Crawford, 2020). It is an extension of the mesosystem but includes other formal and informal social structures that do not contain the developing person, but these social structures still impact the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The workplace can be used as an example of an exosystem that affects a child (Crawford, 2020). The parent's workplace is a microsystem that does not directly impact the child; however, the parent's workplace may indirectly affect the child by affecting the time and engagement of the parent. For example, a workplace that requires the parent to work long strenuous hours may cause the parent to be tired, mean, or distant when they return home. This implies that components of the exosystem that do not directly impact the child may indirectly impact the social and emotional development of the child.

The macrosystem's impact on the child may be found within the factors generated by the culture within the community. It can be defined as the overarching culture and societal structure (Crawford, 2020). The microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem are

concrete manifestations of the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). Some factors affecting the child include socioeconomic status, poverty, and ethnicity. The macrosystem a child is placed in plays a major role in their development (Crawford, 2020). Poverty is a societal structure within the macrosystem that affects a child. If a family is impoverished and the child suffers from food insecurity, this may cause issues at school due to physical ailments related to hunger. If a child is ill at school, this may negatively affect their grades and behavior. This evidence suggests that a developing child may be impacted by being a part of the macrosystem.

Bronfenbrenner added the chronosystem to the ecological system. It includes the concept of time as it relates to age and the time in which a person lives (Crawford, 2020). The chronosystem is a compilation of age as it relates to maturation, and all the environmental changes that happen over the lifetime of an individual which impact his or her development (Lian et al., 2018). This implies life transitions and historical events may impact an individual's growth, development, and maturation.

For example, children born before the 9/11 tragedy may view terrorism as an ideal that does not directly impact their lives and airport security as something that can or should be relaxed; however, children born after the 9/11 tragedy view terrorism as something that has the potential to affect and disrupt their daily lives and airport security as something that should be heightened and strictly enforced (Crawford, 2020). This suggests the chronosystem impacts the perceptions and actions of developing children. In recent years, Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development model has been used to

explain and explore bullying (Analisa & Indartono, 2019; Brown et al., 2020; Gradinariu, 2021; Qiu, 2021) and bullying preventative measures (Rana et al., 2021). For example, Analish and Indartono (2019) explored risk factors associated with bullying and identified stakeholders and environments within each level of the ecological system that had the most impact on bullying behaviors. Gradinariu (2021) similarly examined the role of the teacher in bullying prevention in all systems within the ecological model. Brown et al. (2020) also examined the role of the principal in implementing anti-bullying policies. Further, Qiu (2021) explored environmental factors through the lens of the ecological model to identify causes for school bullying. Using the ecological model, empowerment theory, and the model of personal and social responsibility, Rana et al. (2021) developed a curriculum to prevent bullying and cyberbullying by addressing information, awareness, and involvement and used the ecological model to design a multi-component anti-bullying program for school students. This research informs the current study by providing a framework for exploring the risk factors, stakeholders, environmental contributors, and preventative measures related to bullying in schools.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variables**

The key concepts to be discussed in this section include the prevalence of bullying, defining and understanding bullying behaviors, warning signs of bullying, stakeholders' roles in bullying, coping strategies used to combat bullying, roles of anti-bullying programs in the United States, and student perceptions of anti-bullying programs. These key concepts are discussed in the following sections.



## **Prevalence of Bullying**

Bullying can be detrimental to not just the victim. It is an issue that affects students, schools, and communities (Basile et al., 2020). It has been associated with mental and behavioral concerns such as depression, anxiety, antisocial behavior, and decreased academic performance (HHS, Effects of Bullying, 2021). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2019) reported that of an estimated 24,650,000 students 12 to 18 years of age in grades 6th through 12th, 20.2% reported being bullied. Of the children who reported being bullied, 13% reported being made fun of, called names, or insulted, 13.3% reported being subject to rumors, 3.9% reported being threatened with harm, 5.3% reported being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on, 1.9% reported others tried to make them do things they did not want to do, 5.2% reported being excluded from activities on purpose, and 1.4% reported having property destroyed on purpose (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019, pp. T-6). Among U.S. high school students, 15.7% report being bullied electronically and 19.5% report being bullied on school property (Basile et al., 2020). Overall, about 24.8% of students report experiencing any type of bullying. Among those being bullied, 30.2% were female, 19.2% were male, 28.8% were White non-Hispanic, 18% were Black non-Hispanic, 19.2% were Hispanic, 22.2% identified as heterosexual, 39.5% identified as lesbian, gay, or bi-sexual, and 32.7% identified as not sure of sexual identity (Basile et al., 2020). Parents reported among students ages 6–11 years that 22.4% of children were bullied and among those ages 12–17, 21% were bullied (Lebrun-Harris et al., 2020). This evidence suggests that bullying is a pervasive issue for

students in the United States.

### **Defining and Understanding Bullying Behaviors**

Defining and Understanding bullying behaviors is key to the exploration of former high school bullying victims' interactions with bullies in the school environment. Bullying has been defined in current literature as repetitive aggressive behavior caused when there is an imbalance of power (Analisah & Indartoo, 2019). Bullying has been described as an intentional malicious form of aggressive behavior (Arsenault et al., 2010). Bullying happens when physical, social, or symbolic exclusion becomes extreme, regardless of whether such exclusion is experienced and/or intended (Qiu, 2021). This mirrors findings from Thornberg (2018) that bullying is rooted in oppressive and discriminatory interactions. Gomez- Ortiz et al., (2019) described bullying as a group phenomenon that happens unprovoked within complex networks of relationships, where a person or group of people are victimized. Thus, bullying may be defined as an unprovoked act of aggressive behavior occurring within a situation where there is an imbalance of power.

In addition to defining bullying, bullying behaviors should be understood when planning to implement anti-bullying programs in the school setting. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service (2021), some youth may bully due to peer, family, emotional, and school factors. Peer factors may be related to the desire to gain and maintain social status and power, fit in, or control others. Family factors may include being raised in a family that exhibits bullying behaviors, lack of emotional

support from parents, authoritarian parenting style, or lack of parental involvement. Increased levels of tough demeanors affiliated with the home environment have also been associated with increased peer victimization, which implies developed habits used to combat issues in the home environment may lead to peer victimization or bullying in the school environment (Hong et al., 2020). Parenting style may also be related to bullying behaviors. Children who exhibit bullying behaviors often come from environments where parents use authoritarian, harsh, or punitive child-rearing practices (Gomez-Ortiz et al., 2019). Children exposed to parental intimate partner violence in the home may also interpret physical violence as an accepted way to deal with conflict or gain power in a relationship (Arango et al., 2018). Further, parental conflicts have been shown to increase the risk for poor emotional regulation in children, which makes them vulnerable to physical and psychological victimization by peers (Arango et al., 2018). Parents involved in abusive relationships reduce their involvement in the lives of their children and create an uncertain social environment, which reduces social and emotional support for their children (Arango et al., 2018).

Emotional factors may include a history of being bullied, feeling insecure, lack of understanding of the emotions of others, inability to control emotions, or lack of skills needed to handle social situations. School factors may include schools that do not address behavior, bullying incidents, and social exclusion (U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, 2021). Researchers at the Yale Medicine Child Study Center (2017) used personality measurement tools to explore the reasons children perform acts of bullying.

Findings suggest children identified as bullies scored high in callous/unemotional traits indicating they have difficulty perceiving the distress of others. Researchers also found that these children have issues managing anger and aggression (Yale Medicine, 2017). But adolescents deviate in social settings due to the loss of attachment to social groups such as their home, family, or school; it is also important to understand sex and gender differences in bullying behavior.

### ***Sex and Gender Differences in Bullying***

There are different forms of bullying. Research suggests there are differences in the strategies exemplified by bullies for different genders (Cosma et al., 2020, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2019), about 16.7% of male children and 23.8% of female children reported being bullied. There were noticeable differences in the types of bullying reported. Among male students, 9.3% reported having rumors spreads, compared to 6.1% of female students. 6.1% of male students reported being pushed, shoved, tripped or spit on compared to 4.4% of female students. 3.5% of male students reported being excluded from activities on purpose, compared to 6.9% of female students. There were also notable differences among school aged children who reported being bullied regarding the type of power imbalance. Among male students, 2.73% report the bully was more popular, compared to 2.24% of female students. 2.35% of male students reported there were multiple people acting as a team, compared to 1.86% of female students. 2.56% of male students reported the bully had more money, compared to 2.08% of female students

(National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). This implies there are notable differences in the types of bullying incidences and the perceptions of the power imbalance experienced by gender among school-aged children.

There are different outlooks on bullying. Adolescent boys and girls exhibit different strategies in approaching bullying (Cosma et al., 2020). Girls use tactics such as name calling, rumors, and social exclusion to bully their victims. Girls also select victims to bully by identifying their emotional instability, looks, weight, and academic standing. Gossiping, slandering, spreading rumors, and the exploitation of friendships are other strategies girls use for peer victimization. Boys use physical force to bully their victims. They select their victims by identifying certain vulnerable characteristics such as physical weaknesses, short tempers, and group affiliations (Cosma et al., 2020).

Examining gender differences in bullying provides the ability to explore and understand the approaches, behaviors, attitudes, and habits that members of both genders exhibit. Understanding how male and female bullies and bullying victims deal with demands of bullying, victimization, and consequences may shed light on designing and implementing anti-bullying programs in schools. Furthermore, understanding the various approaches to bullying scenarios by both genders may be instrumental in helping counselors, mentors, and anti-bullying program directors make meaningful decisions to reduce incidents of bullying in the school environment (Runions et al., 2019).

### **Warning Signs of Bullying**

It is assumed that identifying warning signs for bullying is an imperative part of

being able to prevent and reduce bullying incidents. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2021) indicates that identifying warning signs to bullying may be an important step in acting against bullying (HHS, Warning Signs for Bullying, 2021). Some signs that a child is being bullied include injuries that are unable to be explained, missing or destroyed personal items, frequent illnesses (real or fake), changes in appetite and eating habits, trouble sleeping, drop in grades, decreased self-esteem, and/ or self-harming behaviors. Some signs that a child is bullying others include physical and verbal fights, having friends who are identified as bullies, increased aggression, being punished at school frequently, unexplained goods or funds, blaming others for personal problems, inability to accept responsibility for actions, and being competitive (HHS, Warning Signs for Bullying, 2021).

Historically, the impacts of bullying are well documented. Children who experience bullying report being unhappy at school, feeling as if they are no good and do not belong, poor psychosocial adjustment, and poor relationships with classmates (Glew et al., 2008; Nansel et al., 2004). They are also more likely to feel emotional distress and social marginalization (Scholte et al., 2007). Research suggests that being bullied is related to academic difficulties (Bowes et al., 2013; Glew et al., 2008). Research also suggests children who experience bullying have increased risk for self-harm, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempt (Geoffrey et al., 2016; Sibold et al., 2015), especially among victims who have a history of mental health issues and experience rejection at home (Fisher et al., 2012; Herba et al., 2008). This presents historical evidence that

bullying may be associated with social and emotional distress, academic decline, and most seriously self-harm, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempt.

Bullying can cause mental damage that can be detrimental. Castellvi et al., (2017) found that adolescents who were bullied and experienced physical injuries from confrontations with bullies were more likely to contemplate committing suicide. Klomek et al., (2018) also found that bullying that included physical victimization was related to suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. These studies concluded that physical injuries and bruises sustained by bullying victims were warning signs of bullying. Arango et al., (2018) explored the relationship between connectedness and suicidal ideations among children who were victims of bullying. Connectedness subtypes included family, school, and community. The study found that adolescents with loose bonds to family, school, and peer groups experienced depression, anxiety, isolation, and low self-esteem. These negative emotions contributed to adolescents' suicide attempts. It was concluded that suicide was a warning sign of bullying victimization (Arango et al., 2018). These studies imply that suicidal ideation and suicide attempt are serious warning signs among victims of bullying. These warning signs of bullying must not be ignored by stakeholders. Stakeholders must implement effective and efficient preventative measures to identify warning signs for bullying and implement preventative measures.

### **Stakeholders' Roles in Bullying**

Stakeholders may be powerful allies for galvanizing resources that can be mobilized to reduce bullying within school districts in the United States. In this research

stakeholders are identified as principals, teachers, school counselors, parents, and students. The roles of these stakeholders are an important part of preventing and addressing bullying in the school system (Foody et al., 2018; Hannon et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2019; Luca et al., 2019; Zambuto et al., 2020).

### ***Principal***

The role of the principal is important as a stakeholder in ensuring bullying does not persist. The principal plays an important role within the school environment in creating a climate that fosters differences and promotes equity and equality (Foody et al., 2018). Grissom et al., (2021) report that school leadership is important to school success. Principals contribute to the school environment by engaging in the instructional interactions of teachers, building a productive school climate, ensuring productive collaborations among staff, and managing personnel and resources. In this report the effectiveness of principals was related to student achievement, absenteeism, teacher turnover, and school climate (Grissom et al., 2021). This implies the principal has a very important role in setting the climate for schools, thus setting the climate for how bullying is prevented and addressed. When combatting bullying from a whole- school perspective, principals' practices are crucial in explaining differences in bullying rates (Castro Silva et al., 2017).

It is important that principals have developed a conducive culture. Brown et al., (2020) investigated the perceptions of principals regarding state and district-wide anti-bullying policies. Principals reported needing a clear, detailed district wide definition of



bullying, step by step procedures to investigate bullying from multiple stakeholders (such as students, parents, and teachers), and a state anti-bullying statute (Brown et al., 2020). Reyes-Rodriguez et al., (2021) explored the relationship between teachers' perceptions of principal's practices, school climate, and school collective effectiveness to prevent bullying. Findings suggest principal involvement in bullying prevention had a positive effect on school climate. This indicates principal involvement in anti-bullying programs may improve the school climate by reducing the occurrence of bullying (Reyes-Rodriguez et al., 2021). Research suggests principals play a major role in establishing school climate, thus influencing how bullying prevention programs are implemented and how bullying is addressed in the school environment.

### ***School Counselors***

The American School Counseling Association (2012) identifies school counselors as being systemic change agents in creating and administering inclusive school counseling programs that address academic, career, social, and emotional development. American School Counseling Association Ethical Standards for School Counselors includes the promotion of a safe school environment promoting autonomy and justice from abuse, bullying, harassment, and other forms of violence (American School Counseling Association, 2016). The standards include responsibilities to students including reporting instances of bullying to parents and the appropriate authorities. School counselors often assume the role as the anti-bullying specialist, implying they play a lead role in the implementation of anti-bullying policies and procedures within schools

(Arcuri, 2018; Hannon et al., 2019). School counselors are perceived as stakeholders that ensure the school district pays attention to incidents of bullying. The counselors play a pivotal role in observing management data and information that can aid principals and teachers to make data-driven decisions (Lie et al., 2019). School counselors form collaborative partnerships with superintendents, principals, teachers, students, and parents to ensure bullying incidents are contained and that the school moves in the right direction on behalf of all stakeholders. School counselors also implement effective policies to decrease bullying in schools (Lie et al., 2019). They form collaborative partnerships with principals and teachers as an avenue to manage and allocate resources through the state department of education and local school board to implement strategies that reduce bullying in the school (Wachs et al., 2019).

Counselors have competences to work with victims of bullying (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). They may work with students and teachers in the classroom to stimulate harmony and reduce bullying. Counselors also assist with anti-bullying programs to aid program directors with reducing the mental, psychological, emotional, and physical effects suffered by bullying victims. They specialize in working with students to ensure they report bullying incidents to adults (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

The role of the counselor as a stakeholder is embedded in the understanding that counselors play a vital role as an anti-bullying specialist (Arcuri, 2018) whose professions requires they assist in the creation of a safe autonomous school environment (National Association of School Counselors, 2012). This includes reporting and acting on

incidences of bullying (National Association of School Counselors, 2016) and working to decrease the mental, emotional, psychological, and physical effects of bullying incidences (Pontes et al., 2018). Counselors are the mediators of the bully and bullying victim dynamic and may find solace in decreasing the psychosomatic distresses of bullying victimization (Pontes et al., 2018).

### ***Teachers***

A teacher's role is to help, mentor, and instruct students. Teachers are seen as public servants who play an important role in the lives of students (Vanbaren, 2018). While the main role of the teacher within the school system is classroom management, teachers often play multiple roles in the lives of the children they serve. Teachers set the tone of the classroom, build positive learning environments, mentor and nurture children, identify signs of physical, mental or emotional trouble, and are often seen as role models (Vanbaren, 2018). Teachers are expected to create a positive environment conducive for student expression while implementing sound pedagogy (Keiler, 2018).

Classroom management is an important factor that minimizes bullying. In the classroom, the teacher's primary responsibility is to manage the class (Vanbaren, 2018). Teachers are also expected to be able to identify incidents of bullying (Luca et al., 2019). As stakeholders, teachers enforce bullying policies within the school environment and work in a collaborative partnership with multiple stakeholders in the school, including but not limited to principals, counselors, students, and parents. For example, a teacher may work with parent volunteers that patrol the school to detect bullying activities and

ultimately stop or decrease the acts of bullying.

Teachers play a pivotal role in the school. Teachers are often the first adult students contact regarding a bullying incident (Wachs et al., 2019). Luca et al., (2019) explored the relationship between individual teacher characteristics, school level bullying, and teacher intervention. Findings suggest the competence of teachers (as indicated by the teachers' intervention after a bullying incident) was positively related to students reporting incidences of bullying. Findings also suggest lower levels of bullying are related to teacher job satisfaction (Luca et al., 2019). van Verseveld et al., (2019) found that the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs may increase if teachers are provided knowledge, skills, and training to adjust attitudes and self-efficacy.

A teacher's role in bullying is an important factor. Their responses to bullying are important factors regarding bullying in the school environment (Gradinariu, 2021). These responses may be placed into three categories (Luca et al., 2019). Authoritarian-punitive strategies include threats, discipline, and expulsion. Individual assistance directed to victims and bullies include providing emotional support to both parties and encouraging empathy for victims. Supportive-cooperative strategies include involving all the students in the class to encourage cooperation and outline acceptable behavior at the classroom and school levels (Luca et al., 2019). Wachs et al., (2019) found that supportive-cooperative intervention strategies were most effective with preventing and managing bullying incidents. Luca et al., (2019) noted that teachers do not always intervene. This may be because some are unaware of bullying, consider bullying a normal part of

interactions, do not feel sympathy for the victims, or do not perceive the behavior as bullying (Luca et al., 2019). Gradinariu (2021) reported that teachers' attitudes may encourage bullying if they do not perceive bullying as serious or ignore bullying behavior altogether. Teachers must understand bullying to effectively prevent or stop it. Many do not possess the knowledge and skills needed to recognize bullying (Gradinariu, 2021). van Verseveld et al., (2021) found that teachers have difficulty identifying bullying that happens when they are not around, estimating the seriousness of bullying accusations and incidents, addressing insistent aggressive bullying behavior, and finding solutions with parents to decrease the occurrence of bullying. Teachers may understand the social context of bullying, but not the best way to intervene in bullying incidents when it occurs in the classroom (Divecha & Barackett, 2019).

Some teachers may regard bullying as a personal problem of the victim rather than a problem requiring a cooperative response between the bully, victim, and bystanders. Teachers require training regarding the best ways to approach the diffusion of bullying behaviors in the school environment. Training teachers to gain new knowledge and skills to deal with bullying behaviors can empower them in solving bullying problems in the classroom (Divecha & Barackett, 2019). Fischer and Bilz (2019) found that teachers who feel more confident regarding intervening with bullying do so more often than teachers who do not feel as confident. They suggest teacher training include discussions about real- life bullying episodes and experiences (Fischer & Bilz, 2019). The presence of a teacher may be essential in decreasing incidents of bullying in the school

environment (Zych et al., 2017).

Teachers have familiarity with students who are bullied and the bullies. Teachers possess the ability to provide oversight and management of student activities throughout the school day. The supervision of students has been shown to lower occurrences of bullying behaviors in the school settings (Zych et al., 2017). This presents evidence that suggests teachers play an instrumental role in identifying and addressing bullying. Teachers should be knowledgeable and skillful in the identification of bullying incidents and the implementation of anti-bullying policies so students can be comfortable reporting bullying incidents and feel safe at school.

### ***Parents***

As stakeholders, the power of parents is vital in reducing bullying behaviors among their children within the school. Parents are an important stakeholder in the identification, prevention, and response to bullying behaviors (HHS, What Can You Do, 2021). Historical research suggests a strong relationship between parenting and bullying (Baldry & Farrington 2000; Miller et al., 2002; Snyder et al., 2005). Parents spend more time with their children and can detect incidents of bullying being discussed by their children. Parental involvement with the school and family engagement are powerful strategies to improve student academic performance (Hanson et al., 2020) and can be utilized for reducing bullying incidents.

Principals, teachers, students, and staff must welcome parents and families to be a part of the school community as they are needed to reduce bullying incidents. A

collaborative partnership between school personnel and parents must be formed to reduce bullying incidents in the school (Hanson et al., 2020). Huang et al., (2019) found that school- based bullying programs with a parenting component were effective in reducing bullying perpetration and victimization. Nocentini et al., (2019) found that family and relational variables such as domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, and lack of parental involvement and support are related to bullying behavior. Evidence also suggested a relationship between parent self-efficacy and attitudes towards victimization and bullying (Nocenti et al., 2019). Parental use of psychological control and lack of supervision are related to an increased likelihood of bullying activities (Hong et al., 2017). Punitive parenting is also related to increased bullying behavior. Gomez-Ortiz et al., (2019) found that authoritarian and strict parenting styles were related to higher occurrences of bullying behaviors and aggression, and democratic parenting styles were related to lower occurrences (Gomez-Ortiz, et al., 2019). Poor communication patterns with parents were also related to higher likelihood of bullying behaviors (Ulfah & Gustina, 2020). This presents evidence that parents are an important stakeholder in preventing and addressing bullying.

### ***Students***

As stakeholders, students may be perpetrators, victims, or witnesses of bullying. Because they play multiple roles in the bullying dynamic, they may be able to counteract or decrease bullying behavior. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2022) suggests students treat everyone respectfully by thinking before doing or saying

something hurtful, talking to a trusted adult, being mindful of the differences among individuals, and apologizing for bullying behavior. When analyzing peer relationships from the ecosystem theory perspective, Qiu (2021) found that peer acceptance is essential for adolescent relationships and negative relationships and lack of support from peers may contribute to incidents of bullying.

Student intervention has been used as strategy to combat bullying. Lambe et al., (2019) examined the behaviors of peers intervening in bullying incidents. They found that individuals who are more likely to intervene were girls, have high empathy, have low moral disengagement, and are deemed popular by their peers. Peer- led intervention strategies may be helpful in preventing bullying (Zambuto et al., 2020). Zambuto et al., (2020) examined the difference in peer education strategies where peer leaders were voluntary and when they were nominated. Nominated peers were more popular and exhibited more defending behaviors than their classmates. They found that victimization and bullying decreased in classrooms with voluntary peer educators but not for classrooms with nominated peer educators. Peer educators and classmates in the classroom with the volunteer peer educator had increased defending behavior. Classrooms with the nominated peer educator showed increased defending behavior for the peer educator but not for classmates (Zambuto et al., 2020). This presents evidence that students, when provided the knowledge and skill to do so, may be able to intervene in bullying situations.

Some students avoid talking to adults about their encounters with school bullies.



Students who are bullying victims may speak openly with their peer counselors about the problems they are having in and out of school (Pozzoli et al., 2017). Students confide in their peers and may divulge their experiences with bullies. The advantages that peer counselors have over teachers or principals is the direct link they have as a peer to the student bullying victims who are often afraid of talking about bullying incidents with adults for fear of retaliation from the bully. The school may create an environment in which students feel empowered and safe enough to report incidents of bullying that take place at school by involving student peer counselors to interact with student victims of bullying in the school (Pozzoli et al., 2017). Students are an excellent and often untapped resource that can assist with incorporating anti-bullying programs within the school to reduce incidents of bullying (Lie et al., 2019). This research implies students are an important stakeholder in the prevention of bullying incidents and implementation of bullying prevention programs.

### **Coping Strategies used to Combat Bullying**

Students who have experienced bullying can provide a plethora of information regarding strategies they have used to cope with bullying in the school environment. Students are an important stakeholder as it relates to bullying prevention efforts (Qiu, 2021). Coping strategies are an important part of effectively assessing bullying prevention efforts. Coping strategies are explored to identify the current ways school-aged children respond to bullying incidents. Research provides evidence of coping strategies bullying victims use to combat bullying inside and outside of the school

environment. Atomare et al., (2016) explored coping strategies used by children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). It was noted that students with ASD used approach strategies and avoidance strategies, and the strategies used were dependent on the bullying situation. Approach strategies aim to change the situation directly and included actions such as telling an adult or telling the bully to stop. Avoidance strategies are passive in nature, aim to avoid the bully, and include actions such as ignoring the bully (Atomare et al., 2016). Coping strategies used by bullying victims have been examined to combat bullying incidents. In a study that aimed to identify and understand coping strategies used by adolescents, six coping strategies were identified, including distraction, problem solving, friend, family member or adult, distancing, and retaliation (Bradbury et al., 2018). Mischel and Kitsantas (2020) analyzed the use of coping strategies for bullying among two cultures. Results showed that the students from Taiwan used seeking connection as a coping strategy to combat bullying and the students from the United States used independence as a strategy to combat bullying incidents. Six coping strategies were identified, including aggressive behaviors, claiming status among peers, supportive teacher, talking to a friend, talking to a family member, and crying while alone (Mischel & Kitsantas, 2020). Erath et al., (2019) investigated coping strategies bullying victims used to combat bullying incidents and identified six coping strategies that the bullying victims used to combat bullying incidents including conflict resolution, revenge-seeking, support-seeking, cognitive distancing, prosocial behavior, and aggressive behavior. Evans et al., (2017) identified four coping strategies, including seeking, physical and verbal

aggression, standing up for themselves, and prosocial bystander (Evans et al., 2017). Hong et al., (2020) analyzed the coping strategies used by bullying victims to combat bullying among low-income public high school African American students. Five coping strategies were identified including tough demeanor, avoidance, fighting back, establishing reputation, and affiliation (Hong et al., 2020). According to current research, several coping strategies have been identified by school- aged children as they combat bullying incidents. These coping strategies are important to note as they should be taken into consideration when identifying risk factors associated with bullying, developing bullying prevention programs, and assessing the perception of support needed to prevent bullying.

### **The Roles of Anti-Bullying Programs in the School Setting**

Anti-bullying programs are implemented to protect students and staff. These programs aim to ensure a safe school environment for children and adults that is conducive for teaching and learning (Brown et al., 2021). These programs help prevent and reduce incidents of bullying in the school and require principals and school staff to take a proactive role in the enforcement of anti-bullying policies and procedures (Brown et al., 2021; Gaffney et al., 2019). A meta-analysis performed by Gaffney et al., (2019) revealed anti-bullying programs in the United States are effective in reducing school bullying by about 20% and school bullying victimization by about 15%. Informal peer involvement and information for parents was related to significant reductions in school bullying victimization (Gaffney et al., 2021b). A meta-analysis performed by Kennedy

(2020a) found that participating in bullying prevention programs in the United States reduced the chances of experiencing relational and physical bullying by about 32% but was ineffective in reducing verbal bullying.

Some anti-bullying programs have helped maintain safety and positive discipline in the school environment which subsequently increase student learning and achievement (Chou et al., 2020; Olweus & Limber, 2019). These programs build positive relationships among students. They do so by stimulating rapport between students as they develop trust and encourage positive relationships. Stakeholders' presence is essential in helping students build positive relationships. The superintendent, principal, teachers, school staff, and parents provide support to students in the school environment through their involvement with the activities that positively engage students in learning (Limber et al., 2018). Anti-bullying programs also provide students a reality check about changing their behaviors, attitudes, and habits so they can adopt positive ways of thinking and acting in the school environment (Brown et al., 2020). This is done by teaching students strategies needed to restore morale through reasoning after they have disengaged from morality. Students are also taught strategies to make good decisions when they are involved with moral disengagement. They are assigned to mentors and counselors who provide strategies for preventing and reducing bullying and give them emotional support to overcome effects of psychosomatic distress caused by bullying incidents in the school environment (Arcadepani et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020).

Anti-bullying programs build hope and a sense of belonging among students

during their tenure in the program (O'Brien, 2019). This is done by allowing students to discover their strengths and weaknesses. If students discover their strengths, they may build upon them and provide hope for school success. If they discover a weakness, they may seek assistance from stakeholders such as their counselors, teachers, and parents. These stakeholders become proactively engaged with students and provide them the assistance they need to reduce their weakness by using their power of learning in the school environment to enhance student achievement (Al-Raqqad et al., 2017; O'Brien, 2019). These programs stimulate the development of self-efficacy among students and help them to build confidence which is essential for learning and school success (Hwang et al., 2018). Confidence propels learning among students. Confidence provides students the motivational power to use learning resources wisely and increase student achievement in the school environment. Through confidence, students utilize cognitive strategies that help them to build a repertoire of learning strategies that subsequently increase learning and student achievement. Confidence is a tool students may use to build hope to break the barriers of fear to learn and the courage to face challenges of tackling difficult learning tasks in the classrooms and outside of the school environment (Hwang et al., 2018; Jeffrey & Stuart, 2019).

### **Bullying Prevention Programs in the United States**

It has been established that programs aimed at reducing and preventing bullying play an important role in ensuring children and staff feel safe in the school environment (Brown et al., 2021). There are a variety of bullying prevention programs used in schools

in the United States. According to Jeffery and Stewart (2019) there are five areas needed to ensure a bullying prevention program is effective and efficient. First, an anti-bullying program must be directed toward the needs of students in the PreK- 12 learning environment. Second, it must focus on bullying prevention alone or in combination with skills needed for social-emotional success of students. Third, a bullying program must be based on solid research and theory. Fourth, a bullying program's existence must include universal intervention such as primary prevention which promote wellness and prevent problems in the general student population. Fifth, a bullying program must be researched and evaluated in the United States as evidenced by at least one peer-reviewed publication or comprehensive evaluation report (Jeffrey & Stuart, 2019). Gaffney et al., (2021b) found that the presence of a whole school approach, anti-bullying policy, classroom rules, information for parents, informal peer involvement, work with victims, co-operative group work, and mental health approaches were effective in preventing school bullying.

Analysis of current research suggests that predictors for success in a bullying intervention program include the intervention strategy, form of bullying, and the student's role in bullying. Wachs et al., (2019) identified authoritarian-punitive, supportive-individual, and supportive-cooperative as intervention strategies. Physical, verbal, relational, and cyber are identified as bullying types. Student's bullying roles include bully, victim, or bystander. Evidence suggests supportive-cooperative intervention strategies are the most successful in reducing bullying activity (Wachs et al., 2019). Many evidence-based intervention strategies incorporate social emotional learning

components and attempt to create positive school environments by changing the way that children view and interact with others (Nappa et al., 2018; Younan, 2019). These strategies have been effective in decreasing disciplinary issues among students (White et al., 2011) and decreasing violent behavior (Chou et al., 2020). Several evidenced-based and research-based bullying prevention programs are currently used in the United States. These programs were reviewed to determine effectiveness.

### ***Safe School Ambassadors***

Students have a positive impact in the decrease of torment. The Safe School Ambassadors program is an evidence-based bullying prevention program designed to prevent and stop bullying and mistreatment using a student-centered bystander education approach (White et al., 2011). Safe School Ambassadors uses a social-emotional learning approach in schools to improve the school climate by educating bystanders (Younan, 2019). Program directors have the responsibility of selecting students who will serve as ambassadors and lead other students (White et al., 2011). The main function for student ambassadors is to lead other students with their vision, agility, and creativity to avoid trouble and be models of positive behavior in the school. The ambassadors supervise other students in areas that need assistance and are trained to intervene in bullying or harassment situations. The ambassadors come from diverse groups and undergo training at the beginning of the year. They are educated about issues related to violence and cruelty, ways to prevent and stop mistreatment, and strategies to diffuse conflicts. At the end of the training, ambassadors must demonstrate influence in a social

group, communication skills, loyalty to a peer group, and the ability to tell right from wrong. After the initial training, students meet in small groups with their mentors every 1-2 weeks to discuss skills they have used, practice skills, and receive feedback (White et al., 2011).

An evaluation of the Safe School Ambassadors Program revealed no significant change in the student's attitudes towards acceptance of diversity, but students reported witnessing more students intervening and reporting bullying. Findings also suggest a statistically significant decrease in suspension rates compared to the control school (Pack et al., 2011). Another evaluation of this program revealed a statistically significant decrease in suspensions and disciplinary issues among students due to the implementation of the program (White et al., 2011).

### ***Second Step***

The Second Step Bullying Prevention Unit uses empathy, emotional management, and social problem solving to prevent bullying. Second Step is an evidence-based family of programs that uses social emotional learning techniques to improve school climate (Committee for Children, 2014). This unit includes friendship building and learning to be assertive in lessons. The Second Step Bullying Prevention Unit can be implemented in grades K-5. Each student serves as a role model to the other students by adhering to the ethical standards of the program such as maintaining morality and giving dignity to others with no reservations. The program content includes 5 story-based lessons, classroom DVD, activities to reinforce lessons, classroom posters, and family materials



for parents (Committee for Children, 2014). The program has shown to be effective in reducing bullying in the context of general bullying victimization, physical bullying, malicious gossip, and bystander behavior (Nappa et al., 2018). A cluster randomized trial revealed students who were in the group receiving the program were 56% less likely to self-report homophobic name-calling and 39% less likely to report sexual abuse compared to children in the control group (Esplelage et. al., 2015).

### ***Positive Action***

Positivity among children has shown decreased rates in bullying. The Positive Action is an evidence-based Bullying Prevention Program and Curriculum that uses a social emotional learning philosophy to encourage positive actions among children (Bavarian et al., 2016). In the Positive Action® program, students attend 15-minute lessons four times a week (Limber et al., 2018). The curriculum has six units on positive actions in physical, intellectual, social, and emotional areas that include self-concept, positive actions for your body and mind, managing yourself responsibly, treating others the way you like to be treated, telling yourself the truth, and improving yourself continually. Students at each grade level learn the same concepts each week as the units' lessons are being taught. Lessons are taught in bullying prevention, drug use prevention, conflict resolution, school climate, family, counselor, and community relations (Limber et al., 2018).

The Positive Action Program has had success. In a randomized control trial of the program, students who received the program reported being less likely to be engaged in

bullying, disruptive, or violent behaviors (Lewis et al., 2013). Parents reported decrease in bullying activities and conduct issues, and the school reported fewer disciplinary referrals and suspensions (Lewis et al., 2013). In a cluster-randomized controlled trial that examined the efficacy of this program on physical health behaviors and social emotional character development, it was found that the program improved health behaviors including personal hygiene, healthy eating, and exercising (Bavarian et al., 2016). In another cluster randomized controlled trial, the program positively influenced academic motivation, absenteeism, and math performance (Bavarian et al., 2013). Limber et al., (2018) also found the program was related to a reduction in serious violence and bullying behaviors in the school setting.

### ***Peacebuilders***

PeaceBuilders is a science-based violence prevention curriculum designed to reduce violence among youth by facilitating positive social interactions between students and adults. It can be taught in grades K-12 and afterschool settings (PeaceBuilders, 2002). The program focused on creating positive relationships between students and school staff. Students were taught non-violent attitudes, values, and given incentives for showing positive behaviors in different settings in the school. The six main principles taught by teachers in the classroom include praise people, avoid put downs, seek wise people as advisers and friends, notice and correct sadness we cause, know the rights and the wrongs, and help others. Throughout the year, the six principles are taught monthly by the staff and integrated into the daily routine at the school. The teachers and school

staff undergo four hours of on-site training to learn how to implement the program in the classroom settings and outside the classroom (PeaceBuilders, 2002).

In a case study at a high school in Massachusetts, principals reported PeaceBuilders created a positive school environment promoting acceptance; and after inception of the program there was a decrease in reports of violent aggressive behavior, suspensions, expulsions, student absentees, and staff absentees (PeaceBuilders, 2002). Chou et al., (2020) assessed the PeaceBuilders in an elementary school setting. The outcomes of the program included increased prosocial behavior and social competence, and decreased violent behavior (Chou et al., 2020). PeaceBuilders is described as science-based and research- validated (PeacePartners, 2002). Limited scientific evidence exists regarding the effectiveness of this program and its ability to reduce or prevent bullying behaviors.

### ***Olweus Bullying Prevention Program***

The Olweus Bullying Prevention program includes schoolwide, classroom, individual, and community components and emphasizes long-term change to create a safe and positive school climate. This program is an evidence-based comprehensive program that aims to reduce bullying among children and improve peer relations at school (Limber et al., 2018). The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program® aims to restructure the school environment, reduce bullying, and build positive relationships among students and adults (Divecha & Barackett, 2019). The outcomes of the program include improving peer relations, enhancing school safety, promoting a hospitable environment for learning, and

reducing bullying behaviors. Student reports of general antisocial behaviors such as vandalism, fighting, theft, and truancy were decreased. Relational and physical victimizations also decreased leading to stimulation of positive classroom social climate. The ability for teachers to talk to bullies and bullying victims improved. Students were found to be more positive about their teachers. The key areas of the Olweus program that enhanced program effectiveness were the bullying prevention coordinating committee, ongoing evaluation of students' experiences with and attitudes toward bullying, school rules, staff discussion groups, classroom meetings, parent involvement, and on the spot bullying interventions. The strengths of the Olweus program include the comprehensive whole system approach. The limitations of the Olweus program include difficulty to implement effectively in the United States. (Divecha & Barackett, 2019).

There are anti-bullying programs that have been successful. An early assessment of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in the United States revealed the program effectively reduced students' reports of bullying others and school misbehavior (Olweus & Limber, 2010). Assessment of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program revealed about 25% reduction in students reporting being bullied and about 28% reduction in students reporting being a perpetrator (Ossa et al., 2021). A quasi-experimental study evaluating the effectiveness of the program found that the program reduced the occurrence of students being bullied and students bullying other students (Limber et al., 2018). This provides evidence that the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program may be effective in reducing bullying behaviors in the school environment.

***BP-PBIS***

The BP-PBIS program aims to develop positive relationships between students and school staff. This anti-bullying program intended to prevent bullying through intervention (Cosma et al., 2020). Curriculum content includes lessons on school-wide rules, social skills, gossip, inappropriate remarks, cyber bullying, supervising behavior, and faculty follow up. Teachers deliver content in the classroom to enable students to develop positive behaviors. The teachers use online materials and manuals to deliver content to students. Throughout the teaching period, teachers supervise students and give them necessary feedback. The BP-PBIS program has been shown to stimulate a positive school climate and reduce incidents of bullying. Teachers reported a decrease in bully victimization and improvements in school safety (Cosma et al., 2020).

**Student Perceptions of Anti-Bullying Programs**

Efforts must be assessed from the student's perspective if they are expected to positively impact student's behaviors. Anti-bullying programs have been implemented throughout the United States (Cosma et al., 2020; Limber et al., 2018). A meta-analysis examining the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs found that globally prevention programs have been effective at reducing relational and physical bullying by about 32% and verbal bullying by about 28% (Kennedy, 2020). Another meta-analysis by Gaffney et al. (2019) found that anti-bullying programs reduce school bullying by about 20% and victimization by about 15%.

Several quantitative instruments have been used to assess bullying among

students. Students have been included in many quantitative analysis of anti-bullying programs in attempts to determine their effectiveness (Limber et al., 2018; Ossa et al., 2021). The Olweus Bullying Questionnaire is a 40-item instrument that allows students to self-report being bullied, bullying others, their actions and reactions when witnessing bullying, attitudes about bullying, and perceptions of efforts of teachers to respond to bullying (Limber et al., 2018). This instrument has been used to assess the effectiveness of bullying interventions via students self-reporting behaviors and observations related to bullying (Limber et al., 2018; Olweus et al., 2020; Ossa et al., 2021). The Delaware School Climate Survey – Student (DSCS-S) is a 78- item instrument that allows students to self- report information related to teacher- student relationship, student- student relationship, fairness of rules and clarity of expectations, safety at school, bullying, and student engagement (Coelho & Dell’Anglio, 2019). This instrument has been used to examine the relationship between school environment, bullying victimization, and student engagement (Yang et al., 2018). The Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale is a 16-question instrument that allows students to self-report physical victimization, verbal victimization, social manipulation, and attacks on property (Eastman et al., 2018). This instrument has been used to explore coping strategies of adolescents who were bullied (Khan & Bhutto, 2020) and examine the relationship between peer victimization, school connectedness, and mental well-being (Arif et al., 2019).

Including students’ opinions allows limited or no opportunity for discussion on what parts of the intervention students deem successful or unsuccessful and why. When

it's included in bullying research, the data collection and analysis are quantitative (Gage et al., 2019; Nickerson et al., 2022). Qualitative data collection methods have been used sparingly in bullying research. In recent years, qualitative methods were used to identify risk factors associated with school bullying (Qian et al., 2020) and to explore therapeutic treatments of bullying victimization (Park et al., 2021). It is important to qualitatively assess the perceptions of former bullying victims on anti-bullying strategies to gather in depth information to inform future development and implementation efforts.

### **Summary**

Bullying has been identified as a serious issue. This form of abuse is affecting schools and communities (Basile et al., 2020). Approximately 20% of students aged 12 to 14 reports being bullied, including 16.7% of male children and 23.8% of female children (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). This is concerning considering the negative effects of bullying including emotional distress, social marginalization (Overbreek et al., 2007), decreased academic performance (Bowes et al., 2013) and suicidal ideations (Klomek et al., 2018).

Principals, school counselors, teachers, parents, and students have been identified as key stakeholders needed to ensure bullying is prevented and addressed in a consistent and effective manner. Principals are seen as leaders (Grissom et al., 2021) and must be knowledgeable of anti-bullying policies and procedures to effectively implement them (Reyes-Rodriguez et al., 2021). School counselors are often the designated anti-bullying specialists within the school district (Arcuri, 2018) and are trained to work with bullies

and victims of bullying to promote a safe and positive school environment (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Teachers are often a child's first line of defense against bullying (Wachs et al., 2019) and are essential in combatting bullying behavior (Zych et al., 2017) as their action or inaction may determine if a child is comfortable reporting bullying incidents (Gradinariu, 2021). Parenting style and behaviors are related to a bullying behavior with punitive styles (Gomez-Ortiz et al., 2019), violence in the home (Nocenti et al., 2019), and psychosocial control (Hong et al., 2017) related to increased likelihood of bullying behaviors.

Strategies have been implemented in school to combat bullying. Anti-bullying programs play an important role in reducing and preventing bullying to create a safe school environment (Brown et al., 2021; Gaffney et al., 2019). Children who are bullied develop coping strategies to deal with bullying and harassment (Atomore et al., 2016; Erath et al., 2019). These strategies range from avoiding bullies altogether to confronting them directly (Atomore et al., 2016; Evans et al., 2017; Hong et al., 2020;).

Evidence-based and research-based strategies exist. The Safe School Ambassadors program uses student centered bystander education to address bullying (Younan, 2019). Second Step uses social emotional learning techniques to improve the school climate and reduce bullying (Nappa et al., 2018). Positive Action uses social emotional learning strategies to encourage positive actions and prevent bullying (Limber et al., 2018). Olweus Bullying Prevention Program uses a multi-level approach to improve peer relations and reduce bullying (Limber et al., 2018). BP-PBIS uses



interventions centered around positive relationships to reduce bullying (Cosma et al., 2020). These programs have shown some positive effects in the prevention and reduction of bullying. However, deficits in the knowledge and skills of principals (Runions et al., 2019) and teachers (van Verseveld et al., 2021) to address and prevent bullying still exist.

The current research extends knowledge related to bullying by qualitatively examining the perceptions of school bullying victims on bullying prevention efforts. Student's perceptions of bullying and bullying interventions have been quantitatively assessed using tools such as the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (Ossa et al., 2021), Delaware School Climate Survey – Student (Yang et al., 2021), and Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (Khan & Bhutto, 2020). However, these analyses lack a qualitative component for students to explore the perceived effectiveness and provide additional feedback on the implementation process.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of former high school bullying victims about why anti-bullying programs have not reduced incidents of bullying. This chapter includes information regarding the research design and rationale and the role of the researcher. The chapter also includes the methodology, participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for recruiting, participation, data collection, data analysis plan, trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and summary of this research study.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

This study aimed to address the following research questions:

RQ 1: Why do bullying victims believe anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective in preventing bullying incidents?

RQ 2: What do bullying victims believe is needed to prevent incidents of bullying?

Anti-bullying programs may prevent and reduce some bullying incidents in the school environment when implemented effectively (Gaffney et al., 2019), but despite these efforts, bullying remains a persistent issue (Arango et al., 2018). Thus, this study involved a qualitative research design to explore perceptions of former high school bullying victims regarding the support needed to reduce and prevent bullying in the school system. The rationale for using a qualitative research design in this study was to allow hands-on data collection, an open-ended questioning method, and the opportunity

for in- depth discussions and rich descriptions. In current research, students' perceptions of bullying and the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs have been evaluated using quantitative tools (Khan & Bhutto, 2020; Ossa et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021). This research used a qualitative design to gather in- depth information regarding coping strategies, anti-bullying programs, and reasons anti-bullying efforts have been unsuccessful. The qualitative data collected from participants represents a description of behaviors, attitudes, and experiences of the participants (Nappa et al., 2018). These attitudes and experiences provided valuable information about ways to improve anti-bullying efforts at schools in the United States.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I developed the semistructured interview protocol, administered all interviews, and analyzed the data. This qualitative research study required me to collect and analyze data in an objective manner. I conducted individual interviews with participants using a semistructured interview protocol to guide the individual interview process. Though I am a high school teacher and coach in the school district where the study participants were selected, the participants were selected from students who graduated within the past 5 years and were not current or past students. As a teacher and coach, I had close ties to students who may be bullies or bullying victims. However, I remained objective in interactions with participants, data collection, and data analysis.

### **Methodology**

The methodology section outlines the participant selection, instrumentation,

procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, and plan for data analysis. This section included participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, and plan for data analysis. The Walden IRB approval number for this study is 10-17-22-0806023.

### **Participant Selection**

The target population included former high school bullying victims. Purposive sampling was used to find and select study participants. Approximately 1,250 students graduated from this high school in the past 5 years, which provided a sample pool that fit the selection criteria of approximately 825 former students. According to the data of recent graduates, bullying was the most reported disciplinary problem in public schools with 1 in 5 high school students reporting being bullied on school property in the last year with reports being higher than 28% (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019).

Any potential participants who did not meet these criteria were notified by email of the reasons why they were not able to participate in the study. Former students or athletes I knew were not included as participants in the study. To reach saturation, 10–15 participants were needed for this research study. A partnership with one high school was established. A recruitment flyer was developed by me and emailed to high school graduates. Potential participants who contacted me completed an inclusion questionnaire to determine if they met all inclusion criteria before being allowed to participate in the research study. The inclusion questionnaire is available in Appendix A. The participants who met all inclusion criteria were asked to schedule an appointment to participate in the

study. Before participating in the study, all participants signed an informed consent document.

### **Instrumentation**

I developed a semistructured interview protocol to guide the collection of interview data. This tool was researcher-produced and did not mirror a published data collection instrument. This semistructured interview protocol was designed to qualitatively investigate perceptions of former high school bullying victims as they related to the support needed to reduce and prevent bullying in schools. The interview protocol included a variety of questions to explore different issues that may shed light on the lack of effectiveness of anti-bullying programs. The protocol included questions that allowed participants to explore the roles of each stakeholder in preventing and reducing bullying in the school environment. The protocol also included questions that allowed participants to provide information about practices and coping strategies needed to reduce incidents of bullying.

The questions in this study were reviewed by a panel of experts consisting of two doctoral committee members (experienced academics and qualitative researchers) and the principal at the research study site. Content validity was established by a group of subject matter experts (Paredes et al., 2021). The doctoral committee chair had extensive university experience dating from 1993, including teaching experience at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and has served in administrative director and assistant director roles. The committee chair also had teaching experience with students ranging

from pre-school to high school age and was an experienced ethnographer. The doctoral committee co-chair worked as an early childhood education special education teacher, assistant principal, and principal at the elementary through high school levels.

The co-committee chair was also the executive director of the State of Florida's first Charter Technical Career Center and was the administrator for two campus libraries, six writing centers, and eight academic support centers at a state college. The principal at the research study site has been in education spending his tenure in the public school sector for over 25 years serving as a teacher for 7 years, assistant principal for 4 years, and a principal for 16 years. Based on the feedback from the panel of experts, it is assumed that the semistructured interview protocol questions were sufficient to answer the research questions.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The school administrative assistant sent flyers to former high school students at one high school. The recruitment flyer was developed by me with feedback from the school principal. The flyer provided an overview of the research study, information regarding eligibility criteria, and method to contact me if interested. Potential participants who contacted me completed an inclusion questionnaire to ensure they met inclusion criteria to participate in the research study. Participants who met all inclusion criteria were asked to schedule an appointment to participate in the study via Microsoft Teams. Participants were emailed the consent form via a survey link to read and sign the informed consent document electronically. The informed consent document was

completed before proceeding with data collection efforts.

Data collection took place via Microsoft Teams, an electronic meeting platform. Participants completed one interview lasting approximately 20 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed via Microsoft Stream. Participants exited the study with a debriefing session where the participant was allowed to add any information, and I asked any clarifying questions regarding participant feedback. Participants were asked if they were willing to participate in the member check process, and the first three to agree were included. I also provided a list of local counselors the participants may access if they felt they needed additional assistance with mental health issues due to recalling experiences with bullying. The participants were mailed a \$25 gift card as compensation for participating in the study. Individuals were asked to provide an address for the \$25 gift card to be mailed at the conclusion of the interviews. To ensure confidentiality, I assigned numbers to participants so their real identities can only be found in the records in the safe. If I lose the files, their identities will be hidden.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The information collected in the semistructured interview protocol directly answered the following research questions: Why do bullying victims believe anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective in preventing bullying incidents? and What do bullying victims believe is needed to prevent incidents of bullying. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data. I compiled, disassembled, reassembled, and interpreted data as described by Castleberry and Nolen (2018). To compile the data, interviews were

transcribed using Microsoft Stream. I reviewed and updated transcriptions to ensure accuracy. To disassemble the data, I used thematic coding. An emergent coding scheme was used, meaning codes were identified as data was analyzed instead of in an a priori manner. To reassemble data, coded areas were grouped and put into context to create themes. To interpret data, I made analytical conclusions based on the codes and themes that emerged. Incomplete interviews and inconsistencies were listed as discrepant cases in the data analysis.

### **Trustworthiness**

Credibility and confirmability were established by using member checking. Participants were asked if they were willing to perform a follow-up interview to ensure the information collected was reflective of their responses and experiences. The first three individuals to agree were included in the member checking process. Member checking included sharing findings of the research and requesting feedback from participants to ensure the research is reflective of responses. Dependability and inter-coder reliability were established via peer review. An independent peer researcher reviewed transcripts, coding, and themes to determine if coding was performed accurately. Further, the recruitment flyer was sent to all known former high school students who graduated within the last 5 years and not just known bullying victims identified by officials at the high school. This allowed a diverse group of individuals to opt into the research study and self-report being a bullying victim.



## **Ethical Procedures**

This study was approved by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which provided permission to perform research with human subjects. Ethical concerns included participants having an adverse reaction to participating in research that required them to recall uncomfortable events related to bullying in high school, participants refusing to participate, and early withdrawal from the research study. I compiled and made available a list of licensed counselors in the local area to provide to participants if they expressed discomfort related to this research process. This list was offered at the conclusion of the data collection process or at any point the participant expressed discomfort. Additionally, participation in this research study was voluntary, and participants who refused to participate were not included in the study. Participants were also allowed to cease participation at any point in the research process, including data collection and data analysis.

Informed consent documentation, recordings, and transcriptions of interviews are kept in a locked electronic storage space. Access is password protected and only I have access to these electronic files. Transcriptions were also kept confidential, and any identifiable information recorded, such as name and address, were excluded from transcriptions. Data will be destroyed after 5 years. Findings will be shared via publication, but recordings and transcriptions will not be made available to anyone outside of the researcher.

### **Summary**

The target population for this study included adults who identified as high school bullying victims. Upon ensuring participants met inclusion criteria, each participant was scheduled for an individual interview. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol developed by me with assistance from a panel of experts. Data were analyzed using thematic coding. The following chapter includes information regarding the setting, data collection, data analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and a summary for the results.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of former high school bullying victims about why anti-bullying programs have not reduced incidents of bullying. This study aimed to address the following research questions: Why do bullying victims believe anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective in preventing bullying incidents? What do bullying victims believe is needed to prevent incidents of bullying? This chapter details the results of the study and analysis of the data collected. This chapter also includes information regarding setting, data collection, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness.

### **Setting**

All study participants were high school bullying victims recruited from one high school. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. The interviews took place during a time agreed upon with each study participant. Participants included former bullying victims who were asked about their experiences with bullying, which may include traumatic experiences. A list of licensed counselors in the local area was made available for participants in case they expressed discomfort related to this research process.

### **Data Collection**

Participants included former high school students who graduated in the past 5 years, self-identified as bullying victims, were 18 years of age or older, and agreed to participate in the study. A total of 10 individuals participated in this research study.

Interviews were conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams software. A semistructured interview protocol was used to guide interviews. Interviews lasted from 6 to 21 minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Stream. Transcriptions were reviewed and updated to ensure accuracy. There were no variations in data collection from the plan described in Chapter 3. There were no unusual circumstances encountered during data collection.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study, qualitative data were collected to frame information. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data. Data were compiled, disassembled, reassembled, and interpreted as described by Castleberry and Nolen (2018). Data were compiled by interviewing participants via Microsoft Teams using a semi-structured interview protocol, recording interviews using Microsoft Stream, and transcribing data using Microsoft Stream. Transcripts were reviewed and updated to ensure accuracy. Data were disassembled using an emergent coding scheme. Color coding was used to identify related codes. Data were reassembled by grouping related codes and putting them into context to create themes. Data were interpreted by creating analytical conclusions based on the codes and themes. Discrepant cases were included in the analysis.

### **Results**

Data coding revealed shared perceptions regarding the reasons bullying programs were not perceived as effective and the types of efforts needed to prevent bullying. Former bullying victims reported that (a) principals, teachers, and counselors were

unconcerned about bullying happening in the school; (b) the actions of principals, teachers, and counselors that aimed to prevent or stop bullying were ineffective; (c) anti-bullying policies were nonexistent or unknown; (d) anti-bullying policies should include elements that equip school staff to handle bullying incidents; and (e) anti-bullying policies should include coping strategies for dealing with bullying. Appendix C includes a summary of the codes and themes. Contrary to most participants, two participants stated they felt that the actions of school staff were effective at stopping bullying, and three students stated anti-bullying programs existed at the school. Table 1 provides an overview of themes used to identify emergent themes described by the former bully victims.

**Table 1***Overview of Codes Organized into Emergent Themes*

Codes	Themes	Commonalities
Code 1: Staff do not care Code 2: Staff do not do anything Code 3: Staff are too busy	Theme 1: School staff are unconcerned about bullying	Participants reported principals, teachers, and counselors did not care about bullying.
Code 4: Staff do not do a good job Code 5: Staff do not do enough Code 6: Actions do not work	Theme 2: School staff actions are ineffective	Participants reported actions of principals, teachers, and counselors were ineffective at preventing or stopping bullying.
Code 7: Do not have any policies, programs, or trainings Code 8: Do not know about it	Theme 3: Anti-bullying policies are nonexistent or unknown	Participants reported being unaware of any anti-bullying policies, programs, or training at the school.
Code 9: Staff care Code 10: Staff check on students Code 11: School address root cause Code 12: School has better enforcement	Theme 4: Policies should include elements that equip school staff to handle bullying incidents	Participants reported things they wished they had while in high school to prevent and stop bullying.
Code 13: Avoidance Code 14: Stand my ground Code 15: Stay close to friends	Theme 5: Policies should include coping strategies	Participants reported what they or other bullying victims did to stop or prevent bullying.
Code 16: Did not work Code 17: Bullying kept happening		Participants reported the things they did to prevent or stop bullying were ineffective.
Code 18: Stand up for myself Code 19: Stay focused Code 20: Stand my ground Code 21: Stand up for others		Participants reported things they wish they had done to stop or prevent bullying in high school

### **Research Question 1**

The first research question was “Why do bullying victims believe anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective in preventing bullying incidents?” Exploring the perceptions of former bullying victims may offer insight into the reason bullying is pervasive in the school environment. Themes that emerged regarding the reasons anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective included school staff are unconcerned about bullying, school staff actions are ineffective, and anti-bullying policies are nonexistent or unknown.

#### ***School Staff are Unconcerned***

During emergent coding, the former bullying victims’ perceptions about the care and concern of staff to prevent or stop bullying emerged as a reason anti-bullying efforts were ineffective at preventing bullying. Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10 indicated they felt that principals, teachers, and/or counselors did not care or were unconcerned about bullying that happened at the school. Participants 2 and 6 were discrepant cases. Participant 2 felt the principals, teachers, and counselors were concerned about bullying at the school. Participant 6 felt that principals tried their best to stop bullying but were unsuccessful.

Participants provided information that implied staff were unconcerned or uncaring as it related to bullying happening at the school. Participants 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10 had similar responses to questions that implied school staff did not care and/ or were unconcerned about bullying victims. Participant 1 stated, “They don’t care about the students,” “they don’t play a role,” and “they don’t care” when asked about the role

principals, school counselors, and teachers played in preventing bullying from happening. Participant 4 stated that “it was like you got bullied and you need to get over it,” when asked how school counselors interact with bullying victims. Participant 4 also stated “Teachers really didn’t pay attention to it. Like, they’ll teach the lesson and just think the kids are playing around and didn’t really stop anything.” When asked about the roles staff members played in anti-bullying efforts, Participant 5 stated “Principals don’t take charge,” “The counselor is gonna try to sugar coat everything,” and “You got yo teachers that got they favorites.” He went on to explain that teachers showed preferential treatment to students they considered “favorites,” so if they were bullies, they were not punished. Participant 8 stated that principals “just don’t care” and counselors “don’t do the best.” Participant 9 stated principals “really don’t care about you,” counselors “always too busy to worry about bullies,” and staff at the school “turn around like nothing was happening.” Participant 10 stated principals “don’t care” and “just walked by” when someone is being bullied, and teachers “don’t care about the students” as it relates to preventing bullying at the school. Participant 3 implied the school staff got enjoyment from seeing students being bullied. When asked about why he felt school staff “don’t do nothing” regarding actions taken to prevent bullying, Participant 3 stated, “I feel like they enjoy seeing somebody getting bullied” and “I feel like they like it.” When asked to provide specific examples of how the school staff interact with bullies and bullying victims, Participant 3 stated, “Yeah they talk to them, but it ain’t gonna work.”

Contrary to these responses, Participants 2 and 6 stated that school staff cared



about preventing bullying and were concerned about bullying victims. One of the things Participant 2 stated that staff do to that indicated they cared included the following: “The victims of the bullying go to the counselor so they can find out if the person is okay from the bullying if they need assistance or if they need to talk out they feelings.” Participant 2 also stated that principals “speak to the bully and the victim ... depending on how dire the situation is they will take a disciplinary measure” and teachers “look in the classroom seeing if a person is uncomfortable or if the person is bothering the other person” which provided evidence that Participant 2 felt the school staff were concerned about bullying. When asked how principals interact with bullies and bullying victims, Participant 6 stated that principals “try they best to stop it but they just can’t.” When asked how counselors interact with bullies and bullying victims, Participant 6 stated they “Check and see if everything is alright. Try to be positive.” It is noted that Participant 6 stated that teachers are “more focused on getting they lesson and teaching.” This implies that for Participant 6, principals and counselors are concerned with bullying, but teachers are not concerned with bullying.

### ***School Staff Actions are Ineffective***

The ineffectiveness of the actions of staff to prevent or stop bullying emerged as a theme regarding the reason anti-bullying efforts were not effective at preventing bullying. Participants 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8 felt the actions staff took to prevent and stop bullying were ineffective. Participants 2, 4, and 7 were discrepant cases and they felt that some of the things done were effective at stopping bullying when it happened.

Participants felt that the actions of school staff members, including principals, teachers, and counselors, were ineffective at stopping or preventing bullying. Participant 1 stated principals “don’t do a good job” and are “not doing good enough for bullying” in their role to prevent and stop bullying. When asked about the counselor’s role in antibully programs at school, Participant 1 stated “I don’t think they play a role,” and when asked how counselors interact with bullies and bullying victims he stated, “they don’t do nothing.” Participant 1 stated teachers do “Nothing” in their role to prevent or stop bullying, and when asked about how teachers interact with bullies and bullying victims, he replied “I think they don’t interact with them.” Participant 1 also felt that overall school staff did “Nothing” to prevent bullying at the school. Participant 3 stated principals “separate the bullies” but the actions of principals “ain’t gonna work” regarding preventing bullying at school. He also felt “counselors didn’t do nothing” when he was being bullied because “they just didn’t have that much power to the bully,” and “if the teacher didn’t see that he was bullying me, they didn’t believe it” regarding his own experience with bullying at school. When asked about the effectiveness of the things staff do to prevent bullying, he recalled an event where he had previously reported being bullied to a staff member and thought things were getting better, but the bullying suddenly started happening again. Below is his account of the event:

Out of nowhere it came back. Like he was just like, yeah, you remember me. And, you know, the more he got louder, the more he, you know, started pushing, you know, pushing the force on me. But what made me step up is I had to come face

to face with him, and I actually had to, you know, tell him, look here man. Look, this is getting old. You can't keep doing me like this. Well, I'm getting too old for this and for you to be doing me like this. You making me look like a punk in front of all these other people. And it's leading to a lot of stuff. We got to fighting and stuff like that. And for a minute He was just like okay, but he still had his crew with him, so you should know where that leaded. I got jumped. And for a minute I was just. I just accepted the fact."

Participant 5 provided details about what happens after a bullying victim reported a bullying incident to school staff. He stated, "at the end of the day the kids gonna go right back out there and the same thing will be happening," "the counselors aren't gonna be there like you want them to," and "they ain't finna just understand one person problem knowing that they got a million other problems going on at the same time." He also stated that teachers "give them a slap on the wrist and let him go back to do what they do" when asked about how teachers interact with bullies and bullying victims. When asked if he felt the things principals did were effective at stopping bullying, he stated the following:

No, not really because if they was enforcing, it won't be that much bullying going on still. Like you know how many people done died off this stuff and people don't try to talk about it and still don't because people still do it behind closed doors, right? Principals don't take charge.

Participant 6 stated he "don't feel like principals can stop bullying" because "too much going on and can't get around the school fast enough." He felt principals "try they

best to stop it but they just can't." Participant 8 stated school staff are "not in tune to it" when asked if he felt school staff could stop bullying.

Participant 2 stated school staff were effective at preventing and stopping bullying. He stated the things school staff do to prevent bullying are effective, and principals "discipline bullies," counselors "can give good advice on how to stop bullying," and teachers "move the student or they would talk to the student outside of the classroom." Participant 4 stated counselors "helped me get through a lot and talk to me and give me different ways to cope with the bullying and get around it" regarding his own experience with bullying. Participant 7 stated counselors were effective at stopping bullying because "they do a lot," such as "put them in a room and make them do work for like an hour." This referenced the counselors' actions to remove the bully from the classroom and put them in a separate location for a designated amount of time as a punishment for bullying.

#### ***Anti-bullying Policies are Nonexistent or Unknown***

It was found that former bullying victim's perception that anti-bullying policies were absent or unknown emerged as a theme to explain why anti-bullying efforts were ineffective at preventing bullying. Participants 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 10 stated there were no anti-bully programs at the school. Participants 2, 4, and 9 existed as discrepant cases and stated there were anti-bully programs at the school. All study participants attended the same school, but only 3 of the 9 participants who answered questions about anti-bullying strategies at the school recalled an anti-bullying program.

Participants felt that anti-bullying programs, policies, and training were not available at the school. When asked about anti-bullying programs, practices, or trainings, Participant 1 stated “we didn’t have any.” Participant 3, 6, and 10 answered “No” when asked if the school had anti-bullying programs, policies, or trainings. Participant 5 stated “there were no bullying programs” at his school. Participant 8 answered “No” when asked if there were any anti-bullying programs at his school and stated, “if they did, I wouldn’t be able to tell.” When asked why he felt the anti-bullying program did not work, he stated the following:

I don’t even remember there being a program. If there was a program, I wouldn’t know. I don’t feel like students knew there was a bullying program and if there is a bullying program, I feel like that they wouldn’t know how to like sign up for it. They don’t promote the sign up or just like call. None of that.

All participants from this study were recruited from the same school. However, there were discrepant cases. Contrary to the accounts of other former bullying victims, Participant 2, 4, and 9 stated the school had anti-bullying programs, practices, and trainings. Participant 9 described the anti-bullying programs as “they show you the PowerPoint and they say some things and that’s it.” Participant 2 stated:

Once a month there was a meeting where the counselor and the principal talked to the whole school in the gym in the training. There were lists that teachers would get about either 2 students or multiple students that could not be near each other so they would try to enforce it by separating them or not having them in the same

place. The principals or teachers were taught to be observant. Uh personally, it really worked because when staff actually cared and when they were going through instead of like you know basically doing like separating once and then never again. So they would try to see like normal checkups on how the victims were doing and how the bullies are doing. Seeing if there's any problems or anything like that.

Participant 4 described the anti-bullying program as follows:

We had this one program. It had a show called Stop Bullying. We used to watch that. Like all the classes used to come in and watch in a room. Then the teacher will explain the video and then they'll post posters around say stop bullying. And our guidance counselor would, you know, check up on everybody, see how they're doing mostly. The kids will lie to the guidance counselor because they don't want to be considered a snitch. A snitch can be defined as an informer, and this carries a negative implication.

## **Research Question 2**

The second research question was as follows: What do bullying victims believe is needed to prevent incidents of bullying? Exploring the perceptions of former bullying victims may provide beneficial information regarding the development and implementation of effective anti-bullying efforts. Themes that emerged regarding what is needed to prevent incidents of bullying included policies should include elements that equip school staff to handle bullying incidents, and policies should include coping

strategies for bullying victims.

### ***Policies Should Include Elements That Equip School Staff to Handle Bullying***

#### ***Incidents***

During emergent coding, former bullying victims expressed the need for anti-bullying policy elements that equip school staff to handle bullying incidents. Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9 described efforts they wish they had when they were in school and advice, they have about preventing bullying in school. Participants 4, 7, and 10 did not have any suggestions about what was needed to prevent bullying in the school environment.

Participants expressed a need to equip school staff to handle bullying incidents. When asked about things he wished were different about the bullying prevention at school, Participant 1 stated “that teachers would care.” Participant 2 stated the school needed “even more options on bullying prevention” so it could “help more because some most of the ways that we try to treat bullying doesn’t help because students are scared to speak out because they would most of the time adults do not pay attention to them or hear them out on what they have to say.” When asked what things he wished were different, he provided the following response:

Things I want to be different. But the way we have it now is pretty good. Instead of the teachers having to like move two people from each other, they should have ways to where the bullies and the victim it’s going to be talking about why they chose basically each other, because instead of moving them away from each other

not even them talking about their feelings. With the you can basically help the relationship between both of them.

Participant 3 stated he wished he had the “confidence to join in these programs and promote with the teachers” and wanted “more kids to get along.” Participant 5 stated he wanted “better enforcement and reinforcement” and “better communication with the principals and teachers talking to the students and helping them.” Participant 6 wanted “bullies to be punished and not be punished because the color of their skin.” Participant 9 stated “I wish they talk to you more. Like help you understand why it’s not good for you to bully.” Participant 8 stated the following:

Yeah, I do wish teachers would just not just be so much as teachers and also like try to figure out what was going on in our life, what it was like when we come to school, what’s going on outside of school and actually sit down with us and not just teach us.

### ***Policies Should Include Coping Strategies***

It was found that former bullying victims perceived that effective coping strategies for dealing with bullying at school were needed to prevent incidents of bullying. Specific questions were asked about the strategies that the participants used when experiencing bullying at school, and if they felt the strategies were effective at preventing and stopping bullying. The actions that participants used to stop or deal with bullying were interpreted as coping strategies. Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 described coping mechanisms they used when being bullied and the ineffectiveness of these



strategies. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 9 included coping mechanisms as things they wish they would have done in high school to prevent bullying or as advice for students who are currently dealing with bullying. There were no discrepant cases.

Participants provided details about the strategies they used to stop bullying when it was happening and prevent bullying from happening to them. Participants also discussed their perceived ineffectiveness. Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 provided information about the strategies they used when being bullied and their perceived ineffectiveness. Participant 1 stated “I ran away” and “Cry” when asked what he did when he was bullied, and he stated he felt these strategies “did not work.” Participant 3 stated “I had the shivers, but I had to stand my ground”, “I just tried to stay away from him”, and “If I see him come my way, I’m going to go another way.” The shivers described the participant shaking from fear due to being bullied. When asked if he felt these strategies worked, he responded “No, it would have made him more aggressive.” Participant 4 stated he would “take a different path to class or don’t go to certain spots,” “staying to myself,” “hanging out with my close friends”, and “in the moment of being bullied I’ve tried to ignore and walk away” to cope with being bullied. He also stated “Ignoring it didn’t work well” in response to the effectiveness of things he did to stop or prevent being bullied. Participant 5 stated he “had to zone out,” and “turn to like football and music.” Zone out referred to disassociating from the things that were happening when being bullied. He provided the response below regarding a specific instance when he was coping with being bullied.

I try to deescalate the situation before it turned into a bigger situation. So, I just stepped back and put on music, turn my music on, my headphones in. Alright, I ain't finna do this in school you is trying to show out in front of people. That's what a bully is. They a person who's trying to get their reputation off bullying, trying to be belittling somebody, that's all the bully is.

When asked if he felt these strategies worked, he responded "Not all the time."

Participant 7 stated he "just tell her to back off" and "tell them to just relax" in response to being bullied. He responded "it didn't really work" in response to the questions about the effectiveness of this strategy. Participant 8 stated "I let them bully me and I ran to the guidance." When asked if this strategy worked, he responded "Not at all. If anything it made it worse for me."

When asked about things he wished he could have done differently when dealing with bullying in high school, Participant 1 stated he "wished I stood up for myself."

Participant 2 stated he wished he "reached out for help from other people. Basically, talking to them or to other family and stuff, so they could at least help me through the tough time." Participant 3 stated the following regarding what he would tell individuals being bullied at school:

I just want to tell people if you get put in my position I feel like you should just walk away and try to stay focused on what you have in front of you instead of what somebody trying to do to you, because at the end of the day everybody gone wanna get put in or fit in, or you know, try to get put in with a crowd that is a

showoff. Basically, like so I feel like if you ever get put in my position that I was in, you just need to you know, tell somebody and if they don't work, you just stand your ground or you approach them yourself.

Participant 9 stated "I wish I could help if I see somebody get bullied and help him out and get him out of the situation." Participant 4 stated he wished he would have done the following things differently when dealing with being bullied in school:

I wish I was more of a upstander when I was in school. I wish I had stand up for people, wish I was bigger. I could stop a lot of things from happening and step in when I was able to have the confidence to join in these programs and promote with the teachers.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

There were no adjustments to the strategies stated in Chapter 3. Credibility and confirmability were established using member checking. The first three individuals who were interviewed agreed to be included in the member checking process. Research findings were shared with these three study participants via an electronic meeting using Microsoft Teams. The quotes, codes, themes, and findings were discussed in detail to ensure information was accurately interpreted. The study participants provided feedback to ensure the research was reflective of responses. No changes were suggested based on these discussions. Dependability and inter-coder reliability was established via peer review. An independent peer researcher reviewed transcripts, coding, and themes to determine if coding was performed accurately. It was determined that the coding and

themes were reflective of the data collected in the transcripts.

### **Summary**

The first research question was “Why do bullying victims believe anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective in preventing bullying incidents?” Thematic analysis revealed three themes. Themes that emerged regarding the reasons anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective included school staff were unconcerned, school staff actions were ineffective, and anti-bullying policies were nonexistent or unknown. The second research question was “What do bullying victims believe is needed to prevent incidents of bullying?”. Thematic analysis revealed two themes. Themes that emerged to explain what was needed to prevent incidents of bullying included policies that included elements that equip school staff to handle bullying incidents and policies that include coping strategies. Chapter 5 includes research discussions, conclusions, and recommendations. This includes an introduction, interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusions.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of former high school bullying victims about why anti-bullying programs have not reduced incidents of bullying. Bullying and bullying prevention efforts were explored from the point of view of former bullying victims. Findings suggest that some reasons why anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective in preventing bullying incidents include school staff were unconcerned about bullying, school staff actions to prevent and stop bullying were ineffective, and anti-bullying policies were nonexistent or unknown to bullying victims. Participants also suggested that to prevent incidents of bullying, schools need anti-bullying programs that include elements that equip school staff to handle bullying incidents and policies that include coping strategies to assist bullying victims.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

This study was designed to explore the perceptions of former high school bullying victims about why anti-bullying programs have not reduced incidents of bullying and the efforts needed to prevent and stop bullying in the school environment. Participants' perceptions were explored through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development theory. This theory is used to understand and explain human development through interconnections between a growing human and the environment in which they exist (Crawford, 2020).

Findings of this research study suggest anti-bullying efforts are ineffective in preventing bullying in the school environment because school staff were unconcerned

about bullying, school staff actions to prevent and stop bullying were ineffective, and anti-bullying policies were nonexistent or unknown. The unconcerned nature of staff is supported by previous research. For example, Luca et al. (2019) found that teachers do not always intervene in bullying incidents because some consider bullying a normal part of interactions, do not feel sympathy for the victims, or do not perceive the behavior as bullying. Gradinariu (2021) also found that teachers' attitudes may encourage bullying if they do not perceive bullying as serious or ignore bullying behavior altogether. The current research expands these previous findings to principals and counselors.

Participants felt principals, counselors, and teachers were unconcerned about bullying in the school environment. Participant 1 responded, "They don't care about the students." When asked about the interactions between bullies and bullying victims, Participant 4 stated counselors felt like "you got bullied and you need to get over it." Participants 1, 4, 5, and 10 felt teachers did not care about the students being bullied. Participant 4 stated, "I remember one time I was getting paper thrown at me and the teacher didn't really say anything." Participants 5 and 10 similarly implied that teachers were too busy with instruction to care about bullying. This evidence suggests that one reason anti-bullying efforts are ineffective may be because school staff, specifically principals, counselors, and teachers, are unconcerned about bullying happening in the school environment.

The ineffective actions of staff to prevent bullying also emerged as a reason bullying prevention efforts are ineffective. Teachers' attitudes may encourage bullying if

they do not perceive bullying as serious or ignore bullying behavior altogether (Gradinariu, 2021; Luca et al., 2019), and many teachers do not possess the knowledge and skills needed to recognize bullying. In the current study, participants stated that the actions of teachers were ineffective at stopping or preventing bullying. Participant 1 stated teachers “don’t play a role” in preventing bullying and “if the teacher didn’t see that he was bullying me, they didn’t believe it” referring to bullying occurrences happening at the school. Former bullying victims also reported that the actions of principals and counselors were also ineffective at preventing bullying incidents.

Participants reported that principals are “not doing good enough for bullying,” and the actions of principals “ain’t gonna work” to prevent bullying. Participants also reported that counselors “don’t do enough things to stop bullying,” and “counselors didn’t do nothing” to stop incidents of bullying when they happened. This was contrary to existing research indicating that principal involvement in anti-bullying programs may improve the school climate (Reyes-Rodriguez et al., 2021), and school counselors often assume the role as the anti-bullying specialist (Arcuri, 2018; Hannon et al., 2019). The difference in participants’ perceptions and previous research on actions principals and counselors take to stop bullying may be because of a lack of training and awareness. In the current study, most participants felt that an anti-bullying program did not exist, implying principals and counselors may not have had the opportunity to be trained on the knowledge and skills needed to intervene in bullying incidents.

The theme that anti-bullying programs were nonexistent or unknown also arose as

a reason anti-bullying efforts were ineffective. Research implied that anti-bullying strategies may work (Brown et al., 2021; Gaffney et al., 2019); however, within the school included in the current research, there was conflicting findings about the existence and strategies of the anti-bullying program. The current research study was conducted at one high school, and participants graduated within the past 5 years. Most participants stated that anti-bullying policies, programs, and trainings did not exist. One participant stated, “if they did, I wouldn’t be able to tell.” Three participants stated there was an anti-bullying program at the school, but they reported different descriptions of the program, implying the program may not have been well known or consistently enforced.

Participant 4 described a program called Stop Bullying.

Within the program, students watched a video, teachers explained the video, posters were visible throughout the school, and the guidance counselor checked on students. Participant 9 described an anti-bullying program that included a PowerPoint presentation and explanation of the presentation. Participant 2 described teachers receiving a list of students to keep separated, and principals and teachers being taught to observe bullying behavior that was reported. This presents three different experiences with anti-bullying efforts at the school and may imply inconsistent administration of the program. Overall, in this research study it was suggested that for most participants, anti-bullying programs did not exist or were unknown, and this may be one reason they are ineffective.

Findings from this study also suggested that anti-bullying programs should



include elements that equip school staff (i.e., principals, counselors, and teachers) to handle bullying incidents. Teachers are expected to be able to identify incidents of bullying (Luca et al., 2019), but though teachers may understand the social context of bullying, they may not know the best way to intervene in bullying incidents when it occurs in the classroom (Divecha & Barackett, 2019). Recent research suggests the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs may increase if teachers are provided knowledge, skills, and training to adjust attitudes and self-efficacy (van Verseveld et al., 2019).

Participants were asked what they wished was different to prevent bullying when they were in school. Participants wanted staff to show concern, have additional anti-bullying knowledge and skills, and have strategies to enforce the anti-bullying policies. Participant 8 expressed wanting teachers to know and understand more about what bullying victims experience inside and outside of school and stated teachers should “try to figure out what was going on in our life, what it is like when we come to school, what’s going on outside of school.” Participant 9 implied he wanted staff to have discussions with bullies, so they understand the effects of their actions on bullying victims: “I wish they talk to you more” and “help you understand why it is not good to bully.” Participant 5 specified wanting “better enforcement and reinforcement” of anti-bullying policies, and Participant 6 wanted bullies to receive punishment for bullying activities. The current findings imply a need for school staff to be better equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to prevent and stop bullying.

Former bullying victims also perceived that anti-bullying programs should

include policies that provide coping strategies to assist bullying victims in preventing and stopping bullying. Research implies that anti-bullying programs may provide students with a reality check about changing their behaviors, attitudes, and habits so they can adopt positive ways of thinking and acting in the school environment (Brown et al., 2020). Coping strategies were explored in this research to identify the ways participants responded to bullying incidents. Participants who reported knowledge of an anti-bullying program described watching videos and PowerPoints, receiving explanations from teachers about information in videos, and having the guidance counselor check in on students. It is unknown if any of the information provided to students as part of anti-bullying efforts included coping strategies specifically to assist the bullying victim.

Participants mentioned several coping strategies they used to prevent or stop bullying and their perceived ineffectiveness. Erath et al., (2019) identified six coping strategies that the bullying victims used to combat bullying incidents including conflict resolution, revenge-seeking, support-seeking, cognitive distancing, prosocial behavior, and aggressive behavior. Cognitive distancing strategies were used most often among bullying victims. The actions of participants included doing things to distract from being bullied, taking different routes to classes, ignoring, and walking/ running away.

Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, and 10 used cognitive distancing strategies to cope with being bullied. Participant 3 described ways he tried to avoid the bully and stated he “just tried to stay away from him... if I see him come my way, I’m going to go another way,” and “I had to pretend I could not see the board and move up front.” Participant 8

described ways he would distract himself from being bullied and stated some of the things he did were to go into his “own world” and “zoning out”. Participants used conflict resolution strategies to prevent and stop bullying. Participants 2, 3, 5, and 7 tried to talk to the bully directly and resolve issues. Participant 2 stated he would “talk to the bully” and Participant 7 stated he would “Tell them (the bully) to just relax” to try and stop the bullying from happening.

Participants also used aggressive behavior to cope with being bullied. Participants 3, 5, and 8 described aggressive behaviors used by bullying victims to prevent or stop bullying. Participant 5 stated students who were bullying victims brought weapons to school to stop bullies. Participant 8 stated he would “stand up, but don’t stand up too far where it leads to you getting in trouble.”

None of the participants reported that the strategies they used worked to prevent or stop bullying from happening. The participants’ perception that coping strategies did not work aligns with findings from Hong et al. (2020) who found that tough demeanor was associated with higher levels of peer victimization, and avoidance was not significantly associated with peer victimization. When analyzing peer relationships from the ecosystem theory perspective, Qiu (2021) found that peer acceptance is essential for adolescent relationships, and negative relationships and lack of support from peers may contribute to incidents of bullying (Lie et al., 2019). This information implies the need to provide bullying victims coping strategies and peer education related to preventing and stopping bullying incidents.

The data in this research study was examined through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecology of Human Development Theory. Ecology of Human Development consists of five ecological systems including microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The microsystem consists of the individual's direct environment including the places and people the child interacts with directly (Crawford, 2020). Within this research study, the microsystem consisted of the student- staff relationships. This included the relationships between the student and teacher, student and principal, and student and counselor. Former bullying victims recalled their experiences from high school and identified the care and concern of staff and the actions of staff as reasons they felt anti-bullying efforts did not work during their tenure in the school environment.

The mesosystem consists of multiple microsystems and how they interact (Crawford, 2020). The mesosystem for the former bullying victims included the classrooms where they interacted with teachers as the administrator of anti-bullying efforts, and the overall school where they interacted with principals and counselors. Participants in this research study felt that staff members should be equipped to handle bullying incidents if they are to be capable of preventing and stopping bullying in the school environment. The exosystem consists of the interactions between microsystems, but within at least one of the microsystems, the individual is not at the center (Crawford, 2020). The bully's home environment may be a part of the exosystem. Qui (2021) identified the bully's home environment as an exosystem when exploring bullying

through the ecosystem theory.

This research did not explore the exosystem and focused on the systems in which the bullying victim was centered within. The macrosystem can be described as the overarching culture and societal structure (Crawford, 2020). The culture of the school environment is the macrosystem. The school system functions as an organization. Behavior is embedded in the culture of an organization, and school norms may perpetuate inequality, alienation, aggression, or oppression (Qiu, 2021) thus leading to increased incidence of bullying. Participants expressed that teachers, principals, and counselors did not care. This suggests a school environment that does not care about bullying or bullying victims and therefore will be ineffective at preventing or stopping bullying. Most participants also stated that anti-bullying efforts were nonexistent or unknown, and those who knew of anti-bullying efforts had vastly different descriptions of the program and practices.

This may suggest that anti-bullying programs, policies, and trainings are not provided and enforced in a consistent way that encourages an atmosphere that prevents and stops bullying. The chronosystem is a compilation of age as it relates to maturation, and all the environmental changes that happen over the lifetime of an individual which impact his or her development (Lian et. al, 2018). Former bullying victims were asked to recall their time in high school when they experienced bullying and to provide information about ways to prevent bullying in the school environment. Participants perceived the coping strategies they used as ineffective, and that better coping strategies

would be effective at helping bullying victims and preventing bullying incidents.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were limitations to this study, including sample size, geographic confines of the sample, effect of potential researcher bias, and the qualitative nature of the study. A total of 10 former bullying victims participated in this study. Bullying is a persistent problem across the United States, and this represents a small sample of former bullying victims nationwide. The participants for this research study were recruited from former bullying victims who graduated from one school district within a five-year period. This represents a small part of the schools throughout the state and throughout the nation. It is possible that a broader sample that expanded to multiple school districts throughout the state or nation would have revealed data that either supported or changed the findings from the data collected in this study.

The researcher has over a decade of experience as a teacher and coach in various school systems. It was the researcher's knowledge and experience with bullying victims and bullies that led to the interest in this topic. Due to the researcher's personal experience, there was a chance that personal biases may have influenced the analysis of the data. Individuals who are current or past students of the researcher were not included in this study. Although the study was designed to minimize research bias, there was a chance that the researcher's personal experiences influenced interpretation of the data.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, findings may be subjective, and results cannot be verified. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data and determine findings.

Information collected in these interviews cannot be verified, and information is based solely on the interpretations of the experiences of the individuals included in the research study. To encourage objectivity, the focus of the study was clearly defined, variables were identified, and steps were outlined before the start of the research study. While information collected via interviews may not be verifiable, it is assumed that the perceptions of high school bullying victims are the truthful recollections of events in the lives of participants. While findings may not be generalizable, it is important to perform this research to identify the perceptions of bullying victims.

### **Recommendations**

The current research explored the perceptions of former high school bullying victims about why anti-bullying programs have not reduced incidents of bullying, focusing on only former high school bullying victims as participants. Future research should explore the reasons anti-bullying efforts are ineffective from the point of view of the bully, principals, teachers, and counselors to gain additional knowledge about the administration of anti-bullying efforts, and how this is communicated and enforced among students.

In the current research former bullying victims retrospectively expressed the reasons they felt anti-bullying efforts did not work. Through the lens of Ecology of Human Development, it may be assumed that within the chronosystem former bullies may have a different perception of their actions, given they have matured with age. They may have an advantageous perspective regarding why anti-bullying efforts were

ineffective and recommendations for anti-bullying strategies that may be effective.

Teachers, principals, and school counselors emerged as important stakeholders in anti-bullying efforts. Participants concluded that these school staff members need to be equipped to handle bullying incidents. Teachers, principals, and counselors may present a unique perspective on why anti-bullying efforts do not work and what is needed to prevent bullying. Additional research is needed to explore the perceptions of additional stakeholders regarding anti-bullying efforts to obtain their insights into why anti-bullying efforts often fail and what might help to prevent and reduce bullying. These insights may shed light on the gap in practice, since the existing interventions have not worked, and the schools have not been able to prevent bullying despite their efforts.

### **Implications**

This study may positively impact positive social change in the form of improved outcomes on the individual level. The negative impact of bullying on individuals is well documented. Bullying victims have experienced psychosomatic distress which impairs learning and student achievement (McNamara, 2021); and bullying victimization has been linked to a decrease in academic performance, increase in adolescent suicide, and an increase in homicide (Kennedy, 2020; World Health Organization, 2022).

Some anti-bullying programs have helped maintain safety and positive discipline in the school environment which subsequently increase student learning and achievement (Chou et al., 2020; Olweus & Limber, 2019). The current research identifies possible reasons anti-bullying efforts have been ineffective and recommendations for strategies



that may be effective at preventing bullying. Findings suggest that anti-bullying programs should include elements that equip school staff to handle bullying incidents and policies that include coping strategies to assist bullying victims. Implementing these efforts to reduce and prevent incidents of bullying may contribute to positive social change.

### **Conclusions**

This research explored the perceptions of high school bullying victims on anti-bullying efforts through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development theory. Bullying is considered an epidemic in the K-12 educational school setting in the United States (Serwacki et al., 2022). The negative impact bullying has on bullying victims may include a decrease in academic performance, increase in adolescent suicide, and an increase in homicide (Kennedy, 2020; World Health Organization, 2022).

Findings from this research suggest that some reasons anti-bullying efforts are ineffective include school staff were unconcerned about bullying, school staff actions to prevent and stop bullying were ineffective, and anti-bullying policies were nonexistent or unknown to bullying victims; and anti-bullying programs should include elements that equip school staff to handle bullying incidents and policies that include coping strategies to assist bullying victims.

Findings from this research points to specific reasons why anti-bullying efforts do not work. Participants felt staff were unconcerned about bullying, the actions that staff took to prevent or stop bullying was ineffective, and anti-bullying policies, programs, and trainings were nonexistent or inconsistent. The finding that staff are unconcerned about

bullying is supported by Luca et al. (2019) who found that teachers do not always intervene in bullying incidents because some consider bullying a normal part of interactions, do not feel sympathy for the victims, or do not perceive the behavior as bullying. The finding that the actions of staff are ineffective was supported by Gradinariu (2021) who found that teachers' attitudes may encourage bullying if they do not perceive bullying as serious or ignore bullying behavior altogether, and many teachers do not possess the knowledge and skills needed to recognize bullying. It is important to note that most participants stated there was not an anti-bullying program, and the participants who stated the school did have an anti-bullying program described it very differently implying inconsistent administration of the program.

Findings from this study also suggest that anti-bullying programs should include elements that equip school staff (i.e., principals, counselors, and teachers) to handle bullying incidents. Participants who reported having an anti-bullying program did not describe any methods that included staff training. It was only disclosed that teachers were provided a list of students to keep separated due to previous bullying encounters and counselors checked in on students who had previously reported being bullied. It is not clear in this research study what the check-in entails. Teachers are expected to be able to identify incidents of bullying (Luca et al., 2019). Recent research implies principal's involvement in bullying prevention positively impacts school climate (Reyes-Rodriguez et al., 2021). School counselors also implement effective policies to decrease bullying in schools (Lie et al., 2019).

Research participants wished that the school staff were able to assist bullying victims and perceived the need for staff to better administer anti-bullying strategies and apply punishments to bullies. Former bullying victims believe that anti-bullying programs should include policies that provide coping strategies to assist bullying victims in preventing and stopping bullying. Participants who reported having an antibully program described being shown a video and PowerPoint presentation, but it is unknown if this information included coping strategies or methods specifically for bullying victims. Participants mentioned several coping strategies used to prevent or stop bullying but reported none of them worked. Participants also mentioned the need for effective coping strategies when dealing with bullying incidents. This research presents findings regarding anti-bullying efforts that may improve the school environment by reducing or preventing bullying.

#### References

- Al-Raqqad, H., Al-Bourini, E., Al-Talahn, F., & Aranki, R. (2017). The Impact of School Bullying on Students' Academic Achievement From Teachers' Point of View. *International Education Studies*, 10(6), 44–50. <https://schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/ASCA-National-Model-for-School-Counseling-Programs/Executive-Summary>
- American School Counselor Association. (2016). ASCA Ethical Standards for School

Counselors. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/f041cbd0-7004-47a5-ba01-3a5d657c6743/Ethical-Standards.pdf>

- Analish, C., & Indartono, S. (2019). Ecological theory: Preventing student bullying to promote culture of peace. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 323, 239–244. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/125910006.pdf>
- Arango, A., Cole-Lewis, Y., Lindsay, R., Yeguez, C, Clark, M., & King, C. (2018). The Protective Role of Connectedness on Depression and Suicidal Ideation Among Bully Victimized Youth. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15374416.2018.1443456>
- Arcadepani, F, Eskenaz, D., Fidalgo, T., & Hong, J. (2019). An Exploration of the Link Between Bullying Perpetration and Substance Use: A review of the literature. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 2, 20–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838019837593>
- Arcuri, N. (2018). Counseling Relationship Experiences for K-12 School Counselors who also Fulfill the Role of Anti-Bullying Specialist. *Journal of School Counseling*, 16(5). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1182116>
- Arsenault, L., Bowes, L., Shakoor, S. (2010). Bullying Victimization in Youths and Mental Health Problems: Much ado about nothing. *Psychological Medicine*, 40(5), 717–729. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19785920/>
- Arif, S., Khan, S., & Rauf, N. (2019). Peer Victimization, School Connectedness, and Mental Well-Being Among Adolescents. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 34(4), 835–851.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338860633\\_Peer\\_Victimization\\_School\\_Connectedness\\_and\\_Mental\\_Well-Being\\_among\\_Adolescents](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338860633_Peer_Victimization_School_Connectedness_and_Mental_Well-Being_among_Adolescents)

- Atomare, A., Adam, M., Cappandocia, M., Weiss, J., Beran, T., & Smith-Demers, A. (2016). When Push Comes to Shove: How are Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder Coping with Bullying? *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 32*(3–4), 200–229. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1151812>
- Baldry, A., & Farrington, D. (2000). Bullies and Delinquents: Personal Characteristics and Parental Styles. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 10*, 17–31. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Bullies-and-delinquents%3A-personal-characteristics-Baldry-Farrington/26e3e5ff298b69db7f30ad0aff8170b7d630c972>
- Basile, K. Clayton, H., Degue, S., Gilford, J., Vagi, K., Suarez, N., Zwald, M., Lowry, R. (2020). Interpersonal Violence Victimization Among High School Students — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States. *Pub Med Central, 28–37*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7440202/>
- Bavarian, N., Lewis, K., Acock, A., DuBois, D., Yan, Z., Vuchinich, S., Silverthorn, N., Day, J., & Flay, B. (2016). Effects of a School-Based Social-Emotional and Character Development Program on Health Behaviors; A Matched Pair, Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of Primary Prevention, 37*, 87–105. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5007948/>
- Bavarian, N., Lewis, K., DuBois, D., Acock, A., Vuchinich, S., Silverthorn, N., Snyder,

- F., Day, J., Ji, P., & Flay, B. (2013). Using Social- Emotional and Character Development to Improve Academic Outcomes: A Matched-Pair, Cluster-Randomized Controlled Trial in Low Income, Urban Schools. *Journal of School Health*, 83(11), 771–779. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24138347/>
- Bowes, L., Maughan, B., Ball, H., Shakoor, S., Ouellet-Morin, I., Caspi, A., & Arseneault, L. (2013). Chronic Bullying Victimization Across School Transition: The Role of Genetic and Environmental Influences. *Development and Psychopathology*, 25, 333–346. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3881278/>
- Bradbury, S., Dubow, E., & Domoff, S. (2018). How do Adolescents Learn Cyber-Victimization? Coping Skills? An Examination of Parent and Peer Victimization. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 47(9), 1866–1897. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29536327/>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development. *American Psychology*, 32(7), 513–571. <https://doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). *International encyclopedia of education 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Ecological Models of Human Development. Freeman. [https://impactofspecialneeds.weebly.com/uploads/3/4/1/9/3419723/ecological\\_models\\_of\\_human\\_development.pdf](https://impactofspecialneeds.weebly.com/uploads/3/4/1/9/3419723/ecological_models_of_human_development.pdf)
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Evans, G. (2000). Developmental Science in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Emerging Questions, Theoretical Models, Research Design and Empirical

Models. *Social Development*, 9(1), 115–125. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9507.00114>

Brown, J., Karikari, I., & Abraham, S. (2021). Left off the route: A qualitative Examination of Urban Bus Drivers Wanting to be Players in Bullying Prevention Solution. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(7-8). <https://doi:10.1177/0886260518787204>

Brown, J., Keesler, J., Karikari, I., Ashrifi, G., & Kausch., M. (2020). School Principals Putting Bullying Policy to Practice. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-25. <https://doi:10.1177/0886260520914553>

Casper, D., & Card, T. (2017). Overt and Relational Victimization: A Meta-Analytic Review of Their Overlap and Associations with Social–Psychological Adjustment. *Child Development*, 88 (2), 466–483. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27709610/>

Castellví, P., Miranda-Mendizábal, A., Parés-Badell, O., Almenara, J., Alonso, I., Blasco, M., & Alonso, J. (2017). Exposure to Violence, a Risk for Suicide in Youths and Young Adults. A Meta-Analysis of Longitudinal Studies. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 135(3), 195-211. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27995627/>

Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Research Data: Is it as Easy as it Sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy teaching and Learning*, 10, 1877 – 1297. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30025784/>

Castro Silva, J., Amante, L., & Morgado, J. (2017). School Climate, Principal Support

- and Collaboration Among Portuguese Teachers. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(4), 505-520. [https://doi: 10.1080/02619768.2017.1295445](https://doi:10.1080/02619768.2017.1295445)
- Chou, W, Wang, P., Hsiaao, R., Hu, H., Yen, C. (2020). Role of School Bullying Involvement in Depression, Anxiety, Suicidality, and Low Self-Esteem Among Adolescents With High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Front Psychiatry*, 11, 9-23. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32082201/>
- Coelho, C., & Dell’Aglia, D. (2019). School Climate and School Satisfaction Among High School Adolescents. *Psicologia: Teoria e Prática*, 21(1), 265- 281. <https://doi:10.5935/1980/6906/psicologia.v21n1p265-281>
- Committee for Children. (2014). Bullying Prevention in Schools Starts with Social-Emotional Learning. [https://assets.ctfassets.net/98bcvzcrxclo/572krvYG2sugMcscwcioe8/389eafdbee237954b507f5560e85d2a7/SEL\\_Bullying\\_Paper.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/98bcvzcrxclo/572krvYG2sugMcscwcioe8/389eafdbee237954b507f5560e85d2a7/SEL_Bullying_Paper.pdf)
- Cosma, A., Walsh, S., Chester, K., Callaghan, M., Molcho, M., Craig, W., & Pickett, W. (2020). Bullying Victimization: Time Trends and the Overlap Between Traditional and Cyberbullying Across Countries in Europe and North America. *International Journal Public Health*, 65(1), 75-85. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31844919/>
- Crawford, M. (2020). Ecological Systems Theory: Exploring the Development of the Theoretical Framework as Conceived by Bronfenbrenner. *Journal of Public Health Issues and Practice*. 4(2). [https://doi: 10.33790/jphip1100170](https://doi:10.33790/jphip1100170)



- De Oliveira, W., Silva, M., da Silva, J., Carlos, D., Pereira, B., & dos Santos, M. (2021). Implications of School Bullying Victimization in Mental Health: Qualitative Evidence. *Psico-USF*, 26(4), 673-684.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9251019/>
- Divecha, D., & Barackett, M. (2019). Rethinking School-Based Bullying Prevention Through the Lens of Social and Emotional Learning: a Bioecological Perspective. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, 1, 1-21.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332705186\\_Rethinking\\_School-Based\\_Bullying\\_Prevention\\_Through\\_the\\_Lens\\_of\\_Social\\_and\\_Emotional\\_Learning\\_a\\_Bioecological\\_Perspective](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332705186_Rethinking_School-Based_Bullying_Prevention_Through_the_Lens_of_Social_and_Emotional_Learning_a_Bioecological_Perspective)
- Eastman, M., Moore, A., Cecilione, J., Hettema, J., & Robertson-Nay, R. (2018). Confirmatory Factor Structure and Psychometric Properties of the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 40, 725-735. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30416254/>
- Erath, S., Kaepler, A., & Tu, K. (2019). Coping Peer Victimization Predicts Peer Outcomes Across the Transition to Middle School. *Social Development*, 28(1), 22-40. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/sode.12330>
- Esplelage, D., Low, S., Polanin, J., & Brown, E. (2015). Clinical Trial of Second Step© Middle School Program: Impact on Aggression and Victimization. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 37, 52-63.  
<https://doi.:10.1016/j.appdev.2014.11.007>

Evans, C., Cotter, K., & Smokowski, P. (2017). Giving Victims of Bullying a Voice: A Qualitative Study of Post Bullying Reactions and Coping Strategies. *Child Adolescence Social Work Journal*, 34, 543-555.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8583182/>

Fisher, H., Moffitt, T., Houts, R., Belsky, D., Arseneault, L., & Caspi, A. (2012). Bullying Victimization and Risk of Self-Harm in Early Adolescence: Longitudinal Cohort Study. *British Medical Journal*, 344, e2683.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.e2683>

- Foody, M., Murphy, H., Downes, P., Normal, J. (2018). Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools in Ireland: Principal's Responses and Perceptions. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 36(2), 126-140. <https://doi: 10.1080/02643944.2018.1453859>
- Forsberg, C., Wood, L., Smith, J., Varjas, K, Meyers, J., Tomas, J., & Thornberg, R. (2018). Students' Views of Factors Affecting Bystander Behaviors in Response to School Bullying: A Cross-Collaborative Conceptual Qualitative Analysis. *Research Papers in Education*, 33(1), 127-142. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1163022>
- Gaffney, H., Ttofi, M., Farrington, D. (2019). Evaluating the Effectiveness of School Bullying Prevention Programs: An Updated Meta-Analytical Review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 45. 111-133. <https://doi: 10.1016/j.avb.2018.07.001>
- Gaffney, H., Ttofi, M., Farrington, D. (2021a). What Works in Anti-Bullying Programs? Analysis of Effective Intervention Components. *Journal of School Psychology*, 85, 37-56. <https://doi: 10.1016/j.jsp.2020.12.002>.
- Gaffney, H., Ttofi, M., & Farrington, D. (2021b). The Effectiveness of School-Based Programs to Reduce Bullying Perpetration and Victimization: An Updated Systemic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Campbell Systemic Review*, 17(2), e1143. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350646524\\_Effectiveness\\_of\\_school-based\\_programs\\_to\\_reduce\\_bullying\\_perpetration\\_and\\_victimization\\_An\\_updated\\_systematic\\_review\\_and\\_meta-analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350646524_Effectiveness_of_school-based_programs_to_reduce_bullying_perpetration_and_victimization_An_updated_systematic_review_and_meta-analysis)
- Geoffroy, M., Boivin, M., Arseneault, L., Turecki, G., Vitaro, F., Brendgen, M., Renaud, J., Seguin, J., Tremblay, R., & Cote, S. (2016). Associations Between Peer

Victimization and Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempt During Adolescence: Results from a Prospective Population-Based Cohort. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 55, 99–105, [https://doi: 10.1016/j.jaac.2015.11.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2015.11.010)

Glew, G., Fan, M., Katon, W., & Rivara, F. (2008). Bullying and School Safety. *Journal of Pediatrics*, 152, 123-128. [https://doi: 10.1016/j.jpeds.2007.05.045](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2007.05.045)

Gomes, A., Martins, M., Farinha, M., Silva, B., Ferreira, E., Caldas, A., & Brandao, T. (2020). Bullying's Negative Effect on Academic Achievement. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 9(3), 243-268. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1275422>

Gomez-Ortiz, O., Apolinario, O., Romera, E., Ortega-Ruiz, R. (2019). The Role of Family in Bullying and Cyberbullying Involvement: Examining a New Typology of Parental Education Management Based on Adolescents' View of Their Parents. *Faculty of Education and Health*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8010025>

Gordon, S. (2020). Research Shows Rise in Cyberbullying During COVID-19 Pandemic. Very Well Family. <https://www.verywellfamily.com/cyberbullying-increasing-during-global-pandemic-4845901>

Gradinariu, T. (2021). An Ecosystem Approach to Preventing Bullying in School: Risk Factors Associated with School. *Lumen Proceedings: Vol. 17 Lumen Congress 2021*. [https://doi: 10.18662/wlc2021/27](https://doi.org/10.18662/wlc2021/27)

Grissom, J., Egalite, A., & Lindsay, C. (2021). How Principals Affect Students and

Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research. The Wallace Foundation: New York. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/How-Principals-Affect-Students-and-Schools.pdf>

Hannon, M., Sheely-Moore, A, Conklin, T., Reitter, A., & Gainor, K. (2019). The Experiences of School Counselors as Anti-Bullying Specialists. *Professional School Counseling*, 22(1), 1-10. <https://doi: 10.1177%2F2156759X19870799>

Hanson, R., Pugliese, C., & Grady, S. (2020). Parent and Family Involvement in Education. U. S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013028rev.pdf>

Haugen, J., Sutter, C., Tinstman Jones, J., & Campbell, L. (2020). School District Anti-Bullying Policies: A State-Wide Content Analysis. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, 2, 309-323.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337698939\\_School\\_District\\_Anti-Bullying\\_Policies\\_a\\_State-Wide\\_Content\\_Analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337698939_School_District_Anti-Bullying_Policies_a_State-Wide_Content_Analysis)

Herba, C., Ferdinand, R., Stijnen, T., Veenstra, R., Olde-Hinkel, A., Ormel, J., & Verhulst, F. (2008). Victimization and Suicide Ideation in the TRAILS study: Specific Vulnerabilities of Victims. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 49, 867–876. <https://doi: 10.1111/j.1469-7610.2008.01900.x>

Hong, J., Kim, D., & Piquero. (2017). Assessing the Links Between Punitive Parenting, Peer Deviance, Social Deviance, Social Isolation and Bullying Perpetration and Victimization in South Korean Adolescents. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. 73, 63-70.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.09.017>

Hong, J., William-Butler, A., Cathe, R., Kim, J., & Voisin, D. (2020). Relationship Between Coping Strategies and Peer Victimization Among Low-Income African American Youth Living in Chicago. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 49(2), 289-302.

<https://scholarworks.bwise.kr/skku/handle/2021.sw.skku/5196>

Huang, Y., Espelage, D., Polanin, J., & Hong, J. (2019). A Meta-Analysis Review of School-Based Anti- Bullying Programs with a Parent Component. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*. 1, 32-44.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330231444\\_A\\_Meta-analytic\\_Review\\_of\\_School-Based\\_Anti-bullying\\_Programs\\_with\\_a\\_Parent\\_Component](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330231444_A_Meta-analytic_Review_of_School-Based_Anti-bullying_Programs_with_a_Parent_Component)

Hutson, E. (2018). Integrative Review of Qualitative Research on the Emotional Experience of Bullying Victimization in Youth. *Journal of School Nursing*, 34(1), 51-59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059840517740192>

Hwang, S., Kim, Y., Koh, Y., & Leventhal, B. (2018). Autism Spectrum Disorder and School Bullying: Who is the Victim? Who is the Perpetrator? *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 48 (1), 225–238.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28936640/>

Jeffrey, J., & Stuart, J. (2019). Do Research Definitions of Bullying Capture the Experiences and Understandings of Young People? A Qualitative Investigation Into the Characteristics of Bullying Behavior. *International Journal of Bullying*

*Prevention*, 7, 1–10.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333674900> Do Research Definitions of Bullying Capture the Experiences and Understandings of Young People A Qualitative Investigation into the Characteristics of Bullying Behaviour

Kann, L., McManus, W., Harris, S., Shanklin, K., Flint, B., Queen, R., Lowry, D., Chyen, L., Whittle, J., Thornton, C., Lim, D., Bradford, Y., Yamakawa, M., Leon, N., Brener, K., & Ethier, A. (2018). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2017. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Surveillance Summaries*, 67(8), 20–21.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29902162/>

Keiler, L. (2018). Teachers' Roles and Identities in Student-Centered Classrooms.

*International Journal of STEM Education*. 5(34). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-018-0131-6>

Kennedy, R. (2020a). A Meta-Analysis of the Outcomes of Bullying Prevention

Programs on Subtypes of Traditional Bullying Victimization: Verbal, relational, and physical. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 55, 1-12. [https://doi:](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2020.101485)

[10.1016/j.avb.2020.101485](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2020.101485).

Kennedy, R. (2020b). Cyberbullying, School Bullying, and Psychological Distress: A

Regional Census of High School Students. *American Journal of Public Health*, 10, 34-42. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22095343/>

Khan, H., & Bhutto, Z. (2020). A Comparison Between Coping Strategies of Bullied and

Non-Bullied Adolescents. *Pakistan Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 19(2), 45-59.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25156292/>

Klomek, A., Barzilay, S., Apter, A., Carli, V., Hoven, C., Sarchiapone, M., Hadlaczky, G., Balazs, J., Keresztesy, A., Brunner, R., Kaess, M., Bobes, J., Saiz, P., Cosman, D., Haring, C., Banzer, R., McMahon, E., Keeley, H., Kahn, J., Postuvan, V., Podlogar, T., Sisack, M., Varnik, A., & Wasserman, D. (2018). Bi-Directional Longitudinal Associations Between Different Types of Bullying Victimization, Suicide Ideation/ Attempts, and Depression Among a Large Sample of European Adolescents. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. 60(2), 209-215. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12951>

Lambe, L., Cioppa, V., Hong, I., & Craig, W. (2019). Standing up to bullying: A social ecological review of peer defending in offline and online contexts. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 45, 54-74. <https://doi: 10.1016/j.avb.2018.05.007>

Lebrun-Harris, L., Sherman, L., Miller, B. (2020). State-level prevalence of bullying victimization among children and adolescents, National Survey of Children's Health, 2016-2017. *Public Health Reports*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0033354920912713>

Levy, M., & Gumpel, T. (2018). The Interplay Between Bystanders' Intervention Styles: An examination of the "bullying circle" approach. *Journal of School Violence*, 17, 339-353. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0886260519880168>

Lewis, K., Schure, M., Bavarian, N., DuBois, D., Day, J., Ji, P., Silverthorn, N., Acock,



A., Vuchinich, S., & Flay, B. (2013). Problem Behavior and Urban, Low-Income Youth: A Randomized Controlled Trial of Positive Action in Chicago. *American Journal of Preventative Health, 44*(6), 622-630.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23683980/>

Lian, Q., Su, Q., Elgar, F., Liu, Z., & Zheng, D. (2018). The Association Between Chronic Bullying Victimization with Weight Status and Body Self-Image: a Cross-National Study in 39 Countries. *Peer J, 6*, e4330-e44430.

<https://doi: 10.7717/peerj.4330>

Lie, S., Ro, O., & Bang, L. (2019). Is Bullying and Eating Associated with Eating Disorders? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 52*(5), 497–514. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30706957/>

Limber, S., Olweus, D., Wang, W., Masiello, M., & Breivik, K. (2018). Evaluation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: A large scale study of U.S. students in grades 3–11. *Journal of School Psychology, 69*, 56–72.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0886260519880168>

Luca, L., Nocentini, A., & Menesini, E. (2019). The Teacher's Role in Preventing Bullying. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 1-8. <https://doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01830>

Malgorzata, W., & Wojciech, F. (2021). Addition to the Bullying. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 36*(19), 11131- 11154.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0886260519880168>

Martinez, M., & Temkin, D. T. (2021). School Bullying has Decreased During the

COVID-19 Pandemic, but Schools Should Prepare for its Return

<https://www.childtrends.org/blog/school-bullying-has-decreased-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-but-schools-must-be-prepared-for-its-return>

McNamara, B. (2021). Bullying and COVID 19: How Teachers Deal with New Bullying Manifestations in Their Classes. *Journal for Leadership and Instruction*, 1, 39-42.

Menesini, E., & Salmivalli, C. (2017). Bullying in Schools: The State of Knowledge and Effective Interventions. *Psychological Health Medicine*, 22, 240–253.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28114811/>

Miller, J., Diiorio, C., & Dudley, W. (2002). Parenting Style and Adolescent's Reaction to Conflict: Is There a Relationship? *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 31(6), 463-

468. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12457579/>

Mischel, J., & Kitsantas, A. (2020). Middle School Students' Perceptions of School Climate, Bullying Prevalence, and Social Support and Coping. *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal*, v23 n1 p51-72.

<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1244007>

Musu, L., Zhang, A., Wang, K., Zhang, J. & Oudekerk, B. A. (2019). Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2018 (NCES 2019-047/NCJ 252571). Washington, DC:

National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and

Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of

Justice. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019047.pdf>

Nansel, T., Craig, W., Overpeck, M., Saluja, G., Ruan, J., & the Health Behaviour in

School-aged Children Bullying Analyses Working Group. (2004). Cross-national consistency in the relationship between bullying behaviours and psychosocial adjustment. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, *158*, 730–736.

<https://doi: 10.1001/archpedi.158.8.730>

Nappa, M., Palladino, B., Mesesini, E., & Baiocco, R. (2018). Teachers' Reaction in Homophobic Bullying Incidents: the Role of Self-Efficacy and Homophobic Attitudes. *Sexual Research Social Policy*, *15*, 208-218.

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Teachers%E2%80%99-Reaction-in-Homophobic-Bullying-the-Role-Nappa-Palladino/4cf1511f477cbae6cd0c877bae863332e042f39f>

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2019). Student Reports of Bullying: Results from the 2017 School Crime Supplement to the National Victimization Survey. *U.S. Department of*

*Education*. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=20150>

Nocenti, A., Fiorentini, G., Di Paola, L., & Menesini, E. (2019). Parents, Family Characteristics and Bullying Behavior: A Systematic Review. *Aggression and*

*Violent Behavior*, *45*, 41-50. <https://doi: 10.1016/j.avb.2018.07.010>

O'Brien, N. (2019). Understanding Alternative Bullying Perspectives Through Research Engagement with Young People. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*(6), 12-28. National

Academies of Sciences Engineering and Medicine (2018). Preventing bullying through science, policy, and practice. Washington, DC: National Academies

Press. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6722199/>

Ossa, F., Jantzer, V., Eppelman, L., Resch, F., Kaess, M. (2021). Effects and Moderators of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) in Germany. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 30*, 1745-1754.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32960324/>

Olweus, D., Limber, S. (2010). The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: Implementation and Evaluation Over Two Decades. In S.R. Jimerson, S.M. Swearer, & D.L. Esplage (Eds.). *Handbook of bullying in schools: An International Perspective* (pp. 377-401). New York: Routledge.

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-06797-027>

Olweus, D., & Limber, S. (2019). The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. In P. K. Smith (Eds) *Making an impact on school bullying: interventions and recommendations* (pp. 23–44). New York: Routledge.

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2019-49457-005>

Olweus, D., Limber, S., & Breivik, K. (2019). Addressing Specific Forms of Bullying: A Large Scale Evaluation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention, 1*(1), 70–84.

[https://olweus.sites.clemson.edu/documents/Olweus2019\\_Article\\_AddressingSpecificFormsOfBully.pdf](https://olweus.sites.clemson.edu/documents/Olweus2019_Article_AddressingSpecificFormsOfBully.pdf)

Olweus, D., Solberg, M., & Breivik, K. (2020). Long-Term School-Level Effects of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 61*,

108-116. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30277582/>

Ossa, F., Jantzer, V., Eppelman, L., Resch, F., Kaess, M. (2021). Effects and Moderators of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) in Germany. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 30*, 1745-1754.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32960324/>

Pack, C., White, A., Raczynski, & Wang. (2011). Evaluation of the Safe School Ambassadors Program: A Student-led Approach to Reducing Mistreatment and Bullying in Schools. *The Clearing House, 84*, 127-133. [https://doi: 10.1018/00098655.2011.564974](https://doi:10.1018/00098655.2011.564974).

Paredes, C., Ramirez, E., & Rodriguea-Sabiote. (2021). Content Validation of Semi-Structured Interview to Analyze the Management of Suffering. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*, 1-24.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34769919/>

Park, T., Cui, C., Park, Y., Kim, K., Moon, H., Kim, H., Sim, H., Lee, Y., & Lee, H. (2021). Multiple Case Study on Family Therapy for Middle School Bullying Victims on South Korea. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 1-21*.

[https://doi: 10.1080/01926187.2021.1974973](https://doi:10.1080/01926187.2021.1974973)

PeaceBuilders. (2002). Assabet Valley Regional Vocational School Targets Bullying and Harassment with Student Peace Coaches. Retrieved from

<https://www.peacebuilders.com/media/pdfs/caseStudyTeen.pdf>

PeacePartners. (2022). The Science of PeaceBuilders. PeaceBuilders.

<https://www.ScienceofPBBBrainResearch.pdg>

Pontes N., Ayres C., Lewandowski, C., & Pontes, M. (2018). Trends in Bullying

Victimization by Gender Among U.S. High School Students. *Research Nursing*

*Health*. 41(3), 243-251. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29485213/>

Pozzoli, T., Gini, G., & Thornberg, R. (2017). Getting Angry Matters: Going Beyond

Perspective Taking and Empathic Concern to Understand Bystanders' Behavior in Bullying. *Journal of Adolescence*, 61, 87–95.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320145551\\_Getting\\_angry\\_matters\\_Going\\_beyond\\_perspective\\_taking\\_and\\_empathic\\_concern\\_to\\_understand\\_bystanders'\\_behavior\\_in\\_bullying](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320145551_Getting_angry_matters_Going_beyond_perspective_taking_and_empathic_concern_to_understand_bystanders'_behavior_in_bullying)

Qian, Y., Yang, Y., Lin, P., Xiao, Y., Sun, Y., Sun, Q., Li, X., Fei, G., Stalloones, L.,

Xiang, H., & Zhang, X. (2020). Risk Factors Associated with School Bullying

Behaviors: A Chinese Adolescent's Case Study, 2019. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-23.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/08862605221092074>

Qiu, H. (2021). Explore Factors of School Bullying from the Ecosystem Theory. *Open*

*Access Library Journal*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1108165>

Rana, M., Gupta, M., Malhi, P., Grover, S., & Kaur, M. (2021). Designing a Multi-

Component Stop Bullying Intervention Program in Chandigarh, a North Indian

Territory. *Global Health Promotions*. [https://doi: 10.1177/17579759211021061](https://doi:10.1177/17579759211021061).

Reyes-Rodriguez, A., Valdes-Cuervo, A, Vera-Noriega, J., Parra-Perez, L. (2021).

Principals' Practices and School's Collective Efficacy to Preventing Bullying:

The Mediating Role of School Climate. *Sage Open*, 1-10.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211052551>

Runions, K., Shaw, T., Bussey, K., Thornberg, R., & Salmivalli, C. (2019). Moral

Disengagement of Pure Bullies and Bullying-Victims: Shared Distinctive

Mechanism. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48(9), 1835-1848.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31278567/>

Scholte, R., Engels, R., Overbeek, G., de Kemp, R., & Haselager, G. (2007). Stability in

Bullying and Victimization and its Association with Social Adjustment in

Childhood and Adolescence. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 35, 217–

228. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1915632/>

Serwacki, M., Nickerson, A., & Schrantz, M. (2022). Guide to School-Wide Pred

Bullying Prevention Programs. <https://gse.buffalo.edu/alberticenter>

Sibold, J., Edwards, E., Murray-Close, D., & Hudziak, J. (2015). Physical activity,

Sadness, and Suicidality in Bullied US Adolescents. *Journal of the American*

*Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 54, 808–815. <https://doi:>

[10.1016/j.jaac.2015.06.019](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2015.06.019)

Sparks, S. (2022). Bullying Dropped as Students Spent Less Time in In-Person Classes

During Pandemic. [https://www.edweek.org/leadership/bullying-dropped-as-](https://www.edweek.org/leadership/bullying-dropped-as-students-spent-less-time-in-in-person-classes-during-pandemic/2022/01)

[students-spent-less-time-in-in-person-classes-during-pandemic/2022/01](https://www.edweek.org/leadership/bullying-dropped-as-students-spent-less-time-in-in-person-classes-during-pandemic/2022/01)

Thomas, H., Connor, J., Lawrence, D., Hafekost, J., Zubrick, S., & Scott, J. (2017).

Prevalence and Correlates of Bullying Victimization and Perpetration in a Nationally Representative Sample of Australian Youth. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 51(9), 909-920.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28513190/>

Thornberg, R. (2018). School Bullying and Fitting Into the Peer Landscape: a Grounded Theory Field Study. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 39(1), 144–158.

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2018-01862-010/>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2019). *Center for Disease Control and Prevention*. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/effects>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). *Effects of Bullying*.

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/effects>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). *Warning Signs for Bullying*.

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/warning-signs>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). *Why Some Youth Bully*.

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/why-some-youth-bully>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). *What Can You Do*.

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/what-you-can-do>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2022). *What Kids Can Do*.

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/kids>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021): *Facts About Bullying*.

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/facts>



Ulfah, M., & Gustina, E. (2020). Bullying Behavior Among Adolescents. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 9(3), 644-649.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1274846.pdf>

van Verseveld, M., Fekkink, R., Fekkes, M., & Oostdam, R. (2019). Effects of Anti-Bullying Programs on Teachers' Interventions in Bullying Situations: A Meta-Analysis. *Psychology in the Schools*, 56, 1522-1539.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pits.22283>

van Verseveld, M., Fekkes, M., Fekkink, R., & Oostdam, R. (2021). Teachers' Experiences with Difficult Bullying Situations in the School: An Explorative Study. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 41(1), 43-69.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0272431620939193>

Vanbaren, J. (2018). Roles of a Teacher in the Classroom. *Classroom Magazine*.

<https://classroom.synonym.com/roles-teacher-classroom-7833444.html>

Wachs, S., Bilz, L., Niproschke, S., & Schubarth, W. (2019). Bullying Intervention in Schools: a Multilevel Analysis of Teachers' Success in Handling Bullying from the Students' Perspective. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 39, 614-668.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0272431618780423>

White, A., Raczyn, K., Pack, C., & Wang, A. (2011). The Safe School Ambassadors Program: A Student Led Approach to Reducing Mistreatment and Bullying in School. *Community Matters*. [https://community-matters.org/wp-](https://community-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Evaluation-Report-SSA-2011.pdf)

[content/uploads/2019/08/Evaluation-Report-SSA-2011.pdf](https://community-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Evaluation-Report-SSA-2011.pdf)

World Health Organization. (2022). More than 1.2 Million Adolescents Die Every Year, Nearly all Preventable.

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2017/yearlyadolescent-deaths/en/>

Yale Medicine. (2017). Why Kids Bully. Yale School of Medicine.

<https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/understanding-bullying>

Yang, C., Chen, C., Lin, X., & Chan, M. (2021). School-Wide Social Emotional Learning and Cyberbullying Victimization Among Middle and High School Students: Moderating Role of School Climate. *School Psychology, 36*(2), 75-85.

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2021-38272-001>

Yang, C., Sharkey, J., Reed, L., Chen, C., & Dowdy, E. (2018). Bullying Victimization and Student Engagement in Elementary, Middle, and High Schools: Moderating Role of School Climate. *School Psychology Quarterly, 13*(1), 54-64.

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2018-14403-006>

Younan, B. (2019). A Systematic Review of Bullying Definitions: How Definition and Format Affect Study Outcome. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, 11*(2), 109-115.

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JACPR-02-2018-0347/full/html>

Zambuto, V., Palladino, B., Noventini, A., & Menesini, E. (2020). Voluntary vs Nominated Peer Educators: A Randomized Trial with the No Trap! Anti-Bullying Program. *Prevention Science, 21*, 639-649.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7305073/>

Zych, I., Farrington, D., Llorent, V., & Ttofi, M. (2017). Protecting Children Against Bullying and Its Consequences. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature. <https://scirp.org/reference/referencespapers.aspx?referenceid=3051429>

### Appendix A: Inclusion Questionnaire

Thank you for contacting me about being a participant in the research study “Former High School Bullying Victim Perceptions of Support to Prevent Bullying Incidents.” Before we can move forward with including you in this research, I am going to ask you a few questions to determine if you are a good fit for this project. Please answer honestly.

1. Did you graduate from high school in the past 5 years?
2. Have you been the victim of bullying during your time in high school?
3. Are you 18 years of age or older?
4. Would you like to participate in a research study where you talk about your experiences being bullied in high school?
5. During your time in high school, have you ever had a teacher named Mr. Aaron Woods?

Meets selection criteria: Thank you for taking the time to contact me about this important research. Based on the responses provided, it was determined you are a good fit for this research study. The next steps include scheduling a time to meet. When we meet, I will review the informed consent information to make sure you would like to participate in this research, and then we will do an individual interview. The interview will take about 1 hour. What is a good day and time for you?

Does not meet selection criteria: Thank you for taking the time to contact me about this important research study. Based on the responses provided, it was determined you would not be a good fit for this research because [add reason here]. Thank you again for your willingness to assist.

## Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Protocol

**Introduction:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this important research. The questions you will be asked are about how you feel about the role of stakeholders, coping strategies, implementation and enforcement of bullying prevention programs, and if you think these efforts are effective. Please remember your participation is voluntary and we can stop any time you feel uncomfortable.

The first set of questions are related to the roles that faculty plays in preventing bullying at school.

1. What role do you think principals play in preventing bullying in the school environment?
  - a. What do they do as it relates to bullying programs at the school?
  - b. How do they interact with bullies and bullying victims?
2. Do you think the things principals do are effective at stopping bullying from happening?
  - a. Why do you feel that way?
3. What role do you think school counselors play in preventing bullying in the school environment?
  - a. What do they do as it relates to bullying programs at the school?
  - b. How do they interact with bullies and bullying victims?
4. Do you think the things school counselors do are effective at stopping bullying as school?
  - a. Why do you feel that way?
5. What role do you think teachers play in preventing bullying in the school environment?
  - a. What do they do as it relates to bullying programs at the school?
  - b. How do they interact with bullies and bullying victims?
6. Do you think the things teachers do are effective at stopping bullying from happening?
  - a. Why do you feel that way?
7. What role do you think parents play in preventing bullying in the school environment?
  - a. What do they do as it relates to bullying programs at the school?
  - b. How do they interact with bullies and bullying victims?
8. Do you think the things parents do are effective at stopping bullying from happening?
  - a. Why do you feel that way?
9. What role do you think students play in preventing bullying in the school environment?
  - a. What do they do as it relates to bullying programs at the school?
  - b. How do they interact with bullies and bullying victims?

10. Do you think the things students do are effective at stopping bullying from happening?
  - a. Why do you feel that way?

The next set of questions will ask about specific things you have done when you were bullied. Feel free to describe situations that have happened and how you dealt with them.

11. What did you do to cope with bullying when you were bullied in high school?
  - a. What specifically did you do when you were being bullied?
12. Tell me about how effective you think these strategies were at stopping bullying from happening in that moment.
13. Tell me how effective you think these strategies were at stopping bullying from happening again?
14. What did people at the school do about you being bullied?
15. What did people from your home life do about you being bullied?

The next set of questions will be about the programs, policies, and rules in the school environment that aim to prevent and reduce bullying.

16. Tell me about the bullying prevention programs that were at your school.
  - a. Tell me about any policies that were provided to students or staff.
  - b. Tell me about any trainings you received to deal with bullying.
  - c. Tell me about any parent involvement that happened because you were bullied.
17. Tell me about how school staff enforced the bullying prevention programs and rules.
  - a. What happened to children who were accused of being bullies?
  - b. What happened to children who reported being bullied?
18. Do you feel the bullying prevention program or rules worked?
  - a. Why or why not?
19. What are some things you wished were different about the bullying prevention program?
20. As an adult who has graduated, looking back on your experience, what are some things you wish you would have done differently?

**Closing:**

21. As we conclude this study, I want to give you the opportunity to provide any information. If you would like to add anything, it would be helpful with this research. Thank you for participating in this important research.

## Appendix C: Codes and Themes

Quotes	Commonalities	Codes	Themes
<p>They don't care about the students. They don't do nothing. Because they don't care about the students. I feel like the counselors didn't do nothing teachers really didn't pay attention to it teachers didn't really say anything principals always say that they care, but they really don't care. The counselor gonna try to sugarcoat everything counselors aren't gonna be there like you really want them to You got yo teachers that got they favorites teachers and students would let the stuff go on the teacher, they more focus on getting they lesson and teaching They just sat there and watched. The school counselors, they always too busy to worry about bullies.</p>	<p>Principals, teachers, and counselors did not care about bullying.</p>	<p>Do not care  Do not do anything  Too busy</p>	<p>School staff are unconcerned</p>
<p>I think they don't do a good job. They're not doing good enough for bullying. I think they don't do much. Most of the time teachers listen to bullies what will happen is the bullying will keep happening it ain't gonna work They just didn't have that much power to the bully. Like if the teacher didn't see that he was bullying me, they didn't believe it And the principal was like, well, we really can't do anything if we don't see it happening give them a slap on the wrist and let him go back to do what they do. I don't feel like principals can stop bullying They try they best to stop it, but they just can't.</p>	<p>The actions of principals, teachers, and counselors were ineffective.</p>	<p>Do not do a good job  Do not do enough  Actions do not work</p>	<p>School staff actions are ineffective</p>
<p>We didn't have any. We didn't have any policies. We did not receive training. There was no bullying programs None were available Oh, if they did, I wouldn't be able to tell. I don't even remember there being a program If there was a program, I wouldn't know. I don't feel like students knew there was a bullying program</p>	<p>Unaware of any policies, programs, or training at the school.</p>	<p>Do not have any  Do not know about it</p>	<p>Anti-bullying policies are nonexistent or unknown</p>
<p>That the teachers care. They should be looking out for other students, making sure that there are alright and mentally that they're okay from being bullied. Instead of the teachers having to like move two people from each other, they should have ways to where the bullies and the victim it's going to be talking about why. talking about their feeling helping the relationship between both of them able to have the confidence to join in these programs and promote with the teachers. Better enforcement reinforcement If it was better communication with the principals and the teachers talking to the students and helping them</p>	<p>Things they wished they had while in high school to prevent bullying</p>	<p>Care  Check on students  Address root cause  Better enforcement</p>	<p>Policies should include elements that equip school staff to handle bullying incidents</p>

<p>If they show like they actually care, maybe it will make an effect          Bullies can be punished and not be punished because the color of your skin.          I do wish teachers would just not just be so much as teachers and also like try to figure out what was going on in our life          I wish they talk to you more, talking like help you understand why it is not good for you to bully.</p>			
<p>I ran away. Cry          take a different path to class or don't go to certain spots          I just tried to stay away from him          If I see him come my way, I'm going to go another way          I just had to stand my ground          take a different path to class or don't go to certain spots          taking different paths, talking to people, staying at myself,          hanging out with my close friends          in the moment of being bullied i've tried to ignore walk away          I had to zone out.          I had to turn to like football or music          take a different path to class or don't go to certain spots</p>	<p>Things that were done to stop or prevent bullying</p>	<p>Avoidance           Stand my ground           Stay close to friends</p>	<p>Policies should include coping strategies</p>
<p>They did not work.          It kept happening.          I just accepted the fact.          So that didn't help for me.          they still just it kept on happening          Ignoring it didn't work so well.          I feel like they'll just get around it and make fun of me for find a way to make fun of me for ignoring or walking away          If the victim was caught fighting back or whatever and they would also get suspended. So it was, it really wasn't a win.          It really didn't work.          Not at all. If anything, it made it worse for me.</p>	<p>The effectiveness of the things that were done to prevent or stop bullying</p>	<p>Did not work           Bullying kept happening</p>	
<p>Wish I would have stood up for myself.          reaching out for help          so they could at least help me through the tough time that I was having.          Walk away and try to stay focused on what You have in front of you instead of what somebody trying to do to you.          tell somebody and if they don't work, you just stand your ground or you approach them yourself          I wish I had stand up for people, wish I was bigger</p>	<p>Things they wish they had done to stop prevent bullying in high school</p>	<p>Stand up for myself           Stay focused           Stand my ground           Stand up for others</p>	