


2015

School Bullying and Teacher Professional Development

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

School Bullying and Teacher Professional Development

by

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MA, Alabama State University, 1987

BS, Alabama State University, 1984

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2015

Abstract

Bullying has become a serious concern in many American public middle schools in recent years. Inadequate professional development (PD) in bullying prevention and response strategies has compounded this problem. The overarching purpose of this study was to increase understanding of the growing problem of school bullying.

Bronfenbrenner's socioecological theory, which states that environment and relationships influence student behavior, served as the conceptual framework for this qualitative study. Guiding research questions, grounded in socioecological theory, were used to examine middle school teachers' views of PD and their perceived skills in responding to or preventing bullying. Through purposeful sampling, 8 middle school teachers in a community in rural Alabama were interviewed over a 3-week period. Each had at least 1 year of teaching experience in the local rural setting. To authenticate study findings, discipline referrals and state incident reports spanning the 2 previous years were assessed for teacher management of bullying. Data were analyzed using open coding to identify and categorize the patterns and themes that emerged. Results indicated that the teachers perceived that PD would give them the strategies to recognize and manage incidents of school bullying. These results supported and informed the PD project for middle school teachers. This study contributes to social change by providing professional development that will help teachers to either prevent or manage school bullying appropriately, a benefit to children and communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful grandmother, Fredonia Smith, and my precious daughter, Bryana Harris. Thank you for your patience and support during my doctoral journey.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all the teachers who participated in this study. I hope that these findings and recommendations will be helpful to you in facilitating the change that you all strive to achieve. I thank my committee members, Drs. Wells, Wattam, and Bail, for their encouraging words, thoughtful feedback, and time and attention during busy semesters. I thank my invaluable network of supportive family members and friends, without whose enthusiasm and encouraging words, I could not have survived the process: Dr. Blair, Shirley, Bridgett, and Katrina. Lastly, I thank my late grandmother, who always encouraged me to strive to do my best and never give up on my dreams.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Bullying that occurs in schools is a growing problem for educators in a variety of settings. These concerns are frequent across the United States among educators in elementary, middle, and secondary schools (Schoen & Schoen, 2010). Graham (2010) stated that between 30% and 80% of U.S. students are the victims of school bullying, and the National Center of Education Statistics (2015) found that 27.8% of U.S. students reported being bullied at school. DeVoe and Bauer (2011) found that 63.5% of students who reported being the victims of crimes at school also reported that they had been the victims of bullying, whereas Tokunaga (2010) found that at least 40% of youth in the United States have experienced being bullied at least once. In addition, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS, 2014) reported that one in three U.S. students had been bullied at school.

School bullying can happen when there is a lack of supervision, and it can manifest as face-to-face harassment or gossip spread through social media that affects school climate and school safety. Bullying is the continuous teasing of students for the purpose of causing a power imbalance; unsupervised areas include hallways, school gyms, bathrooms, cafeterias, and school buses. Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2013) found that teachers perceived bullying as the result of school climate and poor classroom management; they also found that students believed that student-teacher relationships were important to providing a safe place for learning. Teachers need the classroom management skills necessary to provide a positive school

climate. Professional development (PD) workshops can provide teachers with strategies that they can use to respond to school bullying. Understanding how teachers perceive their ability to handle school bullying will inform and improve bullying prevention strategies.

Statement of the Problem

It is important that teachers, the key mediators in bullying prevention (Ettetal, Kochenderfer-Ladd, & Ladd, 2015), receive PD in antibullying strategies. The problem that prompted this study was the lack of PD in bullying prevention and response strategies available to teachers (Ansary, Elias, Greene, & Green, 2015; Gulemetova, Drury, & Bradshaw, 2011; Sherer & Nickerson, 2010). The general purpose of this study was to address the gap in practice by generating an understanding about the growing problem of school bullying. I also wanted to examine middle school teachers' perceptions of PD as a means of responding to or preventing bullying situations.

School bullying is the deliberate and hurtful intimidation or humiliation of peers. It encompasses such harassing behaviors as the belittling of others, name-calling, threats, gossip, and rejection (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & Johnson, 2015; Honig & Zdunowski-Sjoblom, 2014; Juvonen & Graham, 2014). Bullying can encompass acts of physical violence as well as indirect and negative forms of verbal cruelty. Researchers have paid particular attention to the negative effect of bullying on school climate and adolescents' physical and mental health (Seeley, Tombari, Bennett, & Dunkle, 2011). As a result, school officials have sought to make schools safer by implementing PD and student-

centered antibullying programs that help students and teachers to understand the adverse effects of bullying.

Despite the implementation of antibullying programs and policies, the rate of office referrals and parental complaints about bullying remains a problem (B. Vinson, personal communication, February 2012). Researchers did not discuss school bullying widely until the 1999 shootings at Columbine High School (Allen, 2010; Winburn, Winburn, & Niemeyer, 2014). After Columbine, school officials became concerned about the implications of bullying for the learning environment. In a national survey conducted by Wang, Iannotti, and Nansel (2009), the frequency rates of students who experienced bullying at school over a 2-month period were 20% physical, 53.6% verbal, 51.4% social, and 13.6% electronic, respectively. DeVoe and Bauer (2011) cited the results of a survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education [USDoE], 2012) that one third of all adolescents surveyed reported having been bullied at school. Students in schools across the United States are affected by traditional face-to-face bullying, as well as bullying through social media (DeVoe & Bauer, 2011), causing an increase in discipline referrals.

Problem in the Local Setting

The local setting for this study was a middle school in rural Alabama. According to the Alabama Department of Education (ALDoE, n.d.), every school year, students in the state experience bullying from peers, either in person or on social media. School bullying, especially cyberbullying, has increased in the local school system within the last 3 years (M. Giddens, personal communication, April 2014). Social media and technology

have become conduits for bullying in the school district through texting, Facebook, Twitter, and Vine. Social media, cyberbullying, and traditional bullying often cause the loss of valuable classroom instruction, resulting in a decrease in academic accountability. Therefore, I wanted to understand how the teachers perceived their ability to respond to or prevent bullying situations.

School bullying requires that educators use strategies and approaches available to them when such situations occur (Schultes, Stefanek, van de Shoot, Strohmeier, & Spiel, 2014). However, when I attended a countywide administrator meeting concerning school prevention and support in February 2012, I heard from local administrators that their teachers were concerned about their ability to handle bullying problems in the classroom and that they often sent students involved in bullying situations to the principal's office for intervention. According to the PD documentation, no antibullying PD had been offered to teachers in this local setting from August 2005 until May 2013 (J. Blair, personal communication, June 2013). Furthermore, August 2005 teacher inservice, was the last time that related PD was offered to local teachers, since then several teachers have retired, and new teachers have been hired. In a meeting with system administrators, the local superintendent stated that the district needed to focus on more PD on school harassment and school bullying in an effort to be compliant with the ALDoE's (n.d.) requirements for prevention and support (G. Reynolds, personal communication, August 2014).

The National Education Association's (NEA, 2012) survey on bullying indicated that teachers were aware of the severity of school bullying and recognized the need for

more PD in bullying prevention and response strategies (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2013). Limited funding for PD in the local school setting has restricted the amount of antibullying workshops available to middle school teachers. Bradshaw et al. (2013) contended that common approaches toward school bullying would likely improve the school climate and contribute to increased student attendance and positive behaviors. Local data indicated that 40% of the students who participated in the 2010 school pride surveys had been threatened or harassed during school hours. In the school district where I am employed, discipline referrals and attendance reports have indicated that face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying, and absenteeism among middle school students have increased over the past 2 years (B. Vinson, personal communication, February 21, 2012).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2012) reported that 14.1% of middle to high school students in Alabama had been bullied at school during the 2010-2011 school year. For example, a girl who attended a rural middle school near the school in this study jumped to her death from an interstate overpass, ostensibly because she had been the target of constant bullying on the school bus ("Bullying Partly Blamed for 15-Year-Old Girl's Death," 2010). In another nearby rural community, a middle school student hanged himself after he reported to school personnel that he had been bullied (Leech, 2010).

Baron Sandlin, founder of the Northeast Alabama Community Development Corporation (NACDC), conducted a survey in 2011 of 133 students in Grades 8 and 9 to evaluate the problem of bullying in one local high school in East Central Alabama. The

results indicated that 62% of the students identified a problem with bullying in their schools. In addition, 44% had experienced traditional bullying (i.e., face-to-face bullying); 42% had witnessed bullying incidents; 20% had been bullied online since the start of the school year; 30% had been verbally bullied; 14% reported had been physically bullied; only 17% had tried to stop the bullying by telling adults about it; and 46% had rated the efforts of adults to make school a safe place as poor (B. Sandlin, personal communication, December 17, 2011). These statistics indicated that bullying is an ongoing problem in the local school district. The NACDC's findings support the purpose of this study.

Bullying in Schools: A National Problem

Bullying has become a problem that is all too familiar among students in U.S. middle schools and high schools. Increased awareness of school bullying has prompted proposed state legislation to combat the problem (Weaver, Brown, Weddle, & Aalsma, 2013). Weaver et al. (2013) noted that Georgia, one of the first states to pass antibullying legislation, was instrumental in helping to inform the public that bullying was a problem that affected students socially and emotionally.

Many states have enacted laws aimed at reducing the incidence of bullying. Consequently, six states encourage school districts to provide staff training on bullying prevention. These laws focus on the responsibility of schools in handling bullying situations. According to Alabama's Student Harassment Prevention Act of 2009 (ACT 2009-571), reports of harassment must be submitted in a timely manner to school district officials and must be investigated promptly. Reports must be available to the public or

any federal agency requiring the information, but students' identities must be kept confidential.

In addition, school bullying permeates the adolescent world through reality television and violent online games (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). Bullying can lead to suicide, school violence, and social isolation (Flaspohler, Elfsrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009). The NEA (2012) and the American Federation of Teachers (n.d.) reported that bullying can be a barrier to student achievement and can result in students at the middle school level exhibiting symptoms of anxiety. Sibley (2010) found that U.S. middle and high school students are increasingly afraid of bullying. The number of incidents of suicide that has been the result of school bullying has plagued surrounding communities in central Alabama. Auburn University, recognizing the seriousness of school bullying in Alabama, developed an annual bullying summit to address the issues.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The Information Now Data Management System, a reporting system used by Alabama to archive disciplinary actions and attendance, reported a 14% increase in the number of harassment referrals during the 2012 school year in schools throughout the state. For this reason my motivation for conducting this research was to address the lack of antibullying PD provided to teachers in the local school district. In response to the increased number of bullying reports, the ALDoE began to monitor all schools to ensure that ACT 2009-571, which required each school district in Alabama to develop an antiharassment policy, was being followed. In addition, schools were required to develop

forms to report incidents of harassment. The act mandated schools to make harassment forms easily accessible to parents and students.

According to Yoon, Bauman, Choi, and Hutchinson (2011), “Teachers’ reactions to bullying have become a socializing experience that can influence the future behaviors of the involved students” (p. 315). In a similar study, Allen (2010) argued that bullying will continue to be a problem in schools until teachers know how to create a bully-free learning environment. Teachers often lack the information and skills to handle disciplinary incidents that are the result of cyberbullying as well as traditional bullying (Allen, 2010). The lack of bullying strategies being used shows that middle school teachers need antibullying PD to identify and deal with bullying now and into the future.

The NEA (2012) found that 98% of teachers who responded to its survey said that they believed that it was their job to intervene when they encountered school bullying. However, 46% of school employees stated that they had not received PD regarding their district’s antibullying policy, 61% stated that they could benefit from additional PD on ways to intervene in bullying situations and gender-nonconformity issues, and 74% noted that they could benefit from PD to know when and how to intervene in situations involving cyberbullying. Likewise, Blain-Arcaro, Smith, Cunningham, Vailancourt, and Rimas (2012) stated that PD is important in preparing teachers to deal with indirect bullying (i.e., cyberbullying). According to Blain-Arcaro et al., 56% of the teachers whom they surveyed reported never having received PD in bullying prevention strategies from their districts, and 74% agreed that they needed more PD. Blain-Arcaro et al. also suggested that the lack of PD might have accounted for the lack of confidence among the

teachers to address bullying incidents. Bullying in and outside of the school setting can lead to academic and social problems for bullies and victims (Morgan, 2012), so it is important to provide PD to improve teachers' skills in dealing with school bullying when it occurs.

Flynt and Mortion (2008) found that 63% of the Alabama principals whom they surveyed reported that their school districts did not provide any type of PD for teachers specific to bullying, even though 87% of the principals supported such PD. Evidence of bullying in local middle schools has been found in archived discipline referrals; local law enforcement reports; observations from teachers; and school pride surveys, which are conducted at the end of every school year by the ALDoE to provide important information about school safety.

Definitions of Terms

Bullying: Intentional, repeated, and negative (unpleasant or hurtful) behaviors by one or more persons directed against people who have difficulty defending themselves (Olweus, 2003).

Cyberbullying: Occurs when someone repeatedly harasses, mistreats, or makes fun of another person online or while using cellphones or other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Physical bullying (direct bullying): Intentional aggression that involves injuring someone or damaging that person's property, including hitting, kicking or punching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or breaking someone's belongings, or making mean or rude gestures (USDoE Office of Safe and Healthy Students, 2015, para 3).

Verbal bullying (direct bullying): Intentional aggression that involves saying or writing things that are mean or hurtful to others including teasing, name-calling, taunting, inappropriate sexual comments, or threatening to cause harm to another person (USDoe Office of Safe and Healthy Students, 2015, para 4).

Indirect (covert bullying): Social exclusion designed to harm another individual's reputation or cause humiliation (Urdang, 2013).

Significance of the Problem

The review of the literature exposed a gap in the local offering of PD in bullying prevention and response strategies. Previous researchers have focused primarily on bullying from the perspectives of students (Camodeca & Goosens, 2005; Holfeld & Grabe, 2012; Lovegrove, Henry, & Slater, 2012), not the perspectives of teachers. Teachers play an important role in preventing school bullying and developing a positive school climate (Cassidy, Brown, & Jackson, 2012; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008; Roberts, 2011). Because teachers often are the first responders to bullying incidents, they should be prepared to recognize and respond to them when and where they happen (Nickerson, Cornell, Smith, & Furlong, 2013). Therefore, offering PD focused specifically on bullying might empower teachers and other school personnel to better confront bullying in this school.

Teachers have received little preparation to deal with bullying (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012). Identifying bullying incidents and being able to handle them appropriately are vital to reducing bullying; however, novice and veteran teachers have expressed feeling uncomfortable when intervening in bullying incidents (Ihnat & Smith,

2013). Ihnat and Smith (2013) suggested that workshops on bullying could be advantageous to preservice teachers. They concluded that with the increased number of requests for teachers to address school bullying, PD in bullying prevention and intervention strategies should be a required part of the preservice curriculum.

Kennedy et al. (2012) conducted a study of 139 educators (98 teachers and 41 administrators) to gain their perceptions of school bullying as it related to the responsibility of teachers and administrators in the prevention of bullying. They collected data from educators across the United States, using a survey with a cross-sectional design. According to Kennedy et al., 90% of the educators whom they surveyed believed in adding bullying prevention strategies to the school curriculum, and 93% expressed an interest in receiving more antibullying PD. Kennedy et al. concluded that educators must be sufficiently trained so that they feel confident in intervening in bullying incidents and that schools might benefit from the provision of increased PD for teachers on bullying prevention strategies. They also found that the teachers and administrators in their study had different perspectives about the magnitude of the role that educators can and should play in bullying prevention. The study is important because it illustrates the gap between actual PD and the perceived need for PD by educators.

My study will help to guide the superintendent and administrators of the local school district being studied in making decisions about antibullying PD for teachers in an effort to ensure a positive school climate. The findings also might help school officials to identify and develop effective strategies to build a safe school climate conducive to learning for all students.

Research Questions

As the literature review illustrates, teachers' perceptions about the adequacy of PD in bullying prevention and response strategies often go unnoticed. Thus, having a more in-depth understanding of the ways that teachers perceive bullying and their preparation to handle it in middle school will be useful in determining whether teacher PD is necessary. To address this issue, I conducted a qualitative case study of a middle school in rural Alabama. Two research questions (RQs) guided my investigation:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of middle school teachers about bullying and teacher PD in bullying prevention and response strategies?

RQ2. How do middle school teachers handle bullying incidents, prevention(s), and responses to bullying when they occur?

Development of a project to address the identified problem was guided by the responses to the RQs (see Appendix A). Understanding how the teachers perceived school bullying can inform local school administrators of the need for specific interventions and PD for rural middle school teachers.

Introduction to Review of Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to present additional research on middle school bullying and teacher PD in bullying prevention and response strategies. From my review, I developed a conceptual framework that I believe is beneficial to understanding school bullying and perceptions about bullying. I reviewed articles from peer-reviewed journals to find common themes. I also retrieved articles from various databases, including ERIC, ProQuest, EBSCOhost and SAGE Premier, using the search terms

bullying, teacher PD, school climate, cyberbullying, direct bullying, indirect bullying, bullying in middle schools, bullying in rural schools, teacher perceptions, and effects of school bullying.

Conceptual Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory served as the conceptual framework for this qualitative study on teachers' perceptions of bullying prevention and response strategies (Yoon et al., 2011). Teachers' reactions to bullying incidents can influence not only the classroom environment but also the future behaviors of students. Espelage and Swearer (2003) remarked that bullying is an ecological occurrence that continues over time because of the complex interactions between and among individuals. The way that teachers approach bullying situations is the focus of antibullying efforts, so it is essential that teachers know how to handle bullying in appropriate and effective ways (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008).

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, the environment, including relationships and organizations, affects children's development; hence, the ecological theory helps to clarify the contributions of peers, victims, and bystanders to bullying. Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, and Hymel (2010) asserted that the socioecological perspective can be a theoretical framework to study the impact of environmental influences on adolescent behavior. The socioecological model was used in this study because of the responsibility of teachers to provide effective bullying prevention and response strategies.

The socioecological model identifies the behaviors associated with cyberbullying and traditional bullying. Bauman (2010) noted that students who have access to technology are likely to engage in cyberbullying. Furthermore, Bauman's research resulted in a better understanding of cyberbullying. Students in Bauman's study reported spending more time on the Internet during school hours, an indication that home Internet access was not prevalent among students who were cyberbullies. In addition, Bauman found that cyberbullying transpired more through cellphone use than computer use. The results supported the notion that students as well as adults need to be educated about the problems of cyberbullying. In a similar study, Barboza et al. (2009) found that bullying tended to increase among students who lacked teacher support, which often resulted in deficits in the social climate. Barboza et al. also explored the ecological risk factors and characteristics associated with bullying in the middle school setting.

Lee (2011) established the usefulness of the socioecological model in understanding bullying in the middle school setting by explaining that individual traits are significant factors in bullying behaviors. Lee identified three socioecological components important to understanding bullying: individual, microsystem, and mesosystem. These components work together to influence student behavior. Lee stated that using the socioecological model to study bullying is an important and effective way to examine the school environment and its relationship to student behavior.

Swearer et al. (2010) stated that the socioecological approach offers a comprehensive view of bullying within the framework of attitudinal and behavioral changes in children and adolescents. They suggested that comprehensive programs that

integrate levels of a socioecological system and focus on individual factors in the literature on bullying are necessary when changing behaviors in adolescents. Lee (2011) and Swearer et al. provided a guide to understanding Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory related to bullying.

Dealing effectively with bullying in the school setting requires well-prepared teachers who are motivated and empowered to work with children and who are willing to address the consequences of school bullying (Dayton & Dupre, 2009). Teachers who are equipped with strategies to deal with bullying often are willing to intervene when necessary. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socioecological model offered insight into understanding the individual and social indicators of school bullying. This conceptual framework was used to facilitate an investigation into the combined impact of social contexts and the strains on behavioral development. Dayton and Dupre (2009) suggested that the systems in the framework can affect students directly. These systems include schools, peer groups, teacher-student relationships, positive peer influences, and positive school climates that deter adolescents from engaging in bullying. The socioecological model offers a holistic view of bullying.

Literature Review

The NEA (2012) and the American Federation of Teachers (n.d.) reported that bullying is a barrier to student success. The NEA explained that bullied students often have high absenteeism rates and low academic achievement because they are afraid for their safety while at school. As a result, bullies and victims are at risk of serious short- and long-term consequences that can include adjustment difficulties and academic

underperformance (Swearer et al., 2010). Bullying can have significant consequences not only for students but also for teachers (Lee, 2011). Lee (2011) suggested that the seriousness of bullying validates the need to understand bullying in the school setting and provide appropriate prevention or intervention strategies.

Strohmeier and Noam (2012) remarked, “Educators need strategies to detect bullying in their schools and need to be able to apply effective interventions” (p. 7). Accordingly, Strohmeier and Noam suggested that teachers needed to learn how to detect school bullying, differentiate “light” bullying occurrences from more serious ones, and prevent bullying incidents. Past research providing greater insight into the characteristics of bullying behavior, PD, and educators’ perceptions of school bullying has not been applied in such a way that bullying faced by middle school students is fully understood.

Types of Bullying

School bullying has a number of definitions. Craig and Pepler (2007) defined bullying as a “destructive relationship problem” (p. 87). In a study by Kowalski, Morgan, and Limber (2012), 4,531 students in Grades 9 to 12 were surveyed about their roles as bully and victim in incidents of traditional bullying and cyberbullying. They found that the sources of control included a position of physical strength in society or one of knowledge on the Internet. Therefore, use of physical bullying and social media affects the breakdown of student trust, causing a destructive relationship for all involved. Lodge and Frydenberg (2005) believed that acts of antagonism and bullying often can be the reasons for adolescents’ mental and physical issues. Olweus (2013) stated that bullying occurs without encouragement from or incitement by the victims. He defined bullying as

aggressive behaviors with characteristics that include unbalanced power relationships and repetitiveness of negative behaviors.

In 2011, the CDC reported that 26.8% of middle school students had been the victims of bullying. Pergolizzi et al. (2009) stated that “indirect types of bullying—gossiping, rumors, excluding, and teasing—are more prevalent than direct types of bullying like hitting or threatening” (p. 275). Many middle school students often are targeted through social media gossip and teasing. Increased bullying through social media often results in classroom disruptions, along with academic and social problems among students who are bullied.

Cyberbullying. Cyberbullying has become an increasingly common phenomenon (Sbarbaro & Enyeart-Smith, 2011). The rapid growth of technology has allowed students to attack their peers continuously. Sbarbaro and Enyeart-Smith (2011) stated that electronic bullying can include harassing text messages, e-mails, and blogs that facilitate the easy and fast dissemination of negative content. Kowalski et al. (2012) described electronic bullies as nameless individuals who engage in anonymous bullying online.

Amid the increased use of technology among adolescents, researchers now view cyberbullying as one of the major ways to harass others. Escaping this type of ubiquitous bullying, according to Sbarbaro and Enyeart-Smith, is almost impossible. Bullying via cyberspace, whether done at home or at school, often affects the climate of the classroom in negative ways. Therefore, understanding that cyberbullying is a social issue affecting the relationships and emotions of students might compel teachers to improve their classroom management strategies.

Researchers who have investigated cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying agreed that a relationship exists between the bully and the victims' mental suffering, in spite of whether the bullying is social or physical (Boulton, Hardcastle, Down, Fowles, & Simmonds, 2014). For instance, Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, and Coulter (2012) reported an overlap between cyberbullying and school bullying and students' emotional anguish. They described cyberbullying as the factor linking victimization, school attachment, and school performance. Schneider et al. surveyed students from 22 high schools in the western suburbs of the Boston metropolitan area. Participants included 303 to 1,815 students from each school site. They asked the students about cyberbullying and traditional school bullying victimization over the last 12 months. Schneider et al. noted that 15.8% of the students stated that they had been the victims of school bullying within the last 12 months. Schneider et al. also reported the overlap between cyberbullying and traditional face-to-face bullying as being substantial, with 59% of cyberbullying victims also being the victims of traditional bullying and 36.3% of traditional bullying victims being cyberbullying victims. Their results indicated that victimization between cyberbullying and school bullying can be interrelated. Schneider et al.'s research is generalizable in other urban and rural populations.

Hoff and Mitchell (2009) examined the extent and causes of cyberbullying. Using a mixed methods design, they collected data over a full academic year from 351 freshman and sophomore students at a New England University. As one of their methods, they administered an in-person survey in which the participants described their experiences with cyberbullying using a 10-point Likert type of scale. The survey was intended to

provide a comprehensive picture of the causes of cyberbullying, the psychological effects on students, and schools' reactions to the bullying. Hoff and Mitchell found that cyberbullying resulted in students experiencing feelings of anger, powerlessness, fear, and sadness. Hoff and Mitchell also noted that cyberbullying included some of the same negative outcomes for victims as face-to-face bullying did. According to the researchers, the prevalence of cyberbullying and its consequences have made it necessary for schools to devise strategies such as training teachers, counselors, and administrators to recognize and respond appropriately to promote a school climate that is beneficial to student learning.

Bauman and Newman (2013) used a questionnaire to test the hypothesis that the consequences of cyberbullying pose a greater threat than those of traditional bullying. Participants responded to questions about the degree to which they had experienced traditional bullying or cyberbullying. Bauman and Newman concluded that cyberbullying might not be more injurious than traditional bullying. The results suggested that bullying intervention programs should be developed to help the victims to cope with the effects of bullying, not just the act of bullying itself. Their study provided an in-depth understanding of how traditional bullying and cyberbullying are related and why the severity of bullying is more important than the manner in which it occurs.

Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla, and Daciuk (2011) identified three categories of participants in cyberbullying: victims, bullies, and bully victims. They considered bully victims as students who encounter drastically more direct bullying than any other type of bullying. Mishna et al. surveyed 2,186 urban middle and high school students to

determine the frequency of student involvement in electronic bullying. They found that the students were highly involved in cyberbullying as victims and bully victims.

According to Mishna et al., 8% of the participating students reported cyberbullying other students within a 3-month period. The results of this cyberbullying research, compared to other results relevant to face-to-face bullying, indicated that more students emerged as victims and bullies rather than bully victims

Physical and verbal bullying. Physical and verbal bullying are forms of traditional bullying that are unlike cyberbullying because they occur in face-to-face situations in which the victims know the antagonists. Incidents of physical and verbal bullying involve physical contact, verbal abuse; mean facial gestures, or the intentional exclusion of the victims from social involvement (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Kowalski et al. (2012) studied the relationship between traditional bullying and cyberbullying among 4,531 students in Grades 6 to 12 from across the United States. Students volunteered to complete a survey about their involvement in bullying. Kowalski et al. suggested that because the victims of traditional bullying have the potential to become the victims of cyberbullying, providing teachers with strategies to respond to traditional bullying offers a way to prevent the likelihood of cyberbullying incidents.

Bender and Losel (2011) concluded that bullying, especially physical bullying, can have antisocial consequences. They studied 63 male bullies and their victims, all between the ages of 15 and 25 years. The participants came from the Erlangen Nuremberg Bullying Study. Bender and Losel used the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire, including observations of behavior and interviews, to determine the

processing of social information. Their study results showed that physical bullying can be a strong indicator of delinquency, violence, aggression, and other related antisocial problems. One limitation of the study was that Bender and Losel used a small sample that had an overrepresentation of bullies and victims. Bender and Losel suggested that antibullying programs should include the whole school (students, teachers, counselors, administrators) as to individual groups.

Indirect (covert) bullying. Indirect bullying includes the influence of social relationships in an attempt to overtly isolate the victim (Carbone-Lopez, Esbensen, & Brick, 2010). Indirect bullying is hidden and repeated aggression with the intent of spreading malicious rumors and isolating others from social situations (Smith, Polenik, Nakasita, & Jones, 2012). Indirect hostility is a form of traditional bullying that is linked to cyberbullying through anonymity. Spears, Slee, Owens, and Johnson (2009) described cyberbullying as a type of bullying that incorporates elements of covert bullying to antagonize others through online voting polls; therefore, it is considered indirect bullying. Researchers who have studied indirect bullying have reported that the student victims suffer from academic, behavioral, and psychological problems associated with relational aggression (Bonanno & Hymel 2013; Leff & Waasdorp 2013).

Hutzell and Payne (2012) studied the impact of indirect bullying on elementary, middle, and high school students. They concentrated on the correlation between bullying and avoidance behaviors resulting from student harassment in educational institutions. They used data from the 2007 National Crime Victimization Survey conducted by the

U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Justice Statistics that had measured students' perceptions of bullying incidents.

Hutzell and Payne (2012) also developed additional questionnaires to measure bullying victimization and school avoidance among middle and high school students from various ethnic backgrounds. They analyzed a nationally representative sample of students from the United States to improve previous research on victimization and avoidance. Their results, which identified a link between bully victimization and avoidance behavior, indicated an urgent need to address bullying through PD and antibullying programs. This study was limited in determining whether the avoidance behavior caused bullying or whether bullying caused the avoidance behaviors because of the lack of longitudinal data.

Jose, Kljakovic, Scheib, and Notter (2011) explored the correlation between bullying and victimhood in terms of traditional social relationships, together with the context of cyber communication. The results indicated that bullying and victimhood were related in face-to-face and cyber-based exchanges. Jose et al. reported that adolescents are more likely to be the victims of face-to-face (i.e., traditional) bullying than cyberbullying. Jose et al.'s examination of the steadiness of an interrelationship between traditional victimhood, cyberbullying, and cybervictimhood among adolescents over 2 years also indicated that adolescents who cyberbullied were more likely to become cybervictims over time. They collected data from surveys administered to 1,700 students between the ages of 11 and 16 years who had self-reported bullying and victimization from four perspectives: in school, out of school, online, and texting. According to Jose et

al., their study was significant in addressing the gap in the literature related to cyberbullying and cybervictimhood.

Covert bullying often comprises widespread and harmful behaviors that can damage emotional health and self-esteem (Barnes et al., 2012). These covert behaviors can go unnoticed by teachers and administrators. Barnes et al. (2012) explored the attitudes of school staff about covert bullying and the strategies that staff used to address bullying behaviors. Barnes et al. obtained their data from the Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study, which investigated covert behaviors among students from ages 10 to 14 years. They also investigated collected responses from school staff to determine their attitudes toward school policy, knowledge, and awareness of bullying behavior, and their skills used to address covert bullying; however, Barnes et al. used only data collected from school staff to complete the study. Participants included two administrators and four teachers from each of the 106 schools in the study. Barnes et al. found that the teachers were uncertain about identifying covert behaviors and often misjudged the impact of bullying behaviors on students' health. They concluded that PD to increase knowledge and understanding of the strategies to address bullying behaviors is essential to preventing covert and overt bullying behaviors in the school setting. These findings are instrumental in explaining the challenges that schools face in dealing with students' bullying behaviors.

Professional Development

Developing and implementing effective antibullying strategies depend on adequate PD. Glasner (2010) described the ways in which a sample of teachers used

antibullying strategies to intervene in bullying incidents. He used a web-based survey to obtain 145 teachers' perceptions about their preparedness to intervene with bullies and with how they recognized cyberbullying. Glasner incorporated the responses into an antibullying training program at the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center. Because the study was limited to a small sample, Glasner could not generalize the results to a larger population of educators.

In addition, although Glasner (2010) noted that a lack of detail limited the scope of his research, the results indicated that the absence of interventions by teachers resulted in an increase in bullying incidents. Glasner further highlighted the need to train teachers and educators in ways to recognize and intervene in cyberbullying.

Providing PD that builds teachers' skills and efficacy is important to preventing school bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Novick & Isaacs, 2010). Novick and Isaacs (2010) examined the relationship of teacher support, coaching, preparedness, and observations to the number of bullying reports made by students. After surveying 115 middle school teachers in various U.S. cities, Novick and Isaacs analyzed their preparedness in dealing with school bullying. They suggested that teachers who were knowledgeable about antibullying strategies were more likely than those who were not to become involved in helping students to deal with bullying issues. The results of their study showed the extent to which teachers in general can identify their ability to respond to bullying when it occurs.

In a similar study, Marshall, Varjas, Meyers, Graybell and Skoczylas (2009) attempted to address the gap in the bullying literature by interviewing teachers of

students in Grades 4 to 8 about the need for more antibullying PD and skills development for elementary school teachers. Marshall et al. conducted semistructured interviews with 30 teachers in a U.S metropolitan school district to determine the need for school-based strategies to reduce bullying. The researchers assessed the teachers' awareness, experiences related to bullying, and perceptions of effective responses by teachers and other important stakeholders without focusing on bullying categories and student connection. A two-dimensional model was used as the framework that facilitated a parallel examination of teacher intent and teacher participation. Marshall et al.'s research is significant because the model derived from their study offered a more comprehensive approach to teachers' responses to bullying that supported the need for antibullying PD.

PD is important; but teachers' support for such PD is crucial. K. Craig, Bell, and Leschied (2011) conducted quantitative research on teachers' perceptions of school violence and PD. The 750 participants were student teachers enrolled in a psychology education course at a university in Ontario, a province in Canada. K. Craig et al. used two standardized questionnaires to collect information from the teachers related to their knowledge of school violence. The eagerness of the teacher candidates to mediate in bullying incidents was based upon their perceptions of bullying. K. Craig et al. found that the preservice teachers did not think that their postsecondary education prepared them for the challenges of dealing with school bullying. Novice teachers would welcome more PD in school safety while still in their preservice programs (Boulton, 1997; K. Craig et al., 2011).

Similarly, Bauman and Hurley (2005) conducted an exploratory study of 93 first-year teachers in five school districts in the southwestern U.S. They asked the teachers to complete a survey on bullying and their ability to handle bullying situations. Bauman and Hurley found that first-year teachers would like more PD in ways to respond to bullying. Teachers who participated in Bauman and Hurley's study also indicated that they had not received any preservice or in-service PD on ways to handle bullying.

In addition, Bauman and Hurley (2005) reported that 88% of the participants perceived themselves and their coworkers as doing a good job preventing serious bullying problems; however, only 60% indicated the need for more PD. According to Bauman and Hurley, teachers who are overconfident in their ability to handle bullying incidents might not seek PD in antibullying strategies. The results of their study demonstrated that teachers' perceptions about bullying might be problematic in offering bullying prevention PD.

Kahn, Jones, and Wieland (2012) conducted a study of 97 preservice teachers from an educational psychology course at a Midwestern university. They asked the teachers to complete an Internet survey that described 14 possible strategies for managing stressors and eight scenarios portraying direct and indirect bullying. The study was designed to determine how preservice teachers viewed aggression as a problem and how they believed their involvement was needed. Kahn et al. scrutinized the correlation between hostility and teacher intervention and the association between preservice teachers' classroom management styles and their responses to the scenarios.

Kahn et al. found (2012) that the preservice teachers wanted more PD in ways to deal with bullying and that they perceived direct aggression as more of a problem than indirect aggression. Kahn et al. noted that the teachers' coping styles predicted their response to bullying incidents. Kahn et al. concluded that problems can occur among new teachers when they have not been trained to handle relational aggression. They asserted that new teachers might benefit from PD that explains the potentially harmful and long-lasting effects of direct and indirect bullying and describes ways to recognize signs of bullying problems before they begin.

Allen (2010) explored the relationship among classroom management, school bullying, and teacher practice. Allen highlighted the importance of classroom management by suggesting that antibullying PD be given to preservice teachers. The survey results showed that bullying is a problem for all individuals involved and must be resolved through the development of safe school, home, and community environments (Allen, 2010), given that the interrelationship of these environments affects the behaviors of individual students. Allen implied that traditional bullying is likely to occur in these three environments unless teachers acquire the skills to become proactive in classroom management and intervene effectively to diffuse bullying situations.

Schools have a responsibility to provide a safe place for students to learn, so it is important that teachers be prepared to handle bullying situations. Blain-Arcaro et al. (2012) discovered from their research of 235 teachers and the factors that influenced their decisions to intervene that the teachers could have benefited from antibullying PD that could have informed them about the health risks such as low self-esteem and depression

to students who bully and to those who are the victims of indirect bullying. Blain-Arcaro et al. indicated that distressed victims often influence teachers to mediate in bullying events.

Teachers' Perceptions

Roberts (2011) asserted that an evaluation of teachers' perceptions of school bullying was needed to determine how they perceived the importance of intervening. In a study of 66 teachers and their perceptions of the effect of cyberbullying on students and which intervention strategies would prevent cyberbullying, Stauffer, Heath, Coyne, and Ferrin (2012) concluded that their perceptions should be considered before schools implement antibullying programs. The study was conducted in an urban high school in the western United States. Stauffer et al. analyzed data retrieved from a questionnaire developed by school district administrators. The open-ended questions explored teachers' perceptions about antibullying strategies that would help to prevent cyberbullying. Stauffer et al. found that the teachers were more receptive to antibullying programs that shared responsibility among parents, teachers, and administrators.

In contrast, Bauman, Rigby, and Hoppa (2008) found that a sample of U.S. teachers and school counselors handled school incidents of bullying differently. In an effort to reflect the preferences of the target population adequately, Bauman et al. used a sample of 735 teachers and counselors, with at least one respondent from each of the 50 states. They determined that the counselors and teachers had different preferences in bullying strategies. The counselors were more interested in helping the victims and less inclined to ignore the bullying situations. The counselors and teachers also had different

views about the ways in which bullying incidents should be treated. The need remains to enhance the PD of teachers and counselors in antibullying strategies.

Farmer, Hall, Petrin, Hamm, and Dadisman (2010) described the impact of a Rural Early Adolescence Learning Program (Project REAL) on teachers' awareness of peer groups and their involvement in bullying. PD for this study included social dynamics and early adolescence and peer group development. Farmer et al. surveyed 39 middle school teachers and 466 middle school students. They established that teachers who received PD in Project REAL strategies were more likely than teachers who did not receive PD to identify students' peer group membership. Thus, teachers who are given information about antibullying strategies are more likely than teachers who have not to recognize potential bullying situations.

Farmer et al. (2010) suggested that the intervention teachers were more likely to understand students and place them in categories representative of their behaviors and social attributes, a process that facilitated the successful implementation of antibullying strategies. Teachers, counselors, and administrators who cannot recognize students who are potential bullies or bully victims might hinder the development of strategies to control the problem; therefore, being knowledgeable of and having PD in antibullying strategies could have a positive impact on school bullying interventions.

As stated by Harwood and Copfer (2011), teasing is an issue linked to the effectiveness of a school culture. Harwood and Copfer studied the effect of teachers' experiences with student teasing on their opinions about traditional bullying and their practices in dealing with teasing in the classroom setting. This study provided a glimpse

into teachers' perceptions of the differences between simple teasing and bullying. Harwood and Copfer used a qualitative methodology to interview five teachers of students in Kindergarten to Grade 8. Teachers from the urban schools participating in the first part of the research, which included students, were asked to participate in the interviews. Participants represented low-socioeconomic status (SES) and middle- to high-SES communities. The researchers followed a semistructured interview process to collect data about the ways that their experiences with teasing prepared the teachers to deal with teasing among their students. The results indicated that the teachers' reactions to teasing depended on their own childhood experiences and belief systems, factors that allowed the teachers to be more empathetic to victims of teasing. The findings indicate that teachers can provide strategies to decrease bullying behavior. Having knowledge of and PD in bullying such as teasing is important, given the influence of teachers on peer socialization and school climate.

Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier (2008) examined teachers' beliefs about the causes of bully victimization as a predictor of classroom management strategies. They focused on two issues, namely, the perceptions that influence teachers' responses to bullying and the relationship between strategies used to support victims of bullying and the number of reports made by students. In addition, they evaluated the teachers' perspectives in regard to three beliefs: (a) Students would avoid bullying incidents if they defended themselves, (b) bullying is behavior that helps students to learn social patterns, and (c) students would not be bullied or picked on if they evaded mean students.

Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier (2008) collected data from 32 teachers and 363 ethnically diverse students at an elementary school in the southwestern United States. They concluded that the teachers' attitudes and beliefs about bullying and peer harassment were related to classroom management. Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier explained that the teachers were more apt to acknowledge bullying incidents if they viewed bullying as a way to help children to handle social norms and if they had compassion for the victims.

Dedousis-Wallace, Shute, Varlow, Murrihy, and Kidman (2013) conducted a quantitative study to examine the predictors of teacher interventions in the indirect bullying of 326 girl-school teachers in Australia. Dedousis-Wallace et al. used vignettes as a technique to elicit teachers' responses regarding how seriously teachers perceived various bullying incidents. Using a model of predictors, Dedousis et al. concluded that providing teachers with intervention strategies proves to be more effective when managing indirect bullying. Teachers' reactions to bullying often are connected to their knowledge about the subject, so understanding the attitudes of educators about bullying can be useful for PD purposes.

Ahtola, Haataja, Kärnä, Poskiparta, and Salmivalli (2012) investigated the perceptions of teachers after administering the KiVa Antibullying Program in 33 schools. To determine the effects of the program on teachers' perceptions of school bullying, Ahtola et al. obtained data from 128 teachers in noncontrolled schools and 110 teachers in controlled schools. Ahtola et al. found that the teachers who participated in the program felt more competent to deal with bullying than the teachers who did not

participate in the program. The program resulted in better attitudes concerning ways to deal with bullying, even though it was not the aim of the program to change the teachers' attitudes.

Combating bullying is a struggle for many school districts. Cultivating and maintaining a safe and bully-free school will result in a school climate that is more conducive to learning. Efforts to control bullying often are the most effective in middle school, but if bullying is not addressed, the problem will continue at the high school level (Hoover & Oliver, 2008). The aforementioned review of research provided information about school environments and teacher practices that can provide a base for themes to be developed in future qualitative studies about school bullying.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to address the gap in practice by generating an understanding about the growing problem of school bullying and examining the perceptions of middle school teachers concerning PD to respond to or prevent bullying situations. PD can be vital to deterring school bullying. Based upon the analysis of the data, I developed a PD training contingent on project study approval.

Summary

Although research about school bullying from the perspectives of students exists, a gap in practice from the standpoint of teachers remains (Dedousis-Wallace et al., 2013; Sterling, Heath, Coyne, & Ferrin, 2012). Bullying is a universal problem in middle schools that teachers must deal with each day. The ability of teachers to recognize and react to bullying incidents seems to be having a positive influence on addressing the

problem. Therefore, understanding school bullying from the perspectives of teachers helped to generate information important to the development and implementation of PD in bullying prevention and response strategies. The review of the literature also highlighted the need for research on teachers' perspectives of school bullying, PD, and their ability to handle and respond to bullying incidents when they occur.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

I conducted this study to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions of antibullying PD. I also wanted to gauge teachers' confidence in managing, preventing, and coping with the incidence of school bullying. A qualitative case study approach was the most suitable for this study. Qualitative research is the assessment of social experiences from the viewpoints of individuals when information about an event is limited (Patton, 2002). It is a way to explore and understand a social problem through the perceptions of individuals or groups (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). Creswell (2009) suggested that qualitative approaches allow researchers to conduct in-depth investigations that illuminate the views and perceptions of the participants; therefore, he advised that the RQ or RQs should begin with exploratory language focusing on a single concept or occurrence in its natural environment. Merriam (2009) explained that qualitative researchers attempt to understand how individuals or groups construct meaning from their world experiences.

Case studies give researchers the opportunity to examine the uniqueness of real-life experiences. Merriam (2009) stated that a case study is a comprehensive description and examination of a single entity. The bounded system, according to Merriam, can encompass an individual, group, institution, or a community where there are boundaries. The intent of my study was to understand teachers' perceptions about the need for PD in bullying prevention and response strategies, along with the extent to which they perceived their ability to manage school bullying in order to provide school district

administrators with detailed information about the importance of PD. Therefore, after careful consideration, I determined that a case study was more appropriate than other methodologies because it helps to determine meaning using investigative procedures to gain insight into an individual or a group circumstance (Harmel, DuFour, & Fortin, 1993; Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

Setting and Participants

Setting

The setting for the study was a middle school located in a rural community in the southeastern United States. At the time of the study, the middle school had 335 students in Grades 7 and 8, 30 teachers, two administrators, and one counselor. The community continues to have a middle- to low-SES population, with 64% of the student population eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program. According to 2013 INOW Data Management report, the school's racial composition is 75% European American, 20% African American, and 5% Hispanic.

Participants

I selected potential participants from a master list of teachers provided by the principal. The criteria to be in the study were as follows: (a) The participants had to have contact with middle school students in the capacity of teacher, (b) they had to be employees of the local school system, and (c) they had to have at least one year of experience in the local school setting. I chose these criteria to identify key participants who had insight into the RQs (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). These attributes directly reflected the purpose of the study because of the participants' knowledge of local middle

school bullying and the need for PD in bullying prevention and intervention strategies. I randomly selected eight to 10 teachers from the list of prospective participants to represent the target population (Lodico et al., 2010). I contacted them by e-mail to determine their interest in participating. Eight teachers agreed to participate in the study; two did not respond to the invitation.

I had established a previous positive relationship with the potential participants through my involvement in PD, committees, and other school activities. The relationship was further strengthened through participation in common school-related organizations and in-service meetings. Although I was the director of federal programs for the local school district at the time of the study, I had no direct supervisory role over any of the participants. Of the four schools in this small district, only two elementary schools are Title I schools. The middle school and the high school are not Title I schools, so they were not under my direct supervision during this study.

To safeguard the participants' rights, I submitted a detailed description of the procedures that I used to ensure confidentiality to Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review and approval before I collected any data (IRB approval #02-26-14-0201478). I also submitted the interview protocol to the IRB for review. The procedure for gaining access to potential participants included sending letters by mail and e-mail to the district superintendent and school principal requesting permission for the teachers to participate voluntarily in the study. After obtaining approval from the district and the IRB, I extended an invitation to the selected teachers. During the initial meeting, I provided the teachers with a detailed description of the study, the consent form,

information about the benefits and risks of participation, and my personal contact information. I asked interested teachers to sign and return the forms to me within a designated time.

Collection of Data

Data included the teachers' responses to the semistructured interview questions (see Appendix B) about their perceptions about the need for PD in bullying prevention and response strategies. Hancock and Algozzine (2006) stressed that semistructured interviews are the most appropriate way to collect data in case studies because they allow researchers to ask probing yet flexible questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Rubin and Rubin (2005) also encouraged dialogue between respondents and researchers to build meaningful relationships that could facilitate the sharing of in-depth thoughts and perceptions. Semistructured interviews, as Hancock and Algozzine noted, give participants the opportunity to express their views and beliefs freely. Ensuring honesty and truthfulness is important when conducting interviews (Patton, 2002); therefore, I established a positive rapport with the participants by building a trust-based relationship that would convey empathy and understanding without judgment.

Based upon the literature review, I designed the interview questions to explore the teachers' perceptions about the need for PD in bullying prevention and response strategies and their ability to intervene and handle school bullying incidents. Individuals with characteristics similar to those of the participants reviewed the interview questions. These individuals were the district superintendent, the assistant superintendent, the school principal, two professors from a nearby university, and my committee members. These

individuals were part of the larger study sample. I asked these individuals to review the interview questions for relevance, clarity, and understandability. Suggestions included changing the word “training” to “preparation”; rewording questions for clarity; and adding the question, “Does your school have a bullying policy?” I made changes based upon these suggestions.

Because the focus of this study was to understand teachers’ perceptions about the need for PD in bullying prevention and response strategies, along with the extent to which they perceived their ability to manage school bullying, it seemed logical to review the school’s discipline referrals and state incident reports (SIRs). I used discipline referrals to gain a deeper understanding of what the teachers understood about school bullying (Merriam, 2009). Discipline referrals and SIRs could provide more detail over a much longer period of time in an effort to increase reliability.

Data Collection

To ensure the participants’ privacy, I conducted individual interviews in a private conference room at the school during the teachers’ planning times. Each interview lasted 50 to 60 minutes. I catalogued all data collected from the interviews in electronic files for easy access. I also followed all requirements of Walden University’s IRB to ensure that the participants were protected from harm. I kept the responses to the interview questions in a secure location in my office to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the participants. I locked all written documentation in a filing cabinet in my home office, and all electronic information pertaining to the participants and the study in general were password protected. Only I had access to the filing cabinet and password.

I recorded the interview responses once I gained permission to do so from the participants. I assigned pseudonyms to all participants to safeguard their anonymity. After I completed the interviews, I transcribed the survey responses into Word documents.

Data Analysis

I used content analysis, referred to as the analysis of text while searching for recurring words or themes (Patton, 2002), to analyze the data. Patton (2002) defined content analysis as “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meaning” (p. 453). I also examined school discipline referral documents to enhance the integrity of this qualitative study. I transferred the interview responses to the corresponding RQs on electronic data sheets. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), when researchers transcribe interview responses, they must pay more attention to the participants’ answers. I documented the participants’ responses throughout the data analysis phase, and I looked for common attributes by identifying similarities. I also noted the responses by the numbers of the interview questions and the numbers that corresponded to the participants (e.g., Q1P1). I analyzed the data using open coding to identify common themes. Open coding allows researchers to remain open to any data that might be useful (Merriam, 2009); hence, coding is an essential part of the qualitative research process. Lodico et al. (2010) described this process as “identifying different segments of the data that describe related phenomena and labeling these parts using broad category names” (p. 305).

Once I transcribed and coded all of the data, I used axial coding to make connections between and among the themes developed through open coding. I broke large categories into subcategories as I read the data multiple times. I also conducted member checking to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings, that is, I gave the participants the opportunity to review the interview transcriptions, correct any errors, challenge information that they perceived as wrong interpretations, and offer additional information. Member checking took place after I had identified and charted themes and patterns in the survey responses (Creswell, 2009). I made no changes to the transcriptions after the member checking was completed. Creswell (2007) suggested that the analysis of qualitative data involves preparing the data and conducting different analyses such as keywords-in-context and content analysis in order to develop a deeper understanding.

Documents

In addition to conducting interviews, I reviewed all 2013-2015 discipline referrals and SIRs for the participating middle school. I analyzed the documents to determine activities and strategies used by the teacher to handle reported bullying incidents. I noted all fight and harassment referrals due to bullying activity. Reading through written referrals and organizing the data from the SIRs helped me to identify a broader perspective about bullying in the middle school setting. I gathered the discipline referrals for the participating middle school to understand the strategies used by the teachers to manage bullying behaviors. Often the actual written referrals by the teachers provided more information than what was reported in the SIRs.

System for Keeping Track of Data

Once I began to collect the data, I also tracked the data collection process, including interview schedule times and locations, in a research journal. All of the recorded interview data, including the transcribed interview responses, will remain in a password-protected file on my personal computer for 5 years, as required by Walden University's policies and procedures. I will destroy all data after that time.

After transcribing the audiotaped interviews, I reviewed all of them against the tape recordings to ensure that they were the same. I organized the transcribed interviews in a three-column format, with the verbatim interview responses in column A, initial notes and codes in column B, and the second round of codes in column C. To ensure the accuracy of my notes, I read each transcription several times. I highlighted frequently occurring words and phrases in various colors. The use of colored pens and markers helped me to identify developing themes within the text.

Findings

I completed the analysis of the data in the framework of the RQs. I conducted interviews with eight teachers of students in Grades 7 and 8 in the local middle school who had taught for 1 or more years. I asked each participant the same 16 interview questions. The participants were representative of the 19 middle school teachers at the school. When applicable, I used tables to illustrate relationships, as suggested by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). I discussed the results related to each RQ in the framework of the interview protocol. I supported each RQ with specific interview questions. I also identified and discussed the data from the unobtrusive documentation.

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions of middle school teachers about bullying and PD in bullying prevention and response strategies?

Teacher preparation. One interview item addressed preparation in problem solving and classroom management: “Tell me about your preparation specific to student problem solving and classroom management.” Table 1 illustrates the individual teachers’ preparation.

Table 1

Teachers’ Classroom Management Preparation

Participant	Local preparation	State preparation	College preparation
Rudy	None	Some	Some
Nycole	None	None	None
Asha	Some	None	None
Zara	None	None	Some
Allan	Some	None	None
Markus	None	Some	Some
Corey	None	None	Some
Maury	Some	None	Some

Finding 1. Two participants said that preparation specific to student problem solving and classroom management was either minimal or nonexistent. Indeed, only three teachers indicated that they had received local training (via the school principal and teacher in-service sessions), and only two teachers indicated that they had received state preparation (via conferences and workshops). Although Asha, Zara, and Maury agreed that preparation in classroom management only occurred during college, two other participants suggested that on-the-job learning was more valuable than college courses on classroom management. Allan said, “I can’t give a whole lot of credit to college

curriculum on specifics of how to deal with student problems and classroom management.”

Corey reinforced Allan’s comment:

Mostly to me, my classroom management skills are what I’ve learned comes from being in the classroom. What I’ve learned comes from working in the field. Until you get in the classroom, I don’t think you can really be taught anything about management.

Finding 2. The teachers learned strategies in classroom management and student problem solving from their day-to-day relationships with students. Nycole and Corey agreed that they had learned their classroom management strategies from on-the-job daily encounters. Rudy and Asha suggested that schools needed to present more assemblies for students and teachers about trending bullying activities and the impact of bullying on everyday life. Zarah stated that teachers needed more time to communicate with students on a level where the students felt comfortable talking about bullying and expressing themselves. Allen and Markus agreed that schools needed to make sure teachers were aware of the signs of bullying. Allen also stated that parents needed to be involved instantly when bullying incidents occurred. Markus suggested that teaching students some coping skills would be a beneficial strategy in preventing school bullying. Maury responded that in addressing school bullying, administration should have a zero tolerance policy and use severe punishment as deterrence to bullying.

Addressing school bullying. The following interview items addressed preparation to address school bullying: “Discuss your concerns about teacher preparation

for addressing school bullying.” Table 2 illustrates the participants’ responses to this interview statement.

Table 2

Concerns About Teacher Preparation to Address School Bullying

Participant	Concerns about preparation
Rudy	“I haven’t been trained well enough to handle bullying.”
Nycole	“I think that-as opposed to being proactive we have come to a position where we’re reactive.”
Asha	“I don’t think we know everything to look for.”
Zara	“You can’t teach me how to handle bullying if you don’t know what I’m dealing with everyday.”
Allan	“I don’t know all the signs that I need to know of somebody being bullied.”
Markus	“We need to define what we’re gonna consider bullying and clear that up.”
Corey	“I think the preparation is in the wrong direction.”
Maury	“I feel under prepared to address school bullying.”

Finding 3. The teachers expressed concern about having received only minimal PD in ways to manage school bullying. Markus agreed that defining bullying was significant to understanding how to identify occurrences and victims. Asha and Allan agreed that understanding the various ways that bullying could occur, as well as student jargon, was significant in developing a bully-free school environment. Maury mentioned the need for teachers to understand the extent of their role in bullying prevention. Rudy indicated that teachers did not have enough information about the implications of school bullying and ways to manage incidents. She indicated that the local teachers needed more PD on school bullying because it was becoming an escalating problem.

Markus said:

I think as a society and certainly as a school, as a unit here, we need to define what we’re gonna consider bullying and clear that up. A policy should first define

what bullying is and what you're going to consider bullying and then have a structure set of responses to that – to how you're going to handle it.

Maury stated:

I do think there is a need for teacher preparation. I think it would be valuable to know what is the line for teachers in both preventative and proactive steps but also reactive steps when prevention isn't enough and bullying continues.

Finding 4. Handling school bullying was viewed as more reactive than proactive.

Nycole noted that the way teachers responded to bullying when it occurred was important when trying to prevent future occurrences. Nycole and Maury agreed that the teachers often became reactive rather than proactive when handling school bullying. Asha noted that teachers often looked for old signs without knowing the new codes or language that the students were using.

Strategies. One interview item addressed possible strategies used in managing school bullying: “What are some of the strategies that you think should be used to address school bullying? Cyberbullying? Traditional face-to-face bullying?”

Finding 5. Teacher-student relationships and school-parent relationships were deemed important in the provision of a safe antibullying school climate. Nycole, Asha, and Zara agree that building a relationship with students that made them feel free to communicate and discuss issues without being intimidated was important. When discussing strategies to manage school bullying, Asha and Zara expressed the importance of teachers becoming more cognizant of student-teacher relationships as well as student-peer relationships when managing cyberbullying and traditional bullying.

Zara articulated:

If kids know that we are going to back them or be on their side, we have less chance of it being in the classroom. I think the biggest problem here is our teachers don't have the kind of relationships with students they need in order to address either of these. I think that sometimes, we just get busy because we are trying to hit all of these standards – that we don't have time to make connections with kids.

Allen and Maury agreed that it was not solely the school's responsibility to deal with cyberbullying: Parents also need to become more involved when monitoring electronic devices and cyberbullying. Thus, school administration had to maintain and nurture a supportive parent-school relationship.

Bullying policies. Three interview items addressed state, district, and school policies on bullying: (a) "Does your school have a policy on bullying?"; (b) "Tell me about your school district's policy on bullying. State policy"; and (c) "Is the antibullying policy in the school and district clear and usable for teachers?"

Finding 6. The teachers agreed that although the state, district, and school had policies on bullying, the content of the policies was unclear and difficult to understand. When the participants were asked about their school district's policy, Rudy, Nycole, Corey, and Allan indicated that reports of bullying incidents had to be submitted to the counselor and/or administrator for further investigation. Asha and Zara agreed that the county had a zero tolerance policy for school bullying and that the school and the district took such incidents seriously.

Asha explained, “Bullying is just not allowed. We take it very seriously. Our county takes it very seriously.”

Zara said, “I think bullying is probably one of the things that my fellow teachers and I work the hardest at.”

Relationship to the literature. The findings are consistent with the literature: The teachers acknowledged the need for stronger student-teacher relationships. O’Brennan, Waasdrop, and Bradshaw (2014) stated that students’ willingness to report bullying to their teachers was indicative of a positive interpersonal student-teacher relationship. O’Brennan et al. found that teachers’ relationships with their students and the school community as a whole had a positive impact on the teachers’ comfort when intervening with at-risk students.

Esplage, Polanin, and Low (2014) indicated that a school climate that supported relationships among students, parents, and teachers increased the number of self-reports of bullying. A decrease in bullying, according to Esplage et al., required parent training, classroom management, PD, development of an antibullying policy for the entire school, and cooperative group work among teachers and staff. Creation of an antibullying program needs to focus on training and supervising teachers and staff.

Relationship to conceptual framework. The teachers indicated that student-teacher relationships played a part in managing bullying. Therefore, the results were consistent with the conceptual framework of the socioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Relationships between students and teachers were seen as elements of the students’ microsystem. According to the teachers, developing relationships conducive to

listening and understanding gave students the opportunity to feel safe in communicating problems related to incidents of bullying. The student-teacher relationships that had been developed also allowed the teachers to become familiar with students' personalities and behaviors in order to recognize indicators of bullying behaviors. Researchers have noted that teachers play an important role in developing classroom management strategies (Boulton, Hardcastle, Down, Fowles, & Simmonds, 2014; Gest, Madill, Zadzora, Miller, & Rodkin, 2014).

Research Question 2

How do middle school teachers handle bullying incidents, prevention(s), and responses to bullying when they occur? Interview Items 7 to 15 and discipline referrals answered RQ2.

Experiences with bullying. Two interview items asked about experiences with student bullies or bully victims: (a) "What is your experience with students who have been bullied?" and (b) "What is your experience with students who have been bullies?"

Finding 1. The teachers who had encountered school bullying often were unsure that bullying had truly occurred, thus making it difficult to manage. In addition, the teachers who encountered incidents of bullying were unsure how to handle them, so they transferred the bullying situations to the school counselor or administration. Rudy and Maury noted that incidents of cyberbullying were prevalent but difficult to manage because cyberbullying occurred through social media, which was not always seen or recognized by the teachers. Nycole stated, "Indirect and cyberbullying, I think, is a bigger issue because they have so much social media."

The participants mentioned that they often sent students to the school counselor and/or principal when they encountered bullying incidents. Rudy said, “I encourage students to speak to the counselors and teachers and principals if they are being bullied, and to report it if someone else is being bullied.”

Maury noted:

I actually had a student at the beginning of the school year who left a note. I don't think she meant to leave the note, but the note said something to the effect that “I wish I weren't alive,” and this is a student that is visibly picked on by other students. So I turned the note in to the counselor. I don't think the girl was going to do anything suicidal, but I just wanted to be sure we made the proper precautions.

The participants indicated that their best course of action in managing bullying incidents was to send students to talk with someone more experienced in handling school bullying. One participant questioned to what extent he needed to get involved. Confidence in the ability to manage students who bullied or were being bullied often was questioned. However, some participants felt strongly in their ability to communicate with students about their actions.

Influences on the classroom. Two interview questions asked about how bullying affects the everyday operations of classrooms: (a) “How has traditional face-to-face bullying influenced your classroom?” and (b) “How has cyberbullying influenced your classroom?”

Finding 2. The participants indicated that school bullying did not influence their classrooms unless it spilled over from an unstructured environment. Rudy and Nycole explained that they had never had to deal with cyberbullying in their classrooms; however, they were aware that it was present within the school. Zara indicated that she had to use valuable class time every day because of face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying. Allan explained that to his knowledge, his classroom had not been influenced by cyberbullying because of the absence of electronic devices; however, face-to-face bullying had been a big disruption. Maury asserted that cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying affected students' overall performance in class.

Rudy said:

I've never had to deal with cyberbullying directly in my class, but I know that Mrs. X has had to deal with a lot of that this year and last year, too. I think she dealt with some, but it's just one of those things where I know it goes on, but I don't know how to stop it because I can't see it.

Zara stated:

I do have 'em come out of mostly nonstructured situations-hallways, PE, lunchroom-where there has been a bullying situation that might spill over into my classroom. At which point, I have to stop what I'm doing to fix that because everybody in the classroom is talking about - did you see that, hear that, and I just immediately deal with it and move on.

The teachers were unaware of cyberbullying in their classrooms and the school as a whole. Some participants agreed that cyberbullying was a problem within the school,

whereas others were unaware of the presence of social media bullying and its influence in the middle school setting.

Challenges in addressing bullying. One interview item examined problems that the teachers faced in their treatment of school bullying incidents: “Discuss what you perceive to be challenges in addressing school bullying.” Responses are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Challenges in Addressing School Bullying

Participant	Challenges
Rudy	“Students don’t understand there are consequences for their actions.”
Nycole	“Time constraints.”
Asha	“We don’t know when it’s happening.”
Zara	“No connection with students who are bullies or those being bullied.”
Allan	“Early detection.”
Markus	“Defining bullying.”
Corey	“Not telling students what you think.”
Maury	“Defining bullying.”

Finding 3. The participants expressed that bullying needed to be defined in a way that all teachers could identify it when it occurred. Often, the teachers were unsure about what actions were considered bullying and which were merely students being students.

Nycole stated:

A lot of teachers, myself included, feel as though because we have so many standards and so many things to get through on a daily basis, we can’t stop to take time out to talk about life issues or things that need to be addressed to build a community.

Asha commented:

I think the biggest challenge is to get the child that was really bullied- unless they are tired of it, unless they just can't take it any more to come across and tell us the truth. Cause so many times, they don't want to make the person mad, or they are scared that it's going to get worse.

Zara stated, "We don't have time to make those connections with kids."

Allan said:

The biggest challenge is after the bullying is identified is making sure that it is totally stopped and the student that is being bullied is not worse off for trying to put an end to it. That, to me, is the biggest challenge.

Markus stated:

A broad general construct-social construct of what bullying is. Again, until we can define specifically what it is, it makes it very hard to do anything about it. It's very hard to attack the problem because of the generality of it.

Concerns about teacher preparation. One interview item inquired about apprehensions about teacher preparation in managing school bullying: "Discuss your concerns about teacher preparation for addressing school bullying."

Finding 4. In relation to becoming proactive in managing school bullying, the participants expressed that they needed more knowledge. The participants acknowledged that they needed more PD in the area of changing their current classroom management strategies to prevent bullying.

Rudy said, "I haven't been trained well enough to handle bullying. I would love to receive more [PD] on it because it is a growing problem."

Nycole noted:

I think that as opposed to being proactive we have come to a position where we're reactive. So if something happens then we address it as opposed to building a community that it doesn't happen. I don't think I have been properly trained in what to do.

Asha stated:

My biggest concerns are that I don't think we know everything to look for. I think all of us know certain things to look for, and I think we know what the guidelines say, and I think we know what the policy says, but every day, there is something new that we find out about. Our biggest problem is we just don't know exactly what we are looking for.

Allan commented, "A lot of kids can be bullied and not show it outward to the teacher, so we don't really know. I don't know that I know all the signs that I need to know of somebody being bullied."

Markus said:

I think as a society and certainly as a school as a unit here, we need to define what we're gonna consider bullying and clear that up. I don't think for me personally that is clear. A policy should first define what bullying is and what you're going to consider bullying and then have a structure set of responses to that, to how you are going to handle it. That's your teacher preparation program. First define it so everybody is on the same page as to what we're gonna consider bullying and then explain how we're going to handle each situation specifically.

Maury concluded:

I feel underprepared to address school bullying. I think bullying has always been around, but it seems to be becoming more prevalent and more severe, so I think there is a need for teacher preparation. I think it would be valuable to know what is the line for teachers in both preventative and proactive steps, but also reactive steps when prevention isn't enough and bullying continues. What is the teacher's role, I guess, would be a question I think needs to be addressed. After addressing that question, give specific practical tips for effectively addressing the bullying.

Relationship to the literature. Findings relevant to how the middle school teachers handled bullying incidents, prevention strategies, and responses to bullying when they occurred are related to the literature. According to Yoon and Bauman (2014), "Teachers are not perceived to be effective at intervening when bullying occurs" (p. 308). The teachers reported that uncertainty about what constituted bullying resulted in difficulty determining how to handle bullying incidents when they occurred.

Relationship to the conceptual framework. The findings are supported by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory that students' social circle influences their behavior. Espelage (2014) stated that teachers' attitudes can impact peer victimization. Espelage believed that teachers' perceptions of opportunities for PD around bullying affect students through the microsystem component of the ecological model. According to Espelage, schools as a whole should participate in PD to understand, recognize, and intervene in incidents of school bullying. The CDC (2014) identified violence prevention strategies as including "mentoring, programs intended to reduce conflict, the

development of problem-solving skills, and the promotion of healthy relationships” (para 4). The teachers acknowledged the significance of PD in their efforts to implement antibullying strategies in the middle school setting.

Conclusion

The problem that framed this study was the lack of PD in bullying prevention and response strategies available to middle school teachers in the local school district. The purpose of this study was to address the gap in practice by generating an understanding about the growing problem of school bullying and examining the perceptions of middle school teachers concerning the need for PD to respond to or prevent bullying situations. The data provided insight into the RQs. The data will help to guide district administrators not only in making decisions about antibullying PD for teachers but also in identifying effective strategies to ensure a safe school climate. Upon completion of this project study, I will disseminate a copy of the data analysis via personal e-mail to the participating teachers for examination.

The results indicated that the local middle school teachers lacked the PD needed to mediate successfully in bullying incidents in the school setting. The participants identified a lack of adequate PD in antibullying strategies at the district and state levels. They also relied on strategies from previous experiences and on-the-job learning to mediate in school bullying incidents, even in the absence of a satisfactory definition of what constituted true bullying.

Based upon these findings, I developed a PD workshop for this project study. Upon completion of the workshop, tentatively titled, “Middle School Bullying: What

You Need to Know,” I will e-mail the materials to all faculty members through the district’s e-mail system. I developed this project study to provide local middle school teachers with additional knowledge about antibullying strategies that they could be using. The workshop will give middle school teachers the information necessary to manage bullying incidents more effectively and efficiently in the school setting.

I will offer the PD workshop as a PowerPoint presentation. A link on one of the slides that will allow teachers to complete the workshop evaluation will be developed using SurveyMonkey. Section 2 emphasized the need for local middle school teachers to receive PD in strategies to address school bullying. Section 3 focuses on describing the project.

Section 3: The Project

School bullying is an ongoing problem for middle school students. Teachers and administrators are responsible for ensuring a school climate conducive to learning while continuing to deal with incidents of cyberbullying and traditional bullying. Teachers often are unaware of the cyberbullying and traditional bullying problems in their schools (Strohmeier & Noam, 2012), and they sometimes lack the knowledge and skills to build and maintain an antibullying learning environment. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to generate an understanding about the growing problem of school bullying and examining the perceptions of middle school teachers concerning the need for PD to respond to or prevent bullying situations. While conducting this study, I examined the perceptions of middle school teachers about bullying, PD in bullying prevention, and response strategies, and identified the strategies that a sample of middle school teachers used to prevent further incidents and respond to bullying. The study had two components, namely, teacher interviews and a review of 2013-2014 SIR discipline referrals.

Project Description

The project is an antibullying PD workshop for middle school teachers specifically designed to enhance their knowledge of school bullying and antibullying strategies. The framework of the project is based upon findings specific to understanding the perceptions of teachers about the need for antibullying PD and their understanding of ways to respond to bullying incidents in the middle school setting. Data from the semistructured interviews revealed that participating teachers in this study believed they lacked the ability to handle bullying incidents and intervene in them successfully. I used

Caffarella's (2002) guide to developing the PD workshop. The 3-day workshop would take place at the beginning of every school year as part of the local in-service requirement.

Goals of the Project

National antibullying PD sessions have focused on increasing the knowledge and awareness of students and school staff about bullying in an attempt to ensure a positive school environment that discourages bullying (Lund, Blake, Ewing, & Banks, 2012). In addition, Lund et al. (2012) contended that one of the main factors in the effectiveness of an antibullying program is the quality of the PD. Lund et al. stated that the majority of teachers whom they surveyed reported having received most of their antibullying training at professional conferences, not from their local school districts.

The goals of the project are to enhance middle school teachers' knowledge, skills, and ability to identify and intervene in bullying situations before, during, and after they occur. Gorsek and Cunningham (2014) suggested that school districts provide teachers with PD about the districts' antibullying policies and the ways in which teachers are expected to participate in interventions. Development of substantial PD to prepare middle school teachers to handle bullying is fundamental to ensuring an antibullying school climate. Thus, directing antibullying PD toward teachers can enhance their knowledge of bullying intervention strategies and skills (Duy, 2013).

By increasing teachers' confidence, knowledge, and skills in handling bullying situations, the PD workshop will promote social change within the middle school setting

by encouraging teachers to become proactive in dealing with school bullying. Project evaluations will be shared with the superintendent.

Scholarly Rationale for Project Selection

The RQs allowed me to explore the perceptions of eight middle school teachers about current practices, past PDs, and concerns about their confidence in implementing bullying strategies. In conjunction with teachers' established attitudes and beliefs about their ability to manage school bullying, teachers also shared how they felt that bullying should be handled within and outside the school setting. However, the teachers also identified the lack of PD in ways to handle school bullying and the need to understand how to detect and defuse bullying situations when and before they occur. The teachers also expressed the need for antibullying PD that would give them the opportunity to develop strategies to deal with school bullying as well as establish a coherent definition of bullying that could be used throughout the school.

The success of any antibullying program is based upon whether or not evidence-based PD is provided to teachers (Lund et al., 2012). Preventing and reducing school bullying require systematic action from the whole school (Ertesvag & Roland, 2015). However, no particular strategy can be used for all schools (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2011). Procedures would have to vary based upon the needs of each school. I developed an antibullying PD workshop for middle school teachers based upon the needs of the local middle school supported by my findings. Lund et al. (2012) stated that teacher preparedness and past experiences in managing school bullying dictate the

confidence and readiness of teachers to intervene in bullying incidents, the antibullying PD workshop will focus on strategies to promote a safe school climate.

The antibullying PD workshop will help the participating teachers to develop effective ways to deal with bullying incidents in the school setting (Gorsek & Cunningham, 2014). The antibullying PD workshop also will offer the teachers effective prevention and intervention strategies to deter school bullying. This project will assist the middle school teachers to implement best practices in dealing with school bullying.

Scholarly Rationale of How the Problem Was Addressed by the Project

A high-quality antibullying PD workshop will explore the teachers' current knowledge about school bullying while providing them with ways to take the most appropriate actions to manage bullying incidents. The ability of middle school teachers to intervene successfully in incidents of school bullying is integral to the success of any intervention program. The project involves strategies to support the teachers' ability to manage bullying in middle school. The project content includes preparing middle school teachers with information on effective ways to develop positive student-teacher relationships, the role of teachers in dealing with bullying incidents, ways to identify bullying and intervene appropriately, proactive interference, types of intimidation, and definition of school bullying.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to present research to help middle school teachers understand the characteristics of bullies, victims, and bystanders. Besides understanding the impact of bullying on students, middle school teachers must learn to

develop positive relationships with students who are prone to bullying as well as those who are more likely to be bullies. The literature review concludes with descriptions of established strategies that can facilitate a decrease in traditional bullying and cyberbullying.

In the literature review in Section 1, I explored the ecological context of teacher preparation for handling bullying and the impact of social relationships on student behavior. The theoretical framework of the study was the socioecological theory, which supports teacher preparation in bullying behavior and student teacher relationship. In the conclusions of the literature review the amount of PD in school bullying is a strong indicator of teachers' perceptions of their ability to recognize types of bullying and use strategies to intervene successfully. The literature review in Section 3 discussed best practices in decreasing school bullying and improving the school climate. Bradshaw et al. (2013) emphasized the need to strengthen antibullying intervention and prevention efforts in schools across the United States. Teachers must develop a standard definition of bullying and understand the difference between school bullying and student conflict. The literature review concludes with a description of strategies and interventions that can facilitate a safe and bully-free environment.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention

Preparing middle school teachers to handle bullying incidents is essential because teachers must intervene immediately and efficiently when bullying occurs (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). However, teachers often are unsure how to respond when bullying incidents happen (Rigby & Bauman, 2010). Hektner and Swenson (2012) argued that

teachers' reactions to bullying affect the extent to which bystanders are willing to intervene.

PD on bullying intervention and prevention strategies should result in positive outcomes for middle school teachers as well as the students whom they supervise on a day-to-day basis. Offering the teachers a PD workshop on ways to deal with bullying should be a fundamental part of providing a safe and secure environment conducive to learning. Typical goals for PD include the enhancement of teachers' knowledge about bullying behaviors, the development of skills to respond to bullying situations, and the ability to identify and intervene in bullying incidents (USDoE National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environment, 2012).

PD often originates in preservice programs; however, many teacher preparation programs often do not include antibullying PD. Rigby (2011) argued that "what is conspicuously lacking and under resourced is the training of teachers in dealing with bullying and assisting them in making an appropriate and effective choice method" (p. 281).

Rigby (2011) stated that teachers are unaware of their choices when confronting incidents of bullying. Rigby suggested that teacher preparation to deal with bullying comprise the following steps:

1. Knowledge of intervention strategies currently being implemented in schools.
2. An examination of appropriate strategy choices for different types of bullying.
3. An examination of factor that may cause certain strategies to work more than others in a given environment.

4. Information about available resources that will assist in the development of knowledge and skills pertaining to the strategies.
5. Commitment of teachers to thoroughly evaluate their intervention methods by carefully monitoring the results. (p. 282)

Teachers should emphasize what schools are doing proactively as well as reactively (Rigby, 2011). It is important to provide antibullying preparation in preservice programs (Sairanen & Pfeffer, 2011).

Teacher engagement. Bullying is a common problem that is detrimental to students' education (Migliaccio, 2015). It also is a problem that can impair the effectiveness of a school (Haigen, Gu, Lai, & Ye, 2011); therefore, how teachers react to incidents of bullying can have a significant influence on decreasing bullying at the middle school level. According to Sairanen and Pfeffer (2011), antibullying PD can be a significant factor in determining how teachers decide how to handle incidents of bullying. Sairanen and Pfeffer argued that schools fail to communicate their bullying policies to their teachers, which is problematic because antibullying measures can be successful only if teachers know of their existence. Hymel, McClure, Miller, Shumka, and Trach (2015) argued that because teachers have an "invisible hand" (p. 1) in shaping student behavior, they need to know how they can influence school climate and student behavior.

Administrators should encourage collaboration among teachers. Teachers who have previous experience dealing with bullying incidents can share strategies with colleagues on ways to deal with bullying (Kyiakides et al., 2014). Kyiakides et al. (2014) suggested that collaboration could involve teachers sharing observation notes and

working out potential strategies to reduce school bullying. Teacher involvement with school administrators also might add to the overall improvement of the school climate. Teacher engagement with students changes the dynamics of a school culture by providing support to students who otherwise would feel unsupported by staff members. As stated by Migliaccio (2015), the ecological context of understanding bullying includes the relationship among teachers, school, and students. Student-teacher relationships are one-way for teachers to understand students' social and emotional exchanges with other students as well as situations outside of school that might be contributing to students' aggressive behaviors.

Creation of a positive school experience. Teachers play an important role in school climate and student discipline. Counteracting incidents of bullying require an extensive approach that includes a focus on school climate (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014). Thus, teachers often overlook bullying situations because of their inability to recognize what bullying is and is not (Yoon, Sulkowski & Bauman, 2014). Teachers' failure to recognize key bullying indicators often result in improper responses, thus making the situations even worse for the victims. Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huitsing, Sainio, and Salmivalli (2014) argued that because of teachers' important role in implementing antibullying strategies, they should be considered the main recipients of PD antibullying workshops.

Schools are accountable for student safety; successful antibullying prevention and intervention strategies alone do not create a safe and secure environment conducive to learning. Effective prevention strategies involve both proactive and reactive approaches

(O'Neal, Kellner, Green, & Elias, 2012). Teachers and administrators must take steps to understand and eliminate bullying. O'Neal et al. (2012) suggested that an explicit mechanism for prompt investigation and action is needed to address bullying and ensure a positive school climate. They advised schools to develop action teams that specialize in responding to intimidation, bullying, and other types of harassment. To promote positive school experiences, specialized antibullying teams that involve administrators, counselors, bus drivers, and custodians working together with teachers can minimize victimization and bullying.

Intervention Strategies

Over half of the states in the United States encourage school districts to discipline bullies (Cornell & Limber, 2015). In addition, state laws support approaches to prevent students from becoming involved in bullying as well as increased PD for school personnel (Cornell & Limber, 2015; Sacco, Baird Silbaugh, Corredor, Casey, & Doherty, 2012). PD, especially for teachers, should emphasize the importance of developing effective ways to address school bullying. Bradshaw (2015) argued that the most effective methods of preventing bullying and addressing its influences on students are still vague. However, interventions must be implemented to handle the increasing levels of school bullying.

Often, intervention programs have a limited impact on school bullying because of sustainability issues and poor implementation. Rose and Monda-Amaya (2011) asserted that bullying is a pervasive problem not immediately recognized by classroom teachers. Incidents of bullying often are not recognized in part because the definition of bullying is

miscommunicated. Garcia and Margallo (2014) defined bullying as the use of organized and “repeated aggressive behaviors against certain students by other partners in the context of a relationship of power imbalance between bullies and their victims” (p. 269). Furthermore, Garcia and Margallo stated that repetitive violence in school could create delinquency that stimulates antisocial personality and other aggressive disorders. PD focused on introducing bullying strategies to middle school teachers is critical to improving the skills that they need to provide students with the support to become socially apt to withstand bullying situations.

Bullying is a community concern, and schools have a responsibility to be proactive in preventing bullying behaviors (Studer & Mynatt, 2015). Discussions about school bullying have increased over the past decade among educators and stakeholders, resulting in an awareness of and concern about ways to prevent bullying (Holt, Reczynski, Frey, Hymel, & Limber, 2013). Outlining what strategies work and what areas need more attention has become necessary. To combat bullying, schools use a variety of approaches, including no tolerance policies, individualized discipline, and bullying programs that involve entire school communities. However, Branks, Hoetger and Hazen (2012) stated that one extensive way to confront bullying is through school and teacher intervention programs. Ideal intervention programs should be discussed with school administrators and teachers, and they should include input from all of the stakeholders involved. Interventions can take place at the individual, classroom, or school level (Branks et al., 2012; Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2011).

Similarly, Studer and Mynatt (2015) suggested that collaborative efforts, where the attitudes of school staff support one another for the benefit of students, among teachers, school counselors, and families remain a priority in decreasing school bullying. Teacher collaboration often leads to deeper understanding of ways to evaluate bullies and bully victims. Such information might result in the development of strategies to prevent bullying among students.

Zero tolerance policy. Many bullying prevention programs exist across the United States. The Olweus Bullying Program and Steps to Respect are two of them. The Olweus Bullying Program is the most experimental program used in the country. Olweus's program stressed the importance of social change, the school environment, and the involvement of school staff (Holt et al., 2013). Although Steps to Respect promotes positive climate change through early intervention (National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices, 2014), both programs stress teacher awareness and responsiveness to bullying situations. Steps to Respect rely on a socioecological model to increase school staff awareness (Low, Van Ryzin, Brown, Smith, & Haggerty, 2014). The socioecological level of avoidance, as stated by Low et al. (2014), engages the entire school in bullying intervention mindfulness.

Individualized discipline. The success of any antibullying program depends on the teachers and the wiliness of school administrators to follow through with implementation of the necessary activities. The ability of teachers to provide immediate support to bullying victims can determine the effectiveness of bullying interventions. According to Holt et al. (2013), all stakeholders must have a sense of ownership for

antibullying programs to be successful. Sustainability of bullying intervention programs depends largely on funding as well as the motivation, knowledge, and PD of the teachers responsible for program implementation. (Holt et al., 2013; Low et al., 2014).

Whole school intervention. A safe and reliable school climate is a strong deterrent to school bullying (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014). School interventions that require participation from all members of a faculty promote a respectful and positive environment that is fundamental to the success of antibullying efforts. Bosworth and Judkins (2014) suggested that teachers be supportive of the needs of students who are forced into bullying circumstances by developing strong student-teacher relationships. School administrators, along with counselors and other staff members, should develop a standard definition of bullying and establish universal rules. Swearer, Wang, Berry and Myers (2014) contended that understanding the consequences of bullying related to the nature of social interactions is vital to decreasing bullying behaviors. Swearer et al. believed that bullying interventions must target the concepts of bullying by requiring the participation of the whole school when implementing antibullying programs because only then will schools be able to decrease the incidence of bullying. Stakeholders in the school community, including bus drivers, janitors, and lunchroom workers must be involved in developing a climate that is characteristic of a safe learning environment.

Statement of Saturation

Various databases were used in the search for relevant articles for the review of literature. Databases included ProQuest, ERIC, and Educational Research. Keywords

used in the search included *bullying, school bullying, teacher perception, middle school bullying, bullying strategies, teachers, and interventions.*

Discussion of the Project

Needed Resources, Existing Supports, and Potential Barriers

Needed resources. Planning an adult learning experiences is challenging and requires establishing, program ideas and needs, while building goals and objectives, and designing successful instruction (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). Resources required to implement the PD workshop include a room big enough to accommodate 15 to 25 adult learners, five to six round tables for small-group participation, a laptop computer, a projector, flip charts, markers, and five to six copies of *Road Map Through Bullying: Effective Bully Prevention for Educators* (Nicolai, 2011). The process of planning and implementing a successful PD workshop requires the support of key stakeholders (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). The support of the school superintendent was necessary for this workshop to be included on the PD fall in-service calendar. Gaining support of the district superintendent promoted interest and teacher enrolment in the workshop.

Use of existing supports. An essential component of planning PD is evaluating existing support. According to Caffarella and Daffron (2013), introducing a new program should not mean departing from tradition; dates and locations should be similar to those for previous programs to measure participants' expectations. The facility (cafeteria) that the school will provide is large enough to support small- and large-group participation. The facility is equipped with audiovisual equipment (i.e., microphones, screens, Wi-Fi, and projector) and furnishings. Teachers will receive PD numbers from the

superintendent for registration through the manager Software Technology Inc.

Professional Development (STIPD) manager.

Potential barriers. After reviewing the logistics of the project, I identified time as a potential barrier that might affect the PD workshop. Teacher in-service is held twice a year, once at the beginning of the school year before students return to class and once at the end of the school year. Teachers often are bombarded with other PD required by the state education department, which leaves little time for local PD workshops. Scheduling the amount of time needed to complete the PD modules with district leaders can present a problem if not arranged promptly. According to past PD plans maintained by the district, there are no PD workshops for middle school teachers during the year except for the in-services mentioned previously. According to Caffarella and Daffron (2013), when planning PD workshops, it is vital to their success that the dates and times fit into the participants' job schedules.

Project Time Line for Implementation

The planned implementation of this project is during the fall in-service calendar of PD offerings for the 2016-2017 school year. Following is a detailed depiction of the proposed time line:

1. June 2016: The findings and implications of the study will be presented to the school board and district superintendent during a scheduled board meeting.
2. July 2016: I will meet with the superintendent to add the PD workshop to the master system calendar. The superintendent will e-mail the calendar of

scheduled training and PD number for continuing education units to teachers through the system e-mail in the fall of 2015.

3. July 2016: The school cafeteria and all necessary audiovisual equipment will be booked through the school principal.
4. August 2016: I will print the agendas and handouts for the PD workshop modules.
5. August 2016: I will present three complete PD workshop modules during 3 of the 5 in-service days.
6. September 2016: I will ask all PD participants to complete an e-mail survey through SurveyMonkey. Participants also will be asked to complete an evaluation as an exit slip immediately after finishing the last module. Data from the survey and feedback from the evaluation will help me to improve future presentations.

Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others

The researcher. I developed and planned the PD workshop modules based upon the teachers' perceptions concerning antibullying preparation and their understanding of ways to respond to bullying incidents in the middle school setting. I will present the PD as the instructor and assume responsibility for accomplishing the goals and learning objectives of the PD workshop while supporting the participants' learning outcomes.

Middle school teachers. The teachers will be responsible for actively participating in the learning process before, during, and after the PD workshop. The extent of the implementation of the antibullying strategies presented in the PD workshop

lies with the teachers. It is the responsibility of the teachers to take the information back to their classrooms and put it to practical use. Caffarella and Daffron (2013) indicated that gaining the support of the participants' influences the success of PD workshops. Participants' beliefs and understanding of the importance of the preparation can determine whether or not the goals and objectives of the PD workshop have been achieved.

Others. Although teachers will be the primary participants in the antibullying PD workshop, other stakeholders also can influence implementation of the preparation. Cooperation from administrators and technology departments, along with the printing of PD materials, can impact the success of the PD workshop. I will seek the support of those not previously mentioned as needed.

Project Evaluation

Type of Evaluation

The proposed antibullying PD workshop will enhance classroom management and current practices in handling bullying situations. Program evaluation is a "process used to determine whether the design and delivery of a program were valid and whether the proposed outcomes were met" (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013, p. 202), thus, it is imperative to evaluate the success of the PD in terms of its support of middle school teachers in providing a safe and bully-free learning environment.

The evaluation will occur at the end of each module with the use of exit slips. I will distribute the slips and ask the participants to suggest ways to improve the content of the modules. I will use summative and formative evaluations to enhance the PD

experience for future participants. I will send summative evaluations via SurveyMonkey via the participants' work e-mail 1 to 2 weeks after the PD to determine the effectiveness of the workshop. All evaluations will be analyzed, and results reported to the building principal and district superintendent.

Justification for Type of Evaluation

The effectiveness of the PD will be determined by the information obtained from the formative and summative evaluations. Formative data help to reevaluate what is being studied to help expand instruction (Spaulding, 2008). Spaulding (2008) defined summative data as valuable information for future instruction that can determine the success of a program. I will most likely collect summative data at the end of the PD workshop to determine the participants' learning outcomes.

General Goals of the Project

The overall goal of this project is to broaden middle school teachers' knowledge about antibullying strategies and strengthen their belief in their ability to handle bullying incidents effectively. The project goals for middle school teachers include explaining the myths and truths about bullying, defining the role of teacher as mediator, understanding the meaning of bullying, and identifying ways to manage traditional bullying and cyberbullying inside and outside the classroom effectively.

Overall Evaluation Goals

According to Caffarella and Daffron (2013), evaluations have two objectives, which are "to provide feedback to individual instructors and presenters [and] to contribute to a larger data set focused on evaluating the program as a whole" (p. 208).

The project's overall evaluation goals are to provide middle school teachers with intervention strategies when dealing with school bullying situations and provide them with up-to-date information about school bullying and best practices (i.e., strategies).

Key Stakeholders

Stakeholders are important to the success of any PD offerings. Establishing a positive connection with stakeholders often determines the outcome of the training and the evaluations (Spaulding, 2008). Stakeholders for this project are middle school teachers and local administrators.

Project Implications

Social Change Implications

Implications of this project for the local middle school teachers, students, and administrators are extraordinary. Teachers at the local middle school will have the strategies to ensure a safe learning environment and a school climate that will not support bullying. The middle school teachers also will have the strategies and information necessary to intervene effectively in traditional bullying and cyberbullying situations.

Teachers will develop a sense of confidence in communicating with parents as well as working with students who are bullies, victims, and bystanders. Teachers will gain confidence in encouraging strong teacher-student and parent-school relationships to decrease the number of incidents of school bullying. Most importantly, students will gain a secure learning environment where they believe in their teachers' ability to intervene effectively in bullying situations when and if they occur. The community, as well as

students, will develop a belief in teachers' support and understanding before, during, and after bullying incidents develop.

Local Stakeholders and the Larger Context

The project coincides with the overall goal of the state department of education and the local school district's objective to stop school bullying. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socioecological model, teachers shape and influence the development of students. By participating in the proposed PD workshop, the middle school teachers will obtain the aptitude to implement antibullying strategies to support a safe and secure social environment for all students. The project will promote teachers' ability to develop and maintain policies that will foster relationships to meet the need of bullies, victims, and bystanders. Equally, students will learn what to do in bullying situations.

Conclusion

I conducted this project to explore the gap in local practice regarding the PD of teachers in bullying prevention and response strategies. I found that the teachers had received little, if any, direction on ways to handle incidents of school bullying. Teachers in general are unprepared to intervene in bullying situations. Accordingly, the project is a model of PD designed to prepare middle school teachers to improve in their ability to intervene in incidents of school bullying as well as use strategies to diffuse bullying situations when and if they are needed. Therefore, the PD workshop will support middle school teachers as they develop clarity about school bullying.

The literature in this section showed a strong link between PD and the implementation of successful antibullying strategies. According to Juvonen, Wang, and Espinoza (2011), when teachers do not or cannot intervene successfully in school bullying, students are placed at risk.

Information about the project's goals, rationale, resources, existing supports, barriers, time lines, roles and responsibilities, program evaluation, implications and social change was presented in Section 3. Included in Section 4 are my reflections, a description of the project's strengths and limitations, and recommendations for alternative approaches. I also address scholarships, project development, and leadership change, in addition to implications and directions for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to generate an understanding about the growing problem of school bullying and examining the perceptions of middle school teachers concerning the need for PD to respond to or prevent bullying situations. I interviewed a small group of middle school teachers to obtain their views about the need for PD in bullying prevention and intervention strategies and how they viewed their ability to manage incidents of school bullying. Based upon the findings, I designed a PD workshop for middle school teachers to improve their understanding of school bullying, provide resources to help teachers identify best practices regarding the use of bullying prevention and intervention strategies, and provide training that includes dialect and conversation. This section provides a detailed description of the project study's objectives.

Project Strengths

The project is a PD for middle school teachers designed to improve their ability to deal with incidents of bullying. The focus of the project is to provide teachers with a more uniform definition of bullying and show them how to use proven bullying strategies effectively to minimize the number of incidents of school bullying and provide students with a safe learning environment. PD workshops that provide practical intervention strategies on ways to deal with direct bullying are the most effective, according to researchers (e.g., Dedousis-Wallace et al., 2014).

The project has two significant strengths in addressing the problem. The literature review was used to support the significance of the problem, placing an emphasis on the problem of bullying in the local school and the lack of PD for teachers to address it. PD is

needed to improve teachers' knowledge about effective antibullying strategies (Boulton et al., 2014). Burger, Strohmeier, Sprober, Bauman, and Rigby (2015) noted, "A crucial factor to reduce bullying in schools is the competent handling of bullying incidents by teachers" (p.196). This project offers specific research-based information on providing the teachers with PD modules on comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention strategies. This project is unique because it will be offered free of charge to the teachers. In addition, the PD will be offered when class time is not interrupted, and substitutes are not necessary.

The most important strength of this project is that it is a solid example of PD for teachers in the area of school bullying. Because of the often unnoticed distressing bullying behavior among middle school students and limited staff understanding and skills to address bullying behavior (Barnes et al., 2012), it is imperative that schools and school districts provide antibullying training to teachers. Furthermore, the literature review was used to "justify the relevance of the problem" (Creswell 2012, p. 80). In conducting this study, I hope to offer a feasible means for local schools and school districts to offer professional training on bullying to their teachers.

Project Limitations

When developing a PD project, the developer must consider the project's limitations. Limitations of the project are that it is offered to middle school teachers only, so attendance at the 3-day training might be limited. The project was developed from data gleaned from a survey and an interview with a sample of middle school teachers from a small rural community. According to Patton (2002), the experience of the researcher

plays a significant role in the overall research, so the interviews and documents could have been vulnerable to inadvertent bias.

The project's limitations include the willingness teachers to use the strategies and resources provided in the PD workshop modules. It is important for teachers to recognize and support the need for training. Teachers must see the need to implement policies beyond the PD. Project success relies on teacher participation; thus, school administrators at the local and district levels must realize the importance of PD in antibullying strategies.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Limber, Luxenberg, and Olweus (2014) reported that 83% of girls and 77% of boys reported being bullied in some form during an average school year. Bullying is a serious problem across grade levels. However, school bullying is more prevalent in middle school. Currently, PD focusing on school bullying is a trending topic. Researchers have a much greater awareness now of the demand for PD on bullying intervention and prevention strategies and the importance of how teachers intervene in bullying situations (Migliaccio, 2014). One approach to addressing the problem of limited PD in dealing with school bullying is to observe and survey teachers and students. Understanding the perceptions of students and teachers of how well teachers are handling bullying situations in the school setting will serve as a starting point for developing more effective PD. An alternative approach to increasing teacher awareness is through the development of learning communities for teachers, where analyzed data can be used to instigate

discussions about school bullying that stress the need for antibullying strategies tailored to the local middle school.

Scholarship

Establishing scholarship in the development of this project study proved challenging. Engaging in scholarly writing while defining the problem, conducting the literature review, linking the issue to a theoretical framework to support the problem, and developing the RQs required me to think critically about the importance of understanding the seriousness of school bullying and teachers' perceptions about the extent of their PD in bullying intervention and prevention strategies. I had to integrate prior knowledge with newly acquired knowledge while exploring PD in bullying intervention and prevention strategies.

Consequently, the development of the project encompassed investigating school bullying, antibullying strategies, and PD. Writing in a scholarly fashion and expressing my own voice in the research proved rigorous and time-consuming efforts. Planning the PD workshop was like connecting puzzle pieces (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013): The more information that I added, the more information seemed to be missing. My doctoral journey was frustrating and challenging but ultimately satisfying.

Project Development and Evaluation

In the beginning, I found it difficult to comprehend the concept of project study as opposed to a traditional dissertation. In the process of completing this study, I also learned that developing a project is a time-consuming and challenging effort. However, after completing the data collection and data analysis, I could see how the findings

guided the purpose and goals of the project. The project became a catalyst for systematic change that extended beyond the local community, and it supported Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socioecological theory.

Leadership and Change

Lessons learned regarding leadership and change were surprising and positive. According to Marx (2006), leaders are “clarifiers, definers, critics, optimists, teachers, mobilizers, implementers, managers, and nurturers” (p. 16). Real leaders appreciate learning and are not afraid of the unknown. In addition, Marx stated that leaders possess the ability to remain influential while communicating with others so that they feel free to offer ideas and suggestions. With the support of faculty at Walden University, I developed a passion for research and learning. In this journey to develop my project, I learned that gaining knowledge is a process that encompasses the role of teacher and student. As stated by Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005), “Creative leaders are committed to a process of continuous change and are skillful in managing change” (p. 260).

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Developing a PD workshop as a project was challenging. As researchers have pointed out, adult-centered learning is complex (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). Researching the literature, preparing the review, and defining the problem to be investigated required considerable thought and time. While conducting the study, I began to realize that school bullying is a ubiquitous problem that is not particular to the United States. While collecting the data, I realized that the teachers had different thoughts about

and definitions of bullying. Through this research, I expanded the scope and depth of my knowledge toward school bullying and teachers' perceptions. As I continued to research and add to my repertoire of resources, I became more invigorated about conducting future research on school bullying. At the beginning, I collected data only to support completion of this project study, but as I continued, I began to contemplate sharing my knowledge with other potential scholars.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

Given that I am a former principal, I found the teachers' perspectives about school bullying and their lack of preparation to deal with it enlightening yet frightening. During the interview process, it was my goal to understand school bullying from the perspectives of eight middle school teachers while maintaining a neutral stance toward what was being communicated. Patton (2002) stated that it is the duty of the researcher to remain unbiased as information unfolds. Patton argued that researchers are committed to reporting information that either validates or disproves what is being investigated. Taking into consideration Patton's statement allowed me to collect and analyze the data while remaining impersonal. The development of this project study has given me a platform to conduct future PD and presentations on bullying prevention and intervention strategies.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

Writing and developing the project required examining current research, organizing the data, engaging in critical thinking, and being creative. After carefully analyzing and interpreting the data, I sought to organize the findings in a productive and informative presentation. While navigating various resources, I concluded that the

information needed to be presented in a meaningful and comprehensive way. Therefore, developing a project that involved adult learners required careful planning and organization to ensure the inclusion of elements of their learned experiences. Caffarella and Daffron (2013) identified five primary purposes of adult learning: encourage constant growth, assist in responding to real-life problems, prepare for current and future opportunities, assist in achieving desired results, and provide opportunities to examine social issues to foster change.

Importance of the Study to Social Change

Discussing school bullying and obtaining the perceptions of middle school teacher are endeavors worthy of consideration. Bullying is a burgeoning problem in schools across the country. Understanding what bullying is and knowing the necessary actions that must be taken to stop it are critical. Understanding where bullying takes place, what the indicators of bullying situations are, and knowing how to intervene can change the social climate of a school as well as a community. Without a targeted focus on school bullying and best practices that teachers can use to deal with the problem effectively could result in a dangerous and unproductive learning environment.

Teachers must recognize the link between student behavior and academics as well as the importance of strong student-teacher relationships. Middle school teachers who have inadequate skills to handle bullying resort to using strategies that often produce adverse results. This project study is but one option to improve middle school teachers' recognition of bullying situations and knowledge of ways to use proven strategies to intervene when bullying occurs. Given that teacher preparation through PD workshops is

one effective way to stop bullying, it is the most important variable to ensure that proper techniques are used to develop interventions to decrease bullying situations and support bully victims (O'Neil, Kellner, Green, & Elias, 2012).

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Research on school bullying is expanding throughout the United States (Migliaccio, 2015; Swearer et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2009). I examined the practice regarding the PD of teachers in bullying prevention and response strategies. I conducted a qualitative study and found that even though the local middle school teachers were somewhat prepared to intervene in bullying situations, they needed PD in implementing best practice strategies that would support victims and bullies. I developed a PD workshop to better equip middle school teachers to deal with bullying in the school setting. Research has concluded that teachers are instrumental in creating school climates that exclude hostile situations.

The implications for the project include cultivating proven antibullying strategies, clearly defining what bullying is and is not, and developing classroom management techniques to eliminate bullying situations. On a larger scale, to help to eradicate school bullying, this project could provide the PD for school administrators throughout the state at the elementary and secondary school levels. However, offering PD to teachers on bullying intervention and prevention strategies is only the beginning. Parents and community leaders also must be knowledgeable of the consequences of school bullying.

Even though the focus of this study was to generate an understanding of the growing problem of school bullying and examine the perceptions of middle school

teachers about the need for PD in bullying intervention and prevention strategies, other research possibilities are unlimited. Future researchers should integrate the perceptions of teachers and parents about school bullying into program development to enhance teacher training.

Conclusion

Include in Section 4 was a discussion of my deliberations and conclusions, a description of the project's strengths, and an explanation of the limitations of the study. I offered recommendations to remediate these limitations. I examined and discussed scholarship, program development, evaluation, and leadership change. I also presented my self-analysis as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. To conclude Section 4, I discussed the potential impact of social change and the implications for, application of, and direction for future research.

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Appendix A: The Project

Background

The effect of bullying upon middle school children is a concern across the United States (Donoghue, Almeida, Brandwein, Rocha & Callahan, 2014). According to Donoghue et al., becoming a victim of bullying can lead to emotional stress and instability. Furthermore, many of these students are afraid to report bullying to their teachers. Often students feel that reporting bullying will lead to an increase in harassment and humiliation. Further, the question remains, if bullying is reported are teachers prepared to provide effective strategies to reduce negative behavior such as bullying within the realms of the schoolhouse. Unfortunately, teachers find themselves in situations where effective bullying strategies are needed to prevent students from becoming casualties of harassment. Researchers found that teachers are unprepared to intervene in both traditional bullying and cyberbullying (Banas, 2014).

Teachers are often unprepared to handle the needs of the bully-victim as well as the bully.

Purpose

Middle school teachers require preparation for implementing successful antibullying strategies when intervening in bullying situations. Middle school teachers need additional support working with students who are being bullied as well as bully victims and bystanders. In addition middle school teachers benefit from knowing how to recognize bullying indicators. Middle school teachers promote mental development of middle school students in addition to providing a safe and secure learning environment.

Thus this training provides teachers with strategies to assist in the promotion of an antibullying awareness environment as well as management of bullying in classrooms and decreasing bullying behavior. Overall this training will provide teachers with best practices when intervening in bullying before and during an bullying incident.

Goals and Objectives of Training

Training is scheduled for three (3) days. Each day consists of six (6) hours of intensive training. On Day 1, Module I will be introduced and concluded. Module II will be completed at the end of Day 2. Module III will be introduced and completed on Day 3.

Module I Day 1

9:00 -10:15	Module I
10:15 - 10:30	Break
10:30 - 12:00	Module I (cont'd)
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 2:15	Module I (cont'd)
2:15 – 2:30	Break
2:30 – 4:00	Module I (cont'd)

Module II Day 2

9:00 -10:15	Module II
10:15 - 10:30	Break
10:30 - 12:00	Module II (cont'd)
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 2:15	Module II (cont'd)
2:15 – 2:30	Break
2:30 – 4:00	Module II (cont'd)

Module III Day 3

9:00 -10:15	Module III
10:15 - 10:30	Break
10:30 - 12:00	Module III (cont'd)
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 2:15	Module III (cont'd)
2:15 – 2:30	Break
2:30 – 4:00	Module III (cont'd)

The training will occur Fall 2016 during the 5 days of Teacher Inservice. The training sessions will take place in the middle school gym. Five to six round tables are arranged to facilitate group collaboration.

The training assists middle school teachers in implementing effective techniques when intervening in school bullying occurrences. The content of this training include preparing teachers to recognize physical, verbal, social and cyber aggression, understanding how to intervene before and after bullying occurrences, and opportunities to participate simulated school bullying activities designed to increase bullying awareness. Participants will learn how to support and provide assistance to bullies, victims and bystanders.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the 3-day training, participants will have:

- Learned the importance of teacher preparation and behavior management when dealing with school bullying
- The definition of bullying both traditional (physical, and social) and cyber
- Developed a better understanding of the role of teachers in creating a safe school climate absent of bullying
- Eliminate school bullying myths
- Learn effective ways to intervene in bullying situations

Activities and Instrumentations

Objectives will be met through activities, video's, handouts and other materials.

Participant activities and required materials for the completion of each module are described below.

Module 1: Activity 1

Bullying- what is it?

Discuss with your table the definition of *school bullying (traditional and cyber)*. Write your definitions on the chart paper provided. Elect one person from your group to post your definitions on the wall to be discussed. (3 min)

Module 1: Activity 2

Interactive Pop Quiz. Answer True or False to each question. This quiz is imbedded within the PowerPoint

Module 1: Activity 3

Think about what you know or think you know about school bullying. Take 3 minutes to complete a copy of the Bullying Survey provided. Discuss your answers with the people at your table (4 minutes). Share the results with the class.

Module 1: Activity 4

Participants will remember how it feels to be a victim of bullying

Can you recall a time when you were bullied or a time when you were embarrassed or when someone threatened you? Discuss how you felt with someone sitting next to you

(3 minutes). Summarize emotions and how it feels to be bullied by sharing with the class.

(Write the emotions shared on large chart paper taped to the wall as a parking station.)

Module 2: Activity 1

Test Your Knowledge

Participants will answer question on PowerPoint slides in Module 2 to test their knowledge about bully behavior. This activity will include participants from each table.

Questions and answers will be discussed in detail.

Module 2: Activity 2

Bullying Thermometer

Participant tables will be allowed 10 minutes to discuss questions from the PowerPoint slides about the behavior of bullies, the impact of bullying physically and mentally, and the perceptions of bully behavior. After 10 minutes each group will be allowed to share information with the class.

Module 2: Activity 3

What Does Bullying Look Like?

Bullying comes in many forms. As teachers how do you determine which type is more severe? This exercise examines the types of bullying behavior and invites the participants to discuss each type in detail. Discussions will be shared with the whole class placing emphasis on the different types of bullying and how to recognize the signs.

Module 3 Activity 1

Antibullying Strategy Task

Discuss the penalties of bullying in your local school setting. Does these consequences work? Share with the people at your table (3 minutes). Share and discuss with the class.

Module 3 Activity 2

Bully Hero Activity

Using the “Buster the Bully Hero Activity” in your packet answer the questions about Bully Bystanders. Imagine that you are a “Buster the Bully Hero”, what are your skills. Take 5 minutes to discuss the skills you need to fight school bullying with your table. Choose a spokes person to share with the class. Write the skills your table thinks are important on the chart paper on your table and tape it to the parking station wall. Skills will be discussed with the entire class.

Module 1: Activity 1

My Definition of Bullying

Bullying is _____

Bullying is not _____

In my school we handle bullying _____

Module 1: Activity 2

Bullying Quiz

Answer True or False to each of these statements

1. **True/False** Bullying is a part of growing up.
2. **True/False** Bully/Victim situations can be resolved easier if the victims parents will confront the parents of the bully.
3. **True/False** Bullying is only harmless fun
4. **True/False** Girls bully just as much as boys; they just do it differently.
5. **True/False** Most students who observe bullying don't think that they should get involved.
6. **True/False** "Once a bully, always a bully."
7. **True/False** Bullying is mainly physical.
8. **True/False** Bullies pick on others at random.
9. **True/False** Children need to learn to fight their own battles.
10. **True/False** Students who bully have significantly lower self-esteem than their peers who don't bully.
11. **True/False** Bullying is a problem at my school
12. **True/False** Bullying is a problem in my class
13. **True/False** Our staff is comfortable dealing with bullying.
14. **True/False** Our parents are well equipped to teach their kids bully-proofing skills

Module 1: Activity 3

What Does Bullying Look Like?

1. Use the scenarios below.
2. Take 2 minutes to discuss whether or not the scenarios constitute a bullying concern.
3. Discuss what is happening in each scenario.

Objective: To encourage conversation about various bullying situations in order to provide a clear definition of school bullying.

Scenario 1

Rukiya usually an easy going friendly student who loves to participate, has started sitting in a corner in the back of the room and no longer participates in classroom activities. Recently you observed two students walking behind Rukiya whispering to each other as they leaves the classroom.

Dose this constitute bullying? Justify your answer.

Scenario 2

Judy, Phyllis, and Crissy are friends and in 8th grade. Judy and Phyllis live in the projects with their parents. All three girls ride the school bus home from school. Susan and Alisa, both 9th graders, also ride the same bus. One day Sharon and Vicki start repeatedly calling Judy and Crissy “ghetto” and make fun of their clothes and belongings. One day, Phyllis, frustrated with the on-going harassment of her friends, shouts at Sharon and Vicki, “Why don’t you shut up and leave Judy and Crissy alone!” Susan gets up and pushes Phyllis and says, “You shut up! Why do you hang out with those ghetto girls anyway?”

Does this constitute bullying? Justify your answer

Scenario 3

Today is the day that your students are presenting their posters at the conclusion of their family culture projects. All students are supposed to stand up and talk about their culture and what they put on their posters. When Anna talks about her family, someone in the back of the room yells, “That’s creepy!”

Does this constitute bullying? Justify your answer.

Module 3 Activity 1*Antibullying Strategy Task Handout*

1. Table discussion.
2. Think about what middle school teachers need to know about school bullying and in order to intervene when faced with a school bullying situation.
3. Using the worksheet provided, list skills and strategies need to intervene.
4. Determine which you feel is most important and why.

WHAT MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW	
Managing Bullying Behaviors	Classroom Management

What is the most important skill or strategy needed for managing bullying behavior?

Why? _____

What is the most important strategy needed to successfully intervene in school bullying?

Module 3 Activity 2**Behavior Problems**

1. Think about the behavior.
2. Where do you think each aggressive behavior is most likely to occur.
place an X in the appropriate column.
3. Discuss with your colleagues at your table and complete the chart below.

	Physical Bullying	Verbal Bullying	Emotional Bullying	Social Bullying
Halls				
Classroom				
Cafeteria				
Bathroom				
PE/ Playground				
Before school				
After school				
Bus				

List 3 strategies that teachers can use to provide support for bully victims.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

using SurveyMonkey 2 weeks after the initial training. Caffarella's (2002) Designing and Assessing Learning Experiences evaluation module was used to create evaluation surveys.

Sample Module Evaluation

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Teacher Professional Development Training Participant Questionnaire			
Module: _____		Date: _____	
Please circle the rating that best describe your reaction to this session			
1 = NO		2 = SOMEWHAT	
3 = YES, DEFINITELY			
1. Where the sessions objectives clear?	1	2	3
2. Were the materials used helpful in your learning?	1	2	3
3. Did the presenter focus the presentation on session objectives?	1	2	3
4. The overall session contributed to my knowledge and/or skill base.	1	2	3
5. Please identify any information and/or strategies you can use from the training module.			
6. Please list any suggestions for improvement for this session.			

Sample Session Evaluation (two and four weeks after training)

**Bullying Prevention and Intervention
Teacher Professional Development Training
Participant Questionnaire**

Check appropriately

Week 2 Week 3 Date: _____

Please assist us in evaluating the quality of the activities by completing this questionnaire. For each question, circle the number that best exemplifies your opinion.

1 = NO

2 = SOMEWHAT

3 = YES, DEFINITELY

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. Could the content and strategies be applied to your students? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. Have you incorporate best practice strategies in the handling of school bullying? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. Did you collaborate with other participants to create antibullying strategies for your school or classroom? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Describe the antibullying strategies you used in your school. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. How has the use of the best practice strategies influenced your handling of school bullying incidents? | | | |
| 6. Is there anything else you need to implement the use of antibullying strategies in your school? Explain. | | | |

Presentation

BULLY PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION
Teacher Professional Development Training

PRESENTED BY
DEMITA S. PARSON
WALDEN UNIVERSITY DOCTORAL CANDIDATE



Bullying

Students fall victim to school bullying everyday.

- Bullying occurs once every seven minutes.
- 70% to 80% of students have witness school bullying as a bully, victim or bystander

(Grahm, 2015)

According to NEA's survey, 98% of school staff believed it's their job to intervene when they see bullying occur.

(Graham & Robertson, 2013, para. 5)

How serious can it be?

- According to national surveys:
 - Elementary and secondary school students see bullying as a major problem
 - Middle school students are more concerned about emotional and social mistreatment from peers than anything else including academic achievement
 - Recent school shootings are linked to school bullying
 - Peer Harassment affects student Health

Bullying and State Laws

Almost all states currently have a law addressing bullying in schools.

- Review Alabama law for inclusion of a bullying definition.
- Does the law effectively communicate an educator's legal responsibilities regarding bullying?
- Does the law require training of all school staff?

Purpose

The purpose of this training is to enhance teachers, understanding of bullying by providing best practice strategies need to prevent and manage school bullying appropriately.

Training Modules

Module 1: Justification for specialized training in preparing teachers on managing school bullying (overview and terminology)

Module 2: Identifying and understanding bully behavior and the effects of bullying on students

Module 3: Strategies and Best Practices for intervening in school bullying

Training Objectives

➤ Participants will:

- Understand the problem of school bullying
- Understand the culture of school bullying
- Learn the importance of teacher preparation for understanding and managing school bullying and student behavior
- Examine the duties of school staff especially teachers with respect to preventing school bullying and developing a safe environment
- Learn best practices in preventing bullying and how to respond when bullying happens

Module I

*Specialized training in preparing
teachers on managing school bullying
(overview and terminology)*

Module 1 Objectives

- Participants will:
 - Explore the definition of bullying
 - Increase their knowledge about the issue of bullying within the classroom and within a general school
 - Discuss the role of teachers and other school personnel

What is bullying?

Activity 1:

Discuss with your table the different types of bullying and then create a definition for bullying.

Bullying is....

- Unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.
- Meant to hurt, humiliate, or harm another person physically or emotionally.
- Repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

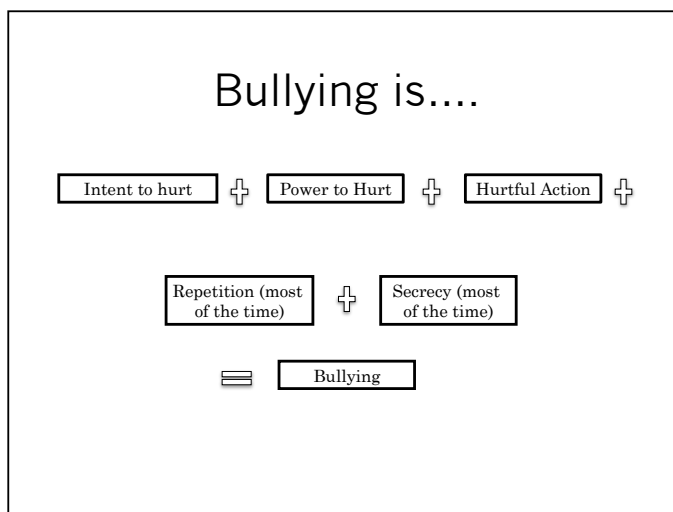
(Olweus, 1993)

"Bullying is intentional harmful behavior initiated by one or more students and directed toward another student. Bullying exists when a student with more social and/or physical power deliberately dominates and harasses another who has less power. Bullying is unjustified and typically is repeated" (para.9)

Resource: Bully Guide, Mentoring Minds™

Stopbullying.gov (2014)

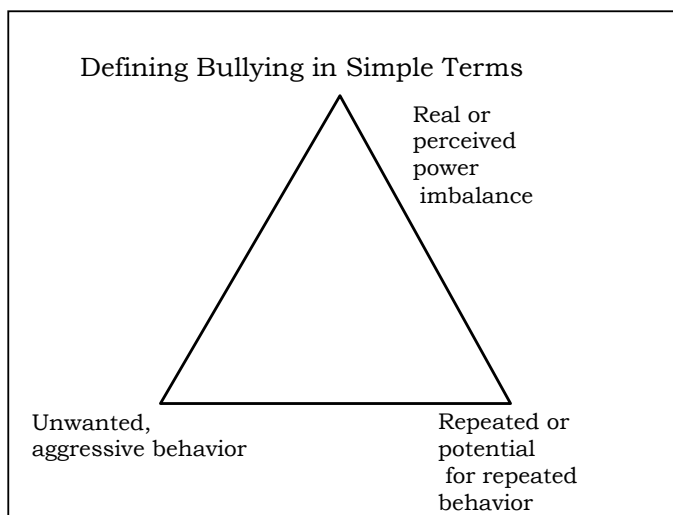
- Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.



Alabama's Definition

HARASSMENT. A continuous pattern of intentional behavior that takes place on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored function including, but not limited to, written, electronic, verbal, or physical acts that are reasonably perceived as being motivated by any characteristic of a student, or by the association of a student with an individual who has a particular characteristic, if the characteristic falls into one of the categories of personal characteristics contained in the model policy adopted by the department or by a local board.

(Act 2009-571, p. 1674, §6.)



- ## Duties of Schools in Alabama
- **Section 16-28B-6**
 - **Duties of schools.**
 - Each school shall do all of the following:
 - (1) Develop and implement evidence-based practices to promote a school environment that is free of harassment, intimidation, violence, and threats of violence.
 - (2) Develop and implement evidence-based practices to prevent harassment, intimidation, violence, and threats of violence based, as a minimum, on the criteria established by this chapter and local board policy, and to intervene when such incidents occur.
 - (3) Incorporate into civility, citizenship, and character education curricula awareness of and sensitivity to the prohibitions of this chapter and local board policy against harassment, intimidation, violence, and threats of violence.
 - (4) Report statistics to the local board of actual violence, submitted reports of threats of violence, and harassment. The local board shall provide the statistics of the school system and each school in the school system to the department for posting on the department website. The posted statistics shall be available to the public and any state or federal agency requiring the information. The identity of each student involved shall be protected and may not be posted on the department website.
 - *(Act 2009-571, p. 1674, §6.)*

How widespread is it?

- 70% of middle and high school students have experienced bullying at some point.
- 20-40% report having bullied or been part of bullying during the school year.
- 27% report being harassed for not conforming to sexually stereotypical behavior.
- 5-15% of youth are chronic victims
- 7-12% are chronic bullies

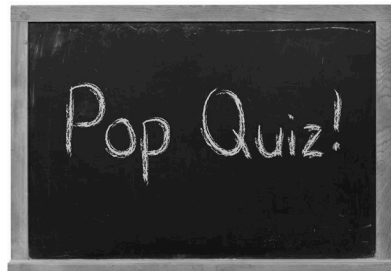
(Graham, 2013)

Factors of Bullying

Key factors that may contribute to bullying either as a bully, victim, or bystander.

- choice of peer groups
- social interaction skills
- popularity
- attitudes toward violence
- being part of a particularly vulnerable population

Activity 2



**Bullies are excluded by their peers
and have no friends?**

True

False

False

Most bullies are popular in school and have lots of friend. During middle school years some bullies are perceived as leaders. Many of their peers will try to imitate them because they like their rough behavior.

Bullies do not have low self-esteem?

True

False

True

Bullies can perceive themselves as well-liked.
Therefore, just focusing on self-esteem improvement
will probably not mend the outcome of bullying.

**Many middle school victims of
bullying become violent teens?**

True

False

True

Often students who are bullied develop low self-esteem and act out in violence as a way to retaliate against their aggressors. However, according to Graham (2015) many bully victims suffer without reporting their pain to anyone

Harassment

- Bullying and harassment often overlap.
- Not all bullying is harassment and not all harassment is bullying.
- Harassment is unwelcome conduct based on a protected class that is severe, pervasive, or persistent and creates an aggressive environment.



(Federal Civil Rights Law)

“School bullying usually occurs during breaks in dressing rooms, bathrooms, or corridors that are easily accessible to children, but where teachers rarely go”



(Majcherova, Hajduova & Andrejkovic, 2014. p. 463)

According to the National Association of School Psychologists, 160,000 students per day stay home from school because of bullying



Source: www.nea.org

Activity 3 Bullying Survey

Reasons Students Bully

- Thinks bullying is an easy way to get what is desired
- Feels bullying increases social status
- Jealousy
- Feels the need to look tough in front of others
- Enjoys inflicting power on others to cause fear
- Suffers from poor parenting and aggressive behavior modeled at home
- **Failure of a school to implement and enforce effective bullying plan.**

◆ Imbalance characterized by:

- Physical Characteristics such as age, size, and strength
- Popularity
- Background/Demographic
- Abilities and skills such as academic and or physical
- Access of money, resources, or information
- Being outnumbered
- Presence of weapons in every day life.

Bullying vs. Conflict

The term *bullying* has been misused for other behavior problems.

Can you distinguish bullying from normal conflict?

Activity 4
Remember how it feels to be bullied

Identifying Bullying:

Characteristics:

- Aggressive behavior
- Repetitive behavior
- Power imbalance
- Criticizes others
- High levels of self-esteem
- View violence positively
- Lacks empathy for others

What is NOT Bullying?

- Peer Conflict
- Teen Dating Violence
- Hazing
- Gang Violence
- Harassment
- Stalking

Risk Factors-Target for Being Bullied

- Observed as “being different” from peers
- Perceived sexual orientation
- Ability/disability level
- Socioeconomic status
- Poor social skills
- Overweight/underweight
- Most things that are perceived as being difference

Module 2:

Identifying and understanding
bully behavior and the effects of
bullying on students

Module 2 Objectives

- Participants will:
 - Test their knowledge about bullying behavior and what it looks like.
 - Learn key terms associated with school bullying.
 - Explore the severity of school bullying on middle school students.

Activity 1
Test Your Knowledge

Knowledge Question #1

What is bully behavior?

- Repeated aggressive behavior with the intent to harm or cause another person to feel humiliated or belittled.
- Unwanted aggression when a student uses intentional, harmful actions against another student.

Knowledge Question #2

Bullying vs. Rough Play. How do you know the difference?

- Watch for red flags:
 - Facial Expressions
 - Body Language
- Bullying must have aggression. An aggressive behavior must be followed by more aggressive behavior.

Knowledge Question #3

What is an imbalance of power?

- Power imbalance may be described as:
 - Physical characteristics
 - Popularity
 - Socio-economic status
 - Academic ability
 - Social clicks/being outnumbered

Terminology

► **Target** or **Victim**: Student that has been bullied.



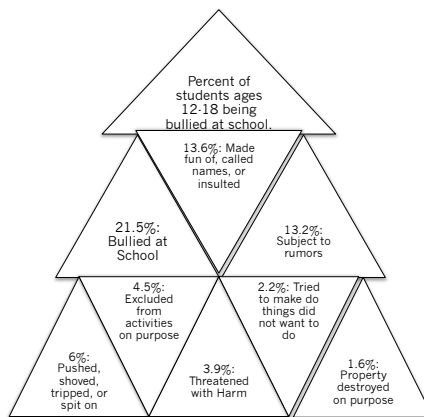
► **Bully** Student that has been identified as showing aggressive behavior toward another student on a regular bases.



► **Witness** or **Bystander**: A student or students that witness other students being bullied.



Bullying Statistics



(National Center for Educational Statistics 2013)

Most Common Types of Bullying

Bullying is talk about a lot but is not always fully understood.

Bullying takes on various forms:

Physical (traditional face-to-face) – Includes violence or intimidation (kicking, hitting, tripping).

Verbal (traditional and cyber) –speaking to or about another person in a negative way (teasing, name-calling, spreading rumors and harmful gossip)

Emotional – actions that upset, excludes or embarrasses another person.

Sexual – Singles out a person due to gender or sexual preference (unwanted sexual contact, harassing comments).

Social – (social media)

Physical Bullying

Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions.

•Physical bullying includes:

Hitting/kicking/pinching

Spitting

Tripping/pushing

Taking or breaking someone's things

Making mean or rude hand gestures

Social Bullying

Social bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships.

•Social bullying includes:

Leaving someone out on purpose

Telling other children not to be friends with someone

Spreading rumors about someone

Embarrassing someone in public

Verbal Bullying

Verbal bullying saying mean things.

Verbal bullying includes:

Teasing

Name-calling

Inappropriate sexual comments

Taunting

Threatening to cause harm

Cyber-Bullying

Cyberbullying takes place through the use of written messages using various forms of electronic technology.

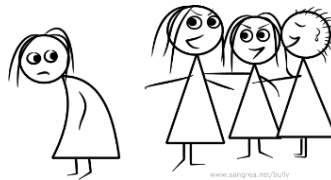
Examples of Electronic bullying include:

mean text messages or emails,
rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and
embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles.

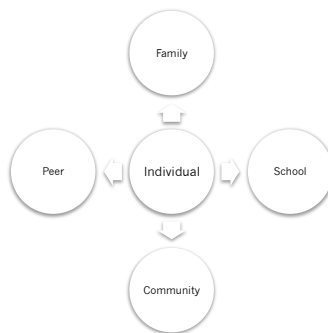
Activity 2

“Bullying Thermometer Activity”

- ▶ Discuss the different types of bullying behavior.
- ▶ Discuss the impact of bullying.
- ▶ Discuss how differences (gender, generational, social) can affect the perception of bullying behaviors.

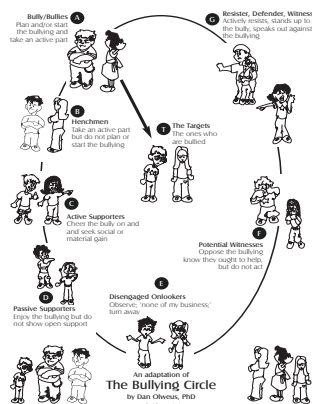


Contributing Factors in Bullying



Source: www.stopbullying.gov

Bullying Cycle: Social World



- Bullying and harassment do not occur in isolation.
- Bullying stems from complex exchanges between students and the environments in which they function.
- Levels of bullying have been linked to inappropriate teacher responses, weak relationships between teachers and students, lack of teacher support, and lack of participation in school activities.

(Swearer & Hymel, 2015)

Activity 3

What does bullying look like?

Warning Signs Student May Be the Target

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, possessions
- Frequent headaches, stomach aches or illnesses
- Changes in eating habits
- Difficulty sleeping
- Declining grades or interest in school
- Not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends
- Avoidance of social situations
- Decreased self-esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors

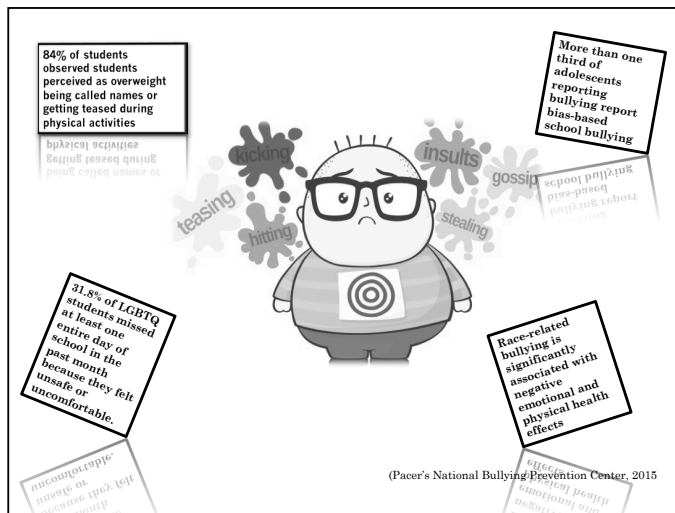


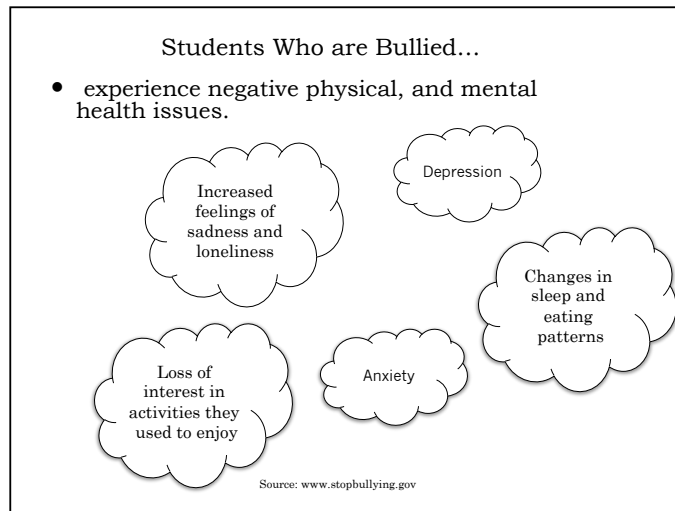
Signs a Child May be Bullying Others

- Get into physical or verbal fights
- Have friends who bully others
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Get sent to the principal's office or to detention frequently
- Have unexplained extra money or belongings
- Blame others for their problems
- Don't accept responsibility for their actions
- Are competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity



- The school climate often dictate levels of learning among students. Often negative behavior creates negative obstacles.
 - Substance abuse
 - Delinquency
 - Suicides
 - Truancy
 - Mental problems
 - Decreased academic performance
- (NASP, 2012)





Effect of Bullying on Students

Bullying can have long-term physical and psychological consequences. Some of these include:

- Have increased health complaints
- Decreased academic achievement—and school participation.
- Are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school.
- Higher risk of suicide.
- Are more likely to participate in school violence

In 12 of 15 school shooting cases in the 1990s, the shooters had a history of being bullied.

Source: www.stopbullying.gov

Effects of Bullying (Cont.)

Students Who Bully Other Students...

Students who bully are more likely to:

- Abuse alcohol and other drugs in the future
- Get into fights, and drop out of school
- Participate in early sexual activity
- Have criminal convictions as adults
- Be abusive toward their girlfriends or boyfriends, spouses, or children as adults

Effects of Bullying (Cont.)

On Students that Witness Bullying Incidents

Students who witness bullying are more likely to:

- Have increased use of tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs
- Have increased mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
- Miss or skip school

Module 3:

Strategies and Best Practices for
intervening in school bullying

Module 3 Objectives

Participants will:

- Understand what bullying behavior may look like in a classroom.
- Explore ideas for responding to bullying behavior
- Develop specific strategies for addressing and reporting bullying.

According to the National Association of School Psychologists (2012) schools have a ethical and legal responsibility to provide a safe school environment.

(NASP, 2014)

**Bullying can occur
anywhere in the school**

In the Cafeteria

The structured of most school cafeterias increases opportunities for bullying behaviors.

School food service workers can play a big role in preventing bullying in the cafeteria by:

- Creating a positive environment by treating students the way they should treat each other.
- Use positive non-verbal communications
- Notice or say something positive to students so others can hear it.
- Encourage students to report incidents of bullying to adults.

In the Classroom

Students spend a majority of their school day within the classroom. Teachers, paraprofessionals, and substitute teachers spend a great deal of their day interacting with students and therefore, can have a significant impact on bullying behavior.

How to Prevent Bullying in the Classroom

- Create a safe and supportive environment within the classroom
- Develop rules with your students
- Use positive terms in explaining acceptable behavior as apposed to unacceptable behavior
- Manage student behavior. Well-managed classrooms are less likely to have bullying behavior.

In the Hallways & Common Areas

- Crowded hallways are environments that are capable of promoting aggressive behavior.
- It is important for teachers to monitor hallways and common areas to ensure an adequate level of supervision.
- **Custodians are important.** They are able to observe students behavior throughout the school everyday when teachers may not be available.

Intervening in Hallways

- Calmly intervene. If the situation warrants it, get another adult to help.
- Do not publically chastise students involved
- Report incident according to your schools protocol.
- Provide support for the victim.

Source: www.stopbullying.gov

On the Bus

The bus is a place where bullying can occur on an everyday basis. Bus drivers can make a big difference in reducing negative behaviors and creating an environment that prepare students for success once they arrive at school.

Strategies For Prevention

- Comprehensive school plan to address bullying
- Policy
- Appropriate responses/consequences to identified bullies and targets
- Professional development for ALL staff/faculty
- Parent training
- Build empathy
- Teachable moments to build community and model appropriate behavior
- Student empowerment

Source: www.stopbullying.gov

Activity 1
Antibullying Strategy Task

Strategies for Teachers

- Respond to ANY incident you witness
- Use incidents as teachable moments
- Seek outside help when needed
- Set an example with your own behavior
- Never ignore a student who reports
- Don't let peer group off the hook

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality."

Desmond Tutu

Training ALL School Staff

Bullying is everyone's problem. It will only be controlled through a total school effort. Administrators, faculty and Educational Support Professionals (ESP) who may witness bullying in their school this year include:

- Teachers, Instructional aides & substitute teachers
- Administrators & Counselors
- Cafeteria staff
- Bus Drivers
- Custodians
- Parent volunteers

All staff need to be aware of:

- The definitions of bullying
- How to recognize bullying
- Protocols for reporting incidents to administrators
- Their role in creating a safe school environment

“Bully Hero Activity!”

Objective/Goals:

- ▶ Many people just stand by and watch when someone is bullied. This lesson explores the role of the bystander in bullying and how you can help prevent bullying.
- ▶ Understand what it means to be a bystander.
- ▶ Learn ways to prevent bullying when it is experienced by others.

Bullying Strategies

- Learn about bullying so you know what you are looking for (see previous slides or handout)
- Learn what your schools discipline policy is for bullying and what support is in place for victims of bullying.
- When you see something, do something – be assertive and calm.
- Express strong disapproval of and stop bullying when it occurs
- Report incidents as required by your school's policy.

Source: National Education Association (www.nea.org)

Observing Bullying in the Classroom

- Learn about bullying so you can effectively identify bullying behaviors
- Intervene immediately. It's okay to get another adult to help if necessary.
- Separate the students involved
- Stay Calm. Reassure the students involved, including bystanders.
- Model Respectful behavior when you intervene.
- Follow your school's incident reporting protocols.
- Refer the victim to medical or counseling support if necessary.

Substitute teachers...

Substitutes are more likely to see bullying than the full time teacher.

Students sometimes feel that classroom rules don't exist on days that they have a substitute teacher.

Things you can do are:

- Learn the teachers classroom rules and **be consistent**
- Know how to report any behaviors that require disciplinary action
- Learn about bullying definitions & descriptions

Source: www.stopbullying.gov

Preventing Bullying On the Bus?

Develop rules for students to follow while on the bus.

Name calling and put downs are bullying behaviors.

- Model Respect for each child
- Create a caring, respectful, and cooperative environment on the bus by:
 - Greeting students daily
 - Ask students how their day went
 - Know the names of students on your bus
- Encourage students to report anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Encourage parents to stand at bus stops

Intervening When You Observe Bullying On The Bus?

- Speak Up – Stop the Action!
- Pull over and stop the bus
- Support the Victim
- Name the bullying behavior
- Refer to the school and bus rules
- Impose immediate consequences
- Encourage the bystanders
- Report the incident immediately, following school corporation protocols

Prevent Bullying in the halls

- Establish a culture of inclusion and respect that welcomes all students.
- Maintain adequate supervision in hallways and common areas at all time
- Role model a positive and respectful attitude when interacting with students
- Be aware of “Danger Spots.” Bullying may be more likely to occur in areas with little or no adult supervision.

Conclusion

Remember....

It takes everyone working together to develop a safe and supportive environment conducive to learning.

- Be well versed in your District's Policies and Procedures
- Be knowledgeable about bullying and how it differs from other student behaviors.
- Make sure you are knowledgeable about bully incident reporting protocols for your school.
- Make bullying prevention a priority. Promote it in the classroom, in the halls and in the community.

Remember....

BE PROACTIVE VERSES REACTIVE.

- Provide training to staff members in Bullying Prevention and response
- Develop rules that reinforces good behavior
- Increase adult supervision
- Provide activities for bullying prevention

Source: www.stopbullying.gov

Intervening Strategies Revisited

- Intervene by separating the students involved.
- Do not question students in front of other students.
- Report the incident following your school's guidelines
- The students can then be questioned individually.
- Don't try to resolve the incident on the spot
- Don't assume that students can work it out themselves.
- Listen before talking and reflect before acting

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www.stopbullying.gov

BE A GAME CHANGER.
STOP BULLYING!



Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. Explain your current teacher position.
 - a. Grade level
 - b. Years in classroom as teacher
3. Tell me about your preparation specific to student problem solving and classroom management.
 - a. Local preparation
 - b. State preparation
 - c. University/College preparation
4. Does your school have a policy on bullying?
5. Tell me about your school district's policy on bullying. State policy?
6. Is the antibullying policy in the school and district clear and usable for the teachers? What makes it that way?
7. What experience have you had with students who have been bullied?
 - a. Traditional face-to-face
 - b. Indirect or cyber
8. What experiences have you had with students who are bullies?
 - a. Traditional face-to-face
 - b. Cyber
9. How has traditional face-to-face bullying influenced your classroom?
Explain.

10. How has cyberbullying influenced your classroom? Explain.
11. Discuss your concerns about teacher preparation for addressing school bullying.
12. What are some of the strategies that you think should be used to address school bullying?
 - a. Cyberbullying
 - b. Traditional face-to-face bullying
13. Discuss what you perceive to be challenges in addressing school bullying.
14. What do you perceive the role and responsibility of teachers to be in addressing cyber and traditional school bullying?
15. Tell me about an incident when you intervened and you feel that you intervened well.
16. Would you like to tell me anything else about school bullying that I have not asked?