2015

A Comparison of Preservice Teachers' Responses to Bullying Scenarios

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MEd, The Pennsylvania State University, 1998

MS, Drexel University, 1996

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

This nonexperimental study was conducted to determine differences that exist between PreK to 4th grade preservice teachers' beliefs about the severity of bullying, their empathy with victims of bullying, beliefs about their ability to cope with bullying in the classroom, and their ability to intervene in bullying issues. Bandura's self-efficacy theory and Ajzen's theory of planned behavior provided the study's theoretical base and demonstrated a connection between participants perceived ability to cope with bullying behavior and willingness to intervene. The participants (N = 112) were students in a 2-year community college PreK to 4th grade education transfer degree program. Data were collected from self-reported student surveys. Current research in the field of bullying showed a correlation between preservice teachers' self-efficacy and their willingness to act in a bullying situation. This study was undertaken to extend that research to preservice teachers at the community college level. Repeated measures of analyses of variance were conducted to evaluate the significance of the survey responses. Participants did not express a high level of confidence in coping with the bullying scenarios presented (p <.001), but did report a high likelihood of intervention for all types of bullying (p <.001). The lack of confidence in coping with bullying scenarios was related to lower self-efficacy to manage bullying situations and indicated the need for increased preparation. Implications for positive social change included benefits to school districts as well as other community college and university teacher education programs because of increased awareness and preparation for preservice teachers. This preparation will promote proactive behavior on the part of the preservice teacher to prevent bullying behavior and the resulting physical, emotional, and psychological damage to children.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my Dad, Lew Hoover, who instilled in me at a very young age the value and the joy of education. If I could have you back for 1 hour, this would certainly be one of the things I would like to share with you and see you smile that I have actually accomplished this. I would also like to dedicate this to my Mom, Ginny Magnelli, who is still with me in body, but her mind has been overcome by Alzheimer's Disease. If I could have you back for 1 hour, I know you would be proud. For Margaret… my angel on silent paws.

Finally, for all of the victims of bullying of any kind at any age – may you find peace.

Acknowledgments

There are no words to adequately express my heartfelt thanks to my chair, Dr. Kelly Benson. You truly are an angel who came into my life at the darkest hour in this process. If it weren't for you, this would not be a reality. It has been the most difficult and yet the most joyous year of my academic career and I cannot think of anyone else I would have rather shared it with. Holy doodle!

To Dr. Peter Ross, where would I be without your knowledge of statistics? Math has never been my strong point and in my other life as a paramedic I can "titrate to effect…" You have certainly been the APA guru with an eagle eye to detail. It has been a pleasure to get to know you.

Dr. Anita Dutrow, many thanks for your many reviews as the URR. You were always looking out for clarity in the study and for that, I am thankful.

To my family – you have all been there for me in your own special way throughout this process. I am thankful for the tremendous support – this would not be a reality without you.

Many thanks to Dr. Kathy Doherty, who provided a sounding board for statistics rants and helped me crack the Greek code. Thanks to Dr. Diane Thompson for her editing assistance and cheering me on.

You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think. ~Christopher Robin to Pooh

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Bullying is a pervasive problem nationally and locally (American Educational Research Association [AERA], 2013; Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2014). On the national level, 28% of students reported being bullied at school, including incidents of name calling, being the subject of rumors, social exclusion, being threatened with bodily harm, and having personal property destroyed willfully (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). In line with national statistics, Pennsylvania reported 3,763 bullying incidents during the 2012 – 2013 school year (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2014). While many people tend to focus on the negative consequences to the victims of bullying, the damage done by bullying affects the bully and witnesses as well. Bullies and victims both experience a variety of the same issues including poor peer relationships, maladjusted social behavior, and comorbid disorders such as anxiety, depression, and inappropriate conduct (Khan, Jones, & Wieland, 2012). Details of the problems experienced by both bullies and victims are outlined in Section 2. In addition to psychological damage, bullying is associated with chronic health issues. A longitudinal study led by Bogart (2014) found that those students who were bullied at any age exhibited lower self-worth, an increase in depressive symptoms, and worse mental and physical health than nonbullied peers. Those who were bullied chronically had problems with physical activities such as walking, running, or sports participation (Bogart, 2014).

Student learning can also be a casualty to bullying. According to Olweus (1993a), who is regarded as a central figure in contemporary bullying research, the psychological problems caused by bullying ultimately impact the bullied student's ability to learn. Other researchers have noted the negative impact on academic performance due to the lack of concentration and disruption of learning caused by bullying (Hazel, 2010; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). A domino effect can be seen as the entire learning community is affected. Absenteeism has been shown to increase while teacher morale decreases and the combination caused a lack of trust on the part of the parents who hold the schools accountable for their children's safety and education (Allen, 2010).

Current research has indicated that teachers and other staff members do not recognize the prevalence of bullying (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007). Preservice teachers are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to recognizing bullying behavior since they lack experience in the classroom. There is not a significant amount of research on preservice teachers' understanding of bullying behaviors or their perceived ability to manage it in the classroom, but the problem has been noted over time in studies done from 2000 to 2014. O'Moore (2000) suggested eight areas to include in the preservice teachers' curriculum, including the definition of bullying; the extent, signs, effects and causes of bullying; prevention strategies; policy development; methods of handling bullying situations; and attitudes and perceptions about bullying. Craig, Henderson, and Murphy (2000) and Yilmaz (2010) reported that preservice teachers' attitudes and empathy can be important factors in determining the way they will characterize bullying situations and whether they are likely to intervene based on their

awareness of the severity of the bullying. Overt physical bullying is most often reported by preservice teachers as the most serious type of bullying and relational bullying is rated as the least serious type of bullying; preservice teachers are more likely to intervene in the situations they perceive as serious (Bauman & DelRio, 2006; Khan et al., 2012).

The AERA Report Brief 10: Putting School Safety Education at the Core of Professional Preparation Programs (2013) clearly articulated the need for curriculum change in teacher preparation programs to include bullying prevention. The report suggested multiple key areas to be included in the curriculum such as the prevalence of bullying in schools, the harm caused by bullying and school violence, and the social and psychological factors linked to bullying. In this report, the AERA (2013) stated that bullying is "one of the greatest health risks to children, youth, and young adults in U.S. society" (p.1).

In Pennsylvania, the Center for Safe Schools (2013) listed the role of educators in the prevention of bullying to include the following:

- Understanding the difference between bullying and conflict.
- Understanding there are different ways to bully.
- Understanding the laws related to bullying.
- Knowing how to intervene in bullying situations.
- Documenting bullying situations.
- Following up with students after bullying has occurred.

Knowledge of bullying prevention, efficacy of intervention skills, and appropriate responses to bullying were seen as positive roles for teachers in a meta-analysis

conducted by Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, and Isalva (2008). If these roles are noted in local and national research as important in the prevention of bullying, the inclusion of these roles into the teacher preparation curriculum seems to be a logical step.

The education program at the community college in this study consisted of an Early Care and Education career degree to prepare students for the workforce on graduation and an Early–Childhood Elementary Education transfer degree to prepare students to transfer to a 4-year institution for the remaining 2 years of study for teacher certification in PreK to fourth grade. The National Association for the Education of the Young Child accredits both degree programs. The National Association for the Education of the Young Child standards for associate degree programs are to ensure developmentally appropriate instruction for children from birth through 8 years. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Pennsylvania certification levels are "PK – 4 for grades Pre- Kindergarten (PK) to 4" (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2015). The 2-year transfer degree consists of 61 credits comprised of 31 general education credits and 30 credits of education theory and pedagogy (10 classes). Content area courses such as literacy, mathematics, art, and creative play are comprised of students in both early care and PreK to fourth grade transfer programs. Because of statewide articulation agreements, students meeting all requirements of the transfer program continue their studies at the baccalaureate level at the junior year. In this study, I focused on the students in the 2-year transfer degree program and excluded the students in the 2-year career degree program. In this study, the reference to *PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers* will be used to describe students who are enrolled in the 2-year

transfer degree only and have not attained certification to teach in the public school system.

Preservice teachers in a local community college have been reporting their perception of being prepared to intervene in bullying situations through a discussion thread in an online class. Of the 94 preservice teachers participating in the discussion, 51% stated they are not prepared or are unsure if they are prepared to handle bullying situations (Study Site). Thus, further research was needed to determine the preservice teachers' perceived knowledge of types of bullying and their perceived self-efficacy to prevent and/or intervene in bullying situations. Current research on the topic will be discussed in depth in Section 2.

Background of the Study

Bullying is seen as a problem throughout the world. Using data collected by the World Health Organization, Harel-Fisch et al. (2011) discovered that across 40 countries, there were consistencies in bullying data. Most striking are the relationships that were discovered between the victim, the bully, and the bully/victim with the school. Results of the multinational study showed child victims of bullying seem to report negative school experiences focusing on relationships with fellow students (Harel-Fisch et al., 2011). Bullied students do not feel they have positive relationships with other students, such as peers being nice or helpful to them. Students who are bullies, however, report negative school experiences focusing on the teacher-student relationship. This includes bullies feeling they are not treated fairly by teachers, they are not encouraged to express their views, and teachers do not provide extra help when needed. Students who are both bullies

and victims consistently report the most negative feelings toward school (p.647). Harel-Fisch et al. (2010) concluded that children who are victims tend to have poor relationships with other students, bullies tend to have issues with teacher relationships and academic achievement, and the bully/victim experiences negative perceptions in all categories. It would seem logical to assume children who have problems relating to peers may become victims of bullying; however, it is interesting and critical in terms of this study to see the pivotal role of the teacher in both the bully and the bully/victim. This reinforces the need for preservice teachers to understand the nature of bullying and what they can do to prevent it not only from the perspective of the victim, but also from the viewpoint of the bully.

Several longitudinal studies have also demonstrated the long-term physical, emotional, and psychological effects of being bullied (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010), the effect on academic achievement (Steithauer, Hayer, Peterman, & Jugert, 2006), and the ability to predict violent behavior later in the child's life (Ttofi, Farrington, & Lösel, 2012). Bullying can be likened to a flame that needs oxygen to continue burning. As suggested by Vanderbilt and Augustyn (2010), bullying cannot thrive on its own without either active encouragement or passive acceptance. This is a powerful statement considering the potential impact it has on teachers. If the teacher ignores bullying in the classroom or thinks of it as a rite of passage, it could indicate passive acceptance of the behavior. A teacher who does not understand the types of bullying can unwittingly allow active encouragement from other students. Because of the multitude of long-term effects on each person involved in a bullying situation, it is imperative that preservice teachers

begin their training in recognizing and ameliorating bullying early and throughout their studies.

Perceptions of bullying behavior and intervention by preservice and active teachers have been studied with similar findings. Both preservice and active teachers are more likely to recognize and intervene in physical bullying scenarios (Bauman & DelRio, 2006; Craig, Bell, & Leschied, 2011; Yoon, 2004). Self-efficacy in responding to bullying or aggressive behavior has been positively associated with increased training and preparation. In a study on teacher self-efficacy and aggressive behavior, Alvarez (2007) found that teachers with training were more likely to respond to aggressive acts with positive intervention strategies. Similar findings were noted in a study by Sela-Shayovitz (2009) in which violence prevention training had positive effects on teachers' self-efficacy, giving them much higher levels than those of teachers who did not participate in training. O'Neill and Stephenson (2012) reported preservice teachers increased their perceived self-efficacy after completing training in classroom management skills including bullying and intimidation. These findings underscore the importance of including training to recognize and intervene effectively in bullying situations for preservice teachers.

However, most researchers have not examined the teachers' empathy toward the bully. Students who bully are more likely to have depression, negative attitudes towards school, and higher dropout rates (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Bullying and being the victim of a bully has been shown to predict future aggressive and violent behavior (Ttofi et al., 2012). These findings appear to correlate with studies showing the ineffectiveness

of zero tolerance policies for bullying (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014; Skiba et al., 2006). If zero tolerance policies are not the answer, preservice teachers should be trained in methods that are effective in preventing bullying behavior from the perspective of both the victim and the bully. These concepts and theories will be discussed in detail in Section 2.

Problem Statement

PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers in the 2-year transfer degree program at the local community college have reported that they are unsure if they are prepared to handle bullying situations. During informal classroom discussions over the 2014 – 2015 academic year, students have made many comments about their inability to handle bullying situations. The following samples illustrate common themes in the discussions.

Students who have been bullied and no one has stepped in to help or resolve the situation:

- I was bullied in high school about my weight. I didn't know how to handle the bullying so I cursed at the kids. The teacher didn't know what to do so no one took care of the bullying.
- I'm not sure how I would react to a bullying situation. I was bullied a lot when I was younger and more often than not the teacher did not step in and stop it.

Student's lack of understanding that bullying is not just a physical act that requires separating children who are fighting:

- Age and size are big factors in how to handle bullying. It's physically easier to separate them when they are smaller.
- There really is no good way to approach bullying.
- My opinion on bullying is very strong, I strongly dislike bullies.

The lack of self-efficacy to manage the situation:

- It would really depend on how severe the bullying was if I would feel I could handle it.
- I feel a little confident, but I don't think I can do it on my own yet.
- I really don't think that I am equipped to handle a bullying situation.
- It's so sad that children get bullied all the time now. It's like the new thing to beat up a helpless person and post in on YouTube.
- I saw a child get bullied during my field experience in fourth grade. I was very nervous about what should be done and was glad the teacher was there to handle the situation.
- I am not incredibly comfortable teaching social skills and conflict resolution, I tend to shy away from confrontation and just let things go.

New genres of bullying have surfaced, and it is unclear whether preservice teachers are being adequately prepared to recognize and address them. Therefore, in this study, I compared the relationships between the perceived self-efficacy of preservice teachers to intervene in bullying situations and their knowledge of physical, verbal, relational, and cyber bullying. Further research is needed to determine their beliefs and

levels of self-efficacy in terms of intervening in bullying situations, and whether additional training may be needed on a particular form of bullying.

According to the Pennsylvania Safe Schools Statewide Report, bullying is seen as a problem with over 20,000 bullying incidents reported in Pennsylvania schools between 2008 and 2013 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2014). Pennsylvania requires each school district have a bullying policy according to the Pennsylvania School Code Amendment of 2008 (Pennsylvania House Bill 1067, 2008). Schools are also required to report bullying incidents to the Pennsylvania Department of Education Office of Safe Schools annually according to the definition the individual school has adopted for bullying (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2013). Table 1 shows the reported bullying incidents in the immediate area surrounding the community college and the 10 counties comprising the service area of the community college for the 2012-2013 academic year. Column B in Table 1 illustrates the total number of reportable incidents of misconduct occurring in each county during the academic year. There are 50 misconduct categories ranging from aggravated assault to possession of various weapons. Column C in Table 1 illustrates the total number of bullying incidents reported by the county during the academic year (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2013). Bullying is a problem in the school districts surrounding the local community college where preservice teachers have informally indicated their lack of preparedness to recognize and handle bullying situations.

Table 1

Pennsylvania Safe Schools Report 2012-2013/Community College Service Area

County	Enrollment	Total incidents of misconduct reported	Total bullying incidents reported
County #1	13,787	312	22
County #2	29,015	556	20
County #3	34,420	948	27
County #4	19,387	441	11
County #5	2,963	68	4
County #6	67,867	1,444	176
County #7	19,135	505	7
County #8	6,250	127	2
County #9	18,450	1,008	61
County #10	64,629	1,263	63

Teachers' self-efficacy to intervene in bullying situations along with their ability to recognize all forms of bullying has been linked to the likelihood of their intervention (Boulton, 2014). Teacher intervention in bullying situations has a potential impact on the behavior of the bully and the victim. When there are no negative consequences for the bully due to the lack of intervention, the bully is able to maintain the power imbalance over the victim (Huesman & Eron, 1984). Intervention strategies can also be a function of the bullying policies existing in the school. There are two major types of antibullying policies used in schools differentiating teacher responses to bullying as either a problem

solving approach or a rules-sanctions approach (Smith, Pepler, & Rigby, 2004). In addition to existing policies, teacher intervention strategies have been linked to the perceived seriousness of the bullying incident (Yoon & Kerber, 2003).

Preservice teachers who had completed college coursework in classroom management reported higher perceived confidence in dealing with behaviors that disrupted learning; aggressive, antisocial, or destructive behavior (bullying is a part of this category); and disorganization during student teaching experiences (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012). Preservice teachers were more comfortable with the categories of labeled behaviors that disrupted learning and noncompliance behaviors such as talking out of turn, lack of motivation, disobeying class rules, and rocking on chairs. O'Neill and Stephenson (2012) also reported preservice teachers who had no college coursework related to classroom management were "feeling not at all prepared" for handling aggressive, antisocial, and destructive behaviors.

Pennsylvania is in compliance with state law regarding bullying policies and reporting as evidenced by the statistics made available on the Department of Education's website (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2014). However, the role of bullying prevention education at the preservice teacher level has not been widely explored. The local institution where preservice teachers discussed their lack of preparation does not address bullying prevention in the current curriculum. This study is designed to contribute to the body of knowledge exploring the relationships between preservice teachers' knowledge of bullying behaviors and their perceived self-efficacy regarding intervention in bullying incidents.

Nature of the Study

In this quantitative study, a survey was used to compare the relationships between the perceived self-efficacy of preservice teachers to intervene in bullying situations and their knowledge of physical, verbal, relational, and cyber bullying using the scenarios based on the Bullying Attitude Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000). PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers were presented with two vignettes each of physical, verbal, relational, and cyber bullying situations replicating measures used by Boulton (2014). Each of the vignettes was followed by Likert scale questions to determine beliefs and intentions. The validity and reliability of the Bullying Attitude Questionnaire have been established from the past use of the instrument in at least four other studies of preservice teachers (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Boulton, Hardcastle, Down, Fowles, & Simmonds, 2014; Craig et al., 2000; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). The rationale for this study is demonstrated by the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) detailed in the theoretical frameworks.

A quantitative approach was selected to gather and analyze large quantities of data for descriptive purposes. The data were used to describe the perceptions of PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers for the purpose of informing potential changes to the teacher education program. The research design is covered in greater detail in Section 3.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the self-reported beliefs and actions (severity, empathy, coping, intervention) of PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers toward varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?
2. What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs about severity scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?
3. What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' empathy scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?
4. What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs about coping scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?
5. What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' intervention scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs and actions toward varying forms of bullying and to compare their beliefs and actions across the four types of bullying: physical, verbal, relational, and cyber. The Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000) with scenarios depicting four types of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, and cyber) was administered. Each scenario was followed with questions to be answered by means of a Likert-type scale. Using the

conceptual framework of Bandura's self-efficacy theory and Ajzen's theory of planned behavior, I examined the knowledge of bullying behaviors and self-efficacy of PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers in a community college in Pennsylvania to effectively intervene in bullying situations.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks for this study were based on Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977) and Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (1991). Both theories provide evidence to support the assumption that people's actions are based on their beliefs (Ajzen, 1991) and their perceived ability to perform an action (Bandura, 1977). Boulton et al. (2014) stated that these theories are being used to develop an understanding of teacher beliefs regarding bullying and how their beliefs impact their management of bullying situations. The implications for teacher education are that the implementation of training during the preservice years could increase the teacher's perceived self-efficacy and behavioral control, which may increase their ability to effectively manage bullying situations. The local community college PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers do not currently receive any training in the recognition of bullying behaviors or strategies for management of these behaviors. In this study, I gathered evidence to determine their perceptions of self-efficacy and knowledge of bullying types. In a longitudinal study of teachers, self-efficacy could be predicted by examining teachers' perceived effectiveness to handle bullying situations; the more teachers believe in their effectiveness, the more likely they are to intervene (Boulton et al., 2014). If this is the case, training preservice teachers to recognize and intervene in bullying situations could increase their self-

efficacy and better prepare them for the classroom. The existing curriculum at the local community college does not include specific training in bullying awareness or intervention strategies. The topic of bullying is only addressed in a cursory manner in three of the 10 required courses in the current program including EDUC 110 - Introduction to PreK – 4 Education, EDUC 260 - Social Studies for the Young Learner, and EDUC 290 - Principles of Classroom Instruction. The results of this study will inform the need to provide specific training focused on bullying required for all students in the program.

Operational Definitions

Bully: An individual who uses aggression to demonstrate power over another person (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010).

Bully –Victim: Student who is both an aggressor and a target in the cycle of bullying (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010).

Bullying: Behavior that is aggressive and includes a power imbalance and repetition (stopbullying.gov, 2014).

Career Degree Program students: Students enrolled in the Early Care and Education 2-year terminal degree program. Upon graduation, students in this program are prepared to enter the workforce in the preschool field (Study Site).

Cyber bullying: Bullying that is delivered via electronic media such as cell phone, personal computers, and the Internet (Boulton et al., 2014).

Imbalance of power: Using physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity to harm or control others (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).

Physical bullying: Hurting the person's body or possessions including hitting, kicking, or pinching; spitting; pushing or tripping; taking or breaking someone's things; being mean, or making rude hand gestures (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).

Preservice PreK to fourth grade teachers: Students enrolled in the Early Childhood - Elementary Education 2-year transfer degree program (Study Site).

Social bullying: Also called *relational bullying*, involves hurting a person's reputation or relationships including leaving someone out on purpose, telling others not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors, and embarrassing someone in public (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).

Verbal bullying: Includes verbal or written abuse including name-calling, teasing, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, or threatening to cause harm (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.gov, 2014).

Victim: Target of the bullying behavior (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010).

Assumptions

An assumption was the participants took time to read each scenario carefully and answer each question honestly. It was also assumed all survey answers would be accurate reflections of the PreK to fourth grade preservice teacher's knowledge of bullying, coping skills, and types of interventions. Participant responses may have been biased if

the participant was a bully, victim of a bully, or witnessed bullying at any time. To ameliorate as much bias as possible, a valid and reliable research instrument was used to collect quantitative data. The scenarios used in this study were designed to evaluate the perceptions of PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers in regard to knowledge of types of bullying behaviors and efficacy to intervene in bullying situations. It was also assumed the study results may be generalized to other PreK to fourth grade preservice teacher populations.

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of the study were the use of a convenience sample that may not be generalizable to the population of all preservice teachers. In addition, I explored the perceptions of self-efficacy in first and second year PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers in one community college in Pennsylvania. I also examined the PreK to fourth grade preservice teacher's knowledge as it relates to physical, verbal, relational, and cyber bullying.

Significance of the Study

In this study, I explored preservice teachers' knowledge of bullying behaviors, their perceived confidence to handle bullying situations as a teacher, and the types of training they would find helpful, as part of their education studies, to increase their knowledge and confidence levels. The results of this study add to the current body of knowledge by increasing the descriptive statistics available for preservice teachers' perceived knowledge of bullying types and self-efficacy in bullying intervention. Researchers have suggested that teacher training institutions lack formal programs in

bullying prevention (Craig et al., 2011) and moral and character education (Schwartz, 2008). Additional research has shown the teacher's role to be a critical component in bullying recognition and prevention (Gorsek & Cunningham, 2014). Hence, the implications for this study have the potential to impact future teacher behavior and self-efficacy in handling bullying situations and to help stop bullying behavior and the resulting physical, psychological, and emotional damage to children. The results of this study have the potential to increase the knowledge of preservice teachers' understanding of bullying behavior and to stop the cycle of bullying behavior as a rite of passage for children. Preservice teachers must be able to recognize all types of bullying behavior before they are able to understand how to intervene in bullying situations. This study increases the data available regarding preservice teachers' knowledge and perceptions of bullying and intervention that will drive curriculum change in the local community college setting. This curriculum change has the potential to increase the self-efficacy of preservice teachers to intervene in bullying situations as they enter the field and provide a safe classroom environment for students. The curriculum change may also serve as a model for future local and state changes in other teacher education programs.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore preservice teachers' knowledge of bullying behaviors, their perceived confidence to handle bullying situations as a teacher, and the types of training they would find helpful, as part of their education studies, to increase their knowledge and confidence levels. In addition, the self-efficacy of preservice teachers in the community college setting to effectively intervene in bullying

situations was examined. Self-efficacy has been shown to increase the likelihood a teacher will intervene in a bullying situation. The results provide information for the local setting to implement changes in the curriculum to address appropriate training needs for preservice teachers.

Section 2 addresses past and present research on the types of bullying and its effects on children, preservice teachers' knowledge and self-efficacy in intervening in bullying situations, and the role of the teacher in providing a classroom atmosphere that prevents bullying behaviors. Section 2 also provides a review of the literature pertinent to teacher self-efficacy as it relates to bullying prevention. In Section 3, I outlined the research methodology and procedures for this quantitative study. Section 4 details the results of the study, and in Section 5, I discussed the findings and present recommendations for future research and the implications for social change.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review was arranged in four sections to explore the research as it relates to this study. In the first section, I examined the types of bullying including physical, verbal, relational, and cyber, and the effects of bullying on children, such as psychological, physical, academic, and long term consequences. The effects noted underscored the importance of early and appropriate management of bullying. In the second section, I focused on preservice teachers and their perceptions about bullying and its management in the classroom. There are no published studies that focus on preservice teachers in a 2-year transfer degree at a community college. The theoretical frameworks including Bandura's self-efficacy theory and Azjen's theory of planned behavior were also discussed. Finally, implications for social change were addressed.

Strategy for Searching the Literature

The literature presented in this review was drawn from the following databases: Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, ERIC, SAGE Premier, PsycINFO, and PsycARTICLES, and SocIndex with Full Text. Keywords used either individually or in conjunction include *bullying, aggression, preservice teacher, aggression, self-efficacy, academic achievement, bullying prevention, antibullying programs, effects of bullying, teacher role, teacher training, student perceptions, relational, physical, verbal,* and *cyber*. Resources included books, journal articles, and statistical reports published between 1977 and 2014.

Types of Bullying

Olweus (1993a) described bullying as repeated attempts by a more powerful individual or group to hurt, humiliate, upset, or otherwise cause distress to a less powerful individual or group. Bullying has many forms that can be categorized as overt and covert. Overt forms of bullying include physical and verbal bullying, while covert forms include relational and cyber bullying (Boulton, 2014). These four types of bullying were presented in the scenarios and were the focus of this study.

Boulton et al. (2014) cited the following definitions of the four types of bullying:

- Physical bullying is the repeated harming of another person through actions such as hitting, kicking, punching, and so on.
- Verbal bullying is the repeated mocking of another person through name calling, teasing, or derogatory remarks.
- Relational bullying is repeated exclusion and ignoring of another person.
- Cyber bullying is when a group or individual intentionally causes repeated harm and distress to another, using electronic forms of contact.

Other researchers using these scenarios have found similar results in the following respects: (a) physical bullying is considered to be the most dangerous type of bullying and to be the one in which teachers or preservice teachers are most likely to intervene, (b) relational bullying is seen as the least dangerous type of bullying and teachers and preservice teachers are less likely to intervene, and (c) verbal bullying is seen as falling somewhere between physical and relational bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Boulton, 1997; Craig et al., 2000; Ellis & Shutte, 2007; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Boulton et al.

(2014), indicated that cyber bullying was considered to be similar to verbal bullying by preservice teachers.

Effects of Bullying on Children

Psychological

Children who are bullied tend to report higher incidences of anxiety (Cook et al., 2010), depression (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), and suicidal thoughts (Espelage & Holt, 2013). Schools are beginning to recognize the impact of bullying on the social–emotional status of students by establishing character education, social-emotional learning standards, and positive behavior interventions (Rueger & Jenkins, 2014). However, one of the complicating issues with the research on psychological problems associated with bullying is the use of self-reporting and not the frequency of bullying experiences (Lopez & DuBois, 2005).

The type of bullying experienced by students can also impact their psychological response. Direct bullying, such as physical bullying, is linked to students externalizing problems and experiencing social issues with others (Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008). In addition, Card et al. (2008) found students experiencing indirect or relational bullying were more likely to internalize problems and had prosocial behaviors related to the type of bullying experienced are gender based responses.

Rueger and Jenkins (2014) reported girls experience significantly higher levels of anxiety, depression, and problems with self-esteem. Girls are also more frequently involved in relational bullying than boys , while boys were found to be involved in physical or verbal bullying situations and had lower grade point averages (Rueger &

Jenkins, 2014). Rueger and Jenkins (2014) stated their results indicated significant gender differences in the effect of bullying on psychosocial development and also academic achievement, but both boys and girls experienced negative effects.

In a longitudinal study, students who were victims of peer bullying did not show long term consequences when they were removed from the social context in which the bullying occurred (Smithyman, Fireman, & Asher, 2014). This finding corroborates an earlier study conducted by Olweus (1993a) where victims were able to recover over time when they were no longer victimized by their peer group. The negative effects are associated most directly with concurrent victimization. This is not to make light of the serious consequences of bullying, but to underscore the thought that victims can and do get better given the appropriate support and surroundings, which is why preservice teacher training is critically important.

Physical

The physical effects of bullying can be seen in several different areas. Some manifest in psychosomatic problems (Gianluca & Pozzoli, 2013), self-harm (Leraya et al., 2013), and alterations of chromosome length (Copeland, Wolke, Angold, & Costello, 2013). While some may think bullying is simply a rite of passage into adulthood, in this section, I provided compelling evidence that bullying causes serious, long term physical issues. To underscore the importance being placed on bullying and appropriate strategies to stop bullying, statements have been issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics (2014), American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2011), and the

American Psychological Association (2004) recognizing bullying as a serious medical and public health issue.

Schuster and Bogart (2013) suggested that physicians become part of the solution to bullying by recognizing possible signs a child is being bullied, is bullying, or has witnessed bullying. They recommended that a proactive stance should be taken and offered guidance to parents and children regarding bullying. Concern over students with characteristics that could put them directly in the path of a bully such as obesity, disabilities, food allergies, and gender issues have been raised as starting points for educating parents about recognizing the signs of bullying (Schuster & Bogart, 2013).

Gianluca and Pozzoli (2013) conducted a meta-analysis to determine the association between bullying and psychosomatic problems in children. The analysis included 30 studies meeting strict inclusion criteria including the reporting of effect sizes, confidence intervals, and control groups. The studies were conducted in the following countries: Norway, United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Finland, India, Austria, China, France, Germany, Greenland, Italy, Mexico, and Turkey (p.722). The most frequently noted symptoms were headache, stomachache, poor appetite, nervousness, and sleeplessness (Gianluca & Pozzoli, 2013). The researchers stated that bullied children are two times more likely to suffer psychosomatic problems than nonbullied peers (Gianluca & Pozzoli, 2013). Similarities have been noted in the medical literature by Williams, Chambers, Logan, and Robinson, (1996) and Luntamo et al. (2012) whose findings included children suffered from headaches, tummy aches, bed wetting, depression, abdominal pain, and sleep problems as a result of bullying.

Self-harm was described as cutting, burning, or swallowing pills (Hawton, Rodham, & Evans, 2006) for the purpose of stress relief or potential suicidal intent (Muehlenkamp & Gutierrez, 2007). A longitudinal study was conducted assessing children who were bullied between 7 and 10 years of age and also had inflicted self-harm at 16 to 17 years of age (Lereya et al., 2013). The reports were gathered from the child, mother, or teacher (Lereya et al., 2013). The research questions focused on the association of being bullied from 7 to 10 years of age and self-harm in adolescence, a direct relationship between being bullied and self-harm, and other mitigating risk factors (Lereya et al., 2013). The conclusion was that bullying during childhood increased the risk of self-harm by direct pathways (Lereya et al., 2013).

While the specifics of the medical complexities of the changes to chromosomes are beyond the scope of this study, research has shown that children who are exposed to bullying, domestic violence, or physical mistreatment have accelerated erosion of the telomeres (Copeland et al., 2013). This shortened chromosome is under investigation as a biomarker for stress (Shalev et al., 2012). Cortisol is also being studied in relation to bullied children and the development of depressive symptoms (Ouellet-Morin et al., 2011). Moreover, the serotonin transporter gene (5-HTT) has been linked to gene transformation in children exposed to bullying (Sugden et al., 2010). Clearly, the results of bullying are not simply a rite of passage.

Academic Achievement

The relationship between bullying and academic achievement is not as defined as the other effects discussed in this literature review. Results of studies have shown

correlation between teasing and victimization and academic achievement (Lacey & Cornell, 2013) and bullying and low academic achievement (Schwartz et al., 2005) while other studies have shown conflicting results (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). The confounding factor appears to be much like the chicken and egg conundrum. Were students bullied because of their low academic achievement or did bullying cause their low academic achievement? In a meta-analysis, Nakamoto and Schwartz (2010) discussed the inconsistency in the findings of the studies. One of the issues presented in the meta-analysis was methodological issues that lead to inconsistent findings including the data source used for assess victimization and the source used to measure academic achievement. Common sources for assessing victimization are self-reporting, peer group, and teacher reports (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). Academic achievement can also be assessed using self-report, grade point averages, standardized test scores, and teacher ratings (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). Each one of the measures has its own inherent difficulties in the accurateness of what is being measured which is outside the scope of this study. Nakamoto and Schwartz (2010) recommended future researchers carefully consider data sources used to more accurately represent the negative association between bullying and academic achievement. At the time of this study, the association between academic achievement and bullying in PreK through fourth grade has not been clearly defined in literature using methodology to account for effect size.

Long Term Consequences

Bullying was considered as a form of childhood abuse along with maltreatment and neglect (Gilbert et al., 2009). A longitudinal study conducted by Takizawa,

Maughan, and Arseneault (2014) followed children who were bullied at ages 7 and 11 with follow ups at ages 23, 45, and 50. After removing any confounding factors, such as childhood adversities, the results indicated victims of bullying in childhood experienced negative influences on mental health as well as social and economic outcomes (Arsenault, 2014). The researchers compared the long term effects of bullying to those seen when children were placed in foster care or have had exposure to adversity within the family. Those who were bullied frequently as a child had more anxiety, depression, psychological distress, and suicidality in their adult years (Copeland et al., 2013).

Ttofi et al. (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies to determine if there was any association between bullying and violent behavior later in life. The researchers used measures to control for other known childhood risk factors and still found a significant link between bullying, as a victim and a perpetrator, in childhood and later violent behavior (Ttofi et al., 2012). Recommendations from their research included increased efforts at establishing anti bullying programs as a means of early crime prevention (Ttofi et al., 2012).

Why Students Bully

One of the earliest theories of why students bully was attributed to aggressive personality patterns (Olweus, 1978). Early definitions of bullying defined it as a subset of aggressive behavior independent of social context (Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). As studies progressed over time, the aggressive behavior displayed by bullies was classified as a subset of "proactive, goal-directed aggression" (Cole, Dodge, Terry, & Wright, 1991). This classification acknowledged bullies as being skilled at using bullying to gain what

they want (Garandeau & Cillessen, 2006). Jacobson (2010) suggested bullies have the ability to lead others into joining their victimization of others in a subtle, but effective way. Jacobson's philosophical look at bullying suggested that bullying is bullshitting. He defined bullshitting according to Frankfurt, who stated bullshitting is not lying, but phony, and the bullshitter is misrepresenting what he or she is up to. This theory suggested the intent of the bully was to manipulate the audience to inflate the status of the bully (Jacobson, 2010). While Jacobson took an unconventional stance on bullying, his ideas mirror the research citing increased status in social groups as a reason for bullying. Salmivalli (2010) stated the complexities of bullying are much like a jigsaw puzzle where one cannot see the entire picture until all of the pieces are put together likening each of the players in bullying (bully, victim, peers) to the puzzle pieces.

Researchers who studied children aged 8 to 11 discovered sobering thoughts as a result of examining children's drawings and narrative comments about bullying. In the drawings of 82 children, 78% depicted the bully as smiling (Bosacki, Marini, & Dane, 2006). The researchers suggested the results indicated the children had potentially encountered bullies who seemed to have enjoyed inflicting harm on others. Comments from the children describing why a person might be bullied included being ugly, small, wearing weird clothes, ethnicity, or low socioeconomic status (Bosacki et.al., 2006). The drawings in this study seemed to echo the research regarding power differentials in bullying with the bullies being drawn larger than the victim. Conversely, the drawings did not mirror the research on the many players involved in bullying, as the drawings were predominately dyads of bully and victim without bystanders.

Teachers' Role and Response to Bullying

Bullying occurs in school settings, and teachers appear to play a vital role in the recognition and prevention of bullying activities. When teachers avoid responding to bullying, incidents of bullying increase (Marachi, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2007). Conversely, students noted effective classroom management as one of the most effective strategies against bullying (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010). Unfortunately, students who are victims of bullying see teachers as unable to protect them against bullying (Novick & Isaacs, 2010). This is a tremendous amount of responsibility for teachers, especially if they have not been trained to recognize bullying and intervene.

School climate has also been linked to student's willingness to ask for help from the teacher in bullying situations (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, & Gottfredson, 2005). A school climate perceived as unhealthy and unsupportive has been noted to foster a social atmosphere where bullying behavior can occur (Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013). The combination of positive teacher-student relationships and negative attitudes towards aggression and bullying behavior have been noted as key factors in establishing a positive school climate (Wang et al., 2013). Students who feel teachers are caring, interested in them, and respectful are more likely to go to a teacher to report being bullied, witnessing bullying, or other threats of violence (Eliot et al., 2010). Racial/ethnic and gender differences were also observed where males and African American students were less likely to ask for help from a teacher and females were more likely to seek help (Eliot et al., 2010). Understanding what makes students comfortable enough to ask teachers for help in bullying situations underscores the need to tailor training to the many differences

in students, such as gender and ethnicity. Additionally, students reported a favorable school climate when positive behavioral strategies are used in the classroom instead of exclusionary discipline methods (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013).

Children in first through fifth grades were asked how they would respond to a number of bullying situations that were read to them. Confronting the bully, getting the teacher to intervene, and helping the victim were the strategies suggested (Rock & Baird, 2011). The results indicated children were most likely to ask the teacher to intervene when the incident involved physical bullying and least likely to ask for teacher intervention in relational bullying situations. Two very interesting conclusions of the study were children's perception of what is potentially in their control and the ability of children at the elementary school level to develop intervention strategies for bullying situations.

Preservice Teachers' Perceived Ability to Identify Bullying as Serious

Teachers can be unaware of bullying issues occurring in their schools (Strohmeier & Noam, 2012) while students report they are cognizant of the same bullying issues (Bradshaw et al., 2013). Studies conducted with preservice teachers share a common finding with respect to the identification of types of bullying behavior and how serious they perceive the behavior to be. While preservice teachers agree bullying is a serious issue to be dealt with (Craig et al., 2011), their ability to recognize all forms of bullying as serious varies. In studies where preservice teachers were given bullying scenarios to read, they selected physical bullying as the most serious (Boulton et al., 2014, Craig et al., 2011, Yoon, 2004). One study found preservice teachers rated physical or overt

bullying among boys and girls as serious as relational aggression in girls (Kahn, Jones, & Wieland, 2012). In this same study, relational aggression among boys was not perceived as needing the same amount of intervention.

An early study using scenarios found preservice teachers were more likely to identify physical bullying as serious and in need of intervention and scenarios involving the actual witnessing of the bullying event significantly increased the recognition of the act as bullying, the perceived seriousness of the incident, and the intention to intervene (Craig et al., 2000). Similarly, Bauman and Del Rio (2006) used scenarios with 82 preservice teachers and found physical incidents of bullying were always rated the most serious. In open ended questions, participants in the study stated physical bullying had to be stopped immediately because of school policies, it demanded an immediate response from an adult, or a physical incident could not be ignored. Again, in this study relational bullying was not perceived as serious as physical or verbal forms of bullying as indicated by the statistical analysis conducted by the authors. Using paired *t* tests, a significant difference was shown between the seriousness of relational and verbal bullying, $t(35) = 5.69$, $p < .0001$, $d = .99$, physical and relational bullying, $t(35) = 4.36$, $p < .0001$, $d = .88$, but no significant difference was found between verbal and physical bullying.

The most recent study of preservice teachers was conducted by Boulton et al. (2014) and was based on the scenarios described previously with the addition of two scenarios related to cyber bullying. Once again, physical bullying was listed as the most severe form of bullying, while relational bullying had significantly lower severity ratings (comparisons were significant at $p < .001$) (p. 149). No significant difference was noted

between verbal and cyber bullying. Similarly, intervention scores were markedly higher for physical bullying and significantly lower for relational bullying (significant at $p <$ .001). Again, no significant difference was noted between verbal and cyber bullying.

The significance of preservice teachers' identification of overt bullying as the most serious form of bullying and the one they perceive needs intervention becomes problematic because students have been found to experience negative consequences from all types of bullying (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996, Hawker & Boulton, 2000). While multiple studies presented in this review noted the same conclusions, there is little evidence in the literature relating to programs targeted to training preservice teachers to recognize all forms of bullying as serious and in need of intervention. Coupled with the ability to recognize bullying behaviors is the perceived ability to intervene in bullying situations, which is examined in the following section.

Preservice Teachers' Perceived Ability to Intervene in Bullying Situations

Each of the studies also examined how preservice teachers perceived their ability to intervene in bullying situations as well as whether it was important to intervene based on the seriousness of the bullying. The studies each replicated the results obtained by others (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Boulton, 1997; Boulton et al., 2014; Craig, et al., 2000; Ellis & Shute, 2007; Khan et al., 2012; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Physical bullying was consistently identified as the most serious form of bullying requiring immediate intervention, relational bullying was found to be at the opposite extreme, and verbal bullying was in the middle (Boulton et al., 2014).

The relationship between the perception of the severity of the bullying coupled with perceived self-efficacy to manage the situation has been noted as a key relationship in predicting whether teachers will intervene (Boulton, 2013). Preparation to deal with bullying situations has also been tied to self-efficacy and the how teachers report they would respond to bullying (Novick & Isaacs, 2010). Using Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, the more a person believes he or she is prepared and able to manage bullying situations, the more likely the individual is to do so in actual bullying incidents (Boulton et al., 2014).

Perceived actions instead of the intent to act in bullying situations are two different constructs. Self-efficacy refers to what a person feels he or she is capable of doing in a given situation, not his or her intentions to act in that same situation (Bandura, 2006). This is evident in the results of a study where self-efficacy was linked to a direct effect on intervention in a bullying situation (Dedousis-Wallace, 2013). The finding was striking as in all of the previously mentioned studies, indirect or relational bullying was the least likely type of bullying to be recognized as needing intervention. However, self-efficacy appears to function outside of the other variables, such as empathy and perceived seriousness, and stands alone in determining whether a teacher feels he or she can take action or not.

Bandura (1993) described those with low self-efficacy in situations as prone to stress and depression because their inability to master a given task is seen as a personal failure. On the other hand, Bandura (1993) described those with high self-efficacy as people who see difficult tasks as an opportunity for growth and who believe that failure is

not a personal failure, but the lack of skills or effort in a particular area and within their control to correct. Preservice teacher's self-efficacy has also been studied in relation to technology integration (Abbitt, 2011), inclusive education (Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel, & Malinen, 2012), science (Nadelson et al., 2013), and peer relations (Ryan, Kuusinen, & Bedoya-Skoog, 2015) supporting Bandura's earlier work.

The attribution theory by Weiner (1980) also supports the self-efficacy theory in positing that amount of control a teacher feels he or she has over a situation is directly related to the teacher's intervention. Teachers who feel bullying is caused by an external source are less likely to intervene in a bullying situation because they feel the factors causing the bullying are beyond their control (Oldenburg et al., 2014). Conversely, teachers who see bullying caused by internal sources are more likely to intervene because they feel they have some locus of control over the situation and the classroom environment (p.34). Bandura's theory of self-efficacy also links the teachers' belief regarding their control over the situation to be positively correlated with their perceived ability to take action.

Teachers' Empathy Toward Bullying Victims

Another variable shown to be an accurate predictor of intervention in bullying situations is empathy (Dedousis-Wallace & Shute, 2009; Yoon 2004). One variable that has been studied is how being bullied as a child relates to teacher's intervention in bullying. Yoon and Bauman (2014) discussed the reaction of teachers who had experienced bullying as more likely to take a firm hand in dealing with bullying and enlisting help from other adults. Conversely, these same teachers were less likely to show

any empathy with the victims or respond to them in any way. In another study, teachers who were victimized as children did not successfully handle bullying in their own classrooms (Oldenburg et al., 2014). Oldenburg et al. suggested that previously victimized teachers felt strongly about stopping bullying, but were unable to do so despite the having the necessary skills. These studies appear to indicate empathy may be present in a teacher who was the victim of a bully, but it is not an accurate predictor of successful intervention. However, studies with teachers and preservice teachers, irrespective of prior bullying status, showed empathy as a reliable predictor of intervention in bullying (Craig et al., 2000; Dedousis-Wallace & Shute, 2009; Dedousis-Wallace et al., 2004; Yoon, 2014). This finding holds significant promise for the content of training modules for both preservice and inservice teachers.

Teachers' Training and Efficacy in Managing Bullying

Dedousis-Wallace et al. (2014) posited that professional development and training increase the likelihood of teacher's intervention in bullying incidents. On the other hand, Ihnat and Smith (2013) discovered that preservice teachers select appropriate interactions when given scenarios depicting bullying situations prior to having any training in bullying prevention. The major contributors to the research relating to preservice teachers and bullying also state the need for preservice teacher training (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Boulton, 1997; Boulton et al., 2014; Craig et al., 2000; Ellis & Shutte, 2007; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). It would appear the answer would lie somewhere in the middle.

Beginning with the Ihnat and Smith (2013) study, preservice teachers were given a pretest followed by two hours of training and a subsequent posttest. While the

researchers admitted the preservice teachers lacked confidence in dealing with bullying situations, they are nonetheless able to select effective intervention strategies (Ihnat & Smith, 2013). Results demonstrated marginally significant changes in relationship to increased sensitivity to children who bully (Ihnat & Smith, 2013). They also noted the need to stress to adults working with children that a child's response to bullying is not necessarily an adequate predictor of the potential harm caused by the bullying. In other words, a child may be quite adept at masking the distress caused by the bullying situation. This is another critical finding in regard to the content of training programs for preservice teachers.

Another approach to the training of teachers and preservice teachers reflects the nature of the social interactions in the classroom. How a teacher responds to bullying has been shown to affect the level of bullying behavior in the classroom (Hektner & Swenson, 2012). Teacher strategies for handling bullying have also been shown to impact the levels of aggressive behavior displayed by students (Troop-Gordon & Quenette, 2010). In classrooms where students were separated after being involved in aggressive behavior, aggression declined. In contrast, when children were told to become more assertive after being bullied, bullying increased among the males, but not females (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). The complexities of bullying and the social milieu surrounding it do not make a one size fits all approach feasible. Yoon and Bauman (2014) suggested the use of classroom discussion to communicate expectations and expected behaviors and norms as well as to promote positive social goals and problem solving behaviors among students.

The theme of positive social context in the classroom is evident in the study of teachers' self-efficacy in handling the myriad of peer relationships in the classroom. Looking at peer relationships, one can easily see the connections to an atmosphere that would either support or diminish bullying behavior. Entering the classroom and school life in general, children must establish the ability to get along with others, work together in groups, regulate emotions and receive support from peers (Rodkin & Ryan, 2012). Teachers are the tone setters in the classroom and establish the boundaries for acceptable behavior, including respectful interactions among students (Hughes, 2012). It is crucial for teachers to feel competent in managing this aspect of social behavior with their students. Creating a positive classroom climate allows students to learn to make friends, exhibit respectful behavior, and use problem solving to manage bullying and teasing (Ryan et al., 2015). These findings suggest the implications for preservice teacher training point to the affective domain.

In summary, the implications for preservice teacher training presented in the research appear to indicate a shift away from a program that focuses specifically on knowledge of the types of bullying. The knowledge areas that appear to be lacking are an understanding of self-esteem as it relates to the bully, the power imbalance and the repetitive nature of bullying (Lopata & Nowicki, 2014). While preservice teachers seem to have implicit knowledge of bullying and can identify elements that are presented to them, they lacked the ability to articulate the knowledge on their own or act on it. Instead, focusing on the attitudes and beliefs of the preservice teachers and promoting teacher empathy toward victims, bullies, and bystanders would potentially be a greater

predictor of self-efficacy in handling bullying behaviors (Ihnat & Smith, 2013; Yoon & Bauman, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior is focused on three constructs: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). These constructs provide a framework used to predict the likelihood that a person will complete a behavior. Ajzen (2005) reported that attitudes are positive and negative judgments constructed out of our personal experiences and beliefs and function as the primary indicators of our intent to perform a behavior. In the context of this study, preservice teacher's attitudes regarding bullying could relate to their prior experience with bullying (positive or negative) and their personal belief system related to bullying. Questions the preservice teacher might ask himself or herself would relate to how useful or worthwhile he or she felt it would be if they intervened in a bullying situation, and how likely is it that the outcome of that intervention would be desirable?

The subjective norm is a social factor and is described by Ajzen as the perceived social pressure to perform the behavior or not (1991). For preservice teachers this can be a very important variable since the construct asks whether the people who are important to the preservice teacher will approve of the behavior or not and furthermore if the preservice teacher is seeking that person's approval. This could potentially relate to professors, field supervising teachers, or peers. Motivation for preservice teachers has

been linked to the need to be well perceived by their peers with a special emphasis on administrators (Smarkola, 2008).

The final construct is perceived behavioral control described by Ajzen as the perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest (1991). Ajzen stated that locus of control is different from perceived behavioral control in that locus of control remains stable across situations because the outcome is determined by one's own behavior (1991). Perceived behavioral control, on the other hand, varies across situations and actions depending on the perceived control one has over the situation. For preservice teachers this can manifest in wanting to perform a behavior, but the perception that they have no control over the situation may or may not prohibit them from performing the behavior. In summary, if the person is intent on performing a behavior and believes he or she will be successful, that person is more likely to persevere. However, this changes if the individual lacks information about the behavior, if there is a change in resources or requirements, or if there are new and unfamiliar elements (Ajzen, 1991).

Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura (1977) described outcome expectancy as a person's estimate that a "given behavior will lead to certain outcomes" (p. 193). He further defined efficacy expectations as the "conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviors required to produce the outcomes" (p.193). The difference is important in gaining an understanding of how a person may know certain actions will be effective in intervening in bullying behavior; however, if they do not believe they can perform those actions, what they know may not influence their decision to act. When an individual believes they

have the ability to perform the necessary actions, it will also impact their ability to initiate action and increase their coping behavior (Bandura, 1977). People have the tendency to avoid situations that exceed their coping skills or put them in what they perceive to be a threatening environment. Bandura also stated people will act with confidence and involve themselves in a situation when they feel prepared to handle the situation even though they might find it threatening or intimidating (Bandura, 1977). For preservice teachers the implication of self-efficacy would suggest bullying situations could be perceived as threatening or intimidating and thus exceeds their ability to intervene or cope with the situation. For preservice teachers to have a high degree of self-efficacy, they have to know what to do in bullying situations and believe they can perform the necessary actions. The stronger a person's perceived self-efficacy, the more likely they are to intervene as long as they have the capabilities (Bandura, 1977).

Banas (2014) reported that self-efficacy is consistently a common factor in the literature related to preservice teachers' ability to deal with bullying. Improving self-efficacy in teachers and preservice teachers can be done effectively with training. Benitez, Garcia-Berben, and Fernandez-Cabezas (2009) cited significant improvement in preservice teachers' self-efficacy in intervention in bullying situations after training. Similar results were noted in teachers' knowledge, skills and efficacy after receiving training in bullying prevention (Newgent, Higgins, Lounsberry, Behrend, & Keller, 2011). The implications for preservice training appear to be further solidified in an earlier 2002 study that found preservice teachers lacked knowledge and confidence to intervene in bullying situations (Nicolaides, 2002). In addition, the study also determined that

preservice teachers were interested in receiving training in recognizing bullying, intervention strategies, and policy writing (Nicolaides, 2002). The theory of planned behavior and self-efficacy theory clearly provide a framework for studying preservice teachers' beliefs in their ability to manage bullying situations in relation to training they have received.

Literature Related to the Method

According to Creswell (2014) there are two main types of quantitative research, experimental (including quasi experimental) and non-experimental (including cross-sectional and longitudinal studies). The survey method is used to produce a numeric description of various constructs using a sample population. One objective of this approach is to potentially generalize the results to the larger population. The quantitative method was selected for this study to quantify PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' knowledge and beliefs about bullying. I then compared the preservice teachers' knowledge and beliefs about bullying to their potential actions toward the different types of bullying. Online survey research allows the researcher to create a survey quickly and efficiently, contact participants that are not at the same location as the researcher, and provide automated data collection (Wright, 2005). Using an online survey to collect data allowed for quick turn around time and the ability to reach students that are not located at the same physical campus as the researcher. This survey was cross-sectional where all the data was collected at one point in time. A longitudinal approach would not provide any benefit since the study is not looking for changes over time.

Variables in quantitative research are described as a characteristic or attribute of individuals or organizations that are observable or measurable (Creswell, 2014). In addition, Creswell (2014) stated these attributes or characteristics vary among the people being studied. When looking at variables in quantitative studies they are seen as having two characteristics: temporal order (one variable precedes another) and method of measurement (Creswell, 2014). In this study the variables were be the type of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber) and scores obtained for severity, empathy, coping, and intervention.

Literature Related to Different Methods

Different methodologies have been used to explore similar research questions including qualitative and mixed methods. Qualitative research is used when the researcher wishes to understand and describe phenomena typically from the perspective of the participant (Merriam, 2009). The researcher plays a key role in data collection and is often involved in interviewing the participants. Silverman (2013) suggested that interviews allow a researcher to gain first hand access to the participant's experiences, thoughts, and emotions. Qualitative research was initially considered for this study, but due to the potential sensitivity of the subject matter and my position at the institution, the quantitative survey appeared to be a better choice to avoid stress in the participants or researcher bias. The following are studies using the qualitative or mixed method tradition.

Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Weiner, (2005) conducted a qualitative study to examine teachers' understanding of bullying in their urban classrooms. The study involved semi-structured interviews with teachers who had children in their classes that

identified themselves as having been bullied (Mishna et al., 2005). A troubling finding was a majority of the teachers were unaware of the bullying happening in their classrooms.

In the research conducted by Marshall, Varjas, Myers, Graybill, & Skoczylas (2009) a qualitative study was conducted with 30 teachers to determine their experiences, definitions and perceptions of bullying in their classrooms. As a result of this study, the teacher responses were categorized into teacher intent and teacher involvement. These categories were further split into constructive response and punitive response for teacher intent (rationale) and direct and indirect response (implementation of response) for teacher involvement (Marshall et al., 2009). In their findings, Marshall et al. (2009) reported discrepancies with previous research regarding teacher responses to bullying, primarily the use of ignoring the behavior as a response. The researchers concluded the study yielded data supporting teachers' consistent responses to bullying (Marshall et al., 2009).

A number of studies were conducted examining the attitudes and intervention strategies used by elementary school teachers currently working in the field. Yoon and Kerber (2003) used a similar format of vignettes followed by Likert style questions. The results were very similar to the studies with preservice teachers where physical bullying was deemed the most severe and warranted intervention and social exclusion was the least likely to elicit the need for intervention (Yoon & Kerber, 2003).

Craig et al. (2011) used two questionnaires to determine preservice teachers' knowledge and attitudes regarding bullying. The Teachers' Attitudes About Bullying

Questionnaire (Beran & Li, 2005) is a 22 item questionnaire that was used to measure preservice teachers' thoughts on bullying ranging from the commitment of the teacher and school to the level of preparation they received in managing bullying. A second questionnaire was used to ascertain the preservice teachers' knowledge of different types of bullying, their previous experience with bullying, and confidence in working with parents and children (Craig et al., 2011). The participants had not yet attended any teacher training courses and were recruited from psychology classes. The results demonstrated a correlation between personal experience with bullying incidents and previous training in violence prevention to perceived ability to identify and manage bullying behaviors (Craig et al., 2011).

Summary

In the literature review I examined past and present research related to the types of bullying, the effects of bullying on children, preservice teachers' perceptions of their ability to identify and intervene in bullying situations, teacher training, the theoretical framework, and literature related to the quantitative methodology. While bullying has existed for some time, cyberbullying is a new phenomenon related to the technology boom and has had an impact on children. Preservice teachers were found to be knowledgeable about many types of bullying, but the knowledge does not appear to translate to self-efficacy in intervention strategies. The literature suggested training for preservice teachers should cover the areas of knowledge that are lacking, specifically power imbalances and behavior over time, but the major focus would appear to be the social–emotional component and management of peer relationships. As the theoretical

frameworks suggest, the more preservice teachers understand a topic and feel control over a situation, the more likely they are to intervene when the need arises.

Section 3 outlines the methodology of this quantitative study. I provided the analysis of the survey results in Section 4 and in Section 5 I discussed the findings of the study and present recommendations.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

The post script of the suicide note left by 14 year old Angelina Green (2013) said, "It's Bullying that killed me. Please get justice." Bullying is a problem that has negative effects on children including physical, psychological, and academic achievement. In the literature review, I indicated preservice teachers have a limited understanding of the types of bullying, but they are still able to select the appropriate interventions when given a list of choices. Studies that were cited presented the need to initiate training programs for preservice teachers in order to clarify their understanding of all types of bullying, provide training to enhance empathy for all students in the bullying relationship, and give them skills to manage different types of bullying situations.

In this nonexperimental, cross-sectional survey, I explored PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs and actions toward varying forms of bullying and also compared their beliefs and actions toward the different types of bullying to examine any relationships among the types of bullying. The participants were selected from community college students enrolled in the PreK to fourth grade 2-year transfer degree program only. The results of this study may add to the current literature regarding preservice teachers and their ability to identify bullying situations as well as the relationships of their attitudes towards the different types of bullying. Through this study, I attempted to identify any relationship between the preservice teachers' ability to identify bullying and their actions based on those beliefs. In this section, I gave an overview of the research design and approach selected, the setting and sample, the survey

instrument, the method of data analysis, and the protection of the participants in the study.

Research Design and Approach

Quantitative research design was based on the scientific method and used the positivist schema, which according to Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003) is the best approach to understand the world around us and make meaningful use of information verified through observation. The quantitative method uses a deductive reasoning approach starting with a theory to be tested (O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2014). Additional characteristics of quantitative research methodology include the description of a research problem via trends, collecting numerical data from a large population using predetermined questions, and noting the overall tendency of responses from participants to examine the variation and diversity of views (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) further stated the literature review is a critical component in determining the need for the research and developing potential research questions. Correlational research designs measure the association or relationships between variables using statistical correlational analysis; this correlation is expressed in numerical data indicating the degree of the relationship between variables or the ability of one variable to predict another (Creswell, 2014).

The experimental research design is used when the researcher is trying to determine if an intervention (instruction, activities, manipulatives, etc.) will impact the results for study participants (Creswell, 2014). One group receives the intervention and the other group does not. Because this study did not employ an intervention, it is considered a nonexperimental study. Correlational research designs measure the

association or relationships between variables using statistical correlational analysis; this correlation is expressed in numerical data indicating the degree of the relationship between variables or the ability of one variable to predict another (Creswell, 2014).

Four ANOVA analyses were conducted with the variable types of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber) and the variable of scores (1 = *severity*, 2 = *empathy*, 3 = *coping*, 4 = *intervention*) to compare preservice teachers' beliefs and actions toward bullying across the four types of bullying.

Survey research is used to describe trends and test research questions using a sample of a larger population group (Creswell, 2014). When conducting survey research, data might be collected at one point in time, indicating a cross-sectional survey, or collected over time, indicating a longitudinal survey (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of this study was to explore PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs and actions toward varying forms of bullying and to compare their beliefs and actions across the four types of bullying: physical, verbal, relational, and cyber. The results of the survey data may be used to develop curriculum to meet the needs of the student population.

Survey methodology allows the researcher to collect data in an efficient manner with rapid turnaround time (Creswell, 2013). Using survey methodology provided the best method for obtaining the information needed from this population. Using a quantitative design allowed me to classify the data from the survey into teacher perceptions and relationships among the variables according to each of the research questions. This study used a comparative, cross-sectional survey design to determine any relationships that may exist between the preservice teachers' beliefs about severity of

bullying, empathy with victims, beliefs about their coping skills, and their ability to intervene with each of the four types of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber).

Setting and Sample

The setting for the study was a community college in south central Pennsylvania consisting of five physical campuses and a virtual learning component. Ten counties are located in the service area of the college. These counties comprise urban, suburban, rural, and agricultural communities. There are 74 school districts within the 10-county area that are potential hosts to the students in the education program at the college. According to the College Fact Sheet (2015), there were approximately 21,000 students enrolled at the college; of those 21,000 students, 579 were education majors in a career or transfer degree. Of the 579 education majors approximately 352 were specializing in the PreK to fourth grade transfer degree.

Population

The target population or sampling frame consisted of PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers in a 2-year transfer degree program at a large community college in south central Pennsylvania. There were 352 students enrolled in the PreK to fourth grade 2-year transfer degree education major who were considered part of the target population or sampling frame. Sue and Ritter (2012) described the sampling frame as the complete list of population members. I had access to the sampling frame through college software and the students in this sampling frame can substantiate or negate the need for antibullying training at the college.

Sampling Method

A convenience sample was used to collect the data for this study. O'Dwyer and Bernauer (2014) described a convenience sample as one where the individuals are available to the researcher and are not selected to participate based on probability. According to Creswell (2104), one of the limitations of using a convenience sample is the inability of the researcher to generalize to a population. All PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers at the community college were invited to participate in the study. Fink (2013) stated there is a chance for multiple sources of bias when using a convenience sample, including the possibilities that students who are concerned about the topic will be more likely to participate in the study, students may have a complaint they wish to air, and students who may want to participate may not have time to do so at that moment. To avoid these potential areas of bias, the survey was conducted online to allow as many students who choose to participate and have access to the survey. If the researcher is familiar with the target population, convenience samples are less problematic because the researcher's familiarity with the population allows for assurance that the participants do not vary greatly from the population (Fink, 2013). As the program director, I had access to the demographic data associated with the target population and knew that the population was primarily female students between the ages of 18 and 35. Permission was obtained from the community college's institutional review board to conduct the study. Participants were eligible to participate in the study if they were education program students in the PreK to fourth grade preteaching concentration and were 18 years of age or older.

Instrumentation and Materials

To examine PreK to fourth grade preservice teacher's responses towards bullying, the Bullying Attitude Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000) was used. This instrument was selected for use because it has been used with preservice teachers in earlier studies (Boulton et al., 2014; Craig et al., 2000). Several modifications were made to the original vignettes to make the bullying scenarios less ambiguous (Yoon, 2004) and to add cyber bullying vignettes (Boulton et al., 2014). Permission to use the original vignettes and each of the modifications was granted by the authors (Appendix C). The Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire is comprised of eight vignettes that cover each the four guiding research questions of this study, which are (a) the perceived seriousness of the bullying, (b) empathy felt toward the victim, (c) confidence in managing bullying behaviors, and (d) self- efficacy to intervene in bullying situations for a total of eight vignettes. Each of the vignettes was followed by four questions using a 5-point Likert- type scale ranging from 1 = (a) not at all serious, (b) strongly disagree, (c) not at all confident and (d) not at all likely to 5 = (a) very serious, (b) strongly agree, (c) very confident, and (d) very likely. For each of the questions, the mean response, standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha were determined. The complete instrument can be found in Appendix D.

Instrument Reliability and Validity

The reliability of an instrument shows the ability of the instrument to produce consistent results each time it is used with each participant (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). The Bullying Attitude Questionnaire has been used in multiple studies reporting measures of internal consistency for each question type appearing across the six

vignettes. Cronbach's alpha was determined for four previous studies, and each reported the following ranges: seriousness of bullying (α = .65 to .85 dependent on vignette), type of bullying (α = .69 to .78 dependent on vignette), empathy (α = .65 to .86), and likelihood of intervention (α = .56 to .82 dependent on vignette: Byers, Caltabiano, & Catalbiano, 2011; Craig et al., 2000; Yoon, 2004; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Boulton et al. (2014) reported the following correlations: severity of bullying (α = .62), empathy (α = .65), coping (α = .65), and likelihood of intervention (α = .56). Creswell (2014) stated validity can be established by reviewing prior studies reporting scores and the interpretation of the researchers. Each of the studies listed also found the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire to be a valid tool for assessing preservice teachers' attitudes. All scores and data for this study were presented in tables. No identifying information about the participants was provided in the tables.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using a questionnaire containing four Likert type questions following eight bullying scenarios for a total of 32 questions. All information used in the analysis was derived from questionnaire data. Nonexperimental descriptive studies are designed to answer what particular characteristics and not why the characteristics are (O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2014). The attitudes of PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers were examined in a self-report questionnaire. After receiving permission from the local community college (Appendix A) as well as Walden University IRB approval (Appendix B), emails were sent to the 352 students enrolled in the PreK to fourth grade education program using college student email accounts. In the email, the study was explained and

the informed consent information was presented. The link to the Survey Monkey web site was provided so that students who chose to participate in the study could log on and complete the survey. I sent the initial email message (I am also the program director) and followed up after a week to remind students of the opportunity to participate. After 2 weeks, a reminder email message was sent to all students who did not complete the survey. All participants were volunteers and received no monetary or other remuneration for participation in the study.

According to Fink (2013), descriptive statistics are used with surveys to show frequencies, frequency distributions, or measures of central tendency. In this study, data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to ascertain frequency distributions and measures of central tendency. This information is valuable to me in planning curriculum to meet the needs of the student population.

Similar studies employed the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) when testing differences between group means or averages (Boulton et al., 2014; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). One of the major advantages to using ANOVA instead of *t* tests is the ability to evaluate mean differences when there are more than two sample means (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014). A repeated measures ANOVA was used to compare the same group of participants over multiple variables (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014). In this study, there were repeated measures ANOVA analyses with the independent variable types of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber) and the dependent variable of scores (ANOVA 1 = *severity*; ANOVA 2 = *empathy*; ANOVA 3 = *coping*; ANOVA 4 = *intervention*) using the same participants. The *F*-ratio is the test statistic used with

ANOVA to determine population variances and to determine significant differences between mean scores (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014). The *F*-ratio was used to determine the amount of variability and determine if the variance was due to chance or if the difference was greater than would be expected by chance alone.

The following research questions guided data collection and analysis:

Research Question1: What are the self-reported beliefs and actions (severity, empathy, coping, intervention) of PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers toward varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?

Descriptive statistics were used with a means table to show the data that were used in the ANOVA tests.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs about severity scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?

ANOVA 1 was used to answer this research question. The preservice teachers' scores related to the severity of each form of bullying were studied, and the level of severity to each of the forms of bullying were compared to determine which was the most severe.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' empathy scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)

ANOVA 2 was used to answer this research question. The data were used to determine in which type of bullying preservice teachers express the most empathy for the victim.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs about coping scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?

ANOVA 3 was used to answer this research question. The data were used to determine which of the bullying types preservice teachers stated they are the most able to cope with.

Research Question 5: What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' intervention scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?

ANOVA 4 was used to answer this research question. The data were used to determine in which of the bullying types preservice teachers would intervene to stop the behavior.

Protection of Participants' Rights

Participants' Rights

In order to protect the rights of the participants in this study, approval was sought from the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the IRB from the local institution before collecting data. This approval was to guarantee that participation in the study was a minimal risk to the participants and to provide participant confidentiality (Creswell, 2014). This study asked the participants to read eight short bullying scenarios and

respond to questions regarding their knowledge and potential reaction to the situation. As defined by Creswell (2014) minimal risk is such that a person may encounter in everyday life. According to the current Walden IRB application, the scenarios would be considered minimal risk because they would not subject the participants to any more harm or discomfort than they might experience in everyday life with routine psychological tests. I did not select participants from any vulnerable populations as described by Walden IRB that can be predetermined by the researcher, including children under the age of 18, mentally challenged individuals, victims, pregnant women or fetuses, individuals with AIDS, or prisoners. These individuals were excluded from the study using demographic information available to the researcher. The following populations that would not be identified by demographic information are individuals who are victims, pregnant or have AIDS. Because the study was not experimental in nature and did not include any invasive procedures or treatments, participants would not be exposed to health or safety risks. Finally, participants were given an informed consent form prior to participation in the study to be sure they understood their rights as participants and that their rights would be protected. Those rights include understanding the purpose of the study, what will be done with the results, and what consequences the study may have on the participants (Creswell, 2014). The consent form included the following: a brief description of the study, confidentiality, the risks and benefits to the participants, participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time, and voluntary consent to participate. The surveys were administered using Survey Monkey to protect anonymity and confidentiality and featured implied consent. The participants read the informed consent information online

and clicked the link to activate the survey to confirm their consent to participate and acknowledged their right to end their participation at any time by exiting the browser.

Role of the Researcher

I am a professor of education and the education program director at the community college where the study took place. In my role as professor, I teach a minimum of four education courses each semester; three of the courses are delivered online and one is taught face to face at one campus location. One of the ethical considerations posed by Creswell (2014) is to avoid disruption at the site of the study and to make sure there is nothing that would create a power imbalance. Since I am the program director, the choice was made to use an online survey in order to protect the identity of the students, cause no disruption in the classrooms, and avoid the appearance of forcing students to complete the survey due to the my position.

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative, cross-sectional survey was to explore PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs and actions toward varying forms of bullying, and to compare their beliefs and actions across the four types of bullying: physical, verbal, relational, cyber. The quantitative data was collected using the Bullying Attitude Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000) and data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. In Section 4 I discussed the research questions and data analyses including tables and figures to aid in the representation of the findings. Section 5 details the findings, implications for social change, recommendations for further action and study.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs and actions toward varying forms of bullying and to compare their beliefs and actions across the four types of bullying: physical, verbal, relational, and cyber. Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977) stated people are more likely to perform an action based on their perceived ability to do so. Ajzen (1991) similarly suggested that people's actions are based on their beliefs. This nonexperimental, cross- sectional study used the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire (Craig, 2000) to gather data related to the severity of bullying, empathy for the victim, coping skills of the preservice teacher, and the preservice teacher's perceived ability to intervene in the four types of bullying.

Descriptive statistics were used to determine frequencies and measures of central tendency. The Pearson correlation was calculated to determine the internal reliability of the paired questions for each type of bullying. Because the correlations were significant, an average of the scores for each type of bullying was used for the remaining analyses. A repeated measures ANOVA was used for each of the research questions to determine significant mean differences of bullying types on the dependent variable of scores for severity, empathy, coping, and intervention.

In Section 4, I provided the analyses of the data collected to answer the five research questions presented in Section 1. The analysis provided meaningful insight into the preservice teachers' beliefs and intended interventions. In this section, I presented the research questions, research tools, data collection and analysis, and findings of the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the data collection and analyses:

1. What are the self-reported beliefs and actions (severity, empathy, coping, intervention) of PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers toward varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?
2. What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs about severity scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?
3. What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' empathy scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?
4. What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs about coping scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?
5. What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' intervention scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)?

Research Tools

The quantitative data were collected using the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000) to obtain descriptive statistics and to investigate preservice teachers' beliefs and actions (severity, empathy, coping, intervention) about bullying. Participants read two scenarios for each of the four types of bullying for a total of eight scenarios.

Each of the scenarios was followed by four Likert-type scale questions to ascertain the perceived severity, empathy for the victim, perceived coping skills, and the likelihood of intervention. Values were assigned to each of the Likert-type scales following each of the questions. The values ranged from 1 (*not at all serious, strongly disagree, not at all confident, not at all likely*) to 5 (*very serious, strongly agree, very confident, very likely*).

IBM SPSS Statistics, version 21.0.0.0 was used to analyze all data in this study. Descriptive statistics summarize and describe data; and according to O'Dwyer and Bernauer (2014), allow the researcher and the reader to understand the data before trying to make sense of what it means. Frequency distributions, measures of central tendency, and standard deviations were calculated. One way repeated measures ANOVA were also used to compare the differences between group means. SPSS was used to calculate four ANOVA analyses using the independent variable of bullying type (physical, verbal, relational, cyber) and the dependent variable of scores (severity, empathy, coping, and intervention) using a 95% confidence level. While the ANOVA shows whether a significant difference exists in the means, it does not describe how they are different (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014). The *F*-ratio was used to determine population variance and whether the variance was due to chance or not. Mauchly's test of sphericity was determined using SPSS. Sphericity refers to the state when variances in the differences between all of the possible pairs of groups in the study are equal (Hinton, Brownlow, & McMurray, 2004). In this study, spherecity was violated indicating the differences in all possible pairs was not equal. In order to have a more accurate *F*-ratio, corrections should be made to the ANOVA (Field, 2005). Degrees of freedom were adjusted using the

Greenhouse-Geisser correction to reduce the possibility of a Type I error in the *F*–ratio (1959). In order to determine where the differences were in the group means, post hoc tests were conducted. When conducting multiple comparisons of groups of means, as was done in this study, the possibility of familywise alpha errors exist (Aickin & Gensler, 1996). The Bonferroni correction was used to adjust the alpha to correct for any potential familywise errors (Simes, 1986).

In order to determine the likelihood that study results were not due to chance, an a priori effect size was estimated and a power analysis was conducted (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). An a priori power analysis was conducted using G* Power 3.1.9.2 with an estimated effect size of 0.25, α of 0.05, power = 0.80, and number of groups = 4. The recommended sample size was 180 participants. Small studies ($N < 100$) can result in medium to large effects but do not have significant *p*-values; conversely, large studies ($N > 2000$) may have small effect sizes and be statistically significant, thus reporting both the effect size and the *p*-value helps to show there was sufficient power in the population to obtain significance (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). While this study did not yield the recommended 180 participants (actual $N = 112$) as determined by the a priori calculations, the *p*-values obtained were statistically significant at <.001 and the effect size measured by partial eta squared (η^2) ranged from severity ($\eta^2 = 0.58$), empathy ($\eta^2 = 0.36$), coping ($\eta 2 = 0.53$) and intervention ($\eta^2 = 0.49$). Cohen (1969) lists η^2 values of .0099 as small, .0588 as medium, and .1379 as large. The reported *p*-values and effect sizes would indicate this study had sufficient power with 112 participants to refute the notion that the results were due to simply chance.

Data Analyses

The purpose of this nonexperimental, comparative design was to compare PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs and actions across four different types of bullying: physical, verbal, relational, and cyber. Data analysis helped establish the similarities and differences in the four types of bullying. To insure anonymity for the participants, the study did not include demographic data.

Sample

Invitations were emailed to 352 students enrolled in the PreK to fourth grade education program. There were 121 participants yielding a response rate of 34%. Of those responses, 10 were excluded from the analysis due to incomplete answers to various questions giving an average of 111 responses per question. The numbers of responses used in this study are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Responses per Question

	Physical bullying *N*	Verbal bullying *N*	Relational bullying *N*	Cyber bullying *N*
Severity	110	111	111	111
Empathy	112	112	112	112
Coping	110	110	110	110
Intervention	111	111	111	111

As shown in Table 2, the same number of participants did not answer each question. Severity scores were determined using the following question: In your opinion, how serious is this situation? The following statement measured empathy: I would be upset by the student's behavior and would feel empathetic toward the bullied child. Coping scores were determined using the following statement: I would feel confident coping with this

situation. Finally, intervention scores were compiled using the following question: How likely are you to intervene in this situation? In order of decreasing response rate, empathy was the highest (n = 112) followed by severity (n = 111) and intervention (n = 111) with coping being the lowest (n = 110).

Research Question 1

What are the self-reported beliefs and actions (severity, empathy, coping, intervention) of PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers toward varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)? As in the previous studies using the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire (Boulton et al., 2014: Craig et al., 2000; Yoon, 2004; Yoon & Kerber, 2003), a Pearson correlation was determined for each of the pairs of questions for each type of bullying in order to assess internal reliability. All of the pairs in this study had a strong correlation. Because each type of bullying had two scenarios associated with it, the Pearson correlation determined how similar the answers were for each of the scenario pairs. Each set of questions had a high correlation in the range of r = .63 to r = .96 indicating the answers were very similar and the average of the pairs could be used for the remaining data analysis. An average of the scores for each of the pairs of bullying was computed and used for the rest of the analyses following the model used in previous studies. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Reliability Correlations (r) for Question Pair

	Physical bullying			Verbal bullying			Relational bullying			Cyber bullying		
	M	*SD*	*r*	*M*	*SD*	*r*	*M*	*SD*	*r*	*M*	*SD*	*r*
Severity	4.60	0.64	.84**	4.67	0.51	.63**	3.92	0.85	.74**	4.25	0.82	.91**
Empathy	4.53	0.82	.86**	4.60	0.77	.89**	4.23	0.78	.81**	4.26	0.88	.93**
Coping	4.41	0.69	.95**	4.34	0.80	.90**	4.25	0.73	.87**	3.92	0.95	.96**
Intervention	4.82	0.43	.79**	4.80	0.42	.63**	4.42	0.69	.80**	4.29	0.84	.90**

*Note. ** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

Each type of bullying had two scenarios associated with it followed by the same four questions. The Pearson correlation was conducted to determine if the questions for each set of scenarios were answered in a similar way. As shown in Table 3, each of the answers for the pairs of questions for the four types of bullying was found to be similar. The highest correlation was seen in the responses to the cyber bullying scenarios. Participants' responses indicated they answered the questions related to how severe they perceived the situation to be and the degree to which they were upset by the bully's behavior and felt empathy toward the victim in a similar manner. Their perceived confidence in coping with the situation and the likelihood they would intervene in the situation showed the least amount of variation. Participants' responses for their perceived confidence in coping with all four types of bullying also displayed a high correlation with all scores being in the range of $r = .87$ to $r = .96$ indicating very similar responses for those questions. Conversely, the responses for the perceived severity and likelihood of intervention showed the most variation across all types of bullying, with verbal bullying having the lowest correlation.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs about severity scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)? In the second research question, I examined the differences in the severity scores for each of the four types of bullying. After reading the eight scenarios, the first question presented was, "In your opinion, how serious is this situation?" The choices ranged from *not at all serious* (1) to *very serious* (5). A one way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine if any significant differences in severity scores over the four types of bullying. Mauchly's test of sphericity, $X^2(2) = 119.173$, $p = .001$, showed violation of sphericity (Field, 2005) so correction was applied using Greenhouse-Geisser ($\varepsilon = 0.614$) to correct the one way repeated measures ANOVA (Greenhouse & Geisser, 1959). Partial η^2 was used as the index of sample effect size. Table 4 shows the adjusted scores of the Tests Within-Subject Effects for the dependent variable severity scores as calculated by SPSS.

Table 4

Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Severity

	Type III sum of squares	*df*	*F*	Sig.	Partial eta squared
Greenhouse Geisser	40.745	1.841	104.222	.000	.487
Error		202.479			

Severity scores were significantly different across the four types of bullying F (1.841, 202.479) =104.222, p <.001, partial $\eta^2 = .487$. Because significant differences were found with the severity scores, post hoc comparisons, using Bonferroni corrections

were used to pinpoint the specific significant differences in the severity scores (Simes, 1986).

As noted in Table 5, verbal ($\overline{x}$ = 4.67) and physical ($\overline{x}$ = 4.59) bullying were rated more severe forms of bullying by the participants with the mean scores being closer to very serious and was rated as a 5 on the Likert scale. Cyber ($\overline{x}$ = 4.19) and relational ($\overline{x}$ = 3.92) bullying were perceived as less severe with the scores being closer to serious and was rated 4 on the Likert scale. Relational bullying was rated as the least severe form of bullying. All of the comparisons between types of bullying were significant (p <.001). Physical and verbal bullying would be considered overt types of bullying that are easily seen or heard.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Severity Scores

	Physical bullying		Verbal bullying		Relational bullying		Cyber bullying	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Severity	4.59	.69	4.67	.54	3.92	1.05	4.19	.84

Research Question 3

What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' empathy scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)? In the third research question, I examined the differences in the empathy scores for each of the four types of bullying. To assess perceived empathy, the participants were asked to rate the following statement: I would be upset by the student's behavior, and would feel empathetic toward the bullied child. The choice of responses ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). A one way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted

to determine any significant differences in severity scores over the four types of bullying. Mauchly's test of sphericity, $X^2(2) = 123.976$, $p = .001$, showed violation of sphericity so correction was applied using Greenhouse-Geisser ($\varepsilon = 0.569$) to correct the one way repeated measures ANOVA. Partial η^2 was used as the index of sample effect size. Table 6 shows the adjusted scores of the Tests Within-Subject Effects for the dependent variable empathy scores as calculated by SPSS.

Table 6

Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Empathy

	Type III sum of squares	*df*	*F*	Sig.	Partial eta squared
Greenhouse Geisser	11.241	1.707	38.089	.000	.255
Error		189.528			

Empathy scores were significantly different across the four types of bullying $F(1.707, 189.528)=38.089$, $p <.001$, partial $\eta^2 = .255$. Because significant differences were found with the empathy scores, post hoc comparisons, using Bonferroni corrections, were used to pinpoint the specific significant differences in the empathy scores.

As shown in table 7, Physical bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.49$) and verbal bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.56$) had significantly higher scores for empathy than relational bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.22$) or cyber bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.20$).

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Empathy Scores

	Physical bullying		Verbal bullying		Relational bullying		Cyber bullying	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Severity	4.49	.88	4.56	.84	4.22	.85	4.21	.92

Participants were more upset by behavior that was physical or verbal in nature and also felt more empathy towards the victim that had been physically or verbally bullied. Similar to the scores for severity, the participants' responses for empathy were nearly identical for verbal and physical bullying. The same was true for empathy scores between relational and cyber bullying. While the participants felt less empathy for the victims of relational and cyber bullying, their responses were still ranked 4 out of 5 on the Likert scale. In this comparison, the relationships among physical, cyber, and relational bullying were significant (p <.001). Comparisons between verbal bullying and cyber bullying and relational bullying were also significant (p <.001). There was no significance between verbal and physical bullying or cyber and relational bullying.

Research Question 4

What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs about coping scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)? The fourth research question determined the differences in the coping scores for each of the four types of bullying. Following each scenario, the participants were asked to rank their confidence in coping with the bullying situation presented. The scale ranged from *not at all confident* (1) to *very confident* (5). A one way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine any significant differences in severity scores over the four types of bullying. Mauchly's test of sphericity, $X^2(2) = 47.479$, $p = .001$, showed violation of sphericity so correction was applied using Greenhouse-Geisser ($\varepsilon = 0.776$) to correct the one way repeated measures ANOVA. Partial η^2 was used as the index of

sample effect size. Table 8 shows the adjusted scores of the Tests Within-Subject Effects for the dependent variable coping scores as calculated by SPSS.

Table 8

Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Coping

	Type III sum of squares	*df*	*F*	Sig.	Partial eta squared
Greenhouse Geisser	19.445	2.329	69.370	.000	.389
Error		253.848			

Coping scores were significantly different across the four types of bullying $F(2.329, 253.848)=69.370$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .389$. Because significant differences were found with the coping scores, post hoc comparisons, using Bonferroni corrections, were used to pinpoint the specific significant differences in the coping scores.

As shown in Table 9, participants perceived ability to cope with physical bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.40$,) and verbal bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.32$) was higher than perceived ability to cope with relational bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.23$) or cyber bullying ($\overline{x} = 3.85$). Cyber bullying received significantly lower coping scores than the other types of bullying. Comparisons among coping scores for physical bullying with cyber bullying and relational bullying were significant ($p < .001$). Comparisons between verbal bullying and cyber bullying were significant ($p < .001$). There was no statistical significance in coping scores between verbal, physical, and relational bullying.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Coping Scores

	Physical bullying		Verbal bullying		Relational bullying		Cyber bullying	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Severity	4.40	.69	4.33	.81	4.24	.74	3.85	.94

Research Question 5

What is the relationship between PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' intervention scores among the varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber)? The fifth research question determined the differences in the intervention scores for each of the four types of bullying. To determine if participants were likely to intervene in the bullying situation in each of the scenarios, they were asked how likely they were to intervene in the situation. The scale ranged from *not at all likely* (1) to *very likely* (5). A one way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine any significant differences in severity scores over the four types of bullying. Mauchly's test of sphericity, $X^2(2) = 314.459$, $p = .001$, showed violation of sphericity so correction was applied using Greenhouse-Geisser ($\varepsilon = 0.502$) to correct the one way repeated measures ANOVA. Partial η^2 was used as the index of sample effect size. Table 10 shows the adjusted scores of the Tests Within-Subject Effects for the dependent variable intervention scores as calculated by SPSS.

Table 10

Tests of Within-Subject Effects for Intervention

	Type III sum of squares	*df*	*F*	Sig.	Partial eta squared
Greenhouse Geisser	26.295	1.507	81.581	.000	.426
Error		165.720			

Intervention scores were significantly different across the four types of bullying $F(1.507, 165.720)=81.581$, $p <.001$, partial $\eta^2 = .426$. Because significant differences were found with the intervention scores, post hoc comparisons, using Bonferroni

corrections, were used to pinpoint the specific significant differences in the intervention scores.

As shown in Table 11, participants were most likely to intervene in physical bullying ($\overline{x}$ = 4.81) and verbal bullying ($\overline{x}$ = 4.80). The results for physical and verbal bullying were nearly identical for the participants indicating they were just under the highest level on the scale, which was very likely (5). Participants were less likely to intervene in relational bullying ($\overline{x}$ = 4.41) or cyber bullying ($\overline{x}$ = 4.25). Cyber bullying received significantly lower intervention scores than the other types of bullying. Comparisons between physical bullying with cyber bullying and relational bullying were significant (p <.001). Comparisons between verbal bullying and cyber and relational bullying were significant (p <.001). There was no statistical significance in intervention scores between verbal and physical bullying.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for Intervention Scores

	Physical bullying		Verbal bullying		Relational bullying		Cyber bullying	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Severity	4.81	.44	4.80	.44	4.41	.74	4.25	.85

Comments on Findings

This study compared the differences in PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' ability to read scenarios representing physical, verbal, relational, and cyber bullying and rate the severity of the incident, empathy for the victim, their perceived ability to cope with the situation, and the likelihood they would intervene in the incident. The data were collected using the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000). The Pearson

correlations for all four pairs of bullying demonstrated strong correlation with values from .63 to .96 indicating the responses for each of the pairs of scenarios were similar to each other.

Four one way repeated measures ANOVA were done for each type of bullying. Physical and verbal bullying had significantly higher ratings for severity of bullying, empathy for the victim, coping skills, and intervention intent. Participants ranked the severity of the bullying types as verbal and physical bullying being very serious and cyber and relational bullying as serious. Conversely, relational and cyber bullying had the lowest ratings for severity of bullying, empathy for the victim, coping skills, and intervention intent. The participants were most empathetic toward victims of verbal bullying followed by physical, relational and cyber bullying. The perceived ability to cope was highest for physical bullying followed closely by verbal bullying and relational bullying. Participants were least likely to feel confident in their ability to cope with student cyber bullying situations. The intent to intervene in physical bullying and verbal bullying scenarios was almost equal as the most likely for the participants to step in. Intervention in relational bullying and cyber bullying were less likely, with cyber bullying being the least likely for intervention. The findings consistently had very little variation in scores for physical and verbal bullying.

The results of each of the four ANOVAs showed students consistently rated physical and verbal bullying as the two types they perceived as most severe, felt the most empathy for the victims, were able to cope with and were most likely to intervene in the situation. Possible alternative explanations for these high scores could be that these are

the types of bullying the participants are most familiar with and hence perceive they are more capable of handling. Other possible confounding factors might be that the participants were victims of bullying or were bullies themselves. Conversely, relational and cyber bullying are thought to be newer genres of bullying the participants may not have had as much exposure to them and hence the lower scores. One final alternative explanation for the scores could be the nature of reading a scenario as opposed to being confronted by the behavior in person.

Summary

This section presented the research questions, research tools, data collection and analysis, and comments on findings of this quantitative study. The data were collected from PreK – fourth grade preservice teachers at a community college. Of the 352 students invited to participate, 121 participated for a response rate of 34%. A Pearson correlation was determined for each of the pairs of questions to establish internal reliability. Four one way repeated measures ANOVA were done to examine each type of bullying.

The results of this study indicated PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers scored physical and verbal bullying the highest for severity, empathy, coping and intervention. Results also indicated relational and cyber bullying scored lower for severity, empathy, coping and intervention. In Section 5, I provided a thorough discussion of the research findings, implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further study.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers' beliefs and actions toward varying forms of bullying and to compare their beliefs and actions across the four types of bullying: physical, verbal, relational, and cyber. Using the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000) and the conceptual framework of Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1993) and Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (1991), in this study, I examined the relationships between the knowledge of bullying behaviors and self-efficacy of PreK to fourth grade preservice to effectively intervene in bullying situations. The results of this study will guide the development of an appropriate addition to the curriculum to increase preservice teachers' self-efficacy for managing bullying behavior in the classroom.

The results of this study indicated the participants perceived physical and verbal bullying to be the most severe form of bullying among the four types presented in the survey. Physical and verbal bullying also scored highest for empathy for the victim of bullying, the participants' ability to cope with the bullying situation presented, and the perceived likelihood that they would intervene. Conversely, relational and cyber bullying were perceived as less severe forms of bullying by the participants. Participants indicated less empathy for the victims of relational and cyber bullying as well. While the scores for their confidence in coping with the cyber and relational bullying scenarios were low, participants indicated their perceived ability to intervene was high. In this section, I

provided a discussion of the research findings, the implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further study.

Interpretation of Findings

The interpretation of findings found in Section 4 is framed within the research questions that guided this study. The purpose of Research Question 1 was to determine the self-reported beliefs and actions (severity, empathy, coping, intervention) of PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers toward varying forms of bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber). The total number of participants in the survey was 121, and of that number, 112 responses were used for data analyses. The remaining participant responses were incomplete and were not used for the study. Descriptive statistics were gathered and presented in a table detailing the means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations for each type of bullying. It is important to note the results for all of the scenarios were significant and the scores for each of the questions asked ranged between 4 and 5 when rounded to the whole number. When stating one form of bullying was perceived as the "least" in terms of scores, it was still significant.

In Research Question 2, I examined the perceived severity of each of the four types of bullying presented in the scenarios. Participants were able to identify all four types of bullying and rated them as *serious* (4) to *very serious* (5). The results indicted the preservice teachers rated physical ($\overline{x} = 4.60$) and verbal ($\overline{x} = 4.67$) bullying as *very serious* (5) when rounded to the whole number selected on the Likert scale. Cyber bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.25$) and relational bullying ($\overline{x} = 3.92$) were identified as *serious* (4) when rounded to the corresponding number on the Likert scale. I would have expected this

result since physical and cyber bullying are overt forms of bullying that are easily seen and heard. Cyber bullying and relational bullying were less easily seen by teachers and are newer forms of bullying. The results obtained in this study were very similar to the results of previous studies that used the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire. Preservice teachers in previous studies rated physical bullying as the most severe, verbal bullying in the middle, and relational bullying as the least severe (Bauman & DelRio, 2006; Craig et al., 2000; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). The first time cyber bullying was used with the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire was in 2014 where physical bullying was rated as most severe, followed by verbal bullying, cyber bullying, and finally relational bullying as least severe (Boulton et al., 2014). Because covert forms of bullying, such as cyber bullying and relational bullying have been associated with more negative outcomes (Hawker & Boulton, 2001), the results of the current study are concerning.

The perception of severity is directly related to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) that states the perception of severity will predict the actual behavior of intervention on the part of the preservice teacher. The outcome of this study was to make recommendations for curriculum planning for preservice teachers in the area of bullying, based on their responses to the survey. The results indicated preservice teachers who participated in the study were able to recognize the severity of each type of bullying. There was statistical significance in the severity scores, but all scores were still high. For purposes of curriculum planning, all four types of bullying should be addressed and clear distinctions should be made for the less overt forms of bullying, especially relational bullying.

Research Question 3 was measured by the question "I would be upset by the student's behavior, and would feel empathetic toward the bullied child." The preservice teachers in this study showed more empathy for victims of verbal bullying and the least amount of empathy for victims of cyber bullying by responding to the statement as *agree* (4) to *strongly agree* (5). Interestingly, there were no significant differences between verbal ($\overline{x} = 4.57$) and physical bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.50$), nor were there significant differences between relational ($\overline{x} = 4.23$) and cyber bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.21$). This result was somewhat unexpected due to the current amount of press coverage given to cyber bullying. The study yielded slightly different results than were obtained in previous studies that used the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire. Preservice teachers in previous studies were more empathetic toward victims of physical bullying followed by verbal bullying, with the least empathy toward victims of relational bullying (Bauman & DelRio, 2006; Craig et al., 2000; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Empathy for victims in the study by Boulton et al. (2014) was greatest for physical bullying followed by verbal, cyber, and relational bullying. Again, the results are somewhat concerning for the covert forms of bullying.

Empathy for the victim is also a predictor of intervention according to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The combination of empathy for the victim and perceived severity of the bullying situation would indicate the participants in the study might be more inclined to intervene in physical or verbal bullying situations. The outcome of this study was to make recommendations for curriculum planning for preservice teachers in the area of bullying, based on their responses to the survey. In terms of curriculum planning, more consideration needs to be given to covert forms of

bullying and the negative consequences for the students whether they are victims, bullies, or bystanders.

In Research Question 4, I examined the participants' perceived confidence in coping with the physical, verbal, relational, and cyber bullying scenarios presented in the survey. Participants indicated their confidence between *somewhat confident* (3) for cyber bullying and *confident* (4) for physical, verbal, and relational bullying. There were no responses at the *very confident* (5) level. The results generated by this response were intriguing since the responses to all of the other statements or questions following the scenarios were in the 4 to 5 range on the Likert scale. The preservice teachers in this study were less confident in their ability to manage all forms of bullying behavior. There were no significant differences between verbal ($\overline{x} = 4.33$) and physical bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.40$), nor were there significant differences between relational ($\overline{x} = 4.23$) and verbal bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.33$). Cyber bullying ($\overline{x} = 3.85$) had significant differences with all forms of bullying. Participants were much less confident in their ability to cope with cyber bullying as presented in the scenarios. The study yielded similar results as obtained in previous studies that used the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire. In order of confidence level, preservice teachers in previous studies expressed more confidence in their ability to cope with physical, verbal, and relational bullying (Bauman & DelRio, 2006; Craig et al., 2000; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Compared to the results of the study conducted by Boulton et al. (2014), the current study mirrored the order of most confidence to least confidence with physical bullying, verbal bullying, relational bullying, and cyber bullying.

Research Question 5 was measured by the question, "How likely are you to intervene in this situation?" Physical bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.81$) and verbal bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.80$) were rated *very likely* (5) as rounded to the whole number on the Likert scale. Relational bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.41$) and cyber bullying ($\overline{x} = 4.25$) were rated *likely* (4) as presented on the Likert scale. The preservice teachers in this study indicated they would intervene in all types of bullying. Again, the study yielded similar results as obtained in previous studies that used the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire. In previous studies, preservice teachers were more likely to intervene in physical bullying and verbal bullying more often than relational bullying (Bauman & DelRio, 2006; Craig et al., 2000; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). The results of the current study compared to the results of the study conducted by Boulton et al. (2014) were primarily the same for physical and verbal bullying as the most likely for intervention. The participants of the current study were more likely to intervene in relational bullying than the participants in the Boulton et al. (2014) study. The study conducted by Boulton et al. in 2014 was the first time cyber bullying had been used as a scenario in the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire. This could account for the differences in the results between the current study and the study done in 2014.

The perceived confidence of the participants is linked to their self-efficacy belief in their ability to manage the bullying situation. Bandura's (1977) theory of self- efficacy describes outcome expectancy as the person's estimate that behaviors will lead to a certain outcome. In this theory, a person has to believe he or she can execute the behaviors required to produce the needed outcome. In essence, individuals can know what to do, but unless they believe they can perform the required behaviors, what they

know may be of little value. According to Bandura (1977), people tend to avoid situations they feel exceed their coping skills or make them feel threatened. The results of this measure of perceived coping skills indicated preservice teachers felt less able to cope with the bullying situations thus reducing their self-efficacy. Preservice teachers demonstrated by their responses to the other questions they felt they knew what to do, but also indicated they were not as confident in their ability to cope with the situations presented. The implications for curriculum planning are enormous since training has been linked to higher self-efficacy and hence the ability to cope with and intervene in bullying situations (Newgent et al., 2011).

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) looks at three constructs, attitude, subjective norm, and control, to determine how likely it is that a person will complete a behavior. In this study, attitude was reflected in the participants' prior positive or negative experiences with bullying. Participants were not asked to report if they had been involved in bullying at any point in their lives; hence, their prior experiences were not directly measured, but it was assumed their prior experiences may impact the response. The subjective norm is the perceived social pressure to perform the behavior or perhaps not to perform the behavior. It is possible the participants in feeling social pressure to indicate all bullying situations are severe, felt empathy for all of the victims, and would intervene to stop the bullying. However, when control enters the picture, the participants may have wavered due to the varying scenarios presented and the inability to know whether or not they have control over the situation. The results of this study clearly indicate the need for curriculum change related to bullying recognition and prevention.

Implications for Social Change

In this study, I focused on changes for the teacher education curriculum to increase the awareness of bullying and providing training opportunities for preservice teachers. The end result of the curriculum change is the hope it will help stop bullying behavior. By stopping this antisocial behavior, the physical, emotional, and psychological harm to children can also be stopped. As preservice teachers gain the required skills and knowledge to prevent and manage bullying in the classroom, they will also increase their self-efficacy. With an increase in self-efficacy comes the ability to act and end bullying in the classroom and other school areas and functions.

The results of this study may also bring positive social change to neighboring colleges and universities by providing an understanding of methods that may decrease bullying in schools. Collaboration with local faculty may bring about further change in their curriculum to provide a continuum from the community college to the 4-year college to further increase preservice teachers' self-efficacy. Parent education would be a perfect opportunity to establish a working relationship with families to foster positive behavior with their children. The results of this study could also be extended into the community to help organizations working with children to foster the same methods of preventing bullying. The support of the family, school, and community is necessary to end the harmful effects of bullying.

Recommendations for Action

Participants ranked physical and verbal bullying as the most severe forms of bullying, and they were also more likely to intervene in physical and verbal bullying

scenarios. While the scores were quite high, relational and cyber bullying were ranked as the less severe and also had lower scores for intervention than physical and verbal bullying. In order to have the greatest opportunity to stop bullying, the family, school, and community need to be involved. The first step in the process is the development of a curriculum that increases preservice teachers' knowledge of bullying and the social implications surrounding bullying and the development of a skill set allowing them to develop and practice proactive intervention. Providing a positive classroom environment that supports each child in a safe atmosphere for cognitive and emotional growth is essential. Understanding each child in the triad of bullying (bully, victim, and witness) will help increase the preservice teacher's knowledge and consequently their self-efficacy. Hopefully, this will have a ripple effect beginning with the preservice teacher in the community college following them to the 4-year college and then spreading out into the classroom and the community.

There are several programs that will be considered for use in teaching prosocial skills and classroom management. One program is the BOSS (Behavioral Opportunities for Social Skills) program to teach classroom management skills and should be considered as an addition to the curriculum for the preservice teachers in the local community college. The BOSS program is evidence based and integrates developmentally appropriate practice and learning theory (Ross, 2013). This would have the potential to increase preservice teachers' self-efficacy in teaching prosocial behaviors and end punitive disciplinary approaches. Positive classroom climate is linked in the literature with increased teacher self-efficacy and reduced bullying behavior (Rodkin &

Ryan, 2012; Ryan et al., 2015). The need for increased instruction for preservice teachers in the affective domain is evident.

To further extend the positive benefits of this study, the results must be shared in order to effect positive social change. Colleges and universities in the surrounding area will receive a brief newsletter summary of the study findings along with an invitation to meet and discuss collaboration with curricular changes.

Recommendations for Further Study

Studies show that punitive actions do not stop negative behaviors (Ross, 2013). In order to better equip preservice teachers, classroom management practices need to focus on proactive behaviors. Teaching prosocial skills is one of the areas that teachers report feeling ill prepared to handle (Yoon, Sulkowski, & Bauman 2014).

Ross and Sliger (2015) suggested bullying is an area that is mired in lack of evidence-based practices, especially as it relates to classroom management and discipline. His theory of teaching positive social skills is based on the tenet of learning theory consisting of the demonstration of the behavior and subsequent time to practice and master the skill with appropriate reinforcement (Ross & Sliger, 2015). Instead of waiting for negative behaviors to occur and reacting to them, they stated making the time to teach the appropriate behavior, modeling the behavior, allowing time for practice and reinforcement will result in the desired behaviors and social skills. BOSS is a four-step classroom management program developed by Ross as an evidence-based model for classroom management (2008). Adding this model to the preservice teacher curriculum and allowing students to practice using BOSS during their field observations could be an

invaluable addition to the research on evidence-based practices for classroom management, building prosocial skills and eliminating bullying behaviors.

The I DECIDE program was developed for children seven years of age and older. The program is a cognitive-behavioral approach using practical exercises instead of direct teaching (Boulton, 2014). The students are instrumental in the program and are taught to keep diaries of events and things that trigger their bullying behavior. This process is meant to help children discern their own feelings and the associated behaviors they display. Students who are at risk of being bullied are also taught skills to help them develop alternative strategies for managing bullying (Boulton, 2014). Boulton stated teachers who attended workshops on the I DECIDE program reported they understand why the cognitive-behavioral approach should work, but they do not feel competent in implementation. The I DECIDE program would be worth further study as a possible addition to the curriculum.

The study of bullying at the preschool level is limited. DeVooght et al. (2015) suggest that relational and verbal bullying exist at the early childhood level and typically this behavior is labeled as kids being kids because they have not yet established basic social skills. Identifying the precursors to bullying behavior is of paramount importance if we are to develop interventions that work. Attachment style has been suggested as a way to determine a child's future problems with aggressive behavior (Koiv, 2012). VanderVen (2011) points to disrupted child-rearing practices as a possible antecedent to bullying behaviors due to attachment issues. Further study into the precursors of bullying behavior could be extremely important in determining interventions.

Future research should also include follow up studies after the implementation of curriculum changes to determine if any changes are noted in self-efficacy. Longitudinal studies would also be helpful once the preservice teachers have their own classroom to evaluate the effectiveness of the changes. This would provide the college with a research-based process for curriculum changes.

Conclusion

In this study I examined the knowledge and perceptions of PreK to fourth grade preservice teachers regarding physical, verbal, relational, and cyber bullying. Using the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000), 121 participants read eight scenarios and responded to four questions related to the perceived level of severity, empathy for the victim, confidence in coping with the scenario, and perceived ability to intervene in the situation. Four one way repeated measures ANOVA were conducted to determine any significant differences in the mean scores for each type of bullying.

The results indicated the participants were able to recognize all four types of bullying, but had different perspectives on the severity of each type. While all of the results were statistically significant, the scores were still near 4 even for relational bullying which was less severe ($\overline{x} = 3.92$). Consistent with previous studies that used the Bullying Attitudes Questionnaire (Craig et al., 2000), physical and verbal bullying were seen as the most severe forms of bullying. Additionally, the results were also consistent in rating relational and cyber bullying as less severe than physical and verbal bullying.

Participants expressed strong perceived confidence and perceived ability to intervene in physical and verbal bullying and expressed slightly less confidence in

perceived abilities with relational and cyber bullying. The lower confidence scores for verbal and cyber bullying were not unexpected, but troubling. When viewing the results through the lens of Bandura's self-efficacy theory, participants who reported high confidence levels in their ability to cope with a particular bullying scenario would be more likely to intervene in that situation. Participants did not express a high level of confidence in coping scores, but did report a high likelihood for intervention. This discrepancy would indicate the need for increased training for preservice teachers in the areas of relational and cyber bullying. It is unknown whether these hypothetical responses to bullying scenarios would mirror the participants' actual behavior when faced with a real life bullying situation.

Bonanno and Hymel (2010) have stated participating in bullying behaviors as a bully or a victim has been shown to be a risk factor for suicide during the adolescent years. The emotional and psychological harm caused by bullying has been well documented in this study. Physical changes to the chromosomes have also been noted in the research (Copeland, et al., 2013). In addition, the effects of relational bullying such as exclusion, activates the same part of the brain that causes the physical experience of pain (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003).

As a result of this study, I will encourage faculty colleagues to focus on the research and implementation of curriculum to more adequately prepare preservice teachers to understand the many facets of bullying. As educators, we must educate ourselves about the causes of bullying and the devastating effects on children. News reports of school shootings and suicide caused by bullying continue at an alarming rate.

Preparing future teachers to provide a positive classroom climate and a safe atmosphere for all children is a critical step in eradicating bullying behavior.

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Appendix A: Local Institution IRB Approval

June 23, 2015

To whom it concerns:

Please note that Cindi Davis, a [redacted] faculty member, has been approved to conduct research at XXX Area Community College in pursuit of her graduate studies at Walden University. Please accept this letter as indication of a positive review of the ethical treatment of human participants and the data collected as outlined in her proposal. If you have any questions regarding this approval, please contact me at [redacted].

Sincerely,

[redacted] Ph.D.

Associate Provost and Professor of Psychology

Appendix B: Walden University IRB Approval

Your approval # is 08-11-15-0125187.

Your IRB approval expires on August 10, 2016.

Appendix C: Permission to Use Bullying Attitude Questionnaire

From: Cynthia Davis [redacted] **Sent:** February 18, 2015 12:11 PM **To:** Wendy Craig **Cc:** Cynthia Davis **Subject:** Permission to use Bullying Scenarios

Dear Dr. Craig,

I am a doctoral student at Walden University and my dissertation is on preservice teachers self efficacy in dealing with bullying situations. I have been reviewing your work extensively and would like permission to use and cite your scenarios. I would also like to ask to use the questions that followed each scenario.

I am the program director for a teacher education program at a community college in Pennsylvania and have discovered in conversation that many of our students do not feel comfortable identifying and potentially intervening in bullying situations. Obviously, the results of my study will be instrumental in developing curriculum for our program.

You may respond to me at: [redacted] at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your consideration and the tremendous contributions you have made to the field.

Respectfully,

Cynthia Davis

Doctoral Candidate

Walden University

From: Wendy Craig [redacted]

Date: February 25, 2015 at 7:11:36 AM EST

To: Cynthia Davis [redacted]

Subject: RE: Permission to use Bullying Scenarios

Yes that is fine. DO you need the questions?

From: Cindi Davis [redacted] **Sent:** February 25, 2015 9:26 AM **To:** Wendy Craig **Subject:** Re: Permission to use Bullying Scenarios

Dr. Craig,

If you could send them that would be great.

Thank you so much!

Cindi

From: Wendy Craig [redacted]

Date: February 25, 2015 at 9:38:20 AM EST

To: Cindi Davis [redacted]

Subject: RE: Permission to use Bullying Scenarios

Here you go please reference accordingly.

From: "Cynthia Davis" [redacted]

To: [redacted]

Cc: "Cynthia Davis" [redacted]

Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2015 1:04:50 AM

Subject: Permission to Use Bullying Scenarios

Dr. Yoon,

I am a doctoral student at Walden University and my dissertation is on preservice teachers self efficacy in dealing with bullying situations. I have been reviewing your work extensively and would like permission to use and cite your scenarios. I would also like to ask to use the questions that followed each scenario.
I am the program director for a teacher education program at a community college in Pennsylvania and have discovered in conversation that many of our students do not feel comfortable identifying and potentially intervening in bullying situations. Obviously, the results of my study will be instrumental in developing curriculum for our program.
You may respond to me at: [redacted] at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your consideration and the tremendous contributions you have made to the field.
Respectfully,

Cynthia Davis
Doctoral Candidate
Walden University

From: Jina Yoon [redacted]
Date: February 17, 2015 at 9:21:12 AM EST
To: Cynthia Davis [redacted]
Subject: Re: Permission to Use Bullying Scenarios
Reply-To: Jina Yoon [redacted]
Hi Cindi,
Thank you for your interest in the scenarios.
You have my permission to use them.
thanks,
j
Jina Yoon, Ph.D.
Doctoral Program Director, School Psychology concentration
Associate Professor, Educational Psychology
Associate Editor, Journal of School Psychology
[redacted]
Wayne State University
Detroit, MI 48202
[redacted]
email) [redacted]

Subject: **Permission to use study materials**

From: **Cynthia Davis** [redacted]
Date: Mon, Oct 13, 2014 at 8:27 PM
To: [redacted]
Dr. Boulton,
I am a doctoral student at Walden University and my dissertation is on preservice

teacher's self efficacy in dealing with bullying situations. I have been reviewing your work extensively and would like permission to use and cite your scenarios. I would also like to ask to use the questions that followed each scenario if you would be so kind as to provide them

I am the program director for a teacher education program at a college in the United States and have discovered in conversation that many of our students do not feel comfortable identifying and potentially intervening in bullying situations. Obviously, the results of my study will be instrumental in developing curriculum for our program.

You may respond to me at: [redacted] at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your consideration and the tremendous contributions you have made to the field.

Respectfully,
Cynthia Davis
Doctoral Candidate
Walden University

From: **Michael Boulton** [redacted]
Date: Mon, Oct 27, 2014 at 7:44 AM
To: Cynthia Davis [redacted]
Cc: Michael Boulton [redacted]

Dear Cynthia – many thanks for your kind words about our research. We would be very happy if you used the scenarios and questions (the latter can be found in the Measures and Procedure section on page 148).

I am very interested in your study and would be delighted to find out more. We are currently refining an intervention for preservice teachers. If you and your supervisor are interested in exploring how we might collaborate (developing an intervention, devising a test of its effects, developing measures, etc) please do let me know.

Very best regards
Mike

Appendix D: Bullying Attitude Questionnaire

Questions would appear at the end of each scenario.

In your opinion, how serious is this situation ?	**1 not at all serious**	**2 not very serious**	**3 moderately serious**	**4 serious**	**5 very serious**
I would be upset by the student's behavior, and would feel empathetic toward the bullied child.	**1 strongly disagree**	**2 somewhat disagree**	**3 neutral**	**4 agree**	**5 strongly agree**
I would feel confident coping with this situation.	**1 not at all confident**	**2 not very confident**	**3 somewhat confident**	**4 confident**	**5 very confident**
How likely are you to intervene in this situation ?	**1 not at all likely**	**2 not very likely**	**3 somewhat likely**	**4 likely**	**5 very likely**

Cyber Bullying Vignettes

1. You witness a group of children in the corridor just before your lesson looking at their mobile phones and laughing. You overhear them mention a name of a person in a mocking manner. You have witnessed similar situations before mocking the same person in the same way.

2. You witness a child look fearful as they look at their phone during free time. The child is then constantly looking over their shoulder. This is not the first tine you have witnessed this behavior.

Physical Bullying Vignettes

1. A student has brought in a large Easter egg to school. He boasts that he won it in a raffle. Another child goes over and smacks his head, demanding the Easter egg. This child refuses at first but eventually gives in.

2. You have directed the children in your class to work in groups of 4 to do projects. While the children are getting in their groups you see a student push another child with enough force that he falls to the ground. The push was clearly intentional and was not provoked. The child that fell yells, "Stop pushing me around! You always do this just go away."

Verbal Bullying Vignettes

1. At the writing center you hear a student chant to another child, "teachers pet, Brown-nose, suck-up, kiss ass." The child tries to ignore the remarks but sulks at his desk. You saw the same thing happen the other day.

2. Your class is getting ready to go to lunch and the children are in a line at the door. You hear a child say to another child, "Hey give me your lunch money or I'll give you a fat lip!" The child complies at once. This is not the first time this has happened.

Relational Bullying Vignettes

1. When the pupils are sitting down for the lesson to start you overhear a pupil say to another pupil, "you can't sit here it's saved." This is not the first tine you have heard this remark made to this pupil.

2. You have allowed the children in your class to have some free time, because they have worked so hard today. You witness a child say to another student, "No absolutely not. I already told you that you can't play with us." The student is isolated and plays alone for the remaining time with tears in her eyes. This is not the first time this child has isolated someone from playing.