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U.S. Teachers' Perceptions of School Violence Prevention Programs

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Natakie Chestnut

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2016

Abstract

U.S. Teachers' Perceptions of School Violence Prevention Programs

by

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MEd, Cheyney University, 2004

MS, Cheyney University, 2001

BA, Cheyney University, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2016

Abstract

In response to high profile violent incidents and crimes, many schools have developed plans that address school discipline to create a school climate and culture wherein everyone is valued and treated with respect. The problem that prompted this study is teachers are struggling with effectively implementation prevention program. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of teachers about school violence prevention programs. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, this study examined the connection among school violence, environment, discipline and prevention programs; and it explored approaches to creating safe communities in schools. The research questions focused on teachers' perceptions of the implemented strategies, of the barriers to program success, and of supervising roles of high school administrators. The 9 participants were Grade 9-12 urban school teachers who had 3 to 5 years of full time teaching experience and who had 2 to 3 years of work experience at the targeted high school. This qualitative case study described and analyzed data from individual interviews, self-reported observations, and researcher observations. Emergent themes were identified from the data through open coding and findings were developed and validated. The key results were that teachers support a uniform program and security officers help reduce school violence; that program implementation can be strengthened by increased funding, community support and professional development. Implications for social change are that educators, parents, students and community members must work collaboratively to create a safe school environment and a culture of problem solving and resolution.

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Dedication

This research study is dedicated to my daughter, Tabia Jolie. Tabia, remember that as long as you do your best, God will do the rest. I am proud to be your mother. The twelve years of your life, I have watched you grow from an infant to blossoming into a very beautiful, intelligent, independent, and critical thinker. God could not have blessed me with a more wonderful child.

Acknowledgments

The time writing this dissertation has been one of the most stressful periods in my life. I have experienced many huddles and trials during this doctoral journey. Many have caused me to cry, scream, and even ask God why me, but all of my tribulations have molded me into a stronger person.

I would like to thank Dr. Boykins for believing in me and never giving up on me when I was ready to give up. However much your feedback at times discouraged me, especially when I had to change directions altogether, your honesty and expertise was appreciated. I would also like to thank Dr. Bennett, Dr. Lafferty, and Dr. Thomasson; although you were not with me in the beginning of my journey, all your feedback and assistance thus far has been appreciated.

A special thank you to my mother for being that itch that would not go away and reminding me constantly that I have come too far to quit now. I know it is for you that I am able to complete this task. Mom, you have been a role model of courage, dedication, strength, hope, and love. I love you! Thank you to my husband Herman for being that listening ear and voice of reason when I did not know what to do next. Herman, your encouragement kept me pushing forward.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Schools have long been relatively safe havens for students, allowing opportunities for cognitive and emotional growth as young people develop from infancy to adulthood (Cawood, 2010). In recent years, however, a number of high profile violent incidents and crimes have brought school safety issues in the United States to the forefront. Media also are increasingly highlighting violence in U.S. schools (Bosworth, Ford, & Hernandez, 2011). Dinkes, Kemp, Baum, and Snyder (2008) reported that 11% of all crimes take place in schools, one every six seconds. Furthermore, every five minutes, students threaten approximately 225 teachers and attack nearly 15. Each year, approximately 400,000 violent crimes are committed on school property (Dinkes et al., 2008). The Centers for Disease Control (2015) surveyed students in Grades 9 through 12 in 2013 about their experiences of school violence:

- In the year before the survey, 8.1% reported being in a physical fight on school property.
- Because they felt unsafe on their way to school, 7.1% reported that they did not go to school on one or more days in the 30 days before the survey.
- One or more days in the previous month, 5.2% reported carrying a weapon (gun, knife, or club) on school property.
- One or more times in 12 months, 6.99% reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property.

- During the year before the survey, 19.6% reported being bullied on school property and 14.8% reported being bullied electronically.

School violence can take numerous forms. It includes locker theft, mob activities, victimization and intimidation, use of firearms, and assault, among other crimes (Volokh, 1998). Schools face the daunting task of keeping students and teachers safe in the atmosphere of increasing violence.

The rise in school violence has led to increased security measures and the introduction of zero tolerance policies (Fonseca, 2010), which dictate punitive consequences for all students in all violent situations (Teske, 2011). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has also sponsored initiatives focused on violence prevention and intervention (Cawood, 2010). Many violence prevention programs exist for use in schools, including *Barriers to the Use of Evidence-Supported Programs to Address School Violence* (Cawood, 2010); *The School Uniform Movement and What It Tells Us about American Education: A Symbolic Crusade* (Brunsma, 2004); and *School Technology* (Garcia, 2003). Still, student violence is on the rise, and the increase in incidents may challenge school safety and security policies as well as student achievement (Burdick-Will, 2013).

Problem Statement

Studies indicate that schools with minimal incidents of violent conduct are distinguished from those with high levels of such conduct by a conducive school environment wherein comprehensiveness, nurturance, and communities are marked. Furthermore, when little trust exists among faculty and students, poor communication

and cultural misinterpretations may negatively impact student learning and contribute to instances of violence as well (Burdick-Will, 2013).

Eighty-nine percent of people in 700 metropolises and townships who were interviewed for a report for the National League of Cities (Arndt, 1994) said that violence in learning institutions remains a challenge for their communities. Strategies to manage the escalating violence among youths are focused on isolating the wrongdoer (Walker, 1995). This tactic can safeguard other learners, but it has been demonstrated to be ineffective in averting children from emerging criminal livelihoods (Walker, 1995). According to the 2001 report *Problem of School Violence*, over the course of years, an unprecedented number of incidents of school violence have occurred. Teachers from schools in high-crime areas have reported violent offenses that have impacted either them or their communities (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013).

A catastrophic event occurred on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Colorado that affected many students, teachers, support staff, parents, administrators, and countless others. Two students, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, killed 12 students and a teacher, and wounded 21 others, before they both committed suicide (“Columbine High School Shootings,” 2015). In the wake of this massacre, the United States experienced a call to action, but the violence did not end. Another shooting occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, on December 14, 2012. The gunman, 20-year-old Adam Lanza, fatally shot 20 children aged between 6 and 7 years old, as well as six adult staff members (Barron, 2012). Some teachers and the principal of Sandy Hook put their lives on the line to save their students. According to CNN reporter Ben

Brumfield (2012), “What the teachers and principal at Sandy Hook Elementary School did for the children in their care could win a soldier in a war zone a Purple Heart” (para. 2). Still, school violence continues today.

As a result of the continued violence, many schools across the world are developing plans that address school discipline and create a school climate and culture in which everyone is valued and treated with respect. Key goals of discipline plans re to ensure that children learn in meaningful ways what appropriate behavior is and that any wrongdoing will have a consequence (Walker, 1995). However, schools do not exist in vacuums; they are one part of a larger environment—a neighborhood, a city, a state.

Repeated and pervasive incidents of violence have caused many U.S. cities and neighborhoods to be branded as unsafe (Puma, 2000). In addition, many U.S. schools are unsafe because the number of violent acts committed in them has risen over the course of years. As a result, national attention has focused on the public health issue of youth violence (Ali, Swahn, & Sterling, 2011). Although researchers recognize that poverty and violence are highly connected, they also increasingly view other factors, such as low socioeconomic status, little community involvement, drug use rates, unemployment, and overcrowding housing (Chonody, Ferman, Amitrani-Welsh, & Martin, 2013) as factors accounting for violence in communities. To summarize, socioeconomics, discrimination, unemployment, abuse of drugs, weapon availability, lack of parenting skills, and negative media exposure may contribute to youth violence (Walker, 1995). Urban students do see a correlation between school violence and their environment (S. L. Johnson, Burke, & Gielen, 2012). Moreover, school violence occurs in U.S. schools, at all levels, in all

regions, and in urban, suburban, rural and or private, public, and parochial school systems.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

According to the Kids Count Data Center (2006), a local problem with youth violence exists in Philadelphia, significantly affecting youth there. A 2006 study revealed that more than 8% of high school student's skipped school at least once during a one-month period because they did not feel safe in their school. Physical fighting occurred among 45.6% of high school students, while nearly 16% of students carried weapons on school property. The same study found that 34% of students reported feeling depressed. Many students worry about what their future may hold due to violence and scarcity plaguing their communities, along with threats from gang violence and drugs. A decline in student achievement may be affected due to offenses committed in schools. All these factors may cause anxiety and inability to focus properly among students (Burdick-Will, 2013). Researchers have attempted to get a handle on this problem.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Violence in schools and what to do about it has long been a topic of academic inquiry. The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls on education for more than 10 years explored problems facing public schools such as school violence and discipline (Bushaw & McNee, 2009). Based on research by S. L. Johnson et al. (2012), the majority of U.S. schools allocate money to address school violence through the development and implementation of program and governance. School violence is not only affecting students but schools as well. In the United States, approximately 40,000 students

experience physical attacks in their schools each month (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). Approximately 8,000 U.S. teachers are physically attacked every month at work (Lunenburg, 2011). Many students are accustomed to a school day filled with bullying, pandemonium, and violence (Burdick-Will, 2013). In addition, community conflicts make their way into schools. Schools must face the challenge of creating schools that provide rigorous instruction in a safe nurturing environment (Lunenburg, 2011).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of U. S. teachers about school violence prevention programs. I anticipated that the findings from this study would enable educators to explore initiatives to decrease the number of violent acts in their schools each year. The results of my study can be used as a guide to provide insight into what programs can be beneficial as well as effective in reducing school violence. Schools should be institutions of learning where students can thrive in a safe environment. However, crime and violence in schools not only disrupts the learning process but has an emotional impact on other students, staff, and the school community (Henry, 2000).

Guiding/Research Questions

Researchers have found that violence is impeding the development of students in U.S. schools (Henry, 2000). Mistreated students are increasingly reporting feelings of being isolated from peers, hopelessness, frustration, and the inability to formulate a relationship with the school (S. L. Johnson, Burke, & Gamlen, 2011). Public school violence has increased (Lunenburg, 2011). Violence in schools cannot be separated from

the larger problem of violence in communities. Studies have shown that school climates are being affected by the climate within the school neighborhoods (Lunenburg, 2011).

I focused my investigation around one guiding question and three subquestions:

RQ1. What are urban high school teachers' perceptions of school violence prevention programs?

RQ2. What do teachers know about current violence prevention programs?

RQ3. Are there any barriers impeding the success of the violence prevention programs?

RQ4. What can high school administrators do to ensure the violence prevention programs are implemented with fidelity?

Conceptual Framework

According to Bronfenbrenner, the environment in which individuals live greatly influences their characters. Real life bears out Bronfenbrenner's theory, as researchers have established that neighborhoods as well as the school grounds themselves serve as a context for school violence (Tudge & Hatfield, 2011). Children who were born and brought up in high crime neighborhoods tend to exhibit a more violent behavioral profile than their counterparts who were born and raised in relatively calm and low crime areas (National Gang Center, 2010). A more in-depth examination of any environment reveals a variety of influences of this type.

Many different factors in a child's environment can influence the eventual behavior of that child. Exposure to deviant friends in and out of school amplifies the violent tendencies in students (Garo, 2013). Exposure to violence in a child's immediate

community also fosters fierceness and virility. The immediate environment influences the personality and the behavior of a child. High poverty levels in the child's immediate environment also establish a base for physical and other sorts of violence in later life (Garo, 2013). Along with conditions outside the school, policies and practices inside the school may influence a child's character.

The disciplinary measures schools take against students also play a vital role in determining student's violent responses. Educators who adopt corporal punishment may prepare a breeding ground for extremely violent students (National Gang Center, 2010). On the other hand, laxity by school authorities may also provide a safe haven for school violence. Every human being involuntarily initiates adaptive measures in their immediate environment, perhaps even school administrators. U.S. school authorities have in some cases tried to conceal cases of violence that happened under their watch in a bid to maintain a good public image of their school (Miller, 2008). This deception may have increased cases of violence as violence-prone students were aware that no action could be taken against them (Fonseca, 2010).

Nature of the Study

Studies have indicated that institutions of learning with minimal incidents of violent conduct are distinguished from institutions with high levels of criminal conduct by a conducive school environment wherein comprehensiveness, nurturance, and communities are marked. Furthermore, when little trust exists among faculty and students, poor communication and cultural misinterpretations may negatively impact student learning and contribute to instances of violence as well (Burdick-Will, 2013).

Eighty-nine percent of interviewees in 700 metropolises and townships interviewed for a report for the National League of Cities (NLC) (Arndt, 1994) articulated violence in learning institutions remains a challenge within their community. Strategies to manage the escalating violence among youths have been basic, isolating the wrongdoer. This tactic can safeguard other learners, but it has been demonstrated to be ineffective in averting children from emerging criminal livelihoods (Walker, 1995). According to *Problem of School Violence*, 2001, over the course of years, an unprecedented number of incidents of school violence have occurred. Teachers from schools in high-crime areas have reported violence related offenses that have impacted either them or the community (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013).

A catastrophic event occurred on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School that affected many students, teachers, support staff, parents, administrators, and countless others. This was the scene of a massacre, and in wake of this massacre, the United States experienced a call to action. Educators at Sandy Hook Elementary School (December 14, 2012) lost their lives trying to ensure the safety of their students. According to CNN reporter Ben Brumfield, "What the teachers and principal at Sandy Hook Elementary School did for the children in their care could win a soldier in a war zone a Purple Heart" (Virtue, 2013). The teachers and principal of Sandy Hook put their lives on the line to save their students from an armed gunman.

School violence continues today. As a result, many schools across the world are developing plans that address school discipline to assist with creating a school climate and culture where everyone is valued and treated with respect. Discipline plans need to

ensure that children are taught in meaningful ways what appropriate behavior resembles and that any wrongdoing will have a consequence (Walker, 1995).

Research studies have proven that many cities and neighborhoods have been branded as unsafe because acts of violence have been repeatedly associated with them (Puma, 2000). In addition, many schools have been labeled as unsafe, as the number of violent acts committed there has risen over the course of years. As a result, national attention has focused on the public health issue of youth violence (Ali, Swahn, & Sterling, 2011). Although researchers have recognized that poverty and violence are highly connected, other factors, such as low socioeconomic status, little community involvement, drug use rates, unemployment, and overcrowding housing (Chonody, Ferman, Amitrani-Welsh, & Martin, 2013), also affect violence rates in communities. To summarize, socioeconomics, discrimination, unemployment, abuse of drugs, weapon availability, lack of parenting skills, and negative media exposure may contribute to youth violence (Walker, 1995). Urban students do see a correlation between school violence and their environment (S. L. Johnson, Burke, & Gielen, 2012). Moreover, school violence occurs in American schools, at all levels; in all regions of the country; and in urban, suburban, rural and or private, public, and parochial school systems. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding school violence prevention programs.

Subsystems and Their Influence on School Violence Prevention

The major goal of the various prevention as well as intervention strategies is to deter school violence from happening (Ricketts, 2007). All the stakeholders in the

education sector, including educators and parents and guardians, should be actively involved in violence prevention programs. The exclusion of one party would result in an unbalanced approach in solution-seeking procedures. Violence prevention programs can be instituted at four levels of influence in a child's environment—community, school, family, and individual—in hopes of a coordinated, unified effort to prevent further incidents.

Societal Influence

Violence prevention initiatives instituted at this level are intended to alter the various social and cultural conditions that make up a child's immediate society. In general, society and culture comprise the macrosystem, the outer layer of the child's environment (Tudge & Hatfield, 2011). The cultural values, laws, and customs at work in this system influence the interactions of other subsystems in a child's environment (Tudge & Hatfield, 2011). In other words, society as a subsystem has a great influence on how students carry out relations in life. Basically, the system is important in assisting an individual in holding together the innumerable threads of life. Educators and parents should play a substantial role in helping students to strictly adhere to societal values through instruction and setting good examples.

School Influence

Influences inside school systems are crucial in molding the students into nonviolent individuals. The school should engage in constant study and monitoring of the student behavior. Schools must formulate sound strategies to respond to various incidents of violence. Proactivity is highly essential as prevention has always been better than

reaction after the face. The CDC suggested that schools should promote behavior management strategies, putting students in groups, and effective student observation (Kali, 2010).

Parental Influence

Schools should also initiate programs aimed at fostering better family relations (Daniels & Bradley, 2011); this approach could include parenting seminars. Researchers have established that family interventions have a modest effect on students' behavior, both in the short- and long-terms (Daniels & Bradley, 2011). Parents should be directly involved in the molding of their children in and out of school. Family has an important stake in the personality of an individual and hence its inclusion is inevitable (Daniels & Bradley, 2011).

Outside Organizations, Institutions, and Media Influence

Violence in schools in most cases begins at an individual level. Programs should be developed in schools to facilitate self-evaluation and violence prevention. Teaching of social skills at school would be important in enabling self-discovery, conflict resolution, and problem solving among individual students. To the extent possible, the child's interaction with the immediate environment should be controlled and monitored to ensure each child has few or no challenges that trigger aggressiveness. In this way, controlling the child's microsystem may turn school into a safe place where the child can develop coping skills, rather than a place that recalls troubling memories and uncertainty (Lampinen & Sexton-Radek, 2010). Training the child on how to adapt to the

environment is also essential as it ensures that changes in the environment do not promote the change of personality but rather a change for the better.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

School districts, communities, state, nation, and international data all agree that school violence is a growing issue in need of immediate attention. In previous years, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has sponsored initiatives designed to disseminate interventions throughout the country by promoting the propagation of violence prevention and intervention programs (Cawood, 2010). Still, the problem persists. According to the Centers for Disease Control (2015), in 2013, among students in Grades 9 through 12,

- 8.1% reported being in a physical fight on school property in the 12 months before the survey.
- 7.1% reported that they did not go to school on one or more days in the 30 days before the survey because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school.
- 5.2% reported carrying a weapon (gun, knife, or club) on school property on one or more days in the 30 days before the survey.
- 6.99% reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property one or more times in the 12 months before the survey.
- 19.6% reported being bullied on school property and 14.8% reported being bullied electronically during the 12 months before the survey. (p. 1)

Furthermore, Dinkes, Kemp, Baum, and Snyder (2008) reported that 11% of all crimes

take place in schools, one every six seconds. Furthermore, every five minutes, students attack nearly 15 and threaten approximately 225 teachers. In total, each year, approximately 400,000 violent crimes are committed on school property (Dinkes et al., 2008).

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls on education for more than ten years have cited problems facing public schools such as school violence and discipline (Bushaw & McNee, 2009). Based on research by S. L. Johnson et al. (2012), the majority of United States schools allocate money to address school violence through the development and implementation of program and governance. School violence is not only affecting students but schools as well. The United States has approximately 40,000 students who are physically attacked in their schools each month. Approximately 8,000 United States teachers are physically attacked every month at work (Lunenburg, 2011). Many students are growing accustomed to a school day filled with bullying, pandemonium, and violence. Often times, community conflicts are brought into school. Schools are being faced with the challenge of creating schools that provide rigorous instruction in a safe nurturing environment (Lunenburg, 2011).

Operational Definitions

The following terms are frequently used in reference to school violence in this study:

Crime: A violation of a law or guideline or the commission of an act that the government has deemed harmful to the public. Crimes may be felonies or misdemeanors,

may include violence, and may injure individuals or damage property (Robers, Kemp, Truman, & Snyder, 2013).

Gang: An association of three or more people who use the same identifiers. Members of the association are involved in illegal and or violent activity (Robers et al., 2013).

Incident: A criminal act or offense that involves at least one perpetrator and at least one victim (Robers et al., 2013).

Perception: A person's understanding of a phenomenon. As Dogatus (2013) noted, research participants' perceptions may be influenced by the environment and settings of research sites.

Violence-prevention programs: Programs created to prevent violent behaviors in schools by providing students with alternatives to violence and negative behavior (DeVoe et al., 2004).

Weapon: An apparatus used to cause harm or kill a person. Weapons also include replicas that would be used for the same purpose (Robers et al., 2013).

Assumptions

When conducting research, the researcher may assume that all participants will answer the questions honestly. An assumption of this research was that all participants would answer all questions honorably. It was also an assumption that all participants not only attended the professional development for staff on school violence prevention programs but also were able to retain information presented. However, some participants may not have been completely honest in answering the questions because they were

afraid of the research's affecting their school community in a negative way. I worked to control my bias by setting aside personal beliefs and or position on the topic.

Scope and Delimitations

According to Rudestam and Newton (2001) restrictions in a study are when researchers do not have the ability to control for something. The expected range of participants will be nine. I will have no control over the number of participants since some may not want to participate due to the many district and state mandates being placed upon them. This is known as a limitation. Another limitation the researcher has is the inability to compare multiple urban high schools since only one urban high school will be targeted. Since this is a qualitative case study, one school has been targeted to allow the research to be in depth. Perceptions of teachers will be another limitation because the participants are providing their opinions based upon their experiences and observations. I have to assume that the participants will show their own beliefs.

Significance of the Study

The identification and potential implication of successful programs to address school violence in U.S. schools can be a benefactor to all educational institutions. Several programs have proven to be effective in some high schools. Schools and administrators can benefit from the first-hand knowledge of teachers who have to deal with violence on a daily basis when creating policy and programs. Schools should be safe havens for students, and parents and community members expect their children to be safe while they are in school. This study may begin a community conversation that would

engage all stakeholders in contributing to a safe environment. It might also provide recommendations for immediate corrections to establish a secured environment.

Summary

The purpose of Section 1 was to provide the reader with a brief synopsis of the research study. Section 1 outlined the purpose of the research study, why there is a need for the study, the conceptual framework, definitions, and evidence of the problem, local problem, guided research questions, the significance of the study, assumptions, and limitations. Section 2 presents a review of literature, and the implications. The saturation of literature is essential to the study. The extensive literature review is derived from themes used to address school violence such as: school uniforms, dress codes, school security, preventive intervention, gang prevention and bullying. In Section 3, the qualitative research design and methodology is discussed along with the data collection process. In this section, the data collection process consists of interviews, self - reported observations, field notes, and review documents.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

My focus in this section is on identifying the initiatives implemented in schools to address violence at the high school level. Researchers have acknowledged that these programs have been effective and beneficial in some high schools across the United States. My study aimed to gain insight into how these initiatives work by identifying teachers' perspectives and experience with these programs and policies. School-based violence prevention programs can influence a variety of social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes in a positive manner, and teachers can provide valuable perspectives on the problem and its solutions.

In reviewing the literature on the topic of school violence and strategies for addressing school violence, I found little research on teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of violence prevention. Therefore, I redirected the focus of the literature review to violence prevention programs and policies that have had an impact on public high schools throughout the United States. My study sought to inform school districts of teachers' perspectives on violence prevention programs. I also sought to provide school districts with more insight about programs being used throughout the United States and about best practices related to school violence. Educators know that creating a safe school is part of the responsibility of the community in which a school or school system resides, but the responsibility for maintaining safe schools on a daily basis lies with the school administrators and teachers.

Literature Search Strategy

The primary focus of my study was an analysis of U.S. teachers' perspectives on violence prevention initiatives. In reviewing literature for this study, I focused on research conducted between 1985 and 2014, with an emphasis on literature published after 2008. The major topics addressed in this review of existing literature included uniform and dress code policies, school security, preventive intervention, gang prevention and intervention, and measures to combat bullying.

Databases used for the literature review included Sage Full Text Collection, Dissertations, Education Research Complete, Educational Resource Information Center, and Dissertations. Walden University librarians aided me with locating researched based literature that could be used in my study. Search terms included *perceptions of school violence, school violence and urban, violence, high school, secondary, uniforms, school uniforms, security, programs, prevention, bullying, intervention, secondary, violence prevention, gang prevention, school security, school dress code, school violence initiatives, Bronfenbrenner, and nested ecological theory.*

School Uniforms and Dress Codes

Brunsma (2004) indicated in the 20th century, the issue of dress codes and school uniforms had emerged as an emotive one, especially regarding plans to use them to prevent school violence. Policies related to these developments had become recurrent happenstances. Siegel and Welsh (2008) revealed that a couple of school districts in the United States had seen the need for the introduction of dress codes and school uniforms and this translated to numerous experiments with the measures that caught the attention

of the then President, Bill Clinton. The decrease of school violence incidents at specific school districts after the adoption of uniform policies revealed their effectiveness.

Educators believed that school uniforms had a direct correlation between school violence and student achievement (Sanchez, Yoxsimer, & Hill, 2012). A number of public schools that chose to implement uniform policies took a rather casual approach that was not only effective but also affordable for parents and students. Moreover, uniform policies that were being implemented in public schools usually required that students dress in knit shirts and khakis.

Lumsden (2001) revealed that the National Association of Principals of Secondary Schools realized that school uniforms had been implemented at both private and parochial schools. Past reports revealed an increase in the number of public schools that had adopted a school uniforms policy as a response to the increase in the incidents of school violence. The series of shootings in schools led researchers to school principals. This survey revealed an increase in support for the adoption of dress codes and school uniforms. Three-quarters of about 6,000 principals surveyed in 1996 at the conference for the National Association of School Principals revealed that requiring students to wear school uniforms had the potential benefits of increased school attendance, and increase in respect for teachers. The use of school uniforms also had the potential benefits of improved behavioral traits while in the classroom, low rates of violence and school crimes, and improved discipline. The same survey revealed that uniforms led to ease of identifying of non-students, an increase in confidence and self-esteem among students, as well as the fostering of a learning spirit and other positive attributes (Lumsden, 2001).

Notwithstanding the claims of the effectiveness of school uniforms at mitigating violence in several high schools, some objections have emerged. In response to the implementation of school uniforms policies, opponents raised fundamental issues. Many questioned if the mandatory uniform policy infringed upon the students' first amendment right to the freedom of expression. According to Lumsden (2001), the legal challenge that emerged on this issue maintained that the freedom possessed by students to select what they wanted to wear while in school was a core part of the freedom deeply embedded in U.S. society. Challengers asserted that schools should not interfere with students' freedom regardless of the weight of the matter. On the other hand, courts have made ambiguous and inconsistent rulings on school uniforms.

Federal courts have played a central role on the issue as they have consistently upheld the right by school districts to establish regulations for the operations of schools on a daily basis. Nevertheless, despite the prevailing argument in the legal domain at the time that the policy on uniforms was a violation of the first amendment, most of the lawsuits have failed in these courts (Boyles, 2005). In the development of school uniforms as an element of programs on violence prevention, policy makers and administrators have to make sure that they consider the connection between the policy and the capacity to educate students in an orderly and safe environment. Lumsden (2001) suggested that courts consider the issues of safety, disturbance of learning, and health and mostly rule in favor of school districts.

Hamilton (2008) indicated that an environment conducive for learning characterizes a school. However, many forces tend to limit the achievement of such an

environment as illuminated by the escalation of school violence in the recent decades. School violence is unacceptable and a source of concern for our schools. The phenomenon has compelled authorities to formulate appropriate measures to improve the situation. One of the policies adopted in this regard has been school uniforms and dress codes. Dress codes and uniforms help address crimes because criminals are rendered incapable of separating themselves from other scholars. Hamilton (2008) suggested that the school uniform refers to a formal or an informal dress implemented to eliminate unnecessary distractions and curb violence in the school environment. Away from the primitive notion that school uniform consists of plaid skirts suit jackets and scarves for girls, and dress pants, jackets and shirts for boys, some schools are adopting modern color dresses and trendy dress codes. Such a move has not only reduced costs but also prevented social stratification and quest for a fashion statement that makes the socially unfortunate student a target for ridicule by peers. Subsequently, such sentiments lead them to identify with others in similar situations and therefore form gangs with violent tendencies (Larson, 2009).

The policies regarding schools uniforms and dress codes have been effective at reducing school violence in some schools. The benefits include decreased violence associated with the types of clothing students wear. Second, school uniforms and dress codes reduce the need for the teachers to pay unwarranted attention to dress codes instead of focusing on issues that need more attention. Students experience less distraction when the school has a dress code or a school uniform. Moreover, school uniforms create a sense of community, which assists in eliminating violent tendencies. Of major

importance is the fact that school uniforms and dress codes enable school employees to recognize strangers within the school community, and school employees can recognize strangers who might be on campus to supply students with weapons or drugs. Hence, through adoption of school uniforms restricts the display of gang colors (Larson, 2009). Despite these purported benefits, objections persist.

Although objections to school uniforms tend to consist of personal and private opinion, some students and parents harbor the opinion that implementation of school uniforms is a violation of the essential freedom of expression. The issue evokes religious connotations because most religious affiliated schools require uniforms. This mindset has made it difficult to address completely the violence experienced in U.S. schools. The issue of school uniform in addressing school violence in America has attracted legal attention with numerous cases ruling either for or against the introduction of school uniforms in U.S. schools as a violence reduction policy. For example, Shafii and Shafii (2008) mentioned a ruling in 1969 that sought to protect the freedom of expression enjoyed by students. The only provision for the limitation of the same was in case such freedom severely interfered with discipline requirements in U.S. schools. Nevertheless, the emergence of nonconforming views revealed that the U.S. elite had seen the need for the introduction of any necessary measures to quell such violence. Despite the strong protection given to students under the rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court, proliferation of gang violence and overall violence within the schools made more individuals and institutions turn towards the idea of introducing school uniforms and dress codes for the

sole purpose of maintaining and facilitating the safety of the students (Shafii & Shafii, 2008). Each school—and its community—determines the matter independently.

School boards have authority to make decisions about whether students should wear uniforms, and many embrace the idea. When students wear school uniforms, they experience less peer pressure to dress in a certain manner (Twemlow & Sacco, 2012). Theft of shoes has been eradicated with students focusing their energy on education rather than spending more time on distractions that cultivate violent tendencies (Twemlow & Sacco, 2012).

According to Mathison and Ross (2007), the genesis dress codes dates back to 1996, when President Bill Clinton endorsed the idea. This move was an attempt to curb the presence of gangs in schools and to eradicate disciplinary conflicts that culminated in gross violence. In response to the disturbing trend, officials in school districts across the United States introduced school uniforms or implemented dress codes. Policies for school appearance mandated special outfits and limited regalia, such as hats, bandana, religious symbols, immodest clothing, and jewelry. The above-mentioned clothing items were synonymous with gang membership and a distraction to the learning environment. The U.S. public was aware that clothing trends in schools prior to the introduction of school uniforms were to blame for the disruption, unhealthy school atmosphere, violence, and intimidation.

Mathison and Ross (2007) revealed that although an inadequate account of empirical evidence existed on the issue, magazines and newspapers relied on various accounts to bring the issue of school uniforms to the forefront. In support of the gesture

made by President Clinton, school administrators reported that dress codes not only reduced gang activity and violence but also aided in leveling the socioeconomic field of play. Competition among students to obtain new fashions like expensive sneakers and team jackets decreased after the introduction of the dress codes. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds felt less pressure to resort to theft to keep up in the fashion race, according to Mathison and Ross (2007).

School Security

The strategy of school security has been effective in addressing school violence (Garcia, 2003). The widespread security measures in schools include monitoring students' movements in hallways and congregation places, such as the cafeteria and restrooms. Conventionally, school staff members have assumed the role of monitors. Nevertheless, in the contemporary society, schools have hired guards to increase patrols in the hallways. A number of researchers acknowledged that adoption of school security measures has produced the desired results of reduction of school violence (Garcia, 2003). Education and law enforcement officials have begun to take preventive measures in ensuring the safety of students and staff. Over the past 20 years, *target hardening* techniques (Garcia, 2003) have been used to ensure the safety of the school community by making it less attractive to target. The escalation of violence in schools was connected to the rise in the number of criminals, who brought all forms of weapons and drugs to the schools.

School districts across the country have begun employing mandatory uniform policies, security guards, electronic surveillance systems, metal detectors, indiscriminate

examinations of students' belongings and lockers, and restriction of personnel to school buildings without access from an additional security feature (Jennings, Khey, Maskaly, & Donner, 2011). School systems must decide on their own security measures because universal standards do not exist. Schools' strategies may differ according to the demographics of the students, the location of school, school violence data, or the school building itself. Several studies suggested that schools with more diverse student bodies and linguistic minority students have less security than schools who make up the majority (Shelton, Owens, & Song, 2009).

In Philadelphia, the public school district is among the many school districts that have started using handheld metal detectors and walk-through metal detectors. Researchers have asserted these methods to be highly effective in some schools spread across the United States. Photo identification has also been embraced as a means of tracking the students who are in specific buildings. This measure has also been used in handling matters related to discipline and in other matters of importance to school security. Increased supervision through the addition of security personnel is another measure arising to mitigate the extent of violent incidents in schools. Haynes (2003) revealed that using security personnel in the school buildings has effective and beneficial returns when the school officer joins the police department and the school principal in combating school violence. The community and the neighborhood have also assumed a close connection with this matter.

In response to increased cases of school violence in U.S. schools, the need has emerged to adopt better security measures (Brydolf, 2013); with the advent of

technology, schools have access to effective safety measures, which have reduced entry of drugs and weapons in these schools. Kupchik (2010) indicated that the Association of Chiefs of Police in the United States has been faced with an escalation of school violence in the past two decades (1990-2010) primarily because of the lack of effective security measures in schools. Shootings at the West Nickel Mines Amish School on October 2, 2006, resulted in the deaths of five female students and the suicide of the male perpetrator. Incidents such as this one in Pennsylvania once again brought to the forefront the national problem in school violence (Logue, 2008). Effective security measures have been found to be important. The resources used to maintain security in schools are very important in helping our policy makers acquaint themselves with the resources needed to make informed decisions and drive their agendas effectively.

One of the security measures adopted in U.S. schools to curb school violence is the involvement of the community in school safety (Chen, 2008). Community engagement in the school community is important in preventing crimes perpetrated by students or outsiders. Police in the United States have developed videos in collaboration with the Bureau of Justice Assistance to highlight the need for community intervention and praise those individuals involved in preventing school crime (Doscher, 2008). Basically, the video highlights the ways in which the neighboring communities have the power to provide information that may help prevent crimes at schools (Kupchik, 2010).

An updated guide appeared in 2009 to address prevention and intervention measures that help curb violence in schools. Such a guide was instrumental in helping U.S. schools become well versed with resources needed for the prevention of crime. The

guide endorses a systemic view and clarifies the roles to be assumed by schools, families, the community, law enforcement agencies, and the justice system. The guide further directs key stakeholder groups to work together in manner that promotes an efficient response to the problems related to school violence (Juhnke, Granello, & Granello, 2010).

To foster security for the reduction of school violence, security agencies in New York formulated best practices to ensure school security and safety. The escalation of incidents of school violence in the recent past, particularly in New York, motivated this strategy (Twemlow & Sacco, 2012). The Department of Homeland Security in New York collaborated with city police, regional universities, and emergency management offices to create best practices that promise to be effective in addressing the high rates of school violence. The aforementioned agencies used their expertise to provide a comprehensive and critical response and prevention strategies for incidents related to school violence (Daniels & Bradley, 2011).

Technology has also come to aid in the incidents of violence in U.S. schools. Further, technology has proved of major importance with digital imaging helping address crimes through timely responses from chiefs of police and reduce shootings in schools. Digital imaging is one of the technological concepts adapted to help in addressing violence in these schools (U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Justice Programs United States of America, 2007). This approach is a response to recent and past shootings within U.S. schools. The Chiefs of Police in America, in collaboration with the Institute of Justice, formulated a guide for the use of advanced cameras to create compact discs containing digital images of a school's interior. This precaution allows responding officers to

determine the best way to access the school in case of a hostage and shooter situation (Skiba, Morrison, Furlong, & Cornell, 2013). Other agencies have collaborated to develop training solutions to the problem, as well.

In another move to improve school security in order to reduce the number of incidents of school violence, several bodies have come together to form partnerships to oversee training for safety in U.S. schools. The Justice Department and the Office for Juvenile Offenders developed and delivered training that focused on the improvement of school safety and incorporated topics ranging from principles on school safety, models for safety in schools, and management of critical incidents (Twemlow & Sacco, 2012). Despite all these efforts, one type of school violence has remained largely intractable: bullying.

Bullying is a manifestation of violence that recurs in U.S. schools (Hess & Drowns, 2009). The failure to stop the offenders has been among the root cause of incidences of increased violence in schools, with victims of bullying planning retaliatory attacks. In response to this problem, many schools have adopted a program for anti-bullying which aims to increase safety through violence mitigation (Riordan, 2014). The Justice Department collaborated to produce a series of such programs, aimed at prevention of juvenile delinquency. Their reports and resources have assisted in delivering information to justice officials and law enforcement officials. Moreover, they have addressed the flaws in contemporary juvenile justice practices and justice policy. Each of these reports has highlighted promising programs to address the important issue

of juvenile justice (Riordan, 2014). Involving U.S. students is crucial to the success of such programs.

Engaging the youth via volunteerism is a milestone towards the achievement of school safety in U.S. schools, according to Siegel and Welsh (2008). To address the youth on the issue of bullying, the police, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the Department of Justice in the United States have developed videos that introduce the benefits of these programs to law enforcement (Greenwood, 2008). Furthermore, these videos engage the youth and emphasize the roles that youth volunteers can play in such programs, ranging from recreation activities, academies for youth police, and internships to the exploration of law enforcement (Greenwood, 2008).

The Chiefs of Police have entered in productive collaboration with the Alliance of National Children and the League of American Welfare in formulating guidelines that will build partnerships for the protection of children (Greenwood, 2008). The resulting guidelines provide a strategy built around the creation of centers for child advocacy. In these guidelines, the youth will receive a comprehensive legal, social, and enforcement services at a designated location (Greenwood, 2008).

The Project for Safe Neighborhoods in another initiative determined to eliminate violence in U.S. schools. This project holds symposia and trainings to support its research. These trainings involve state, federal, and local law enforcement prosecutors and officers. Their emphasis is on investigations of firearms, making a case stick, and prosecution of cases revolving around the use of firearms. Furthermore, the training covers techniques that detect and divert firearms in an attempt to prevent their use in

perpetrating school violence. In 2005, the alliance announced plans to incorporate anti-gang initiatives in the research for safe neighborhoods. Presently, several chiefs of police are collaborating with federal partners in order to integrate coursework on gangs into curricula for training of relevant agencies (Soordhas, 2009).

Soordhas (2009) suggested that although it is a challenging feat to eliminate violence from schools completely, a couple of measures for school security can be adopted to stop the unfortunate incidents of violence in school. School staff must have the ability to identify individuals with high risk prior to their entry in the schools. Proper training and relevant security measures and alerting specific parties after unfortunate occurrences help to prevent an increase in casualties. School staff having a vast knowledge of security measures is among the most important security measures a school can have. Being educated and versed in school security measures helps administrators get behavioral clues even before violent incidents occur. For instance, administrators might detect that a potential perpetrator might have been involved in making inappropriate and threatening statements, perhaps by posting them online.

Behavioral clues may also help the school community detect behavioral changes; normally, the school counselors, teachers, and administrators are the first line of defense in preventing acts of violence in schools. The key to this training is the incorporation of elements like conflict resolution, anger management, and identification of warning signs (Miller, 2008). The student body can also play an important role in maintaining school security through violence prevention education. Effective communication between

parents, teachers, administrators, community member, and support staff is a great way to increase school/community involvement (Greenwood, 2008).

Because school violence can derive from a variety of sources, all school stakeholders must play a part in the decision-making and collaboration (Teasley, 2013). Security procedures and policies are necessary for a proactive approach to school violence. The critical timing of security interventions is paramount if a school is to guarantee safety at the school. Periodic visits by the local police may also help in deterring offenders from carrying out violent acts (Greenwood, 2008). Monitoring of access points and the perimeter using CCTV is another security aspect that aids in the prevention of violence in schools (Greenwood, 2008). Some researchers asserted that all the entry doors to schools should have increased access control, which allows school personnel to control activities from a remote location. Doors should be made of solid metal with the interior and exterior of these schools being equipped with well-functioning alarms. Further, a communications system should be installed alongside fire alarms in appropriate locations to allow for direct alerts to the authorities in case of emergence of serious problems (Greenwood, 2008).

Preventive Intervention

Among the most effective school-based programs formulated to address the situation of violence in school has been preventive intervention. School-based programs have used several different forms in an attempt to decrease school violence such as peer mediation and classes on social norms (Neville, Goodall, Gavine, Williams, & Donnelly, 2015). According to D. W. Johnson and Johnson (1995), this program focuses on offering

assistance to school districts for the purpose of preventing school violence, failure of the school, juvenile delinquency in high-risk adolescents, and related issues. The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (2006) observed that preventive intervention is a program based in schools and that target juvenile cynicism about daily undertakings and life. The program also focuses on ameliorating the lack of self-drive and self-efficacy to deal with such problems. Furthermore, the aforementioned type of program can be adopted in urban, low income, middle class, and racially mixed schools.

According to Center for Study and Prevention of Violence (2006), the school-based program of preventive intervention entails a two-year intervention period. The participants in this program are monitored closely. Participants receive incentives to demonstrate appropriate behavior and increase communication between themselves and their parents and teachers. In addition, teachers submit weekly reports on the assessment conducted on students' preparedness, punctuality, and positive and negative behaviors. Students have also been rewarded through the use incentives for changes achieved in behavior. In this program, students have to meet on a weekly basis with appointed staff to understand and discuss the nexus between their actions and the ramifications of what they do.

The Center for Study and Prevention of Violence (2006) also revealed that the outcomes from the programs of preventive intervention in schools have demonstrated long-term and short-term positive ramifications upon evaluation. In addition, results from a follow up study revealed that students in the intervention demonstrated fewer cases of juvenile delinquency than students in the control group. Furthermore, the prevention

intervention study spanned five years and illuminated that students who took part in the intervention program had fewer court cases when compared to control students.

According to Miller (2008), preventive intervention is instrumental in assisting school districts in decreasing violence in schools. It also helps mitigate juvenile delinquency and drug abuse among high-risk adolescents. Preventive intervention targets juvenile cynicism. This form of intervention was developed after the realization that many practices in the schools unintentionally contributed to the development of antisocial tendencies, which ended in school violence. The overemphasis on detection and the need to change a child's characteristics predicting violence caused most schools to overlook important variables such as ineffective instructions that led to academic failure, punitive and inconsistent practices for managing behavior, lack of opportunity to learn pro-social skills, and inconsistency and the disagreement of implementation among members of staff. The above-mentioned harmful practices in schools were amended to change in a positive and proactive manner (Miller, 2008).

In response to increased cases of violence in U.S. schools, some schools saw the need to serve as the ideal setting for organizational efforts against increased problems of children exhibiting antisocial behaviors. Preventive intervention in schools entailed timely identification and intervention in children at high risk. Programs targeted children who exhibited a high risk of dropping out of school, committing delinquent or violent acts, or adjustment problems. The main aim of preventive intervention stemmed from the realization that academic recovery was very difficult in the absence of early intervention (Lampinen & Sexton-Radek, 2010). Hence, most U.S. schools saw the need to implement

programs to prevent violence through a combination of strategies with special and individualized interventions.

A number of services in preventive interventions were school-based. Such interventions were instrumental in the provision of comprehensive support for all students. These preventive services provided for mentoring from adults, individualized instructions for social skills, increased support in academics, and alternative discipline (Lampinen & Sexton-Radek, 2010).

Adult mentorship was a necessary step in preventing incidences of school violence. This form of intervention was necessary in building the nexus between the school and the students. To achieve this feat, the staff of involved schools provided services for adult mentoring and management services based in schools. Important features of adult mentorship included a system for daily check in, increased student monitoring during the school days, high ratio of positive interactions with high-risk students, and an open forum for responding to student problems without judging them but focusing on solutions (Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, & Bollinger, 2009).

Academic support is a core component of preventive intervention. In this form of intervention, schools maintain low student-to-teacher ratios so students receive enough attention. Further, the teaching strategies provide individual instruction and small group instructions for students who are at risk. The curriculum areas focus on include life skills necessary for a good transition to a responsible adult life. Furthermore, the staff of involved schools conduct training in social skills to incorporate basic communication, coping with feelings, problem solving, and making friends. In addition, the program also

provides the students with academic support via consultant and direct support in the setting of regular classroom help in tutoring with assignments in the classroom, basic instructions in skills and training and study skills (Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, & Bollinger, 2009).

According to Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas, and Bollinger (2009), during the latter decade of the 20th century, researchers assessed an array of interventions to determine their effectiveness in the prevention of violence in students both in school and the community. Several projects in major cities main targeted the urban and high-risk youth population. Effective strategies in this policy involved the use of a school-based curricula emphasizing on formulation of problem solving, communication and social skills. Moreover, the interventions also focused on anger management. Furthermore, parenting programs promoting a strong bond between the children and parents were formulated. These programs taught parents skills instrumental in conflict management in the family setting.

The administrations in schools were asked to support actively programs for poverty amelioration because chaotic environments and lack of support for these programs exacerbated the situation notwithstanding the presence of sound strategies (Lampinen & Sexton-Radek, 2010). In addition, in a situation where parents were confused and teachers were unable to manage classrooms, the situation got worse as time passed. Administrators realized that fruitful partnerships between agents that intervened in the problem worked better than the efforts that were already established. The timing

and design of such interventions was a very important factor during their formulation (Lampinen & Sexton-Radek, 2010).

Gang Prevention and Intervention

A broad definition of gang, according to Conoley and Goldstein (2004), is an organized group comprised of three or more people who interact in a manner that excludes others. These groups have names, leaders, tattoos, hand signals, jewelry, and colors. Gangs often base on territories and fight rival gangs threatening their cohesion. The Coordinating Council on Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention (1996) indicated that gangs engage in the perpetration of illegal activities such as drug dealing and violent crimes. Information from the Institute for Intergovernmental Research (2013) suggested that members of almost all gangs have low self-esteem. Youth become involved in gangs due to poor conditions in their homes and social settings. Several books and articles have described have described tendencies that lead youth towards gangs, drugs, and violence. High unemployment, single-parent households, high rates of illiteracy, and the absence of a responsible male role model tend to classify dysfunctional families (Hughes, Griner, Guanine, Drabik-Medeiros, & Williams, 2012).

Gang prevention and intervention programs that focus on positive relationships, personal responsibility, self-esteem, and conflict resolutions have helped individuals to get themselves out of the gangs and lead different kinds of life (Hughes et al., 2012). These programs have been used for high and junior school students. According to the Institute for Intergovernmental Research (2013), from several sources of information relating to intervention and prevention of gangs, some programs have been identified as

highly effective in various school districts in the United States (Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2013).

Among the programs was the GREAT Program (Gang Resistance Education and Training), a cooperative effort between area schools, the police department, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. The aforementioned program taught students various types of skills on life that can help them to reduce prejudice, violence, and negative attitudes towards law enforcement (Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2013). The education and training given to assist the youth to desist from gangs is based on evidence and effective violence and gang prevention programs built around a classroom curriculum involving the use of law enforcement officers.

The program was developed as a form of prevention against adolescence violence, gang association, and delinquency for youngsters who were at the prime age for introduction into delinquent behavior and gangs. The curriculum consisted of lessons of half-a-hour to 45 minutes that were to be taught in sequential order with not less than one day and more than a fortnight between lessons. A letter that expounded on the lessons and encouraged interaction between students and parents accompanied several lessons (Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2013).

In California, Making the Right Connection (MTRC) is a gang intervention and prevention program that targets youth from the inner city. The curricula adopted for this program consists of volunteer students, community members, and teachers. According to Boyles (2005), the program includes educational and training materials that foster tenants of good citizenship.

Gang Prevention and Intervention is a policy that has been adopted in numerous schools in the US to address the recent rise in school violence incidents. In this approach, the Gang Prevention and Intervention Unit (GPIU) have worked hard to promote the safety of students and foster awareness regarding youth and gang violence and other unlawful tendencies. The Unit aims at helping schools and their neighboring communities create secure and safer environment by providing assistance to them on the development of proactive approaches to gang activities and various forms of violence by the youth. In their mission, the unit supports education of students in the city of New York through provision of professional development, collaborative intervention and technical assistance related to gang activity and gang presence within schools (Howell, 2010).

The goal of the unit concerned with prevention of gang-related violence is to work with safety administrators and other members of the school to design and create interventions that address group and individual problems relating to youth violence, especially bullying and gang activity. The unit has the mandate to provide professional development and training from the Department of Education in New York and community agencies that serve the youth and families in New York. Further, the unit has the role of maintaining up-to-date information and in-house expertise that relates to aspects of gangs and all forms of violence by the youth and unruly students (Merrill & Merrill, 2008).

Gangs occur in schools for an array of reasons, but the principal motivation for youth who joins a gang is to satisfy the needs their home life does not provide for them. Gangs provide dysfunctional youths and youth facing life problems with a sense of

acceptance and a family (Merrill & Merrill, 2008). In the prevention of gangs, schools and other concerned bodies are aware of the factors that compel dysfunctional youths to enter into gangs. Consequently, programs have been formulated to deter students from entry and participation in gang violence.

One of the interventions has been Substances Abuse and Narcotics Education (SANE), which has had a great impact and helped a large number of students in a number of schools throughout the United States. Particularly in the Los Angeles region, the program has proved important through prevention procedures that stress on provision of information on gangs, ways to increase self-esteem, techniques to resist influence from gangs, and coping with pressure from peers. The SANE program has a strong support base in Los Angeles, especially the Sheriff Department in the city, schools, school districts, and several municipalities. This development allows the involved parties to engage in expansion of the program to all students in Los Angeles and gifting every student in the area with a chance in the program and to offer a testimony in relation to gang matters (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008).

Another effective program in the prevention of gang violence in the United States is the Community Youth Gang Services (CYGS), which focuses not only on the elementary and students in the middle school but also on the entire community. The program aimed to dissolve gang violence in the suburban and inner cities through a six-course program that comprises of bodies that help in providing timely information to deal with issues related to gang violence. All the parties in this program interact with the gang members to reduce violence levels in a particular area and give the youth some diversion

techniques and counseling that aids in preventing kids from participating in all forms of violence (Kinnear, 2009).

Neighborhoods with active gangs are targeted by CYGS members, who use cars to patrol neighborhoods. Such patrols aim at showing the need to involve in community and family activities. These activities include fostering a sense of togetherness and harmony in the community, which helps to reduce sexual assaults and gang violence. Another component of the program dubbed “Graffiti Removal” helps teach the youth about the need to emancipate themselves from the problems of defacing property (Englander, 2007).

Englander (2007) listed some of the causative factors for the proliferation of gangs and measures instrumental in preventing the emergence of gangs. Particularly, such factors have been categorized into individual, family, school, community, and peer. In the latter category, the factors include association with delinquent and aggressive peers, peer drug and alcohol abuse, rejection from peers, and membership in gangs.

In an attempt to help youth desist from entry into gangs, Kinnear (2009) mentioned that a comprehensive gang model, based on an assessment of programs reserved for youth gangs, has been developed. These programs have been funded by the federal office for the prevention of juvenile delinquency. A study dating back to 1980s identified the main strategies that are still relevant in the contemporary U.S. society. These strategies are viewed and used favorably by communities in response to problems brought about by gangs.

Incorporated in the aforementioned model are a number of strategies that have proved highly effective in prevention of problems synonymous with the existence of gangs in a neighborhood. Mobilization of the community is the first strategy that includes the involvement of the local citizens. The members involved in this in this strategy are agencies, community groups, and youth who were former gang members. Staff functions and program coordination occur across and within the agencies. Second, the provision of opportunities is a strategy that entails the formulation of an avalanche training, education, and employment programs that target youths who are involved in gangs (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008).

Social intervention is a strategy in the realm of gang prevention that involves agencies that serve the youth, grass root groups, schools, law-enforcement agencies, organizations based on faith, and organizations based on criminal and juvenile justice. These organizations reach out to the youth involved in gangs and their respective families and links them with the services they need in the conventional world. Suppression is another strategy that incorporates the use of informal and formal control procedures in society, close monitoring, and supervision of the youths involved in gangs by community agencies or the criminal and juvenile justice system. Last, organizational development and change is a strategy involving implementation and development of procedures and policies resulting in effective use of available resources (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008).

Combating Bullying in Schools

Over the course of 10 years, legislators have become more involved in bully prevention through amending public school to incorporate safety guidelines. States are

now required to develop school regulations that will ensure the safety of its school community in order to receive certain federal monies. For instance, The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) included the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Community Act (SDFSC, Title IV, Part A) provides funding for schools to create guidelines for the problem of bullying in schools. Several measures have been adopted by legislation being formulated to address the issue (Edmondson & Zeman, 2011).

Over the last 10 years, bullying has entered the public consciousness as a ubiquitous source of violent behavior in schools, and unresolved, bullying can predict the development of more serious violent crimes among youth. Bullying affects students' academic performance as well as their physical, social, and emotional well-being, and the overall climate at a school may deteriorate when bullying is a part of the institutional culture (Bowllan, 2011).

School personnel have an obligation to safeguard all students from incidents that compromise their safety and well-being. In the absence of a parent, school personnel become the parents (they act in loco parentis) of students entrusted in their care including during normal school hours in addition to any activities outside the traditional school day (Essex, 2011). Teachers are expected to report bullying incidents to school administrators with the bullies being at risk of expulsion and suspension in the case of convictions of even minor teasing to severe cases.

Rigby (2012) suggested that bullying has evolved into more advanced forms of targeting not only vulnerable students but also those with the same-sex preferences. Moreover, bullies have not spared transgendered youths, and bullying has transformed

schools into a hostile environment, where these individuals have been rendered susceptible to physical abuse and harassment because of gender identity and sexual orientation. Transgender and gay advocacy groups, as well as civil rights organizations, have implemented measures intended to protect all youths. Furthermore, groups for advocacy of education have seen the need to support measures for anti-bullying. All the organizations focusing on this phenomenon are aiding in the dissemination of information on bullying and its widespread ramifications on vulnerable youth.

Of major importance is the fact that advocacy organizations are helping and encouraging students, parents, and concerned citizens to reach out to elected representatives and enlighten them on the importance of adoption of anti-bullying measures. According to Rigby (2012), a survey conducted by a national organization for education in the United States, which focused on maintaining safety for all students in schools, noted that vulnerable students skip school days because of the trauma and safety concerns after being targeted by bullies. Among these are the transgendered students who have felt very unsafe because of their gender identity or sexual orientation (Savage & Schanding, 2013).

Rigby (2012) indicated that articles and guidelines have been published intended to help teachers, governing bodies, and staff to respond and prevent bullying as the core behavioral policy, to explain their responsibilities regarding bullying, and to describe other schools' approaches regarding this issue. As the efforts to prevent and stop bullying continues to expand, some schools in the United States are coming up with more comprehensive approaches for anti-bullying (Domino, 2013). In about 49 states,

educators have become legally and professionally responsible for stopping and preventing bullying (Rigby, 2012).

The entire community in these regions strives to ensure that students improve their academic achievements by guaranteeing security through reduction of instances of bullying, which limits security for students who are more vulnerable. Further, schools implemented anti-bullying interventions partly because administrators realized that bullying had widespread ramifications on students' ability to focus on their academic activities and success in the classroom and beyond. Therefore, bullying is of major concern to all parties working with children and young adults. Unfortunate events that have happened in the past are constant reminders of the impact of bullying on students across the United States, and most administrators in schools across the country engage in proactive, educationally sound, and innovative strategies to combat bullying.

According to Rigby (2007), although students and their parents should report incidents of bullying to the school administrators and the staff at schools, the families and the students should also feel comfortable calling hotline numbers in some cases. All bullying cases must be treated with utmost seriousness with proactive measures applied to prevent any further bullying. Educational initiatives have also proved instrumental in addressing the problem of bullying. These initiatives include the professional development of school personnel, parent workshops, school-wide and classroom education for prevention of bullying, and resources for parents and school personnel.

Rigby (2012) indicated that sometimes bullying occurs outside the school premises. In fact, most severe forms of bullying occur away from the reach of school

administrators or in places where the teachers cannot notice the bullies. Head teachers in almost all schools have the power to discipline students who exhibit poor behavior outside the premises of the school. Through legislations, the head teachers are given power to control the behavior of learners when not in the school properties. The conduct to be regulated by the head teachers may relate to incidents of bullying that occur anywhere outside the school premises, such as on public or school transport. When such an incident is reported to the staff, the school investigates and takes action. The head teacher should also consider whether it is necessary to notify the police. Notification is mandatory if the level of the misbehavior is criminal or has the potential of becoming a threat to a member of a society. According to King and Vidourek (2010), however, schools that can develop and maintain a nurturing and supportive climate are likely to see positive impacts on factors that influence student success, such as healthy relationships among peers and teachers, and positive regard for the school itself.

Implications

The adoption of the aforementioned policies has proved vital in improving school violence in the United States. Particularly, using school uniforms and dress code policies has addressed some of the root causes of school violence. Schools documented a great reduction in the number of students killed over clothes, which had become a worrying trend before the adoption of uniforms (Shafii & Shafii, 2008). Before adoption of uniform policies, designer clothes had created segregation in U.S. schools and was one among numerous forces that limited the students' achievement and learning.

Daniels and Bradley (2011) found that the distractions of gang attire, which inclined students towards acts of violence, were ameliorated after the implementation of proper dress codes in the schools. Moreover, adoption of school uniforms helped reduce social stratification and the quest for a fashion statement that compelled some of the underprivileged students to enter into criminal gangs in order to provide a source of income for fancy clothes. Sentiments harbored by such students were to blame for the rise of homicide in U.S. schools before the introduction of measures such as the dress code and the school uniform.

Hamilton (2008) added that school uniforms have been crucial in setting better academic standards thus making vulnerable students focus less on criminal activities. Moreover, school uniforms have prevented the situation where teachers tend to shift focus on dress codes instead of issues that require more attention such as performance of the students. Due to this policy dress, income, and gangs have been less of a distraction.

Shaping Policy

With regard to policies relating to security measures to reduce incidents of school violence, the adoption of better technological measures has led to increased security in the schools and fostered a proper learning atmosphere that was absent before the policy was adopted (Garcia, 2003; Haynes, 2003; Jennings et al., 2011). Teachers and policy makers in schools are finding it easier to deal with security concerns because most of the roles they used to undertake have been assumed by sophisticated technological gadgets that have proved not only effective but also highly reliable (Ballard & Brady, 2007). Using sophisticated cameras, schools are able to detect the entry of weapon and drugs in

schools. Chiefs of police in the United States have been able to respond timely to prevent incidents of school violence after being informed by security agents in the schools about issues of concern (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010).

Resources such as security briefs and guides have helped political players to become well versed with means of stopping crimes before they happen. The use of help from neighboring communities has helped U.S. schools spot potential criminals before they can perpetrate their acts of violence within the school's vicinity. These communities have collaborated with the security of particular schools and helped to stop students from committing homicide. The development of videos by the U.S. police to aid in teaching the youth about dangers of involvement in all forms of crime has reduced the number of students involved in crime and fostered a spirit of academic success (Acosta, 2008).

Security agencies, particularly in New York, have formulated best practices to ensure that safety in schools and school security has been maintained (Eisenbraun, 2007). This move proved effective, and it was a response to the escalation of incidents of school violence that in some instances involved deaths of students. Agencies involved in these policies use their expertise on crime issues to provide a comprehensive and timely response to prevent incidents of school violence.

In the policy of preventive interventions, school districts have found a way to prevent violence in schools. This policy has helped in mitigating juvenile delinquency and drug abuse in adolescents this policy has helped to target juvenile cynicism and was adopted after a realization that school practices contributed to the development of antisocial tendencies, which led to school violence. The use of the preventive intervention

policy has helped in increasing organizational efforts to counter the problems faced by the youth and children who exhibit anti-social tendencies (Williams, Rivera, Neighbors, & Reznik, 2007). Through preventive intervention, children and students at high risk have been identified with relevant help and intervention being given to them to stop them from engaging in unbecoming behavior. Among the students helped through this strategy have been delinquents, children highly inclined to violence, school dropouts, and students with an array of adjustment problems.

The policy of gang prevention and intervention has been instrumental in addressing the rise in violent incidents across the United States (Ramadas, 2008). Through the gang prevention unit has achieved safety for students and fostered awareness on youth and gang violence, among other unlawful tendencies. This gang unit has helped schools and their neighboring communities to create a safer and more secure environment through the provision of assistance on the development of proactive approaches to gang activities and forms of violence perpetrated by the youth. The children born into a gang lifestyle cannot elect to be part of a gang or not. Gang members account for 80% of crime in neighborhoods. The violence from gangs make its way into schools due to the violent nature and drugs that plague the community (National Drug Intelligence Center, 2009, p. 6).

The National Youth Gang Center, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Howell & Lynch, 2000) documented that youth gangs are prominent in both elementary and secondary schools in the United States. Gang violence in schools increased between 1989 and

1995 in several urban neighborhoods. Research by Howell and Lynch (2000) argued that gang violence spiked during this period due to increase of controlled substances such as crack cocaine and heroin.

Awareness of factors compelling dysfunctional students join gangs has helped formulate programs to help defer students from entry and participation in the gangs. Particularly, the Substance Abuse and Narcotics Education (SANE) is an intervention that has implications for a number of students in school districts throughout the United States. In Los Angeles, the program has played a pivotal role because of prevention procedures which stress providing information on gangs, means of increasing self-esteem, resisting influence from gang members, and dealing with pressure from peers (Franzese, Covey, & Menard, 2006). The strong base of programs that aim at preventing gangs allows the parties to expand the programs to all students and the neighboring communities. Moreover, such an attribute gives students the opportunity to participate in the program by giving testimonies on matters relating to gangs.

The Community Youth Gang Services (CYGS) is another highly effective program for the prevention of gangs that not only focuses on middle school students but also on the entire community in the school's vicinity (Pitts, 2008). This program has been instrumental in dissolution of gang violence in the inner and sub-urban cities through programs that comprises bodies concerned with offering timely information to deal with issues relating to gang violence.

The policy for gang prevention has brought positive implications because of the involvement of parties that interact with gang members to ameliorate violence levels in

particular areas and gifting the youth diversion techniques and counseling aiding in prevention of entry of kids from the participation in all forms of violence. Through car patrols by the members of gang prevention, neighborhoods ridden gangs have been targeted with the sole aim of showing the members of such gangs the need to be involved in community and family activities. Such activities include inculcating a sense of harmony and togetherness in the community. Such a development leads to the reduction of sexual assaults and gang violence reserved for such neighborhoods. Through various components, these programs have helped the youths learn the need to emancipate themselves from problems linked to poverty (Pitts, 2008).

A Review of Differing Methodologies

I used a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative approach to examine school violence. I made this choice because qualitative research focuses on opinions and thoughts, while quantitative research focuses on numerical data. The main reasons I chose a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative approach is that I focused only on nonnumerical data using research instruments such as participant observation, interviews, and archival data. Moreover, a qualitative approach provides a detailed and complete description of the case study (Stake, 2010). Qualitative research enables a researcher to gain a comprehension of underlying opinions, reasons, and motivations; moreover, it helps to construe ideas or offers insights into the subject matter. In addition, qualitative researchers access trends in opinions and thought while diving deeper into the case study. Therefore, I employed qualitative research in this study to focus on the teachers' perceptions regarding school violence. Some previous studies

considered the perceptions of teachers regarding school violence (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007).

For instance, Dogutas (2013) employed a qualitative approach to survey school violence in three urban schools in United States. In this study, Dogutas (2013) interviewed three teachers along with applying non-participant observation in urban schools. The study concluded that physical violence is more frequent in urban schools. The qualitative study indicated that some types of the school violence are fights, insults, bullying, and bad language in class. Moreover, the study identified causes of the school violence as follows: boredom or demotivation, peer pressure, conflicts between students and among teachers, intercultural co-existence problems, and use of drugs.

A study by Doyle (2009) applied qualitative research design to present a research meant to evaluate the nature of music teachers' perceptions and attitudes in urban schools in Florida. The researcher administered six in-depth semistructured interviews to draw out teachers' perceptions, knowledge, experiences, and beliefs concerning the basis and nature of student violence. The researcher's findings depicted that the teachers admitted that the causative factors leading to school violence are internal school factors.

Another qualitative methodology review by Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennen, and Gulemetova (2011), whose national wide survey in suburban schools in the United States involving bullying as school violence. This study involved teachers' perception on bullying as a form of school violence. The study revealed that bullying was a

common practice in most of the urban schools and that it is a form of physical violence. Moreover, the finding of the case study showed that there was a significant likelihood of teachers' being victimized by students in form of bullying. Bullying has been reported in elementary, middle, and high schools in urban areas. Kennedy, Russom, and Kevorkian (2014) concurred and collected data from 139 active teachers as well as administrators, who undertook a survey involving their point of view regarding schools and bullying. The research concluded that bullying was a major challenge in urban schools. Moreover, the study suggested that the prevention measures need to be put in hand such as requirement to have a bullying training course in the elementary school.

Another qualitative study by Joong and Ridler (2006) used questionnaires to survey teachers in the United States regarding their perception on school violence and prevention. The researcher used open-ended questions to draw out responses to violent events that participants had witnessed, experienced, or participated. The survey involved 20 teachers from urban schools in an Ontario district. The research pointed out that participants expressed school pride and some school climate concerns, as well as deficiency in administrative support in the schools. Nevertheless, the response from the teachers was overwhelming since they felt that their violent fear associated incidences in addition to school violence was frankly linked to their school climate negatively (DeLara, 2008).

Another qualitative research by Ricketts (2007) examined teachers' perceptions of fear of violence in urban schools in the United States. The study involved focus groups containing five to 10 teachers in an hour-long discussion. These focus groups

concluded that the physical assault is rampant in urban schools. The survey further documented violence acts in schools including aggression, murder, cultism, demonstration, kidnapping, rape, and gang activity. These extreme forms of school violence, such as murder and kidnapping, are rarely seen in urban schools but sometimes they occur.

Mooij (2011) in his study that involved teachers' experiences regarding school violence in secondary schools, used an approach that is qualitative in nature to look at schools in urban area employing non-participant observation to look at how teachers perceive school violence. This case study surveyed the teachers from the same region who taught comparable grade levels. The findings from the research indicated that most of the teachers perceived bullying as the key factor leading to school violence. Moreover, about 67% of the teachers encountered school violence in the course of data collection.

Summary

This section described five violence prevention programs and measures that have been taken in an urban high school: school uniforms and dress codes, school security, preventive intervention, gang prevention and intervention, and combating bullying in schools. In this section, I discussed initiatives that schools have used in an attempt to curb violence. All school stakeholders must be involved in the process of violence prevention in order to see highly effective safe schools.

Also in this section, I reviewed six methodologies used by previous researchers to give an insight to the literature that regards school violence in many parts of the

continent. This section's purpose was to give clear insight of the causes of school violence and how they are to be curbed. The key points analyzed in this section were that the major causes of school violence are bullying, boredom or demotivation, conflicts between students and among teachers, peer pressure, as well as intercultural co-existence problems, and use of drugs (Testa & Smith, 2009). Moreover, this section highlighted that school violence directly affects the quality of education provided in schools.

This section defined school violence and a safe school, in addition to exploring the causative factors of school violence, both internal and external. Previous research indicated that the internal causes of school violence include overcrowding, a lack of teacher training, bullying, and poor school climate. The external factors that impact school violence include deficiency in family structure, family dysfunction, children with history of maltreatment and abuse, as well as exposure to domestic violence.

In the third section, methodology, I will describe the participants in the study, the data collection and analysis processes, and any emerging themes that may arise. Section 3 will also include the research design, the criteria for selection of the participants, the demographic background of the school selected, and the researcher's role. Additionally, I will describe the measures I took for ethical protection. In the fourth section, I will present the data gathered from interviews, self-reported observations, and field notes and interpret the perceptions of urban teachers regarding school violence prevention. In the last section will present summary of conclusions of this research.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

School violence is a critical issue in the United States. Researchers have conducted extensive studies and implemented numerous initiatives to address school violence (Daniels & Bradley, 2011) However, no studies have gathered teachers' perspectives on violence prevention programs. Creating a healthy and safe environment, which is conducive to learning, is necessary for students to focus on their academic pursuits (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011). Achieving this environment is possible, in part, through the implementation of effective prevention initiatives (Daniels & Bradley, 2011). Research has shown a direct link between school climate and student outcomes that go beyond achievement scores to include violence prevention, adolescent health, and school success (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011).

My study examined U.S. teachers' perspectives of the implementation of the violence prevention programming in schools. The primary purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of teachers to bridge the gap in literature pertaining to urban teachers' perspectives on school violence prevention initiatives and the effectiveness of their implementation. This study provided teachers the opportunity to report their experiences with intervention strategies designed to prevent violence both inside the classroom and around the school building. I used a qualitative case study methodology to describe and analyze data that emerged from teachers' interviews and self-reported observations and my field notes.

Research Design and Rationale

In order to obtain teachers' perspectives on school violence prevention initiatives, I used open-ended semistructured questions (see Appendix A). The questions derived from violence prevention programs discussed in the literature review. The research questions were

RQ1. What are urban high school teachers' perceptions of school violence prevention programs?

RQ2. What do teachers know about current violence prevention programs?

RQ3. Are there any barriers impeding the success of the violence prevention programs?

RQ4. What can high school administrators do to ensure the violence prevention programs are implemented with fidelity?

For this study, I used a qualitative research design. Qualitative data consist of words rather than numbers or other statistical data found in quantitative research (Merriam, 2002; Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Qualitative research was appropriate for this research study because it offered me the opportunity to gather a wealth of meaningful data in natural settings that were familiar to the participants. As Creswell (2003) noted, working within a setting that is familiar to participants helps researchers in understanding participants' human and social concerns. Qualitative researchers also seek to comprehend the perspectives of persons who experience the phenomenon of interest (Hatch, 2002). According to Hatch (2002), qualitative researchers typically include field notes, which may include observations about participants and notes about the transcription of

interviews. Biggan (2008) stated that qualitative research includes using logic to understand or comprehend the study of phenomena in their regular habitat and to interpret the significance society brings to them.

In this study, I employed a qualitative approach because it stressed the need to examine data in its natural surroundings. Quantitative research, with its focus on theory and use of numbers and statistics to arrive at a conclusion (Yilmaz, 2013), would not have been appropriate to portray the perspectives that inform individual social behaviors (Hatch, 2002). Furthermore, the instruments and methodologies differ between the two types of research.

Qualitative researchers employ interview strategies that differ from the interviews in quantitative studies. Many quantitative interviews contain closed-ended questionnaires with Likert scale categories, whereas in qualitative studies, participants answer open-ended questions and expound upon their perspectives on the problems facing society while listening to cues that may reveal meaning structures participants use to understand their worlds (Hatch, 2002). In qualitative research, the researcher limits the number of participants to allow for more in-depth contact with participants and allows the researcher to better understand the participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2003). Quantitative researchers use surveys and or questionnaires and a large pool of participants in order to gather data (Creswell, 2007).

I used a case study approach because it allowed me to be able to explore on a deeper level the perceptions of urban high school teachers on school violence prevention programs in their actual setting. Yin (2003) defined the case study research method as an

empirical inquiry wherein a researcher examines a current phenomenon within a realistic context. According to Hatch (2002), a case study is qualitative work conducted within deliberate limitations (such as small sample sizes or limited generalizability) to investigate a contextualized contemporary phenomenon. Case studies involve work in real-life settings (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) also described case studies as examinations that incorporate several different sources of information, such as field notes, interviews, and observations as means to determine common or emerging themes.

Due to the lack of literature on urban teachers' perspectives on the high school level, I decided to use a case study approach. Qualitative methods allowed me to investigate matters related to human perception and understanding (Stake, 2010). That is, I explored school violence prevention by collecting and analyzing data from urban classroom teachers who had first-hand experience and knowledge of school violence prevention initiatives. Teachers also completed a self-reporting observation regarding their implementation of violence prevention initiatives. I triangulated data from individual interviews with school training documents, professional development calendars, and meetings, and other documents that proved useful in providing me with a complete understanding of the urban teachers' perceptions on school violence prevention.

Methodology

This qualitative study consisted of interviews with nine teachers servicing Grades 9 through 12. The selection criteria for participants were three to five years of full-time teaching experience at the high school level and two to three of those years needed to be at the target high school.

The target school is located in an urban area in a mid-Atlantic state and is in the fifth most populous city in the country with approximately six million people. The selected school had approximately 600 students; 96% of the population is African American and the other 4% are White. The school employs approximately 40 general education teachers and five special education teachers. I selected the school included in the study based upon its size and its location in a high crime urban area. The participants provided interviews at the target site in the actual school setting. This arrangement allowed me to understand the dynamics being studied from the perspectives of those participating in the study (Hatch, 2002, p. 72).

The participants were full-time teachers who had three to five years of full-time teaching experience and two to three years of work experience at the targeted high school. The participants' full-time teaching at the targeted high school included school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2013-2014. The small sample size allowed the researcher to build a relationship with all the study participants and gather very detailed data (Hatch, 2002).

Ethical Protection of Participants

In order to conduct this research, I gained approval from the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB), Walden University committee members, the building principal, and the teachers. In the district of the planned study, the building principal had the authority to approve studies at the school level. Upon approval, I set up a meeting with the building principal at the target site. Throughout the meeting, I discussed the purpose of my

research, Walden University's policies on research procedures, the research process I would utilize, the participant selection process, the staff training on school violence prevention programs, and the potential benefits of the study for the school community. I also set up a meeting to speak during a staff meeting to explain the purpose of the study, its potential benefits, and on the potential benefits to the school community.

During that meeting, I highlighted the confidentiality of the study and stressed that no compensation would be rendered for participation. In order to protect participants, I explained, none of the information obtained from participants during the data collection would be shared with any unauthorized person without consent from the participants (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). In an effort to ensure that all information remained confidential, I devised a system to protect the confidentiality of all participant volunteers. I assigned a code to conceal the identity of each participant throughout the entire research process (i.e., Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.). Only the researcher had access to the list of codes assigned to each participant, and I used these codes throughout the duration of the research study.

Role of Researcher

I kept all confidential information including the list of codes assigned to each of the nine participants in a locked cabinet to which only I had access. I had no professional or personal ties to the targeted school or any of its teachers. Prior to the data collection, I explained that participants would have the option to withdraw for any reason at any time without repercussions. If any participants would have withdrawn from the study, I would have documented this in journal field notes and continued research. However, none did

so. The identities of the participants and research site in this study were held in confidence. I stored all audiotapes, documents, and transcripts related to this study in a locked cabinet in my home office. After five years, I will destroy all collected data.

I have no professional relationship with the target school or any of its teachers. The researcher plays a central role in facilitating and developing the meaning of the research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). I understood that careful planning was essential to a great research study. Although the data analysis is one of the last stages of a study, I planned it first (Wilkinson, 2000). I was responsible for not only the data collection and its analysis but also for the way it would be collected and stored. I kept field notes to make certain that I remained neutral during the interviews and during the reading of the self-reporting observations. I have no bias regarding the school or its participants because I did not have prior knowledge of the inner workings of the school; therefore, I was able to conduct an impartial study. I used bracketing to identify my personal feelings and preconceptions about the topic. By doing so, I remained open and receptive to what I was trying to understand (Hatch, 2002). I kept notes of my thoughts and questions through this process in my field notes, especially when I felt that my opinions or my bias could interfere with remaining neutral. I used these notes as a reminder of the importance to bracket my feelings and not show bias when asking questions in the interviews.

Criteria for Selection of Participation

The following criteria were used for selection of participants: full time teachers, both male and female, who had three to five years of full-time teaching experience and

who had two to three years of work experience at the targeted high school. The participants' full-time teaching at the targeted high school included school years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2013-2014. The sample consisted of nine urban teachers of Grades 9 through 12. The small sample size allowed me to build a relationship with all the study participants and allowed me to gather detailed data (Hatch, 2002). The sample size also allowed me to have deeper inquiry with the study participants. I purposefully selected participants from the targeted research site based upon the aforementioned criteria. According to Creswell (2007), purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select participants who can contribute to the phenomena being studied. In this research, I selected only people who had the ability to make significant contributions by responding to both the interview questions and self-reporting observations with fidelity. The ideal participants were able to effectively communicate their thoughts to me.

Data Collection

I collected data from semi-structured interviews, self-reported observations, and field notes. I interviewed each participant separately, and I was the sole person responsible for collecting the data (Appendix A). I developed a schedule of participants' interviews. I reminded the participants by phone at least one week in advance of the interviews about the date, location, and time. The interviews took place in the principal's conference room because it had no windows and a door with a "Do Not Disturb" sign. I audiotaped the interviews, and the open-ended semi-structured interview questions allowed me to engage in deep discussions with participants regarding school violence

prevention initiatives. I provided all participants with the same questions (see Appendix A).

Interviews are an interchange of thoughts between two people talking about a commonality that interests both parties. The researcher tries to understand the participants' perspective while listening to their experiences (Grunewald, 2004). The semi-structured interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes. Participants also completed a self-reported observation that took approximately 15-20 minutes (see Appendix B). Qualitative studies establish credibility through participants' judgments regarding the accuracy and credibility of the data elucidated through the interview process. (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba; 1985; Stake, 1995). I collected data from different sources (semi-structured recorded individual interviews, self-reported observations, field notes, and documents from the school) in an effort to ensure validity of data and to determine if any themes arose during the data collection process (Hatch, 2002).

I used multiple data sources as a way to triangulate data. According to Creswell (2007), triangulation adds to the credibility of the study and makes the findings robust. I used interviews and self-reported observations in an attempt to determine similarities, emerging themes, or differences among the various data sources. Although the effects of school violence can be devastating enough to the affected individuals, there still exists the need to examine a wider context of school violence prevention programs instead of focusing on individual behavior predictors.

Self-Reporting Observation

Once the individual interviews concluded, I gave each participant a self-reported observation to complete (see Appendix B). The participants took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete this task and share their professional perspectives regarding school violence prevention initiatives implemented to address school violence at the high school level. The instrument also afforded the participants a chance to reflect on their classroom implementation practices. Self-reported data might be more useful than a person's opinion because it may reveal unknown biases in behavior (Morgan, 1997). Parental consent was not needed because the purpose of the self-reported survey was intended for the reflection of teachers and not students. I identified the observation tools using the participants' unique identification codes.

Journal Field Notes

I used journal field notes during the entire research process. I anticipated the majority of my field notes would be generated during the interviews. This procedure allowed me to record any biases or common themes that arose. Furthermore, the field notes gave me an opportunity to write down questions, ideas, or pertinent information that stood out during this research process. I used the identifying code assigned to each participant to ensure confidentiality in every entry made to my journal field notes.

Data Analysis

After data collection and data alignment were complete, I became immersed in the data analysis process. I transcribed the audiotaped interviews verbatim. Merriam (2002) stated that to make the data come alive, a researcher must read it, touch it, color

code it, copy it, and play with it, over and over again and keep track of the possible themes that arise from the data. Data from this study included interviews, self-reported observations, and archival data. By immersing myself in the data, I began to separate data into categories. Merriam (2002) referred to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of the data as coding. Coding procedures normally reflect the emergence of themes. Thematic categories became obvious as I examined the several data sources. I coded all the participants' responses in hopes of identifying emerging themes related to the study. Categories or themes emerged as I coded the data. At the conclusion of the data analysis, I described all themes or categories that materialized out of the data relating to teacher's perceptions of school violence prevention program.

Methods to Address Validity

The methods used in this research study to address validity were member checking, triangulation, peer debriefing, and bracketing. The crosschecking method added to the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2007). In order to address the study's validity with fidelity, I began to examine the data several times. I also used triangulation as another strategy to assist with supporting my findings correctly. Peer debriefing and member checking further enhanced validity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined peer debriefing as "a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (p. 308). The peer reviewer offered an external expert with in depth knowledge and experience in qualitative research to objectively review the work presented in a constructively critical manner. The

peer reviewer reviewed the data and data analysis at the end of the study and once in the beginning of the study. She also ensured that all ethical provisions were upheld. This is essential because her review validated both my confidence and the trustworthiness of the findings.

Member Checking

One method to establish validity in qualitative research is by verification or extension of information developed by the researcher; this method is called member-checking (Hatch, 2002). To ensure bias did not affect findings, I employed the research process with fidelity. I monitored the data collection and data analysis process closely to discover emergent themes. To code data by anticipated themes from the framework and past studies, I looked for themes that emerged or were not anticipated. Member checking involved asking participants to verify that their responses were recorded accurately and provided them with a second chance to validate their own responses. Hatch (2002) believed it is vital to increase the validity of the study by using participants to assist with authenticating the accurateness of the results of the findings

Member checking served as a measure that would decrease the probability of incorrect information's being recorded. It also ensured that the information was interpreted accurately. All participants reviewed the research questions and their responses and participants informed me whether their responses had been reported and interpreted acceptably within the research paper.

Triangulation

According to Hatch (2002), triangulation is the verification or extension of information from other sources. The forms of data collection that were used for this study included interviews, self-reporting observations, field notes, and various documents. Together, these provided an accurate picture of the effectiveness of school violence prevention programs from teachers' viewpoints. I accomplished triangulation by cross-checking the various data sources: interviews, field notes, documents, and self-reported observations. Triangulation added depth to the results that would not have been present if I had utilized a single-strategy approach. By using this process, I increased the validity and reliability of the findings.

Bracketing

I was the primary instrument of data collection in this case study. According to Hatch (2013), bracketing is a detailed strategy used during the data collection process in qualitative studies. Bracketing is important because it allows the researcher to separate emotions and interpretations early in the study. During the research process, prior to interviewing any of the participants, I kept a journal to record any bias or pre-conceived notions I may have had. This procedure mitigated any subjectivity that may have affected my performance before or during the interviews. Bracketing alleviated adverse effects of research. It also helped me to explore a deeper understanding of my reflections across the several phases of qualitative research: population and choosing a subject, determining how the interviews will be arranged, gathering data, interpreting data, and reporting findings that derived from the research (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Summary

The above section described the various methods used in this study to examine the urban high school teachers' perceptions on school violence prevention programs and the methods used to build upon the data. Section 4 reports the results of the findings generated through data analysis. Section 5 offers a summary of study conclusions, implications for social change, and researcher's recommendations; it proposes how the results of the study might be disseminated and offers the researcher's reflections.

An expansion of this research is paramount to understanding school violence prevention programs through the eyes of teachers. Moving forth, I suggest that cross-national research be done in the future because the problem of school violence continues to face the entire nation (Daniels & Bradley, 2011). Recent cases of school violence and bullying in the United States have revealed the prevalence of the problem. Cross-state research is necessary to identify the patterns that are common across various schools in the United States and to determine the characteristics of nation-states and schools that can be used to predict violence (Henry, 2009). The core of this research was to provide a voice to our unsung school stakeholder heroes by looking at their perspectives on school violence prevention programs. Inequalities in academic achievement predict a high level of school violence across the United States (Henry, 2009). It is of great importance to assess whether measures of strain, social disorganization, and anomie that predict violence in adults are applicable to violence in schools. This study is important in examining the perspectives of the teachers and how effective they view their school violence prevention programs.

At the conclusion of this investigation, it will be important to bring teachers together to assist in the planning and implementation of violence prevention programs with fidelity. The teachers who participated in the planning and implementation of violence prevention programs are not reflective of the study participant group. It is essential for this to be done if we want to create schools that are truly conducive to student learning and academic achievement. There is not a saturation of violence prevention research that focuses on perspectives from urban teachers.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to explore the perceptions of teachers about school violence prevention programs. I sought to answer these research question and subquestions:

RQ1. What are urban high school teachers' perceptions of school violence prevention programs?

RQ2. What do teachers know about current violence prevention programs?

RQ3. Are there any barriers impeding the success of the violence prevention programs?

RQ4. What can high school administrators do to ensure the violence prevention programs are implemented with fidelity?

This section describes the themes, categories, and codes that emerged from my thematic analysis of interview transcripts, self-reported observations, and field notes.

Data Collection

Upon obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board at Walden University (approval number: 10-16-15-0014783) and consent to conduct a case study in the study school, I identified potential interviewees using the teachers' directory with the permission of the school administrators. Potential participants were teachers who had three to five years of teaching experience with two to three years of work experience at the target school. I met with staff members and explained the study's purpose, discussed the selection criteria, and distributed the consent forms. After the meeting to discuss the

study and its purpose as well as the participants' availability to be interviewed, nine teachers who had signed and returned consent forms remained on the list.

After participants signed the informed consent form (see Appendix C), I contacted them to determine the locations and schedule times for interviews. Once we scheduled the interviews, I reminded the participants one week prior to the interviews via phone, and again, one day prior to the scheduled time of interview. Once all the interviews were complete, I prepared verbatim transcriptions of the audio recordings of the interviews. The unique participant codes served to identify the transcription for each teacher's interview. For purposes of simplicity, the pseudonyms consisted of the word "participant" followed by a number from one to nine.

Data Analysis

A combination of all qualitative data from the various sources formed the source for the coding process. I divided the interview transcripts, the self-reported observation responses, and the research notes into segments; each segment contained a single idea or construct. I then color coded each segment according to the source of the information or idea. I found this procedure to be helpful for triangulating data and for identifying verbatim quotes to support the findings.

Using thematic coding, I grouped segments of meaning together according to the similarity of their meanings. Patterns emerged during the coding process. I used an inductive approach to group the codes based solely on the information that they contained. I employed no existing theories to guide the grouping process (Braun & Clarke, 2006), but I used Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis to facilitate

the data analysis. The first phase involved familiarizing myself with data as I transcribed and read them repeatedly to get familiar with the meanings and contexts of each idea. The second phase involved identifying preliminary codes by taking note of the interesting and salient patterns evident throughout the dataset. The third phase involved searching for themes by systematically grouping similar ideas under each preliminary theme. The fourth phase was examining the themes to determine how well they accommodated all codes from the data set and how they related to each other to form a thematic map. The fifth phase involved labeling each theme and subtheme to define their limits. The last phase was writing the report, which involved the careful selection of relevant codes that represented the themes.

The interview questions ranged from inquiries about the participants' awareness of current violence prevention programs and strategies to general questions regarding what factors they perceived to affect the general climate of the school. The interviews included questions aimed at eliciting responses regarding specific factors discussed in the literature review, such as parenting, gang-related violence, and the effectiveness of particular violence prevention programs, such as school uniforms.

I used participants' self-reported observations to validate their interview responses. I coded and included other relevant qualitative data from the observation and the field notes in the thematic analysis. The resulting themes and categories from the data set appear in the next section.

Results

Four main themes emerged from the analysis: (a) perceptions of program effectiveness, (b) factors that influence student behavior, (c) factors that influence program success, and (d) effective school and teacher practices. These themes consist of several categories. I describe these categories in the following sections and support my descriptions with passages from the qualitative data. Figure 1 presents the qualitative thematic map that emerged from the data.

Perceptions of Program Effectiveness

To address RQ2, What do teachers know about the current violence prevention programs? Participants initially described their awareness of the major projects or programs aimed at combating school violence. All of the teachers reported they were aware of the programs. This means that all of the interviewed teachers had knowledge about the programs, as evidenced by Participant 1, “I know that bullying prevention, uniforms, school security, and prevention intervention at the school are to help with creating a better climate in our school.” All the other teachers shared the same sentiment; in the case of this particular school, awareness of school violence prevention programs was high, as all teachers responded in the affirmative. In fact, when I asked a more definitive *yes* or *no* question regarding their awareness of a school-wide behavior plan designed to address school violence such as student code of conduct and whether it is shared with staff, students, and parents, all nine of them responded *yes*.

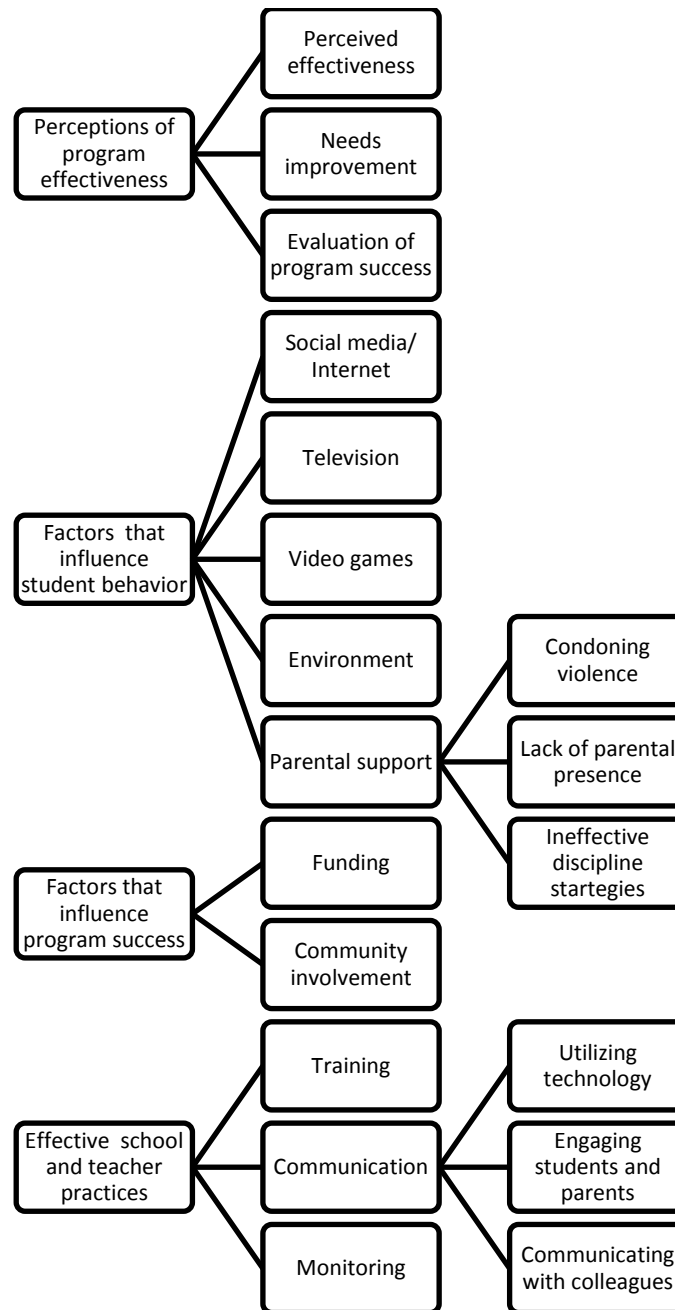


Figure 1. Thematic map.

The differences among the teachers appeared not in their levels of awareness but in their opinions regarding the effectiveness of these programs. The perception of effectiveness theme is then divided into three categories: (a) perceived as effective, or the opinion that the programs implemented in the school are effective in reducing school violence; (b) needs improvement, or the opposing opinion that the implementation is unsuccessful and has some room for improvement; and (c) evaluation of effectiveness, or the current practices of the schools and teachers relating to the measures that are undertaken in order to judge if a program is effective in reducing school violence.

Perceived as effective. Generally speaking, most of the teachers agreed that some school violence prevention programs are effective when implemented properly. Eight of the nine participants agreed that all programs are generally effective, theoretically. However, when I asked them how effective they thought specific programs were, the opinions varied. For instance, most of the teachers agreed that the implementation of school uniform programs is effective, for several reasons. The most commonly expressed reason that making the students wear school uniforms decreases violence was that such policies result in decreased pressure on the students to dress in certain ways. With a uniforms policy, they are less likely to struggle to fit in with their classmates, as mentioned by Participant 1:

Yes, I do believe it is effective. Since we are a uniform school this alleviates the need for students to buy expensive clothes to fit in with their peers. Each student is expected to wear the uniform and if they don't they are assigned a detention.

Participant 3 expressed the same sentiment: “Yes, because students are not pressured to have the current styles.”

Based on these responses, I inferred that one problem that the teachers perceived as a cause of school violence is the pressure to fit in and the fear of being different from the other students. Thus, having a school uniform would ease the fear of the less “stylish” or less “fortunate” students’ being ostracized by their peers, as expressed by Participant 1, “Yes, this is highly effective because it takes the pressure off students to keep up with the latest trend and become ostracized into a certain category,” and Participant 7, “Uniforms ensure children are not bullying each other because they are on the same playing field of attire.”

I also inferred from these responses that socioeconomic inequality of the students might also be a reason why school violence may erupt. Due et al. (2009) and Elgar, Craig, Boyce, Morgan, and Vella-Zarb (2009) also reported this conclusion in their studies on bullying and concluded that those students who could not afford to look as elegant as the students from families with higher socioeconomic levels were more likely to be bullied. Therefore, requiring the students to wear uniforms would be an effective way of reducing the delineations among the students; hence, they could coexist peacefully without being distributed according to class.

According to Participant 3, wearing uniforms would also discourage the students from defining themselves as part of a group, which may be a precursor to forming a gang. Uniforms also help the teachers to identify the students of the school: “Yes, it is effective. It allows the staff to see who our student is or not. It eliminates the students wearing gang

colors, which can cause major problems in a school” (P3). This program is not only beneficial and effective for the students who cannot fit in and the teachers, as mentioned by Participant 8, but uniforms also allow the students an opportunity to express their individuality in a more productive and helpful way than by wearing certain clothing, “Yes, because students are able to show their individuality in other ways” (P8). Thus, the teachers described requiring uniforms as highly beneficial in preventing conflict, bullying, student division, and ultimately, school violence. Cunningham, Cunningham, Ratcliffe, and Vaillancourt (2010) also reported the same findings in their study on bullying from the perspective of the students.

Another important program that was perceived by the teachers as effective was school security. However, unlike the uniform program, which was agreed upon by a majority of the teachers as effective, only three teachers mentioned the effectiveness of school security as a means of preventing violence in the school. Participants 5 and 7 indicated that the current school security is alert and keeps the school vicinity safe from any fights or violence. This program is effective in stopping an act that would otherwise immediately result in violence. Participants shared, “Our school security is great and proactive. They mediate some of the students’ disagreements before it even turns into a fight. We are lucky to have a good team of security” (P5), and “School security and prevention intervention at the school help makes sure the school is safe” (P7).

Unlike the school uniform program, which teachers perceived to be effective because it addresses the root causes of violence, such as inequality and not fitting in, the school security program aims at addressing the immediate causes of violence, the fights

and disagreements that could potentially turn violent. Thus, the effective programs, according to the teachers, are the ones that deal with addressing both the long-term and short-term causes of conflict and violence. Jennings et al. (2011) reached a similar conclusion: that security measures among schools in the nation are effective in reducing crime and violence in high schools.

On the other hand, in studies by Bachman, Randolph, and Brown (2011) and Perumean-Chaney and Sutton (2013), although teachers felt more secure with the effectiveness of such measures, the perspective of the students differed. The presence of security and technology such as metal detectors and cameras lead certain students, especially those belonging to minority groups, to feel less safe in their school environment. This dynamic may mean that the sense of security for the teachers is the opposite of that for some students. Although these measures are effective in reducing bullying, fights arising from conflict, and gang-related violence, the fact that some students may feel unsafe with these measures in place also impact negatively on student school performance, the improvement of which was one of the aims of keeping the school safe. Thus, the purpose of the program would be defeated, and it would appear counterproductive, unless the students are assured that they can feel safe around these security measures (Crawford & Burns, 2015; Hughes, Gaines, & Pryor, 2014).

Needs improvement. Only two of the nine teachers expressed opposing ideas regarding the effectiveness of the current school programs such as school uniforms and school security; however, their opinions were based on how the current programs are being implemented and not based on the perceived theoretical effectiveness or benefits of

the programs. For instance, Participant 3 suggested that school security could be effective, if the school administrators would be consistent in implementing it in terms of the number of security and the regularity: “Violence prevention programs work but we need to finish what we start. The school security helps but we have less this year.” Participant 4 expressed the same opinion, “Having school security helps a lot. I just wished they did not reduce the number of security we had.”

In terms of the implementation of school uniforms policy, one comment from Participant 4 suggested that the policy needs improvement because students still find a way to express themselves with their clothes and appearance without violating the school uniform rule. The teacher expressed concern regarding the measures to which some students would resort just to look different from the others: “No, because the kids jazz up a uniform. They wear decorative socks and things, so by the time they are done, it looks like street clothes.” This phenomenon indicated that some students are resisting the notion of equality in the classroom brought about by the uniforms.

Evaluation of effectiveness. According to Furlong, Morrison, Cornell, and Skiba (2004), it would be very difficult to measure the effectiveness of school violence prevention programs due to the lack of a standardized scale or measurement of school violence, since this construct encompasses many acts and activities that are hardly monitored; thus, an accurate assessment of school safety or violence is still lacking. In order to address this deficit, the participants offered their opinions, based on their experience, of how they assess the effectiveness of new programs aimed at reducing school violence.

The teachers observed that their school had no standard measure to assess the level of violence in the school. Some of the most common suggestions included counting the reported infractions, the calls to the parents, and the detention and suspension rates. Participant 1 indicated, “Success of violence prevention programs is measured in my school by looking at the data of suspensions and overall infractions. As a school, we also look at how many times security is called to a classroom or the cafeteria.” Participant 4 stated, “The success of violence prevention programs is measured by looking at the serious incidents in a school. We look to see the frequency and duration of them,” and Participant 7 added, “We also look at our call logs to parents and the data of suspensions or detentions.”

Upon obtaining these data, the administrators could estimate violence rates and report them to the staff regularly, in order to keep the teachers updated on the current situation and discuss how they could improve this rate. Participant 8 asserted, “By our monthly meetings by our administrative team. In these meetings we are shown data on areas including suspensions, detentions, behavior improvements and other academic data. This shows us what is going well and what needs to be improved.” Participant 9 concurred, “Administration shares this with us in our grade level meetings to see how we can improve and what’s working. We also discuss amongst ourselves as a staff how the school rates among our neighboring schools in the area.”

However, one problematic issue with these measurements is the lack of a clear definition of what counts as a serious incident of violence. The question is also confounded by other incidents wherein detentions, suspensions, or calls to parents happen

because of other offenses that do not involve violence, such as cheating or the breaking of other school rules. Another confounding factor about this type of measurement is the administration's lack of ability to witness all the violent incidents within the school premises. Many forms of violence are not readily observable, especially since students are wary when teachers are present; thus, they tend to commit violent acts that would get them reprimanded when teachers are not around. As a result, these unnoticed incidences cannot be accounted for in the measures.

These responses seem to indicate that the school is lacking in terms of violence monitoring and standard assessment methods. Thus, it is more difficult to provide accurate feedback in order to improve. However, according to the self-reported observation data, the teachers all agreed that they are given feedback regularly; thus, it could be assumed that the feedback that they receive may be inaccurate due to the lack of an accurate measure and monitoring system.

Factors That Influence Student Behavior

The second main theme that emerged from the qualitative data set was the factors that have been identified by the teachers as having a major impact on the school's climate and which ultimately influence the students to commit violent acts. This theme provides insight on the main research question, "What are the urban high school teachers' perceptions on school violence prevention programs?". These factors suggest the teachers' perceptions about why certain violence prevention programs are necessary. These factors also provide some insight as to how violence prevention programs could be implemented effectively. This theme is made up of five categories: (a) social media and

the internet, (b) television, (c) video games, (d) school surroundings or environment, and (e) parental support. The analyses and the supporting evidence of the mentioned categories are presented in the following sections.

Social media and the Internet. The most common response, among the teachers when asked about their opinion as to which factors outside of the school influence the students, was the internet or social media. Researchers, including David-Ferdon and Hertz (2007), Ybarra et al. (2008), and Funk, Baldacci, Pasold, and Baumgardner (2004) also named these influences as significant. Six out of the nine teachers agreed that the internet and social media are the biggest factors that impact the behavior and attitudes of the students; the teachers asserted that unchecked use could ultimately result in more aggressive and violent behavior. According to Participant 4, social media influences the way the students think, and thus, their behavior at school is affected: “Social media and the internet have poisoned the minds of our students.” Participant 7 agreed, “Social media and the internet are playing a high role in the way students are conducting themselves at school.”

The other five teachers all agreed that social media posts have caused many misunderstandings and arguments that often lead to fighting and violence in the school. Statements from Participant 1 and Participant 3 reflected this sentiment.

Our students put a lot of inappropriate things on social media about one another that lead to fights when they come to school. I would say many of our fights steam from stuff on social media, chat rooms are the worse. Social media is the cause of many of our school conflicts. (P1)

Participant 3 stated, “Our students are attached to their phones. Students often argue over things that someone placed on social media. When this happens the students bring the drama into the school.”

These statements suggested that social media has played a major role in contributing to the overall number of conflicts that the school has witnessed. What the students post on social media usually results in someone being offended and initiating fights and arguments. Thus, this suggests that despite having school violence prevention programs in place, if the root causes of student conflict were not kept in check, violence would still remain a pressing issue in the school.

Television. The second external factors that the participants reported to have an impact on student behavior and attitude were television and the shows that students watch on screen. Paik and Comstock (1994) and Dorfman, Woodruff, Chavez, and Wallack (1997) also named television programs as an influence on students’ behavior. Participant 7 responded, “TV and the music they hear are the biggest things that are influencing our students.” According to the teachers, television, music, and the celebrities and personalities students see on TV all influence their beliefs, their aspirations, and their actions; some of these influences ultimately lead to negative impacts on their studies. Participant 4 stated, “TV is also influencing these kids. Whatever they see on TV they believe is real and they should be like the people they see on TV.” Other participants concurred, as seen in the following responses:

This generation of students watch a lot of TV. They emulate what they see on TV because they think it is cool and the right thing to do or be like.... Social media

and TV are the biggest things that influence the students. Many students want to be like the rappers and sport players they see on TV. (P1)

Participant 3 offered, “Television, and the internet influence my students. Students will talk about what was on vine, YouTube and social media before they discuss their assignments.”

These responses suggested that television and the media affect not only the students’ behavior in school but also the way they think beyond the confines of the school. Some students aim to become famous and successful like the celebrities they see on TV; hence, they begin to copy the looks and actions of their idols. Popular celebrities portray themselves to the public with attitudes characterized by lewdness and crass and aggressive behaviors, and the mindset and behavior of the current youth are in serious danger of becoming corrupted (Janssen, Boyce, & Pickett, 2012; Robertson, McAnally, & Hancox, 2013). The teachers’ responses implied that the students’ behavior outside the classroom, like what they watch on the television at home, should also be monitored. However, as indicated by most of the teachers, they do not have any control nor any idea on how the students’ parents raise them or watch over them at home. Participant 8 stated, “I do not see how children are disciplined at home, only if it is or is not working once they get to school,” and Participant 7 asserted, “Parents discipline their children in ways that I am unaware of when they are not on school time.”

These findings implied that the factors that lie outside the control of the teachers also have a major influence on the children’s overall attitude and behavior and might define their tendencies to become violent (Coker et al., 2015). Thus, violence prevention

programs in schools should also aim to appeal to the students, the way that television does in order to prevent the mindset of the students from becoming corrupted by mainstream media.

Video games. According to the teachers, video games are also a major factor that influences students' behaviors. Violence is a common recurring theme in many of the most popular games among young adults (Ferguson, 2011). The research on the impacts of video games on children's violent behavior are contradictory, with some studies claiming that exposure to violent video games results in the increased likelihood of aggressive behavior (DeLisi, Vaughn, Gentile, Anderson, & Shook, 2013), while some studies refute this idea, suggesting that video games do not have an impact on real life violent behaviors because they provide young people an outlet for their aggressive urges (Ferguson, 2011; Ferguson, San Miguel, Garza, & Jerabeck, 2012).

According to the perceptions and the experiences of these teachers, video games are a factor that influences the students of the school in this case study. However, the teachers did not provide much information regarding the impact of video games on the children. Most of them just enumerated the external factors that they think influence the children, and video games just happen to be one of them, as Participant 3 stated when asked which outside things influence the students: "Social media, TV, and video games."

According to Participant 7, video games, just like television, contain much inappropriate content that shapes the young children's behavior, considering that these children are young and impressionable.

Being that we have younger children, TV, video games and lack of parental support are key factors in influencing the climate of our school building. Our students hear a lot of inappropriate things on video games and television that influence their behavior. Some children are being raised by the television.

Participant 9 was the only participant who mentioned the amount of violence in the games that may have influenced the behavior of the children in school: "Video games influence some of the children in my school. The games they are playing are extremely violent."

However, the reports of these teachers regarding video games may or may not be reliable, as it does not seem that they are very knowledgeable or experienced when it comes to the actual content of video games. This interpretation is based on the way the teachers talked about video games, lacking any first-hand detail, suggesting that their opinions about the games may have come from second-hand information. However, the impacts of video games on the behavior of the children are still very much debatable, and it is possible that some of the students may really be influenced by the video games they play. However, further investigation will be needed to confirm this speculation, since, as the teachers noted, they do not have any idea as to how the students spend their time at home or outside the school.

School surroundings and environment. The category regarding school surroundings and environment was not directly stated by the teachers as having an impact on the behavior of the students. However, the National Gang Center (2010), asserted that the immediate environment of children might have an impact upon their attitudes and

behavior. Furthermore, Chonody et al. (2013) suggested that children who live in a violent neighborhood have a higher likelihood of being engaged in violent behavior, including gang-related activities. Thus, it is possible that the recurring problem of violence in the school in this case study may be a result of the conditions in the environment where the school is located.

Participant 2 indicated that the neighborhood in which the school is located is not safe; it has a high crime rate and police presence during the day: “I would not feel safe at night because of the high crime. During the day we have police that patrol the area.”

Participants 8 and 4 shared the same observation; however, these teachers interpreted the police presence as a sign of relative safety of the environment, rather than an indication of a prevalence of violence; otherwise, police presence would not be necessary: “The neighborhood is safe around our school. Police officers patrol the area often and during the day but I would not roam around the area at night” (P8). P4 shared, “Yes, the neighborhood is safe the police come around and I see them when I go out to lunch.”

Furthermore, Participant 9 stated that the unsafe neighborhood has negative impacts on the longevity of the teachers’ service to the school, because some of the teachers choose to move to a safer neighborhood where they can teach at a relatively safer school. In addition, the unsafe neighborhood even causes fights within the school grounds: “No, I don’t think the neighborhood around the school is safe due to the high crime rate. This is affecting the teacher retention rate as well as the fights in our school” (P9). On the other hand, other teachers shared the opposite opinion regarding the safety of the neighborhood. For instance, Participant 7 perceived that the immediate

environment of the school is safe and clear of any gang activities: “I believe the neighborhood immediately around the school is safe from what I can see. I have not seen much gang activity during the day.”

These conflicting opinions of teachers regarding the safety of the school’s immediate environment may be attributable to individual differences in their interpretation of what safety is. Some teachers felt that the neighborhood is secure because of the apparent police presence, while others perceived this as an indication of an unsafe neighborhood that needs constant police monitoring in order to take control and even scare the people into being more compliant with the laws for safety reasons. However, the teachers interpreted the question of safety, one assumption is that the relative lack of safety of the school’s immediate environment could be related to the violence rate inside the school. However, further studies need to be conducted to confirm this proposition.

Parental involvement. The category of parental involvement was divided into three subcategories relating to what the teachers perceived as the problems with how some of the students are being raised by their parents. However, as noted earlier, most of the teachers acknowledged that they are not entirely sure how the children spend their time at home, nor how their parents bring them up. These responses, therefore, are just the teachers’ opinions and speculations regarding the impact of parental involvement on their students’ attitudes and behavior, which may have an effect on their predisposition to violence.

Condoning violence. Two of the participants pointed out the possibility that some parents may teach their children to be tough and to defend themselves through violence, directly influencing the students to behave more violently in school. According to Participant 1 and Participant 9, some of the parents have been too easy on their children, to the point that they are somehow teaching the children to be disrespectful. This is because the parents are favoring the child even if they did something wrong.

Today parents question what the teachers report. To me this allows the child to be disrespectful with little to no consequences. I have heard parents often times than not tell their child if they hit you, you better hit them back. In a case like this the practice of the parents would hurt the school because why we are teaching conflict resolution the parents are teaching violence. (P1)

Too often parents side with the children rather than with the teacher. Gang participation in this area is due to parents being too lenient on their children and not showing a general concern to their well-being. (P9)

These responses implied that teachers believe parents indirectly teach their children to be more violent and aggressive in order to get something that they want.

Lack of parental presence. The second subcategory under the parental support category is the teachers' common observation that some of the students in their classes who are incorrigible are usually the ones who lack an actual concerned parent to raise them and discipline them at home. Participant 2 noted that one of reasons that some children behave violently is because of family issues, and when a child has no parent

around to resolve their issues and to control their violent tendencies, the problem worsens:

When students misbehave and get involved in altercations is because, they have issues at home and bring into school. It would be perfect for all parents to work with school but some of our parents are in jail, are raised by grandparents so it makes it difficult to really discipline their child.

Participant 4 further noted that some of the children grow up in the streets, because their parents are not taking a more active role in their lives, “Parents are not active in schools in today’s society on this level. The students are being raised by the streets, and the Internet.”

Participants 8 and Participant 9 also mentioned the lack of parental engagement in the school and in the children’s lives. They expressed a desire for the parents and the teachers to cooperate in planning and disciplining children; however, some of the parents of these children are not present. Nevertheless, the teachers explained that despite not having the parents involved, the children usually have someone to take care of them, and therefore, the children are still less likely to be involved in gangs.

It would be ideal if the parent/guardian could get on the same accord as the school as it pertains to behavior plans but for some children this would not work. Some of them are being raised by foster parents, grandparents and family relatives. This makes it even more difficult for them to have stability at school. I don’t feel any of this encourages gang participation because most of them have at least someone at home who cares for them. (P8)

Participant 9 stated, “If parents were more involved over what their children posted on social media there would be less arguments/fights in school.”

Ineffective discipline strategies. Some of the teachers expressed their opinion that it is not only parental presence and involvement that is needed in helping the children decrease their violent tendencies but also the proper disciplining strategy that fits the personality and behavior of the children. According to Participant 3, the children now hold more power over the parents because they have the option to call social services if the parents are too strict in disciplining or punishing them; thus, the wrong behavior is reinforced:

Parents today are afraid to discipline their children. The children are quick to tell their parents they will call social services or the police on them if they discipline them. On the high school level parents are less engaged and active in what is going on in their child’s school.

According to Participant 7, the parents should know how to correctly and effectively deal with their children, in terms of rewards and punishment, so that the children learn early on that only the right way of behaving is rewarded and violence is not tolerated:

[In some cases,] the child is physically disciplined and in others they are simply placed on restriction. In either situation, depending on the child it can be effective...the restriction and reward system would work well with students because it teaches them the value of working toward something. Physical discipline could only encourage gang participation if it is done in excess.

From the subcategories that have emerged within the parental support category, it could be inferred that the teachers feel that they are not getting any help from the parents when it comes to disciplining the students who are acting violently. According to them, parenting is not limited to just merely being present in the child's life and being supportive and encouraging, but the parents should also know how to balance encouragement and leniency with discipline and strictness. One important piece of information that could be taken from the data is that every child needs different types of parental and school support, and what may work well for one child, may not work for another. Therefore, it is the parents' and the teachers' jobs to get to know the children so they can design a strategy that will bring out beneficial results in shaping the attitudes and behavior of the children in order to prevent further violence in the schools.

The factors described under this theme of factors influencing student behavior may all have indirect impacts that may impede the success of some school violence prevention programs since these factors are some of the possible root causes of school violence. In order to prevent violence before it happens, programs should target the causes of conflict and violent behavior, which could come from social media, television, video games, and the immediate environment. Otherwise, any violence prevention program would not be fully effective without addressing the main causes of violence. The following theme looks at the factors that have been identified to have a direct influence on the success or failure of the school violence prevention programs.

Factors That Influence the Success of Violence Prevention Program

This theme directly addresses the second subquestion laid out for this current study, Are there any barriers impeding the success of the violence prevention programs? Only two categories identified by the teachers directly addressed the success of the current violence prevention programs in the school: school funding and community involvement.

Lack of funding. According to majority of the teachers interviewed, lack of school funding has been the main reason why the school could not have an ongoing effective school violence prevention program. Although the awareness of such programs is high among the teachers, the implementation was where the problem started, because the school did not receive enough budget. Therefore, the allocation for violence prevention is even smaller. According to teachers, the school is aware of the effectiveness of such programs, but they could not implement all of them because of budget cuts. Participant 9 explained, “I am familiar with the bully prevention, uniform, school security, prevention intervention programs that are available but my school is only able to access a few of these due to lack of funding.” And Participant 4 concurred, “Those programs are good; however, we don’t have the funds to implement such things on a regular basis.”

Based on the responses of Participants 2 and 7, lack of funding impedes the success of the violence prevention programs due to lack of staff and man power to implement them. For instance, school security is lacking because there is not enough budget to hire the needed number of security officers to ensure the safety of the school.

The most that the school could do is organize an assembly to discuss the matter with the students and the staff; however, even this could not be done regularly due to lack of funding to hire an expert to talk about the issues. However, despite this shortfall, both teachers agreed that the bullying problem in the school is controllable and any immediate program to deal with this problem is not necessary.

We do not have too much bullying prevention due to budget cuts. We have less staff... Bully prevention should be in place where you can work with a group of students. Unfortunately, we do not have the money and staff to have solid programs on bullying. Our schools do not have the major problems like other schools have in our district have. (P2)

We are only able to do but so much as far as actual ongoing programs for bully prevention, and security in our school due to lack of school funding. We have assemblies when possible and guest speakers but an ongoing program is not possible. Our school doesn't have major bullying problems as a whole. (P7)

As noted earlier and apparent in these responses, the limited number of staff, teachers, and security may make it easier for the students to commit bullying acts and other violent behavior without being detected by the adults. Thus, the reported lack of bullying problems in the school could just be a reflection of the teachers' lack of awareness of the actual rate of bullying in the school because some of these acts go unnoticed. In this way, the responsible students may get away with their behavior without being reprimanded.

Lack of community involvement. In relation to the previous category, the teachers asserted that the impact of lack of school funding on the ineffectiveness of violence prevention programs of the schools could have been resolved and alleviated if the community were more involved in the school's causes. The district official's responsibility that the students be given the proper protection and security, as well as monitoring, is not always addressed, according to Participant 3: "All these programs are good; however, we need consistency and that cannot happen with budget cuts. Our district has cut so much out of the school budget it's disheartening." Participant 9 attributed the problem to the "lack of a strong parent and community involvement."

In addition to lack of community involvement and initiatives to raise funds for the violence prevention programs in the schools, even the students' parents' lack of action result in the increasing tendencies of the students to become more violent. Participant 1 explained how the lack of a healthy community environment may result in the students' seeking a sense of belonging from the wrong crowd; hence, they are likely to join gangs instead of participate in community activities: "The parent's actions do encourage gang participation, because when children fight now they tend to fight in groups. The children have to find a group to align themselves with."

The categories under this theme suggested that the teachers felt that the schools may be standing alone, without the help of the parents, authorities, or community in trying to combat the violence in the schools.

Effective Practices

The last theme from the qualitative data consisted of the current practices of the teachers and schools, which the teachers reported as effective in combating violence in the school. The teachers recommended strategies and actions that should be taken in order to increase the effectiveness of violence prevention programs in schools. Three categories emerged from the responses, including (a) teacher training, (b) communication, and (c) monitoring.

Training. The first and most common response of the teachers was the category regarding training; all of the teachers expressed their desire to achieve higher professional development by training, researching, and attending workshops in order to gain more information and knowledge on preventing school violence and reducing its negative impact on student performance and achievement. All the other teachers also shared the sentiments of Participant 7, “I can be professionally developed by going to workshops and possibly attending other schools to see what right looks like. I can speak with other teachers in other areas to see what resources they may have available” and Participant 9, “I would like to attend more workshops if possible and have the staff trained on other violence prevention programs.”

The Likert scale responses of the participants indicated strong agreement that the school administration plays an active role in the current violence prevention programs by serving as facilitators for professional development of the programs. However, upon triangulating the responses with the self-reported observations, all of the teachers responded with a *no* when asked whether their school schedule allowed them to be

trained in violence prevention programs. This inconsistency in the teachers' responses might suggest that, although the administration does play an active role in developing the teachers professionally in the current violence prevention programs by serving as facilitators to train the teachers, the problem lies in the lack of time allocated to the teachers to actually attend the trainings. Thus, the responsibility of handling the violence prevention programs lies solely on the administration, as the teachers are too busy to be trained.

In addition, the responses of the participants, when asked what the school administration could do in order to support the staff in the effort to combat school violence, included offering support to the staff by hiring experts to be workshop facilitators. Two of the teachers responded that it is also the administration's duty to develop a professional development calendar and to allow the teachers to attend the training and professional development sessions. The implication is that some of the teachers feel that their responsibilities inside the classroom are already too time consuming, and they feel that they do not have any more time to be developed professionally through training on the violence prevention programs. Thus, it is recommended for the school administrators to allow enough time for the teachers; however, this lack of time may also be a negative result of the lack of funding problem, wherein each of the very few teachers and staff must bear a heavy and time consuming workload.

Communication. The communication category is made up of three subcategories including (a) engaging the students and parents, (b) communicating with other teachers and staff, and (c) utilizing technology.

Engaging the students and parents. Using the self-reported observations, the teachers reported that in order to deal with violent and disruptive students, most of them would talk to the students, call the parents, and possibly meet with the parents personally. This meeting could occur during conferences that involve both the students and the parents, or the teacher could write a formal report to the parents. These practices ensure that the students and the parents are aware of the disruptive behavior of the students. According to Gerbacz et al. (2015), parent-teacher communication is important in developing the behavior of the children. A teacher-student relationship defined by proper communication has also been reported to have positive impacts on student behavior and performance (Wubels et al., 2014). Participant 2 also expressed this sentiment:

Having lunch time with the students in the form of a group. A lot of times get into violent situations because of communication issues. They do not know how to address problems without fighting... [disruptive students are dealt with by] individual student conference, parental contact and involvement, formal write up.

Participant 4 explained, “I speak with the students in the hallway, then if it continues I send them out to the Dean,” and Participant 7 contributed, “[I] issue warning to student, non-verbal/verbal cues, call home, meet with parent, and meet with the guidance counselor if necessary.”

Teachers also mentioned in the self-reported observation responses that they all agreed to incorporate the violence prevention programs in their classrooms, and they all have procedures are in place that are related to the programs. All of the teachers were consistent in their responses regarding this practice. This means not only that the violence prevention programs are practiced and implemented by the school administrators but also that they have been put in place inside the classrooms. This small-scale implementation seems an effective way to prevent violence, since the students could be engaged more in the classroom setting than in an assembly for the whole school, which does not give enough engagement and attention to the individual students because there are just too many of them.

However, according to Maring and Koblinsky (2013), teachers need sufficient support in order to deal with violent behaviors of students who are daily exposed to a violent community; otherwise, they would feel stressed and that would lead to emotional withdrawal and avoidance of disruptive students, which would be counterproductive to the purpose of the programs. Thus, it is important for the teachers to be properly trained to implement the preventative measures.

Utilizing technology. Another less common response to the ideas of what can be done to ensure violence prevention programs succeed was the utilization of technology to communicate with the students, parents, and staff. Technology could be used in various ways that would entertain and encourage the students to listen and pay attention. Having already observed that social media is a very powerful tool in influencing the students, teachers asserted the school could also use social media to encourage proper behavior

among the students. Participant 3 stated, “We have tried as a school to infuse more technology into our building to compete with this growing trend [social media].”

Communicating with colleagues. The third subcategory was mentioned by two of the teachers. They both expressed that talking with the other teachers and the staff of the school could also be good practice to come up with the best design and strategy to prevent school violence. Snyder (2015) also made this recommendation. Talking amongst the school staff could provide a wider perspective on the matter, and other factors, which would otherwise be overlooked, could be taken into consideration, as reflected in the statement by Participant 9, “I can also continue to have conversations with my colleagues to see if we are doing everything we can to make our school safe.”

In addition, some of the participants suggested that the school administration had to be accessible for communication with the teachers in order to provide support and feedback when needed. According to O’Brennan, Waasdorp, and Bradshaw (2014), a positive connection among school staff, as identified by an encouraging atmosphere and positive relationships among colleagues and administration, helps teachers to feel more comfortable to intervene against school violence, particularly bullying. Thus, it is important for the teachers to have a good support system, which could be delivered through proper communication, healthy relationships, and connectedness among their fellow staff and administrators.

Monitoring. The final category in this theme is monitoring, which includes not only the regular and careful watching of the students’ behavior and school performance but also the practices of reinforcement and punishment when necessary. Most of the

participants mentioned monitoring in the self-reported observation data. Some suggested practices under this theme should include keeping records of the students' behavior; regular reviewing of classroom rules and school regulations; and giving warnings, detention, community service requirements, and suspension, when the teacher sees fit.

Evidence of Quality

It is possible that a bias among the teachers existed during the data collection. According to attribution bias theory (Tetlock & Levi, 1982), individuals, in this case, the teachers, tend to look at the external factors, such as the environment, the districts, the community, and the parents, when justifying a negative issue that is under their jurisdiction, instead of taking responsibility for the situation. It is possible that the teachers neglected to see and report their roles in the violent tendencies of the students, if any, since this theme did not come up at all in any of the interviews.

In order to minimize the confounding effect of a potential bias, I took certain measures to improve the data quality. As mentioned earlier, I checked the interview responses against the other sources of information. The triangulation method allowed me to check for any inconsistencies between the interview responses, the self-reported observation, and my field notes. If any biases were present in my notes or in the interview data, they would be readily apparent upon triangulation. Upon comparing the evidence from the interviews to the responses of each teacher to the self-reported observations and my field notes for the process of triangulation (Hatch, 2002), I confirmed the existence of little discrepant data, which indicated the teachers had each answered consistently throughout the study. Although some of the teachers disagreed regarding certain issues,

like their opinions on how safe the school's neighborhood is, the level of bullying in the school grounds, and the tendency of the students to be involved with gangs, these differences of opinion were reflective of the different experiences, perspectives, and predisposition of the teachers, and therefore, they only made the data richer and more in-depth.

The only inconsistency in the responses was the teachers' strong agreement that the school administrators are active in providing the teachers with professional development and training; however, they all reported that their schedules do not allow them to attend. This discrepancy emerged in the self-reported observation responses of the teachers. One probable explanation is that although school administrators do offer training and development for the teachers, the administration is not aware that the teachers are too burdened with work to attend such training.

Member checking helped ensure the quality of the interpretation and the analysis of the data (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Hatch, 2002). This procedure involved the participation of the interviewees. Upon completing the themes and the codes for the thematic analysis, the interviewees checked whether any of their responses were misinterpreted. Thus, the validity and the meaning of the data from the actual sources would be verified and preserved. The participants validated my interpretation regarding the seemingly inconsistent responses of the teachers regarding training and development schedules during member checking. They all confirmed that their teaching schedules and other related work made them too busy to attend training.

Another way to ensure the quality of the data was bracketing. This procedure ensured that my interpretations and analysis of the data were not corrupted by my own biases. As mentioned earlier, I kept a journal of my thoughts and emotions in relation to the research during the entire process of the interviews and analysis. The journal also contained any possible biases or judgment that I had. This method ensured that I was conscious and aware of my predispositions, and therefore kept them in mind and set them aside during the entire process.

Upon completion of these measures, the biases, inconsistencies, and misinterpretations were corrected, and the resulting data and findings were presented in this current section. The next section concludes this research. It presents the discussion of the findings and how they relate to previous literature. The implications of these findings and the recommendations based on these findings are also presented. Finally, the limitations of the current study as well as recommendations for future research relating to school violence prevention are discussed.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of U. S. teachers about school violence prevention programs. To assess the effectiveness of such programs, I gathered the opinions and perceptions of nine school teachers working in a school in a high-crime urban environment in the United States. Data in the form of interviews, self-reported observations, and field notes provided qualitative information that addressed the study's research questions:

RQ1. What are urban high school teachers' perceptions of school violence prevention programs?

RQ2. What do teachers know about current violence prevention programs?

RQ3. Are there any barriers impeding the success of the violence prevention programs?

RQ4. What can high school administrators do to ensure the violence prevention programs are implemented with fidelity?

Thematic analysis of data showed that awareness of such projects was very high among teachers, all of whom agreed that these programs were effective in reducing school violence. However, several factors still need to be considered in order to ensure the practical effectiveness of the programs. The teachers identified lack of sufficient funding as the major determinant of success in the violence prevention program in the school; the lack of community involvement was a secondarily important determining factor. One of the major themes in the findings was the factors or causes of violent

behavior among students, which indirectly impacted the success of violence prevention programs. These indirect factors, including exposure to television, video games, and social media and lack of parental involvement, occur outside of the school environment and are more likely to originate in the homes of the students (Gerbacz, 2015; Henry, 2009). Another indirect factor for student violence may be unsafe school surroundings or the immediate environment (Miller, 2008). Participants' responses regarding how the programs could be more effective fell into three categories. Categories included training programs for teachers; communication with students, parents and staff; and consistent behavioral monitoring of the students.

Interpretation of Findings

In order to address the study's primary guiding question regarding the perceptions of teachers on school violence prevention programs, I need to address the subquestions first. The following sections provide insight based on teachers' knowledge of violence prevention programs, their perceptions about the barriers to the programs' success, and their views on what high school administrators can do to effectively implement the programs.

Finding 1: Teachers Believe That a Uniform Program and Security Officers Help Reduce School Violence.

Based on the evidence from qualitative data regarding RQ2. What do teachers know about current violence prevention programs?, the participants agreed that the school violence prevention programs are effective. Researchers have invest much attention to uniform or dress code programs (Lumsden, 2001). In accordance with

Twemlow and Sacco's findings (2012), most teachers agreed that these measures are very effective in quelling any conflict or bullying that may arise from peer pressure to fit in based on clothing. The teachers agreed that uniforms eliminate one of the most common sources of division among students, one that sometimes results in gang formation (Howell, 2010). Teachers opined that when they wear uniforms, students feel like they belong with their fellow classmates, and no one need be ostracized, even those who are from less advantaged families, a conclusion which complies with that of Mathison and Ross (2007).

In terms of school security programs, most teachers agreed that this measure is also effective in preventing violence in the school if implemented properly; however, the problems lie in the implementation of the program and not in the design. For instance, the main problem that the teachers have perceived in the security program is the lack of staff or technology to implement the program consistently, as a result of lack of funding allocated for security.

All the teachers agreed that their school experienced no current threat of gangs and bullying in the school; however, this finding could be interpreted as the teachers' lack of awareness of how the students conduct themselves when they are not being watched by the school authorities. As indicated, the school is low on staff due to budget cuts; thus, it is possible that the teachers are unaware of possible gang-related activity or incidents of bullying incidents that they do not see, as Rigby (2012) suggested. Thus, data provided insufficient focus on bullying prevention and gang prevention programs. In

addition, interview responses indicated that the measure for program success of the school is neither standardized nor accurate.

Finding 2: Teachers Believe There are Two Barriers Impeding the Implementation and Success of School Programs

In response to inquiries based on RQ3., Are there any barriers impeding the success of the violence prevention programs?, teachers identified the barriers that impede program success in two categories: factors that directly impact the implementation of the programs and the root causes of violent behavior among students. The most common barrier that participants identified was lack of school funding allocated for security and other programs for violence prevention, followed by lack of community involvement. These responses aligned with Chonody et al.'s (2013) findings. The teachers felt that the community needs to work with the schools to create a safer and crime-free environment for the students within and outside the school grounds.

The community could also do well by raising awareness regarding gangs and violence so that the students who are more predisposed to violence would be warier of the potential dangers of belonging to a gang. Teachers asserted the community could also raise funds for the school's security programs, which have been lacking in resources, in terms of personnel, as well as technology. These deficits have affected the accuracy of student behavior monitoring and violence prevention measures. As a result, the teachers and the parents are likely to learn about fewer instances of violence than actually occur. Thus, parents and teachers lack knowledge of the appropriate measures to correct the situation.

In the course of analyzing the data and comparing it to the conceptual framework of the study, I found most of the subsystems discussed in the literature were also present in the data. For instance, according to Tudge and Hatfield (2011), the larger system of society plays a vital role in shaping the social relationships of students and ultimately the values that they will adopt throughout their lives. This system includes schools, parents, and external influences that are part of society (Tudge & Hatfield, 2011). Teachers also mentioned all of these influences in this study. Their responses suggested that prominent external influences on students—in the form of media such as television, video games, and social media websites—play a huge part in influencing students' predilection for violence. In addition, the teachers asserted that students spend too much of their time pursuing these forms of media.

Furthermore, according to the teachers, these influences from the outside environment are very influential in causing conflict within the school. They especially pointed to the influence of social media, a new form of media that has not been included in the conceptual framework of this current study. The posts that students see on social media are often the main causes of arguments that lead to violence, according to the teachers. According to Lampinen and Sexton-Radek (2010), these influences make up the students' microsystems, and they should be controlled and monitored in order to control any possible violent tendencies that might develop in the children as a result of spending too much time on these activities.

In addition, the teachers identified the role of the students' immediate environment as one of the root causes of violent behavior among the students. For

instance, an urban environment where police patrol the streets during the day but not at night indicates that the neighborhood is unsafe. Some students who are always on the streets are then likely to be influenced by the violence around them (National Gang Center, 2010), especially in neighborhoods with low socioeconomic status (Zenere & Lazarus, 2009). According to some of the teachers, some of the students spend too much time on the streets; hence, they are likely to be exposed to gang activities. However, the teachers reported that the school does not have a gang problem, as far as the teachers know. Tudge and Hatfield (2011) suggested that the immediate environment should set a good example for the students; thus, the initiative of violence prevention should not be limited to the schools but should extend to the immediate environment as well.

Finally, a huge impact on the students' violent tendencies is their family situation and their parents' strategies; these factors form a part of the parental involvement subsystem discussed by Tudge and Hatfield (2011). In this issue, the teachers offered much insight; however, it should be noted that these were based on speculation, as these teachers have admitted to being unsure about how the parents raise their children in their own homes. Some teachers expressed that the lack of parental involvement in the children's school performance and activities may play a vital role in shaping the child's personality, a position supported by Daniels and Bradley (2011). It is apparent from the data that disciplinary strategies of parents should be specific to the child. According to the teachers, the parents should strike a correct balance between strictness and leniency so as not to drive the children to violence by being too controlling nor to reinforce or condone violence by being too lenient. In addition to ineffective parenting styles that may

shape the violent tendencies of children, the lack of involvement of the parents on school activities may also impede the success of current programs to prevent violence, according to the teachers' responses.

Finding 3: Teachers Believe Administrators Can Provide Staff Development, Mentoring for Teachers, and Workshops Facilitated by Experts

RQ4. was What can high school administrators do to ensure the violence prevention programs are implemented with fidelity? According to the teachers, the best things that administrators could do are to provide professional development for the staff by funding training programs, to offer workshops facilitated by experts, and to provide mentoring for new teachers on how to deal with violent behavior and how to foster a stress-free and calm classroom atmosphere to prevent violence.

In addition, school administrators should always be accessible to communicate with the teachers, students, and parents in order to ensure proper feedback gets to the concerned parties (O'Brennan et al., 2014). Another goal expressed by teachers would be to get the parents more involved in the disciplining of their children. Congruent to some of the principles of the preventive intervention program, the teachers suggested steps administrators could take to ensure program success, such as consistent and regular monitoring of the students and providing rewards and punishments when necessary.

In conclusion, much work needs to be done to ensure schools have the necessary resources to ensure the school is a safe environment conducive to learning and student achievement. The character of individuals is greatly influenced by the environment in which they thrive, according to Bronfenbrenner. The findings of this study directly

showed the impact the environment has on how teachers perceive school violence and the implications associated with their perceptions. This study provides a foundation for stakeholders to build upon when developing and improving programs that address violence in schools. This systematic problem requires all stakeholders to cultivate a mindset so that they can begin to see the importance of collaboration.

Implications for Social Change

Youth violence has been one of the main issues that has been plaguing U.S. society in recent years. These issues have continued to garner more attention with the recent violent incidents and tragic losses in various schools across the country. The findings of my study could help in preventing such incidents from occurring again. By looking at the perspectives of the teachers on how to implement preventive programs successfully, the actual practicability of the programs could be assessed instead of the theoretical effectiveness of the designs of the programs.

Another implication of this research is the possible direction of developing training and workshops for educators. Training has been suggested as one of the most important steps that needs to be taken so that teachers may be well prepared in dealing with violent behavioral tendencies; thus, this current research's findings could provide information relevant to designers of workshops and training programs for teachers and parents. The findings could also help in the modification of trainings and educational programs to realign the focus on the factors that really matter. One important idea that has come up from this research is that violence could be prevented by targeting the root causes so that long term behavior of the students could be modified, as well as focusing

on the current security situation of the schools so that potential serious violent incidents could be prevented before they begin.

Recommendations for Action

This section presents recommendations to help make the social changes on preventing youth violence possible for parents, teachers and school administrators, and policy makers. I will present my study and findings to the school administrator and the superintendent. I will request their approval for me to disseminate the findings to all involved groups.

For Parents

Based on the findings of the research, the role of the parents is very influential in shaping the personality and behavior of their children; thus, the following recommendation may prove helpful for parents who are in a similar situation as the parents in the case study. First, parents should try to be as involved in their children's school performance, activities, and standing as possible. They can accomplish this involvement by taking time to talk with their children regarding school matters, as well as talking to teachers in order to learn more about how their child behaves in class.

Parents should also be wary of what their children do in their free time. Parents should be aware of what their child is watching on television, what they post on social media, and which video games they play, including the music they listen to. However, parents should also note that they should give their children enough space and independence, if they ask for it. Parents should strike the proper balance between sternness and leniency when it comes to punishing and rewarding their children's

behavior. Lastly, parents should also foster an encouraging and loving atmosphere at home, so that the children would be less likely to take any domestic issues to school that would otherwise affect their school performance and violent behavior.

For Teachers and School Administrators

The findings of this study lead to the recommendation that the school staff always be accessible for communication with the students and the parents. School administration should also be responsible for providing sufficient opportunities for professional development of teachers in order for them to be more skilled at conflict resolution and violence prevention, by organizing trainings and workshops related to violence prevention. It is also the responsibility of the school administrators to ensure that the implementation of programs is done properly, consistently, and regularly.

For Policy Makers

Policy makers should ensure that the community is safe and secure from anything that may threaten the well-being of the youth. Thus, constant police monitoring for crimes and gangs should be a priority. Policy makers should also provide ample allocation of budget for violence prevention programs, or at least organize events to raise awareness and funding for this cause. The effectiveness of violence prevention programs is immaterial if there are not enough resources to implement them properly, and the problem of youth violence would continue to persist.

It is also very important for the parents, teachers and the students to be familiar with the information contained in this research. It is the policy makers' responsibility to ensure that awareness of violence prevention measures and how they should be

conducted and implemented are disseminated properly. School administrators can disseminate information from the study by hosting school workshops, teacher trainings, and community projects to increase awareness of study outcomes.

Recommendations for Further Study

Since this current study looked at the specific case of one particular school, it might be helpful to generate some quantitative data involving more schools in order to confirm the generalizability of this current study's conclusions. For instance, the applicability and effectiveness of the programs should be measured and assessed by developing a valid and reliable scale to measure program success.

It would also be interesting to further investigate the monitoring practices of the teachers in school regarding violent behavior. This current study assumed that the reported lack of bullying and gang-related problems in the school might be due to the shortage of staff and technology to keep an eye on the students; thus, it could be helpful to confirm this assumption by conducting field observation studies.

Lastly, future researchers could also focus on the students' situation at home. This could be done by sampling a few students from the school and finding out the parenting style of their parents, as well as how they spend their free time, including their use of social media, Internet, television, and video games.

Summary and Conclusion

School violence is a recurring problem that has yet to be solved. The results of this study suggested that the problem of school violence should be addressed in two ways. First, the short-term solution of providing enough security within and around the

school premises to stop any conflict before it escalates into a serious violent act. Trained security personnel may work to accomplish this task, and teachers could also be trained to handle such incidences. In addition to increased security, immediate solutions could also appear in the form of other programs to reduce school violence, including school uniform policies and gang and bullying interventions. However, the problem with these programs is that they are aimed at reversing an already existing violence problem among the youth. The second way to address this problem is to target the root causes of violent behavior, with include monitoring student behavior including social media, television and videogame use. This measure also includes rewarding and reinforcing positive behavior in order to provide various programs that may interest the students.

Based on my journal, this entire experience has raised my awareness on the many possible factors that may shape an adolescent's attitude towards violence. Some of my biases that I have noted in my journal are my tendency to generalize an idea as to being applicable to the many. Thus, in this current research, I took conscious considerations not to generalize any of the ideas shared by the teachers; thus, the conclusions offered here are for the benefit of the school in the case study. Further studies need to be conducted to test for the generalizability of the conclusions. Upon talking to the nine teachers, I have changed my tendency to generalize and keep in mind the important role of individual differences. Thus, I now tend to look at the different factors that come into play when looking at the possible impacts of a treatment on an individual level.

The prevention of violence in the schools must be a collaborative effort. It is not the sole responsibility of any one to keep the behavior and activities of the children in

check. Rather, it is a joint responsibility of the parents, teachers, school administrators, and the community, and even the students as well. In order to end the violent tendencies of the youth today, as influenced by outside factors, the combined efforts of the aforementioned parties are needed to shape a less violent generation of students.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

AWARENESS
Subquestion 1: What do teachers know about the current violence prevention programs?
1a. What do you know about bully prevention, uniform, school security, prevention intervention, school security at your school?
1b. Which student target population participates in violence prevention program?
1c. Which current violence prevention programs improved the overall culture and climate of the school?
1d. Do you believe the uniform implementation has been effective why or why not?
BARRIERS
Subquestion 2: What barriers impede the success of the violence prevention programs?
2a. Please identify ways you can be professionally developed in the area of school violence prevention programs?
2b. How do parents discipline their children? Would their practices help schools? Encourage gang participation?
2c. How is the success of the violence prevention programs measured in my school?
2d. What social influences affect the climate of your school building?
2e. Do you think the neighborhood is safe due to gang activity? Why or why not? Please give examples.
2f. What outside things influence the students you teach? Why?
2g. How can the school partner with the community and parents to ensure a safe and orderly school environment?
2h. How can the school partner with the community and parents to ensure a safe and orderly school environment?
LEADERSHIP
Subquestion 3: What can High School administrators do to ensure the violence prevention programs are implemented with fidelity?
3a. The administration plays an active role in the current violence prevention programs by serving as facilitator for its professional development through bully prevention, uniform, school security, prevention intervention, school security.
1. Disagree
2. Neutral
3. Agree
4. Strongly Agree
3b. The school administration can support its team by:
1. Be assessable to discuss concern/issues
2. Offering innovative training/supports
3. Be active listeners
4. Other _____
3c. Are you aware of a school-wide behavior plan at your school that addresses school

violence such as student code of conduct? If so who is it shared with staff, students, and parents?

1. Yes
2. No

3d. Staff workshops and professional development days can be used in a more effective manner to address school violence prevention initiatives by doing the following?

1. Developing a professional develop calendar
2. Allowing any staff member to attend PD
3. Experts serve as workshop facilitators
4. Other _____

3e. The administration team provides the staff with feedback on the effectiveness or lack thereof of the implemented violence prevention programs through the implementation of bully prevention, uniform, school security, prevention intervention, school security? Why?

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Appendix B: Self-reported Observation Protocol

The purpose of the participant observation is to be able to provide a deeper understanding on the school's implementation of school violence programs.

Date of Observation: _____ Participant: _____

Time of Observation: _____

Staff Implementation of Violence Prevention Programs

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do I, as the classroom teacher refer to any of the violence prevention programs? 2. Are classroom procedures in place? 3. Do I, incorporate any of the programs into the classroom? |
|--|

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are disruptive students dealt with? 2. Does the school schedule allow for teachers to be trained in violence prevention programs? 3. How is the staff interacting with the students? |
|---|

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do I, as the classroom teacher, refer to any of the violence prevention programs? 2. Are the classroom procedures posted in my classroom? 3. As a classroom teacher, I incorporate violence prevention initiatives in my classroom. |
|--|

Appendix C: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of School Violence. The researcher is inviting participants that have 3-5 years of teaching experience at the high school level, 2-3 of those years need to be at the selected High School. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Natakie Chestnut, who is a Doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of teachers about school violence prevention programs.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a 30-minute semi structured audio recorded interview
- Participate in completing a 15 minute – 20-minute self – reported observation form
- Follow up meeting to review the results

Here are some sample questions:

- Which student target population participates in violence prevention program?
- How is the success of the violence prevention programs measured in my school?
- How can the school partner with the community and parents to ensure a safe and orderly school environment?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one in your school district should treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this study should not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. The benefits from participating in this survey is to assist the researcher with shedding light in the education field from a teacher’s perspective on the effectiveness of school violence prevention programs.

Payment:

NO compensation will be giving for participation in this study.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by placing all data collected in a locked box. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at [redacted] and via email: [redacted]. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is [redacted]. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB will enter approval number here** and it expires on **IRB will enter expiration date.**

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix D: Principal's Cooperation Agreement

Natakie Chestnut

[address and phone no. redacted]

September, 2015

Dear Mr. [Redacted],

I am conducting a study on Urban High School Teachers' Perceptions of School Violence. As part of my graduate studies in Educational Leadership at Walden University, data collection is an integral part of my research which I will be doing. My doctoral study is entitled: School Violence: Perspectives through a Teacher's Lens. The research study will be comprised of about 9 teachers who agree to participate. The study will include a semi structured interview with the 9 teacher participants, a self-reported observation, and peer review. This information is essential in order to gather data that will depict different perspective on school violence programs in your city. The interview and self – reported observation will be completed after dismissal for approximately 1 hour in length. I will ensure that my presence on school property does not impede on the academic program.

Please sign this letter of request granting me permission to conduct essential research at XXXX School.

Data collected throughout the research process will be confidential. Thank you in advance for your support with this research study.

Sincerely,

Natakie Chestnut

Ed.D. Candidate

Walden
UniversityPrincipal's Signature: [Name redacted]

Date: 9/28/15

Appendix E: Samples of Transcription of Data

Interview Questions

What do teachers know about the current violence prevention programs?

What do you know about bully prevention, uniform, school security, prevention intervention at your school?

Participant 1: I know that bullying prevention, uniforms, school security, and prevention intervention at the school are to help with creating a better climate in our school.

Participant 2: We do not have too much bullying prevention due to budget cuts. We have less staff. But the staff do a lot to help with bully prevention. Bully prevention should be in place where you can work with a group of students. Unfortunately, we do not have the money and staff to have solid programs on bullying. Our schools do not have the major problems like other schools have in our district have.

Which student target population participates in violence prevention program?

Participant 1: All of our students.

Participant 2: All the students participate in the programs but we do not do enough because of the budget cuts.

Which current violence prevention programs improved the overall culture and climate of the school?

Participant 1: Having school security and the students wearing uniforms. Our school security is great and proactive. They mediate some of the student's disagreements before if even turns into a fight. We are lucky to have a good team of security.

Participant 2:

Do you believe the uniform implementation has been effective? Why or why not?

Participant 1: Yes, I do believe it is effective. Since we are a uniform school this alleviates the need for students to buy expensive clothes to fit in with their peers.

Each student is expected to wear the uniform and if they don't they are assigned a detention.

Participant 2: Yes, because students are not pressured to have the current styles.

What barriers impede the success of the violence prevention programs?

Participant 2: Funding impeded the success of violence prevention program.

Please identify ways you can be professionally developed in the area of school violence prevention programs?

Participant 1: I can be professionally developed by attending more workshops on school violence and the impact it has on student achievement. I can also continue to have conversations with my colleagues to see if we are doing everything we can to make our school safe.

Participant 2: Having lunch time with the students in the form of a group. A lot of times get into violent situations because of communication issues. They do not know how to address problem without fighting.

How do parents discipline their children? Would their practices help schools? Encourage gang participation?

Participant 1: I am not sure how parents discipline their children behind closed doors; however, I can tell you times have changed. Years ago a parent would never question a teacher about a report they have provided regarding their child's behavior. Today parents question what the teachers report. To me this allows the child to be disrespectful with little to no consequences. I have heard parents often times than not tell their child if they hit you, you better hit them back. In a case like this the practice of the parents would hurt the school because why we are teaching conflict resolution the parents are teaching violence. The parent's actions do encourage gang participation because, when children fight now they tend to fight in groups. The children have to find a group to align themselves with.

Participant 2: This is a very delicate question. We don't see how parents discipline their children at home. When students misbehave and get involved in altercations is because, they have issues at home and bring into school. It would be perfect for all parents to work with school but some of our parents are in jail, are raised by grandparents so it makes it difficult to really discipline their child.

How is the success of the violence prevention programs measured in my school?

Participant 1: Success of violence prevention programs is measured in my school by looking at the data of suspensions, and overall infractions. As we school we also look at how many times security is called to a classroom or the cafeteria.

Participant 2: The success is measured in my school by our administration sharing discipline and academic data with us each month. By doing this we are able to see areas in which we have made gains and other areas that are in need of improvement.

What social influences affect the climate of your school building?

Participant 1 This is a biggie. Social media, internet, and TV affect the climate of our school. Our students put a lot of inappropriate things on social media about one another that leads to fights when they come to school. I would say many of our fights steam from stuff on social media, chat rooms are the worse. This generation of students watch a lot of TV. They emulate what they see on TV because they think it is cool and the right thing to do or be like.

Participant 2: Social media and TV.

Do you think the neighborhood is safe due to gang activity? Why or why not? Please give examples.

Participant 1: I believe the neighborhood is safe although it has taken a change for the worse over the last few years. If you go five blocks over, then that is a different story.

Participant 2: Yes, the neighborhood is safe during the day but I would not feel safe at night because of the high crime. During the day we have police that patrol the area.

What outside things influence the students you teach? Why?

Participant 1: Social media and TV are the biggest things that influence the students. Many students want to be like the rappers, and sport players they see on TV. Social media is the cause of many of our school conflicts.

Participant 2: Social media has taken over. Our students are fighting and arguing daily about something someone posted on social media. We would have less school conflicts if Social media was not so prevalent.

What can high school administrators do to ensure the violence prevention programs are implemented with fidelity?

The administration plays an active role in the current violence prevention programs by serving as facilitator for its professional development through bully prevention, uniform, school security, prevention intervention, school security.

1. Disagree
 2. Neutral
 3. Agree
 4. Strongly Agree
- Participant 1: Strongly Agree

Participant 2: Strongly agree

The school administration can support its team by:

1. Be accessible to discuss concern/issues
 2. Offering innovative training/supports
 3. Be active listeners
- Other _____

Participant 1: Other, all of the above

Participant 2: Other, all of the above

Are you aware of a school-wide behavior plan at your school that addresses school violence such as student code of conduct? If so who is it shared with staff, students, and parents?

1. Yes
2. No

Participant 1: Yes

Participant 2: Yes

Staff workshops and professional development days can be used in a more effective manner to address school violence prevention initiatives by doing the following?

1. Developing a professional develop calendar
2. Allowing any staff member to attend PD
3. Experts serve as workshop facilitators
4. Other

Participant 1: Experts serve as workshop facilitators

Participant 2: Experts serve as workshop facilitators.

The administration team provides the staff with feedback on the effectiveness or lack thereof of the implemented violence prevention programs through the implementation of bully prevention, uniform, school security, prevention intervention, school security?

Why?

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Participant 1: Strongly agree, the administration always gives us feedback. We get both negative and positive feedback from the admin.

Participant 2: Strongly agree, we get feedback often whether we want it or not.

Self-Reported Observation

Participant 1

1. Do I, as the classroom teacher, refer to any of the violent prevention programs?
Yes
2. Are classroom procedures in place? Yes
3. Do I incorporate any of the programs into the classroom? Yes
4. How are disruptive students dealt with? Meeting with student, call home, meeting with parent.
5. Does the school schedule allow for teachers to be trained in violence prevention programs? No
6. How is the staff interacting with the staff? Very well
7. Do I, as the classroom teacher, refer to any of the violence prevention programs?
Yes
8. Are the classroom procedures posted in my classroom? Yes
9. As a classroom teacher, I incorporate violence prevention initiatives in my classroom? Yes

Participant 2

1. Do I, as the classroom teacher, refer to any of the violent prevention programs?
Yes
2. Are classroom procedures in place? Yes
3. Do I incorporate any of the programs into the classroom? Yes
4. How are disruptive students dealt with? Warning, review of rules and behavior, start recording behavior, individual student conference, parental contact and involvement, formal write up, suspensions.
5. Does the school schedule allow for teachers to be trained in violence prevention programs? No
6. How is the staff interacting with the staff? Staff are involved, professional and fair.
7. Do I, as the classroom teacher, refer to any of the violence prevention programs?
Yes
8. Are the classroom procedures posted in my classroom? Yes
9. As a classroom teacher, I incorporate violence prevention initiatives in my classroom? Yes

Appendix F: Schedule for Conducting Interviews, Self-Reported Observations, and
Member Checking

Table F1

Schedule for Conducting Interviews, Self-Reported Observations, and Member Checking

Name	Interview	Self-Reported Observation	Member Check
Teacher 1	November 23, 2015 2:30 pm	November 23, 2015 3:00 pm	December 9, 2015 2:30 pm
Teacher 2	November 23, 2015 4:00 pm	November 23, 2015 4:30 pm	December 9, 2015 3:00 pm
Teacher 3	November 23, 2015 5:30 pm	November 23, 2015 6:00 pm	December 9, 2015 3:30 pm
Teacher 4	November 24, 2015 2:30 pm	November 24, 2015 3:00 pm	December 10, 2015 2:30 pm
Teacher 5	November 24, 2015 4:00 pm	November 24, 2015 4:30 pm	December 10, 2015 3:00 pm
Teacher 6	November 24, 2015 5:30 pm	November 24, 2015 6:00 pm	December 10, 2015 3:30 pm
Teacher 7	November 30, 2015 2:30 pm	November 30, 2015 3:00 pm	December 11, 2015 2:30 pm
Teacher 8	November 30, 2015 4:00 pm	November 30, 2015 4:30 pm	December 11, 2015 3:00 pm
Teacher 9	November 30, 2015 5:30 pm	November 30, 2015 6:00 pm	December 11, 2015 3:30 pm