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Educators' Perceptions of a School-Based Antibullying Program in an Elementary School

Jacquelyn Andrea Sims-Jones
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

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Jacquelyn Andrea Sims-Jones

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Dr. Elsie Szecsy, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Shelly Arneson, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Mark Earley, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2017

Abstract

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by

Jacquelyn Sims-Jones

M Ed, University of Phoenix, 2007

BS, Bethune Cookman University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Administration Leadership for Teacher Leadership

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Abstract

Bullying is a problem experienced in schools across the country including in the ABC Elementary School in Georgia, where the No Place for Hate antibullying program is in place to address this problem. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand educators' perspectives on their experiences implementing the program. Bandura's social learning theory was used as the conceptual foundation for this study. A content analysis research method based on that of Yin and employing NVivo software was used to analyze interviews. The participants were asked to comment on three main areas: (a) bullying, (b) useful components of the No Place for Hate antibullying program, and (c) resources available for them to use in identifying and responding to bullying. The participants were 10 teachers and 3 administrators at ABC Elementary School who were affiliated with the program. Each participant engaged in a semi structured, face-to-face interview lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Teachers and administrators perceived that the No Place for Hate anti-bullying program at ABC Elementary School helped participants to actively acknowledge and respond to the issue of bullying. However, all felt that a more consistent implementation would increase its effectiveness. Educators may use the results of the study through a professional development as a basis for recommendations concerning vital areas of antibullying programs that schools should improve upon or implement. The results of this study added to the body of knowledge for other schools that use or might use the No Place for Hate antibullying program. Moreover, the results of the study could be used to inform federal and state governments concerning the development of sound policies and programs on addressing bullying that may result in safer educational experiences for students.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my husband (Rebet). My husband has been there for me through long days, late nights and early mornings, with my computer being my best friend. There were many moments when I wanted to give up; I felt this was not worth it. During the time that I wanted to give up, he was the person to inspire me to finish what I started. I am appreciative for those words of support today. I would also like to dedicate this to my family supporters who knew that this was something that I could accomplish. I will be the first in my immediate family to complete this prestigious honor and will pave the way for other family members.

Acknowledgments

  First, I would like to thank God for his grace, mercy, and his favor. I would like to thank my wonderful husband (Rebet) for his patience, love, and motivation throughout this process.   My Aunt Jessie and Uncle Chester who have been my inspiration through the trying times in this process. My friends Dr. Shvilla Gaines, Dr. Mae Maddox and family words cannot express my gratitude for all that you have done. My participants, thank you for your time and patience throughout the interviewing process. My chair Dr. Elsie Szecsy, what can I say, none of this would be possible without your mentorship, support and scholarly feedback. My second chair Dr. Shelly Arneson your advice, guidance, and support were well appreciated. I was truly blessed to have a support team such as this.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the past few years, reports of bullying incidents in schools have increased (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Kessel Schneider, O'Donnell, & Smith, 2015). Reports suggest that approximately 1 in 3 students in the United States have been victims of bullying in school (U.S. Department of Health & Human Service, 2017). From school shootings to social media, bullying is a phenomenon that has resulted in increased violence across the country. Because of the rise of bullying in schools, the State of Georgia required that all schools implement antibullying programs and character education programs (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2017). Georgia Code (2010a, 2010b) require the implementation of character education programs at all grade levels that include methods of discouraging bullying and violent acts against fellow students.

Background

The process of bullying is affected by the environmental dimension. Bullying takes place in the presence of other pupils and the way in which those pupils react to the practice plays a significant role in shaping the behaviors of both the bully and the victim (Salmivalli, 2014). Peers who are spectators to the act also significantly influence the response of the victim and the acts of the bully (Denny et al., 2014).

The conceptual definition of bullying is broader compared to the common view of antisocial acts between individuals and groups. Although formal definitions of bullying may be the subject of debate, these are self-evident in many ways (Carbo, 2017). According to Flygare, Gill, and Johansson (2013), bullying is the physical and psychological abuse by those perceived to be stronger or superior toward those often seen

as weak. This sense of inferiority or superiority may result from the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social status of people. Thus, bullying is aggression derived from a position of power. Bullies always have perceived advantages over their victims, leaving those persons feeling vulnerable (Carbo, 2017). Whether the advantage is in physical stature, social status, or some other characteristic, bullies have power over their victims.

Bullying involves an intention to harm, harmful outcomes, direct or indirect acts of aggression, repetition, and expressions of inequality. According to Hemphill, Heerde, & Gomo (2014), bullying occurs when a person repeatedly commits verbal, physical, or psychological acts of aggression toward another person. Bonifas (2015) observed that bullying may occur through rumors or gossip, as well as through leaving someone out of an activity and threats, mean words, gossiping, teasing, name calling (especially among elementary school children in arguments), pushing, kicking, stealing, damaging property, and hitting. Bullying may occur between individuals, between groups, or between an individual and a group.

Bullying rates differ among different studies; however, a meta-analysis conducted by Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra, and Runions (2014) of 80 research studies found that a mean prevalence rate among students between 12-18 years was 35%. Approximately 30% of students' report bullying by their peers (U.S. Department of Health & Human Service, 2017). Although education systems in different countries have different levels and grading, researchers have found correlations in bullying characteristics by following age and grade criteria. In addition, studies conducted in

America and European countries have shown similar observations about bullying incidents across age and grade levels (Jeong, Kwak, Moon & San Miguel, 2013).

Studies show significant similarities among bullies across grade levels. Of the total number of students who were bullies in elementary school, 72% went on to be bullies in high school, and 53.8% were bullies in college (Ofe, 2015). Of the total number of the victims in elementary school, 41.6% were victims in high school (Ofe, 2015). Bullying is more likely to be prevalent in lower grades, decreasing as learners move into higher levels (Smokowski, Cotter, Robertson & Guo, 2013). Because of these trends, authorities can make confident predictions and are in a better position to develop intervention mechanisms.

Given the various definitions of bullying, the statistics concerning bullying, and the research findings, a need exists to develop mechanisms or prevention programs to deal with elements of bullying in schools. Variables such as desk placements, race, grade, and performance all have vital roles in determining how peers respond to bullying. Therefore, according to Marraccini, Weyandt, and Rossi (2015), educators must develop efficient structures of assessing and analyzing rates of bullying in their schools. Schools must also consider other influencing factors such as the pupils' backgrounds and may need to gather additional information from parents and support staff to enhance the credibility of studies on antibullying.

Bowers et al. (2015) stated that antibullying intervention programs must be comprehensive, bringing together the perspectives of all the stakeholders in the elementary school. Variables such as classroom arrangement, race, ethnicity, the general

school programs, and the content of study in schools may also affect these programs. School-based intervention programs for bullying date to 1978 when D. Olweus (1978) systemized such interventions in a formal and scholarly manner. Olweus' plan resulted in a 50% reduction in bullying in Norway (Eleni, 2014). Flygare et al. (2013) implemented a program exemplifying Olweus' (1978) program. They noted that variables such as gender, race, grade, performance, and family background were determinants of the effectiveness of the program. Some elementary schools in the United States have since adopted their program. Various scholars and experts have also developed plans and models in attempts to curb bullying in schools, and countries and educational institutions have implemented a variety of such programs. These programs include both modifications of Olweus' program and entirely different plans, such as the Toronto antibullying program and the Flemish antibullying project. However, although programs focused on bullying have proven successful, results from the Norwegian Department for Education Flemish Anti-Bullying Project revealed that other antibullying programs need continuous improvements, such as tailoring for specific environments as different contexts present different challenges.

The effects of bullying manifest in many ways at school and home and in the future lives of both victims and the perpetrators. The social dimensions of bullying in school reveal that some acts of bullying stem from their home environments (Tippett & Wolke, 2014), with the behaviors of parents having a direct impact on the bullying characteristics of their children (Shetgiri, 2013). Against this backdrop, establishing the

effectiveness of the antibullying program No Place for Hate at the ABC Elementary School (pseudonym) is important.

Problem Statement

There were perceived potential gaps in the effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School in Georgia, and there was a lack of certainty regarding the program meeting intended goals. Bullying is a national problem that has academically and socially adverse effects on children and their schools (U.S. Department of Health & Human Service, 2017). Studies have shown that bullies who maintain their behavior into adulthood do not have healthy relationships (Wolke, Copeland, Angold & Costello, 2013). Also, researchers have found a strong relationship between bullying and criminal troubles (Hebron & Humphrey, 2013). In the United States, research on bullying have shown a strong correlation between bullying in school and at work after schooling (Hebron & Humphrey, 2013; Smokowski et al., 2013; Türkmen et al., 2013). Thus, the effects of bullying are not only daunting to the victims and the institutions of study or work but also constitute a social problem (Hebron & Humphrey, 2013).

Since the 1980s, researchers have studied bullying extensively, and many schools and organizations have adopted antibullying programs. However, antibullying programs may have flaws from improper implementation of the entire program or inappropriate use of the components. For example, components to target verbal bullying may not be the same as those for dealing with physical and psychological bullying (Bradshaw, Waasdorp & Johnson, 2014). Currently, many schools and states are updating their bullying laws

and are reporting that they have proactive bullying programs in place. Under the new Georgia policy, bullying can be anything from unwanted taunting to cyberbullying through social networking Web sites or text messages. Students charged with bullying must get age-appropriate discipline or counseling, and their victims must do the same (Bradshaw et al., 2014).

Bullying also poses a threat to the safe learning environment officials know is essential for students to succeed. Studies have established connections between bullying characteristics in elementary schools, high schools, college, and the workplace (Carbo, 2017; Marraccini et al., 2015; Shetgiri, 2013). Effective antibullying programs at the elementary level may result in reduced bullying in subsequent levels of education (Eleni, 2014). Through the No Place for Hate program, schools could prepare young people to live and work successfully in a global community. Corporation leaders understood that this social competency increased the productivity and effectiveness of all staff.

The ABC Elementary School was experiencing a serious problem with bullying, specifically involving students' aggression and psychological dominance over other students. To address this issue, the ABC Elementary School implemented the No Place for Hate program in 2012, a free program developed by the Anti-Defamation League. The purpose of the program was to gather the entire school around the objective of creating a warm, welcoming community dedicated to stopping all forms of bullying. With No Place for Hate, schools could foster cultures of respect and create safe learning environments for students at all grade levels. Public and private schools across the country have implemented No Place for Hate since 2011.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program from the perspectives of teachers and administrators at ABC Elementary School. Teachers and administrators at the school affiliated with the program were the participants in this research. These individuals included the custodians of the program, its implementation, and the functionality of its components. The research contributed to the empirical findings related to bullying and served as the basis for recommendations about the implementation of the program. The setting for this study was the ABC Elementary School, which was in an urban area in Georgia. The timeframe of the study was one-half of the school year.

Research Questions

The fundamental question of this study was the following:

RQ: Is the No Place for Hate Program effective in reducing bullying at ABC Elementary School?

Drawn from this central question were three research subquestions:

SQ1: How do teachers and administrators perceive the effectiveness of No Place for Hate antibullying program in reducing bullying incidents at ABC Elementary School?

SQ2: What do teachers and administrators perceive as vital and useful components of the No Place for Hate antibullying program?

SQ3: What do teachers and administrators perceive as ineffective components of the No Place for Hate antibullying program?

Conceptual Framework

To have a better understanding of bullying, its effect, and how teachers and administrators could mitigate and prevent these effects, I used Bandura's (1977) social learning theory as theoretical foundations for the current study. In general, the social learning theory concludes that individuals learn through observing others' behavior, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors. The theory asserts that there are three necessary conditions for effective modeling: retention, reproduction, and motivation. Collectively, these conditions help an individual to obtain and apply the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and manage their emotions with the end goal of maintaining positive relationships and making responsible decisions (Thomas & Simpson, 2014). In addition to the observation of behavior, learning also occurs through the observation of rewards and punishments, a process known as vicarious reinforcement. Bullying has its consequences and must, therefore, constitute punishments for those people who practice it, and rewards for those people who try to lessen the existence of such activity. According to Smith and Low (2013), the social learning theory is useful in developing a structured way for improving students' social and emotional competencies and impact bullying at the individual and peer levels of the school social-ecology.

I used the social learning theory to examine the effectiveness of intervention-bullying programs such as the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School, which could successfully target root causes of bullying problems in schools. Children bullied are searching for help, and those feeling they have no place to find answers may turn to drastic measures, such as suicide. Victims of bullying

demonstrate lower self-esteem and are typically more apprehensive and vulnerable than their peers (Merrill & Hanson, 2016). The repeated harassing of victims continue to build anxiety and insecurities, resulting in how victims evaluates their self-worth (Eleni, 2014). The fragility of adolescent development does not need such negative external factors further clouding the journey from childhood to adulthood, and poor self-esteem has ongoing, lifelong consequences (Shetgiri, 2013). All students deserve the chance to develop a healthy self-perception and feel safe in their classroom and social environments (Bowers et al., 2015).

Awareness of depression, poor self-esteem, and suicidal ideation are growing concerns among educators and psychologists (Russell & Fish, 2016), but consensus regarding the connection between these very real issues and bullying behavior that might cause them or enhance them in the victims' minds are still developing. Such issues also showed the need for bullying intervention programs, which must put in place to protect students and maintain a healthy environment for all students (Eleni, 2014).

Administrators play an important role in providing bullying prevention education to parents, staff, students, and the community. Applying the social learning theory may help in changing unacceptable student behaviors (Hanna, Crittenden & Crittenden, 2013). Furthermore, guiding student behaviors through social learning theory may directly affect the students' personal outlooks on acceptable behaviors in and out of the classroom. Multiple studies reported connection in social learning theory and bullying and how these behaviors may be carried into adulthood (Miller & Morris, 2016; Swearer, Wang, Berry & Myers, 2014), authenticating the need for intervention strategies in reducing bullying

actions. Therefore, the social learning theory, education, and improving ways to decrease bullying in the educational setting will be the basis and focus on this study.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative research design for this study to address the research questions. Qualitative research is especially useful in studying a complex phenomenon such as the effectiveness of school based antibullying programs (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). In addition, bullying is a relatively newly identified phenomenon with growing interest about its implications in an elementary school setting (Flygare et al., 2013). Thus, a qualitative research design was ideal for this complicated subject, exploring through the perceptions and experiences of participants who were directly involved in No Place for Hate antibullying program the effectiveness of the program.

Furthermore, this study used a case study approach, given that the focus of this study was to provide an explanation for the effectiveness of No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School from the participants' perceptions (Maxwell, 2012). A case study approach allows the opportunity to understand the experiences, perspectives, and insights of a case through the personal lens (Merriam, 2014). For this study, the case was about the effectiveness of No Place for Hate antibullying program, which I examined through the elicitation of information from the teachers and administrators directly involved in the program. Overall, case studies provide an answer to a specific question pertaining to the case on hand.

Participants included both teachers and administrators currently affiliated with the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School in Georgia.

Purposive sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) was used to select participants for interviews. Recruitment strategies for selecting participants occurred partly face-to-face, and I began the one-on-one interview by identifying current teachers and administrators with whom I had connections or whom I knew. A total of five participants consisted of those who I personally knew. Based on the recommendations of the participants with whom I had connections or whom I personally knew, I selected additional participants. Malterud, Siersma and Guassora (2016) stated that in qualitative research studies, the sample size was largely up to the researcher. There are currently 25 teachers and eight administrators working in ABC Elementary School. For this study, I recruited 13 participants. Specifically, the sample included 10 teachers, or 40% of the school faculty, and three administrators, or 37.5% of the administrators, affiliated with the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School.

I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews with the teachers and administrators to gather their experiences and perceptions about the effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School. During the interviews, I used an interview guide (Appendix A) that contained open-ended questions. I used open-ended questions to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers and administrators about the topic and their perceptions on bullying and the antibullying program implemented. Finally, I used a qualitative content analysis based on Yin (2014) to analyze the data gathered through the interviews. Content analysis provided a narrative explanation and made sense of the perceptions and experiences of participants through identification of emerging themes and categories. The analysis involved the process of

identifying recurring themes and patterns in the information gathered from the participants and strove to interlink the pieces into an integrated whole.

Definitions

The following are the definitions of terms in this study:

Antibullying program: An antibullying program is a defined scheme of practice for preventing bullying that must involve feasible components, be executable, and be measurable (Gaete et al., 2017).

Bully–victim: A bully–victim is a student who is both a bully and a victim. One may also refer to this person as a provocative victim (Habashy Hussein, 2013).

Bullying: Bullying refers to negative actions whether physical or verbal with unfriendly intent that are repeated over a period of time (Shetgiri, 2013).

Victimization: Victimization is an aspect of bullying that relates to either the psychological or the physical harm experienced by the victims of bullying (Sigurdson, Undheim, Wallander, Lydersen & Sund, 2015).

Assumptions

The research reflected two major assumptions. First, it was assumed that the teachers and administrators responsible for the implementation of the antibullying program at ABC Elementary School followed the program consistently. I also assumed that the teachers and administrators in the program were available to give true and honest information.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the research included the teachers and school administrators of ABC Elementary School. The focus of the study was on teacher and administrator perceptions of the effectiveness of the antibullying program at ABC Elementary School, as well as on what elements of the program they perceived to be effective and ineffective. However, influences and spillover effects might have existed beyond the community.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the study. First, teachers and students had received only limited training in working through bullying issues at ABC Elementary School. Second, the cohort of pupils in ABC Elementary School during the year from which data were collected might have their own preconceptions about bullying. Third, ABC Elementary School had a high rate of student turnover. Therefore, determining the consistency of the program and the usefulness of its components might have been difficult when the students were transient from one time to another. Fourth, ensuring teachers gave accurate and objective information might have been difficult. People might understand the questions in different ways, contributing to possible error. To mitigate possible errors, I ensured the clarity of interview questions. Lastly, responses might not reflect the authentic sense of distress the victim felt or and the aggression of the bully.

Significance

Significance for the ABC Elementary School in Georgia

This research served to inform the stakeholders (i.e., administrators, teachers, parents, and the community) of ABC Elementary School in Georgia about the perceived

effectiveness of its antibullying program, No Place for Hate. I used the results of the study as the basis for recommendations concerning vital areas and program components that the school administrators and teachers might implement or improve. In principle, because of the research, the school should be able to position itself better to deal with bullying.

This research also served to validate the reason for the concerted effort of all the educational stakeholders in improving social systems (e.g., families, schools, and communities) for a better society. This study reflected an ongoing effort to combat bullying through elementary school students and school staff working together to identify solutions to the problem through the aspects of the program such as collaboration between individuals, professional development, and role play. The emotional and social dimensions of the antibullying program required concerted efforts to realize their potential (Wolke et al., 2013).

Significance for Government Policy

Although government policies were currently in line with established empirical findings, this research can become a part of the body of knowledge used to inform policymakers at the state and district levels concerning the development of sound policies on bullying in schools in Georgia. The Georgia Department of Education desires more information on bullying trends about Georgia student populations. Schools want to understand students' readiness to intervene in bullying situations to inspire safe levels of involvement. To gain this knowledge, administrators and staff in Georgia schools may use both the findings from this research study and the analysis from the Georgia Student

Health Survey II (GSHS, 2015) to answer many of their important but unaddressed questions. In addition, government agencies and school personnel in other states might replicate the processes, findings, and recommendations from this study or might combine these with previous and subsequent studies to formulate robust national and state policies on bullying in schools.

Significance to Academicians

This study of the components of an antibullying program and its usefulness represented a contribution to the extensive work already accomplished on bullying. Because some components of bullying could not be studied exhaustively in a single case study, researchers and practitioners might build on previous work to fill the intellectual gaps in the discipline, as seen in studies conducted by Gaete et al. (2017) and Bradshaw et al. (2014). Even though the geographical scope of this study was Georgia, the findings revealed specific details on bullying found in other studies.

Similarly, academics might apply the scholarly information derived from the research to areas outside the school environment. Bullying affects the healthy development of children, especially their ability to function socially (Merrill & Hanson, 2016). More recently, Olweus and Limber (2010), researchers at Clemson University, studied the usefulness of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) regarding its significance in the context of the United States, specifically in South Carolina, Philadelphia, California, and Washington State. However, the data remained inadequate to determine whether Olweus and Limber's (2010) full findings were significant or meaningful to smaller populations or in other regions of the United States.

Significance to the Demystification of the Interrelatedness of Bullying

Studies have shown that bullying affects the physical health and mental health of young children due to the physical and psychological pain they experience because of bullying (Gaete et al., 2017; Bradshaw et al., 2014). Therefore, I designed this study to show the multidimensionality of bullying and the effect of experiences at one grade level on those in other grades within schools. To accomplish this, the approaches employed needed to be more inclusive. This research was significant because the study served to inform other disciplines, such as sociology and psychology, as well as various aspects of curriculum development.

<div align="center">

Summary

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The chapter is an outline of the study and serves to ground the study intellectually to the subject of bullying. The cognitive schema sets the structure that the remaining chapters form. The previous research conducted on bullying informs the empirical dimension of the study. The day-to-day happenings in school on bullying revealed the practicality of the study. The drive underlying this study was to determine how to prevent pupils from harming those perceived to be weak (e.g., teasing; gossiping; scolding them; deliberately excluding them; beating, hitting, and kicking them). Therefore, this study served to test the effectiveness of one antibullying program currently in place in the ABC Elementary School in Georgia. Doing so was vital to ensure schools could save victims from bullies, correct the aggressors, and teach peers their role as pupils in the same school, class, or community.

This research was strategic in Georgia and significant in the United States within related fields of study. Researchers need to address many areas on bullying. Studies on the effectiveness of antibullying programs serve to identify gaps in the research. In the case of this research, this study resulted in both analysis and evaluation of the No Place for Hate antibullying program, contributing unique research in the body of existing literature.

The authority of the study came from the empirical base derived from previous studies on the same subject (i.e., studies conducted in Norway, Austria, Germany, Italy, and the United States and other scholarly publications in the field). Investigating the No Place to Hate program in the ABC Elementary School revealed more contextual applications concerning program components, ultimately linking these to the purpose for which the antibullying program was established, reducing the social challenges posed by bullying. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature on bullying and antibullying programs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of the qualitative case study was to understand the effectiveness of antibullying programs in elementary schools. The case studied was the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School. The study employed semistructured interviews with teachers and administrators at that school with the goal of understanding the phenomenon of bullying and bullying prevention programs.

A major part of understanding this phenomenon was a thorough review of the existing scholarly literature on the subject. To do this review, I consulted major academic databases such as EbscoHost, JStor, and Google Scholar. I used search terms individually and in Boolean combination searches. These terms included *bullying, school bullying, anti-bullying programs, bullying prevention,* and *elementary school bullying*. Most (90%) of the sources used were from 2013 to 2017, though I included older, seminal works where appropriate.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. First, the theoretical framework for the study is examined via the seminal works supporting it and the treatment of the theory in subsequent literature. Then I discuss the background of the problem of school bullying, in general, followed by a discussion of bullying in elementary and middle schools. Next, discussion of school antibullying strategies is presented. The discussion then moves toward the implementation of school antibullying programs. I identify and discuss the research gap, that there is little if any consensus on what makes school antibullying programs effective or ineffective. A summary ends this chapter.

Conceptual Framework: Social Learning Theory

The theory used to support this study was Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. This theory says that individuals learn and acquire their behavior by observing that of others. They do so by observing the actual behavior of others, their apparent attitude toward society and others, and significantly, the outcomes those persons achieve as the result of their behavior (Bandura, 1977). While this theory ignores any inherent component in a person's behavior (a predisposition or a physical or mental condition that affects displayed behavior), it is still a useful lens through which to observe and understand the phenomenon of school bullying as well as suggest the proper strategies to combat it.

Past studies have suggested that Bandura (1977) might provide a fitting way in which to view the societal problem of bullying. Per Bandura, a person observing a given behavior in another may copy that behavior if the observer perceives that the person performing that behavior is somehow gaining from it. It seems logical, therefore, that if bullying replicates, those who do so must see it as having achieved a favorable outcome for the person doing the bullying. This is an important concept for prevention of bullying in that it suggests that a sound strategy for its prevention could connect toward making it counterproductive. If a child does not achieve a desired outcome via bullying, the child will likely abandon that approach; likewise, others are unlikely to replicate the behavior. I examine this concept in more detail in subsequent sections of this review.

Past scholars have used social learning theory to understand the phenomenon of school bullying. For example, O'Connell, Pepler, and Craig (1999) used the theory to

hypothesize an explanation for bullying being contagious. They observed that when bullying is a part of establishing group solidarity (for instance, ganging up on an outsider), that behavior becomes attractive. In a similar vein, Orpinas and Horne (2006) mentioned that early intervention was critical in antibullying efforts. From the standpoint of social learning theory, it is important that young people do not perceive that others gain from bullying, which is why strong antibullying intervention measures remain needed. Adults should teach children that bullying does not lead to positive outcomes for the ones doing the bullying (Orpinas & Horne, 2006).

It is interesting to consider that antibullying measures in the context of social learning theory do not consider the moral rightness or wrongness of bullying as such. Rather, such measures seek to contain it by making it less likely that others will imitate it; this means that antibullying measures are aimed at modifying behavior more than cognition (O'Connell et al., 2015). Social learning theory says that we are all imitators to some extent (Bandura, 1977), but at the same time, we are less likely to imitate behavior that backfires. If a child is seeking social standing and dominance by bullying behavior fails to achieve that goal or worse, the bully is stigmatized by that behavior instead, not only is that child unlikely to persist in that behavior, but also, others are unlikely to imitate it (Orpinas & Horne, 2006). That bullying may be unproductive or even counterproductive for the individual performing it suggests that positive role modeling can help, in that it encourages similar behavior on the part of those who observe it (Orpinas & Horne, 2006).

Background of School Bullying

The phenomenon of bullying in elementary schools has been the subject of numerous research studies, resulting in the production of substantial information on the subject. Bullies exhibit their behavior because of suffering from risk factors that include low self-esteem, depression, psychosocial problems, and anxiety (Kowalski & Limber, 2013). To combat bullying in elementary schools, several institutions and governmental organizations have provided strategic programs. Although the creation of antibullying programs has been the best approach to stopping bullying in schools, many researchers have questioned the effectiveness of such programs. Forssell (2016) noted that the degree of bullying varied from year to year with the year of study. Berkowitz (2013) postulated that middle school students are subject to a higher risk of bullying because middle school students are more susceptible to undue peer pressure and abuse during their adolescent years. However, this is also a time when adolescents form sophisticated and complex social ties, which can exacerbate the pressure caused by bullying (Berkowitz, 2013).

Research has shown that where there is a bully, there is a victim (Linton & Power, 2013). While bullies get satisfaction from their antisocial behavior, the bullied suffer physically, mentally, and psychologically. Extensive research has revealed that bullying behavior is tied closely to criminal tendencies (Wiklund, Ruchkin, Koposov & af Klinteberg, 2014; Wolke et al., 2013). Bullies also tend to maintain their bullying character into adulthood, leading to dysfunctional relationships and associations (Eşkisu, 2014). Therefore, it is important to curb school bullying not just because of its impact on

children but also because if allowed to grow, it may turn into an even larger social problem later (Eşkisu, 2014).

The causes of school bullying are complex. Human beings in social settings naturally try to form mutual bonds; many of their efforts involve attempting to establish dominance (Marini, 2013). Olweus (2013) observed that a large element of the problem posed by school bullying is that people did not perceive it as a problem until recently and that researchers historically saw bullying as a natural part of human behavior, especially child behavior. Schools are tightly constructed social structures, and roles are often both narrow and clearly described (Marini, 2013). In such a structure, staking out an ideal place in the hierarchy is imperative; again, researchers have historically seen such a process as natural and expected. Moreover, it has been beneficial to society in that standing up to bullies and fighting for one's social standing is a vital aspect of growing up (Marini, 2013; Olweus, 2013).

The phenomenon of bullying moving to indirect Internet contact is well known. For example, Kwan and Skoric (2013) conducted a study on Facebook bullying. This sort of bullying is perhaps less directly personal than face-to-face attacks or physical assaults, but alarmingly, as the authors noted, it appears to be considerably more harmful. However, this could be because with more "personal" bullying attacks the victim can respond to the attacker (Kwan & Skoric, 2013).

A number of researchers have examined Internet-based bullying and identified the link between traditional bullying and cyber-bullying (Hase, Goldberg, Smith, Stuck & Campain, 2015; Tanrikulu & Campbell, 2015; Tomşa, Jenaro, Campbell & Neacşu,

2013). Those who engaged in traditional bullying behavior were more likely to engage in cyber-bullying (Tanrikulu & Campbell, 2015). However, there was theoretical justification for believing that cyber-bullying would also lead to traditional bullying and that cyber-attacks would generate verbal and physical in-person attacks as well (Hase et al., 2015; Tomşa et al., 2013). If the cycle is self-perpetuating, that suggests a major social problem; as per Kwan and Skoric (2013), "Cyber-bullying is even more harmful than in-person bullying" (p. 20).

This problem derived from the fact that no consensus on the causes of school bullying occurred. Part of the reason for this lack was, as mentioned above, it had only recently been considered a social problem and recently it had been considered preventable (Marini, 2013; Olweus, 2013). Regarding cyber-bullying, it may be widespread precisely because there are so few immediate repercussions and the victim cannot immediately defend or retaliate against it. In addition, this can again be related to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, in that an individual is more likely to make an aggressive move to increase social standing (i.e., bullying), but if no consequences accrue, others will be more likely to imitate that behavior as well (O'Connell et al., 2015).

Two possible factors of bullying behavior include differences in socioeconomic status between the bully and the bullied (Tippett & Wolke, 2014) and the child-rearing practices of a child's parents (Gómez-Ortiz, Romera & Ortega-Ruiz, 2016). Growing up in a harsh environment may lead to aggressive and dominance-seeking behavior; also, if a child experiences harsh discipline, especially the use of physical punishment, the child

might be more likely to bully (Gómez-Ortiz et al., 2016). However, researchers did not identify a causal link between these factors and bullying behavior; instead, they merely declared a correlation and were not able to establish a further connection to any significant degree. There appears to be little literature on the *why* of school bullying in general; the literature, recently, has focused on its effects and prevention (Eleni, 2014).

Furthermore, there appears to be little consensus on whether school bullying is a natural phenomenon that might be expected it in any school environment or that is caused by the conditions and upbringing that children experience. This can be classified as the "nature versus nurture" controversy writ small, in that it is open to debate and by no means resolved as to whether a child's personality is more inherent to the child or more influenced by upbringing and environment. Schools may need to understand how nature versus nurture works in school bullying, in that antibullying programs need to focus either on the individual child (nature) or their environment and upbringing (nurture). If a child is naturally violent and aggressive, that would be one thing; it would be quite another if that child's bullying were due to the social environment. Those differences suggest vastly different intervention approaches, and the lack of a consensus on what is best forms part of the research gap explained more fully in a later section of this literature review. I did not address this question in the current study, but it suggested that further research on the topic could be valuable.

Impacts and Effects of School Bullying

American society is just beginning to recognize the harm caused by school bullying. However, this includes psychological trauma to its victims, which can result in

lowered self-esteem, withdrawn behavior, and even self-harm or suicide (Nixon, 2014). Past societal practice has been to let the student fight his/her battles and for authorities to intervene only in extreme cases. However, most young people are not equipped to handle the stresses of these attacks (Espelage & Holt, 2013). Moreover, it is the responsibility of educational authorities to provide a healthy and safe environment in which children can learn.

Researchers have not studied the long-term effect of the psychological trauma inflicted by bullying due to the only recent identification of the phenomenon. However, it has been possible to identify correlations between adult psychological problems and to have been bullied in school (Copeland, Wolke, Angold & Costello, 2013; Nielsen, Tangen, Idsoe, Matthiesen & Magerøy, 2015). Causation would be harder to prove, in that many different factors could have caused an adult's psychological problems. Though it might be valuable to conduct a study of adult populations with psychological disorders to determine if those who were bullied in school are more likely to develop such disorders than the general population, the problem of defining what bullying is would inhibit such a study (Nielsen et al., 2015). A negative experience that is currently defined as having been bullied may not have been defined that way by earlier generations; adults who were bullied as children may not self-report as having been bullied when they were young (Copeland et al., 2013).

School Antibullying Programs

To reduce bullying in schools, researchers have cited antibullying programs as the best approach. However, schools must tailor these programs to their contexts. Contexts

may be specific to grade levels or geographical regions. Some regions may experience high rates of bullying. The educational policies of a nation also affect the design of programs to fit situations within that country. Also, implementation and outcomes of antibullying programs are dependent on teachers, who are the immediate caregivers of the students within the school environment (Hall, 2017).

Researchers have conducted extensive research into the strengths and weaknesses of antibullying programs (Carta et al., 2015; Cunningham et al., 2015). Bullying behavior is widespread, evident both in students' reports and from keen observations on school playgrounds (Carta et al., 2015). Studies have shown that prevention and intervention remedies occur through antibullying programs. Intervention programs are the most comprehensive approach to mitigating bullying in school environments (Cunningham et al., 2015). However, leadership must administer such programs at varying levels according to context and situation to be effective (Cunningham et al., 2015).

The research suggests that antibullying programs should include the establishment of specific policies and teacher training. Teacher training should include strategies for identifying and monitoring bullying behavior among students (Gökkaya, 2017; Burger, Strohmeier, Spröber, Bauman & Rigby, 2015). At the classroom level, every teacher should focus on integrating students' learning objectives through character education activities (Burger et al., 2015). Studies have also shown that effective antibullying programs contain provisions not only for instructing students in general but also for targeting specific individual students (Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huitsing, Sainio & Salmivalli, 2014). With individual students, teachers should engage individual students in

behavioral change. Multilevel intervention approaches result in diminished rates of bullying (Cantone, 2015).

Implementation of antibullying programs has become the main topic of bullying outcome research. A meta-analysis of a whole-school antibullying program revealed insignificant outcomes. Researchers related this lack of significant outcomes to lack of fidelity in monitoring the implementation of these programs. Effective programs result in significant reductions in student-reported victimizations (Oldenburg et al., 2014). In an evaluation of 48 classrooms, Flygare et al. (2013) found reductions in the number of students who reported bullying incidents in classes in which teachers actively implemented the program. These findings served to validate the need for initial teacher implementation of antibullying programs to reduce bullying incidents (Oldenburg et al., 2014).

Emerging evidence has shown that antibullying programs can result in reducing bullying in elementary schools but not in eliminating it. The motivation for designing and implementing anti-bullying programs is increased due to the risk of bullying; yet, researchers have thoroughly analyzed or evaluated only a few antibullying programs (Foody, Samara & Carlbring, 2015; Jeong et al., 2013). Of those, few studies have shown these programs to be efficacious. Also, the periods of evaluation in these studies were less than 18 months (Foody, Samara & Carlbring, 2015). Because of the limited evaluation periods, researchers compromised any suggested long-term efficacy of the programs involved, threatening the understanding of the applicability of available antibullying programs (Nocentini, Zambuto & Menesini, 2015). The lack of program

evaluation and analysis affected mass adoption of programs into schools; and only a few programs include whole-school approaches to tackle bullying. In addition, the focus of evaluation approaches to bullying has been relational aggression (Cunningham et al., 2015). Finally, these analyses were more likely to involve early elementary grades, when bullying was amenable to change (Cunningham et al., 2015).

Early and ongoing studies revealed that peer aggression has close links to social-emotional problems. Researchers who analyzed the social–emotional aspects of peer aggression and announced two important conclusions: socially well-adjusted persons rarely engage in bullying, and bullying is often caused by internalization and aggression (Obsuth, Eisner, Malti & Ribeaud, 2015; Powers & Bierman, 2013). These findings led to sudden attention from policymakers, the media, and educators. Such persons advocated for the development and eventual implementation of school-based antibullying programs.

Substantial literature exists concerning whole-school antibullying programs, including OBPP (Beckman & Svensson, 2015; Goncy, Sutherland, Farrell, Sullivan & Doyle, 2014), Steps to Respect Program (Low, Van Ryzin, Brown, Smith & Haggerty, 2013), and the KiVa Program (Kärnä et al., 2013). Analytically, the OBPP program is the most widely used for students in Grades 4–7. The OBPP is one of the most effective multisystem approaches, bringing together the school environment with comprehensive teacher awareness (Goncy et al., 2014). Through OBPP, schools address bullying through combining rules with school and classroom meetings. Beckman and Svensson (2015) found that the use of OBPP decreased the number of bullying victims and was also cost effective regarding the costs. The program is found to be more effective when schools

initiate early intervention through the program (Goncy et al., 2014) However, Hogland et al. (2012) found that replicating the program in an environment different from that in Norway resulted in varied outcomes. These findings did not suggest the program was not valid, but that whole-school initiatives specific to certain learning environments were unavailable.

The focus of ongoing research has been ensuring the effectiveness of antibullying programs in schools. Despite the need to have highly effective programs in place, studies to quantify zero-tolerance antibullying strategies are still in their infancy, according to Low et al. (2013). Low et al. (2013) argued that antibullying measures should focus not on punishment but also remediate the behavior of bullies. Kärnä et al. (2013) supported this idea by asserting that the victim and the bully are all victims and need help. Such studies are important because they close the knowledge gap and affect perceptions that bullies are entirely bad students. Although bullies receive satisfaction from their bad acts, they are likely to drop out of school, become criminals at an early age, and engage in constant fights both inside and outside the school setting (Oldenburg et al., 2014). The victims of bullying, on the other hand, become socially isolated and have slow learning progress (Hebron & Humphrey, 2013). Researchers advocated for school-wide intervention programs to reduce bullying in institutions of learning and described the sequence of events that follows physical aggression resulting from bullying: the action, the victim, witnesses, and responses from spectators (Powers & Bierman, 2013). These events often lead to the need for prompt attention of an administrator to calm the situation.

The literature on bullying also indicated the necessity of documented policies and intervention procedures for preventing physical aggression. Until recently, loopholes in policies and antibullying programs have resulted in the acceptance of verbal and relational bullying as harmless ridiculing in schools (Bradshaw et al., 2014). In addition, despite antibullying efforts initiated through intervention programs, studies have shown that students receive little information concerning empowerment to reduce bullying in schools (Beckman & Svensson, 2015; Goncy et al., 2014).

Effective Components of a Bullying Prevention Program

A program that works effectively should be school-wide to involve key participants (Flygare et al., 2013). An effective anti-bullying program consists of a number of components, including: (a) common access to bullying data among administrators, students, teachers, and parents; (b) data collection capability of the school counseling department; (c) revision of the curriculum to enhance use of positive approaches in the event of bullying; (d) parent education concerning the different types of bullying; (e) recognition of the contributions of students towards mitigating bullying; and (e) staff training on bullying prevention and intervention approaches (McCotter & Cohen, 2013; Nese, Horner, Dickey, Stiller & Tomlanovich, 2014). The sharing of data, especially between different schools, is critical. School counselors should consider creating a common antibullying database to access information concerning what works for some schools (Mullen, Griffith, Greene & Lambie, 2014).

Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders

The literature revealed distinct stratification in the roles played by bullies, victims, and bystanders. Therefore, one can distinguish between bullies and victims in a school social setting based on predictable behavior that affects their roles. Earlier studies showed that a school social system consists of roles played by bullies, bystanders, bully–victims, and victims. Role interaction promotes and sustains cycles of aggressive conduct (Yang & Kim, 2017). In school ecologies with developed aggressive conduct, bullies and victims exhibit distinctive manners: Victims are anxious, socially isolated, cautious, and insecure; bullies are impulsive, dominant, and temperamental (Shetgiri, 2013).

Psychologists have shown that similarities in attitudes affect the development of friendships among students. As a result, formations of powerful groups that resist or promote bullying is inevitable (Shetgiri, 2013). Additionally, bullies gain confidence in their tendencies to continue their heinous acts as their victims' distance themselves from reporting occurrences (Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014). Victims of bullying in school settings tend to report less as they advance in age (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). When the schools are perceived as a social system, victims and bullies establish diverse social organizations that interactively fortify bullying cycles (Rodkin, Espelage & Hanish, 2015). In the cycle, the victim is likely to maintain the status quo if retaliatory responses and threats do not result in shifting the attention of the bully (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). Because friendships among students occur based on shared attitudes, victims strive to reverse their status quo in the eyes of their perpetrators by forming

alliances or frequently reporting occurrences to the school administration (Habashy

Hussein, 2013).

The type of parenting that both bullies and victims receive affects the outcomes of

antibullying programs (Gómez-Ortiz et al., 2016). Characteristically, bullies' parents are

likely to be permissive regarding their child's aggressive and violent behavior. They may

physically punish their children and openly exhibit violent outbursts. The risk factors

displayed by victims are not very different from those of bullies. However, victims are

likely to have grown up in families in which the mother wields superior control (Gómez-

Ortiz et al., 2016).

The focus of earlier research studies was on bullies as the main perpetrators of

acts of violence and aggression in school social systems. However, emerging research has

shown that victimization may result in victims developing violent tendencies in the

future, even though they are "good" individuals. Evidence has shown that some victims

of bullying become bullies later in their school lives (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). A study

revealed that out of 41 school shooters, 71% reported having been bullied or harassed by

bullies (Espelage, Rao & De La Rue, 2013). Ongoing studies have shown a dynamic

association in which the bully–victim is at risk of engaging in bullying conduct

(Shetgiri, 2013). Researchers have garnered mixed findings regarding the role of

bystander students. However, most studies have shown that bystander students play an

important part in the continuation of aggression cycles in schools. According to Padgett

and Notar (2013), in 85% of bullying incidences, a role is played by individuals who

witnessed bullying incidences but allowed them to continue, either by reinforcement or

by not attempting to intervene. Student bystanders who do not intervene serve as encouragements to bullying behavior.

The magnitude of bullying in a school setting is dependent upon influential interactions between bullies and victims. Staff members' perceptions of victims or bullies, on the other hand, affect their response. These perceptions are important to the development of school culture, which, in turn, will result in either reducing or fueling bullying. The presence of influential adult mentors, uniformity of disciplinary responses, and consistently high levels of academic achievement were characteristics of schools with low bullying tendencies (Shetgiri, 2013). Veenstra et al. (2014) expanded these findings to include a reduction in bullying because of students' confidence in timely and appropriate staff response. Such an environment is an important substrate for an effective antibullying program. However, other studies have shown that students' perceptions of their teachers' responses to bullying situations affect the effectiveness of antibullying programs, thus affecting the use of teachers as key enforces in these programs (Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2013). Most students feel, overall, that their teachers' responses to bullying are inadequate (Waseem et al., 2014). There are inconsistencies in teachers' readiness to identify perpetrators. Researchers have continued to unveil teachers' lack of confidence in dealing with bullying situations that tend to emanate from physical aggression toward the victim (Burger et al., 2015; Goncy et al., 2014).

Although programs such as the OBPP have proven successful in many schools globally, unreported incidences of bullying usually impede the effectiveness of these programs. Studies have shown that as students advance in age, they tend to report

bullying less frequently. The lack of reporting results in the impending implementation of antibullying programs because of the misconception that bullying is nonexistent from the school (Cortes & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2014). Victims' feelings of shame hinder their communication with teachers and leads to isolation (Oldenburg et al., 2014). Cortes and Kochenderfer-Ladd (2014) and Oldenburg et al. (2014) supported the need to mitigate bullying by addressing school-level issues including teacher responses, climate, and comprehensive training.

Teachers' and Students' Roles in Bullying Prevention

The development of healthy relationships between teachers and their students is pivotal to the effectiveness of an antibullying program in a school setting (Gaete et al. 2017). Researchers suggested the importance of developing a warm relationship between the target student and the teacher to prevent that student from continuing to bully. Although the contribution of teachers is vital to the reduction of bullying incidences in schools, research studies have also shown that others must also be involved. For instance, the school administration should lend support to teachers during the implementation of antibullying programs (DeSisto & Smith, 2015). Empirical evidence has shown that teachers need impartial support from principals to deal with disruptive students (Garandeau, Vartio, Poskiparta & Salmivalli, 2016). However, although support from administrators is pertinent to the effectiveness of antibullying programs, study findings have not indicated the specific type of support teachers need (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Thus, the question remains concerning whether administrators should punish the perpetrators or help the victim. Neither has the type of support been specific to the

intervention program investigated (Boulton, Hardcastle, Down, Fowles & Simmonds, 2013; Yoon & Bauman, 2014).

Berkowitz (2013) focused on the teacher's interventions in bullying situations. Based on earlier research, the key variables in the study suggested that a social, ecological environment had a significant bearing on teacher interventions in bullying incidents. According to Berkowitz (2013), bullying involves not only the bully and the victim but also the contextual environment in which the incident takes place. In a typical school environment, bullying can occur in a classroom or the field of play. This study also revealed that most bullying incidents occur without the teacher's notice, reducing the teacher's intervention. Although teachers are instrumental in the implementation of antibullying programs, they are only effective if they witness the bullying or if the victim reports the incident.

Flygare et al. (2013) found many variations in teachers' attitudes towards bullying. Their study revealed that teachers' attitudes toward bullying affect the degree and nature of interventions as well as the emotional responses of the victims. According to Cortes and Kochenderfer-Ladd (2014), students have bias in their reporting of bullying incidents. Continued bullying by perpetrators is dependent on the teacher response to the incident. Some teachers intervene in a threatening manner while others do not intervene sufficiently. However, the study showed that the teacher's guide to the antibullying program did not include clarification of the teacher's position during bullying situations. Whereas antibullying intervention programs have a significant role in the reduction of

bullying, studies have shown the need for interactive collaboration in the school environment (Espelage, Polanin, & Low, 2014).

The question of who to empower to make antibullying intervention programs effective has become central to ongoing studies. Researchers have investigated the best approaches to improving the success of school antibullying programs. The findings emphasize the need to unearth the intent of the bullying student (Ansary, Elias, Greene, & Green, 2015). For antibullying programs to work in the long term, many studies have suggested students will be empowered during the design of both policies and antibullying programs. In their studies, Cunningham et al. (2015) and Gökkaya (2017) argued the need to design student-driven approaches to curbing bullying in both elementary and secondary schools. However, Flygare et al. (2013) disagreed with a one-size-fits-all approach to reducing bullying in schools.

Challenges to Fighting Bullying

While physical and verbal bullying is, may be evident in school settings, cyberbullying may not be. However, before cyberbullying, most antibullying programs did not exist. Bullies can use technology to harm their peers while remaining undiscovered for a long time. They may also employ cyberbullying at any time of the day because they have 24/7 access to the technology they use to harass their victims. Because of the dynamic nature of technology, victims may have access to unsupervised online settings, settings for which parents and teachers do not have access (Forssell, 2016). The spectator audience in cyberbullying is large, which compounds the pain of this type of bullying for the victim (Forssell, 2016). Consequently, antibullying programs must

include the dynamic nature of cyberbullying and educating students on their social responsibilities in this area (Hase et al., 2015).

One of the most persistent challenges to fighting bullying is that administrators, teachers, or researchers do not agree on its definition. One might broadly define it as any behavior that causes mental or physical trauma to a victim and is performed with the intention of establishing dominance over that individual (Hellström, Persson & Hagquist, 2015). However, it can also be more narrowly defined as a direct attack on a person, which to some, excludes many forms of indirect bullying, such as cyberbullying (Flygare et al., 2013). If there is a conflict on what constitutes bullying, and what does not, the ambiguity can sabotage antibullying efforts (Flygare et al., 2013).

This definitional problem is compounded by the fact that what may be a mild form of bullying (teasing, etc.) may be very harmful to the victim, and that harm may not be readily apparent, even to the victim. Any attack that lowers the self-esteem of the victim is potentially very harmful (Espelage & Holt, 2013). Therefore, there is no such thing as harmless bullying, though many older persons, including teachers, who grew up in environments that were more tolerant of bullying, might disagree (Espelage & Holt, 2013). A broadening of the definition of bullying means that more bullying behavior is identified in each setting; the effect seen by many is to over-emphasize the problem or even to trivialize it. Thus, many administrators say that antibullying efforts should be concentrated on the most egregious acts rather than seeking to eliminate all instances of bullying (Flygare et al., 2013).

The Law and Bullying in Schools

Every antibullying program occurs within the legal framework of a given state. Antibullying law literature covers aspects of court decisions and state-level laws. Studies covering bullying case law are few and not thorough. Earlier studies approached the subject of bullying in a general sense while leaning on individual cases (Sentse, Veenstra, Kiuru & Salmivalli, 2014). With this generalized approach to bullying came the introduction of support challenges to antibullying programs. Studies have shown bias in antibullying laws concerning the attention given to different types of bullying. In many studies, cyberbullying receives more weight than other types of bullying in school settings (Forssell, 2016). In addition, Hartley, Bauman, Nixon and Davis (2015) noted discovered that research had not included broad coverage of bullying in special education settings.

Little literature exists on state-level antibullying laws (Hatzenbuehler, Flores, Cavanaugh, Onwuachi-Willig & Ramirez, 2017). The focus of earlier studies was isolated antibullying laws. Researchers in these studies neglected a collective legislative sense about acts for the prevention of violence in schools (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2017). Despite this, the legal literature about prevention of bullying is widespread. Studies have shown that integration of bullying prevention programs into the legal framework of a given state is pivotal to the effective reduction of school violence (Hatzenbuehler, Schwab-Reese, Ranapurwala, Hertz & Ramirez, 2015). However, acts of bullying that result in court suits have evidenced mixed paths. Usually, the victim's parents sue the school, not the victim. Also, this may be because the data show that court suits are more

likely to happen after the victim has died (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015). Court cases that involve the parents and schools following physical harm to a victim from bullying constitute real threats to bullying prevention programs. Diamante (2010) cites a parent who sued the Anoka-Hennepin Independent District School in 2007 after a bully attacked a victim without provocation. The parents demanded justice, citing the antibullying policy of the school. However, the court ruled for the school, saying that the act was unforeseeable to teachers. Thus, although parents are required to support antibullying programs at a general level, such incidences can potentially threaten the collaboration with the school. Regarding cyberbullying, as of mid-2015, all 50 states across the United States had passed anti-cyberbullying laws (Childtrends.org, 2015).

Examples of Existing Case Law

There is, as noted above, a paucity of legal precedent in civil and criminal cases involving bullying, simply because the concept of bullying as a punishable offense, legally or by torts, is relatively new. Nonetheless, some recent examples illustrate the concept. A significant recent ruling was *People v. Marquan*, where a 16-year-old high school student had posted sexually explicit rumors about some of his classmates on Facebook and was prosecuted under New York State's antibullying laws. Marquan, the appellant, maintained that the law and/or its application had violated his First Amendment rights to free speech. The court disagreed, saying that speech was in and of itself a criminal act and was not protected by the First Amendment.

In a civil case, *Preston v. Hilton Cent. School District*, the plaintiffs were the parents of an autistic child who had been subjected to constant harassment and bullying at

the secondary school he attended. The cumulative effect on the child, who was seventeen at the time of the action, was that his grades had dropped significantly and he has significant psychological issues. The plaintiffs contended that the school had no done an adequate job of protecting their son from bullying and therefore sued for damages. The court, however, dismissed the suit, saying that the school was not liable.

The parents of a disabled teen who committed suicide after constant bullying filed a civil case related to the condition in *Moore v. Chilton County Bd. of Education*. As with *Preston v. Hilton Cent. School District*, the plaintiffs alleged that the school had failed in its obligation to protect their child from bullying and harassment. The court partially disagreed, saying that the plaintiffs should seek relief under the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; in other words, the action should not have been for tort relief but rather, as a civil rights violation. The court did not render an opinion as to the merits of the case at that time.

The above cases show that part of the problem is who is and should be responsible for protecting students from bullying. Furthermore, a patchwork of laws applies to the situation, in overlapping local, state, and federal jurisdictions. An even murkier question is whether schools that fail to prevent bullying are civilly liable, criminally negligent, or both.

Technology and Bullying

Bullying solutions provided by intervention programs can be more effective when coupled with the power of technology. Recent studies have shown that bullying prevention programs that embrace technology are twice as effective as traditional

approaches (Pierce, 2012). Controlling bullying even with a program is a pressing issue, researchers, such as Lamba, Sinha and Tripathi (2016), supported the idea of using information technology to deal with bullying. They proposed a system that reflects the need for a functional antibullying program that brings together parents, policymakers, educators, teachers, and students. Such systems use computers and social media to disseminate antibullying messages. However, the use of technology should not only mirror information sharing but also be central to all types of bullying (Parris, Varjas & Meyers, 2014). Studies have shown that even though technology has the potential to mitigate acts of bullying in school, its usage should be carefully planned (Morgan, 2013).

Researchers have not limited the use of technology to the management and sharing of data but have argued for managing technology to reduce bullying. Morgan (2013) conceded that technology is a blessing in disguise: Good use of technology can result in the reduction of bullying incidents in schools. On the other hand, Kowalski, and Limber (2013) reported that students could use technology such as cell phones and portable computers to propagate bullying against their peers. Because such devices have become part of students' social interactions globally, its usage has become the hardest problem to solve in cyberbullying (Hase et al., 2015).

Cyberbullying

Studies have shown that cyberbullying is harder to address and prevent than physical bullying. Digital technology is the most readily available medium bullies use to harm their peers socially (Nixon, 2014). Bullying that utilizes communication devices avoids in-person confrontation between the bully and the victim. Its impact is immediate

and has the potential to affect a sizable number of victims instantly (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder & Lattanner, 2014). Slonje, Smith and Frisén (2013) noted that the methods used in cyberbullying are so diverse that perpetrators gain an advantage over their victims instantly. Also, cyberbullying increases anonymity and often excludes bystanders (Peebles, 2014). Studies have shown that bullies often employ a range of tactics to hide their identity while bullying their target victims. Slonje, Smith and Frisén (2013) reported that because of the lack of immediate response from the victim, bullies have mixed thoughts about the consequences of their aggression.

Despite its widespread preference as a method of aggression, however, little conclusive research exists concerning cyberbullying (Della Cioppa, O'Neil & Craig, 2015). Ongoing research has revealed significant differences in gender patterns between offline and online bullying. Playground or classroom bullying is more likely to involve boys alone. Heiman and Olenik-Shemesh (2013) and Lapidot-Lefler and Dolev-Cohen (2014) reported that such patterns are likely to reverse in online bullying. Both boys and girls were cyberbullied, but girls show an increased involvement compared with boys. However, victims of cyberbullying involving girls are usually other girls. Beal and Hall revealed increased cyberbullying among middle school boys and girls. Nixon (2014) reported that cyberbullying has double the chance of leading victims to suicidal tendencies than offline bullying.

Morgan (2013) suggested that prevention of cyber bullying should involve the collective effort of policymakers, administrators, educationists, parents, teachers, and students. Such collective effort suggests impartial input to any available antibullying

program that the school has in place. Research has shown that acceptance of bullies is a major problem in both elementary and high schools. Tanrikulu and Campbell (2015) proposed quick teacher response to acts of cyberbullying. However, studies have shown that counter-measures should be reconciliatory, not punitive (Foody et al. 2015). The teacher's intervention using antibullying programs is paramount at this stage. Teachers can either design lessons to help prevent cyberbullying themselves or enlist the aid of outside experts, such as law enforcement, to do so. Such activities involve the classroom level component of an antibullying program. Utilizing students to cause behavior change in such situations will result in improving the outcomes of the program (Morgan, 2013). For instance, Merrill and Hanson (2016) held that teachers should utilize older students to teach their counterparts about the vices of cyberbullying.

Additionally, parents should also be involved in any school cyberbullying program. Meter and Bauman (2016) advocated the use of technology to communicate anti-cyberbullying objectives to parents. Schools have begun using media such as e-mail and newsletters to communicate with parents regularly in efforts to include them in the fight against bullying of all kinds.

Prompt response to any cyberbullying case is effective in fighting escalation in such cases. Teachers should not take any incident for granted. Instead, they should respond quickly, gearing responses towards promoting safer feelings in the victims while striving to change the behavior of the bullies positively. The final mood after identifying a bully should be one of fostering acceptance of the bully by the members of the class

(Graham, 2010). This approach should result in a safe climate for both the victim and the perpetrator.

Bullying Prevention Programs for Middle and High Schools

According to the research, bullying incidents are prevalent in middle level and high schools. The effectiveness of antibullying programs between middle show high schools shows little differentiation. Although limited data related to the effectiveness of such programs exist, researchers have begun to introduce the issue of lack of follow up once schools have adopted programs (Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016). Despite the limited data, however, earlier research indicated the importance of a collection of factors in any situation. Cunningham (2016) highlighted the need for including students in antibullying programs in middle and high schools to reduce bullying. Another important factor is the reporting of bullying. Reporting an incident is akin to witnessing it. If staff receive no information, the necessary interventions required will be ineffective. Cortes and Kochenderfer-Ladd (2014) found that as students advance through high school, they tend to report bullying with less frequency. Researchers also showed that high school students could interpret the meaning of antibullying programs better than middle school students can (Cunningham et al., 2015).

Studies on the effectiveness of bullying intervention programs have revealed mixed results for middle schools and high schools. Effectiveness is dependent on the type of bullying prevalent in the school setting. For instance, bullying results that threaten even the best intervention programs, such as the OBPP. Face-to-face bullying increases the probability of incident reporting and identification of the real perpetrator;

cyberbullying does not have such advantages (Modecki et al., 2014), suggesting bullies can continue harming their victims and remain concealed for a long time. Because intervention is dependent on prompt reporting of the incident by the victim to the teachers or administrators, this aspect of cyberbullying can result in diminishing the effectiveness of the program.

Child psychologists have argued that early interventions have a greater impact on changing students' behavior (Forehand, Jones & Parent, 2013). Consequently, middle schools are more likely to exhibit greater reductions in bullying following an intervention program. However, in investigating the effectiveness of antibullying programs in middle and high school, Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, (2012) studied the results of researchers who attempted to replicate the OBPP. Polanin et al. (2012) opined that more research is required to study different environments. Also, intervention programs implemented in these two educational levels will show little success unless combined with the interventions of policymakers, administrators, parents, teachers, students, and educationists. Thus, although certain factors affect the effectiveness of intervention programs in middle and high school, more research is needed to close the information gap due to limitations in the literature about to the two settings.

Effectiveness of Antibullying Programs

Addressing bullying problems among students is critical because the effects range from decreases in academic performance to physical harm (van der Werf, 2014). However, despite the universal design and subsequent implementation of antibullying

programs, bullying has remained a nagging problem. Olweus (2005) developed the greatest landmark in antibullying programs after long-term research on the subject. Other researchers followed suit with programs with the core intent of preventing bullying in schools. A close examination of these antibullying programs showed that they operated at four levels, which one may see as core components of an antibullying program: individual, general, classroom, and school (Olweus, 2005). However, research on the effects of each of these components to the overall prevention of bullying in schools is unavailable (Shetgiri, Espelage & Carroll, 2015).

Even though the literature suggests that bullying is a social problem that society must address through prevention, it contains little information concerning the evaluation of intervention programs. For instance, the literature on the effectiveness of the OBPP is limited, even though this program has been in use for a considerable time. Even though researchers attempted to replicate Olweus's findings, such attempts have been sluggish in the United States (Cecil & Molnar-Main, 2014).

The implication of such a knowledge gap is far reaching. First, lack of a large level replication of Olweus's findings widens the knowledge gap between the effectiveness of programs and their suitability to non-Scandinavian environments (Flygare et al., 2013). Many bullying prevention programs have been designed, but researchers have evaluated relatively few. Thus, policymakers, educators, and teachers have come to a standstill over the issue of bullying prevention program evaluation.

Although the multilevel approach suggested by Olweus's model has been the benchmark for bullying prevention programs, emergent studies have revealed mixed

results in the actual reduction of bullying. Such results could be due, in part, to sampling problems found in earlier studies, which seem to be inherent in bullying prevention studies. Thus, researchers must assess programs over a given period to generalize the results to larger populations. Depending on the methods used for sampling, researchers have to ask participants the same questions during that period (Olweus, 2005). However, this approach is still problematic for two reasons (Cunningham et al., 2015). First, using the same respondents may not be possible. Second, participants may acquire new meanings and interpretations of bullying over time.

Researchers have given little attention to differentiating between the theoretical and practical parts of any given bullying prevention programs (Cantone, 2015). Research findings have indicated that the success of a bullying prevention program requires the input of not only adults but also schoolchildren (Olweus, 2005). In addition, the focus of evaluation of bullying prevention programs should not be solely on the victim but should include the bully as well, even though the bully's actions result in making bullying a cyclic occurrence.

Pointing fingers at the bullies or the teachers or parents for the mixed results on program effectiveness has been common. Research had conducted before the work of Olweus (1993, 2005) indicated the bully was to blame. Since then, the idea of perceiving the bully as a victim has begun to receive attention in ongoing research. This approach has resulted in an important element in bullying prevention programs: behavior change for both the victim and the bully (Garandeau, Vartio, Poskiparta & Salmivalli, 2016). Until recently, researchers focused on the protection of the victim in the event of bullying

without probing into the actions of the bully. As a result, school counselors have begun to strive to reduce such aggression by working with the both the bully and the victim to embrace changes in their behavior.

Identification of the active participants in a bullying situation has remained another pressing issue in the successful implementation of bullying prevention programs. Bystanders are one of the general components of any school antibullying program. The question of their role in bullying has been challenging to both researchers and victims. For instance, the bystander's role is limited to the site of the act and is, therefore, diminished in cyberbullying. This applies to both students and teachers and parents alike. In addition, Lindstrom et al. (2016) noted the unpredictability of a bystander in one bullying incident witnessing subsequent acts of aggression for the same victim. Thus, in most bullying prevention programs, schools limit the integration of bystanders to the comprehensive training embraced in most programs.

Olweus (2005) described events that draw the involvement of bystanders during bullying. The pain of the victim usually results in an emotional shift in the bystander, resulting in the bystander either intervening or departing the scene. However, Olweus (2005) reported that response actions of bystanders during bullying are not directly predictive. Later studies revealed that fear of retaliation from the bully is the core factor in bystanders deciding not to intervene to prevent the continuation of aggression toward the victim (Padgett & Notar, 2013). Researchers have also begun to focus on the effect of bystanders in bully–victim scenarios.

What researchers have not addressed in most studies is the interaction among program components to curtail bullying. In the OBPP, Olweus (2010) identified four components addressed in any intervention effort: education, evaluation, intervention, and treatment no single component can prevent bullying. Instead, the success of antibullying programs is due to the regular interaction assumed to exist among these core components.

Scholars and policy makers have also been developing zero-tolerance policies concerning bullying in school and workplace settings (Cornell & Limber, 2015). This approach serves as the basis of many of the prevention programs currently used. However, zero tolerance results in prioritizing bullying as a physical act alone over other forms of bullying, such as verbal bullying. Thus, school staff not may be as concerned with addressing forms of bullying that cannot be categorized as overt violence (Espelage et al., 2014). In addition, with a zero-tolerance approach, no association exists between the role played by bullies and the continuation or stoppage of bullying behavior. Thus, the focus of the program is to the victim rather than on changing the behavior patterns of the bully. Attempting to prevent bullying in this way results in invalidating an intervention program.

Research studies have shown that early intervention to change the behavior of bullies is imperative to stopping aggressive behavior. However, the effectiveness of these early interventions is dependent on follow-up strategies. Lack of follow-up on the effectiveness of any of intervention strategy is what makes the implementation of any program a challenge. Despite these various drawbacks in the evaluation, educational researchers have continued to seek lasting solutions to the bullying problem. Determining

the effectiveness of antibullying programs is critical to this effort, of the effectiveness of a bullying prevention program has more far-reaching implications than imagined by the people affected.

Methodological Choices of Other Studies on Bullying

Most studies on bullying in all settings and contexts have been qualitative in nature (Patton, Hong, Patel & Kral, 2016). This is understandable, as neither the causes nor the effects of bullying are easily quantified. The case study approach, which I used in this study, has been popular, as the experiences of individuals who have been or are being bullied vary greatly from one person to another. A case study approach allows in-depth examination of individual experiences, which has been the focus of most research (Einarsen & Nielsen, 2014; Ramirez, 2013) on how bullying affects its victims. Many of the studies conducted on the phenomenon of cyber-bullying have been conducted through case studies (George & Strom, 2017; Salleh & Zainal, 2014) because such attacks are often intensely personal in nature.

I hypothesized that the lack of a cohesive nationwide policy on preventing school bullying (in all its forms) is in part due to administrators and other stakeholders failing to understand how intensely personal bullying can be for its victims. Some victims are affected deeply by even mild bullying while others are largely indifferent to even intense attacks. Therefore, it is appropriate to examine the experiences of individuals rather than trying to measure the reactions of a cohort, as will be done in this study.

Synthesis of the Findings

It is apparent from this review of the literature that school bullying is recognized as a serious problem nationwide, and that efforts to combat it have been widespread and far-reaching. The review of the literature also reveals that this effort is being performed in patchwork fashion. While antibullying programs have been in place long enough for researchers to measure their effects, as in Cunningham et al. (2015) and other survey-based research, no researchers have isolated what strategies were most effective and which program components were more effective than others.

Part of the problem is a lack of consensus on just what constitutes bullying. For example, many administrators did not consider bullying that did not involve physical aggression to be bullying. A similar definitional problem exists with cyber-bullying (Hase et al., 2015). In the case of malicious Facebook posts, etc., the bullying person often does not directly contact the victim. Moreover, any bullying that could be classified as psychological bullying causes more harm than direct physical bullying but often receives less attention from authorities.

The effectiveness of "zero tolerance" policies is likewise unclear. Such programs tend to focus on the aspects of bullying that involve direct physical attacks. This could be because such attacks are more easily identified (Goncy et al., 2014). The problem with "zero tolerance" is that it equates all incidents of bullying to one another, with no consideration of degree. There is certainly a difference between a single instance of mild harassment and a systematic campaign of abuse, but under zero tolerance, both are punished the same way (Nocentini et al., 2015). This can cause a backlash that

undermines the effectiveness of the program, as parents protest when drastic sanctions are imposed against their bullying children.

Antibullying Programs: Changing the Child

An ongoing and by no means resolved debate is over the root causes of bullying. Individuals seeking to establish dominance over one another is as old as society itself, and is certainly not confined to children. Therefore, one must ask if a child who bullies another is acting naturally or is expressing some pathology (Kärnä et al., 2013; Nese et al. 2014). Of course, one must suppress many "natural" impulses if one is to live and function in society. There are ways to channel inappropriate behavior or impulses (such as sports and games to channel and redirect aggression). However, the question is whether authorities should expect bullying as routine and devise strategies to combat it in general, or should they seek to identify those individuals who exhibit aggression and dominance. If one identified this, then the use of early interventions to counsel, then those specific individuals will modify their behavior (Powers & Bierman, 2013).

Individual-specific interventions include counseling, therapy, and mentoring. Those methods should include parental involvement (Meter & Bauman, 2016). A major potential obstacle exists, however, when the child's home environment is one of the leading causes of bullying behavior. A male parent who was bullied in school and was forced to defend them self may feel that the child is only doing like behavior toward other students (Gómez-Ortiz, Romera, & Ortega-Ruiz, 2016). It can be tough to convince a child that violence, either preemptive or in response to attacks, is counterproductive, especially if their upbringing is the opposite: that one needs to "stand up for" oneself.

This behavior by bullies as the necessity to preemptively establish dominance by engaging in bullying behavior (Sigurdson et al., 2015).

Antibullying Programs: Changing the Societal Setting

Bullies exhibit their behavior because they expect to realize some gain from it; this is usually some increase (real or merely perceived) in social standing (Hall, 2017). It is a perhaps sad truth of human nature that we often reinforce our in-group standing by stigmatizing, mistreating, and ostracizing members of outgroups. Bullying would continue if one could gain social reward to from the bullying (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). If a bullying child's peers applaud and encourage the bullying behavior, then they have reinforced that behavior, and it would likely continue (Swearer & Hymel, 2015).

An intervention program aimed at reducing or eliminating the social reward for bullying behavior should focus on stigmatizing such actions (Cunningham et al., 2015). If the leadership can modify school culture so that students view bullying as not cool, then bullying will decrease the bully's social standing rather than increasing it (Cunningham et al., 2015). Therefore, under this approach, peer-group modification of attitudes is the most effective strategy for intervention: changing the school culture (Gökkaya, 2017). These contrasts the individualized approach that is aimed at viewing students' aggressive behavior as a pathology that must be treated.

The review of the literature revealed that there is little consensus on the core issue of bullying prevention: should authorities focus on modifying the behavior of individual bullying students or on creating a school culture wherein bullying is socially unacceptable? This lack of consensus could be because there is little empirical support

for the effectiveness of one approach versus the other (treating the group; treating the individual). Some hopeless may see treating the individual as largely if the child learns to defer aggressive bullying behavior but returns each day to a home and neighborhood environment where such behavior is the norm and is rewarded (Tippett & Wolke, 2014). Conversely, the effectiveness of treating the group by establishing or attempting to establish antibullying social norms within the school depends on the extent to which individual bullying students are responsive to peer pressure. It also depends on the extent to which students cleave to the ideas and ideals of antibullying programs and communicate them to their peers (Cunningham et al., 2015).

The case study approach used by the current study and other past studies suggests that bullying's impact is intensely personal—its effects vary from one individual to another. Therefore, one could best understand the phenomenon and the problem by examining the life experiences of those who are bullies and those who suffer from bullying's effects. However, school authorities have tended to take a holistic approach to bullying prevention, attempting to modify the school environment and culture rather than counseling individuals who bully others. This is understandable, in that the overall approach is easier and more cost-effective.

The lack of consensus on the most effective components of antibullying programs impels the research questions for the current study. It is not clear whether antibullying programs should focus on treating individual cases of bullying or modifying the school culture so that bullying is less tolerated and accepted. This lack of clarity and consensus leads to the research gap identified in this literature review, which is discussed below.

Research Gap

It would be best if there were a national consensus on the best ways to stop school bullying. Resources at the federal and state levels could be channeled to prevention efforts that would be cohesive and national in scope. While student populations are diverse and differ from one another in ethnic and socioeconomic makeup, group dynamics as well as the individual causes of bullying are largely the same for all student populations. That suggests that there is one superior, cohesive strategy for preventing school bullying and that some components of such programs are more likely to be effective than others. However, there is no consensus in the literature on what that strategy should be or what those components are.

It is no secret that school bullying is a major problem. Thus, many studies have been conducted to determine how best to mitigate it. Those studies, however, were often confined to a single setting and focused on the effectiveness of a given antibullying program or intervention. Few, if any, of those studies, broke down the individual elements of such programs to determine what worked and what did not. I noted that such an evaluation would have been impossible if a study examined the effectiveness of a program. The only way to compare program components for effectiveness would be a meta-research study comparing the various components of effective and ineffective antibullying programs and determining which components were more commonly found in successful programs.

Of course, there is a further complication: how does one determine that an antibullying program is, in fact, successful? For one thing, one can only measure *reported*

bullying incidents. A drop in reported incidents could mean only that such incidents are being reported less often. Another problem is that of degree. Does, for instance, a 20% drop in reported incidents connote success? The problem is confounded by the inherently subjective nature of the very concept of success.

I designed the current study to help to fill this research gap by breaking down the components of the antibullying program at ABC Elementary School and asking faculty and authorities which of those components are most effective. The literature review has shown that a fundamental divide in antibullying philosophy is whether to address the individual bullies and their victims or to address school culture and environment. I hoped that the current study would add to the understanding of that issue.

Summary

The literature review revealed a copious number of studies on the causes of school bullying, antibullying programs, and the effectiveness thereof. What was not revealed in the literature review was any real consensus on these topics. All stakeholders recognized school bullying as a problem, but how to best deal with it remained an open question. At the heart of the debate were such fundamental questions as whether bullies were inherently so or that they were created by their upbringing and environment and whether antibullying efforts were most effective when aimed at the group or the individual.

It appeared that such lack of consensus was partly fueled by there being no agreed-upon way to measure success or failure of antibullying efforts. For example, if a school program emphasized that bullying was wrong and one should report it upon

occurrence, that might cause a spike in the number of reported bullying incidents (Hogland et al., 2012). Viewed in isolation, that statistic would seem to indicate the massive failure of such a program.

One might be forced, therefore, to admit that the success or failure of antibullying programs was a subjective measure, as is bullying itself. What constituted bullying? That remained a very open and undefined question, and ultimately, society might decide, rather than the authorities. One could look at the changing definition of sexual harassment and what was and had been acceptable as a parallel. Bullying had likewise changed in how it was defined, the extent to which it was tolerated, and the stigma attached to it.

I believed that the current study could add to the understanding of the phenomenon and suggest the best strategies to combat school bullying. The review of the research strongly suggested the need for consensus and the magnitude and urgency of the problem. The approach chosen for the current study was validated by the literature. Qualitative case studies have the potential for in-depth examination of the experiences of individuals who perpetrated, as well as of those who were victims of bullying. A major aspect of this literature review's findings was that no one-size-fits-all approach works for antibullying programs and that the experiences of individuals vary greatly when encountering bullying. This suggested the reason for a lack of consensus, in that a given strategy might work well in one setting but badly in another, even if the latter setting seemed virtually identical.

 The following chapter presents a detailed overview of the study's methodology. The study's location, population, and the sample will be described. The methods of data collection and analysis will be presented. The study's limitations, delimitations, and assumptions will also be discussed.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand educators'

perspectives on the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School.

The participants for this study included the teachers and administrators at ABC

Elementary School who were affiliated with the program. I asked participants to engage

in face-to-face interviews to gather their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the No

Place for Hate antibullying program. Specifically, I asked the participants about three

main concerns: (a) their perceptions of bullying, (b) useful components of the No Place

for Hate antibullying program, and (c) current elements available for staff to use in

identifying and responding to bullying. I asked open-ended and closed-ended questions

during the semistructured interviews that lasted between approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

I conducted content analysis to determine thematic categories from the responses of the

participants and to generate insights about the effectiveness of the No Place for Hate

antibullying program at ABC Elementary School.

Section 3 contains a discussion of the research method for this study. Provided in

Section 3 is a description of the research design and approach used for the study

including a brief discussion of the appropriateness of the research design. Furthermore, I

present an explanation of the study setting and sample including a discussion of sampling

measures. I also present an elaboration of the instruments, data collection procedures, and

data analysis technique used. A summary of the highlights of the research methodology

concludes the section.

Research Design and Rationale

This study followed a qualitative research design. Qualitative research was especially useful in studying a complex phenomenon such as the effectiveness of school based antibullying programs (Cohen et al., 2013). However, bullying was a relatively newly-identified phenomenon with growing interest about its implications in an elementary school setting (Flygare et al., 2013). Thus, a qualitative research design was ideal for this complicated subject through the discovery of the perceptions and experiences of participants who were directly involved in No Place for Hate antibullying program.

Qualitative research involves methods to investigate groups or individuals on an identified social problem (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi & Cheraghi, 2014). There are two main characteristics of qualitative approaches. First, there are the phenomena that occur within a participant's natural setting. Second, there is the study of the phenomena that includes all aspects including the complications and pleasing perspectives. A researcher uses a qualitative approach to study human events, interpersonal relationships, and social structures with the objective of understanding a specific phenomenon from a personal lens (Merriam, 2014). The focus of this study is the concept of bullying in an elementary school setting with a specific emphasis on the perceptions of a school based antibullying program, which is well suited for qualitative research. In addition, qualitative research questions begin with *how* and *what,* allowing researchers to understand better the phenomenon under investigation in an in-depth manner (Palinkas et al., 2013). In the same way, through the research questions of this

study I sought to determine the *how* and *what* of an antibullying program in an elementary school setting.

Furthermore, in this study I used a case study approach, given that the focus of this study was to provide an explanation for the effectiveness of No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School from the participants' perceptions. A case study approach allows an opportunity to understand the experiences, perspectives, and insights of a case through a personal lens (Merriam, 2014). For this study, the case was about the perception of No Place for Hate antibullying program, which I examined through the elicitation of information from the teachers and administrators directly involved in the program. Overall, researchers design case studies to provide an answer to a specific question about the case on hand. For instance, this study aimed to evaluate the perception of No Place for Hate antibullying program. I conducted personal interviews with the teachers and administrators in a semistructured manner (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). During the interview process, I had to remain attentive and take note of the expressions, questions, cues, or occasional sidetracks of the participants that might be pertinent to the study as the participants described their perspectives.

There are other possible qualitative approaches, including grounded theory and ethnography approaches (Lewis, 2015). However, I found these two approaches as generally inappropriate for accomplishing the objectives of this study. Grounded theory approach aims to generate a theory based on the qualitative responses gathered from the participants (Khan, 2014) while ethnography aims to examine social patterns, beliefs, and conditions of cultural groups (Ingold, 2014). This study did not seek to describe

behavioral patterns of cultural groups or to generate a theory about bullying, and thus the two qualitative approaches were suited for the study. In addition, a quantitative research design was unsuitable for the objective of the study as the purpose of the research was not to examine statistical relationships among variables (Merriam, 2014). Quantitative study requires quantitative data gathered from surveys and questionnaires; however, the purpose of this study required subjective, qualitative data through instruments such as interviews. Thus, a quantitative research design was inappropriate for this study.

Role of the Researcher

I followed all the ethical guidelines outlined by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), such as the protection of human subjects in terms of privacy and risks. (The IRB approval number was 11-15-16-006218.) I ensured that participants were not coerced at any point of the data collection and even after the completion of the study. I assured the participants that their participation was voluntary. I did not provide any form of reward or incentives to any participant other than providing findings and feedback. I only mentioned to the participants that the results of the study would benefit the society because of the knowledge it would bring. Consequently, I did not accept any offers from participants nor make any offers to participants outside the informed consent process (Adams & Miles, 2013).

I did not have any professional or supervisory relationship with the participants during the interview process. I carefully identified any potential biases or experiences to improve the trustworthiness, integrity, and transparency of the research. Yin (2014) stated that a researcher might often express biases through poor questioning, incomplete

recollection, or selective interpretation in which the interviewer found what the interviewer wanted to hear (Yin, 2014). However, my role as an interviewer in this qualitative case study was to gather a summary on the perceptions of the bullying program at ABC Elementary School. I maintained awareness of my biases through a journal in which I discussed my feelings regarding the topic, participants, and the information they provided. By putting those thoughts in writing, I could more effectively control for them. In addition, I talked to the participants in a prebriefing session to discuss the details of the study and their responsibilities as participants. Finally, I also bracketed my expectations about the results of the study. Specifically, I expected that staff would convey the perception that the program was ineffective, and I would take care to avoid interpreting responses through the lens of this expectation. I controlled for confirmation bias by examining all interview transcripts in detail, focusing not simply on evidence that would confirm my expectations, but also data that challenged these expectations.

Methodology

Participant Selection

Participants included both teachers and administrators currently affiliated with the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School in Georgia. Purposive sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) was used to select participants for interviews. Recruitment strategies for selecting participants occurred partly face-to-face, and I began the one-on-one interview by identifying current teachers and administrators with whom I had connections or whom I knew. A total of five participants consisted of

those whom I personally knew. Based on the recommendations of the participants with whom I had connections or whom I personally knew, I selected additional participants. Malterud et al. (2016) stated that in qualitative research studies, the sample size was largely up to the researcher. There were currently 25 teachers and 8 administrators working in ABC Elementary School. For this study, I recruited 13 participants. Specifically, the sample included 10 teachers, or 40% of the school faculty, and three administrators, or 37.5% of the administrators, affiliated with the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School.

Participants excluded in the study included students, as well as former teachers and administrators affiliated with the antibullying program but no longer affiliated with ABC Elementary School in Georgia. The reason for including the current teachers and administrators and excluding the former teachers and administrators was to access the most up-to-date and recent knowledge and opinions about the effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School coming from the direct custodians of the program, its implementation, and the functionality of its components.

Purposive sampling (Robinson, 2013) was used to select participants for interviews. Participants or groups of participants are selected for a purpose in purposive sampling (Etikan, 2016). Additionally, purposeful selection was effective because it allowed me to intentionally select participants who could present more robust and rich descriptions of their related experiences and perceptions about the advantages and disadvantages of the topic under investigation (Robinson, 2013).

Qualitative research usually requires small sample sizes as opposed to quantitative research that normally involves larger sample sizes. Robson (2011) recommended that the sample size for a qualitative research should range from 1 to 25 participants, whereas Maxwell (2012) suggested that the size of a qualitative sample should be between 5 to 25 participants. Robinson (2013) stated that in qualitative research studies, the sample size was largely up to the researcher. For the purposes of this study, I recruited 13 participants. Specifically, the sample included 10 teachers out of 25 and three administrators out of eight currently affiliated with the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School.

I secured the confidentiality of all materials gathered during the study. I provided an informed consent form to all teachers and administrators participating in the interviews and included the articulation of the procedural steps to maintain privacy, confidentiality, and the nonattribution of individual responses. The informed consent form clearly stated that the participant's personal data would remain confidential and would not be released without prior personal approval. The interviews were audiotaped upon the consent of the participants.

Furthermore, I contacted the interviewees through an e-mail invitation, conducted the interviews in a private setting, transcribed the interviews with the help of NVivo, and performed the content analysis on the gathered data using NVivo to manage this data. I remained responsible for ensuring that all interview transcripts, audiotapes, and other files pertaining to the study were kept in a secured place. I used passwords and locks to

keep the documents secured. I kept the files and documents in a locked cabinet in my office.

Instrumentation

The main material used for this qualitative study was an interview guide that contained nine open-ended questions (see Appendix A). I primarily used open-ended questions to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers and administrators about the topic (Roeland et al., 2014). I asked a group of three experts of antibullying programs to validate the questions and solicit suggestions to better improve the interview guide. I drafted the interview guide so questions were listed and gave this guide to the experts of antibullying programs for validation.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The main source of data derived from the participants who were teachers and administrators currently affiliated with the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School. I conducted semistructured interviews to gather the participants' experiences and perceptions about the effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School. Semistructured interviews followed an open framework, which allowed for focused, conversational, two-way communication between the interviewer and the interviewee (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). I followed a guideline but could still follow topical courses in the conversation that strayed from the guide when it seemed appropriate, indicating that there were questions designed ahead of time and there were questions created during the interview for probing purposes (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

I audiotaped the interviews upon obtaining informed consent from the participants. The permission to audiotape the whole interview was indicated in the informed consent form. I provided the interviewee with a copy of the questions prior to the interview so that they might have the opportunity to consider them and be prepared (Yin, 2014). I started with a general and introductory question to allow the interviewees (i.e., teachers and administrators) to tell their experiences and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School and other related questions. The subsequent questions were more focused and guided by the initial response given by the interviewee. I used an interview guide to ensure that all questions were covered and all participants were asked similar questions. The interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The interview allowed me to gain understanding of the experiences and perceptions from the study participants' points of view. To better accomplish this goal, during the interview process I remained attentive and took note of the expressions, questions, cues, or occasional sidetracks of the participants that might be pertinent to the study as the participants described their experiences and perspectives.

Data Analysis Plan

I used content analysis to analyze the data gathered from the interviews (Yin, 2014). Content analysis provided for a narrative explanation and makes sense of the perceptions and experiences of participants through identification of emerging themes and categories. The analysis involved the process of identifying recurring themes and patterns in the information gathered from the participants and in the analysis, I strove to interlink the thematic pieces into an integrated whole. Upon completing interviews with

all participants of the study, I transcribed each of the participants' audiotaped interviews verbatim, and I then encoded the transcribed data using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tool called NVivo 10. I assigned all participants a pseudo code, such as P01, to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of personal information. The transcribed data was printed. After transcription of the data, the data was returned to the participants for their review to ensure accuracy. I gave two weeks for the participants to review and return the interview transcripts after making any corrections they felt were necessary. Amendments made by the interviewees to their interview transcripts through this member-checking process were honored and considered final. All audiotaped interviews and transcribed files (printouts) remained secured in a thumb drive that was password-protected and was locked in a file cabinet inside my personal room to maintain confidentiality. Then I reviewed the transcribed data several times to gain an insight into participants' experiences and perceptions.

I used NVivo 10, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software tool, to assist in managing the transcribed data collected from audiotaped interviews. Once all transcribed data were encoded in NVivo, I then followed the process of content analysis, as described by Yin (2014). I sorted similar responses from the participants and provided codes for that set of information to identify emerging themes and patterns. Once the codes were identified, these were then reduced to major themes, which were then interpreted by me to provide insight to the question regarding the experiences and perceptions of teachers and administrators about the effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand educators' perspectives on the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School. Due to the complexity and the relatively newly-identified nature of the phenomenon of the effectiveness of school based antibullying programs (Cohen et al., 2013), the qualitative research method was found to be the most appropriate. As the focus of this study was to provide an explanation for the effectiveness of No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School from the participants' perceptions, I accompanied the qualitative research method with the case study research design. I followed all the ethical guidelines outlined by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), such as the protection of human subjects in terms of privacy and risks. Using purposive sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) technique, I recruited 13 participants, which included 10 teachers and three administrators affiliated with the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School. During data collection, semistructured interviews followed an open framework, which allowed for focused, conversational, two-way communication between the interviewer and the interviewee (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Following the data collection procedure, I used content analysis to analyze the data gathered from the interviews (Yin, 2014). The next chapter will include a presentation of the results derived from the methodology described in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Chapter 4 contains the results of the qualitative content analysis of the interviews with the 13 study participants. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program from the perspectives of teachers and administrators at ABC Elementary School. A content analysis research method was used to analyze the interviews, and NVivo11 by QSR was employed to tabulate the codes and themes from the interviews systemically. In this chapter, I present the data analysis and presentation of findings with the verbatim responses of the participants followed by a summary of the chapter.

Data Collection

The data sources were the participants who were teachers and administrators currently affiliated with the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School. I conducted interviews to gather the experiences and perceptions of the participants about the effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. I audiotaped the interviews and transcribed the recordings.

Data Analysis

Participants of the study included 10 teachers out of 25 and three administrators out of eight from the ABC Elementary School. The interviews with the 13 participants were then analyzed using a qualitative content analysis method. The patterns of the responses from the participants were noted and analyzed. I focused on the accurate interpretations of perceptions and experiences of the teachers and administrators. In the

next section, the themes that received the highest number of occurrences are tagged as the major themes, while those that received fewer occurrences are named as the minor themes.

Results

Research Subquestion 1

The first research subquestion explored teachers' and administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of No Place for Hate antibullying program in reducing bullying incidents at ABC Elementary School. Through the qualitative content analysis of the interviews, one major theme and three minor themes emerged. Ten participants indicated the No Place for Hate antibullying program was effective in spreading awareness on bullying to a larger audience. Subsequently, 10 participants indicated that awareness entailed the acknowledgment of bullying as a grave issue and the awareness that a support team was in place to help. Table 1 contains the breakdown of the themes addressing the first research subquestion of the study.

Table 1

Breakdown of Themes for SQ1

Themes	Frequency
Spreading awareness on bullying to a larger audience	10
**Acknowledging that an issue is ongoing	
**Becoming aware that a support team is in place to help	
Observing an improved behavior from all students	7
**Effectiveness of the rewards-consequences system	
**Knowing the proper behavior	
**More sensitivity to feelings	
Needing more improvement as little has been accomplished	3
**Needing more advertisement	
**Lacking dedication to the program implementation	
Observing an improved educational achievement rate	1

*Note: **Subtheme*

Major Theme 1. Spreading awareness on bullying to a larger audience. The first major theme established was the effectiveness of the program in terms of spreading awareness on bullying to a larger audience. Two subthemes emerged from the development of awareness. These included the acknowledgment of bullying as a serious school problem and the awareness that a support team was in place to help the victims of bullying. The discussion of the themes is found below.

Subtheme 1. Acknowledging that an issue is ongoing. The first subtheme was the positive effect of acknowledging that an issue was present and ongoing. Participant 1 stated that the program was effective in acknowledging that bullying was indeed

happening in their school and concrete solutions must be in place to solve the issue. In addition, the participant shared that various methods were being used to acknowledge and resolve the issues. "Well, we go to assemblies, the students know what bullying is and they know what to look for when it comes to mistreatment. We continue discussions on bullying throughout the year." Participant 3 added that that the program brought attention and awareness to the understanding that bullying should be taken seriously and actions should be done to address it:

> It bought it to the forefront and bought attention to it. It has given it a name, and anytime you give stuff a name you formalize it . . . I think it has a positive effect, it discourages it. It does not reward it or pretend that it's not there.

> Participant 5 echoed that the program allowed the students to be more aware of

the issue of bullying. In addition, with the acknowledgement of bullying, the sensitivity to the effects of the act also increased. Participant 5 stated, "It has made students aware of what it means to be a bully. It has heightened the sensitivity to feelings and the effects on others. It helps with classroom management." Participant 7 believed that the program allowed the acknowledgement that bullying was indeed present in their school, while it made the entire school aware that actions must be taken to better the conditions of all students affected by bullying,

> I must go back to the moral compass again, when the overall climate of the school is affected and everyone is on the same page it makes the entire school aware. It teaches character and that is something that can help the students become better citizens. (Participant 5)

Participant 13 added that with the program, bullying had been acknowledged and a discussion had been pushed forward: "I think that there is an ongoing discussion on bullying. I think that the staff is discussing the topic. They have a name to the problems that we have been having in the school."

Subtheme 2. Becoming aware that a support team is in place to help. The second subtheme that followed was becoming aware that a support team was in place to help the students. Participant 2 stated that with the program, students were now more aware that a support team was present to help them with their complaints and needs. With the presence of a support team, students have been observed as more positive and optimistic in school:

> I think that the students can identify when they are being bullied and know who to go and report bullying to . . . I think the program has helped with the positivity of some students, they are aware of the problems and are able to solve some of the bullying issues on their own. (Participant 2)

Participant 4 indicated that one effective change was the presence and availability of support for all children: "When you do have issues with behavior, you have more support." Participant 6 believed that the program created an outlet for the children, providing a tool that they could use to support and guide them with their bullying experiences: "I believe it's a starting place that children have an outlet." Participant 8 added that the program made the students aware that there was a formal place or structure that they could go to whenever they have bullying-related issues: "I think that the children are more aware of the program than in the previous years. I think that having a

system in place helps the children have some structure." Finally, Participant 12 expressed

that with the program, students now felt that they were safe and well-protected by the

community. Moreover, this was due to a greater audience that was now aware that

bullying was not tolerated in their community:

> Well, students feel safe, they know that they are in a safe place, they know that
>
> they can share any concerns that they have with any faculty or staff member not
>
> just their teacher and that just gives it a more positive feel and they know that this
>
> is a place where bullying will not be tolerated under any circumstances and the
>
> parents know it as well. Parents know that they are sending their students to a safe
>
> environment. (Participant 12)

Minor Theme 1. Observing an improved behavior from students. The first

minor theme that followed was observing improvement in behavior from students. Under

the minor theme, three interrelated subthemes occurred. The subthemes all pertained to

how the behaviors of the students have improved with the help of the program.

Subtheme 1. Effectiveness of the rewards-consequences system. The first

subtheme that was developed was the effectiveness of the rewards-consequences system.

Participant 4 stated that one effective feature of the program was the rewards system,

which encouraged the students to act in a more positive manner: "I think it has changed

behavior. It has had a tremendous improvement with the rewards system the students are

excited about going to the exchange store." Participant 5 believed that they have been

successful in the implementing of the program. The participant shared that their

consistency in practicing the rewards and consistency system is another factor on why the program had been effective:

> I think we have been successful schoolwide in trying to make sure the school is uniform in delivering our expectations; I think this has been a better year for that. It was set during preplanning and we seem to be consistent with rewards and consequences. We have a saying, be a buddy not a bully. (Participant 5)

Participant 11 shared that they also practiced the same system. "Well, students are more aware of their behavior. They know that they are rewarded for great behavior, and they know that there are consequences for unacceptable behavior." Participant 12 highlighted that the students were now more aware that there were consequences for every bullying act that they decided to perform:

> I do believe that the data reflects a decrease in out-of-school suspensions as well as in-school suspensions. Students show ownership so they think about what they are doing before they do it because they know that there will be consequences for what they do.

Subtheme 2. Knowing the proper behavior. The second subtheme that emerged was knowing the proper behavior that the students should embody and exemplify. Participant 7 shared that the students now know the proper values and behavior that they should embody and practice. "I think the awareness and the moral compass of the program is that students knew right from wrong. I think that is the biggest thing that has been accomplished, the students are aware of right and wrong behavior." Meanwhile,

Participant 10 emphasized that there had been a positive change in their school with the implementation of the program; also, suspensions and reports have been decreasing:

Well, I see a difference in my students' behavior. I like the fact that I can use certain words and the students respond and know what I'm talking about. I think that it's been a good thing because suspensions have been decreasing and there is more order walking in the hall.

Subtheme 3. *More sensitivity to feelings.* The third subtheme that followed was the development of an increased sensitivity to the feelings of others. Participant 5 revealed that students have developed an increased sensitivity for the feelings of others, as well as the possible effects of their actions on the other students. The participant shared,

It has made students aware of what it means to be a bully. It has heightened the sensitivity to feelings and the effects on others. It helps with classroom management. As we review our data they say that certain types of behavior have gone down. But, that is positive because considering the data from 2 years ago, it has decreased. (Participant 5)

Minor Theme 2. Needing more improvement as little has been accomplished. The second minor theme was the need for more improvement as the program had not accomplished much based on the perceptions of the participants. Two subthemes emerged under this minor theme. For the participants, the program needed more advertisement, and the school was lacking dedication to the program implementation.

Subtheme 1. Needing more advertisement. The first underlying subtheme was the need for more advertisement for the program to be recognized and effective. Participant 1 admitted that very little had been accomplished by the program and that bullying remained an evident issue in their school. For Participant 1, more advertisement should be done for the program to be promoted and for its goals to be accomplished:

> I think that very little has been accomplished by the program; I mean, I still see a lot of fighting going on in the school, so evidently something is not working with the program. It's too much going on. I think the program is helping with the younger students like prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first. However, in the higher grades is where the problems lie. I think the program is positive but lacks components for the higher grades. I think there needs to be more advertisement and more information especially for the older students. We need more rewards, consequences, training, and more talk about it more. (Participant 1)

Meanwhile, Participant 9 echoed that he was also not aware of what had been achieved by the program. In addition, Participant 9 admitted that there was not much of a difference even with the implementation of the program:

> I don't know anything that has been accomplished. We have people in positions to work within the program to make a difference; however, I really don't see a difference, I don't see anything to do with No Place for Hate.

Subtheme 2. Lacking dedication to the program implementation. Another subtheme was the lack of dedication of the key decision makers and stakeholders to the program implementation. Participant 2 then admitted that they were not as dedicated to

the program anymore, as compared to the initial implementation of the program: "Well we did something with the program once a week a few years ago, however, now we are not as dedicated to the program as we were previously."

Minor Theme 3. Observing an improved educational achievement rate. The third minor theme that emerged was the effectiveness in terms of an improved educational achievement rate. Participant 10 expressed that with the decrease of the referral rates, the achievement rates of the students should also go up. The participant shared some examples:

> When the referral rates go down student achievement goes up. I can also say that students are doing better on tests, the halls are quieter and there seems to be a difference in substitute retention they seem to say that they will come back as opposed to in the past they would say they will not return to the school. (Participant 10)

Research Subquestions 2 and 3

The second and third research subquestions of the study discussed the teachers and administrators' perceptions on the (a) vital and useful components and (b) the ineffective components of the No Place for Hate antibullying program. From the analysis, three thematic categories were formed to discuss and maximize the shared responses of the participants fully. These included (a) the vital and useful components currently present and practiced in the program; (b) the vital and useful components needed in the future; and (c) the ineffective components of the program. Table 2 contains the complete

breakdown of all themes formed addressing the second and third research subquestions of the study.

Table 2

Breakdown of Themes for SQ2 and SQ3

Thematic categories	Themes	Frequency
TC1. Vital and useful components (present)	Actively acknowledges and addresses the issue	5
	Encourages an improved and positive behavior	4
	Ensuring that the kids are well supported	3
	Encourages active participation from all students	1
TC2. Vital and useful components (needed in the future)	Needing a more consistent implementation approach	6
	Needing a stricter implementation approach **Needing to incorporate more values	4
	Needing to focus more on the higher levels	2
	Needing an increased program exposure	1
	Needing the support of the community stakeholders	1
TC3. Ineffective components	Lacking consistency in implementing the program	9
	Lacking the ability to determine the root cause of the issue	3
	Lacking full community buy-in	2

Thematic Category 1. Vital and useful components (present). The first

thematic category that advanced from the second and third research subquestions was the

vital and useful components currently practiced and portrayed by the program. From the analysis, one major theme and three other minor themes were established. Participants then indicated the following perceptions and experiences.

> *Major Theme 2. Actively acknowledges and addresses the issue.* The second major theme that evolved was the component of the program being able to actively acknowledge and address the issue of bullying. Participant 3 stated that one positive aspect of the program was its ability to make people aware of bullying as serious issues; this was because past programs were unsuccessful in concretely acknowledging the presence of bullying in their community: "Well, I think that it addresses it, it labels it and when you do that you make people aware of it, however, historically it has never been addressed." Participant 6 highlighted acknowledgement as one of the strengths of the program. With the No Place for Hate antibullying program, the administrators and school teachers recognized that their school needed to act against bullying, and they must constantly guide and monitor the welfare of their students:

> > The strengths number one is acknowledgement, you acknowledge that there is a problem, you acknowledge that the child can be helped or even the adult. It's hard to tell a student "don't do that" and the adult is doing it. (Participant 6)

> Participant 9 simply stated that the strength of the program was making the students aware of the issue of bullying- especially its negative effects on the lives of the victim: "Good question, it has the students aware of bullying." Participant 11 explained that, with the program, both the students and the parents were enlightened with the basics of bullying, such as the actions that constitute bullying and the consequences of their

acts: "I think the strengths are that it has everyone aware of the problem. I think that the students and parents know what is expected and they also know the consequences." Participant 13 added that one advantage of the program was the opportunity to talk about bullying in a more formal and structured manner: "The strengths are that we are talking about this elephant in the school. Which is bullying."

Minor Theme 1. Encourages an improved and positive behavior. The first minor theme that followed was the ability of the program to actively encourage an improved and positive behavior. Participant 4 stated that the program also encouraged positive behaviors to the students, such as being respectful to others: "It encourages good behavior it shows kids how to be respectful to each other and provides a positive learning environment." Participant 5 shared that the program created a positive environment, which also encouraged a positive behavior from the students: "It encourages positive behavior for the school store as well as the celebrations." Meanwhile, Participant 7 expressed that one positive aspect of the program was its ability to instill the behaviors and values needed by the children today. For Participant 7, most students were not taught the values that they needed to learn and embody; with the program, such morals and ideals were imparted:

> I really like it, I think in more schools there should be a moral compass. Most of our kids are not being taught morals in their homes, such as things that we are teaching here no hate. The school setting is the perfect place to teach this. (Participant 7)

Finally, Participant 12 believed that the program reinforced the needed behaviors to fight and discourage bullying: "I think it works well in reinforcing those positive behaviors as opposed to always punishing or giving consequences for negative behaviors. It cooperates the good things that are happening as opposed to the negatives."

Minor Theme 2. Ensuring that the kids are well supported. The second minor theme that followed was the ability of the program to ensure that the kids or students were well supported. Participant 1 stated that with the program, they could ensure that their students were safe and protected. With the implementation, they have successfully made the community members aware that they have a safe place to go in times that they needed support and guidance in dealing with the effects of bullying:

> Well, the strengths are that the students that may feel intimidated, afraid, or do not have anywhere to go or anyone to talk to we are letting them know that we have a place and people for them to come and talk to. This makes them feel better about themselves instead of feeling alone, they know that they will have someone to talk to. It helps there self -esteem. (Participant 1)

Participant 8 believed that they have an effective team in place to support the students in terms of creating programs that address bullying: "I think that we have an effective team that works together to come up with great rewards and incentives for the children to keep them on track." Participant 10 echoed that their team remained consistent in coming up with programs that keep the children on course: "I think that we have an effective team that works together to come up with great rewards and incentives for the children to keep them on track."

Minor Theme 3. Encourages active participation from all students. The third minor theme was the encouragement of active participation from all students. Participant 2 expressed that the program activities allowed active participation and involvement against bullying: "To meet and have something like incentives for the students every nine weeks like rewards or something they can relate to like activities with student participation."

Thematic Category 2. Vital and useful components (needed in the future). The second category was the vital and useful components perceived by the teachers and administrators as needed to improve the program in the future. In this category, the suggestions of the participants on the vital components needed to improve the program in the future are discussed. For most of the participants, a more consistent implementation approach was needed.

Major Theme 3. Needing a more consistent implementation approach. The third major theme of the study was the suggestion for the need for a more consistent implementation approach. Participant 3 stated that the program would be more effective if it was implemented in a more consistent or periodic manner; in addition, the cooperation and involvement of the other stakeholders would also help: "I would bring parents in, and have periodic sessions about it for everybody make it more of a family thing that is mandatory." Participant 5 suggested that the program should be more consistent and should be implemented school-wide. For Participant 5, the program's goals would be wasted if the implementation is unknown as well as erratic:

I would make sure that the rewards are consistent and incorporate something daily

in the announcements as a reminder. It must be consistent and it must be school

wide. If everyone is not doing the program it's a waste of time. It should look the

same throughout the building. I think that a positive reinforcement because there

are always consequences when we do the wrong thing so we need not forget

positive reinforcement or recognition. (Participant 5)

Participant 7 also echoed the importance of being consistent in the

implementation of the program: "I do not know if I would do any changes the only thing

I would do is make sure everybody is on the same page and follow through with it and

keep it consistent." Participant 8 shared that consistency was vital in achieving the

success of the program: "You must have consistency; you must build the relationship

with the students so that they can gain trust… I think the program is successful you just

must be consistent." Meanwhile, Participant 12 added that the administration and its staff

members were consistent in implementing the program. The participant then stated,

I think the changes would have to occur building wide just making sure that

starting with top that we all know the expectations and then monitoring those

expectations. It's one thing to have a training and to post something in your

classroom about it but we need to make sure that each person, both the teachers as

well as the students are aware of the expectations and are continuously doing

those. (Participant 12)

Participant 13 also recommended that trainings and formal program structuring were needed to have a more consistent program implementation: "I think that we all need training, and a formal definition of bullying and even a manual would help."

Minor Theme 1. Needing a stricter implementation approach. The first minor theme that followed was the need for a stricter implementation approach. More specifically, the school and its staff should decide to incorporate more values. Participant 4 stated that it was vital to have a system that was firm in following the consequences and penalties related to the different acts of bullying: "Having a good rewards system so that students know that are being rewarded for doing the right things and having a system in place where bad behaviors are acknowledged and addressed." Participant 9 echoed that formal policies and rules must be set in place for the implementation of the program to run more smoothly and effectively. The participant explained,

> If I could make some changes, well, first we would have policies and procedures in place which would be displayed around the school, we would have visual information in which we do not have. Bring in more people in who have experienced bullying of all nationalities. If I could make a change I would expose the kids to more and have it visually so that they can see it. (Participant 9)

Meanwhile, Participant 10 also touched on the need for the administration to formalize their policies regarding the program implementation: "If I could change something I would want more input from the administration as far as guiding and leading some of the lessons. I would create a specific time for everyone to focus on teaching the lessons."

Minor Theme 2. Needing to focus more on the higher levels. The second minor theme was the need to focus more on the higher-grade levels. For the participants, the school should also give attention to the higher-grade levels. Participant 1 stated that although the program was effective, there needed to be a stronger campaign in support of the higher-grade levels: "I think the program is helping with the younger students like pre- kindergarten, kindergarten, and first. However, in the higher grades is where the problems lie. I think the program is positive but lacks components for the higher grades." Meanwhile, Participant 6 also suggested that the program should focus on the adults, as they might have unsolved bullying issues from their past years in school. The past years when the program was still not available,

> I would start with the adults. I think the adults are still dealing with things that happened to them when they were in elementary school and especially middle school. Again, start with the adults because if I can't help myself I can't help you. (Participant 6)

Minor Theme 3. Needing an increased program exposure. The third minor theme was the need for an increased program exposure. Participant 1 again highlighted the need for program exposure; again, for the higher levels or the adults in school, "I think there needs to be more advertisement and more information especially for the older students. We need more rewards, consequences, training, and more talk about it more."

Minor Theme 4. Needing the support of the community stakeholders. The fourth minor theme was the need for the support of the community stakeholders. Participant 3 indicated that there was also a need for a community buy-in for the program to be more

successful: "I would bring parents in, and have periodic sessions about it for everybody make it more of a family thing that is mandatory."

Thematic Category 3. Ineffective components. The third and final thematic category was the ineffective components observed and perceived from the program. Under this category, majority of the participant believed that the program implementation was lacking consistency. Two other minor themes included the lack of the ability to determine the causes of the issues and the lack of the community's full support.

Major Theme 4. Lacking consistency in implementing the program. The fourth major themes that emerged was the lack of consistency in implementing the program. Participant 1 stated that they were currently lacking consistency in terms of implementing the program and sharing it to a larger audience. In addition, for consistency to be achieved, Participant 1 suggested that there should be more planning:

Well, they talk a lot about it but, there is not enough information in our classrooms to help the students strategize and problem solve on their own. There needs to be more planning for us to know how to implement it in its entirety. More assemblies, more information, make it public, let's not just talk about it at the beginning of schools let's keep it on going. It must be instilled in them, they should feel comfortable going to someone if someone is bothering them. It could not only be a child bullying them it could be an adult or an older brother or sister bothering them they should be able to tell someone. (Participant 1)

Participant 2 shared that one of the disadvantages of the program was its inconsistency. For Participant 2, there was no fidelity to the program and that the lack of focus and program variation only led to higher rates of bullying in their school:

The weakness is that it should be continued and teachers should be consistent when we use it, it should be used with fidelity or it leads to more bullying issues… Consistency, it would be a daily program and k-5 would have to implement. (Participant 2)

Participant 3 again shared the need to have more regular sessions on instilling the negative experiences of the students on bullying: "I would bring parents in, and have periodic sessions about it for everybody make it more of a family thing that is mandatory." Participant 4 believed that when it was not being implemented on a regular basis, students might find it difficult to follow and take the program seriously: "When it is not consistently being implemented, it has to be consistently implemented so that students will take it serious and know that bullying is not going to be tolerated." Participant 5 simply echoed Participant 4 and shared, "When it is not consistently being implemented." Similarly, Participant 8 believed that there needed to be consistency in the implementation. For Participant 8, the lack of program dedication only gave false hopes to the students: "I feel like we need to be more consistent. I think that if you don't show consistency you really don't have much to look forward to. It gives the kids false hopes." Participant 11 highlighted that the program was not being managed by the staff in a steady manner: "I think the weaknesses are that it is not run consistently by the staff." Participant 12 gave an example on the lack of consistency in the program

implementation. For Participant 12, new teachers should be oriented and trained on the components and practices of the program, as without the proper program knowledge, they could not execute the purpose of the program:

> I think that it is important to have ongoing professional development regarding the program especially when we are in a school that has new teachers coming in and out it's important that we stay current with what is going on just to make sure that it is being implemented with fidelity. (Participant 12)

Participant 13 echoed how the program was too diverse and inconsistent for many of the stakeholders: "I think that there is no handle on bullying here. I think that we all have our own definition of bullying, however, there is not one official definition for everyone. We need to all have training on this subject."

Minor Theme 1. Lacking the ability to determine the root cause of the issue.

The first minor theme that followed was the lack of ability to determine the root cause of the problem. Participant 3 stated that another issue was the program's inability to address the root cause and source of the problem: "It doesn't deal with the root problem that comes from home, just like everything else." Participant 6 shared that another issue was that, "The weaknesses are children are not being taught to let things go." Lastly, Participant 9 believed that the program failed to actually expose the students to the main issue of bullying: "We don't do enough to expose our kids to what's going on. In this community, they don't understand how to handle hate or bullying, they demonstrate bullying, but really don't understand it."

Minor Theme 2. Lacking full community buy-in. The second minor theme that emerged was the lack of full community buy-in. Participant 7 stated the importance of a full community involvement and buy-in: "Every person has to buy in from top to bottom every person in the school has to on the same page we are all on one team to try to solve this type of problem." Meanwhile, Participant 10 shared that the teachers were not in line with the goals and purpose of the program. In addition, the participant expressed that not all teachers were in support of the full program implementation:

> I think that the strength of the program is that it's set around certain ideas and
> commonalities that everyone can apply to their classrooms as well as the school,
> however, the problem is how teachers are implementing the program. Everyone,
> needs to buy into the program. (Participant 10)

Summary

The chapter contained the results from the qualitative content analysis of the interviews with the 13 participants. With the content analysis, five major themes were formed; all addressing the three research subquestions of the study. From the study, it was discovered that the program was effective in spreading awareness on bullying to a larger audience. More specifically, acknowledging that an issue was ongoing and becoming aware that a support team was in place would help assure the success of the program. Meanwhile, for the participants, one strength of the program was that it actively acknowledges and addresses the issue. Furthermore, the participants believed that there was a need for a more consistent implementation approach. Finally, the most ineffective aspect was the lack of consistency in implementing the program. In Chapter 5, the results

are discussed about the literature, as well as the recommendations, implications, and

conclusions of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Approximately 30% of students' report being bullied by their peers (U.S. Department of Health & Human Service, 2017). The effects of bullying are not only daunting to the victims and institutions of study or employment but also constitute a social problem (Hebron & Humphrey, 2013; Smokowski et al., 2013; Türkmen et al., 2013). There have been existing school-based intervention programs for bullying since 1978 (Olweus, 1978). Potential gaps are perceived in the effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program at ABC Elementary School in Georgia. There is a lack of certainty regarding the program meeting intended goals (Polanin et al., 2012). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program from the perspectives of teachers and administrators at ABC Elementary School. The empirical findings of this study could contribute to the implementation of the program.

I formed five themes that addressed the three research subquestions of the study. I discovered that the program has been effective in spreading awareness on bullying to a larger audience. Specifically, two issues were considered evidence of the success of the program, the acknowledgment that an issue is ongoing, and becoming aware that a support team is in place to help. The participants believed that there was a need for a more consistent implementation approach. The most ineffective aspect of the program noted was the lack of consistency of implementation of the program.

In this chapter, I discuss the results in relation to the literature and the theory used. I also present the recommendations and implications of the results of the study. In addition, I present the conclusion of the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

Research Subquestion 1

The first research subquestion asked how teachers and administrators perceived the effectiveness of No Place for Hate antibullying program in reducing bullying incidents at ABC Elementary School. Most of the participants perceived that the No Place for Hate antibullying program had been effective in spreading awareness on bullying to a larger audience. According to the participants, an awareness of the bullying issue meant acknowledgment that bullying is a serious concern. There was also awareness that a support team was in place to help. This was a new finding, as there had been no study about the No Place for Hate antibullying program of ABC Elementary School and how this program spread awareness about bullying. Previous researchers of an antibullying program focused on the strengths and weaknesses of antibullying programs (Kärnä, 2013), effectiveness of the programs (Cunningham et al., 2015), and teacher training activities (Flygare et al., 2013). The research findings support the previous research in which the social learning theory was used as framework with the conclusion that early intervention was critical in antibullying efforts (Orpinas & Horne, 2006), as the study was conducted in the context of an elementary school.

Regarding the finding of the support team, previous researchers focused on the roles of students, teachers, and school administrators on how to support these initiatives.

According to Marraccini et al. (2015), administrators must support teachers during the implementation of antibullying programs. Berkowitz (2013) and Flygare et al. (2013) focused on the role of teachers. Berkowitz (2013) revealed the limitations of the role of teachers, as they did not witness all bullying incidents. Flygare et al. (2013) revealed that the attitudes of teachers toward bullying also affected their responses. Beckman and Svensson (2015) and Goncy et al. (2014) both argued the need to empower students to reduce bullying incidents in schools. Espelage et al. (2014) asserted the need for collaboration among different stakeholders to ensure the effectiveness of antibullying programs and reduction of bullying.

Another finding was the improvement of behavior of students due to the No Place for Hate antibullying program. This agreed with previous studies of Beckman and Svensson (2015) and Cunningham et al. (2015), who asserted that to engage individual students in antibullying programs, these programs should focus on behavioral change. Morgan (2013) also stated that utilizing students to cause behavior change in bullying incidents would result in improving the outcomes of the program. Researchers also saw the reward-consequence system as effective. In addition, Cunningham et al. (2011) recommended that intervention programs should aim to reduce or eliminate social reward for bullying behavior. In relation to the social learning theory, if bullying behaviors were not rewarded in schools, students would be less likely to demonstrate these behaviors. In this case, students would not learn to demonstrate bullying behavior, as the entire school system did not accept the behavior.

One of the effects of the implementation of the program was that students now knew the proper behavior that the students should embody and exemplify. This finding related to the findings of researchers of another intervention program: Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). Bradshaw (2013), Bosworth and Judkins (2014), Bradshaw et al. (2015), and Ross and Horner (2014) concluded that PBIS was an effective intervention program when addressing bullying, as it promoted positive behaviors in all places in schools: classrooms, hallways, restrooms, gym, and playgrounds. Bosworth and Judkins (2014) and Bradshaw et al. (2015) concentrated on the improvement of school climate to prevent bullying incidents. Ross and Horner (2014) investigated the attitudes of students toward bullying and determined how PBIS modified these attitudes to promote positive behavior. From the lens of social learning theory, students imitated the positive behavior of other students because all individuals in the school promoted positive behavior.

Another effect of the program was that students were more sensitive to the feelings of others, as well as realizing the possible effects of their actions on other students. This was also the conclusion of previous studies about bullying and intervention programs. Van Noorden, Haselager, Cillessen, and Bukowski (2014) reviewed 40 studies to explore the association between empathy and involvement in bullying. Twenty-four studies involved cognitive empathy while 38 studies involved affective empathy. These studies explored a type of empathy with four categories of involvement in bullying: bullying, victimization, defending, and bystanding. Bullying negatively is associated with cognitive and affective empathy. Victimization is negatively related to cognitive empathy

but was positively associated with affective empathy. Defending positively is associated with both cognitive and affective empathy. There were contradictory findings in bystanding. Van Noorden et al. (2014) emphasized the need to understand empathy and its association to the different types of involvement of bullying as it could help the development and improvement of effective intervention programs against bullying. Similarly, Mitsopoulou and Giovazolias (2015) concluded that cognitive and affective empathy negatively associated with bullying. In a sample of 564 secondary education students, Del Rey et al. (2016) found that both cognitive and affective empathy negatively predicted traditional bullying and cyberbullying perpetration.

Participants viewed that there was a need for more improvement because the program had not accomplished that much in their school. The program needed more advertisement to be more known and effective. This linked with the finding that because of the program, there were more students who were aware of the issue. However, for leadership to implement an antibullying program effectively, they must promote the program. Leadership implemented most antibullying programs schoolwide. An investigation must occur on how these programs were promoted and ways on how antibullying programs must be promoted for them to be effective. Another issue was the lack of dedication of the key decision makers and stakeholders to the program implementation. This was a new finding as there had been no study that concluded a lack of dedication of stakeholders led to the ineffectiveness of an antibullying program.

Another finding was the measured effectiveness regarding an improved educational achievement rate. The relationship between academic performance and

bullying was explored previously. Van der Werf (2014) observed that addressing bullying issues was critical because the effects of this issue ranged from academic performance to physical harm. This also linked with PBIS. PBIS linked with positive behaviors and fewer bullying incidents. Because of this school climate, students were more likely to excel academically (Bosworth & Judkins, 2014; Bradshaw, 2013; Bradshaw et al., 2015; Ross & Horner, 2014).

Research Subquestions 2 and 3

The second and third research subquestions of the study discussed the teachers and administrators' perceptions on the (a) vital and useful components and (b) the ineffective components of the No Place for Hate antibullying program. The vital and useful components were further divided into two categories: components presently practiced and components needed in the future.

Three components currently presented and practiced in the program that were considered vital and useful were: (a) the ability of the program to actively encourage an improved and positive behavior, (b) the ability of the program to ensure that the kids or students were well supported, and (c) the encouragement of active participation from all students. These components were the findings that answered SQ1. The program promoted positive behavior. In relation to social learning theory, the positive behavior must be rewarded so that students would learn to imitate those kinds of behaviors. Promotion of positive behavior was known to decrease bullying incidents in schools. The collaboration between school administrators and teachers also helped in ensuring that the students had the adults' support due to the antibullying program implemented in their

school. The encouragement for active participation from all students was also included in the program. This agreed with Flygare et al. (2013), who concluded the program that worked effectively had to be schoolwide to involve key participants.

Four components should be included in the program so that it would be a more effective in the future: (a) a more consistent implementation approach, (b) greater focus on the higher grade levels, (c) increased program exposure, and (d) the support of the community stakeholders. The findings that there was a need for a more consistent implementation approach and increased program exposure were not new. Previous researchers have recommended that all antibullying programs should be implemented schoolwide (Ansary et al., 2015; Cunningham et al., 2015). Training and formal program structuring were also needed to have a more consistent program implementation. The school should focus on how to promote the program to all individuals at the school.

Based on the data, bullying incidents were more frequent and more severe at the higher grade levels. This was not new, as many previous researchers have agreed that bullying occurred in all grade levels (Kärnä, 2013; Lapidot-Lefler & Dolev-Cohen, 2014). This finding was also contradictory to the findings of Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, and Hymel (2010), who observed that bullying was more likely to be prevalent in lower grades, decreasing as learners moved into higher levels. Support of the community and stakeholders, however, was significant to the effectiveness of the antibullying program. Karna et al. (2013) and Lapidot-Lefler and Dolev-Cohen (2014) agreed that bullying intervention programs must be comprehensive and must integrate the perspectives of all stakeholders in the elementary school.

Another finding was that two ineffective components of the program were identified. The first ineffective component was the lack of ability to determine the cause of the problem. Olweus (2013) and Marini (2013) explored the root cause of bullying. Olweus (2013) argued that the reason bullying was a concern today is because it was not perceived as a problem until recently and that bullying had historically been a natural part of human behavior. Marini (2013) stated that the urge to establish dominance was the cause of bullying. However, the No Place for Hate Program does not address the cause of bullying. This finding contributed new knowledge in the literature of antibullying programs.

The second ineffective component was the lack of full community buy-in. This was new knowledge, as previous researchers only recommended that the implementation of antibullying programs needed to include all stakeholders. Previous studies did not explore reasons other individuals in the community would not cooperate with the practices and activities of the bullying program.

Implications for Social Change

The school climate improved when positive behavior improved in the school. When the school climate improves, the educational climate improves due to students feeling safe. When students feel safe, they tend to perform better.

The findings from this study validate the reason for the concerted effort of all the educational stakeholders in improving social systems for a better society. The social learning theory states that individuals learn and acquire their behavior by observing that of others. The study provided evidence that points to the importance of all parties to work

together so that ongoing efforts to combat bullying are sustained. All stakeholders cooperated in identifying solutions to the problem. Administrators and staff in Georgia schools may use the findings from this study to compare their bullying issues from a school to the issues addressed at ABC Elementary and come up with a solution that could decrease the incidents.

The insights from this study are a significant contribution to Olweus (1978, 1993, 2005), Cunningham (2015), and Hall's (2017) work on bullying and antibullying programs, which define what bullying is and what antibullying programs aim to accomplish. Researchers and practitioners could use this research and fill in the gaps in this study using the information from this study. More studies will be needed to determine whether the findings of this study are significant or meaningful to other populations or geographical locations.

The information in this study could also help in the clarification of bullying. The results of this study are significant because of other informed disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, and various aspects of curriculum development (e.g., who will be taught, how it will be taught, what will be taught). Given this, students will understand the phenomenon of bullying.

As a result, this study has changed my thinking on bullying programs. I now find myself implementing the components of the adopted program. I think that the shift in my thinking about the program helps with my classroom management, as well as, helps with my understanding of why there are bullying incidents at ABC Elementary School.

Recommendations

In this section, there will be two categories of recommendations. The first is the recommendations for action based on the results of the study. The second is the recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Action

One of the findings in the study was about awareness and promotion of the program. School administrators should evaluate how they promote the program and how they make individuals in the school aware of the program. School administrators could try to determine the most effective way to promote the program to increase awareness about the program. Awareness of the program was one of the measurements of the program's effectiveness.

Another salient theme in the findings was the need for all stakeholders to work together to ensure the effectiveness of the program. School administrators should create a way so that students, teachers, school personnel, and parents have a similar understanding of the objectives and practices of the program. In this way, the program remained consistent. Moreover, school administrators should ask the help of each stakeholder—including students, teachers, school personnel, and parents—so that each stakeholder is accountable to other stakeholders with the aim of reducing and eliminating bullying behavior in school. In line with this, school administrators needed to discuss the need for antibullying programs and the benefits of such programs to make each stakeholder more committed to promoting and implementing the program.

Policy-makers could also evaluate why the teachers and school administrators considered the No Place for Hate Program of ABC Elementary School effective. They could assess whether this program could be effective in other schools, as well. They could also conduct a trial implementation of the No Place for Hate Program in other schools.

The findings of this study will be disseminated through emailed attached copy and the printing of a hard copy. The school administrators will be given a hard copy. The administrators will be encouraged to share the study and results with teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders.

Recommendations for Further Study

The first recommendation is to broaden the population and sample of the study. I only interviewed teachers and administrators in the current study. Synthesizing the perspectives of students, teachers, administrators, and parents would produce a more holistic perspective of the effectiveness of the antibullying program.

The second recommendation is to compare the No Place for Hate Program of ABC Elementary School to other antibullying programs in other schools. Participants in this study perceived that the No Place for Hate Program was effective and that there were only a few aspects that could improve it, it would be good to determine what made it effective compared to other programs. According to participants, one effective element was an increase in awareness of the problem of bullying and understanding that a support team was in place to help resolve any bullying situations. However, because participants also noted that a key weakness in the program at ABC Elementary was its consistent

implementation, it is difficult to determine what elements of the program, if consistently implemented, would be successful. Comparison with other programs is difficult as a result, and future researchers should investigate schools where implementation has been consistent and where full assessment of the program can then be conducted.

The third recommendation is to use a mixed-method study. The two research methodologies could provide advantages and benefits to the current study. The quantitative research could strengthen the validity of the effectiveness of the program by measuring the variables on an instrument, so that numbered data can be analyzed. The quantitative data could also show the existence of relationships between variables that makes the program effective. The qualitative part could provide a contextual description on the statistical data by understanding the groups or individuals attribute to a social or human problem. The qualitative data could also provide detailed accounts on reasons the program is effective based on the actual experiences of the school administrators and teachers.

Summary

My experience in this study made me understand aspects of antibullying programs that would make it effective or not. I acknowledge that bullying is a controversial issue and an important one in the context of schools. As a researcher, I was afraid that my view about bullying could affect how I interpreted the results. Yin (2014) stated that biases might often be expressed through poor questioning, incomplete recollection, and selective interpretation, where the interviewer found what the interviewer wanted to hear. I tried to limit researcher bias as much as possible. As the interviewer, I only asked the

questions in the interview guide and asked follow-up questions meant to clarify the statement of the interviewees. I tried my best to just ensure that my follow-up questions were not leading the participants to answer in a way on. I conducted a bracketing session to limit researcher bias. I already had a belief about bullying before this study. Due to the results of the study, I remain hopeful that bullying and even cyberbullying can cease to exist with the cooperation of both adults and students.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of the No Place for Hate antibullying program from the perspectives of teachers and administrators at ABC Elementary School. Several findings emerged in this study. First, the most ineffective aspect of the program was the lack of consistency of implementation of the program. However, the No Place for Hate antibullying program has been effective in spreading awareness on bullying to a larger audience. The most effective aspect of the program was that it had (a) the ability of the program to actively encourage an improved and positive behavior, (b) the ability of the program to ensure that the kids or students are well supported, and (c) the encouragement of active participation from all students. While bullying remains a problem, studies such a this can work toward making strides to combat its effects.

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Appendix A: Teacher Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of bullying at your school?

2. Tell me about what your experience is in teaching and implementing The No Place for Hate Bullying Program?

3. How do you implement the No Place for Hate Anti-Bullying program both in and outside the classroom?

4. What are your thoughts regarding the strengths of the No Place for Hate Anti-Bullying program?

5. What are your thoughts regarding the weaknesses of the No Place for Hate Anti-Bullying program?

6. If you could change or modify any aspect of the No Place for Hate Anti-Bullying Program, what would those changes consist of?

7. Tell me what you believe has been accomplished by the No Place for Hate Anti- Bullying Program.

8. In what ways do you think the No Place for Hate Anti-Bullying program/curriculum has had significant effects on the overall climate of the school?

9. What components do you feel are necessary in a successful anti-bullying program/curriculum?

Appendix B: Information

You have agreed to participate in an interview for the study *The Perception of a School-based Anti-Bullying Program in an Elementary School*. Please fill out this information questionnaire so that I can obtain some general information prior to the interview. Your responses will be kept confidential. Please write in (where appropriate) or circle your response.

1. **Gender**:   Female   Male

2. **Specify your race/ethnicity**:

_____

3. **Highest degree completed**:

_____

4. **Total years in education**: _____

5. **Years in current position**: _____

6. **Have you received bully training within the past year?** Yes   No

Appendix C: E-mail to Faculty

Good Morning Colleagues,

Many of you may or may not know that I am enrolled as a student at Walden University in the Ed.D program. For my degree, I will be conducting a research study to investigate our current anti-bullying program that has been in place for 5 years. The plan is your perceptions of the program by interview; I hope to interview 7-10 teachers, and 2-3 administrators.

The title of the research study will be *The Perception of a School-based Anti-Bullying Program in an Elementary School*. If you would be interested in participating in the research, please contact me at 404-542-5076, or e-mail me at jacquelyn.sims@waldenu.edu.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Jacquelyn Sims

Walden University

Appendix D: Informed Consent

Introduction

My name is Jacquelyn Sims I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am conducting a research study to investigate Teachers' Perceptions of a School-based Anti-bullying Program in ABC Elementary School.   I am completing this research as part of my doctoral degree. I invite you to participate in an interview regarding the No Place for Hate Anti-bullying program.

Activities

If you participate in this research, you will respond to:

1. Corresponding qualitative research questions. These questions are about your experiences. They concern perceptions of the anti-bullying program No Place for Hate. The interview will last about thirty to forty-five minutes.

Eligibility

You are eligible to participate in this research if you:

1. Teach at ABC Elementary School.

2. Have been teaching at ABC Elementary for the last 5years.

3. Have knowledge of the No Place for Hate Program at ABC Elementary School.

Risks

There will be minimal risks in this study. You will not have proprietary or confidential information disclosed. Your identity, the identity of your school, as well as your

responses will be kept confidential. You may stop your participation at any time and refuse to respond to any questions that you do not wish to answer.

Benefits

A possible benefit of your being part of this study is to shed light on the No Place for Hate anti-bullying program at ABC Elementary and its effectiveness on bullying. This study will provide knowledge on the improvement of the No Place for Hate anti-bulling program that will benefit the school and stakeholders.

Confidentiality

The information you provide will be kept confidential to the extent allowable by law. Some steps I will take to keep your identity confidential are: I will use a number to identify you and pseudonyms will be used to protect you and your school's identity. Your name or personal information will not link to the data. Only Jacquelyn Sims the researcher and Dr. Szecsy my chair will see the coded data. I will also keep the collected data stored on a secure hard drive that is password protected. The data will be secure in a locked file cabinet for confidentiality. I will keep your data for seven years, afterward, I will delete the electronic data and destroy the paper data.

Contact Information

If you have questions, you can contact me at Jacquelyn.sims@waldenu.edu. Phone: (404) 542-5076.

My dissertation chair's name is Dr. Elsie Szecsy who works at Walden University

and is supervising me on the research. You can contact her at

elsie.szecsy@waldenu.edu.

If you have questions about your rights in the research, or if a problem has occurred,

or if harm occurs during your participation, please contact the Institutional Review

Board at irb@waldenu.edu.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, or if you stop

participation after you start, there will be no penalty to you.

Audiotaping

I would like to use a voice recorder to record your responses. You can still participate

if you do not wish to be recorded.

Please sign here if I can record you: _____

Signature

A signature indicates your understanding of this consent form. You will receive a copy

of the form for your information.

_____

Participant Signature   Printed Name   Date

_____

Researcher Signature   Printed Name   Date