

Teachers' Perspectives about an Anti-bullying Program

Robin Rawlings Lester Ed.D

Nancy Maldonado PhD

Paper presented at the Annual Mid-South Educational Research (MSERA) conference

November 8, 2013

Pensacola, Florida

Abstract

Bullying has become a nationwide concern at the K-12 level. Guided by the theoretical framework of social learning theory, this study explored the perceptions of secondary education teachers about the bully-proofing program in place at one target middle school. Despite the target middle school's anti-bullying program, the incidence of bullying had increased during the first and third year of the program's implementation. Because the teachers had first-hand knowledge of the target middle school's anti-bullying program, the study participants included four teachers, and data were collected using semi-structured, open-ended, audio taped interviews. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by coding in order to identify emerging themes. Themes that emerged included the content of the anti-bullying curriculum, the contributions of the anti-bullying program, recommendations for effective anti-bullying programs, and teacher readiness and preparedness to implement curriculum. Reflexivity, member checking, and peer review were used to enhance trustworthiness of the study. Findings indicated that participants believe there is a need for an up-to-date anti-bullying program at the target school and a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of school stakeholders. Study findings could have educational policy implications as well as positive social change implications at the local and national level as teachers and other stakeholders work together in order to combat bullying in schools and create a safe learning environment for students.

Introduction

In the past year, K-12 schools throughout the United States have garnered nationwide attention because of recent bullying problems (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011). Bullying impacts schools differently (Gurney, 2012). Bullying affects student performance and self-regard, and it creates an environment of hostility in schools (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2011; Phillips & Corning, 2012). Many factors contribute to the problem, including socioeconomic status, low self-esteem, peer pressure, and family life (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Kueny & Zirkel, 2012). By explaining to educators, administrators, and counselors how bullies are perceived, study findings could add to the body of knowledge about the bullying problem in the public school setting and may help decrease the bullying problem in schools.

The American Medical Association (2002) identified bullying as verbal, physical, or nonverbal/nonphysical: Verbal bullying includes taunting, teasing, and name-calling; physical manifestations include hitting, kicking, and destroying or stealing personal property. Olweus (1993) characterized the common forms of nonverbal or physical bullying as verbal intimidation, teasing, name calling and spreading rumors; the less common forms are threatening and obscene gestures, purposeful exclusion, and cyber-bullying.

Olweus (1993) found victims of bullying and bullies have similar characteristics. In general, victims are students who have poor social skills and lack the confidence to seek help from adults. Oftentimes, victims either assume responsibility for the bullying or they may bully others. Most bullies engage in acts of aggression, coercion, and

intimidation on a daily basis. They are characterized as having low academic skills, poor grades, no role models, and a lack of empathy (Olweus, 1993). According to Olweus, bullies are more likely to engage in criminal behavior as adults. When compared to their non-bullied peers, they are five times more likely to appear in juvenile court. Of students who displayed bullying behavior in sixth through ninth grade, 60% had at least one criminal conviction prior to the age of 25.

Prior research found that bullying in schools negatively impacts the overall school climate (Myers-Adams & Conner, 2008). Bullying problems have always plagued schools (Carney & Merrell, 2001). Verbal teasing and intimidation are the most common forms of bullying in U.S. schools (Nansel et al., 2001). One study found that victims of bullying struggle with self-esteem, anxiety, depression, feelings of isolation, and posttraumatic stress (Eisenberg & Aalsma, 2005). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 includes a provision that requires schools to create a safe learning environment and equal learning opportunities for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011a).

Yet, the majority of current research on bullying does not include the viewpoints of teachers, counselors, and administrators. Now that schools across the U.S. have implemented various anti-bullying programs, it is necessary to investigate the perceptions of teachers, counselors, and administrators regarding their experiences with bullying and their school's response to the intervention.

The larger study investigated perceptions of teachers, counselors, and administrators about bullying. In addition to benefiting school personnel, addressing the issue of bullying could benefit society. Not only are schools responsible for providing

students with a high-quality education, they are also responsible for developing their social skills and helping them succeed in the world. Decreasing bullying in schools at an early age may prevent bullies from becoming criminals as adults. From a psychological perspective, research addresses the roles of bullies and victims (Koiv, 2012; Murphy & Faulkner, 2011). However, examining the viewpoints of teachers may increase a school's awareness of bullying and its ability to deal with bullying in the future.

One middle school in Central Florida had a three-year, bully-proofing program in place, and it used a significant amount of funds for implementation and staff training (J. Dominquez, personal communication, August 21, 2010). Personnel at this Central Florida middle school worked tirelessly to decrease bullying. To create better guidelines for decreasing bullying in its schools, the school district formed a partnership with the University of Central Florida in 2008. During the planning year, there were 219 bullying-related incidents during the 2008-2009 school year, including referrals that administrators coded as bullying incidents: (a) fighting, (b) hitting/striking, (c) and scuffling/horseplay. The implementation year of 2009-2010 yielded the highest number of referrals, with a total of bullying incidents of 713. During the 2010-2011 school year, the numbers decreased, with a total of 304 bully-related referrals. And during the 2011-2012 school year the totals increased only by one, reaching 305 total bully-related referrals.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of secondary education teachers, regarding the bully-proofing program in place at the target public middle school?

2. What have been the individual experiences of teachers since the bully-proofing program was implemented?

Review of the Literature

This review of the literature includes theory and various bullying topics. National perspectives of bully-proofing curriculums are provided to describe the perceptions of school-related personnel, parents, students, and community member. Formal anti-bullying programs began with Olweus in 1993 and have continued until today.

Theoretical Frameworks

Bandura's social learning theory helps to explain bullying. Social learning theory is a school of thought that implies that violent actions are a product of learned behaviors and observation (Bandura, 1973). The theory suggests that children learn to be violent as a result of imitating role models and being exposed to violent media content. Thus, it is thought that students' home lives have a direct impact on whether they display aggressive behaviors (Berkowitz, 1993). Bandura's major assertion is that individuals learn by observing others.

Each stage of Erickson's theory concentrates on overcoming conflict related to the events that occur during a person's developmental stage. Erickson (1959) stated that individuals develop a sense of identity through psychological and mental development while associating with others. In relation to bullying, if victims of bullying fail to overcome the conflict, they are unable to successfully develop in that phase. Along the same lines, if bullies fail to control their aggression and fail to adapt positive relations with peers, this will affect their development at the current stage.

Historical Context

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) was the first comprehensive, anti-bullying intervention program implemented and evaluated in a school setting (Olweus, 1993). Many U.S schools not only model their whole-school programs after the OBPP, but they also incorporate its core features, including “increased adult supervision on school grounds and the establishment of an anti-bullying committee” (Smith, Cousins, & Stewart, 2005, p. 743). In addition, teachers integrate anti-bullying components in the classroom when they align lessons to anti-bullying themes and establishing behavior codes. Parents are also actively involved in school-wide anti-bullying programs. Within the context of these programs, schools also invite and involve community leaders and stakeholders in school initiatives (Olweus, 1993).

Because the OBPP involves parents and community leaders, schools have integrated some of its components into their anti-bullying programs (Olweus, 1993; 2001). Olweus (1993) described his approach as a whole-school tactic designed to counter bullying in schools. With 30 years of research supporting its effectiveness, the OBPP incorporates four components: (a) school-level components, (b) individual-level components, (c) classroom-level components, and (d) community-level components (Harlow & Roberts, 2010; Olweus, 1993).

School Violence and Bullying

Bullying is defined as an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim in which the bully demonstrates aggressive behavior as well as intent to physically or verbally harm another individual (Olweus, 1993). However, children and adults have

varying definitions of bullying. Students' descriptions of bullying are contextual and factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and peer group associations influence their descriptions (Phillips, 2007). In order to implement effective anti-bullying programs in schools, it is critical to understand the psychological components of bullying as well as teacher, counselor, and administrator perceptions of bullying.

Accordingly, teachers, counselors, and administrators should remove anything that threatens adolescents' health and well-being, educational goals, and cognitive development (Fredland, 2008). When comparing bullying problems at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, NCES (2011) information indicated bullying problems were most prevalent at the middle school level, with 43% at the middle school level, 22% at the high school level, and 21% at the elementary school level during the 2005-06 school year. At least 30% of school children will experience some sort of bullying during their school careers (Nansel et al., 2001).

Physical and Psychological Aspects of Bullying

The developmental changes that occur during a person's early adolescent years impact biological, cognitive, and social development. First, biological changes during early adolescence are dramatic and have direct connections to bullying (Susman & Rogel, 2004). During adolescence, boys and girls enter pubertal development, which complicates their moods and intrapersonal relationships. In regard to gender differences, girls enter puberty about a year and a half prior to boys. Therefore, boys and girls who are the same age chronologically are at different stages of physical development, causing impediments in terms of relationships.

During students' early adolescent years, previous research found that late-developing boys reveal depressive symptoms more than early-maturing boys throughout middle school (Frisen et al., 2008). Late-developing boys display lower self-esteem and are more likely to be bullied (Ge et al., 2003). Based on the effects that puberty has on student behavior (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Susman & Rogel, 2004), school personnel need to be cognizant of the phases of pubertal development as doing so will help them understand and deal with student behavior in school. Adult sensitivity in these cases may help adolescents adjust to these drastic changes and respond to their classmates in a positive manner rather than resort to bullying (Wigfield et al., 2005).

Evidently, students, teachers, counselors, and principals, have different perceptions of school bullying (Newgent et al., 2009). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the efficacy of school bullying programs and their impact on the overall school climate. How school faculty perceive bullying requires close examination in order to formulate effective intervention programs that target issues (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007).

Teachers' Perceptions of Bullying

When designing effective interventions programs to combat bullying, it is important to examine teacher perceptions. A comprehensive intervention plan must take into account teacher involvement (Olweus, 1993). In their study, Harris and Willoughby (2003) found that teachers were unprepared to handle bullying and were intimidated by the topic. Yoon and Kerber (2003) reported that teachers were lenient on students who bullied socially. According to the authors, teachers did not perceive this type of bullying

as serious. Previous studies found that teachers are often oblivious to bullying and its effects on student victims (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Nicolaidis, Yuchi, & Smith, 2002). In their study, Bauman, Rigby, and Hoppa (2008) concluded that teachers who dealt with bullying incidents were less inclined to work with the victim. They found that teachers preferred dealing with the bully in a punitive manner and had no interest in addressing the feelings of the victim.

Teachers need to create a safe and supportive learning environment for students. With this in mind, teachers are a critical component in the fight against bullying since they witness these events first-hand (Smith, Varjas, Meyers, Graybill, & Skoczylas, 2010). Kasen, Berenson, Cohen, and Johnson (2004) stressed that the classroom teacher's role is to identify bullying and provide consistent and effective interventions when bullying occurs in the classroom. Yet, teachers are not properly trained to intervene when bullying problems arise in the classroom (Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener 2006). Swearer and Cary (2003) found that 80% of middle school students believed teachers were unaware of bullying and were not taking the necessary precautions to prevent it.

In addition to not having adequate training, Olweus (1993) found teachers lacked the ability to identify bullying behaviors. In one study, teachers characterized physical aggression as violence, but they failed to categorize nonphysical aggression such as verbal attacks and social exclusion as forms of bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Because they expect students to resolve bullying situations, teachers often refrain from intervening (Newman & Murray, 2005). Yet, teacher involvement with bullying prevention may prevent the issue from arising in the first place. Flaspohler et al. (2009)

discussed the impact of teachers in preventing bullying. They found that “non-victims are nearly twice as likely as victims of bullying to report that there is a teacher with whom they can talk about their problems” (p. 638).

Effective Anti-bullying Practices

Schools across the United States have taken steps to safeguard against bullying. As of April 2011, 46 states have adopted bullying laws and 45 of the 46 states mandate that schools adopt policies addressing bullying (U.S. Department of Education, 2011a). One particular step focuses on violence elimination programs. By combining strategies that address the reality of violence and integrating positive educational programs, experts claim that schools can effectively reduce bullying (Kelley, Mills, & Shuford, 2005;). Morrison, Furlong, and Morrison (1994) noted that effective schools have clearly defined goals in their school improvement plans, close monitoring and feedback regarding these goals, high academic expectations for all students, clear expectations for behavior, high levels of collaboration and engagement, and meaningful involvement from parents and the community.

Many school improvement plans include the implementation of a zero tolerance bullying program. However, incorporating a zero tolerance bullying program in schools does not guarantee it will yield positive results. Zero tolerance programs communicate a culture of strict control, which can result in spiteful outcomes. Clearly, anti-bullying interventions and the investment of time, effort, and resources can lead to safer schools (Smith et al., 2005).

Apparently, a peer-led intervention teaches students appropriate conflict resolution skills. While teacher or counselor led groups concentrate on promoting education to solve conflicts and encourage students to adopt roles of empathy (Cowie & Olafsson, 2000), schools commonly use the school-wide approach (Smith et al., 2005). Developing an effective anti-bullying intervention involves assessing the situation at hand and weighing the outcomes it will have on the bully as well as the school climate. Anti-bullying interventions are not one-size-fits-all approaches. They require teachers, counselors, and administrators to collaborate and create a plan of action that yields positive results (Smith et al., 2005). The rationale behind implementing a school-wide anti-bullying program is that schools need to address the issue at all levels. The first comprehensive anti-bullying program implemented and evaluated in the United States as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus, 1993). Consequently, many schools have modeled their whole-school programs after the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and incorporated several of its core features. This study investigated the individual characteristics of bullies or victims, strategies for decreasing bullying in schools, and school interventions.

Methodology

The purpose of the larger study was to explore the perceptions of middle school teachers, counselors, and administrators about the bully-proofing program in place at their school. For the purposes of this article, the findings relative to teachers are discussed.

Research Design and Approach

German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) introduced the notion of phenomenology when he used human reasoning, introspection, and reflection—rather than data investigations—to examine participants’ experiences. Amedeo Giorgi “introduced a qualitative research approach to phenomenological inquiry in 1970” (Polkinghorne, 2013, p. 145). Giorgi’s 1985 study (as cited in Polkinghorne, 2013), which focused on category learning, used and adapted several of Husserl’s approaches. Giorgi’s phenomenological approach sought to identify the “essential properties an experience needs to have to be interpreted as a learning activity” (p. 145). While Husserl’s studies utilized reflective observation, Giorgi interviewed participants and asked them to describe specific learning activities. Next, he analyzed the participants’ texts in order to identify similar properties in regard to learning activities. Giorgi then compared all of the participants’ descriptions. Finally, he provided a description of the pertinent aspects of learning (Polkinghorne, 2013). By adding the process of interviewing to this phenomenological approach, Giorgi sought to further understand a participant’s consciousness and self-knowledge (Frank & Polkinghorne, 2010).

In qualitative studies, the researcher (interviewer) is an important part of the interviewing process (Giorgi, 2011). Because the interviewer’s purpose is to obtain a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon, the interviewer must be able to adapt certain questions or ask additional questions (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). Polkinghorne (2005) found several parallels between the skills that a researcher needs in the interview process and those that a counselor needs in a counseling session. The author asserted that

a counselor and researcher must develop a rapport, build trust, and form a nonjudgmental relationship with a person as doing so enables them to develop an understanding of another person's experience.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants were those who had first-hand knowledge of the target middle school's anti-bullying program. Ary et al. (2006) stated that researchers select individuals for a phenomenological study because of their ability to provide first-hand knowledge and insight of a particular phenomenon. Individual interviews were conducted with each of the participants at their convenience. Each interview lasted 45-60 minutes and consisted of 10 open-ended. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

This larger study included nine participants: four teachers, two school guidance counselors, and three school administrators. The selected teachers had between 6 and 22 years of teaching experience, and eight of the nine teachers had been at the target school since the school launched its bully-proofing program in 2009.

As stated by Moustakas (1994), the purpose of conducting interviews is to gain a deeper understanding of unique inquiries. In qualitative research, the goal of an interview is to seek and describe an individual's perception, which was necessary in this study in order to determine the efficacy of the anti-bullying programs at the target school as well as to comprehend the perceptions of various school personnel regarding bullying. In essence, interviews are a personal form of data collection because they involve face-to-face communication and are unlike surveys, which may solicit written responses.

Findings

All nine participants stated there is a need to improve the anti-bullying program, including teachers and counselors who want more administrative support and administrators who want more teacher buy-in and a stronger commitment to the program. A recurring theme that emerged during the interviews was that the program did not appear to have a significant effect on the target school's overall climate. For the purposes of this article, the findings relative to teacher responses are discussed.

Teacher Responses

Four teacher interview responses revealed that these faculty members had dissatisfaction with the current anti-bullying program. Participants cited the program's outdated material—now three years old, its inability to engage students, and the repetitive nature of the curriculum, regardless of the grade level. T1 and T3 stated that the videos, included as part of the curriculum, are the only positive aspect of the program as they triggered students' attention. The teachers also discussed the negative aspects of the program, including uninteresting lessons that were devoid of hands-on activities. In contrast, T4 described one engaging, hands-on lesson but stressed the need for more. T2, the last participant, did not discuss the program's instructional materials.

T3 further stated that the program does not provide teachers with enough time to elaborate. According to her, "a program implemented 22 minutes every two weeks will not become part of the school culture." T3 has taught the anti-bullying curriculum to sixth, seventh, and eight grade students. Her experiences demonstrate the sixth grade students are very involved with the curriculum and are motivated to participate in

discussions. However, as students progress into seventh and eighth grade, their motivation begins to decrease. Initially, she found that students are motivated and involved with the curriculum; however, as they progress into seventh and eighth grade, their motivation begins to decrease. Similarly, T1, T2, and T4 found the repetitive nature of the program does not allow for diversity.

All four teachers underscored how important administrative support is to successful program implementation. T3 believed the school should adopt “stiffer consequences” for students who engage in bullying activities, and the school should adhere to its zero tolerance policy. She also stated that concerning student discipline issues teachers, counselors and administration should take care of problems as they arise, to “nip it in the bud.” T3 expressed a desire to review the teachers’ and parents’ survey responses in regard to the bullying program. T1, T2, T3, and T4 assumed having more involvement from administrators and parents as well as increasing peer mediation would have a significant effect, thus they proposed several changes to the current anti-bullying curriculum. Finally, T3 stated that increasing the involvement of administrators and parents would assist with program implementation, as would more visibility from the school resource officer.

In summary, T1, T2, T3, and T4 stressed that in order for an anti-bullying program to succeed, it must involve all faculty and staff. Furthermore, administrators need to use their authority and enforce its rules and consequences. Finally, the program needs to include clear expectations for students, and it must become part of the school culture.

T2 believed the program increases student confidence to speak to adults regarding bullying and encouraged students to intervene as opposed to being a bystander when bullying occurs. However, T1 claimed that the anti-bullying program had no effect on the school climate. T2 also claimed the program has not improved the school climate, since there is evidence that bullying occurred on a daily basis at the school. In contrast, T3 and T4 asserted that the school climate improved because students felt more comfortable talking to teachers. T2 stated she does not know what components are needed to effectively target bullying at the target school. Finally, T3 claimed the anti-bullying program did not improve the school climate.

T1 noted that bullying is a subjective term to the target school's teachers that encompasses different acts, including verbal and physical bullying. He stated that some teachers take physical bullying more seriously while others place equal emphasis on verbal as well as physical bullying. T2 has been with the school since the program's inception and feels the program has not established a climate of safety and security. Conversely, T2, T3, and T4, stated that the climate of safety and security improved, but there is still room for a more consistent and positive change.

Recommendations for Effective Anti-bullying Programs

Buy-in from students, faculty, staff, and parents. First, all four teachers stressed the importance of buy-in from students, faculty, and staff. T1 stated that he took an active role to reduce bullying, both inside and outside of the classroom. Outside the classroom, he monitors the halls before the tardy bell rings and supervises students as they transition from one class to the next. Inside the classroom, the participant

communicates to bullies

and the bullied. T1 stated the following modifications may improve the program: training faculty and staff regarding bullying terminology, creating assemblies and other activities to increase student buy-in, and implementing the program throughout the school day instead of once every two weeks for 22 minutes. T3 pointed out that even students who teachers would not expect to engage in acts of bullying participated in acts of bullying frequently.

Similarly, T3 concluded that a more comprehensive and consistent anti-bullying program that included student, faculty, and staff buy-in and focused on bully management through hands-on activities as opposed to eliminating bullying altogether is not a realistic goal. Another participant stated that the current anti-bullying program only occurs once every other week. She felt the school should embed the program into the curriculum as a whole-school intervention program. During her interview, she stated she utilizes instructional time to revisit topics related to bullying and that even high performing students displayed bullying actions. This participant has taught at the school since the anti-bullying program's inception. Although she claimed that having the program is a positive thing, she wanted to increase exposure to the program in order to determine its effect.

All four teachers discussed and stressed the importance of keeping parents informed and involved with the program. In addition, they perceived that a lack of parental involvement as a major weakness for the school's program. T3 mentioned that

she always contacts the parents of bullies while T1, T2, and T4 did not mention contacting parents.

Curriculum and Assemblies. T2, T3, and T4 recommended that the program include lessons that are not only realistic, but also capture the attention of adolescent students across all grade levels. T1 believed the anti-bullying program implementation is “slipping through the cracks in the classroom.” He referred to the program as something that is taught during homeroom once every two weeks for 22 minutes. All teachers mentioned that the program consisted of dry and simple lessons in which they discussed a similar topic every other week. T3 stated the students’ bullying experiences created teachable moments; however, the teachers endorsed the program’s whole-class discussion component. Specifically, when her student expressed that someone bullied him or her, she uses the scenario to explain the repercussions of bullying. She stressed that she keeps the student’s identity confidential, which allows her to incorporate realistic occurrences in the classroom.

T1, T2, and T3 stated that holding assemblies would trigger more student involvement in the participation of the bullying curriculum. They further stated that the program only utilizes one modality of instruction. These teachers believed that assemblies would be a terrific way to educate students on bullying topics. On the other hand, T4 did not feel that assemblies would augment the program’s effectiveness.

Themes and Subthemes: Conclusion

Findings from the study indicated that teachers believe there is a need to overhaul the program, giving it a fresh, new and innovative look, one that would bring excitement

to all grades, especially to sixth graders, and creates change for future students. T2 and T3 suggested creating an activity to launch the new program. The teachers indicated that they need more training in order to adequately handle situations when they arise, with the hope of squelching any larger problems and discouraging others from the same offense. All teachers mentioned that the administrators' decisions on bullying incidences need to be dealt with immediately and consistently.

Steps to Enhance Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1985) stated that dependability, transferability, confirmability, and credibility are important in qualitative research. They proposed these four standards as necessary criteria for judging the quality of research studies. To increase the internal validity of a study, researchers can utilize several strategies (Merriam, 2002). The literature review and research questions guided the creation of the interview protocol. Therefore, the data collected are a direct representation of the purpose of the study. Applying the research questions throughout different stages of the study such as data collection and data analysis occurred by looking for themes in the perceptions of teachers in order to confirm categories. Methods for enhancing trustworthiness included reflexivity, member checks, and peer reviews (Merriam, 2002).

Implications

Teachers and staff members, students, parents and families, and school board members make up the surrounding local community in which the school resides. The findings of this study could have significant implications regarding social change. First, the positive social strategies to be developed through the proposed, revised anti-bullying

program may help students become productive members of society who may serve their community in a positive manner. Third, teachers may encounter less discipline and bullying problems in the classroom; therefore, they can spend more time on academic instruction. Finally, the program may have positive outcomes on students' overall academic achievement and the school's performance on standardized tests.

The findings of this study could also contribute on a larger scale. The proposed, revised anti-bullying program that will be implemented may serve as a framework for initiating other programs in schools across the nation. Similarly, faculty and staff from the middle school may have an opportunity to share best practices with other schools. This could include conducting workshops for other teachers, visiting teachers' classrooms, or simply exchanging information with teachers regarding the program. It is possible to achieve effective social change at a larger level if other school districts implement programs that successfully combat bullying. Therefore, this project could also have an impact not only in the selected middle school, but also in other schools across the country.

Directions for Future Research

The current study could lead to future research in the area of bully prevention programs. Although research has addressed the impact of bullying, there is limited research focusing on the perceptions of school teachers, counselors and administrators. Future research could focus on the perceptions of school administrators across all educational levels and determine the extent to which these school leaders address as well as devote their time to anti-bullying programs in schools. Currently, this research study

provides school personnel with information regarding the role of teachers. It also considers their perceptions about bullying and takes into account their insight regarding the middle school's current anti-bullying program.

Conclusion

In regard to improving program implementation, the teachers recommended the target school hold assemblies once a month, increase administrator as opposed to teacher and counselor involvement, and enforce the school district's zero tolerance policy. The teachers further stressed the need to increase the frequency and amount of time earmarked for addressing the realities of bullying, which would require additional program materials.

The findings of this qualitative study may serve as a model for schools as they develop anti-bullying programs and interventions. Insights from this study may allow administrators and other school personnel to revamp and contour their anti-bullying programs. Incorporating the perceptions of teachers regarding a school's anti-bullying program may enhance a program's effectiveness. This study's findings may help decrease bullying in schools and as a result, make classrooms, hallways, and school buildings safer.

References

- American Medical Association (2002). Educational Forum on Adolescent Health • Addressing Youth Bullying Behaviors, 5-16.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Razavieh, A., & Sorenson, C. (2006). *Introduction to research in education* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson & Wadsworth.

- Bandura, A. (1973). *Aggression: A social learning analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. doi: 10.2307/1227918
- Bauman, S., & Del Rio, A. (2006). Pre-service teachers' responses to bullying scenarios: Comparing physical, verbal, and relational bullying. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*, 219-231. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.98.1.219
- Bauman, S., Rigby, K., & Hoppa, K. (2008). US teachers' and school counselors' strategies for handling school bullying incidents. *Educational Psychology, 28*(7), 837-856. doi: 10.1080/01443410802379085
- Berkowitz, L. (1993). *Aggression, its causes, consequences and control*. New York: publisher.
- Bradshaw, C. P., O'Brennan, L. M. & Sawyer, A. L. (2008). Examining variation in attitudes toward aggressive retaliation and perceptions of safety among bullies, victims, and bully/victims. *Professional School Counseling, 12*(1), 10-21. doi: 10.1016/jadohealth.2007.12.011
- Bradshaw, C.P., Sawyer, A. L. & O'Brennan, L. M. (2007). Bullying and peer victimization at school: Perceptual differences between students and school staff. *School Psychology Review, 36*(3), 363-382. Retrieved from <http://www.nasponline.org/publications/spr/index.aspx>
- Carney, A. & Merrell, K. (2001). Bullying in schools: Perspectives on understanding and preventing an international problem. *School Psychology International, 21*, 364-382. doi: 10.1177/0143034301223011

- Cook, C. R., Williams, K. R., Guerra, N. G., Kim, T. E., Sadek, S. (2010). Predictors of bullying and victimization in childhood and adolescence: A meta-analytic investigation. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 25(2). doi:10.1037/a0020149
- Cowie, H., & Olafsson, R. (2000). The role of peer support in helping the victims of bullying in a school with high levels of aggression. *School Psychology International*, 21, 79-95. doi: 10.1177/0143034303430021006
- Eisenberg, M. E., Aalsma, M. C. (2005). Bullying and peer victimization: Position paper of the Society for Adolescent Medicine. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 36(1), 88-91. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2004.09.004.
- Erikson, Erik H. (1959). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Flaspohler, P. D., Elfstrom, J. L, Vanderzee, K. L., & Sink, H. E. (2009). Stand by me: The effects of peer and teacher support in mitigating the impact of bullying on quality of life. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(7), 636-649. doi: 10.1002/pits.20404
- Frank, G., & Polkinghorne, D. (2010). Qualitative research in occupational therapy: From the first to the second generation. *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health*, 30 (2), 51-57. doi: 10.3928/15394492-20100325-02
- Fredland, N. M. (2008). Nurturing hostile environments: The problem of school violence. *Family and Community Health*, 31(1), S32-S41. Retrieved from <http://journals.lww.com/familyandcommunityhealth/pages/default.aspx>

- Frisen, A., Holmqvist, K., & Oscarsson, D. (2008). 13-year olds' perceptions of bullying: Definitions, reasons for victimization and experience of adults' response. *Educational Studies*, 34(2), 105-117. doi: 10.1080/03055690701811149
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2010). *Applying educational research: How to read, do, and use research to solve problems of practice* (6th ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon.
- Ge, X., Kim, I. J., Brody, G., Conger, R. D., Simons, R. L., & Gibbons, F. X. (2003). It's about timing and change: Pubertal transition effects on symptoms of major depression among African American youths. *Developmental Psychology*, 39, 430-439. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.39.3.430
- Giorgi, A. (2011). IPA and science: A response to Jonathan Smith. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 42, 195-216. doi: 10.1163/1156916211X599762
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gurney, M. (2012). Bullying tough on students...and teachers. *ATA News*, 47(5), 3.
- Harlow, K. C., & Roberts, R. (2010). An exploration of the relationship between social and psychological factors and being bullied. *Children and Schools*, 32(1), 15-26. doi: 10.1093/cs/32.1.15
- Harris, S. & Willoughby, W. (2003). Teacher perceptions of student bullying behavior. *ERS Spectrum*, 21(13), 4-11. Retrieved from <http://www.worldcat.org/title/ers-spectrum/oclc/1527045>

- Juvonen, J., Wang, Y., & Espinoza, G. (2011). Bullying experiences and compromised academic performance across middle school grades. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 31*(1). doi:10.1177/0272431610379415
- Kasen, S., Berenson, K., Cohen, P., & Johnson, J. (2004). *The effects of school climate on changes in aggressive and other behaviors related to bullying*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kelley, T. M., Mills, J. C., & Shuford, R. (2005). A principle-based psychology of school violence prevention. *Journal of School Violence, 4*(2), 47-73. doi: 10.1300/J202v04n02_04
- Koiv, K. (2012). Attachment styles among bullies, victims, and uninvolved adolescents. *Psychology Research, 2*(3), 160-165.
- Kueny, M. T., & Zirkel, P. A. (2012). An analysis of school anti-bullying laws in the United States. *Middle School Journal, 43*(4), 22-31.
- Merriam, S. B. & Associates (2002). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Meyer-Adams, N., & Conner, B. T. (2008). School violence: Bullying behaviors and the psychological school environment in middle schools. *Children and Schools, 30*(4), 211-221. doi:10.1093/cs/30.4.211
- Mishna, F., Pepler, D., Wiener, J. (2006). Factors associated with perceptions and responses to bullying situations by children, parents, teachers, and principals. *Victims and Offenders, 1*, 255-288. doi: 10.1080/15564880600626163
- G. M., Furlong, M. J., & Morrison, R. L. (1994). From school violence to

- school safety: Reframing the issue for school psychologists. *School Psychology Review*, 23(2), 236-256. doi:10.1080/1045988x.1994.9944308
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Murphy, S. Faulkner, D. (2011). The relationship between bullying roles and children's everyday dyadic interactions. *Social Development*, 20(2), 272-293. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9507-2010.00597.x
- Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pilla, R.S., Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, B., & Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviors among U.S. youth: Prevalence and associations with psychological adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285(16), 2094-2100. doi:10.1001/jama.285.16.2094
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2011). *Crime, violence, discipline, and safety in U.S. public schools: Findings from the school survey on crime and safety 2009-2010*. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011320.pdf>
- Newgent, R. A., Lounsbery, K. L., Keller, E. A., Baker, C. R., Cavell, T. A., & Boughfman, E. M. (2009). Differential perceptions of bullying in the schools: A comparison of student, parent, teacher, school counselor, and principal reports. *Journal of School Counseling*, 7(38), 1-33. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=235>
- Newman, R. S., & Murray, B. J. (2005). How students and teachers view the seriousness of peer harassment: When is it appropriate to seek help? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97, 347-365. Retrieved from http://www.researchgate.net/journal/00220663_Journal_of_Educational_Psychology

- Nicolaides, S., Yuchi, T., & Smith P. K. (2002). Knowledge and attitudes about bullying in trainee teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 72, 105-118. doi: 10.1348/00070990215879
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319 (2008).
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Olweus, D. (2001). Bullying at school: Tackling the problem. *Observer*, 225, 24-26.
- Phillips, D. A. (2007). Punking and bullying: Strategies in middle school, high school, and beyond. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22(2), 158-178. doi: 10.1177/0886260506295341
- Phillips, V. I., Cornell, D. G. (2012). Identifying victims of bullying: Use of counselor interviews to confirm peer nominations. *Professional School Counseling*, 15(3), 123-131. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2012-15.123
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 137-145. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2013). *The Oxford handbook of media psychology*. In K. Dill (Ed.), *Qualitative research and media psychology* (pp. 137-156). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, M. L., Varjas, K., Meyers, J., Graybill, E. C., & Skoczylas, R. B. (2010). Teacher responses to bullying: Self-reports from the front line. *Journal of School Violence*, 8, 136-158. doi: 10.1080/15388220802074124

- Smith, J. D., Cousins, J. B., & Stewart, R. (2005). Anti-bullying interventions in schools: Ingredients of effective programs. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 28(4), 739-762. doi: 10.2307/4126453
- Susman, E. J., & Rogel, A. (2004). *Puberty and psychological development*. New York: Wiley.
- Swearer, S. M., & Cary, P. T. (2003). *Perceptions and attitudes toward bullying in Middle school youth: A developmental examination across the bully/victim continuum*. New York: Haworth Press.
- U.S. Department of Education (2011a). *Analysis of state bullying laws and policies*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/bullying/state-bullying-laws/state-bullying-laws.pdf>
- Wigfield, A., Lutz, S. L., & Wagner, A. L. (2005). Early adolescents' development across the middle school years: Implications for school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 9(2), 112-119. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org>
- Yoon, J. S., & Kerber, K. (2003). Bullying: Elementary teachers' attitudes and invention strategies. *Research in Education*, 69, 27-35. Retrieved from <http://edinformatics.com/research/edjournals.htm>.