Effects of Character Education on the Incidences of Physical Altercations Among Eighth Grade Boys

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Abstract

The research focuses on the prevalence of bullying in certain public junior high schools in Texas and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) with a concentration on the teaching of character education as a means of addressing the issue to decrease incidences of bullying through the changing of attitudes towards physical altercations among 8th grade boys in the USVI. This research was conducted to determine if there was significant association between character education and the decreasing of physical altercations among this population. A post hoc quasi experimental design was utilized to test for incidences of physical altercations between the two school districts.

Introduction to the Study

Background

There is a problem with violence among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). Despite the presence of academic rigor, competitive intramural and interscholastic sports, clubs, organizations, music, arts, and tutorial services during lunch and after school, attitudes toward physical altercations among this population appear to favor violence as a means to resolve conflicts or to command respect as demonstrated by the incident reports by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation from the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Education (2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012). Violent behavior is becoming an increasingly significant issue in recent years, but the problem is unresolved (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). In order to address this antisocial behavior, it was necessary to know more about character education and its effects on the incidences of physical altercations among this age group. A study that used an independent quantitative variable and method helped to provide needful information about the topic for research.

Problem Statement

The problem is that incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools are higher than any other infraction among this population of students in the nation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Based upon the National Center for Education Statistics (2009) and the incident reports from the Office of Planning,

Research, and Evaluation from the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Education (2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012), violent behavior among junior high school students in general and boys in particular has increased and the problem is unresolved. Conducting a post hoc quasi experimental design, a quantitative design in which a "group which has experienced X is compared with one which has not, for the purpose of establishing the effect of X" (Campbell & Stanley, 1963, p. 12), was the design used in this study. Due to a gap in the literature pertaining to a character education based curriculum used in public junior high schools in the USVI, an analogous relationship/comparison with public secondary schools in Texas that used a character education based curriculum and which are similarly comparable in demographics and population with public secondary schools in the USVI was studied.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this post hoc quasi experimental study was to compare incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high school in the USVI who did not receive a character education curriculum with incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public schools in Texas who did receive a character education curriculum. A post hoc quasi experimental design focused on those public junior high schools in Texas that utilized a character education based curriculum and the number of incidences occurring at those schools compared to the public junior high schools in the USVI that did not use a character education based curriculum and the number of incidences occurring at those schools. The significance of this research was to assist internal stakeholders (U.S. Virgin Islands Board of Education, Department of Education, administrators, and teachers) in making decisions about incorporating a character education program.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question which drove this study was the following: Was there a difference in the number of physical altercations among eighth grade boys who received or did not receive a character education curriculum? The Null Hypothesis was: There was no significant difference in number of physical altercations between eighth grade boys who received a character education curriculum and eighth grade boys who did not receive a character education curriculum. The Alternate Hypothesis was: There was a significant difference in number of physical altercations between eighth grade boys who received a character education curriculum and eighth grade boys who did not receive a character education curriculum. The independent variable was the character education curriculum and the dependent variable were the incidences of physical altercations. Therefore, a two tailed test to see if there were increases or decreases of incidences as a result of a character education curriculum was used.

Theoretical Framework

Skinner (1978) focused his study on human development and behavior on the following areas: (a) implications of making education more efficient, (b) the free and happy student, (c) human behavior and democracy, and (d) humanism and behaviorism. He believed that once adolescents were aware (know) why they behaved in a certain manner they make choices which society may deem as acceptable. Constant communication with adolescents about their attitudes and behaviors are important for them to self-reflect upon their choices and their reasons behind their choices. This continued conversation with adolescents about the reasons behind their actions and sentiments are vital in assisting them to think first before acting and to weigh the consequences of their actions based upon their choices. Skinner (1974) also asserted that when a person's private world becomes important to both others and himself, then that awareness enters

into the control of the behavior called knowing (p. 35). He believed that a person's behavior was due to that person's environment, consequences, and reflexes referred to by Skinner as "operant conditioning" (1974, p. 44).

Therefore, according to Skinner (1974), through the process of operant conditioning, behavior becomes more likely to occur (p. 44). The behavior is said to be strengthened by its consequences, and for that reason the consequences themselves are called "reinforcers" (p. 44). He asserted that the standard distinction between operant and reflex behavior is that one is voluntary and the other is involuntary (p. 45). Skinner stated that operant behavior is felt to be under the control of the behaving person and has traditionally been attributed to an act of will, while reflex behavior is not under comparable control such as sneezing, hiccupping and other reflex acts (p. 45). Teaching students how to manage their attitudes which eventually affect their behavior is essential for homes and schools to continue to enforce. When homes and schools continue to enforce those behaviors society deems as acceptable and appropriate for adolescents to have, the end result should reflect attitudes and behaviors of adolescents that demonstrate self-discipline, respect, and responsibility for one's own choices and actions. This is the difference between a reflex action such as sneezing due to the stimulant of dust and an operant behavior, such as willfully making a decision to strike another person, according to Skinner. Therefore, this study is based upon the theory of Skinner.

Operational Definitions

The specialized terms and variables which were under investigation in the study are noted as follows:

- *Physical altercations*: Generally a confrontation, tussle, or physical aggression that may or may not result in injury. Physical altercations are distinguished from verbal

altercations by the use of physical force or contact. It may also be referred to as bullying, fighting, or battery. Physical altercations are governed by federal and state laws, which vary by state, as well as rules of conduct of various entities (Physical Altercation Law and Legal Definition-US Legal.com). For this study, physical altercations are operationally defined as suspensions which resulted from the infraction of physical altercations (fighting).

- *Independent variable*: Character education curriculum (Rachel's Challenge).

- *Dependent variable*: Number of incidences of physical altercations of eighth grade boys in public schools in Texas and the USVI.

- *Instrumentation:* Percentage of suspension rates due to physical altercations among eighth grade boys in Texas and USVI public schools.

- *Character education:* Teaching students to possess and to demonstrate the many different positive qualities commonly known as positive character traits such as being (a) educated: Getting all the facts and making sure they are correct before making a decision; (b) respectful: To value others as important as yourself and to allow that to show through one's actions and attitudes; (c) patient: Demonstrating self-control and remaining calm through setbacks; (d) honest/trustworthy: Being fair, sincere and straightforward; (e) humble: Not being proud or arrogant; (f) thankful: To be conscious of the benefits that you have received; (g) forgiving: To refrain from holding anger or resentment towards someone who has wronged you; (h) steadfast/persistent: You are determined not to give up or change what you have set out to accomplish; (i) having self-control: Not yielding to impulsive thoughts and actions (Peaceful Solutions, Inc., 2011).

- *Rachel's Project*: Character education curriculum used in public secondary schools in Dallas, Texas.

- *Power School by Pearson*: Web based student information system where discipline management and reporting is one of the features which Power School provides K-12 school districts.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions The major assumption is that the students' records maintained by School A Junior High School, School B Junior High School, School C Junior High School, School D Junior High School, School E Junior High School, and School F Junior High School represented actual schools and students' infractions of the disciplinary policies pertaining to incidences of physical altercations from the public junior high schools in the districts of the USVI and public junior high schools in one of the counties in Dallas, Texas.

Limitations In conducting research on the topic of effects of character education on the incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys, the research was limited to the extent that the study does not control for the cultural or racial factors which may account for any differences between the groups. Another limitation was that different cohorts of eighth grade boys from the 3 years under study may have had different characteristics than each other.

Delimitations All other grade levels were excluded from the study due to the prevalence of physical altercations among this population of students (eighth graders) who were transitioning between puberty and adulthood, according to the literature review. Another delimitation was the exclusion of female students for this study due to the higher incidences of

physical altercations among boys compared to girls according to the National Center for

Education Statistics (2009). Lastly, the research was not exhaustive of all of the public junior

high schools in Texas or the USVI.

Social Implications

The implication of the results of the study has the potential for positive social change for

students in the USVI. It is the assertion based on this literature review that the introduction of

the character education program may lead to a decrease of positive attitudes towards violence

and of incidences of engaging in physical altercations and replacing these attitudes with negative

attitudes toward using physical violence to solve social problems, a decrease in passively

observing as others engage in physical altercations, and not contributing to physical altercations

by verbal threats or derogatory comments or remarks.

Through the study of public junior high schools in Texas that used a character education

curriculum, the intended outcome was to know if negative attitudes, words, and behaviors would

be diminished or even eliminated due to the implementation of a character education curriculum.

The overall objective of school districts as reflected in their mission statements is to train

students to become contributing individuals to the community, society, and the culture by

positively communicating their thoughts and sentiments in an appropriate, respectful, and

peaceful manner whenever interacting with others.

In order to address the anti-social behavior of physical altercations, it was necessary to

know more about character education (independent variable) and its effects on incidences of

physical altercations (dependent variable) with the hope of eventually decreasing abusive and

destructive behaviors among this population of students.Addressing students' academic and

extracurricular competencies exists in many of the public junior high schools in the USVI.

However, the incidences of infractions under the category of physical altercations continue to be an issue in public junior high schools as reported by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation from the US Virgin Islands Department of Education (2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012). The literature review presented types of schools (public, private, parochial, Catholic, and other religious schools), and incidences of violence among this age group, and the effect which the implementation of a character education program had on decreasing the percentage of this infraction. The subsequent areas of the research focused on the methodology of the study: rationale for the research design chosen, participants, design, instrumentation, procedures, and statistical analysis; data collection, results, and summary; and interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications and the conclusion.

Literature Review

Introduction

Content and Organization of the Literature Review

The literature review focused on peer reviewed scholarly journals and articles on the topic of bullying (verbal and physical) in secondary education. The organization of the literature review followed an outline format of presenting (a) the definition of bullying, (b) types of bullying, (c) specific types of schools (Catholic, Christian, private, and public) and bullying, (d) gender and bullying, and lastly (e) laws pertaining to bullying.

Strategies Used for Searching the Literature

The strategy used for searching the literature was the Walden University databases where peer reviewed scholarly articles from journals representing various disciplines (education, psychology, and medicine) were utilized. The key search terms selected for searching the literature were *bullying, physical altercations among middle/junior high school students,*

bullying among middle school students, bullying among eighth grade students, bullying in middle schools: An Asian-Pacific regional study, bullying victims: The effects last into college, multiple risk factors of the development of aggression among early adolescents from Urban disadvantaged neighborhoods, school and law enforcement efforts to combat cyber bullying, examining the coexistence of friendship and bullying among early adolescents, and *student reports of bullying and cyber-bullying: Results from the 2009 school crime supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey*.

Bullying--Definition

According to the US Virgin Islands Board of Education K-12 Bullying Intervention, Prevention and Remediation Policy (2011), the following definitions of the various kinds of bullying are as follows:

- Definition: A form of abuse which is comprised of acts that involve a real or perceived imbalance of power with the more powerful individual or group abusing those who are less powerful.

- The power imbalance may be social and/or physical power.

- The victim of the bullying is sometimes referred to as the target.

- There are three kinds of bullying:
    - emotional
    - verbal
    - physical

- It also involves subtle methods of coercion, such as psychological manipulation. Bullying is also referred to as peer abuse.

- It also involves the creation of a threatening environment through

- o   An attempt to place the person in reasonable fear of bodily injury;

- o   Intent to cause substantial/emotional distress to the person;

- o   Use of hostile, offensive, or derogatory remarks; and/or

- o   Intentional physical interference with another student's movement. (pp.1-2)

Types of Bullying

- "Cultural" Teasing/Belittling refers to the consistent teasing or belittling of an individual based on a perceived "weakness or abnormality" in the person's physical or emotional makeup, which may result in the development of low self-esteem and poorly developed social skills.

- Cyber Bullying refers to the intentional use of the Internet or other digital communication devices to bully peers. Such internet speech can be vulgar, cruel, threatening, and harassing to teachers, school administrators, or fellow students. Cyber bullying includes but is not limited to the phone, text messaging, Internet, websites, email, blogs, chat rooms, and/or instant messaging.

- Cyber Stalking refers to anonymously engaging in a course of conduct to communicate or to cause to be communicated by words, images or language by or through the use of electronic communication, directed at a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to that person and serving no legitimate purpose.

- Harassment is the act of harassing or state of being harassed; worry, annoyance, anxiety; any overt act or combination of acts directed against a student by another student or groups of students which

  - o   Is repeated over time;

  - o   Is intended to ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate the student; and

- o Occurs before, during or after the school day, on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored activity.

- Hate/Hate Crimes refer to attacks on individuals or their property intentionally selected based on race, color, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and/or religion.

- Intimidation (also called "cowing") is intentional behavior "which would cause a person of ordinary sensibilities," fear of injury or harm (USVI Board of Education K-12 Bullying Intervention, Prevention and Remediation Policy, 2011).

- Relational Aggression refers to bullying, sextexting, or other forms of aggression mostly related to the female gender based on envy or jealousy which results in social ostracism of the victim(s).

- Sextexting (Sexting) is the transference of sexually explicit photos using cell phones or the internet; these explicit photos show students involved in sexual activity, child pornography, rape, lewd acts, and the promotion of prostitution.

Types of Schools and Bullying

1. According to the results from the 2009 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey by the National Center for Education Statistics, the number and percentage of students ages 12 through 18 where the type of bullying and related school characteristics were reported for school year 2008/2009 included the following characteristics of bullying: Being made fun of, called names, or insulted,

2. Having rumors spread,

3. Being threatened with harm,

4. Being pushed, shoved, tripped or spat on,

5. Tried to make do things they did not want to do,

6. Being excluded from activities on purpose, and

Having property destroyed on purpose. For the purpose of this research, gender and types of schools will be used to compare and to contrast levels of bullying incidences among public, private, Catholic, and other religious schools since the topic of this study pertains to attitudes toward bullying in general and toward physical altercations in particular among eighth grade boys in public schools in the USVI.

Since character education is not taught on the secondary level in public schools in the USVI, and incidences of physical altercations are high among students enrolled in public schools (Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, USVI Dept. of Education, 2009/2010, 2010/2011) in contrast to students enrolled in private, Catholic, and other religious schools Christian and church schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009,) the comparison and contrast of bullying incidences among these various types of schools was warranted. Although the demographics, levels of income, and the population of students at the various types of schools could serve as valid factors contributing to the percentage of bullying incidences at these schools, the one variable which Catholic and religious schools had and where incidences of bullying were lower compared with secondary public schools was the teaching of character education. Perhaps the lack of teaching character education is a legitimate factor to consider as a reason for the high percentage of bullying incidences in secondary public schools.

Summative Comparative Analysis of the Four Types of Schools

Based upon the data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2009), public school students have a higher rate of bullying incidences 29.4% compared to private schools 18.3%, Catholic schools 17.4%, and Christian/other religious schools 19.2%. Public schools

show a higher rate of students who were injured during the 2008/2009 school year at 7.0%, private schools 5.8%, Catholic and Christian/other religious schools did not report this category.

Of the students that reported being bullied, public schools reported a higher rate of students who were physically, verbally, and emotionally bullied during the 2008/2009 school year. In the category of [made fun of, called names, or insulted], public schools reported 19.5%, Catholic schools 12.5%, Christian/other religious schools 11.4% and private schools 12.2%. In the category of [spread rumors], public schools reported 17.4%, Catholic schools 9.6%, Christian/other religious schools 13.6%, and private schools 10.5%. In the category of [threatened to do harm], public schools reported 6.1%, Catholic schools 3.0%, Christian/other religious schools (did not report this category), and private schools 3.8%. In the category of [pushed, shoved, tripped or spit on], public schools reported 9.6%, Catholic schools 2.9%, Christian/other religious schools 5.6%, and private schools 4.2%. In the category of [tried to make do things they did not want to do], public schools reported 3.9%, Catholic and Christian/other religious schools (did not report this category), and private schools 1.6%. In the category of [property destroyed on purpose], public schools reported 3.5%, Catholic schools 1.6%, Christian/other religious schools (did not report this category), and private schools 2.0%.

In the category of cyber-bullying, public schools ranked higher in incidences in comparison to private, Catholic, and Christian/other religious schools. Students who reported that they were cyber-bullied were public schools 6.4%, private schools 4.3%, Catholic schools 4.4%, Christian/other religious schools (did not report this category). This trend parallels those students who reported that they were not cyber-bullied; public schools 93.6%, Catholic schools 95.6%, Christian/other religious schools 94.4%, and private schools 95.7%.

Gender and Bullying

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2009) the number and percentages of males and females ages 12 through 18 who reported being bullied at school, by the frequency of bullying, whether an adult was notified, or whether the student was injured in physical altercations was: 10.1% [pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on] for boys compared to 7.9% for girls. Boys had higher rates in the category under [student was injured] at 8.0% for boys compared to 5.9% for girls under the same category. There were no reports given to compare the frequency of bullying by type of school and gender.

Laws and Bullying

Many school districts in the majority of US states and its territories have implemented anti-bullying laws and have revamped former harassment laws to include the various types of bullying-physical, emotional, psychological, and technological (cyber) bullying (Deskbook Encyclopedia of American School law, 2009). According to Diamentes (2010), school officials have a difficult time dealing with cases of bullying often resulting in one student's word against another. Also, many victims of bullying are reluctant to report instances for fear of retribution as in sexual harassment cases where school officials need to be seen doing something about the problem (Journal of Instructional Psychology, Vol. 37, Issue 4, p. 306-307).

> Courts view indifference to these instances as a form of negligence and will side with students and parents who feel the schools are ignoring the problem. To avoid appearing indifferent, schools need written policies covering bullying as well as sexual harassment and to be seen quickly taking action upon receiving the complaint (2010).

Edmondson and Zeman (2011) believed that best practice school bully laws combine education, intervention, and individual responsibility to building positive school climates by having schools

specify student responsibilities in codes of conduct (p. 33-38). Grona (2000) "examined codes

of conduct to identify the methods schools used to notify students of their rights and

responsibilities."

> He found that these codes may include, but are not limited to, school rules and clearly
>
> defined consequences for their violations and the conditions under which parents are
>
> notified of violations. In best practice policies, student codes of conduct also identify
>
> environments where school related misconduct can occur, such as in classroom buildings,
>
> at school-sponsored activities, in the community at large, and in cyberspace (Grona,
>
> 2000).
>
> According to Willard (2011), the Federal Government has recognized the close

connection between bullying and school violence, as well as the other negative effects on

young people including school performance (p. 75-76). "

> These laws typically require that state or local officials establish and enforce policies
>
> against student bullying, require or recommend procedures for reporting and properly
>
> investigating bullying incidents, and must highlight the importance of discipline for
>
> students who bully (Willard, 2011).

Therefore, school districts need to implement policies and procedures to address harassment

and bullying incidences which do not fall under the category of hate crimes under federal and

state laws in order to protect the life, social, mental, and physical well-being of each student

enrolled in school. The protection of the academic atmosphere is vital in ensuring that students

feel safe and are safe and can learn in an environment that is conducive to their success and

achievement.

The use of school policies in conjunction with character development education programs appear to assist schools to decrease the number of physical altercations among students in schools globally based upon the information from the literature review. The legal protections which are exhibited in the form of anti-bullying school policies and procedures which helps to develop a school's climate and culture of respect and self-control whenever interacting with others do not seem to operate independently of a character education program. Although there are legal protections demonstrated in the form of anti-bullying school policies and procedures in the US Virgin Islands, the teaching of character education in public junior high schools does not exist. A detailed rationale for the research design chosen, instrumentation, procedures, and statistical analysis are described in the methodology section of the research.

Methods

The literature review demonstrated the challenges of adolescents with favorable attitudes toward verbal conflict and physical altercations, incidences of physical altercations in various countries around the world, and the positive results schools experienced when an intervention character education program was implemented to address the issues of violence among this population. The purpose of this post hoc quasi experimental study was to compare incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in the USVI who did not receive a character education curriculum with incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in Texas who did receive a character education curriculum. The organization of the research follows an outline format of presenting (a) the rationale for the research design chosen, (b) participants for the study, (c) design of the study, (d) instrumentation used, (e) procedures utilized, and (f) statistical analysis.

Rationale for the Research Design Chosen

The study on the effects of character education on the incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in Texas had two variables: the character education curriculum (independent variable) and the incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in Texas and the USVI (dependent variables). The research design was a post hoc quasi experimental design where a group "which has experienced X is compared with one which has not, for the purpose of establishing the effect of X" (Campbell & Stanley, 1963, p. 12). The population that was studied is the data on the

number of incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high

schools in Texas and the USVI for school years 2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012. The

procedure used was quasi experimental since students were not assigned to groups. A census

of the population of eighth grade male students from each school district in this study was

taken to analyze the number of physical altercations for each school year per school district.

This research design correlated to the following research question: "Was there a difference in

the number of physical altercations among eighth grade boys who received or did not receive a

character education curriculum?"

Participants

A post hoc quasi experiment where students are not randomly assigned to control or

experiment groups was used in this study. The population of students whose data (percentage

of suspensions due to physical altercations) which was studied were eighth grade boys in public

junior high schools in Texas who used a character education based curriculum compared with

eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in the USVI who did not use a character

education based curriculum.

Design

The type of research design used was the post hoc quasi experimental design which is a

design "in which a group which has experienced X is compared with one which has not, for the

purpose of establishing the effect of X" (Campbell & Stanley, 1963, p 12). In this research,

eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in Texas had experienced a character education

curriculum (independent variable), whereas eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in

the USVI had not received experience with a character education curriculum. Therefore, the comparison of numbers of incidences of physical altercations (dependent variable) from the number of suspensions due to physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public schools from Texas and the USVI was compared to establish the effect of a character education curriculum on the incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools. Due to relying upon data after the implementation of the independent variable of a character education curriculum (Rachel's Challenge), a post hoc quasi experimental design was used. Data were retrieved from the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation from the Department of Education in the USVI and from the Texas Educational Agency.

Instrumentation

The rates of eighth grade boys who were suspended for school years 2009/2010, 2010/2011, and 2011/2012 due to physical altercations were studied in both Texas and the USVI. Due to the lack of a character education curriculum in public junior high schools in the USVI, there was no data to demonstrate any effect of a character education curriculum on the incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools.

The character education curriculum, Rachel's Challenge, a comprehensive approach to character education, concentrated on those students who were between the ages of 12 and 18 in public junior high schools in Texas and other U.S. states. Rachel's Challenge integrates a workbook for students and an assembly program. The curriculum has lessons which focused on encouraging critical thinking skills in character development and supporting students' growth where the goal was on transforming the school's culture.

Procedures

The population of eighth grade male students from one of the independent school districts in Dallas, Texas where a character education curriculum was used for school years 2009 to 2012 was received from the Texas Educational Agency (TEA) website. The population of eighth grade male students from the USVI school district where a character education curriculum was not used for school years 2009 to 2012 was received from the Office of Research, Planning, and Evaluation in the USVI. The measure of the dependent variable (incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public schools) was the percentage of suspension rates due to physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in both Texas and the USVI. A comparison of the number of suspensions due to physical altercations among eighth grade boys in both Texas and the USVI received the Chi square test of statistical significance. Therefore, the number of suspensions due to physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in Texas was the experimental group since this population utilized a character education curriculum, and the number of suspensions due to physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in the USVI was the control group since a character education curriculum was not utilized with this population of students.

Statistical Analysis

A census of the entire male population of eighth graders was used from the data of each school district in this study comparing suspension rates due to incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in both Texas and the USVI.

The data from the census representing incidences of physical altercations of eighth grade boys from school years 2009/2010, 2010/2011, and 2011/2012 from Texas who had character education and the eighth grade boys for the same time period from the USVI who did not have character education was compared to determine any significant effect of the use of a character education curriculum with this population. The management of the data was through SPSS.

Summary and Conclusion

The conducting of a post hoc quasi experimental design comparing suspension rates of eighth grade boys who have had infractions in physical altercations for school years 2009/2010, 2010/2011, and 2011/2012 was the post hoc quasi experimental design comparing the data from the experiment group (suspension rates of eighth grade boys in Texas who utilized a character education curriculum) with the control group (comparing the suspension rates of eighth grade boys in the USVI who did not utilize a character education curriculum). A quantitative approach and method provided information to fill the gap in the literature pertaining to the effect of character education on the incidences of physical altercations among this population of students in public junior high schools in the USVI. A post hoc quasi experimental study in conjunction with the collection of data in the results section of the research provided the necessary information needed to report the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations.

Results

Content and Organization of the Data Results

The purpose of this post hoc quasi experimental study was to compare incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in the USVI who did not receive a character education curriculum with incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public schools in Texas who did receive a character education curriculum. A post hoc quasi experimental design focused on those public junior high schools in Texas that utilized a character education based curriculum and the number of incidences occurring at those schools compared to the public junior high schools in the USVI that did not use a character education based curriculum and the number of incidences occurring at those schools. The significance of this research was to assist internal stakeholders (U.S. Virgin Islands Board of Education, Department of Education, administrators, and teachers) in making decisions about incorporating a character education program.

The research question which drove this study was: Was there a difference in the number of physical altercations among eighth grade boys who received or did not receive a character education curriculum? The Null Hypothesis was: There was no significant difference in number of physical altercations between eighth grade boys who received a character education curriculum and eighth grade boys who did not receive a character education curriculum. The Alternate Hypothesis was: There was a significant difference in number of physical altercations between eighth grade boys who received a character education curriculum and eighth grade boys who did not receive a character education curriculum. The independent variable was the character education curriculum and the dependent variable was the incidences of physical

altercations. Therefore, a two tailed test using Chi-square to see if there were increases or decreases of incidences as a result of a character education curriculum was used.

This study was organized into four parts: the introduction, the data collection presenting the data analyses and tables and figures demonstrating the results of the study, the results of the study presenting any observed consistencies and/or inconsistencies and discussing possible alternate interpretations, and the summary, which not only concluded the findings, but also presented outcomes that were logically and systematically summarized and interpreted in relation to their importance to the research questions and hypothesis.

Data collection was provided by two data analysts from both school districts from the state of Texas and the USVI. The information provided is public information and can be easily accessed through both school districts' website. For confidentiality, purposes the names of the schools within those school districts were not mentioned in the study, and the names of students were not used. The study focused solely on the numbers of infractions due to physical altercations (as operationally defined in Chapter 1) of eighth grade boys for school years 2009/2010, 2010/2011, and 2011/2012. Standard procedures in receiving the data were followed, and measures were taken to ensure full compliance with the procedures and protocol of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the procedures and protocol of both school districts. Based upon the research question, hypotheses and underlying theoretical/conceptual framework of the study the presentation, interpretation, and explanation of the data analysis is consistent overall as is demonstrated in the remaining parts of this research.

Data Collection

During the spring quarter (March-May, 2014) of the school year which consisted of 3 months, the time frame for the data collection was constrained to 1 month (the month of March)

to receive the data in order to analyze, interpret the findings, discuss the results, and summarize the information received before the end of the quarter. Therefore, constant communication between the data analysts from both school districts who participated in this study was maintained throughout the course of the study, and the response rate was immediate. Since the data were available to the public from the districts' websites, accessibility to the information for the study was helpful. Questions were answered, and information was clarified by both data analysts throughout the process of collecting the data for the study.

There were no known discrepancies in data collection from the plan presented in this research. The plan in the methodology section helped to ensure the success of collecting data in the results section of the research. The baseline descriptive and demographic characteristics of the sample was that of eighth grade boys of varying ethnic backgrounds to include African Americans, Asian Americans, Caucasian Americans, and Hispanic Americans. The purpose of the study did not focus on the ethnicity or cultural background of the eighth grade boys as a variable contributing to physical altercations. The study focused on the incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys who had access to a character education curriculum at their public junior high schools compared to those eighth grade boys who did not have access to a character education curriculum at their public junior high schools. There are many variables which may contribute to the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of this population of students to include but not limited to race, culture, environment, media, music, economics, and family structure according to the literature review and as evidenced through debates held in academia and powerfully held positions of concerned citizens in society. However, according to the literature review, regardless of those external variables mentioned, which do have some impact in one manner or another in the shaping of the lives of eighth grade boys, providing them with

character education helped to decrease the number of incidences of physical altercations at the schools utilizing a character education curriculum according to the literature review. Therefore, the data used in the study of eighth grade boys who committed the infraction of physical altercations for those 3 school years under study were representative of a larger population of eighth grade boys regardless of their race, cultural background, environment, media, music, economics, or family structure.

Upon the completion of the data collection, the answer to the research question was two-fold. According to the Null Hypothesis, there was no significant statistical difference in the number of physical altercations between eighth grade boys who received a character education curriculum and eighth grade boys who did not receive a character education curriculum. However, according to the Alternate Hypothesis, there was a significant difference in number (the raw number or data) of physical altercations between eighth grade boys who received a character education curriculum and eighth grade boys who did not receive a character education curriculum. Therefore, the findings of the Alternate Hypothesis supported the literature review that the implementation of a character education curriculum to eighth grade boys in public schools decreases the infraction of physical altercations. However, the findings of the Null Hypothesis fail to support that there is any statistical significance in implementing a character education curriculum to eighth grade boys in public schools. The study does not contain any evident statistical errors.

The following table (Table 1) is a descriptive analysis of data for Texas and the USVI for school years 2010, 2011, and 2012. This information shows the raw numbers of data indicating that the number of infractions for Texas was considerably less in comparison to the USVI. It is important to note that for the 3 school years under study, Texas utilized a character education

curriculum. Therefore, based upon the raw numbers alone, it appeared that character education may have contributed to the very low numbers of physical altercations from a large population of eighth grade boys from those public schools in Texas compared to the USVI where the population of eighth grade boys was much lower in comparison to Texas' population, yet the number of infractions of physical altercations from the eighth grade boys in the USVI was considerably much higher when compared to the infractions of physical altercations of eighth grade boys in Texas. For clarification purposes, only one of the independent school districts in Texas which utilized a character education curriculum was used in this study, and one of the school districts in the USVI was used in this study.

Table 1

Descriptive Analysis of Data for Texas and the US Virgin Islands

Year	TX	USVI	Texas's population of eighth grade boys	USVI's population of eighth grade boys
2009/2010	33	224	911	732
2010/2011	34	80	881	723
2011/2012	19	89	966	765

Note. From the McKinney Independent School District in Dallas, Texas and the St. Thomas, and St. John School Districts in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Reprinted with permission.

To test for statistical significance, the data were organized in the following format to ensure correct analysis when utilizing Chi-square, one of the statistical methods of comparing two variables. This table is a data analysis for SPSS to check for statistical significance. The first set of numbers is the number of physical altercations committed by eighth grade boys in

Texas, the second set of numbers are the physical altercations committed by the eighth grade

boys in the USVI, the third set of numbers are the percentages of eighth grade boys in Texas who

committed the infraction of physical altercations, and the remaining set of numbers are the

percentages of eighth grade boys from the USVI who committed the infraction of physical

altercations respectively. These raw numbers were transformed to percentage scores so the

difference in gross numbers would not impact the Chi Square analysis. The results are displayed

below in Table 2.

Table 2

Data Analysis of Students' Percentage Due to Physical Altercations

Year	TX	USVI	% TX of physical altercations	% VI of physical altercations
2009/2010	33	224	0.036224	0.30601093
2010/2011	34	80	0.038593	0.11065007
2011/2012	19	89	0.019669	0.11633987
			Chi Square Results	Significance?
USVI/TX results%Chi Square result			0.4541	No
TX results %Chi Square result			0.9299	No
USVI results%Chi Square result			0.6225	No
USVI results %Chi Square using the outlier 224			<.0004	No

Note. From the data analysis of SPSS to check for statistical significance.

Results

Based upon the Chi-square test of statistical significance, there was no significant
difference between the schools that used and did not use a character education curriculum and
the decrease of physical altercations among the eighth grade population of boys at those schools.
However, it is also important to note that although the statistical test does not show any statistical
evidence that there is a connection between the use of a character education curriculum and the
decrease of physical altercations among this population of students, the raw data (percentage)
does indicate that there are fewer numbers of incidences of physical altercations from those
schools in Texas that used a character education curriculum with their students compared to
those schools in the USVI where a character education curriculum was not used. Consequently,
those schools in the USVI where a character education curriculum was not used had the highest
amount of physical altercations in percentage for those same school years when compared with
Texas. Lastly, the number of infractions from the USVI, especially for school year 2009/2010,
indicated that there were a few students who were repeat offenders. Therefore, some eighth
grade boys were counted more than once in the data for those school years. Further scrutiny
revealed that the USVI had more than one student who committed the infraction of physical
altercations a number of times throughout the school year. Therefore, one student, for example,
could have participated in four fights in one school year, thus giving the perception that more
eighth grade boys were involved in physical altercations. Upon further review, since the study
focused more on incidences of physical altercations and not on how many times a particular
eighth grade boy committed those incidences of physical altercations having repeat offenders as
part of the study was justifiable. The results also showed that in the USVI, a student's name may
have been recorded more than once for the same infraction. However, if the numbers of physical

altercations were divided in half from the number of eighth grade boys from the USVI who committed that infraction, the numbers would still continue to be higher than the eighth grade boys from Texas who utilized a character education curriculum.

Summary

In conclusion of the study, it is not known if the implementation of a character education curriculum in the public schools of the USVI would result in any decrease of physical altercations among eighth grade boys. Perhaps additional research utilizing an intervention character education curriculum for a specific period of time might present a clearer and more definitive answer to the following research question: Is there a difference in the number of physical altercations among eighth grade boys who receive or do not receive a character education curriculum? This research question seems to have been answered by many other public schools around the world from various cultures and ethnic backgrounds who have credited the utilization of a character education curriculum with their eighth grade boys which brought a decrease in the amount of physical altercations according to the literature review. However, it is still not known if similar results will be seen with the eighth grade boys in the USVI unless further study is conducted.

A detailed recommendation in the discussion, conclusion, and recommendations section of this research discusses what intervention character education curriculum could be utilized in the public junior high schools in the USVI. This research also presented a brief overview of why and how the study was done while reviewing the research question and summarizing the findings. Implications of social change and recommendations for action and for further study was also discussed.

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this post hoc quasi experimental study was to compare incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public junior high schools in the USVI who did not receive a character education curriculum with incidences of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public schools in Texas who did receive a character education curriculum. A post hoc quasi experimental design focused on those public junior high schools in Texas that utilized a character education based curriculum and the number of incidences that occurred at those schools compared to the public junior high schools in the USVI that did not use a character education based curriculum and the number of incidences that occurred at those schools. The significance of this research was to assist internal stakeholders (U.S. Virgin Islands Board of Education, Department of Education, administrators, and teachers) in making decisions about incorporating a character education program curriculum in the public schools within the territory of the USVI.

Due to a gap in the literature pertaining to a character education based curriculum used in public junior high schools in the USVI, an analogous relationship/comparison with public secondary schools in Texas that used a character education based curriculum was studied. The findings of this study showed that although there was no statistical significance with those schools that used or did not use a character education curriculum and the decrease of physical altercations, the raw data (percentage) demonstrated that the schools that had character education had lower numbers of incidences.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this study, the number of infractions pertaining to physical altercations were less in Texas, which had a much larger population of eighth grade male students compared to the USVI, where the number of infractions pertaining to physical altercations were more in the USVI, which had a much smaller population of eighth grade male students. Therefore, although the statistical significance demonstrated one result (no statistical significance between a character education curriculum and the decrease of physical altercations), the raw numbers (percentage) demonstrated that there might be some effect between character education and the decreasing of physical altercations at school.

There was one observation with the results of the study which made the results appear to be a limitation. It was discovered that in the USVI, a student's name may have been recorded more than once for the same infraction as the discipline record was inputted into the computer. For example, "John Doe was fighting with Bob Smith," and "Bob Smith was fighting with John Doe." When this information was placed into the computer, the computer counted both students twice as if the incident were two separate incidences, giving the infraction of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in the USVI a higher number when compared with Texas. However, if the number of infractions of eighth grade boys from the USVI were divided into half to indicate that hypothetically half of the numbers in the data from the USVI were incorrect due to the duplication of names for the same one incident, the number of physical altercations from the USVI would still be considerably higher than those numbers of physical altercations from Texas.

Recommendations

There are two recommendations for further research based upon the findings from the data. The first recommendation is to implement a character education curriculum for 6 to 7 weeks in the USVI for eighth grade boys in public schools to test for attitudes towards physical altercations. A pretest and posttest could be used prior and after the implementation of the character education curriculum. The utilization of data to test for incidences could also be a measure to observe if the character education curriculum caused a decrease, an increase, or no change at all in physical altercations. Therefore, the study would consist of one independent variable, the character education curriculum, and two dependent variables, attitudes towards physical altercations and incidences of physical altercations during the school year when the test would be conducted. Receiving permission from both school districts in the USVI along with parental consent would need to be secured prior to the study and implementation of the intervention character education curriculum. The second recommendation is to review the data of physical altercations from the same independent school district in Texas which was used in this study prior to their implementation of the character education curriculum of Rachel's Challenge. The purpose would be to test to see if there were any significant differences of numbers of physical altercations before the character education curriculum was used compared with the present numbers after the implementation of the character education curriculum was used.

Based upon the findings from these two recommended studies, it may be possible to truly determine if the utilization of a character education curriculum causes a decrease in the number of physical altercations among eighth grade boys in public schools as the literature review claims.

<div align="center">**Implications**</div>

The implication of the results of the study has the potential for positive social change for students in the USVI. It is the assertion based on the literature review that the introduction of a character education program might lead to a decrease of positive attitudes towards violence and of incidences of engaging in physical altercations and replace those attitudes with negative attitudes toward using physical violence to solve social problems, to decrease passively observing as others engage in physical altercations, and to not contribute towards physical altercations by verbal threats or derogatory comments or remarks.

Through the study of public junior high schools in Texas that used a character education curriculum, the intended outcome was to know if negative attitudes, words, and behaviors would be diminished or even eliminated due to the implementation of a character education curriculum. The overall objective of school districts, as reflected in their mission statements, is to train students to become contributing individuals to the community, society, and the culture by positively communicating their thoughts and sentiments in an appropriate, respectful, and peaceful manner whenever interacting with others.

Conclusion

The literature review of the research demonstrated that countries around the world experienced challenges with physical altercations and those eighth grade boys who were the perpetrators of those violent acts at school. Those countries also reported a drastic decrease in the amount of physical altercations with this population of students when a character education curriculum was introduced and utilized with those students who constantly committed those acts of violence. The data received in the research demonstrated through the raw numbers that acts of physical altercations were less within the Texas independent public school district which had

more eighth grade boys in population compared to the raw numbers of acts of physical altercations which were more with the eighth grade boys in the USVI where their population was less. Perhaps the utilization of a character education curriculum as a study within the USVI among eighth grade boys is necessary to test for attitudes towards physical altercations and observe the incidences of physical altercations among this population of students.

The goal of every internal and external stakeholder is to have an atmosphere that is conducive to the instructional and learning environment of all students while helping to develop all students to be placed in a much better position to grow intellectually, vocationally, physically, ethically, and socially. Creating these younger citizens to become productive and contributing members of a larger society that is harmonious should be the goal of all learning institutions. The teaching of character education may be vital in ensuring that responsible and respectful attitudes and behaviors are evident in the lives of all students in general and in eighth grade boys specifically as demonstrated in the literature review.

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