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A qualitative case study to Examine Teachers' Perceptions of bullying within K-12 institutions

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Abstract

Teachers' perceptions are a poignant factor in addressing bullying. Bullying within K-12 institutions has been a major concern for schools and teachers in the United States and around the world. The utmost concern about this topic is to address teachers' perceptions about bullying and how these perceptions can be used in bullying prevention and reduction initiatives within the K-12 community. The topic for this study is A qualitative case study: To examine teachers' perceptions of bullying-related situations within K-12 institutions. Moreover, teachers' perceptions are extremely important, and it has been identified as the legitimate factor in maintaining student good conduct. Bullying behavior continues to baffle teachers because it has resulted in suicidal ideation and death, students' low self-esteem, and rejecting the notion of even being in school. This study intends to help reduce bullying situations in schools.

Keywords: Bullying; Teachers' Perceptions; Suicidal ideation, Vignette; Biblical Worldview; K-12 Community

1. Introduction

This qualitative case study is to examine teachers' perceptions of bullying-related situations within the K-12 learning environment. (Bell & Willis, 2016). Matsunaga (2016) describes victims of bullying as being associated with problems such as suicidal tendencies, self-inflicted wounds, chronic anxiety, and depression. Olweus (1993) a Swedish-Norwegian psychologist was a pioneer in writing a series of journal articles on bullying. He defines bullying as an imbalance of strength, which must be a repeated action and occur regularly over time. In this case, the eminent preconceived notion of the bully is to inflict harm in the form of fighting, hitting, stealing, cursing, lying, using obscene language, a racial epithet, social media, and provocation of suicidal ideation against the victim (Matsunaga, 2016).

It is noteworthy articulating that bullies make certain that the potential victim is weak and will not obstruct or retaliate with equal striking force against the aggressor. Also, once there is no viable obstruction, the bully begins to put the plan into action by (e.g.) stealing the victim's sneakers, or wristwatch, or punching and beating the victim without any provocation is a criminal offense for which expulsion from school and jail time could be the ultimate punishments. Teachers' skills and training have enabled them in handling aggressive behavioral individuals in certain situations. Teachers are supposed to play specific mediatory roles in preventing physical confrontations between opposing factions in case of fights involving bullying. For the same reason, a teacher could be unaware if a student might have a firearm raising the teacher's suspicion on how to intervene in the conflict without being caught in the crossfire. (Rider, 2015).

This study is important because teachers saw how bullying had escalated to the point where bullying regulations and prevention initiatives have failed. Thus, to regulate new perspectives to secure a viable and safe school environment, this study is necessary. Unfortunately, bullying continues to grow unabated in schools across the United States. (Terneus & McGill, 2021). In this case, this study will introduce new measures and insights that will improve teachers'

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positionality in bullying prevention initiatives. Thus said, securing a safe school zone where students can learn free from fear, intimidation, and harassment is paramount. (Lotti et al., 2020). Cyberbullying can influence a student to use it to intimidate and threaten another student through social media platforms (Cherian, 2019).

According to Rose, et al., (2018), student behavior not only affects but shapes the perceptions and understanding of the teacher when responding to interventions in bullying situations. A teacher can be perceived as being bullied in certain instances. (Orange, 2018). A pivotal point to consider is for the teacher who identifies an ongoing physical confrontation to proceed to neutralize the conflict with caution. In this case, if necessary, the teacher can call in for assistance from the principal's office, or the resource officer for rapid response. Sometimes, depending on the availability of the rapid responders could cause a delay and the teacher could be left with the option to make a split-second decision to intervene unilaterally. In this case, the teacher is like a fireman who sees the fire billowing from a house but must enter the house anyway to save lives.

School bullying comes in many forms, and the teacher is the responsible figure in the classroom for securing a safe and viable learning environment for uninterrupted learning to persist. (Rigby, 2020). Disruptions and classroom fights have no place in the classroom because of the negative impact it has on transparent learning within the K-12 community (Kleinheksel & Geisel, 2019). To maintain a healthy and elaborate school environment, the use of strategies and skills by the teacher can be effective tools in reducing bullying. A stringent requirement is that classroom management preserves free flow and transparent education and bullying reduction. (Şen, & Doğan, 2021; Baraldsnes, 2020).

In recent years, the problem of bullying has affected K-12 schools within the United States and the world. Although bullying is one of the most outrageous and despicable behaviors for which understanding teachers' perceptions is important, teachers continue to make progress in providing meaningful intervention measures to address the problem. In essence, the school must not be the place for bullying and violence to be cultivated. Instead, it is an institution for sustaining a secure learning environment to keep transparent learning afloat in developing the academic capabilities of the young. Whereas the teacher is the authoritative figure in the classroom who has the prerogative to intervene in neutralizing school bullying disturbances (Rosen, et al., 2017).

More importantly, pessimists who think that in physical aggression against another student, the teacher is not a police officer or a resource officer and must not intervene is a wrong concept. In refutation to this concept, the teacher must make an ethical judgment to intervene in a physically aggression situation to save lives if necessary. If awaiting a response for the principal or resource officer to arrive is delayed, the ethical duty is for the teacher to intervene. Thus said, the least hesitancy could result in a fatality. (Terneus & McGill, 2021).

1.1. Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

- What impact does bullying have on teachers' perceptions?
- What are teachers' perceptions about the present anti-bullying prevention intervention policy?
- What are teachers' perceptions about cyberbullying intervention initiatives?

2. Related Literature

This literature has been designed to provide existing information on previous research conducted on teachers' perceptions of bullying within the K-12 community. (Brooks, 2020). Waters and Mashburn (2017) specifically articulated middle school perceptions about bullying. After a careful scrutinization of the former studies, it was established that a relationship between the former research and the existing topic is aligned with the topic. Simmons, et al., (2020) study elaborated upon online and in-person bullying in a New Jersey secondary school contributed to this related literature.

Swift, et. al., (2016) conducted a teacher-led anti-bullying intervention program about teachers' perceptions of bullying regarding youth. The participants included 74 teachers and 1409 4th and 5th graders. The study found that because burnout hurts teachers, measures should be implemented to reduce teachers' burnout. Bell and Willis's (2016) study emphasized the use of vignettes by teachers to describe their perceptions regarding bullying. The findings held that teachers could use multiple vignettes to depict bullying contact.

The findings also described two different subtypes of bullying victims: aggressive and non-aggressive. The findings recommend the use of vignettes as a clinical tool in school to measure teachers' and preservice teachers' perceptions of

the distinct types of bullying within a specific school. Brooks (2020) explored the perceptions of high school preservice and in-service-teachers training programs about violence at school. The findings suggest that conflict resolution was not addressed in the program. Ghosh, et al., (2020) study emphasized the use of peer coaching in action learning meetings for reshaping teachers' perceptions of who witnessed bullying.

Hood (2017) published dissertation lengthily discussed understanding teachers' perceptions of bullying. Impeding bullying in a middle school was discussed. Moreover, 10 teachers were participants in this study that were interviewed. There were two findings in this study. The first finding indicated that 10 teachers were interviewed. According to the findings, all 10 teachers agreed that a positive climate in the classroom was a positive factor in having a safe classroom. The second finding indicated that two themes had impacted the findings. The first theme suggested that some components are named by individuals known to present a favorable attitude toward a positive climate. The second theme was, some teachers' descriptions of approaches they used in dealing with bullying cultivated a negative image that encouraged behavior that embraces bullying. (Hood, 2017)

Bush & Schultz (2016) conducted a collaborative project study for bullying prevention, mental health, and teacher education by witnessing a movie and panel discussion. The results indicated that counselors and teachers were important components of bullying reduction intervention.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study will be grounded in Bandura's (1977b) social learning theory. Dr. Bandura is a learned behavioral theorist and an expert in prosocial and deviant behavior. (Schunk, 2020). Because this study will examine teachers' perceptions of bullying within the K-12 community, means that observed student behavior becomes a dominant factor for the use of SLT. The Bandura SLT theoretical framework for this study will guide the research questions, problem statement, and the purpose of the study to ensure that they are aligned with and related to the topic.

More important, students' behavior is observed, and the teacher can predict deviant behavior before it spins out of control. The SLT model of observation is a dominant factor in relieving the child from being influenced by unseen evil forces. (Comode, 2016). Moreover, (SLT) can assist the teacher in addressing bullying by referring the child for psychological treatment. The anticipated outcome is that the child's behavior will change to a productive behavior and become a productive student and abstain from aggressive behavior. (Bandura, 1977b). This study holds Bandura's SLT in high regard because the school is a social environment that comprises various groups, nationalities, creeds, and religions. Therefore, Bandura's (1977b) social learning theory will be appropriate for this study in that teachers play a crucial role in the school where student behavior is frequently observed.

3. Definition of Key Terms

3.1. Ethical judgment

Reasoning is necessary to be able to choose the most convenient action or attitude among those presented in each situation.

3.2. Preconceived notion

Baseless beforehand opinion is formed without evidence.

3.3. Social learning theory

The theory of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. (Bandura, 1977).

3.4. Teachers' Perceptions

The thoughts or mental images which teachers have about their professional activities and their students are shaped by their background knowledge and life experiences and influence their professional behavior.

3.5. Institutional Review Board (IRB)

IRB is an appropriately constituted group that has been formally designated to review and monitor biomedical research involving human subjects. By FDA regulations, an IRB has the authority to approve, require modifications in (to secure approval), or disapprove research.

3.6. Vignette

Is a short scene that captures a single moment or a defining detail about a character, idea, or other element of the story.

3.7. Gaps in Literature

Rosen, et al., (2017) indicated that further studies will be necessary to replicate findings that will reflect a more diverse sample. This study identified themes and subthemes that were risk factors for aggression, including insecurity, personal characteristics of the bully or external influences, lack of knowledge, and lack of social skills. According to the findings, teachers noted that external and internal components were the responsible contributors to being bullied. Lotti, et al, (2020) encourages future studies to focus on several types of bullying, for example, bystander intervention when witnessing bullying in action. The authors suggest that future research should include peer ratings, and teacher ratings of students' emotional and behavioral issues are factors to consider for future studies. According to Rigby (2020), further research is needed to ascertain if the findings of the study were biased in that it was limited to the Australian context. Şen and Doğan (2020) implied that future research is needed to address equal gender distribution to increase the generalizability of the results.

Baraldnes (2020) averred that in the context of some general limitations, future research will be needed to address these limitations e.g., response rate, teachers' self-report as the data source, and small effect size. Brooks (2020) study emphasized that future studies will be necessary to address limitations that included unexpected focus group participant limitations for limited attendance for meeting times. In this out of 14 participants, only eight teachers attended without any assistant administrator in attendance. ell (2016) stated the future can address multiple vignettes submission.

3.8. Biblical Worldview

One of the most admirable verses in the Bible is "God is love." (Sauca, 2021). Despite differences, God would like for mankind to love one another. Another biblical worldview that is aligned with this study is "the Good Samaritan" parable told by Jesus. (Chalmers, 2020). The Good Samaritan parable teaches us about moral values and love. A perfect stranger who had never known this individual before was found on the side of the road where he had been beaten, robbed, and left for dead. The good Samaritan took the man to the inn and paid the innkeeper money to take care of the stranger until he was well enough to continue his journey. Moral value is connected to this case study because the merchandise that this stranger was carrying had not only been stolen but he was beaten. This story sends an impactful message to students bullying others to refrain from this immoral behavior, and not to beat or steal from their colleagues in school or out of school.

According to the interpretation of the scriptures, a priest from the synagogue and a Levite came by and looked at the man, and passed on the other side of the road. Two other individuals likewise passed another way because they did not want to bother this injured man. However, the good Samaritan came by and tended to the man's wounds and took him over to a nearby Inn to remain until he was well. Jesus asked the question, who was the good neighbor? Everybody exclaimed that it was the stranger who look out for the injured man. This story is inspirational and reminds every student to be like the Good Samaritan. (Chalmers, 2020).

4. Conclusion

As indicated above, bullying is a problem that not only impairs the free flow of education to youth in the K-12 schools, but it has also ended countless lives of innocent students who died because of suicidal ideation. This study is in its initial stage and the data collection process has not yet begun. Thus, the outcome is currently unknown. However, based on the collection and analysis of the data, the study's results will be determined and published for the scientific research audience

More importantly, the expectation is because of the value and importance of this study, policymakers must pay specific attention to the importance of teachers' perceptions of bullying, and anti-bullying policy. Thus, through these initiatives and the introduction of effective anti-bullying programs to reduce bullying. Eventually, the school will become safe for all students to become educated without being fearful of their lives being taken, sneakers stolen, or wristwatches or jackets stolen by aggression.

Compliance with ethical standards

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