CREATING HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS AND MAKING SCHOOLS SAFER: STRATEGIES TO DECREASE BULLYING BEHAVIOR IN K-5 SCHOOLS TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

by

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Abstract

For students to learn and grow schools should be positive, safe environments. This study reviewed various bullying prevention programs and strategies to determine if bullying behaviors impacts academic performance in the K-5 educational settings. Schools are using a variety of prevention strategies to create environments that are positive and safe for the students. Research indicates that these prevention programs and policies are indeed improving conditions for students. However, in some settings, these programs may not be improving behaviors and attitudes at a rate conducive to accelerated learning gains. Current research shows the most dramatic changes in bullying attitudes and behaviors occurs when there is a unified effort by students, parents, teachers, and community in an effort to promote a bully free environment to improve student learning.
Chapter I: Introduction

Bullying has become a major problem faced by students. The results of bullying behavior can hurt a student emotionally, physically and socially. The affects can be devastating to an individual’s self-esteem, confidence, and self-image. The goal of this study is to identify the strategies and preventative plans K-5 schools can use to decrease bullying behavior. By decreasing bullying behavior schools can increase the likelihood of creating a safe learning environment for all students. Administrators, school staff and parents must all be educated to look for signs of bullying behaviors. Administrators, school staff and parents must work to improve ways to teach students about the negative affects of bullying, to make students feel comfortable in talking to adults about bullying behaviors, and they must teach strategies to change people’s beliefs and attitudes about victimization in bullying. These are essential components of an effective intervention program. These components must be taught and reinforced in schools for change to occur.

Bullying is a significant problem that occurs in schools around the country. “Although bullying was once dismissed as an ordinary part of growing up, we now know that bullying is an insidious antisocial behavior that traumatizes millions of students each year and undermines the fabric of school life for millions more” (Feinberg, 2003). Research estimates indicate that the problem affects far more students than teachers or parents are aware of (Aalsma & Brown, 2008).

“Between 15-25% of U.S. students are bullied” (Metzger & Adams, 2007). “In addition, 15-20% of U.S. students report bullying others in school” (Metzger & Adams, 2007). Young people who bully are more likely to be truant, drop out of school, smoke, drink alcohol, and get into fights. Based on data collected over several instances, researchers have estimated that two-
thirds of students who were involved in school shootings have reported feeling bullied before their attacks (Metzger & Adams, 2007). Most administrators understand the global realities of the problem. Bullying encompasses a spectrum of aggressive behaviors ranging from overt acts of physical violence to far more subtle, yet equally destructive, patterns of verbal or relational cruelty; and that bullying is often a common thread linking a school's most troubling issues, including suicide, substance abuse, increased absenteeism, and academic failure (Feinberg, 2003).

Bullying has taken on new and different looks as technology has advanced. Victims of bullying must now deal with threats or harassment by email, texting and websites such as Facebook. Often victims have difficulty escaping the attention cast on them by bullies. The threatening or harassing comments made public electronically are available for many different people to view. Although a high percentage of bullying behaviors occur in school settings, the growing fear with advanced technology is victims cannot distance themselves from these behaviors out of school.

With bullying being such a prevalent problem, many schools have implemented school-based programs, many of which take a comprehensive approach to preventing and intervening in peer aggression at multiple levels in a school’s ecology (MacKenzie, Frey, Hirschstein, Snell, & Edstrom, 2007). Teachers, students, administrators, and parents must be educated about bullying in order to move toward correcting the problem. By making everyone involved more aware of what bullying looks like and how to stop bullying behaviors, less people will suffer from the cruel affects of bullying.
Statement of the Problem

Researchers want to re-examine the phenomenon of bullying and its relationship to more serious violent behavior, decline in academic performance and social issues. (Ballard, Argus, & Remley, 1999). Bullying is aggressive behavior distinguished by unequal power and the intention to cause physical, social, or emotional harm to others (Mackenzie et al., 2007). Victims of bullying are often left afraid and embarrassed (Feinberg, 2003). Bullying takes on many shapes and forms in schools. The effects of bullying can be devastating on the people involved. For many students, just surviving adolescence is difficult enough; some students now have to survive taunting, teasing, and feelings of ostracism by fellow classmates (Long & Alexander, 2010). In addition to connections with other forms of youth violence, bullying has been associated with substance use, emotional disturbance, and physical health symptoms. Given these consequences, preventing bullying in schools is a public health priority (Spriggs, Iannotti, Nansel, & Haynie, 2007). Many schools are trying to tackle bullying head on with prevention programs and day-to-day practices to put an end to this problem.

Bullying has a major impact on students’ social and emotional well-being, but it can also play a role in their academic performance. Research has shown how safe and healthy school environments contribute to improved academic performance (Strom, Thoresen, Wentzel-Larsen & Dyb, 2013). Children who are victims of bullying are often anxious and unsecure about themselves (Hansen, Steenberg, Palic & Elklit, 2012). Other negative results of bullying include low self-esteem and school enjoyment, poor social skills, and low self-confidence. These factors can play a major role in how students perform on day to day activities and assessments. Bullying also causes students to not enjoy school or to look forward to the experiences that a typical school day presents. This in turn leads to higher rates of absenteeism, which results in students
losing out on instructional time in the classroom (Woods & Wolke, 2004). Missing out on key academic instruction can lead to gaps in a student’s understanding of concepts and connections when learning skills and ideas. For students to reach their maximum potential and be successful in the classroom, practices and policies must be put in place to ensure that students are learning in a safe and comfortable environment. Student perceptions of supportive school climate have been linked to student adjustment, commitment to learning, and academic achievement (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory & Fan, 2010).

Studies indicate that many anti-bullying programs are effective to a certain degree. Anti-bullying programs could be even more powerful if fully integrated into the curriculum (Metzger & Adams, 2007). For anti-bullying to be integrated into the curriculum teachers need an increased awareness of what encompasses bullying. Bullying can take many forms, such as physical aggression, verbal aggression, or social isolation. In addition, “bullying can be either direct, where the bully directly attacks the victim, physically or verbally, or indirect, where the bully can remain relatively anonymous while manipulating the way other people respond to the victim” (Correia & Dalbert, 2008).

Teachers need to be educated and aware of what risk factors could make students more susceptible to bullying. “Bullies have been regarded as skilled individuals who try to reach personal benefits through bullying” (Vailancourt, McDougall, Hymel, Krygsman, Miller, Stiver & Davis, 2008). The victims are typically children who are more socially rejected and less socially accepted by their peers (Weinhold, 2000). Research evidence indicates that social factors such as group membership and peer pressure, as well as individual, personal factors such as physical strength, aggressiveness, and empathy influence bullying (Van Goethem, Scholte, & Wiers, 2010).
Simply being aware or knowledgeable about bullying does not stop bullying itself. Schools must now educate staff, students, and parents to change everyone’s response to bullying. All must reinforce the strategies and ideas presented to change how we handle bullying behaviors. The ultimate goal of a school wide intervention and prevention program is to create a culture in which adults stop all bullying immediately, all students learn positive behaviors and become part of the anti-bullying solution, and the needs of individual students are met (Feinberg, 2003). Unfortunately, in many schools around the United States bullying is still a prevalent problem that needs to be addressed immediately and professionally. Results vary depending on the study, but up to 54% of youth are affected from bullying worldwide (Hansen et. al., 2012; Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Until the bullying epidemic is under control, many people will unnecessarily suffer physically, socially and emotionally.

Violent, aggressive, or bullying children and adolescents present a common problem for schools, and one of the biggest difficulties for students, teachers, and administrators is how to address and manage disruptive behavioral problems. In the past decade, researchers and educators have put an increased focus on aggression and bullying. Recently schools have implemented a number of specific interventions developed to address the problem (Horne, Stoddard, & Bell, 2007). Some of the way researchers have responded to the prevalence and impact of bullying are by developing school-based programs, many of which take a comprehensive approach to preventing and intervening in peer aggression at multiple levels in a school's ecology (MacKenzie et al., 2007). Schools have implemented these programs and helped make staff more aware of the seriousness of bullying and aggressive behavior. These anti-bullying programs are designed to teach educators specific indicators of bullying behavior, which include behaviors by the bully, the victim, or bystanders. Anti-bullying programs also
teach how to address the behaviors immediately. Anti-bullying programs want the staff to respond to each individual student’s needs effectively to deal with the problem. These programs also teach the victims of bullying behaviors to advocate for themselves or how to get help if needed. Programs such as these teach parents to look for clues in their children’s behavior and are designed to teach parents how to respond when trying to help a child who is suffering from bullying behaviors (Smith, 2000).

Schools are realizing that the failure to stop bullying implies tacit approval of the behavior, enabling bullies and condemning victims and bystanders to feel further victimized by the system (Feinberg, 2003). Many educators, students, and parents are still concerned that bullying is a major problem in schools today. More and more schools are implementing strategies aimed at decreasing bullying behaviors. As these behaviors decrease students fewer students will suffer the negative consequences associated with bullying.

Research Questions

Does creating a healthier and safer school environment for students in K-5 schools lead to improved academic performance? What strategies should be implemented in K-5 schools to create a healthier and safer school environment and to ensure that all students have the opportunity to attend schools feeling physically, emotionally and socially safe?

Definition of Terms

**Bullying.** Aggression in which an imbalance of power exists between aggressor and victim and the aggressive acts are deliberate and repeated (Rigby, 2004).

**Bully.** Individual who uses aggression to demonstrate power over another (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010).
Physical bullying. Using physical force such as hitting, kicking, biting or beating (Berger, 2007).

Behavioral bullying. Doing something mean, perhaps stealing lunch, scribbling on a homework paper, holding one’s nose to show that somebody stinks (Berger, 2007).

Verbal bullying. Repeated derogatory remarks or name calling (Berger, 2007).

Relational bullying. A disruption of the social relationship between victims and their peers. An example would be repeating humiliating gossip about someone in class or excluding them from participating in a social group (Berger, 2007).

Victim. The person being exposed to the negative behaviors (Rigby, 2004).

Victimization. To make a victim of bullying (Hong & Espelage, 2012).

Bullying prevention programs. Programs designed to increase collaboration among school staff and students and enhance the school climate and alter social norms (Bradshaw, O’Brennan, & Sawyer, 2007).

Cyber bullying. The use of electronic or computer based sharing of information to create harm or aggression toward another (Mishna, Saini, & Solomon, 2009).

Aggression. Does not preclude physical acts of hostility, but aggression generally refers to less extreme intentional behaviors that may cause psychological or physical harm to others (Horne, Stoddard, & Bell, 2007).

Bystander. Does not lead the bullying behavior, nor is a direct victim of bullying behavior, but observes bullying happen to their peers (Bacchini, Esposito, & Affuso, 2008).

Analysis of variance (ANOVA). A collection of statistical models used to analyze the differences between group means and their associated procedures (Woods and Wolke, 2004).
Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). A statistical test procedure for comparing multivariate (population) means of several groups (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008).
Making schools safer can lead to increased academic performance.

**Academic achievement among adolescents exposed to violence, abuse and bullying.**

This study is looking to determine the influence of the adolescents’ school environment on academic achievement. This quantitative study conducted by Strom, Throesen, Wentzel-Larsen and Dyb (2013) identified if there was an association between violence, abuse, bullying, classmate relationships, teacher support and academic achievement. This cross sectional study involved 7,342 adolescents between the ages of 15 and 16 from 56 schools in Oslo, Norway. The study sent out invitations to 8,316 10th grade students in the 56 schools. Some students refused to participate. The researchers asked for students to report their grades in math, writing, English and social studies. Students were also asked to respond to questions about abuse, bullying, teacher support and socio-demographic variables. For bullying students were asked to rate how often they experienced bullying from a given set of four choices. A multilevel analysis was used to test for associations at the school level. Levels of perceived classmate relationships (M = 3.04, SD = .70) and teacher support (M = 2.89, SD = .75) were generally high, with a mean level above 2.5 on a scale from one to four, where four reflects high satisfaction. On a scale from one to six, the mean grade reported was 3.93 (SD = .81). Among the students experiencing bullying, 28.8% reported violence from other youths compared with 14.8% among those not being bullied. Classmate relationships were significantly but moderately correlated with teacher support (r = .452, p < .01). The results indicated that the number of endorsed violence/abuse categories was associated with academic achievement. Bullying was significantly associated with poorer academic achievement. Students in schools with higher levels of bullying performed worse academically. The
study states that each unit of increment in bullying in school corresponded to an average 0.98 decrease in grades (p < .01). The authors concluded students attending schools with higher levels of bullying may show poorer school performance (Strom et al., 2013). The results of this study emphasize the need for preventative efforts that focus not only on vulnerable groups, but on all students and the school environment.

How psychological distress affects academic performance.

More and more studies are being conducted to determine the effects bullying has on students academically. A quantitative study conducted by Holt, Finkelhor and Kantor (2007) studied if victimization resulted in lower academic achievement. Participants were 689 fifth grade students from an urban, ethnically diverse school district in the North-East. The students completed self-report measures in school about bullying victimization, victimization in the home and community, psychosocial functioning and their current grades. The totals included 48.3% of the participants were girls, 50.4% boys and 1.3% did not report their gender. Peer victimization was assessed using the University of Illinois Victimization Scale (UVIS; Espelage & Holt, 2001). Four additional items developed for this study were added to expand the scale. The University of Illinois Bully Scale (UVBS; Espelage & Holt, 2001) was used to assess bullying behaviors and 21 items from the anxious/depressed and withdrawn/depressed scales from the Youth Self-Report were used to assess psychological functioning. A cluster analysis was conducted to analyze the results. The study was divided into three clusters. The first defined as “minimal victims” cluster. This included the majority of students (n = 420, 65%). These students had the lowest scores on all victimization measures. Cluster two, characterized by scores approximately one-half a standard deviation above the mean on
peer victimization ($M = 9.22, SD = 2.71$), was labeled the “primary peer victims” cluster ($n = 162; 25\%$). The last cluster was designated the “multiple victims” group ($n = 67; 10\%$). On average, members of this group had scores over two standard deviations above the mean on bullying victimization ($M = 20.88; SD = 4.07$). The results of the study indicated there were statistically significant differences between groups on self-reported grades. The group with the highest percentage of youth earning A’s and B’s was the “minimal victims” group. The study also indicated that youth with multiple victimizations experience more psychological distress and earn lower grades than their peers. The findings from this study suggest the need for more comprehensive assessments of victimization among youth (Holt et al., 2007). The study determined that such assessments will allow for better treatment and intervention for victimized youth. If these students can receive interventions sooner, than more can be done to help students with social, emotional and academic problems before they become a pervasive problem in the student’s life.

**Direct and relational bullying among primary school children and academic achievement.**

The importance of identifying bullying behaviors and addressing them early is critical to help support students long term social, emotional and academic growth. Woods and Wolke (2004) conducted a quantitative study to look at the association between bullying behavior and academic achievement. The study involved 1,016 children from primary schools. The students were individually interviewed and asked if they had experienced any of six behaviors involving bullying. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) was also given as the behavior questionnaire. The students were also
administered the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum Assessment (SATs 1). The assessment is comprised of five tests involving a writing task, spelling task, reading comprehension task, reading task and mathematics task. The students also received a summative teacher assessment (TA) at the end of a unit covered in school. This was done to assist with making judgments about student performance in relation to national set standards. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out on standardized factor scores for SATs and TA and revealed no significant differences between six and seven year old children for direct [F(3,714) = 0.15, p = .93] and relational bullying status [F (3, 713) = 0.52, p=.67]. However, significant differences were uncovered for SATs and TA and relational bullying status for eight and nine year olds [F(3,782)=3.78, p.=.01]. The study is indicating that as children get older the effects of bullying appear to impact their academic performance with significance. Woods and Wolke (2004) also indicated that there was a higher incidence of direct bullying behavior among primary school children compared to relational bullying.

**School climate plays a role in how students respond to bullying behaviors.**

**Supportive school climates.**

Several studies have shown the negative impact bullying has on children. Creating a safe environment for children to grow is essential for them to maintain a healthy outlook on their approach to life. A quantitative study conducted by Eliot, Cornell, Gregory and Fan (2010) investigated the relationship between student perceptions of support and student willingness to seek help for bullying and threats of violence. The study surveyed 7,318 students. 49% were girls and 51% were boys. Based on the student self-report, the study sample was 63% Caucasian, 22% African American, 5% Hispanic, 3% Asian American,
5% Other and less than 1% American Indian. The survey included an 8 item scale that measured student willingness to seek help from school staff members for bullying and threats of violence from the School Climate Bullying Survey (Cornell & Sheras, 2003). The scale requires students to rate on a four-point scale the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements made in the survey. The students also had to fill out an eight item scale that measured the extent to which students perceive that adults at school care about students, respect them, and want them to do well. Students rate on a five-point scale the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements about whether or not adults in their school “really care about all students,” “acknowledge and pay attention to students,” “want all students to do their best,” “listen to what students have to say,” “believe that every student can be a success,” “treat all students fairly,” “support and treat students with respect,” and “feel a responsibility to improve the school.” A hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analysis indicated that girls and boys both supported the idea that school climate was associated with more positive help seeking attitudes among students for bullying and threats of violence. Girls scores (N= 3,589) (M=22.8) (SD=4.43) and boys scores indicate (N=3,681) (M=21.7) (SD=4.81) that schools with better climates encouraged help seeking attitudes among students. Eliot et al. (2010) concluded that the study shows there is a relation between student perceptions of school climate and help seeking attitudes at both the individual level and at the school level. If students feel safe in talking with teachers and staff about bullying issues they will be more likely to approach staff when a problem arises.
Using social support to protect bullied adolescents from adverse outcomes.

Studies have indicated that strong supportive environments can help students avoid the adverse affects of bullying in schools. A quantitative study by Rothon, Head, Klineberg and Standsfeld (2011) investigated the extent to which social support can have a buffering effect against the potentially adverse consequences of bullying on school achievement and mental health. The data was collected from using surveys of 2,790 adolescents ranging from 11-12 years old and 13-14 years old. The group of students attended 28 schools in East London, England. Bullying was measured at baseline with a self-report question. The students had to respond if they have been bullied and how often, answering from a set of given choices in the survey. The educational achievement was measured using the Key Stage 3 examination. Depressive symptoms were measured using the Shorts Moods and Feelings Questionnaire (Angold et. al., 1987). Social support was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). A cluster analysis was conducted to analyze the results. For students who did not have high levels of support from friends, bullying was associated with lower odds of achieving the academic benchmarks. Bullied students with moderate (OR = .27, 95% CI 0.11-0.65) or low (OR = 0.38, 95% CI 0.19-0.76) level of support had approximately a third of the odds of achieving the academic benchmark, compared to students who were not bullied. Rother et al. (2011) concluded that bullying was not associated with educational achievement for students with high levels of support from friends or family. The results of this study indicate having a strong support group can help minimize the effects that bullying has on students. The
author also notes that support cannot always mitigate against the strong negative effect that bullying has on mental health and academic achievement (Rothon et. al., 2011)

**Influences on classroom management strategies and students coping with peer victimization**

Each teacher has a different style of classroom management. Different styles of classroom management may affect how students cope with bullying in the school environment. A quantitative study conducted by Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier (2008) researched if classroom management strategies used by teachers impacted how students coped with peer victimization from bullying. Data was gathered on 34 2nd and 4th grade teachers and 363 ethnically-diverse students (188 boys; 175 girls; M age = 9 years 2 months). Teacher attitudes and beliefs were measured using Troop and Ladd’s (2002) Student Behavior Questionnaire (SSBQ), which consist of 14 items about boys and 14 identical items regarding girls. Teacher management strategies were measured, for boys and girls separately, using the Classroom Management Policies Questionnaire (CMPQ; Troop & Ladd, 2002). Students’ coping was measured using the “What I would do” scale from the Self-Report Coping Scale. Grade effects of teachers’ views and strategies were analyzed using a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) in which teacher views and classroom management strategies were examined simultaneously with grades entered as the independent variable (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008). Girls reported using passive coping more frequently than boys (F(1,359)=10.66, p<.001; Ms=1.70 and 1.56 for girls and boys, respectively) and younger children reported seeking adult assistance more often than older children (F(1,359)=32.56, p<.001; Ms=2.41 and 2.08 for 2nd and 4th graders, respectively). 4th graders reported higher levels of peer
victimization than 2nd grade children (F(1,359)=4.51, p<.05; Ms=1.53 and 1.70 for 2nd and 4th graders, respectively). A breakdown of interaction effects revealed that 4th grade boys were less likely to endorse problem solving strategies (M=1.96) than second grade boys (m=1.21), 2nd grade girls (M=1.11), and 4th grade girls (M=1.23). Findings also indicated that teachers were less likely to tell children to handle victimization on their own (independent M=1.78) than to use any other strategy (ps for all contrasts <.001: advocate avoidance M=2.36; involve parents M=2.83; separate students M=2.90; and punish M=3.39), except advocate assertion (M=2.01; p>.05) (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008). The authors concluded that teachers are more likely to intervene if they viewed the bullying behavior as harmful instead of just normal kids’ behaviors. The teacher’s own feelings toward the seriousness of bullying affected how they responded more than their management strategies.

Are bullying prevention programs effective in schools?

**Quest for the Golden Rule.**

Research has indicated that the effects bullying behaviors have on children can be devastating. Interventions have been put in place in many schools to decrease the negative effects of bullying. A quantitative study conducted by Rubin-Vaughn, Pepler, Brown & Graig (2011) looked at how effective an e-learning bullying prevention program is. With many other academic text books and learning programs now being available in e-learning format, the authors wanted to investigate if a bullying prevention e-learning format is effective. The program is called Quest for the Golden Rule. It is designed by Practi-Quest for children in grades 2-5. The study involved 438 students. The students participated in fall of 2008 and winter of 2009. A survey was given to
students prior to each learning module and immediately following their use of the module. The three modules included The Bark Academy, The Mission to Mars and The Ghoul School. The Bark Academy-Fairness Scale questions addressed attitudes about fairness and social justice and about bullying and copying strategies. The Mission to Mars Friendliness Scale questions addressed attitudes and knowledge about respectful treatment of friends and peers, and strategies to stay safe from bullying. The Ghoul School was assessed using questions in several domains including children’s knowledge of how to identify bullying and strategies to respond when faced with bullying situations, including safely refusing and reporting bullying. An ANOVA analysis was conducted on each module. The results are indicated in the following chart below:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Pre Mean (SD) Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Post Mean (SD) Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission to Mars</td>
<td>40.47 (5.61) (49.62, 41.13)</td>
<td>42.20 (5.56) (41.45, 42.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghoul School</td>
<td>63.70 (8.82) (62.88, 64.53)</td>
<td>66.24 (9.03) (65.40, 67.09)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The authors concluded that students demonstrated growth in their knowledge and comfort level with how to cope with bullying after participating in the e-learning program. The students not only learned skills and strategies, but 93.4% reported having fun playing Bark Academy, 93.0% reported having fun playing Mission to Mars and 83.6% reported having fun playing Ghoul School. E-learning is progressing quickly in schools. This
program appears to show great promise in teaching elementary students about bullying and strategies to cope with these difficult social situations. The authors did mention that this is only just a part of the process in a safe school environment. Teacher and staff support are still key components of a safe and healthy school environment.

The effectiveness of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program.

Research has shown that without appropriate intervention, bullying behaviors tend to increase and contribute to a negative school environment. A quantitative study conducted by Bauer, Lozano and Rivara (2007) examined the effectiveness of a widely disseminated bullying prevention program, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP; Olweus, 1993). The study involved ten public middle schools in Seattle. Seven were in the intervention group and 3 were in the control group. The intervention consisted of 4,959 students while the control group consisted of 1,559 students. A survey was administered to all ten schools from the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 1993). Seven schools implemented the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. The remaining three schools choose a less formal prevention procedure. The intervention schools underwent consultation by trainers prior to implementation. Then, two years later, the experimenters re-visited the groups to determine if the bullying prevention program was more effective or not. Using a Multivariable analyses indicated that overall, there was no difference in relational (RR= .96, 95% CI: .86-1.08) or physical (RR= 1.00, 95% CI: .87-1.17) victimization reports for the intervention schools versus comparison schools over the two-year period. When stratified by ethnicity/race, white students in intervention schools were 27.5% less likely to report relational (RR= .72, 95% CI: .53-.98) and 36.6% less likely to report physical victimization (RR= .63, 95% CI: .42-.97)
compared to white students in comparison schools. There was no difference between the intervention and comparison schools in students’ attitudes to intervene overall (RR= 1.04, 95% CI: .94-1.14). Bauer et. al concluded that in this controlled trial, there was no overall effect of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program on student-reported victimization. However, when stratified by ethnicity/race, white students were less likely to report relational and physical victimization over the two-year period. Among intervention schools, the study found students were 21% more likely to perceive other students actively intervening on behalf of student victims. With regard to student attitude, 6th graders were 21% more likely to feel sorry for victims and want to help. So even though the study showed that there was not a significant decrease in bullying behaviors, results indicated that students overall awareness of bullying victimization increased. A better awareness may lead some students intervene or help others who are the victims of bullying behaviors.

**Looking at the impact of anti-bullying strategies for pupils in schools.**

More and more schools have implemented anti-bullying programs and strategies to create a healthy and safe learning environment. Are the programs and strategies being implemented making a difference for the students? A quantitative study conducted by Raynor and Wylie (2012) investigated the differences in the presentation and management of bullying behaviors in two London Schools. One school has high levels of deprivation and the other with low levels of deprivation. The study was conducted using a web-based questionnaire of 304 students ages 12-13 in four different London Schools. The questionnaire asked students about their involvement with bullying at school, either as a victim, perpetrator or bystander, and the type of bullying that occurred.
Students were also asked about ways of coping with bullying, and their opinions of current anti-bullying strategies at school. A cluster analysis of the results indicated that 45% of students at school three indicated they had no experiences of bullying, compared to school 10% at school one, 33% at school two and 21% at school four. The proportion of students bullied was similar at each school. School one results indicated that 25% had been bullied, 35% at school two, 28% at school three, and 39% at school four. The results indicated that school was the most important factor that determined students’ perceptions of bullying, and gender and ethnicity had no impact on the perception of bullying by students (P= 0.880 and P= 0.820 or 0.765, respectively). Raynor and Wylie concluded that deprivation had no impact on the prevalence of students involved in a bullying culture. The school environment is the most important independent factor for determining bullying. If a tolerance to bullying behaviors are permitted it creates an unsafe learning environment for students. Policies and awareness must be implemented with fidelity by staff to ensure that students feel safe from the victimization effects of bullying behaviors.

Long term effects of bullying on student performance

Prospective relations between children’s response to peer victimization and their socio-emotional adjustment.

The long term affects of bullying on students emotionally, socially and academically can be detrimental to their long term mental health. This quantitative study conducted by Visconti and Troop-Gordon (2010) examined whether children’s responses to peer victimization predict subsequent changes in their social and emotional well-being. The
study also investigated whether these associations vary as a function of children’s sex and level of victimization. The study surveyed 365 boys and girls in the 4th and 5th grades from five public elementary schools located in rural and mid-sized cities in the upper-Midwest of the United States. The students were administered the Self-Report Coping Scale (Causey & Dubow, 1992) to measure their response to peer victimization.

Loneliness was measured using the Loneliness and Social Satisfaction Questionnaire (Cassidy & Asher, 1992). The children’s peer victimization was measured using the Multi-Informant Peer Victimization Inventory (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 1997). Data was collected in the fall and spring of each year. To test whether children’s response strategies predicted changes in their emotional and social adjustment, a series of hierarchical linear regression analysis were conducted. The results of the survey are in the table below.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics for the total sample for fall and spring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall victimization</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall loneliness</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall depression</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall anxiety</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall aggression</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall prosocial behavior</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring victimization</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring loneliness</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring depression</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring anxiety</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Visconnti and Troop-Gordon concluded that seeking other’s support was predictive of decrease aggression among children infrequently victimized, but was also predictive of increased internalizing difficulties. Findings from the current study suggest that many of the strategies offered in schools’ intervention programs might not be effective for all children. Children, therefore, might benefit from more individualized interventions which focus on helping them respond to aggressors in a manner that prevents future harassment and builds social and emotional adjustment. To effectively accomplish this teachers must be aware to the bullying behaviors that are occurring the school environment and be able specifically address those behaviors with victimized students in a way that is unique to that particular student or group of students. School-wide interventions are still necessary, but may not be enough for some cases.

**A longitudinal 8-year follow-up study on bullying**

The effects of bullying can extend far beyond the school walls as children grown into teenagers and into young adults. Some of the negative effects of bullying can extend from the school environment to the community environment. A quantitative study conducted by Sourander, Helstela, Helenious and Piha (2000) investigated if bullying and victimization behaviors persisted over time. To accomplish this task, researchers conducted an 8-year longitudinal study investigating the effects of bullying and victimization from age 8 to 16. Children were evaluated with Rutter Scales (Rutter, 1967) by parents and teachers and with the Child Depression Inventory (Kovacs, 1992) filled out by the children at age eight. When the children were 16, parents filled in the
Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991) and adolescents filled in the Youth Self-Report (YSR; Achenbach, 1991). The original sample consisted of 6,017 children from Finland. The follow-up sample had 857 young adults and parents respond. Based on the age 16 data, 11% of the sample reported being involved bully type behaviors. Of that 11%, boys who bullied consisted of 15% and girls who bullied were reported at 7%. 12% of the samples were victims. 13% of the victims were boys and 12% were girls. Mental health services had been used by 18% of those who bullied and 15% of those who were victims. However, of those who had been referred, 30% were bullies and 30% were victims. In univariate logistic regression analysis, referral to psychosocial services was associated with both bullying (p < .001, OR 4.2, 95% CI 1.9-8.9) and victimization (p < .001, OR 3.5, 95% CI 1.7-7.6). Sourander et al. concluded that bullying is associated with aggressive and antisocial behavior while victimization is associated with internalizing problems. The study also showed that in many cases, both bullying and victimization are rather persistent behaviors from the early school years to adolescence. Preventative programs and practices should be implemented at a young age to decrease the frequency of bullying and victimization behaviors. If these behaviors are not addressed long term, problems can arise. Both bullying and victimization contribute to referrals to psychosocial services. Unfortunately, often a referral doesn’t happen and individuals suffer social and emotional trauma that can persist over the course of their life.

**The long term effect of bullying**

The long term effects of bullying have been investigated in prior research. The negative impact that results from victimization of bullying can extend throughout a person’s life.
school career and potentially affect them once they graduate as well. Brown and Taylor (2008) questioned, if being bullied at school adversely affects educational achievement, then the individual’s employment prospects may be directly influenced by bullying. To achieve this they used data from an existing study and conducted a follow up study to determine the impact bullying could have on children as they transition from school and move into the workforce. This quantitative study used questionnaires to identify educational attainment for students who were in the original study. The authors used multi-variate analysis to look at educational achievement, which was tied with earnings. The results include diploma (Coef.= .2000, Tstat=3.88), Degree (Coef. = .01131, Tstat = 4.50), and O level (other, such as not graduating) (Coef. = 0.0063, Tstat = 1.83). Brown and Taylor concluded that school bullying has an adverse effect on human capital accumulation both at and beyond school. The finding from this study also suggest that it is equally as important to curb bullying in secondary schools as it is in primary schools to alleviate the adverse effects on human capital attainment. Brown and Taylor also concluded that being a victim of bullying has longer lasting scarring effects than for those who are the perpetrators of bullying.
Chapter III: Results and Analysis Relative to Problem

Making schools safer can lead to increased academic performance.

Addressing bullying and victimization issues benefits all students in the school environment. Bullying and victimization have been associated with poor academic achievement either, directly or indirectly. Bullying and victimization have been linked to decreased student classroom or school engagement, which in turn decreased academic performance and achievement (Hammig & Jozkowski, 2013; Woods & Wolke, 2004). Factors that can affect classroom or school engagement include an increase in absences or tardies, students feeling socially isolated, decreased self-esteem and confidence and an overall lack of motivation or excitement about school activities (Holt et al., 2007; Hammig & Jozkowski, 2013; Strom et al., 2013). These factors negatively affect student achievement in school. Research indicates that the long term affect of these factors can be realized years beyond when the initial bullying and victimization behavior has occurred (Strom et al., 2013; Woods & Wolke, 2004). The sooner schools address bullying and victimization, the better chance the schools have to decrease the negative long term effects of bullying (Brown & Taylor, 2008; Sourander et al., 2000; Visconti & Troop-Gordon, 2010). Research has shown that when schools implement a bullying prevention program at a young age it increases students’ appropriate behaviors and awareness to bullying and victimization (Raynor & Wylie, 2012; Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011). Bullying prevention programs do not eliminate bullying or the negative effects associated with bullying and victimization, but the programs do help students and school staffs learn to recognize indicators associated with bullying behaviors. It is no longer acceptable for school staff and students to dismiss bullying behaviors as part of kids growing up and just being kids. It is still unknown how exact the severity of the impact bullying and victimization behaviors has on academic performance and mental health for all students, but research suggest that students who
suffered severe bullying as children are four times as likely to access mental health services as adults (Hamig & Jozkowski, 2013; Sourander et. al, 2000). Each individual student reacts differently to the experience they encounter, but research does indicate that bullying and victimization negatively impact student academic performance. It is up to the schools to implement strategies and increase awareness to minimize the short and long term affects of bullying behaviors.

**School climate plays a role in how students respond to bullying behaviors.**

The school environment can play a key role as to how students respond to bullying behaviors. Researchers have found that if an attitude of tolerance towards bullying behaviors is accepted by teachers and staff, then students feel less comfortable or safe reporting feelings of victimization (Eliot et al., 2010; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008; Rothon et al., 2011). In instances that bullying is tolerated, students feel that their concerns go unfounded with staff and that in some instances the student who is feeling victimized by bullying is treated as if they are just overreacting to a situation (Eliot et al., 2010; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008).

Researchers have found that schools who create a supportive and responsive climate to bullying and victimization behaviors can minimize the effects that bullying has on students (Eliot et al., 2010; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008; Rothon et al., 2011). Different factors that help create a supportive school climate include responding to reports of bullying immediately and with fidelity, implementing an awareness school wide of what bullying and victimization behaviors looks like and the effects of those behaviors on people, and enforcing policies that address the consequences of bullying type behaviors (Bauer et. al., 2007; Raynor & Wylie, 2012). Overall, schools that created a supportive environment for students against bullying and victimization displayed better mental health reports and academic progress over a period of their
MAKING SCHOOL SAFER

For students to progress socially and academically they need to learn in a safe and healthy school environment that encourages them to express their creativity, build confidence and self-esteem, learn to take appropriate chances, feel supported in learning from failure and feel accepted and engaged in their school community. Schools that have created a supportive and safe environment for their students against bullying and victimization help to increase the chances of their students progressing socially and academically throughout their school career.

Are bullying prevention programs effective in schools?

Bullying has negative short and long term consequences on students affecting students’ social, emotional and academic well being in the school environment. Research studies have shown the negative effects bullying and victimization have on students throughout the school careers can impact their social, emotional, and academic growth and well being (Brown & Taylor, 2008; Sourander et. al., 2000; Rothon et al., 2011). Many schools attempts to decrease the harmful effects of bullying have been the implementation of bullying prevention programs in their schools (Eliot et. al., 2010; Raynor & Wylie, 2012). Researchers have stated that there are numerous types of bullying prevention programs and policies that have been implemented in schools all around the world in an effort to combat the harmful effects of bullying and victimization. With bullying still being a world wide problem in schools, many people wonder how effective bullying prevention programs are. Analyzing the results of three different studies evaluating bullying prevention programs used across the United States and world yielded some interesting results. The three different programs include a computer based E-learning program called “Quest for the Golden Rule”, the “Olweus Bullying Prevention Program” and a national policy in the UK that was passed as law to address anti-bullying (Bauer et. al., 2007; Raynor &
Wylie, 2012; Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011). The results in the three studies showed varying levels of positive results. Overall, the studies indicated that the prevention programs did increase awareness as to what bullying behaviors and victimization looks like in the school environment, but interestingly the programs did not realize a significant decrease in the number of students reporting experiencing bullying behaviors after the implementation of the interventions. Researchers concluded that even though the bullying prevention programs have helped to increase awareness of certain behaviors, teacher and staff support are still key components of creating a safe and healthy school environment (Bauer et al., 2007; Raynor & Wylie, 2012; Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011). The studies did not examine in depth the components of each program that appeared to be more successful or how to increase the effectiveness of the bullying prevention programs. The researchers concluded that bullying prevention programs are necessary to increase awareness and understanding of the negative consequences associated with bullying and victimization behaviors, but that a bullying prevention program is not the end all solution to stop bullying in schools (Bauer et al., 2007; Raynor & Wylie, 2012; Rubin-Vaughan et al., 2011). To effectively decrease bullying behaviors requires total support from school personnel, families and the community to ensure that students feel heard and understood about feeling victimized and that there is follow up regarding bullying behaviors (Sawyer, Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2011; Wei, Williams, Chen, & Chang, 2010). A bullying prevention program can be more effective if implemented with fidelity by all the individuals who are involved in that school community.

**Long term effects of bullying on student performance.**

The long term effects of bullying can be devastating on individuals’ social, emotional and academic well being. Physical violence or acts against another individual can be the most visible
form of aggression displayed from bullies, but name calling, harassment, rumor spreading, cyber bullying, and other forms of social isolation can be just as hurtful to individuals as physical violence (Eliot et al., 2010; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008; Rothon et al., 2011). Researchers investigated how bullying can affect individuals’ long term well-being in school and post-school. The most severe reactions to bullying often are displayed in acts of violence, such as school shootings or suicide (Hong & Espelage, 2012; Visconti & Troop-Gordon, 2010). The negative effects of bullying can extend beyond the physical violence displayed by some victims though. Increased absenteeism, withdrawn behaviors from social groups, decreased effort and interest in school and a decrease in self-esteem are all characteristics displayed from victims of bullying behaviors (Hansen at. el., 2012; Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010; Visconti & Troop-Gordon, 2010). The consequences of these characteristics can result in poor grades in school, social isolation, a fear of taking chances, and a hindrance to an individual reaching their potential. The long term affects can result in a decrease in life-long earnings, job attainment, career advancement, substance abuse issues, and depression (Brown & Taylor, 2008; Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). The research studies reviewed did not go into depth about other variables that could contribute to some of the long term behaviors of the individuals involved in this study. Some of those variables include family health history, environmental conditions growing up, and household income growing up. Researchers did indicate the importance of implementing bullying prevention programs at a young age to help decrease the negative effects caused by bullying and victimization. The results from the control group indicated that students were more aware of bullying and victimization, even though the reported occurrence of bullying did not significantly decrease (Brown & Taylor, 2008; Sourander et. al., 2000). By increasing student and staff awareness to bullying and victimization, schools can attempt to decrease the negative
long term effects of bullying on individuals, thus improving their school careers and personal lives as it relates to the school environment.
Chapter IV: Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendation

Bullying is a problem faced by children in schools across the United States and worldwide. Research has shown that if the problem is ignored the effects can be devastating on the individuals involved. Schools must address bullying as soon as possible. Research has shown that prevention programs or policies do not eliminate bullying from occurring, but that consistently implemented programs or policies do help increase awareness to the problem and can help prevent devastating effects on a larger population of individuals (Brown & Taylor, 2008; Ponzo, M, 2013; Visconti & Troop-Gordon, 2010). Schools must implement bullying prevention programs or policies starting in pre-school and kindergarten and continue to implement these programs or policies with fidelity up until and through grade 12 ((Brown & Taylor, 2008; Ponzo, M, 2013; Visconti & Troop-Gordon, 2010). Schools must make staff members aware of the policies established and teach them the behaviors to look for in bullying and victimization. Staff members must also be trained on how to respond to bullying behaviors appropriately. Bullying behaviors can no longer be ignored or brushed off simply as “kids being kids”. The consequences that result from the effects of bullying can harm individuals, schools and communities. The results can range from increased anxiety about school, depression, substance abuse, and extend into conditions as severe as suicide or mass shootings (Hansen at. el, 2012; Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). There are a variety of programs available for schools to use to implement a school-wide prevention policy.

Schools should choose an anti-bullying program that is research based and data driven. This will help measure if the program is effective or not. An example would be one of the
programs discussed earlier in this paper, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Research has shown that the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program increased student awareness to bullying and victimization and provided students with strategies to decrease these types of behaviors from reoccurring. Although recommended, an anti-bullying program isn’t a necessity to properly address school bullying, but the school must at a minimum implement a anti-bullying policy and train staff members on what behaviors to look for and how to address bullying when it occurs. Schools that do not have a plan in place to address bullying need to implement an awareness and prevention policy immediately. Students, staff and families cannot afford to ignore bullying behaviors anymore because of the severe consequences associated with the effects of bullying.

Areas for Further Research

In order to better answer my research question, further studies would need to be conducted. Since I am looking to see if decreasing bullying behaviors in K-5 schools will increase academic performance, studying students in a K-5 school setting would provide quantifiable results. I would suggest an experimental group of one hundred individuals each in second grade and fourth grade in a school that has implemented a bullying prevention program. I would also have a control group of one hundred individuals in second grade and fourth grade in a school that has no bullying program or policy in place. In conducting a quantitative research study I would collect baseline data as to how both groups, the experimental and control groups, are performing academically. I would also conduct a pre and post survey to find out how prevalent bullying is in their current school environment. I would want to use a standardized assessment, such as the WIAT-III (Wechsler, 2009) to collect academic data. I would use the Children’s Social Behavioral Scale- Self Report (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995) and the Bullying Behavior Scale (Austin & Joseph, 1996) as my behavioral measures. Reevaluating using the
same measures with all the available participants in both the control group and experimental
group after a two year period would provide a usable data sample from which to draw
correlations. Using a multivariate analysis of covariance, I would look to see if there has been an
increase or decrease in mean academic performance and analyze the rate at which growth has
occurred for students. I would also analyze the degree to which bullying is reported to determine
if those behaviors correlate with the students academic growth. Some factors that I cannot
control in the experiment would be the quality of instruction provided by staff to each group of
students and the specific curriculum used to instruct students. I would attempt to find schools
that have similar standards for both instruction and curriculum. My goal would be to attempt to
determine the extent to which students in schools with implemented bullying prevention
programs perform academically when compared to students in schools that do not have bullying
programs and policies in place.

Summary and Conclusion

The negative effects of bullying can impact individuals in a variety of ways. If schools
and communities do not address bullying behaviors and victimization the results can be
devastating for children and young adults. It can affect them socially, emotionally, and
physically. The results of social, emotional and physical harm can impact individuals academic
potential, ability to make and maintain friends, decrease confidence and self-esteem, lead to
substance abuse, and influence someone to cause harm to themselves or others. Schools must
address the bullying problem at a young age and continue to address bullying until students
graduate. The school environment needs to be a safe and healthy place for students to learn,
grow, make friendships and develop socially and emotionally. By implementing anti-bullying
programs and policies schools can help increase awareness to the negative short and long term
consequences of bullying. As students and staff become more aware of bullying behaviors and vigilant in addressing bullying behaviors they will be able to help prevent and decrease the frequency at which these behaviors occur. The benefits of creating a safe and healthy learning environment in schools impacts students throughout their lives in a variety of ways, such as allowing students to maximize their learning potential, allowing students to feel safe in developing healthy social relationships, allowing students to feel safe in taking risk and building a community that values individuals strengths and weaknesses. Schools and communities cannot allow bullying behaviors to prevent individuals from reaching their full potential in life.
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