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Bullying Hurts

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BULLYING HURTS

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

_____

by

Katrina Gonzalez

June 2020

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Approved by:

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Dr. Armando Barragan, MSW Research Coordinator

ABSTRACT

This research projects purpose was to research the prevalence of bullying/harassment in schools in a city within the Inland Empire. The city is left confidential to protect the confidentiality of study participants. The researcher utilized the post positivist approach to guide the research processes. The study was completed through interviews with parents which contained qualitative questions. The researcher will create a webpage that's link was posted to Facebook city sites. This website lead to a more private location where research participants were able to gather more information about the study and sign up to participate.

The research participants needed to have a child who attends school in the city to be able to be a part of the research. Once the participants were gathered, they were contacted, and the process was explained to them. The researcher set up days and times to either meet in person or over the phone. The participants were interviewed and asked various open-ended questions about bullying/harassment in their child's school. The researcher utilized a digital audio recording device to record the interviews. Only the audio was recorded to protect the participants confidentiality.

The answers to the questions were evaluated through the bottom up approach where open, axial and selective coding were used. This data analysis was inclusive of the conditional matrix. The researcher then identified the set of concentric circles which determined each different unit of influence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my amazing and supportive husband. You have been my shoulder to cry on and most importantly, you were my compass when I felt lost. I am unbelievably grateful for your patience and love you have given me for the last thirteen years. You taught me that I can do anything that I put my mind too and to never give up. I would like to also acknowledge my four beautiful sons. My oldest for teaching me to be kind, my second son for teaching me to not take everything so serious, my third for teaching me to laugh even when the couch is on fire and my youngest son for telling me that I am the best mom in the world on days when you didn't know I needed to hear it the most. I want to acknowledge my dad who encouraged me to pursue a full life. I am forever grateful for your love and commitment to raising me. I couldn't have made it this far without you and because of you I am a strong and spirited woman who loves without boundaries. Lastly and most importantly, I want to thank God for giving me the strength and courage to fight for what is right and just. Thank you for allowing me to work through you.

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CHAPTER ONE

ASSESSMENT

Introduction

Chapter one covers the research focus of this study, the prevalence of bullying/harassment in schools in a city in the Inland Empire. It explains the assumptions and provides the rationale for using the post positivist paradigm. This chapter presents a review of the literature supporting the problem focus on bullying/harassment in geographical location. Additionally, the theoretical orientation used for this study is explained as well as the potential contribution that the study will have towards social work practice.

Research Statement/Focus/Question

The research focus was on the prevalence of bullying in grade schools in a city in the Inland Empire. To understand the prevalence of bullying, parents of children who attend grade schools in the city were interviewed and asked in-depth open-ended questions. Bullying in schools is explained as a student who causes another peer to feel fearful, less safe or like she/he is unable to participate in school (ACLU, 2017). Bullying, which frequently includes an imbalance of power, can include verbal, physical, or psychological actions against the student (ACLU, 2017).

Bullying and/or harassment can be harmful when students are bullied or intimidated due to perceived or actual characteristics such as ethnic group, age,

color, gender expression, gender identity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation

or race

(ACLU, 2017). This type of bullying is serious and can violate discrimination laws

and violate civil rights (ACLU, 2017).

The National Center for Educational Statistics reports that one out of every

five students (20.8%) reported being bullied and in addition those who had

experienced cyberbullying nearly doubled (18% to 34%) from 2007 to 2016

(Victoria, 2017). Students who experience bullying have an increased risk for

sleep difficulties, poor school adjustment, depression and anxiety (Victoria,

2017). Based on the interviews with parents, common themes emerged and a

theory was identified.

Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

This study was conducted using the post positivist perspective. The post

positivist approach is explained as an "inductive exploratory approach used to

understand an objective reality" (Morris, p.41, 2013). The post positivist study

assumes that the only way to capture the complexity of the human experience is

by gathering data in a naturalistic setting with data collected qualitatively (Morris,

2014).

This paradigm is the most appropriate in addressing the problem focus of

bullying in the area because it is exploratory and helps the researcher gain a

better understanding of the topic and its surroundings influences. The information

was gathered straight from the parents who have children who attend schools in

the area. This provided a concreted understanding of what is occurring and viewpoints on the topic.

Literature Review

This literature review focuses on the concepts which are important when understanding the prevalence and effects that bullying and/or harassment can have on school aged children. It will begin by defining and explaining what bullying is. Next, the prevalence of bullying in school will be discussed followed by the effects of bullying. Additionally, parent's role in identifying and stopping bullying will be outlined.

Definition

Bullying can be defined in a number of ways within literatures as it is perceived slightly different in various societies. Jacobson (2012), explains that there are three common components to all definitions that define bullying. Firstly, it is explained as a purposeful behavior and is not viewed as accidental (Jacobson, 2012). Secondly, there is a power imbalance between the bully and the victim and third, it occurs more than one time (Jacobson, 2012). Bullying behaviors are instrumental and serve to achieve a goal and are agreeably explained as systematic and deliberate negative actions repeatedly targeted at the same victim who is viewed as relatively defenseless in front of the perpetrator (Jacobson, 2012).

Bullying can be enacted through verbal means by threatening, teasing, calling names and taunting (Jacobson, 2012). Additionally, it can be viewed

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through physical contact of hitting, kicking pinching, pushing, tripping, slapping and restraining another (Jacobson, 2012). In schools bullying is outlined in various ways to encompass the wide range of situations that occur to ultimately protect the students.

<u>Prevalence</u>

The prevalence of bullying in schools is significant. A study from 2018 reports that 463 student surveys were conducted in middle school across the Southern United States (Hicks, Jennings, Jennings, Berry & Green, 2018). The grades surveyed were grades six through eight. Of the students surveyed, over 37% reported being bullied face to face or online (Hicks, Jennings, Jennings, Berry & Green, 2018). Under 31% of students reported the bullying incidents to adults (Hicks, Jennings, Jennings, Berry & Green, 2018). This data provides recent research about the prevalence of bullying and its paradigms.

<u>Effects of Bullying</u>

The effects of bullying are not good and can cause serious issues for the victims. Bullied youth are at an increased risk for developing sleep difficulties, depression, anxiety and poor school adjustment (Victoria, 2017). These effects can lead to other risky behaviors associated with suicidal behaviors viewed as use of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco and other drug use associated with depression (Li & Shi, 2018). Research data was gathered from the California Youth Risk Behaviors Survey which linked bullying and suicide through different associated risk behaviors like those mentioned above (Li & Shi, 2018).

Literature provides some startling evidence to the severity of bullying. The study investigated suicide and depressive symptoms amongst Latina adolescents compared to non-Latina counterparts with a focus on bullying as a predictor (Romero, 2013). Bullying rates are higher than previously reported studies which highlight victimization at school as 23%, school bullying as 18% and cybervictimization as 26% (Romero, 2013). The girls who had been bullied were 1.5 times more likely to attempt suicide compared to girls who were not victims (Romero, 2013).

Overall, the research gathered on the problem focus of bullying in grade schools present significant issues that youth face if they are in fact bullied. It appears that the effects of the bullying can cause long-term effects on the youth's mental health and as stated can cause depression and risky behaviors associated to possible suicide. The link between the research and the topic is that it clearly perpetuates that bullying is an issue that many youths are facing.

Parents Role

Parents of bullies may have an influence in their child's aggressive and controlling behaviors towards peers. A study from 2012 explains how parental characteristics are associated with bullying perpetration with US children aged ten to seventeen years of age (Rashmi, Lin, Avila & Flores, 2012). The study provides that Latino, African American and children living in poverty who had development, emotional or behavioral problems had a higher probability of bullying others as did children of parents who felt that their child bothered them,

were hard to care for or felt angry with their child were associated with higher

bullying odds (Rashmi, Lin, Avila & Flores, 2012).

Parents can also play a huge role in identifying and stopping bullying with

their child. Parents can pay attention to different ques of their child being bullied.

Students may act differently, are less interested in school work, or have torn

clothes (ACLU, 2019). In hopes of preventing the detrimental effects of bullying

parents should talk with their child and make them feel supported in the matter

(ACLU, 2019). The parent should document all facts about the bullying and

report it to the schools.

Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical orientations of this study is the empowerment theory. The

empowerment theory is explained as a value orientation for working within the

community and a theoretical model that lends understanding to the

consequences and processes of efforts that exert control, affect organizational

functioning, have influence over decisions that affect one's life, and the quality of

community life (Zimmerman, 2000).

The empowerment framework suggests a distinct approach for creating

social change and developing interventions (Zimmerman, 2000). It focuses on

directing attention to competence, adaption, health and natural helping systems

(Zimmerman, 2000). The empowerment approach calls on a distinct language of

understanding efforts to adapt to change, cope with stress and influence

communities (Zimmerman, 2000).

This framework is appropriate for this study because the data provided suggests that the bullies and victims of bullying may be seen as oppressed through the effects of poverty and mental health concerns related to the issue. Empowerment on both ends of the spectrum seems beneficial as it allows both parties to seek out guidance without judgement being placed.

Potential Contribution of the Study to Micro and/or Macro Social Work Practice

The research added to macro and micro social work practice by providing direct information of experiences and viewpoints of the problem directly from parents. The findings added to the knowledge of professionals in the schools who provide interventions and helped researchers gain a better understanding of how parents are perceiving bullying in their area school.

On the micro end of the spectrum this may help social work practice by guiding treatment for kids and parents who have been victim or need behavioral intervention for the perpetrator. Macro practice benefits from this study because it adds to the administrative and planning section associated with the problem focus of bullying in grade schools in San Bernardino County. Ultimately, professionals are guided by the practices, interventions and groups put together to address the topic being discussed.

Summary

Chapter one covered the assessment phase of the post positivist paradigm approach. It provided information about the assumptions and rationale

used for the post positivist approach in this research project. The chapter

covered literature reviews which examined the definition of bullying, its effects

and parental involvement. The theoretical orientation of the empowerment model

was explained and applied in the chapter. Lastly, the contribution to micro and

macro practices of the study was explained.

CHAPTER TWO

ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

Chapter two addresses the engagement stage of this study. This chapter will provide explanation on how the study site was accessed along with how the gatekeepers were engaged. In addition, self-preparation is examined and explained to ensure that the researcher proceeded with sensitivity towards the study participants. Special attention was given towards diversity, ethical and political issues. Lastly, the role technology played in this study is further discussed in detail.

Study Site

The study site is located in a city in the Inland Empire. The characteristics of the study site area include data that explains that 45.9% of residents are married, 12.6% are divorced, 26.4% are married with children, 27.6% are single with children, 32.1% are Caucasian, 13.2% are African American, 3.2% are Asian, 1.4% are native American and 43.2% are Hispanic (People in Barstow, California, 2018).

The city is located in the Mojave Desert. It is a highly trafficked area for tourists and travelers as two major highways cross through the city. There are two military bases in the area and many military families live in the city. The city has limited in resources. There is no homeless shelter in the city and most of the

jobs available are either military grade or fast food restaurants. There are no big industries or businesses in the area. Most of the families living in the area are of middle to lower class. The schools are rated poorly due to their test scores being low.

Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site

There is no gatekeeper for this research proposal because there was a weblink attached to a public posting on a social media site where residents of the city participate. Study participants were a part of the community and were engaged at residents in the community and not through another source or gatekeeper. Engagement of participants was done through a private web page created by the researcher and contained limited information to protect participants confidentiality.

This project had one research study site. First, the parents of the children who attend school in the district were interviewed. They were recruited from a local webpage created on Facebook for residents of the city. There was a posting on this page with information regarding the project and prompted the participants to follow the link to a private webpage where there received more detailed information about the study.

The website stated that if the parents are interested in participating, they can contact the researcher. Once they made contact, the researcher informed the participants of the study purpose and they were asked if they still wished to participate. When they agreed an appointment meeting time was set.

The research study site was over the phone where audio was recorded and a few were face to face in a private setting in a coffee shop. The researcher met with the parents and engaged in the interview process.

Self-Preparation

Self-preparation was done in many stages for the engagement phase. Firstly, the researcher considered self-preparation when dealing with life experiences. As a parent of children who have experienced bullying on several different occasions within the school district, it was extremely important to consider these facts before starting the interviews with parents. Self-disclosure occurred before the interviews started. Parent participants seemed to feel more comfortable sharing with a parent who had similar experiences.

Self-preparation was important when creating the research questions for the interviews. Some parents had emotional reactions to the topic since it was a sensitive topic due to the unique circumstances that had detrimental effects on their children. The interview questions were tailored to specifically address the topic and remain unbiased as well as culturally sensitive. Parents were instructed to share only what they felt comfortable sharing in hopes of avoiding any type of emotional reactions. When this occurred, the research was prepared with the research advisors' information so they were able to seek out assistance as needed.

Diversity Issues

The county has a population of 2.14 million people, of which 89.3% are citizens (Data USA, 2019). The county is composed of 1.13 million Hispanic residents, 173,558 African American residents, 624,308 Caucasian residents, 147,672 are Asian residents and 49,807 are two or more races (Data USA, 2019). Based on the statistics one can see the County is widely diverse racially and with this comes various ethnicities and cultures. The researcher was sensitive to the various backgrounds and was inclusive of them during the research process.

Research on bullying explains that one is three California high school and middle school students reported having been bullied or harassed as least once in the year prior (Adams, 2015). According to the 2011-13 California Healthy Kids Survey administered by the California Department of Education, thirty-four percent of students in grades 11, 9, and 7 stated that they have been bullied more than one time (Adams, 2015).

This research project addressed diverse research participants from a wide variety of cultures, socio-economic backgrounds and genders to represent the population. There were diverse issues in terms of gender. The goal was not to solely have female research participants but it happened that way. It was beneficial towards the research outcome to represent a wide of range of diverse research participants.

Ethical Issues

The ethical issues posed included keeping confidentiality for the research participants. Bullying is a sensitive subject and can ultimately be linked back to school that it occurred. Therefore, it was important to maintain the confidentiality of the parent. In order to achieve this the researcher took special precautions. The audio recorded interviews were kept on a password protected computer that was only accessible to the researcher. Participants names and any type of identifying information was kept confidential.

There was a general posting placed on the internet social media page. The link lead to a private web page created by the researcher. This barrier overcome was to keep the public from knowing who participated in the research. Ethically the researcher informed the parents that the researcher kept their interview private and that the researcher would not disclose their identity. This was explained as ethically as possible and worked against disclosure of the parents identifying information.

When the study was complete all of the audio recordings and notes associated with the interviews were deleted off the computer. The researcher double checked that the information was permanently deleted off of the computer. The website and posting created to engage participants were deleted at the end of the study as well.

Political Issues

The main political issue was ensuring that the parent's information and situations discussed during the interview process did not include specific school identifying information. The researcher made sure that the results of the interviews were explained without specific details that could lead to administrative officials and specific school sites identifying who participated in this study. If the schools or administrators were to find out who was a part of the interview this could present issues for the parents with fear of retaliation for speaking out. The school area or administrative official could be put in the spot light and could affect their performance and reputation if the study was pinpointed to the specific district.

The Role of Technology

Technology was the main source of communication during the research process. Study participants were initially engaged through a private web page that was posted to a local social media Facebook site that included residents within the community being studied. When the participants clicked on the link, they were taken to the private web page that had more in-depth information surrounding the research purpose. After participants read through the material there was an email listed on the page to where they contacted the researcher. The participants had the choice of interviewing face to face with the researcher or in person at a local meeting place.

The technology used to conduct the interviews was an audio recording device. The faces of the research participants were not be recorded or photographed. This information is kept confidential. It was preferred that the research interviews were conducted over the phone which acted as an additional safeguard for both the researcher and the participant in this study. In this case the participant only knew the researchers contact information and nothing more and vice versa.

Summary

Chapter two discussed the process of engagement. It explained how the researcher gained access to the participants and the study site and how the interviews were conducted. Next, self-preparation was examined and explained to ensure that the researcher proceeded with sensitivity towards the study participants. Special attention towards diversity, ethical and political issues was assessed and consideration to these factors was given. Lastly, the role technology played in this study was further discussed in detail.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

Chapter three discusses implementation of the study. The chapter covers who the study participants are and how they were selected. It explains how data was gathered and the phases of the data collection. Additionally, data recording and data analysis is covered in this chapter. Lastly, termination and communication of findings is discussed.

Study Participants

The participants in this study are parents of children who attend the schools in the inland empire school district focused area. The participants must have a child or children who are currently apart of the school district in the area. The demographic data in the area includes that 45.9% of residents are married, 12.6% are divorced, 26.4% are married with children, 27.6% are single with children, 32.1% are Caucasian, 13.2% are African American, 3.2% are Asian, 1.4% are native American and 43.2% are Hispanic (People in Barstow, California, 2018). The study participants will most likely be a part of the Caucasian, Hispanic and African American decent as the geographical statistics is in the area is more representative of that population.

The participants only needed to meet one criterion to participate of having a child or children who attend school within the school district. The goal was to

gain feedback from various families from different cultural backgrounds but selection is not contingent on those factors. Additionally, participants were asked to provide their ethnicity and any other personal identifiable information. Currently there is no crime data on bullying in the area so this is not a key identifying factor in explaining the characteristics of study participants in the geographical area.

Selection of Participants

The selection of the participants was done carefully with regard to the criteria needing to be met to participate. The participants needed to have met the criteria of having a child or children that are currently living and attending the schools within the school district being studied. The purposive sampling method utilized with the maximum variation sampling measure.

Purposive sampling is explained as selective, subjective or judgmental sampling as it focuses on sampling techniques where the units that are investigated are based on the researcher's judgement (Lund Research, 2012). The goal of purposive sampling is not to randomly select participants from a population with intention to make generalizations from the population of interest (Lund Research, 2012).

The maximum variation sampling measure is most appropriate for this study because it encompasses insight into a phenomenon by looking at it from all of the angles. Maximum variation sampling is a technique that captures a wide range of perspectives that relate to the topic of study (Lund Research, 2012).

This will be especially helpful when approaching common themes found during interviews.

The participants were directed to a private webpage created by the researcher. The initial posting was on the social media page where residents of the community communicate. The information emphasized that the researcher is conducting a study about the prevalence of bullying in the area and would like participation from parents of children who attend the school district.

When participants clicked on the link to participate in the research they were directed to a webpage. This webpage contained specific information about the study including how to sign up, the criteria to participate and it read a brief confidentiality explanation to protect the participants. The web page also included how the participant can be a part of the study either through a phone call or face to face interviews and that the interview will take approximately fifteen to thirty minutes.

The researcher asked a set of open-ended questions that were created to be sensitive to the participants perceptions of the issue. The questions outline was discussed prior to conducting the interviews to ensure that the participants were comfortable with the questions. If for any reason they did not agree with one or more of the interview questions they were given the option to not answer. Data was gathered in-between April 30th 2019 and June 30th, 2020. The exact date is dependent on IRB approval and level of participation.

Data Gathering

The data gathering method was done through individual interviews with the selected participants that meet the criteria specified. Since the interviews were done individually this involved only the researcher and the participant as it is important to gather data correctly. Throughout these interviews the researcher recorded only audio and not video. This aided as another safeguard to ensure participant confidentiality. During the interview the participants were asked open ended questions which were recorded and then the information was transcribed into a data set in order to understand common themes presented throughout the interview.

The open-ended questions were carefully constructed in order to avoid adding researcher bias. This was very important during the interview process due to researcher biases awareness. The researcher practiced active listening and did not share any personal experiences that may have affected the outcome of the interview but will self-disclose minimal information at the beginning of the interview for the purpose of helping the participant feel more comfortable discussing their situations.

Since this is exploratory research it is important to work questions appropriately and not jump to any conclusions about if there is a problem of bullying. The questions were formed around areas like has their child ever experienced bullying/harassment in school and to what extent, how they feel the schools are set up to handle bullying/harassment instances in school, their

knowledge of policies and frameworks in the schools that address or prevent bullying and/or harassment in schools, if their child has ever witnessed bullying in school and what happened, if the parent feels that they are informed of issues that occur in the school, if they feel they are involved in their child's behavioral processes in schools and if they feel comfortable talking with schools if they have concerns or fears about their child's wellbeing in schools.

These questions address the study topic of bullying/harassment in many ways. Firstly, the descriptive questions did not assume that the parent's child has experienced bullying rather the questions asked what their opinion on the topic is and if their child has experienced bullying rather the child was the victim of bullying or if their child was the bully. The descriptive questions were more focused during the interview based off of responses given to questions. For example, what are your experiences with school staff and explain your experiences within the school's district. In addition, some focused questions were if the parent says their child has bullied others the researcher then inquired if they felt they were included in the disciplinary measures and interventions presented.

Phases of Data Collection

The phases of data collection included the engagement phase which included more general open-ended questions. The next phase of data collection consisted of developing the middle section which asked the essential focused questions about the topic of bullying. The third and final stage of the interview

consisted of termination. At the end of the interview the data collected was reviewed with the participant, which gave the participant a chance to clarify on information provided. In the termination stage the researcher reviewed the debriefing statement with the participant which contained future contact information if the participant choses to access the ending product of the data gathered.

Data Recording

Data recording was extremely important in this research project because it involved several different interviews perspectives. The researcher recorded audio from the interviews and took notes during the interview process. The researcher took notes in order to better focus more concrete common questions and areas of concern with the researcher participants. The recording involved a great deal of effort as researcher stayed on script and documented thoroughly.

The interviews were recorded on an audio device and did not include the research participants faces or names. This was done by interviewing fifteen participants and paying special attention to common themes in the interviews. Some common themes that that were identified included: types of bullying experienced, if bullying has been experienced, effects of bullying, feeling powerless, feeling empowered, types of bullying possibly experienced including verbal, physical, relational or cyberbullying, prevalence of bullying, administrative involvement and communication of instances.

When these common themes were identified the data gathering process stopped and evaluated. The data was transcribed from use of Word, EXCEL then into ATLAS ti. where qualitative analysis was the focus. This helped the researcher understand how cause and effect relationships occur. The researcher input the interviews into a word document, transferred to EXCEL and then further evaluated through ATLAS ti. analysis. The notes taken in the journal before, during and after the interviews was used to compare audio recording with documented data and further elaborate on research findings.

Data Analysis

This research project utilized qualitative data analysis and was done through the bottom up approach. It involved open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The data analysis was inclusive of the conditional matrix. The conditional matrix aspect will have the desired outcome of identifying the set of concentric circles which will each correspond with each different unit of influence. The software of ATLAS ti will be used to input the data and find these common constructs.

During the open coding aspect, interview data was transcribed and broken down into common portions that were further analyzed. This aspect of data analysis allowed the researcher to set aside important aspects of the interview and later data was expanded upon. It was broken down and further magnified for commonalities in the data.

During the axial coding stage coding data was evaluated to help identify common themes and connections within the data set. During axial coding the connections in data began to emerge more clearly. Next, selective coding was done to develop the theoretical statement that was governed around the information gathered. Lastly, conditional matrix was further evaluated to help understand how each set of data has imbedded influences in the constructs involved. This process helped the researcher understand how the data collected has an impact on the micro or macro level of practice.

Termination and Follow Up

Termination took place after the conclusion of the interviews. The research made sure to explain this both at the beginning of the research and at the end. At the time of termination, the researcher thanked the research participants for their participation in the study. The researcher explained how the research will be used and placed emphasis on how important their input was in understanding the topic fully from personal experiences.

The researcher provided the participants with a debriefing statement at the end of the research interviews. It informed the participant who can be contacted for further questions about the research study as needed. The debriefing statement was additionally made available to the participants in order to obtain the results of the study if they desire. The research participants were given the option to have research findings sent to them via mail or email so they can

review it to better understand how their interviews were applied to the research paper.

Communication of Findings

The findings of this research were put into a synthesized data set and formalized into this research project and given to the university to publish. The findings from the research project are made available at the California State University, San Bernardino library when published. The communication of findings will be shared per request of the interviewees. Prior to starting the interviews, the participants were asked if they would like to receive the results of the research and which method of delivery they would prefer.

Summary

Chapter three started with focusing on the study participants and the process of selecting them. This was followed by the methods of data gathering and the phases of data collection. Next, the data record and analysis were discussed in detail. Finally, the termination and follow up plan were addressed and communication of findings was outlined.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will review and interpret the data that was gathered from the interviews with the participants. First, some demographic findings will be discussed, the researcher will point out the key variables identified in this study and will additionally identify common themes in parents' statements about bullying. The recorded interviews for the fifteen participants were thoroughly evaluated and analyzed with ATLAS ti. and will be reflected in this chapter. Lastly, the implications for micro and macro practice will be discussed.

Data Analysis

This research study utilized the post positivist data analysis approach to analyzing qualitative data. During the data analysis the research applied codes to themes identified in the interviews. Common themes were identified and coded as relevant to the area discussed. Open and Axial coding were used during the data analysis stages to construct the open coding and to bring together the identified connections to further construct a clearer understanding of the prevalence of bullying in the designated school district.

During the initial phases the researcher reviewed all of the audio recordings for the fifteen interviews. The information from these videos was

carefully transcribed onto a word formatting system and further reviewed to ensure material was not lost during the interpretation of the audio. In addition, the researchers kept a written form of the interview and input this data into ATLAS ti.

Basic demographic data was collected and covered the categories of age, marital status, race, ethnicity and ages of children. The current study consisted of fifteen participants with a mean age of thirty-six years old. Out of the fifteen participants 60% of the them were in their thirties and 80% of the participants stated they were married. Two participants were single and one participant was divorced. In regard the race of participants, 53% identified their race as Caucasian, 20% identified their race as African American and 26% identified their race as Hispanic.

The analysis of the content identified ten open codes. In addition, axial coding was identified and expanded on further in the content below in relation to the open code discussed. The open and axial codes are identified as follows; awareness of the anti-bullying policies in the school, attentive intervention taken when bullying happened, effective intervention, bullying perception of prevalence, experience with bullying with their own child/children, experiences with bullying, experiences with verbal bullying, experiences with physical bullying, witnessed bullying, when bullying should be reported, was the parent notified of the bullying and the form of contact made when an incident occurred.

Awareness of Anti-bullying Policies in the School

The code was created because the participants in the study had

a common response of "No Tolerance" when asked what they knew about their child's school anti-bulling policies. Although a majority of the participants were unaware of the bullying policies at their child's school, twenty percent of the participants stated that they were only aware of the school site and districts "No tolerance" to bullying approach. The axial coding identified was the relationship between the awareness of the anti-bulling policies in the school and being unaware but having a general understanding of there being a "so called" no tolerance approach.
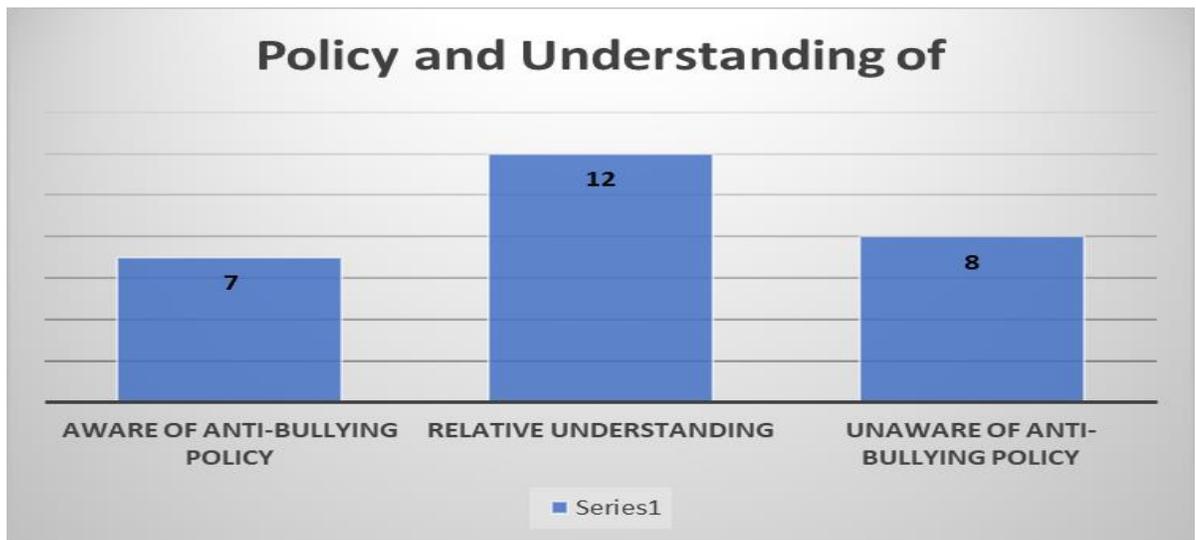

Figure 1. Policy and Understanding

<u>Attentive Intervention taken when Bullying Happened</u>

This code was created because a majority of the participants explained that they felt that the bullying was addressed by school officials when it occurred. One participant explained that they felt like that the school professionals attempted to address the issue but that "the administrators' hands were tied because the bully's' parents lack of follow through" (Participant #7, Survey Interview, October 2019). In addition, a relevant implication was the "no-contact order" that a few of the participants discussed as being a form of intervention (Participant #14, Survey Interview, October 2019).

<u>Effective Intervention</u>

This code was encompassed because it examined the participants perceptions on the school's officials' inattentive action or intervention taken when bullying occurred or was reported. One participant explained that "the school official was not attentive to the bullying so I told my child to fight back. Only then did the bullying stop" (Participant #10, Survey Interview, October 2019). This powerful statement was shared across other participants responses. One parent stated that they "contacted the parents of the bully since the school was stopping the bullying" (Participant #10, Survey Interview, October 2019).

<u>Bullying Perception and Prevalence</u>

This code was formed because interestingly all fifteen participants stated that they felt bullying is occurring and is a huge issue in their child's school within the areas school district. Each participant expanded on how bullying has

impacted their child not just from experience it but from the fear of being bullied and from witnessing others being bullied. One of the participants explained that "the media is making me have more anxiety about sending my child to school in fear they will become seriously harmed by a bully" (Participant #11, Survey Interview, October 2019). The axial coding relationship was reflected in the common theme of the perception of bullying being a serious and occurring issue and the prevalence of bullying being fast and not fully addressed.

Experiences with Bullying with their own Child/Children

This code was created because every participant stated that they have one or more of their children have experienced at least one form of bullying in their current school within the district. This was significant to the research as it helped the research build on an understanding of experiences with bullying within their child's school setting.

Experiences with Verbal Bullying

This code was formed due to participants mentioning verbal bullying several times throughout this study. This was significant to this research because verbal bullying was mentioned a total of twenty-one times during the interviewing process with the participants. Parents were adamant about verbal type bullying. They expressed their frustration in detail with the amount of verbal bullying their child experienced above all other forms of bullying.
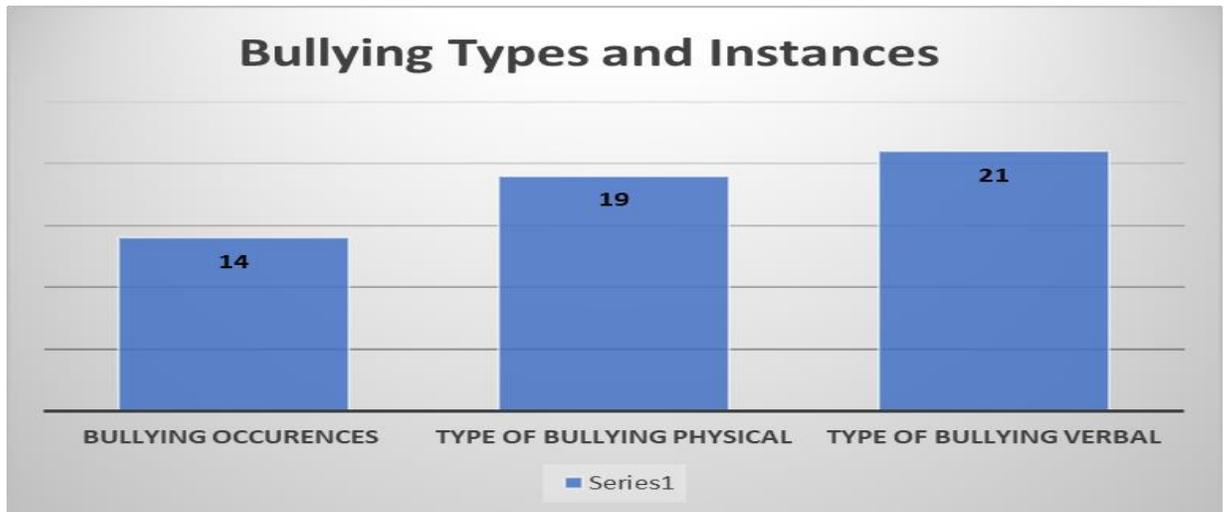
Figure 2. Bullying Types and Instances

Experiences with Physical Bullying

This code was identified because it was relevant to the types of bullying witnessed and experienced. There are several forms of bullying. One of the main types of bullying that has been most talked about is the physical type of bullying. In this study physical type bullying was mentioned nineteen times during the interview process. This is slightly less than the verbal type bullying mentioned but both types of bullying can cause harmful effects. Throughout the interview process several parents explained that their child had experienced "verbal bullying and physical bullying" together. It appeared that this was a common theme with participants.

Witnessed Bullying

This code was formed to place emphasis on witnessing bullying. The outcome of this interview question showed that some parents had strong emotions relating to this question. One parent stated that their child "witnesses bullying every day at school" (Participant #9, Survey Interview, October 2019). Both verbal and physical type bullying were reported to be witnessed while school was in session and after school time when busses were involved. One parent shared their story about their child's friend being "stabbed by a pencil on the bus on the way home from school" (Participant #7, Survey Interview, October 2019).

When Bullying Should be Reported

This code was identified because several participants stated that bullying should be reported "immediately". Six out of the fifteen participants stated that bullying needs to be reported as soon as it happens in hopes of intervening before someone gets hurt. Early intervention is key to these type of problems in school. In addition, one participant states that bullying should be reported "Right away but I also feel that word is overused and should be labeled as a verbal altercation or a disagreement" (Participant #4, Survey Interview, October 2019).

Were Parents Notified of the Bullying

This code was recognized due to participants being split on their answers. Half of the participants explained that they were notified of the bullying and the

other half explained they were not notified. One participant explained that they

took it upon themself to solve the problem by talking with school staff and the

bully's parents. One participant stated that they "had to be the one to contact the

school and notify them of the incident" (Participant #6, Survey Interview, October
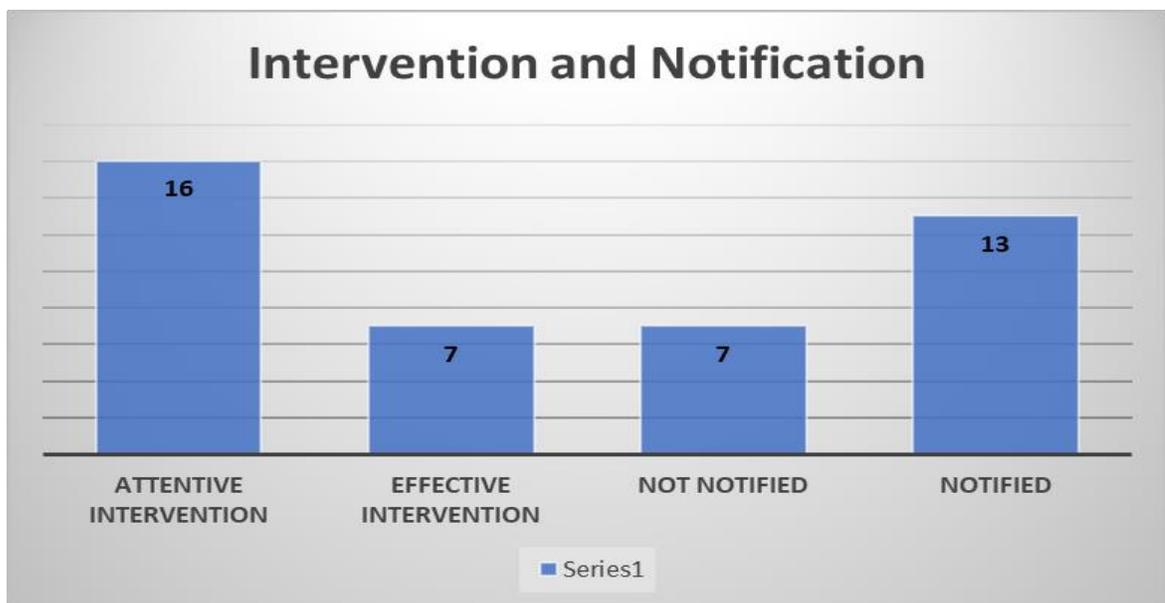
2019).

Figure 3. Intervention and Notification

Data Interpretation

After going through all of the data and analyzing the findings and common

constructs, this researcher was able to identify main themes in parents' views on

bullying in their child's school. Some of the themes that emerged included the

parent's frustration with school staff not being aware of the bullying and lacking the ability to intervene at a higher level. This caused more concern and interest on behalf of the researcher.

There is a clear lack of supervision on school grounds and after school times when kids are exiting the school grounds including being on the bus. This data shows that there is a need for further training on how to intervene before a child is harmed physically or socially. There needs to be more attention given to this area of focus in the school district studied. There was a common understanding from participants of a "no tolerance" to bullying however, parents weren't appeased when providing this explanation. It clearly is not enough to say there is a no tolerance bullying policy if bulling continues without successful intervention.

It is important for school officials to understand how parents are experiencing bullying with their child. It would be beneficial for school administrators to work with school sites to survey parents and children regularly to ensure the safety of the school environment and to evaluate the effectiveness of anti-bullying policies and interventions already in place. This is a sure way to gain understanding of the issue from the sources and to identify possible needs of the families and children being served.

Implications of Findings for Micro and Macro Practices

Throughout this process micro and macro implications were identified and needed to better serve the children during school hours. Schools are equipped

with internal and external social services type providers who provide direct micro and mezzo related services. There was a clear lack of research that evaluated anti-bullying policies and the effectiveness of them. This research can provide a framework for researchers to continue to build upon bullying research and the need for better intervention and response.

At the micro level of practice, this research can assist the social work practice by understanding that there is a need for more intervention in the school for both the bully and the child being bullied. As reported in earlier research bully has long-term harmful effects on children and the bullies themselves are experiencing aggression as a way to cope. This research can help those at the micro level to focus on individual intervention and group intervention. In addition, this research can help micro practice by identifying that family needs to be included in the intervention process to ensure success in treatment.

At the macro level of practice, researchers are made aware of the discrepancy and ineffectiveness of current anti-bully policies put into place. These policies need to be looked at again to ensure that the child being bullied is protected and that the school is a safe environment for children to attend. In addition, if policy makers were able to survey parents and children from school sites in the area, they could better identify how to better form policies to meet the needs of the community and can help identify where emphasis needs to be placed.

Summary

      This chapter explained the evaluation of the data as it was analyzed and as common themes were identified and coded through the interview processes with the fifteen parent participants. This chapter also provided data interpretation which allowed meaningful findings to be discussed. Lastly, the implication of findings towards the micro, mezzo and macro field of practice were brainstormed and examined.

CHAPTER FIVE

TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

Introduction

This chapter providers its readers with an overview of the common themes

identified from this study and the importance of parent's perceptions on bullying

and how it has impacted their views on the measures taken to stop bullying and a

lack of measures taken to stop the bullying. In addition, the researcher will

discuss limitations to this study and recommendations for further needed

research on bullying in schools and the severity or the issue.

Termination of Study

Termination was done after each interview with the research participants.

After the interview was concluded the participants were given a debriefing

statement and were informed that this study would be completed and available

for reference after June 2020. Each participant was thanked for their participation

and were reassured that their identities would not be shared with anyone.

Communicating Findings and Dissemination Plan

The communication of findings will be provided upon request of the

participants who were informed that once the research was completed, they

could gain access to the finished research through California State University,

San Bernardino Pfau Library or archives. The participants were given the website

information on how to access Pfau Library. In addition, participants email

addresses were provided and research findings will be sent to interested parties.

Summary

This chapter explained the process of termination which included

providing a debriefing statement to each participant. This chapter also explained

how the communication of findings would be distributed as requested through

publication. Lastly, the chapter explained the dissemination plan of how the study

could be accessed.

APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT (S)

1.What's your understanding of bullying/harassment?

2.Do you think that it's going on?

3.Do you have experience with this?

4.What type of bullying has your child/children experienced?

5. How often does your child experience or witness bullying/harassment?

6.Have any measures been taken to stop the bullying/harassment?

7.Have you or your child ever witnessed bullying during school hours and if so in what form?

8. Are you aware of the anti-bullying policies in your child's school?

9.When do you think bullying/harassment should be reported?

10. Has your child ever been bullied during school?

11. Has your child ever been accused of bullying in school?

12. Do you feel that school district administrators are attentive to your bullying/harassment concerns?

13. If your child was bullied did you receive notification from the school and in what form?

14. If your child was bullied did the school reach out to you immediately?

Voluntary Demographics of Participant:

Age of participant: Age of child/children:

Race: Ethnicity:

Marital status of parent:

APPENDIX B: ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement link will be on a local social media page. The text on the

private webpage link will read:

I would like to announce that I will be conducting research in your area regarding

bullying and/or harassment within your child's school in the local school district.

The research is purposed to study the prevalence of bullying and/or harassment

in your child's school. If you would like to contribute to this study, please click and

follow the link. (The link will be attached as well as the image seen on this

document)

The linked webpage will include basic information about the research

project including the requirement of having children who attend school in the

school district as well as a willingness to participate in the interviewing process

where questions about harassment and bullying will be asked involving their

child's school. There will be a brief description about the study being confidential.

The webpage will state to privately message the researcher if they would like to

contribute to the study.

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine the prevalence of bullying/harassment in schools in a city in the Inland Empire. The study is being conducted by Katrina Ramirez-Smith, an MSW student under the supervision of Dr. Brooklyn Levine-Sapozhnikov in the School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-Committee, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to examine the prevalence of bullying/harassment in schools.

DESCRIPTION: Participants, parents of children who attend grade school within the city's school district, will be asked a few questions about their opinions and experiences with bullying/harassment in their child's school.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: Your responses will remain anonymous and data will be reported in group form only.

DURATION: It will take 15 to 20 minutes to complete the survey.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Brooklyn Levine-Sapozhnikov at email: Brooklyn.Sapozhnikov@csusb.edu.

RESULTS: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks (http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu) at California State University, San Bernardino after December 2018.

APPENDIX D: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

This study you have just completed was designed to investigate the prevalence of bullying/harassment among school district parents in a city in the Inland Empire. I am interested in assessing the current status and prevalence of bullying/harassment in the school your child attends. This is to inform you that no deception is involved in this study.

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Brooklyn Levine-Sapozhnikov at Brooklyn.Sapozhnikov@csusb.edu. If you would like to obtain a copy of the group results of this study, please contact the ScholarWorks database (http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/) after September 2020.

APPENDIX E: IRB APPROVAL

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK Insertional Review Board Sub-Committee

Faculty Reviewer: Armando Barragån   Due Date:

                                                   Return
Student(s): Katrina Gonzalez   To:
Proposal Title: Bullying Hurts

Please review the attached IRB application for compliance with standards for protection of human subjects. A copy of the full proposal is in the "Students' Proposals" folder for reference, if necessary. If you will be supervising the project, please read it closely and return to the student with your comments.

- -

Proposal Should Be:

☑ Approved

☐ Resubmitted With Revisions Listed Below

☐ Forwarded To The Campus IRB For Review

Revisions That Must Be Made Before Proposal Can Be Approved:

☐ Faculty Signature Missing

☐ Missing Informed Consent   ☐ Debriefing Statement

☐ Revisions Needed In Informed Consent   ☐ Debriefing

☐ Data Collection Instruments Missing

☐ Agency Approval Letter Missing

☐ CITI Missing

☐ Revisions in Design Needed (Specify Below)

Reviewer Signature: _____   Date: 9/23/19

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