TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

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The primary aim of this study was to explore the differences between teacher and administrator perceptions of bullying. Data were collected from 139 practicing educators and administrators who completed a survey regarding their perceptions of bullying in schools. Mann Whitney U tests were conducted to determine if perceptions of bullying varied with occupation and gender. Bonferroni adjustments were made for the multiple pairwise comparisons. There were statistically significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding their role in bullying prevention. Teachers felt more strongly that educators played an important role in bullying prevention; however, administrators felt more comfortable communicating with the parents of bullying victims. Interestingly, teachers were significantly more likely than administrators to perceive a need for increased bullying prevention training. Significant gender differences concerning the inclusion of bullying prevention in school curriculum were also found.

Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of Bullying

Bullying presents a threat to the safe learning environment that schools try to provide for all students. Bullying is now recognized as a global problem affecting all schools, public and private, large and small (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaida, 2008; Lipson, 2001). Of the 37 school shootings analyzed by the United States Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center, two thirds of the shooters reported feeling bullied, persecuted, or threatened by others prior to the shooting (Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzelski, 2002). When it comes to bullying prevention and training of educators and administrators, it is essential for administrators and educators to join to-gether to establish appropriate training and prevention efforts (Marachi, Astor, & Benbenishty, 2007).

Canter (2005) established that bullying is present in most schools in the United States, affecting approximately 70 percent of all students. More specifically, in a national sample of 2,064 students, Lipson (2001) found that 83 percent of girls and 79 percent of boys experience harassment in their schools. Bradshaw, O'Brennan, and Sawyer (2008) conducted an anonymous survey of middle and high school students regarding their involvement with bullying, either as a bully, victim, or both bully and victim. Analysis of the data revealed that 37.9 percent of students were involved in bullying in some form: 17.5 percent as a victim, 11.7 percent as a bully, and 8.4 percent as both a bully and a victim (Bradshaw et al., 2008). Additionally, Bradshaw et al. reported that

youth involved in bullying are less likely to report feeling safe at schools than those students identified as not involved in bullying situations.

Bullying involves a power differential between bully and victim (Craig & Pepler, 2007). Specifically, to qualify as bullying, the circumstances need to contain repeated action, harm to a victim, and an imbalance of power (Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001). Sadly, victims of bullies often manifest a variety of negative psychological and physiological symptoms (Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormond, 2006; Schnohr & Niclasen, 2006; Snyder et al., 2003). The physical and psychological stress related to bullying frequently leads to a host of educational and behavioral problems for children in schools (Schnohr & Niclasen, 2006). In fact, Bradshaw et al. (2008) found that bullying is one of the most common forms of the aggression-victimization cycle experienced by children in school.

Long-term impact

Finkelhor et. al (2006) found that children victimized by their peers often suffer traumatic symptoms. More specifically, Snyder et al. (2003) observed in a study involving 266 boys and girls over two years that children who are victimized by their peers exhibit more antisocial and depressive behaviors than their nonvictimized peers (Snyder et al., 2003). Nishina, Juvonen, and Witkow (2005) analyzed self-reports of 6th graders regarding peer victimization, psychosocial problems, physical symptoms, and school functioning. Girls reported more social anxiety than boys; however, boys reported significantly higher levels of peer victimization than girls (Nishina et al., 2005). Furthermore, according to Nishina et al., peer victimization is predictive of higher levels of psychosocial problems and physical symptoms. Aluede et. al (2008) noted that students, especially boys, who engage in bullying behaviors are more likely to engage in other delinquent behaviors such as drug abuse, shoplifting, and vandalism. Subjects engaged in bullying in elementary school are also more likely to lack impulse control and associate with antisocial peers. Alternatively, students who are victims of bullying behavior are twice as likely to engage in risky health behaviors such as drinking and smoking (Schnohr & Niclasen, 2006) and are more likely to suffer mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, psychiatric problems, and eating disorders (Dake, Price, & Telljohann, 2003). In addition, violence, heavy drinking, and marijuana use at age 21 is linked to childhood bullying (Kim, Catalano, Haggerty, & Abbott, 2011). As a child grows into adolescence, peer relationships are of increasing importance, and positive peer interaction during this time is an indicator of successful relationships into adulthood (McElhaney, Antonishak, & Allen, 2008). This is alarming when one considers that bullying negatively affects the ability of children and adolescents to create positive peer relationships (Dake et al., 2003; McElhaney et al., 2008).

Theoretical Framework

Most bullying prevention efforts in schools focus on observing and controlling student behavior rather than promoting healthy relationships (Bickmore, 2010). The U.S. Department of Education (2010) contends that while implementing bullying prevention procedures, schools must also be mindful of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, all of which prohibit discrimination against individuals. The Department of Education calls for schools to protect students from the physical and emotional harm associated with bullying; however, most school policies reflect a focus only on codes of conduct and behavior management rather than teaching students preventative measures specifically related to bullying (Walton, 2010). All school staff must be adequately trained so that they may intervene in bullying situations with confidence. Despite the existence of bullying policies, many districts fall short when implementing these policies; therefore, it is imperative that school policymakers place increased emphasis on implementing research-based bullying prevention programs (Gulemetova, Drury, & Bradshaw, 2010).

Role of Educators

The few studies exploring teacher and administrator attitudes and perceptions of bullying and school violence have yielded mixed results (Astor, Meyer, & Behre, 1999; Astor, Meyer, & Pitner, 1999; Benbenishty & Astor, 2005; Marachi et al., 2007). Unnever and Cornell (2003) indicated that middle school students perceive that their teachers do very little to stop bullying, while Cornell and Brockenbrough (2004) found that teachers who perceive a student to be a bully are more inclined to make a discipline referral.

Although teachers may perceive that they intervene in bullying situations, observational research indicates that teachers intercept only about 15–18 percent of bullying incidents (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000). Furthermore, children are often reluctant to report bullying behaviors to teachers for fear that the teacher will either do nothing or make the situation worse (Rigby & Bagshaw, 2003; Rigby & Barnes, 2002). Researchers have contended that increased adult awareness and intervention is essential to combat the changing dynamics of bullying within schools (Olweus, 1993; Pepler, Craig, & O'Connell, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2002). In fact, there may be a need for a shift in administrator and teacher perceptions in order to increase the success of school-based bullying intervention programs (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003). It is imperative that both educators and administrators present a united front to combat the effects of bullying within our schools.

The role of teacher perceptions of the seriousness of bullying is recognized as being predictive of the likelihood of intervention in bully incidents. Dedousis-Wallace and Shute (2009) examined the effect of psycho-educational presentations regarding the effects of indirect bullying on teacher perceptions. They found that after a 45-minute presentation, teachers reported an increased understanding of the detrimental effects of indirect bullying as well as increased perceptions of seriousness. Furthermore, at a follow-up seven weeks later, teacher perceptions remained at the increased level. Similarly, Yoon (2004) found that participation in continuing education programs, and staff development workshops, significantly increase teachers' awareness of the negative outcomes associated with bullying and their perceptions of the seriousness of bullying behaviors. They suggest that these changes increase the likelihood of effectively intervening in bullying situations.

Bullying in School Curriculum

Langdon and Preble (2008) stressed the importance of bullying perceptions with respect to school climate. Many children do not wish to involve adults when they have been bullied, often because of fear of retaliation from the bully. Schools must create an open environment in which students feel safe enough to tell an adult about being victimized (McNamee & Mercurio, 2008). Research on a range of antiviolence programs shows that effective remedies must be multifaceted, implemented thoroughly (including professional development support for teachers), and sustained in frequency and duration (Bickmore, 2010). In fact, schools have a responsibility to address bullying and may be held liable when these responsibilities are ignored (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008; Willard, 2007). Thus, schools must have clear educational policies to prevent, intervene, and address bullying behaviors.

Craig, Pepler, and Blais (2007) evaluated the effectiveness of student strategies to reduce bullying problems. Boys are more likely than girls to engage in aggressive behaviors to stop bullying, although girls are more likely to tell an adult about bullying behaviors. Students who are victimized often needed more support to develop the knowledge to recognize healthy relationships and acquire the skills needed to interact in an effective, assertive manner (Craig, Pepler, & Blais, 2007). Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, and Isava (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of bullying interventions and found that students reported fewer incidents of being bullied after participation in intervention programs.

Bullying Prevention Training and Professional Development

Although many districts and schools address violence prevention in their mission statements, many are unsure if this inclusion actually translates into action (Marachi et al., 2007). A key component to the effectiveness of these prevention policies is the interpretation of the policy by teachers, administrators, and students (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). Teacher buy-in is essential to the success of any program (Marachi et al., 2007), and, therefore, teacher attitudes and perceptions regarding violence prevention warrants further investigation (Turkel, 2007).

Because the views of teachers and administrators on bullying and school violence affect the school climate and subsequent safety of students, their collective efforts are critical to the success of bullying initiatives (Astor, Meyer, & Behre, 1999; Astor, Meyer, & Pitner, 1999; Benbenishty & Astor, 2005; Marachi et al., 2007). Hazler, Miller, Carney, and Green (2001) asked teachers and counselors to rate the presence of bullying in 21 scenarios. The teachers and school counselors who were surveyed felt that physical threats and abuse were more serious than verbal abuse and were more likely to rate physical aggression as bullying (Hazler et al., 2001). Teachers tended to categorize physical abuse as bullying more often than verbal or emotional abuse, even when the scenario did not fit the definition of bullying. Furthermore,

teachers rated physical aggression as more serious than verbal or emotional aggression. Results of this study indicated that teachers and school staff were not well-prepared to identify bullying within schools and that increased professional development was warranted to assist in both bullying recognition and prevention (Hazler et al., 2001). Even with the increased attention on helping teachers and administrators understand their role in bullying prevention, there remains a dearth of information regarding the differences and similarities of the perceptions that teachers and administrators have towards bullying.

According to Astor et al. (2005), successful school-wide intervention programs have several key elements, including the need for increased awareness and responsibility related to school violence and the establishment of clear rules and guidelines. Teacher training and professional development are essential to the successful implementation of any program. Biggs, Vernberg, Twemlow, Fonagy, and Dill (2008) found that teachers' adherence to programs was affected by teachers' attitudes and perceptions. Teacher-reported attitudes were positively correlated to program helpfulness in reducing violence and bullying behaviors. Clearly, there is a need for more teacher development related to bullying prevention (Astor, Meyer, & Behre, 1999; Astor, Meyer, & Pitner, 1999; Bradshaw, O'Brennan, & Sawyer, 2008; Marachi et al., 2007). Further exploration of the differences and similarities between educators' and administrators' perceptions of bullying may lead to the establishment of more effective bullying prevention policies, guidelines, and procedures.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her ability to produce at designated levels of performance in specific situations (Bandura, 1977). In this study, self-efficacy refers to the level of confidence that educators and administrators have in conferring with the parents of both the bully and the victim of the bully. Educators often fail to effectively communicate bullying issues to the parents of the involved parties until they understand their role and feel they have the appropriate skills. The self-efficacy of teachers and administrators could increase with the development of bullying policies and procedures focused on communicating with the parents of bullies, victims, and bystanders. Bauman, Rigby and Hoppa (2008) found that antibullying policies reduce the likelihood that bullying will be ignored and increase the chances that

educators who observe an incident will involve other adults, such as parents. Additionally, educators in schools with antibullying policies in place are more likely to feel confident addressing bullying situations. The findings of Dedousis-Wallace and Shute (2009) provide grounds for concern regarding current practices in the training of educators to deal effectively with school bullying. Eighty-six percent of educators surveyed had not received antibullying training either in undergraduate preservice training or in graduate programs, and 42 percent worked in schools without an antibullying policy. This supports the need for policies regarding bullying prevention to include training and professional development, which in turn may increase the self-efficacy of educators. As Kokko and Pörhölä (2009) suggested, teacher self-efficacy may improve with training that targets the most effective ways to communicate with various parties associated with bullying incidents.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the occupational differences between teacher and school administrator perceptions of bullying. The study explored how teachers and administrators perceived (a) the role educators play in bullying prevention, (b) the appropriateness of bullying prevention in the curriculum, (c) the adequacy of bullying prevention training, and (d) the level of self-efficacy related to meeting with the parents of bullies and their victims. Gender differences were also examined.

Method

To assess the occupational differences related to perceptions of bullying, teachers and administrators from across the United States were asked to complete a bullying survey. These individuals were attending a conference in southern Florida. Of the 200 individuals who were asked to participate, 139 completed surveys, including 98 teachers and 41 administrators from 139 different schools. The study was nonexperimental, utilizing a survey approach with a cross-sectional design.

Participants

The general sample was composed of 139 participants, each working at a different school across the country (32 male, 107 female; age = 40.55 years; SD = 15.55; age range, 22–80 years). Approximately 46 percent of the participants were African American; 36

percent were White, non-Hispanic; 9 percent were White, Hispanic; and 9 percent were of other ethnic origins. The primary language of all participants was English. The participants were employed in a variety of schools of different sizes, locations, and types. School size was represented by the following four groups: (a) 27.6 percent had a population of 0–500, (b) 28.2 percent had a population of 501–1,000, (c) 9.8 percent had a population of 1,001–1,500, and (d) 12.9 percent had a population of 1,501–2,000. Approximately 59.8 percent of schools were located in the southeast region of the United States, 11.6 percent in the southwest region, 15.2 percent in the northeast region, 3.1 percent in the western region, 1.8 percent in the midwestern region, and 9.2 percent outside the contiguous United States. Approximately 77 percent of the participants worked in public schools, and 23 percent worked in private schools.

Instrument

The Bullying Perception Survey—10 (BPS-10) targets attitudes and perceptions toward bullying and bullying prevention (Kevorkian, Kennedy, & Russom,

2008). The survey contains 10 items that assess an individual's perceptions of bullying across four factors: (a) role of educators, (b) bullying in school curriculum, (c) bullying prevention training/professional development, and (d) self-efficacy (see Figure 1). The survey includes ordinal response choices. Sample items include "Educators play a large role in bullying prevention" and "Bullying prevention should be part of the high school curriculum." Responses to items are given on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Prior to this study, the dimensionality of the 10 survey questions was analyzed using maximum likelihood factor analysis. A scree plot indicated that our survey questions were multidimensional in nature; we selected four factors each with eigenvalues well within the conservative Kaiser's criterion. These four factors were rotated using a direct oblimin rotation procedure, because the four factors had a high probability of correlating. The rotated solution yielded four interpretable factors (educator's role in bullying prevention, bullying prevention in the curriculum, bullying prevention training, and self-efficacy). Test-retest reliability was also assessed prior to this study through

Figure 1. Bullying Perception Survey—10.

Bullying Perception Survey—10 (BPS-10)					
Instructions: This survey is designed for teachers and administrators in K–12. We are interested in your perceptions related to different aspects of bullying. For each item below, please check the box that best reflects your answer. Thank you for participating.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Educators play a large role in bullying prevention.					
2. Bullying prevention should be part of the elementary school curriculum.					
3. Bullying prevention should be part of the middle school curriculum.					
4. Bullying prevention should be part of the high school curriculum.					
5. I have received adequate professional development on bullying prevention.					
6. I am interested in receiving more professional development on bullying prevention.					
7. Bullying prevention should be provided for current teachers and administrators.					
8. Bullying prevention should be provided for preservice teachers and administrators.					
9. I feel confident confronting the parents of a bully.					
10. I feel confident meeting with the parents of a victim.					

the administration of the instrument to a large sample of teachers at two time points. The weighted kappa value for the total survey (.88) and for each individual item (.79 and higher) indicated that the survey responses were consistent across time.

Procedures

The data were collected from teachers and administrators attending a global conference on leadership. This study involved nonrandom sampling, by which teachers and administrators were asked at a national conference to complete the survey (70 percent response rate). This study utilized a cross-sectional design to explore teacher and administrator perceptions of bullying. Two hundred individuals who were participating in the conference were given the BPS-10 and a demographic sheet to fill out during their lunch break at the conference. They received oral instructions to complete the BPS-10 and the demographic sheet (i.e., age, gender, occupation, ethnicity, language, school size, school location, type of school) and seal it in the envelope provided for them at their table. They were informed that the data would be used to help improve the general knowledge base regarding bullying and bullying prevention.

Descriptive statistical analyses were performed on the data in order to obtain a clear understanding of the population. Measures of central tendency (i.e., means, medians, and other percentiles) and dispersion (i.e., standard deviations, ranges) were computed for continuous data. Frequency distributions were estimated for the categorical data. The Mann-Whitney U test was used for the primary analysis to account for the ordinal data that were not normally distrib-

uted. The Mann-Whitney U test is similar to the t test for independent samples, but allows for the analysis of nonparametric data (Stern, 2008). Bonferroni adjustments were made for the pairwise comparisons by position and gender. Each pairwise comparison for position and gender was tested at the .05 divided by 4, or .0125, level.

Results

Although group differences were found by position, the descriptive data (strongly agree and agree were collapsed for this analysis) revealed that 93 percent of educators and administrators were interested in receiving more professional development on bullying prevention, 93.4 percent believed that bullying prevention should be part of the elementary school curriculum, and 94.9 percent believed that bullying prevention should be part of the middle school curriculum.

Role Educators Play in Bullying

On a Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), the participants were asked if they believed that educators play a large role in bullying prevention. The mean rank of the ratings for the teachers was 63.58, versus 85.35 for administrators (see Table 1). Using a Mann-Whitney U test, the two distributions of ratings were found to differ significantly, $z = -3.24$, $p < .0125$, abs(r) =.27. The absolute value of r, or abs(r), represents the effect size for the Mann-Whitney U. For abs(r), a .1, .3, and .5 represents a small, medium, and large effect size, respec-

Table 1

Differences in Perceptions of Bullying Prevention by Position

| | Mean Rank | | |
Item	Teachers (n = 98)	Administrators (n = 41)	z
Role of Educators	63.58	85.35	-3.24*
School Curriculum	68.83	72.80	-0.60
Training and Development	62.92	86.93	-3.47*
Self-Efficacy	76.16	55.27	-3.16*

* p < .0125.

Table 2

Differences in Perceptions of Bullying Prevention by Gender

Item	Mean Rank		z
	Males (n = 32)	Females (n = 107)	
Role of Educators	75.92	68.23	-1.04
School Curriculum	87.14	64.87	-3.08*
Training and Development	61.02	70.62	-0.36
Self-Efficacy	66.62	72.69	-1.55

* p < .0125.

tively. No significant differences were found with regard to gender (see Table 2).

Bullying Prevention in School Curriculum

On a Likert scale, the participants rated their perceptions regarding the necessity of bullying prevention training in the elementary, middle, and high school curriculum (three separate questions). The mean rank of the ratings for the teachers was 68.83, versus 72.80 for administrators (see Table 1). Using a Mann-Whitney U test, the two distributions of ratings were not found to differ significantly, z = -.60, p > .0125, abs(r) = .05.

Significant gender differences were found in the participants' views that bullying prevention should be part of the school curriculum. The mean ranks of the ratings for the male participants were significantly higher than the female participants (see Table 2). The distributions of ratings between males and females (to include bullying prevention as part of the school curriculum), were found to differ significantly, z = -3.08, p < .0125, abs(r) = .26.

Teacher and Administrator Training and Development for Bullying Prevention

Differences were found in teacher and administrator views related to bullying training and development. The participants were given four questions related to training and professional development and asked to rate, on a Likert scale, the level of bullying prevention

and training that should be provided. The mean rank of the ratings for the teacher participants was 62.92, and that of administrator participants was 86.93 (see Table 1). The two distributions of ratings were found to differ significantly, z = -3.47, p < .0125, abs(r) = .30. No gender differences were found (see Table 2).

Self-Efficacy Regarding Meeting With the Parents of Bullies and Victims

Differences were found regarding how confident teachers and administrators felt about meeting with the victim's and the bully's parents. The participants were given two questions and asked to rate, on a Likert scale, how competent they felt meeting with the parents of both the victim and bully. The mean rank of the ratings for the teacher participants was 76.16, and that of administrator participants was 55.27 (see Table 1). This indicates that administrators feel more confident discussing issues of bullying with parents whose children are involved in bullying. The two distributions of ratings were found to differ significantly, z = -3.16, p < .0125, abs(r) = .27. A small effect size was present, abs(r) = .13.

Discussion

The findings from this study indicate that schools may benefit from increased professional development for teachers and administrators on bullying prevention. Approximately 90 percent of educators and administrators agreed that bullying prevention should be a part of the curriculum in all schools, and 93 percent agreed that they were interested in receiving

more professional development on bullying prevention. Understanding the perceptions of teachers and administrators is crucial to the success of bullying prevention efforts. Even with increased understanding, educator and administrator perceptions of bullying may not truly reflect the extent to which these behaviors are actually occurring in schools (Dake, Price, Telljohann, & Funk, 2004). A united effort between educators and administrators to prevent school violence may be critical. To date, few studies have explored the perception of teachers and administrators when considering a bullying prevention program (Meyer et al., 2002).

In order for bullying prevention efforts to succeed, it is essential for educators and administrators to work together to establish clear rules and guidelines for the entire school and to include all stakeholders in the planning, implementing, and maintaining of the program (Astor, Meyer, Benbenishty, Marachi, & Rosemond, 2005; Langdon & Preble, 2008). The data from this study indicate the need for schools to adopt and implement universal policies regarding bullying prevention. Efforts to implement prevention measures are supported by the Department of Education, which strongly supports programs that target the reduction of bullying in schools. In fact, the Office for Civil Rights issued a letter imploring schools to review school policies and practices regarding bullying to ensure that mandated federal civil rights laws are followed (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This research supports reevaluating the policies and practices currently used to address bullying, in that schools should have well-publicized policies that both prohibit bullying and provide procedures for reporting, investigating, and resolving bullying complaints. The results underscore the importance of including teachers' perceptions of bullying and school violence as a component of prevention efforts (Biggs, Vernberg, Twemlow, Fonagy, & Dill, 2008).

The necessary components of successful bullying intervention programs may still be unclear for many practicing educators (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). Teacher misconceptions can inhibit bullying prevention efforts; thus, improved teacher training is essential (Hazler et al., 2001). Teachers in the current study felt more strongly than administrators that there should be an increase in bullying prevention training. However, in general, both educators and administrators indicated a strong desire for more training on bullying prevention. The fact that teachers continue to struggle with the identification of bullying behavior highlights the need for additional teacher development in this area (Hazler et al., 2001), especially when one considers that after training, teachers displayed increased confidence in implementing prevention programs (Shek & Wai, 2008).

Significant differences in self-efficacy beliefs related to meeting with the parents of bullies and victims were found between teachers and administrators. Specifically, the findings from the current study suggest that administrators are significantly more confident talking to parents of bullies and the victims of bullies. Research suggests that providing professional development increases educators' perceptions of their skills in dealing with bullying and the parents of victims, which ultimately assist in the sustainability of bullying programs (Hirschstein, Edstrom, Frey, Snell, & MacKenzie, 2007; Shek & Wai, 2008).

Administrators' opinions of whether or not educators play a large role in bullying prevention differed significantly from educators' opinions. In fact, teachers felt much more strongly than administrators that educators should have a greater role regarding bullying prevention. These findings suggest that more professional development is needed so that administrators can be made aware of the critical role that teachers play in addressing bullying behavior problems in schools (Espelage & Swearer, 2004; Shek & Wai, 2008). This is in agreement with the literature concerning the need for more professional development in bullying recognition (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005; Gartrell, 2008; Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001; Metzler, Biglan, & Rusby, 2001).

Finally, although gender plays an important role in perceptions of bullying (Xie, Farmer, & Cairns, 2003), there has been little research exploring these gender differences from the perspective of prevention. Various factors, such as previous childhood experiences with bullying and gender, may impact a teacher's decision in whether or not to intervene in bullying situations (Craig et al., 2000). Males and females differ with respect to why they would or would not intervene in violence between students based on social conventional, moral, and personal factors (Behre et al., 2001; Craig et al., 2000; Marachi et al., 2007). An important finding from this study was that males and females differ in their perceptions of the importance of bullying prevention as a part of the school curriculum. Female respondents were more in agreement with the need for bullying prevention as part of a standardized school curriculum than males, while males were slightly (small effect size) more confident with meeting the parents of bullies and victims. These findings suggest that the possibility of

gender differences should not be neglected when developing bullying prevention programs in schools.

Implications of the Findings

Clearly, further work is needed to improve collaboration and unity among educators and administrators to optimize the learning environment within our schools. Perhaps the most significant finding from this study was that teachers and administrators differ with regard to the size of the role that educators play in bullying prevention. This suggests the need for increased dialogue and transparency between teachers and school administrators to ensure that both groups are working together to solve the ubiquitous bullying problem within schools. In addition, if ignored, gender differences may lead to less effective approaches to bullying prevention. Without systemic, whole-school change in bullying intervention programs, students will continue to be victimized by bullies. Results from this study suggest that while teachers and administrators recognize the importance of addressing bullying behaviors within schools, gender and occupational differences that potentially hinder the success of bullying prevention still remain.

According to the Health Resources and Services Administration's (2003) "Stop Bullying Now" campaign, one of the basic and critical components of bullying prevention is staff training. The findings from the current study indicate a gap between actual training and the perceived need of training by educators. Specifically, teachers may need more training than they are receiving (Sahin, 2010). Teachers appear to have a greater need for training than administrators, and information is still needed regarding the specific types of training that are most effective (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Teachers significantly improved their selection of strategies to deal with bullying and had an improved perceived self-efficacy for confronting bullying as a result of specific training on bullying prevention (Benitez, Garcia-Berben, & Fernandez-Cabezas, 2009). Our findings suggest that teachers desire to increase their knowledge about bullying and support efforts to maximize the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs. Establishing clear and consistent policies that help guide school officials in addressing bullying behaviors is critical to preventing bullying. Effective policies rely on consistent implementation of, and training for, the procedures involved. Those who make educational policies should consider ongoing professional development as a priority to provide safe and bully-free learning environments. Teacher input about prevention efforts must be solicited and supported in the training.

Limitations

Although this study provided a glimpse into group differences in perceptions of bullying, a few weaknesses warrant discussion. First, although this study contained a reasonable number of participants, the ratios of teachers to administrators and of females to males were about 3:1, an equivalent sample would likely have increased statistical power. The second limitation of this study was the use of convenience sampling. No reliability or sampling precision statistics could be conducted based on this sampling procedure. Another limitation has to do with selection bias. As discussed earlier, teachers and administrators were asked to volunteer their time to complete the survey; thus, the inclusion criterion was their subjective decision alone. Finally, providing the participants with a definition of bullying may have been helpful in more accurately capturing their perceptions. Research indicates that educators still do not agree on exactly what constitutes bullying (Langdon & Preble, 2008; Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, deBettencourt, & Lemme, 2006).

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