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Examining The Perceptions Of Bullying Between Certified And Non-Certified School Personnel

Shanna Morlock

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EXAMINING THE PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING BETWEEN CERTIFIED AND
NON-CERTIFIED SCHOOL PERSONNEL

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Committee

from the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

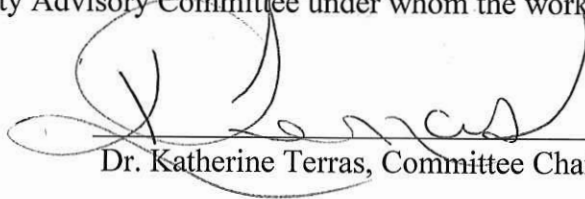
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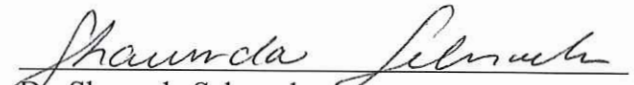
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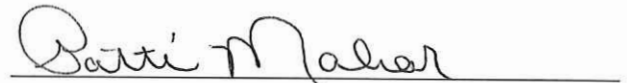
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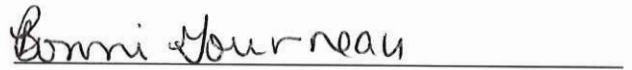
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Shanna Lea Morlock
April 4, 2019

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ABSTRACT

Bullying has been a widely researched topic. However, many areas are yet to be researched in regards to school personnels' perceptions. This dissertation was focused around several of these missing research areas, as well as included non-certified staff. Non-certified staff have been left out of the vast majority of studies involving school personnel and bullying. That, or their perceptions have not been explored as a separate group of school personnel. This is problematic as non-certified staff are often part of supervisory roles in settings where bullying often occurs. This study addressed differences among school personnel perceptions in regards to bullying and media influence, student understanding and awareness, the need for school-wide training, bullying definition changes, and legal and employment consequences. Legal and employment consequences and the need for school-wide training were explored in depth, and differences among perceptions of school personnel were discussed.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Bullying continues to be a concern for students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics (2011) approximately 28% of students between grades six through 12 are bullied. However, statistics do vary and in 2013, the Hazelden Foundation estimated that one out of five students have been bullied at some point and most recently, the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS; 2014) reported that one in three students acknowledge being bullied. More problematic, Cosma and Hancock (n.d.) reported that 10-14% are chronically bullied based on data from 33 countries from 2002 to 2010. Slightly over 70% of students indicated they have seen bullying happen at schools (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007). In addition, around 30% of students have acknowledged they have bullied others.

Bullying has become an important research topic not only because of the prevalence, but also because of the consequences surrounding it. Such consequences of bullying have included depression and suicide for the victims and the bullies (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Marttunen, Rimpelä, & Rantanen, 1999; Olweus & Limber, 2007) as well as more frequent mental illness diagnoses for those involved (Kumpulainen, Räsänen, & Puura, 2001). Stassen-Berger (2007) also included school shootings as consequences of bullying. Bullies often have been at greater risk for underage drinking and smoking as well as for criminal offenses such as shoplifting and vandalizing (Olweus

& Limber, 2007). While bystanders are not directly involved in bullying, witnessing these acts can cause these students to be afraid at school and to carry guilt for not assisting (Olweus & Limber, 2007).

Many definitions of bullying exist; however, they often contain similar elements including a power imbalance, repetition, and deliberate nature (Olweus & Limber, 2007). One such definition indicated that in order for bullying to occur there needs to be intent, repetition, and power differential exhibited by the same individual (American Educational Research Association, 2013). AERA (2013) indicated that bullying is just one part of violence and that not all occurrences of aggression or harassment are bullying; there needs to be intention, repetition, and a power imbalance. When one of the three pieces is missing, a different form of violence is being committed. For others, bullying is defined as “Unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time” (HHS, n.d.). Others have indicated that isolated incidents may be considered bullying too. For example, the Office of Civil Rights has judged one-time incidents as bullying (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2014; North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, n.d.).

Bullying is considered to be direct or indirect (Olweus & Limber, 2007) as well as takes many forms. Direct acts of bullying happen face-to-face, while indirect acts happen behind a person’s back such as gossiping about another person. When children and adolescents experience indirect bullying, it can be hard to figure out the person responsible. In addition, individuals can experience several forms of bullying. Stassen-

Berger (2007) addressed physical and verbal forms of bullying. Physical bullying includes those acts involving physical aggression, while verbal bullying involves calling names or saying mean comments. Relational bullying is a form of bullying students may experience. This form of victimization happens when the bully acts in a way to destroy the victim's reputation or peer relationships (Olweus & Limber, 2007). These acts include secluding the victim and/or spreading gossip/stories about him/her.

There are several reasons children are targeted by bullies. Documented reasons have included physical appearance, race, religion preference, gender identity, and socio-economic status (Glover et al., 2000). Also, victims of bullying have tended to be introverted, lack assertion, (Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1994; Cook, William, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010) and have had poorer relationships with peers (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Cook et al., 2010). "Submissive victims", as termed in the literature, are those victims who do not bully others. Submissive victims have tended to be more introverted, lack friendships, are withdrawn, and are weaker physically (Olweus & Limber, 2007). The other type of victims are called "bully-victims" because they, as the name implies, are both victims of bullying and bully others (Olweus & Limber, 2007).

Children have been some to bully for many reasons. Bullying has provided the bully with attention, possibly negative, as well as access to resources such as money (Wright, 2003). Contributing factors of bullies included coming from homes where physical violence is used as a form of discipline (Duncan, 1999; NoBullying.com, 2015) or the home environment had a "lack of warmth" (Bowers et al., 1994; NoBullying.com, 2015). Bullying also developed because the bully believes the behavior may allow

him/her to fit in with peers (HHS, n.d.). However, earlier research suggested that bullies may experience rejection from their peers (Boulton & Smith, 1994).

Past research studies have linked suicide with bullying incidents (Brunstein Klomek, Kleinman, Altschuler, Marrocco, Amakawa, & Gould, 2013; Espelage & Holt, 2013; van Geel, Vedder, & Tanilon, 2014). The media has presented the case that failing to address the bullying crisis results in students committing suicide (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014) and school shootings are often connected to bullying by the media (U. S. Department of Health and Student Services, n.d.). However, some researchers are not convinced that bullying is on the rise, nor do they feel that bullying alone is responsible for serious actions some youth take (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, n. d.). They believe the media has tended to leave out mental illness as a contributing factor to suicide (McBride, 2013).

Statistics on bullying have indicated it has increased over the years (bullyingstatistics.org, 2013; HHS, 2014). The increase in bullying has been attributed by some to the increase and acknowledgement of cyber bullying (bullyingstatistics.org, 2013) which is defined as bullying through a technology medium such as social media (Jose, Kljakovic, Scheib, & Notter, 2012). However, studies that have involved prevalence rates indicated that cyber bullying is less prevalent than bullying in the traditional sense (Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra, & Runions, 2014; Olweus, 2012; Salmivalli, Sainio, & Hodges, 2013). Olweus (2012), a prominent bullying researcher, indicated that cyberbullying is much less prevalent than people think. In the United States it accounted for about five percent of bullying incidents with verbal bullying being

much higher at 18%. In addition, the vast majority of students who experienced cyberbullying were also bullied in another direct manner. Modecki et al. (2014) conducted a meta-analysis and reported the mean rate of prevalence for cyber bullying was 15% while traditional bullying had a prevalence rate of 35%.

Other experts and data posited bullying itself is not increasing (U. S. Department of Education, 2013; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Instead it appeared to be increasing due to greater public awareness, increased research, the addition of new forms of bullying, and the suicide-bullying link (Fiori, 2011; McBride, 2013). Still others believed that bullying percentages depend on what bullying definition was being considered (AERA, 2013) as well as by who reported the bullying (Newgent, Lounsbery, Keller, Baker, Cavell, & Boughfman, n.d.). A lot of stake was put into bullying statistics, however as AERA (2013) pointed out, the validity of such research is questionable as it is based on behavior missing essential components of bullying such as a power imbalance or intent to harm. If a consistent definition is not followed, the data are not meaningful in measuring bullying trends. As mentioned before, without the three essential components of bullying, a different form of aggression is being measured (AERA, 2013). The seriousness also varied depending on who reported. No matter whether bullying is on the rise or not, most acknowledge the seriousness of the topic and the detrimental impact it can have. Therefore, it is important to understand how those working in the school system perceive bullying so that programs, training, and supports can be geared towards addressing these perceptions.

Research Involving Certified and Non-Certified Staff

There is limited research on the perceptions of school personnel regarding bullying and are not equally representative of all stakeholders (i.e., paraprofessionals, school therapists, and counselors). Studies typically included teachers, and only sometimes other staff. Studies which included other personnel such as school counselors and/or school psychologists are limited and have not examined the differences between the personnel (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Newgent et al., n. d). Only a handful have looked at the perception of education support personnel such as paraprofessionals and administrative assistants (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2014; Espelage, Polanin, & Low, 2014; Williford, 2015) and even fewer have examined the differences between certified and non-certified staff (Williford, 2015). Most studies have focused on examining the difference between student and school personnel perceptions (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Espelage et al., 2014) or examined specific groups of noncertified staff (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2013).

Previous perception studies have tended to focus on prevalence, risk factors, and identification of bullying. Kennedy, Russom, and Kevorkian (2012) compared teacher and administrators' perceptions and found that teachers believed more strongly than administrators that school personnel had a responsibility to prevent bullying. Teachers also expressed a greater need for training. In a study by Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, and Wiener (2005), teachers were interviewed to understand their knowledge of bullying and the perceptions of bullying victims. They found that teachers were not aware of the bullying their students experience and that incidents involving physical bullying were

considered more severe. Teachers regarded both indirect and direct forms of violence as bullying. The seriousness of the two, however, was not equal as some teachers indicated physical bullying more serious while others felt indirect bullying was more damaging. The majority of teachers in this study, did not recognize that repetition was a necessary component of bullying and a few did not include the intent of harm as a necessary factor. Factors that contributed to intervening with bullying behaviors included the severity of the incident, the responsibility of the student for their victimization, how the student matched up to bullying characteristics such as assertiveness, and the empathetic response of the teacher. These teachers also felt an absence of resources, time, and support in dealing with bullying matters, and voiced a need for more training.

One study on teacher perception focused more on risk factors for both bullies and victims as well as effective and ineffective coping strategies (Rosen, Scott, & DeOmellas, 2017). Findings included that teachers generally believed that retaliation and ignoring bullying were ineffective while reporting bullying behavior and self-advocacy were beneficial strategies. Focusing on these perceptions, although important, was only a small fraction of the perceptions regarding bullying that can be explored. The present study looked at the perceived need of more training, however, it also explored perceptions of media influence, definition changes, legal and employment consequences, and student understanding/awareness.

Some studies have had teachers and other certified staff look at scenarios to determine bullying. Expanding on these studies to include other certified staff as well as non-certified staff is important. Non-certified staff do a lot of supervision and therefore it

is imperative that they are able to recognize the difference between bullying and non-bullying behavior. It is equally important to determine how certified staff recognize bullying behavior and to this date, only teachers and school counselors have been asked to perform such a task. Hazler, Miller, Carney, and Green (2001) gave teachers and school counselors vignettes to examine for bullying presence. Both groups rated physical incidents more serious and characterized them as bullying more often than those involving verbal. The take home message was that school staff are not equipped to identify bullying. In Bell and Willis' (2016) study, scenarios were given to teachers to read through to determine bullying. Bullying involving physical aggression was considered the most serious. If the physical scenario had a passive victim, teachers indicated the situation was less serious. This may have implications for how teachers respond to real-life incidences when the victim chooses to ignore the bullying behavior. Whenever the teacher was informed the victim reacted aggressively, the situation was deemed more serious. Scenarios depicting female bullies and male victims were seen as the least serious. When a physical scenario had a passive victim, teachers indicated the situation was less serious. This may have implications for how teachers respond to real-life incidences when the victim chooses to ignore the bullying behavior.

As stated above, research extending beyond certified staff is limited. One study (Williford, 2015) addressed the prevalence perceptual differences of bullying amongst certified and noncertified elementary school personnel. One of the significant findings was that noncertified personnel tend to be more sympathetic to bullies and victims as somewhat responsible for the incidents. This can have a huge impact on the way bullying

is handled at schools. If victims are held responsible, at least in part for these incidents, they may be viewed as needing less support and the bullying behavior may also go unaddressed. If bullying behavior is not addressed appropriately, it can continue to happen. Despite this finding, the study indicated that both groups had similar perceptions of the prevalence of bullying behavior. Another study surveyed both teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) such as paraprofessionals, custodial staff, and bus drivers (Bradshaw et al., 2013). This study was the first comparing teachers and ESPs on a broad level. Results showed that teachers and ESPs differ in their perspectives of bullying. Teachers were more often involved with bullying as they observed it more often, were involved with bullying policies, and saw bullying as a more substantial problem. Both teachers and ESPs expressed a desire to have more training. The current study looked to examine how certified and non-certified staff differ on other perceptions of bullying such as legal and employment matters, student understanding and awareness, media involvement, and definitional changes. The need for school-wide training was also examined to provide further support that both groups still desired the need for more training.

Bullying Perception Research

The current study was important to the existing literature on bullying as it sought to address a gap in the research by including non-certified staff. It examined school personnels' perceptions on bullying relative to aspects not previously addressed such as media influence, legal and employment consequences, definition changes, and student awareness and understanding. The following sections discuss the five areas explored in

more detail as well as why they merited exploration in the study. They included media influence, student understanding and awareness, need for school-wide training, changes in the definition of bullying, and concerns over legal and employment consequences; each are addressed below.

Media Influence

The factor of media influence regarding bullying has not received much focus by researchers. However, due to media involvement with bullying reporting it has caused some concern. According to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (n. d.), there has been cause to believe that media coverage of bullying has an adverse impact on the public. Based on this concern, a task force was developed to address the potential harm the media was creating as well as they created some guidelines to aid in reporting. Such recommendations included determining if it was actually bullying that was taking place, delivering only factual information, gathering information from all parties involved, and to consult experts. Based on this, it was important to understand how the media impacts school personnel perceptions and therefore it was included in this study. There is belief by experts that the media has caused harm in the way they are reporting, and research attention needs to be devoted to this (U. S. Department of Health & Human Services, n. d.). Studies have been conducted to determine the negative influence the media has on other important areas (Ata, Ludden, & Lally, 2007; Levin, 2010), and given the attention media places on this topic (U. S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.) it is important to start researching how the media is impacting bullying perceptions.

While there is no research which indicated the media impacts bullying reporting, there was literature support found for the media negatively influencing or contributing to other issues such as violence and body image (Ata et al., 2007; Levin, 2010). In addition, the impact the media has on how school personnel perceive bullying has not been researched. However, given the influence the media has on society, it is possible that personnel felt their perception of bullying behavior is affected in some way because of what they read and see on television. The media often has highlighted extreme cases of bullying but has played them off like they are common occurrences and therefore, bullying has gained considerable media attention, likely because of its link to school shootings (Stassen-Berger, 2007). When students are bullied, they may become depressed and may develop suicidal thoughts. These thoughts can lead to suicidal attempts as well as committals (Olweus & Limber, 2007). Even if bullying instances have not been linked to school shootings, suicide, and mental illnesses are reported as consequences which result in media attention as well (Romer, 2010; Kumpulainen, et al., 2001). However, some have questioned the media's reporting (HHS, 2017; McBride, 2013). McBride (2013) suggested that journalists overplay the suicide-bullying link by leaving out mental illness and maintained that no causality between the two should be expressed in the media. She also addressed that not all aggression is bullying as there needs to be a power imbalance present as well as the repetitive nature. With bullying-prevalence rates reported as high as one in three students (HHS, 2014), the suicide rate should match this if there was a direct link, therefore, the media has not reported other factors.

Cugler and Mateescu (2007) found that school behavior violence, such as bullying, found its way into the media when the situation or incident is dramatic enough to sell their point. Incidents that involved serious actions such as school shootings or suicide are the bullying cases that are reported by the media in the news. This is such an apparent problem that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014) went as far as to provide recommendations to guide media reporting.

Student Understanding and Awareness

In order for school personnel to intervene correctly, the students need to understand what bullying is. The New York City Department of Education (2017) created a document for their students laying out the differences between bullying and different forms of conflict. Within this document, some situations were provided to show that some conflict is just a difference of opinion and a natural encounter we experience in life. It further explained what bullying behavior is and gave some examples of those types of behaviors. The factor of student understanding and awareness was chosen for inclusion as students need to understand what bullying is if they are going to accurately report it to teachers and other adults. In addition, in my experience working in education, many students have claimed another classmate or peer is a bully without really understanding what a bully is. This could create a stigma for the student and mental health issues could arise from it. It was unknown how teachers felt about student's bullying awareness. It is also important to understand how school personnel feel about student reporting and awareness as it could have disastrous effects on students. If school personnel have felt that students do not know what bullying is, or are not reporting things

correctly, they could choose to ignore this behavior. If students have not felt they are being supported when they report, they could stop telling school personnel.

Bullying statistics are often calculated primarily on student self-report, and it is unknown if students who are younger truly understand what bullying is or if they are capable of deciphering between bullying and other aggression. When bullying statistics are based on student self-report, it can become problematic to ensure individuals are reporting things correctly. Further adding to the possibility of inaccurate reporting was the concern that students do not fully understand what is involved in bullying. In support of this, Gumbrecht (2013) found individuals have to sift through reports generated in schools to determine which are legitimate cases of bullying. Some of the reports were one-time incidents rather than bullying reports that needed to be acted on. It was also discussed how parents are seeing everything as bullying now, whereas before it was viewed as typical behavior by children and adolescents.

Although any form of violence should not be tolerated, not every incidence is bullying (AERA, 2013). The American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2013) indicated that in order for bullying to occur there needs to be intent, repetition, and power differential exhibited by the same individual. The intentional component suggested the bully wanted to, or knew that the bullying behavior would impact the victim emotionally or cause him/her physical harm (Olweus & Limber, 2007). Repetition meant the behavior has been repeated or will likely be repeated in the future, and the power imbalance component referred to the victim being weaker than the bully and likely unable to defend him/herself (Olweus & Limber, 2007). Gumbrecht (2013) wrote a piece

for CNN on the over sensitivity of bullying behavior. Included in this piece were opinions from seemingly prominent members of the field eluding to the misuse of the word *bullying*. Within the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) manual (Olweus & Limber, 2007) there was a quote from a student. It read, “Bullying is when someone says or does mean things to another person” (p. 12). The way bullying was defined in this quote supports the need for adult involvement in bullying identification. Children say mean things all the time and do mean things to others but without the components of power differential, intention, and repeated behavior, this behavior should not be labeled as bullying. It is important to understand if school personnel understand this distinction.

Need for School-wide Training

The potential need for school personnel to have better training in determining the differences between bullying and typical childhood behavior, and between bullying behavior and those inappropriate instances that do not meet bullying criteria, also merited exploration. This factor was chosen for inclusion as based on previous research, teachers and other school personnel have expressed a need for further training (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Mischna et al., 2005). If anti-bullying efforts are going to be effective, all school personnel need to understand what bullying is and need to be able to identify that versus other forms of conflict. We also need to understand if school personnel feel further training is necessary as studies examining this factor have minimally included non-certified staff.

The National Education Association (2015) discussed the importance of being able to distinguish bullying from other forms of violence and stressed the need to not use bullying to describe other forms of conflict. The Association created a toolkit which allows school personnel to better be able to identify bullying. Another such training is the OBPP written by Olweus and Limber (2007). This program was based on the research of Dr. Dan Olweus from Norway and included substantial training prior to implementation. The OBPP contained a section in the teacher's guide that conversed what bullying is, including a discussion of the components of bullying as well as a description on the types of bullying and how to determine the difference between bullying and normal play. Fighting was also discussed and how it differs from bullying. The OBPP Teacher Guide indicated fighting is an unrepeated event with no power imbalance. Other sources found support for adult involvement in bullying prevention efforts, but also recognized the need for training for programs to be effective (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012; Yoon & Bauman, 2014).

Definition Changes

Bullying definitions have changed over time, which is another consideration. Olweus (1986, p. 413) described bullying as follows: "a person is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons." Another earlier definition of bullying was "aggression where the intention is to harm, the aggression is repeated over time, and an imbalance of power exists among the bully and the victim" (Nansel et al., 2001, p. 2094). AERA (2013) does not believe traditional definitions of bullying should be all educators consider and that

single incidents could fit the definition of bullying. Although Olweus (1993) retained his original definition from 1986, he expressed in his book that single, serious incidents may be considered bullying. This was also emphasized in the bullying prevention program handbook (Olweus & Limber, 2007). In addition, the Office for Civil Rights considered some single episodes of victimization as bullying (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2014; North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, n.d.).

Even though one-time instances may be considered bullying, the American Educational Research Association (2013) indicated that bullying is just one part of violence and that not all occurrences of aggression or harassment are bullying; there needs to be intention, repetition or the likelihood of repetition, and a power imbalance. When one of the three pieces is missing, a different form of violence has been committed such as harassment or fights. Another source too acknowledged there are several characteristics that set it apart from other forms of violence and aggression (Developmental Services Groups, Inc., 2013). These characteristics included an intention to harm, repetition of behavior, and a disparity of power, which can be real or perceived, among the victim and the bully. Current reports of bullying have not included a specific definition of bullying. When a common definition is not used, individuals can freely interpret bullying in many ways or may become confused as to what necessitates bullying. AERA (2013) also highlighted additional concerns with regards to bullying research. Not only are there concerns with bullying behavior percentages being calculated by self-report, there are issues with researchers deviating from traditional definitions when conducting research. In AERA's report, it presented several studies that

did not look at the components of intention and power imbalance when assessing bullying behavior. The report further goes on to state, “as a result of differences in definition, there is no consensus on the incidence of bullying or on trends over time” (AERA, 2013, p. 7).

Concerns have been expressed above by researchers on how the definition of bullying impacts statistics and on reporting. This factor was included in the present study as it is unknown if the ability to classify single incidents as bullying is contributing to the perception of bullying behavior among school personnel. School personnel may not know, or understand what constitutes bullying versus another form of violence and if they do not, how can they effectively intervene to address this issue. It is important to understand if they feel bullying is more prevalent now due to how it is defined. If school personnel believe the definition of bullying is too loose, they may not accurately intervene or deem it important to investigate circumstances of true bullying. If the perception is that all conflict can now be considered bullying, students may inaccurately be labeled as bullies which can lead to consequences for them as well (Olweus & Limber, 2007).

Concern over Legal and Employment Consequences

The last of the factors was school personnel concerns with legal and employment consequences. This factor was important for inclusion as we live in a litigious society (Rubin, 2010). Members of the National Education Association (n. d.) are provided insurance against malpractice. Although this can be used for many situations, it is not known how school personnel have perceived this risk of legal consequences surrounding

bullying. This factor has not specifically been studied, but there has been an increase in anti-bullying efforts and reforms (Gumbrecht, 2013). These bullying prevention efforts often have focused on reporting rather than prevention and intervention, however (National Education Association, 2012). Because schools have a due diligence to address bullying, they may be held responsible if an incident is ignored (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008; Willard, 2007). If schools and school personnel may be held liable, it is important to understand how they view this potential.

Currently, there is no federal law that prohibits bullying (HHS, 2017). However, depending on the situation, bullying behavior may be subject to criminal and civil consequences such as harassment charges, defamation charges, and intentional infliction of emotional distress (Glover, 2012). Schools are required by law to address behavior that is severe, ongoing, and widespread; that interferes with another student's education; or behavior that violates civil rights (HHS, n.d.). Therefore, schools have adopted policies and implemented zero tolerance procedures for bullying (Gumbrecht, 2013). The majority of the United States have both laws and anti-bullying policies in place, whereas eight states have only laws and one state has only an anti-bullying policy (HHS, 2014). However, Bickmore (2011) concluded that more focus should be placed on preventative practices of building relationships rather than on controlling behavior through anti-bullying policies.

Employment consequences have also not thoroughly been studied in regard to bullying. Failing to intervene in bullying could potentially result in job dismissal (Findlaw.com, n.d.). Although there has not been a direct link between the two, reasons

for job dismissal including neglect of duty and refusal to perform duties may pertain to bullying behavior. That being said, firings related to a failure to address bullying are not prevalent in media coverage. A few news reports mentioned teacher suspension, however (Dolak, 2012; Hui, 2017).

Importance of the Study

As stated before, past research on teacher perceptions has primarily been focused on preventing bullying, risk factors, and on bullying identification (Kennedy et al., 2012; Stauffer, Heath, Coyne, & Ferrin, 2012; Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002). It is critical to understand and expand our knowledge of bullying perceptions because children typically report bullying to parents and teachers (HHS, n.d.). The five factors chosen for inclusion in the present study add to the current research on bullying perceptions as well as fill an important gaps. School personnel perceptions have not been thoroughly studied in regard to bullying. This has huge implications for school success. School personnel could be labeling students as bullies who are not, thus causing potential emotional, social, and legal problems for that student (Dweck, 2006). If school personnel perceive that bullying is over reported by students, it creates a need for increased training for correct bullying identification (Olweus & Limber, 2007). It also indicates a need for curriculum implementation or training for students, so they fully understand what bullying is and is not.

In order for schools to understand where to go with their anti-bullying efforts, they need to understand where school personnel perceive a need. They also need to identify misperceptions that school personnel have so they can effectively train staff and

highlight correct information. For example, if school personnel believe the media is completely accurate in their reporting of bullying, they may jump to conclusions that a victim is suicidal or that a school shooting will happen. If staff believe they will be held liable if they do not report or address a situation as bullying, they may overreport as a way to guard themselves against potential legal matters. The factors of media influence, student understanding and awareness, legal and employment consequences, need for training, and definition changes addressed potential areas and perceptions and/or misperceptions that schools can focus on with their anti-bullying efforts.

Lastly, this study was important because research including non-certified staff on bullying behavior perceptions is minimal (Williford, 2015). This study included non-certified staff so their perceptions could be explored. It also allowed for comparison between certified and non-certified staff. Bradshaw et al. (2013) found perceptual differences between the two groups and explained how this has implications for bullying intervention. Non-certified staff have made up a large portion of school staff and are often found in supervisory roles where bullying occurs (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, Gulemetova, & Henderson, 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2013). It is imperative to understand their perceptions in regard to bullying behavior. If they are vastly different than teachers and other certified staff, it can make rifts with anti-bullying efforts. Non-certified staff have often reported to teachers about what is happening on the playground. If they believe students are always accurate in their reporting of bullying, for example, they may inadvertently label a student as a bully or regard a different student as a "victim" rather than both as students in need of social skills to address conflict. If they

feel students claim to be victims too much, they may miss identifying actual bullying behavior.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine factors that influence the perception of bullying in schools. A survey was created to determine how certified and non-certified school personnel perceived the influence of media on bullying, the understanding of bullying and its components by students, legal and employment issues surrounding it, definitional changes, and the need for staff training.

The following research questions guided the study: (a) Are there differences among certified and non-certified staff perceptions of bullying as influenced by the media?; (b) Do certified and non-certified school personnel perceive bullying is influenced by a lack of student understanding/awareness differently?; (c) Are there differences in perceptions of training needs among certified and non-certified staff?; (d) Do certified and non-certified school personnel have different perceptions of bullying in regards to legal and employment consequences?; and (e) Do certified and non-certified school personnel have different perceptions regarding how bullying is influenced by changes in the definition of bullying over time?; and (f) Are there differences among certified and non-certified school personnels' ability to accurately identify bullying behavior described through scenarios? It was hypothesized that school personnel perceived that bullying behavior is influenced by each of the five factors.

Theoretical Framework

Overview and Components

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP; Olweus & Limber, 2007) is considered a promising *Blueprints Model Program* by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence. Blueprints programs are those programs created to encourage the wellbeing of children and teens as demonstrated through research. Less than 5% of the programs reviewed are Blueprints programs (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, n.d.). According to the U.S. Department of Education, OBPP is a *Level 2 Program* meaning the program was effective at preventing or reducing delinquency while also enhancing protection. OBPP has also been labeled an *Effective Program* according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, and a *Model Program* by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. OBPP was designed to address bullying school wide by decreasing current bullying behaviors, preventing new bullying acts, and promoting stronger peer relationships.

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program has been around for over 35 years, and has been used all over the world. The program was designed to lessen and prevent bullying problems, while fostering positive peer relationships. The four-level system (school, individual, classroom, and community) is appropriate for those students in elementary school through tenth grade and focuses on the principles of adult participation, limit setting, consequences for unacceptable behavior, and adults as positive role models and authority figures. A committee is created in the school that includes members such as

teachers, counselors, administrators, other school personnel, and a community member. The role of this committee is to support implementation of the program by answering questions, promoting the program in the community, and guaranteeing the components of the program are being correctly implemented. Specialized training on the program has been necessary because it is important to build a basis of program knowledge as well as to deliver trainees resources needed for program implementation. In addition, a questionnaire, given to those students in grades three through 12, is used to gather information and measure change. This questionnaire is given prior to program implementation and then preferably every year. It serves as a way to measure bullying changes over time allowing schools to determine the effectiveness of the program as well as areas of continued need. The questionnaire also has helped to enlighten adults regarding specific bullying behaviors in their school.

Class meetings have served as a way to instruct students on what bullying behavior is, the consequences of bullying, and to provide opportunities for students to role play different bullying scenarios. They also have allowed the class to bond together, to help students recognize what their responsibility is when bullying occurs, and to address ongoing issues. The four rules of the program are also taught in these meetings and include:

We will not bully others, we will try to help students who are bullied, we will try to help students who are bullied, we will try to include students who are left out, and if we know that somebody is being bullied we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home. (p. 51)

These meetings are conducted at least once a week for around 30-40 minutes for students in upper elementary grades through high school; the meeting length for students in lower elementary grades is around 15 to 30 minutes.

Evidence-Base

OBPP was based on more than 35 years of research (Olweus & Limber, 2007). This research started in the 1970's in Norway by Olweus, but really came under national scrutiny when three adolescents committed suicide presumably due to extreme bullying (Olweus, 1991). After this incident, the first version of OBPP came out and has since been minimally refined after program evaluation and research.

The first version of OBPP was implemented in 1983 as part of a nationwide program spearheaded by Norway's Ministry of Education (Olweus, 1991). The program was developed with the goals of reducing current bullying problems and preventing new issues. As part of the program, a questionnaire was devised to address bully/victim problems. This questionnaire included a definition of bullying and more specific questions relating to the time period in which bullying was experienced. In addition, the answer choices were made more objective. The questionnaire was designed in this manner to address concerns with existing instruments.

In addition to the questionnaire, the program that was developed offered literature for schools discussing what bullying is and what can be done to combat this problem. Video footage was made available that depicted the lives of two children who were bullied. Information and suggestions were also sent home to parents. The components of the original program included better supervision, class rules, class meetings, role playing,

and parent involvement. The major goals of the program were to distribute knowledge and information on bullying, to implement rules against bullying, to help victims of bullying, and to get parent and teacher involvement. The three rules included: (a) we shall not bully others; (b) we shall try to help students who are bullied; and (c) we shall make it a point to include students who become easily left out.

Approximately 85% of Norwegian schools participated with the program, 130,000 students, and was implemented in grades one through nine. Findings from the study were based on questionnaire data collected by student self-report from those in grades two through nine or eight to 16 years of age. Initial data showed that one out of seven students (83,000 students or 15%) were involved with bully victim problems “now and then (Olweus, 1991, p.).” More specifically, 9% or 53,000 students were victims of bullying and seven percent or 41,000 students were involved with bullying behavior. In addition, three percent of students or 18,000 acknowledged being a victim of bullying “about one time a week or more (Olweus, 1991)” and 10,000 students or two percent acknowledged bullying others.

In order to determine the success of the project, a study was conducted with 42 schools in the Norwegian town of Bergen. Fifteen months after the program described above was provided to schools, a meeting was conducted in the Bergen schools with school personnel. Feedback was given from the questionnaires and the meetings also served as a way to discuss the bullying problems and how they were being addressed. The program was explained in further detail as well. Approximately 2500 students in grades four to seven participated in the study. The questionnaire was distributed eight

months after program implementation and again at 20 months. Input was also gathered from teachers, administrators, and parents. Results from the program, as measured by the Bergen schools indicated much success. Bullying problems were reduced by 50% or more from baseline data and after 20 months of program implementation. In addition, it was estimated that about one point seven percent of girls and two point six percent of boys were involved in new bullying cases. At 20 months, new cases were point six percent for boys and point five percent for girls (Olweus 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1993, & 1994).

In 1993, Olweus wrote a book describing the intervention program and the Bergen research demonstrating its success. The program described seems to be the program implemented in Norway in 1983. Differences do exist from the 1993 version of the OBPP and the most current version available, however the core features behind the program remain the same. Upon examination of the program as described in *Bullying at School* (Olweus, 1993) and the current version (Olweus & Limber, 2007), some changes were noted. One of the most glaring changes was the level of structure, resources, and guidance available with the current OBPP. In addition, role-playing has always been a part of the program, but the current program provided scenarios to use. The rules were slightly reworded and a fourth was added, “if we know that somebody has been bullied we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home” (Olweus, 2007, p. 51). The training required for program implementation was also increased.

Effectiveness of OBPP

The OBPP was supported by over three decades of research (Bauer, Lozario, & Rivara, 2007; Limber & Olweus, 2013; Olweus & Limber, 2010). Initial research was conducted between 1983 and 1985 in Norway with 2,500 students in grades five through eight. Reductions in being bullying were 62% after eight months in the program and reductions in bullying others were 33% after eight months. At 20 months, there was a 64% decrease in bullying behavior and a 53% decrease in bullying others. Results were based on student self-report. Another study involving 20,000 Norwegian students in grades four through seven, across over 150 schools, elicited results supporting program effectiveness (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

The effectiveness of OBPP implementation has also been demonstrated in the United States (Bauer, Lozario, & Rivara, 2007; Limber & Olweus, 2013). Bauer et al. (2007) reported reductions in physical bullying of 33% and reductions in relational bullying of 28% following implementation of OBPP. Another study involving 70,000 students in 214 Pennsylvania schools also supported the success of OBPP. Decreases in bullying behavior ranged across grade levels from 11 to 17% after two years and decreases in bullying others was 26 to 36%. In addition, after three years, verbal bullying decreases were 20 to 27%, social exclusion decreases ranged from 19 to 28%, and finally, physical bullying decreases were 27 to 37% among elementary, middle school, and high school students (Limber & Olweus, 2013).

Development of Survey Constructs

Previous research has focused on perceptions of mainly teachers on aspects of bullying such as risk factors, coping mechanisms, training, and identification (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Bradshaw et al., 2013; Mishna et al., 2005; Newgent et al., n.d.; Rosen et al., 2017) and studies involving support personnel are very minimal (Bradshaw et al., 2014; Williford, 2015). It was important to expand perception research beyond these areas and professionals. In order to address a gap in bullying research, school personnel in addition to teachers, administrators, and counselors, were surveyed to determine their perceptions of bullying behavior. They were asked questions regarding their level of agreement with statements related to need for school-wide training, student awareness and understanding, media involvement, and legal and employment consequences. The possibility that current definitions of bullying may be related to bullying reporting was also explored through survey questions.

According to OBPP, bullying incidents have included three parts: typically repeated behavior; negative actions that are deliberate; and, the bully is more powerful than the victim. The description of bullying found in the OBPP manual is similar to the definition offered by Olweus in 1993 and includes: “A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself” (p. 11). However, later in the manual, it discussed bullying as behavior that is *typically* repeated. For the purpose of this study, the definition offered by OBPP was used. Five constructs were

developed to explore school personnel's perceptions on bullying behavior (see Appendix A).

One of the constructs addressed is *student understanding and awareness*. This was defined, for the purposes of this study, as increased sensitivity to natural conflict, the tendency of youth to misread social situations, and the overreaction to accidental physical occurrences. For example, while playing football a child accidentally runs into someone and the other student considers this purposeful. It also addressed the influence of student reporting because they do not understand what bullying is and do not know what necessary components are present with bullying, and its difference between typical, developmental behaviors. Lack of understanding was the idea that the reporting of bullying is influenced because the definition of bullying is not known to students, the chronic nature of bullying is not considered, and the imbalance of power is not reflected. Some items that were included in this study were: 1) Students understand the difference between typical behavior (rough and tumble play) and bullying; and 2) Students do not report minor/accidental issues such as someone bumping into them as bullying. The OBPP taught students how their actions can make others feel bad. It discussed how nicknames and jokes may not be funny to the person they are about. This indicated students do not necessarily understand bullying and they need to be taught explicit skills in order to combat this problem. In addition, the class meetings that are a part of the program are used to teach students what bullying entails. This information supported the inclusion of this construct.

Another construct, *media influence*, addressed the amplified attention and awareness bullying behavior has gotten from the media. Media influence was defined in this study as the perceived involvement the media plays in bullying reporting, the assumption that the media overplays the bullying-suicide link, and that the media influences bullying perceptions. Sample survey items for this construct addressed media influence on students and school personnel: 1) The media has increased school personnel awareness of bullying; and 2) The media influences society on the subject of bullying. Although research demonstrating the media's impact on bullying was not available, the role media plays in other issues has. Support was found for the media's negative influence on issues such as violence and body image (Ata, Ludden, & Lally, 2007; Levin, 2010).

The third construct, *legal and employment consequences*, discussed the continued promotion of school policies to address bullying. Legal and employment consequences were defined as the perception of school personnel that bullying reporting is influenced by fear that not reporting will result in him/herself losing their job and/or result in their involvement in a lawsuit. Bullying behavior may be subject to criminal and civil consequences (Glover, 2012) and schools have adopted policies addressing bullying (Gumbrecht, 2013) and thus was included as a construct. Sample items to address this construct included: 1) School personnel are afraid of a lawsuit for not reporting bullying; and, 2) School personnel are afraid of losing their jobs for not reporting bullying.

The fourth construct, *need for school-wide training*, spoke to concerns that not being able to effectively identify situations of bullying is a factor that influenced bullying

reporting. It was defined as school personnel have not been provided with the skills necessary to identify bullying behavior, to decipher bullying behavior from other incidents, and to investigate claims of bullying. Some items that addressed this construct on the survey were: 1) School personnel know the different types of bullying; and 2) School personnel can effectively address incidents of bullying. Based on the OBPP (Olweus & Limber, 2007), school personnel training was a necessary component of the program. The teacher's guide laid out bullying definitions, the types of bullying there are, as well as how to differentiate bullying from other incidents. A two-day training was required for those school personnel that will be on the committee, while other school personnel must attend a one-day training before the program is implemented. This demonstrated the importance of proper school personnel training to aid bullying reduction. When school personnel are not properly trained, they may struggle to report all instances of bullying.

The last construct, *bullying definition changes*, addressed the changes in the way bullying has been viewed from past to present and was defined as bullying reporting is influenced by differences in how typical behavior is viewed, definition changes that have taken place, and a lack of a common definition. There were some discrepancies on the chronic nature of bullying. Some acknowledge the ongoing nature of the behavior while others have now adopted a seemingly "looser" definition that indicates bullying is typically repetitive (Nansel et al., 2001; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014). Items that addressed this construct included: 1) Behaviors now

being reported as bullying were considered typical, childhood behaviors in the past; and
2) The definition of bullying now allows first-time incidents to be considered.

Delimitations

Participants included in this study were certified staff such as teachers, administrators, and consultants (i.e., physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, school psychologists, program coordinators, behavior strategists, reading specialists, and counselors). Non-certified staff such as paraprofessionals, bus drivers, custodial staff, and food service workers were also included. These groups were chosen to be part of the study as they often have frequent contact with students. Their contact typically spans wide areas of the school and supervision in unstructured areas which included the playground where bullying frequently occurs (Bradshaw et al., 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2013). Paraprofessionals are also lunch room supervisors which is another fairly unstructured setting where bullying is reported to occur. Although consultants, (e.g., school psychologists, school counselors, administrators), often do not supervise students in unstructured settings, they are often involved with anti-bullying efforts and disciplinary actions. Substitute teachers were excluded as one cannot easily ascertain how frequent their student contact is.

Another delimitation was not including other participants such as parents and coaches. Both of these populations likely have important perceptions that will contribute to this topic in other studies. Coaches were not included as they likely do not have frequent contact with students on the playground or in other more unstructured settings. Coaches interact with students typically in structured practices and during games.

Parents were not included as this study's focus is on the school perspective. Often parents are not as informed on zero-tolerance policies and on bullying-prevention efforts on the part of schools. They also likely do not have frequent contact with many children at a time.

The setting, or schools chosen, were selected due to proximity to the researcher. Since it is ideal to make face-to-face contact with administrators to gain access to their school district, this was only feasible with schools located within a specific Midwest region of the United States.

The instrument does not include open-ended questions. While qualitative research can provide a more in-depth understanding of bullying perceptions, this study was only comprised of quantitative questions, or those that were assigned numerical value. This study intended to first address and understand the larger perceived influences. Future studies should focus on getting a more detailed understanding.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions are provided to clarify terms for the reader:

- Bullying: “Unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time” (HHS, n.d.).
- Verbal bullying – “Repeated derogatory remarks or names” (Stassen-Berger, 2007, p. 94). “Saying or writing mean things” (HHS, n.d.).
- Physical bullying – “Hitting, kicking, beating” (Stassen-Berger, 2007, p. 94). “Hurting a person's body or possessions.” (HHS, n.d.).

- Relational bullying – “Occurs when children deliberately ignore a classmate’s attempt to make conversation or join a game, or when they move away when the target comes near, or when they repeat humiliating gossip. Relational bullying is also called social bullying” (Stassen-Berger, 2007, p. 95). “Hurting someone’s reputation or relationships” (HHS, n.d.).
- Cyber bullying – “Bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites” (HHS, n.d.).
- Elementary school – “A school for the first four to six grades, and usually including kindergarten” (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.).
- Middle School – “A school intermediate between an elementary school and a high school, typically for children in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades” (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.).
- High School – “A school that typically comprises grades nine through 12” (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.).
- Media – “Communication channels through which news, entertainment, education, data, or promotional messages are disseminated. Media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, billboards, direct mail, telephone, fax, and internet” (Business Dictionary, n.d.).

- School personnel – Individuals that are employed by a school (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.).
- Certified staff – “Must have a certificate that proves they have obtained the necessary credentials and knowledge for the position” (jobmonkey.com, n.d.).
- Non-certified or classified staff – “School employees that do not need certification or licensure to be qualified for their job” (jobmonkey.com, n.d.).

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants and Settings

Two K-12 public school settings were chosen for participation in this study. The first being a midwestern school district with approximately 3,745 students in grades pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. The second setting was a midwestern middle school, employing 61 staff members, with approximately 505 students grades five through eight.

Responses were obtained from 129 participants. Every participant reported working in K-12 education at least part-time, although respondents were mostly full-time employees (n=125). The majority of respondents were teachers (n=75) and worked in an elementary setting (n=69). Twenty-three respondents were certified staff other than teachers and included those working as administrators, counselors, therapists and/or school psychologists. Non-certified staff, such as bus drivers, food service workers, and paraprofessionals, were 31 of the respondents.

Design and Instrumentation

The instrument for this study was developed using the OBPP framework with the following constructs: media influence, need for school-wide training, student understanding and awareness, legal and employment consequences, and definition changes. The scenario items were created to assess participant knowledge of bullying

characteristics using the definition found within the OBPP framework. The instrument was comprised of 15 demographic questions, 29 construct questions, and six scenarios.

Demographic information obtained included: age, sex, race, job title, number of years in current position, work setting, whether or not they supervise students in various areas, whether or not they are a parent, as well as their familiarity with social media. Participants were also be asked if they were a bully, a victim of bullying, or both a bully and a victim while they were in K-12 education. They were also asked if they worked in K-12 education to determine their inclusion in the study.

The first construct measured, *media influence*, was defined as the perceived influence the media plays in reporting bullying. Questions 16 through 24 measured this construct. The second construct, *need for school-wide training*, was defined as the perception that the current training of school personnel influences how they identify bullying, how they distinguish bullying behavior from other incidents (such as accidents) and how they investigate claims of bullying. Questions 25 through 29 related to this construct.

The third construct, *student understanding and awareness*, was defined as the increased sensitivity to natural conflict like disagreements, the tendency of youth to misread social situations, and the overreaction to accidental physical occurrences. Survey items 30 through 33 measured this construct. The fourth construct measured is *legal and employment consequences*. Items that related to this construct were addressed through questions 34 through 38 and was defined by the extent school personnel report bullying behavior because they fear not reporting will result in them losing their job

and/or because it will result in a lawsuit. The last construct, *bullying definition changes*, measured how the definition of bullying is different from the past as it is now more broad, first-time incidents of conflict can now be viewed as bullying as well as behaviors that were considered typical in the past are now considered bullying. Six items, questions 39 through 44, addressed this construct.

The survey questions used a Likert-type scale. Participants were asked to use a 6-point Likert-type scale to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed to each statement with 6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = somewhat agree (all some form of agreement), 3 = somewhat disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree (all some form of disagreement). There is debate when designing Likert scales on whether or not to include a neutral point on the scale. Without including a neutral option, respondents need to make a choice on a level of agreement or disagreement when that might not reflect how they feel (Li, 2013). Supporters for exclusion of the neutral point maintained that including a neutral option allows respondents to always choose this response and not take a stand (Brown, 2000). This study required participants to choose some level of agreement or disagreement by employing a six-point Likert-type scale. It was an option for participants to skip a question or to stop the survey all together if they are unable to choose or take a stand.

Other considerations when devising the Likert-type scale was the choice to include negatively worded items or “reverse-coded items” (Hartley, 2014). Many scales include these types of items; however it is debated if they should be used. Proponents for the use of these types of items do so because of the bias for respondents to choose more

positive ratings for positively-worded questions (Hodge & Gillespie, 2003). It also is a way to cue the attention of responders that the items are not predictable and therefore they answer based on the specific question rather than by their general feelings on the content (Barnette, 2000). Others have eliminated the use of these items because respondents tend to rate both positive and negative versions of the items the same (Swain, Weathers, & Niedrich, 2008). Their study found the average misresponse was 20%. The proposed survey was written without the use of “reverse-coded items.”

The final survey was created and distributed using Qualtrics® with access through the University of North Dakota. Within Qualtrics®, the options for six-answer choices was selected with the opportunity to skip the question. Participants were allowed to select only one choice but could change their answer. Surveys were sent out via email with a link to the survey from the school administrator. The survey instructions and a disclaimer that there was no compensation for participation was presented once the link is clicked on. A cover letter first explained that participation was voluntary, anonymous, and that they could withdraw from completing the survey at any time. Participants were also informed that submission of the survey will imply consent. Approval from the Institutional Review Board was granted before the survey was distributed.

Data Collection

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board, several school administrators were contacted via email to explain the study and to request dissemination. The two school administrators that agreed to the study were provided the link for the survey via email. From there, the school administrators electronically disseminated the

survey to their staff also via email granting them access. Once they clicked the link, participants were provided the disclaimers explained above such as their participation was voluntary. Participation was taken as consent.

Data Analysis

The data was exported from Qualtrics into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program where it was analyzed. Some form of agreement and disagreement was calculated for each Likert-type question. Due to the sample size, the construct items were then placed into two categories which were agreement and disagreement. Agreement levels were also compared based on certified and non-certified status.

Cronbach's alpha was used to determine reliability of the constructs. Both constructs had good internal consistency, with over 80% of the variance explained. Therefore, all items were retained. The construct, *need for school-wide training*, had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88. The construct addressing *legal and employment consequences* had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82.

Independent-Samples *T*-tests were run to compare differences in means of certified and non-certified staff for each construct question. Analysis of variance tests were also run to determine whether or not there was support/evidence for the constructs based on selected demographic groups. These groups included: certified or non-certified status, setting, experience, whether or not participants were bullied as K-12 students, and whether or not participants bullied as K-12 students.

Summary

In order to address ongoing gaps in bullying perception research, the current study surveyed both certified and non-certified staff on bullying perceptions. Five factors were included: media influence; student understanding and awareness of bullying; legal and employment factors; definition changes; and the need for school-wide training. Current perception research has looked mainly at teacher perceptions in regards to bullying in the areas of risk factors, prevalence, and identification (Bell & Willis, 2016; Bradshaw et al., 2007; Espelage et al., 2014; Hazler et al., 2001; Kennedy et al., 2012; Mischna et al., 2005; Newgent et al., n. d.; Rosen et al., 2017; Williford, 2015) with few studies including non-certified staff (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Espelage et al., 2014; Williford, 2015). Due to potential differences between certified and non-certified school personnel (Williford, 2015) and the impact they can have on schools with their anti-bullying efforts, it was important to compare these two groups and determine implications surrounding these differences.

CHAPTER III

ARTICLES

Article 1: Review of the Literature

Overview of Journal

- Title: *Journal of School Health*
- Rationale for Selection: The Journal of School Health was selected as the topic of bullying readily fits this journal's purpose (see below). Bullying impacts school health in a number of ways. Students who are bullied often develop mental health issues which in turn affect their education through lack of attendance and poorer academic achievement. Students who engage in bullying behavior also can experience impacts to their school health.
- Scope: The scope of this journal is to promote practice and research relating to health, particularly the health of students in Pre K-12 education. The aim is to assist professionals with healthy growth and development of practices for students.
- Quality: The impact factor for this journal, according to their website, is 1.935. This journal uses a blind, peer review procedure with two or more reviewers.
- Author Guidelines:
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/17461561/homepage/forauthors.html>

The Impact of Bullying on School Health: Perceptions of School Personnel and the Influence of Media

ABSTRACT

Although bullying is widely recognized, and a well-researched topic, certain aspects of this area have little research. This literature review focused on the current research in two important areas related to bullying: school personnel perceptions and media influence. Following a discussion of the current literature, areas for further research were explored. The importance of future research on bullying perceptions among school personnel and the media influence of bullying is highlighted, as well as the impact both of these have on school health.

BACKGROUND

Bullying has long been a concern, but increased prevalence has caused bullying to become an increasingly popular topic. Cosma and Hancock (n.d.) reported that 10-14% of students are chronically bullied based on data from 33 countries during 2002 to 2010. In 2013, the Hazelden Foundation estimated that one out of five students have been bullied at some point, and now the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS; 2014) reported that one in three students acknowledge being bullied.

Bullying has been well discussed because of prevalence, but also because of the consequences associated with it. Such consequences of bullying have included depression and suicide for both the victims and the bullies (HHS, 2017; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Marttunen, Rimpelä, & Rantanen, 1999; Moore et al., 2017; Olweus & Limber, 2007) as well as growing mental illness diagnoses for those involved (Kumpulainen, Räsänen, & Puura, 2001). Stassen-Berger (2007) also included school shootings as

consequences of bullying. Bullies have been found to often be at greater risk for underage drinking and smoking as well as for criminal offenses such as shoplifting and vandalizing (HHS, 2017; Long & Dowdell, 2018; Olweus & Limber, 2007). While bystanders are not directly involved in bullying, witnessing these acts has caused these students to be afraid at school and to carry guilt for not assisting (Olweus & Limber, 2007). All of these reasons make bullying an important topic for school health.

What is bullying, and why does it occur?

Many definitions of bullying exist; however, they often contain similar elements which have included deliberate nature, repetition, and power imbalance (Olweus & Limber, 2007). Intentionality or the deliberate nature of bullying indicated that the bully wants to harm someone or knows that what they are doing is unpleasant for the victim. Repetition of bullying typically means that acts of bullying are repeated, however, some believe a one-time incident may also be considered bullying. The last element, power imbalance, can be real or imagined. The victim may struggle to defend themselves due to an imbalance in size or strength, or they may think they are weaker than the bully and thus do not fight back (Olweus & Limber, 2007). One such definition indicated that in order for bullying to occur there needs to be intent, repetition, and power differential exhibited by the same individual (American Educational Research Association, 2013). Bullying may be direct or indirect (Olweus & Limber, 2007) as well as take many forms. Direct acts of bullying happen face-to-face, while indirect acts are less obvious and may involve gossiping about another person. When children and adolescents experience

indirect bullying, it can be hard to figure out the person responsible. In addition, individuals can experience several forms of bullying.

Stassen-Berger (2007) addressed physical and verbal types of bullying. Physical bullying included those acts involving physical aggression, while verbal bullying involved name calling or mean comments. Relational bullying, or social bullying, was a form of bullying students may experience as well. This form of victimization happened when the bully acts in a way to destroy the victim's reputation or peer relationships (Olweus & Limber, 2007). These acts included secluding the victim and/or spreading gossip/stories about him/her. Bullying through a technology medium, such as social media, was discussed as cyberbullying (Jose, Kljakovic, Scheib, & Notter, 2012).

There were several reasons children are targeted by bullies. Reasons have included physical appearance, race, religion preference, gender identity, and socio-economic status (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000). Also, victims of bullying have tended to be introverted, lack assertion, (Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1994; Cook, William, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010) and have had poorer relationships with peers (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Cook et al., 2010). "Submissive victims", as termed in the literature, are those victims who have not bullied others. Submissive victims have tended to be more introverted, lack friendships, are withdrawn, and are weaker physically (Olweus & Limber, 2007). The other type of victim is called "bully-victims" because they, as the name implies, have been both victims of bullying and have bullied others (Olweus & Limber, 2007).

Children are known to bully for many reasons. Bullying has provided the bully with attention, possibly negative, as well as has allowed them access to resources such as money (Wright, 2003). Contributing factors of bullies included coming from homes where physical violence is used as a form of discipline (Duncan, 1999; NoBullying.com, 2015) or the home environment has had a “lack of warmth” (Bowers et al., 1994; NoBullying.com, 2015). Bullying has also developed because the bully believes the behavior may allow him/her to fit in with peers (HHS, n.d.). However, earlier research suggested that bullies may experience rejection from their peers (Boulton & Smith, 1994).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Because schools have a due diligence to address bullying, they may be held responsible if an incident is ignored (Kevorkian & D’Antona, 2008; Willard, 2007). Although currently there is no federal law that has prohibited bullying (HHS, n.d.), schools are required to address behavior that is severe, ongoing, and widespread; interferes with another student’s education; or violates civil rights (HHS, n.d.). Therefore, schools have been adopting policies seeking to regulate and ban bullying (Gumbrecht, 2013). One such policy was a zero-tolerance policy, which necessitates that uniform, strict punishment is applied to every student violating these policies regardless of the situation (Gjelten, n.d.). Due to the seriousness of the topic, and the detrimental impact it can have, it is crucial for school personnel to be able to effectively identify and address bullying behavior. It is also important to determine if media reporting has a damaging impact on bullying, and how individuals perceive it in schools. In order to

better address these needs, and to improve student health, it is important to understand how those working in the school system perceive bullying so that programs, training, and supports can be geared towards addressing these perceptions.

Perceptions of School Personnel

Current research that has focused on the perceptions of school personnel regarding bullying is not equally representative of all stakeholders (i.e., paraprofessionals, school therapists, counselors). Studies have typically included teachers, but only sometimes other staff. Studies which included support personnel, such as school counselors and school psychologists, were limited and have not always examined the differences among these personnel (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Newgent et al., n.d.). Only a handful have looked at the perception of education support personnel such as paraprofessionals, bus drivers, and administrative assistants (Bradshaw, Waasdrop, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2013; Bradshaw, Waasdrop, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2014; deLara, 2008; Espelage, Polanin, & Low, 2014; Williford, 2015) and even fewer have examined the differences between certified (teachers, counselors, and social workers) and noncertified staff (custodians, paraprofessionals, and food service staff; Williford, 2015). Most studies have focused on examining the difference between student and school personnel perceptions (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Espelage et al., 2014) or examined specific groups of noncertified staff (Bradshaw et al., 2013).

Some studies have had teachers and other certified staff look at scenarios to determine bullying and non-bullying behaviors. Expanding on these studies to include

other certified staff as well as non-certified staff is important. Non-certified staff often supervise children, and therefore it is imperative they are able to recognize the difference between bullying and non-bullying behavior. It is equally important to determine how certified staff recognize bullying behavior and to this date, only teachers and school counselors have been asked to perform such a task. For example, Hazler, Miller, Carney, and Green (2001) gave teachers and school counselors vignettes to examine for bullying presence. Both groups rated physical incidents more serious and characterized them as bullying more often than those involving verbal. The take home message was that school staff were not equipped to identify bullying. In Bell and Willis' (2016) study, scenarios were given to teachers to read through to determine if bullying occurred. Bullying involving physical aggression was considered the most serious. If the physical scenario had a passive victim, teachers indicated the situation was less serious. This may have implications for how teachers respond to real-life incidences when the victim chooses to ignore the bullying behavior. Whenever the teacher was informed and the victim reacted aggressively, the situation was deemed more serious. Scenarios depicting female bullies and male victims were seen as the least serious.

As stated above, research extending beyond certified teachers was limited. One study (Williford, 2015) addressed the prevalence of perceptual differences of bullying seen amongst certified and noncertified elementary school personnel. One of the significant findings was that noncertified personnel tended to be more sympathetic to bullies and hold victims, to some degree, responsible for the incidents. This can have a significant impact on the way bullying is handled at schools. If victims are held

responsible, at least in part, they may be viewed as needing less support and the bullying behavior may also go unaddressed. If bullying behavior is not addressed appropriately, it may continue to happen. This cycle may result in an increase in consequences for bullying behavior, such as suicide and mental illness, (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; Kumpulainen et al., 2001; Olweus & Limber, 2007; Stassen-Berger, 2007) all being important aspects of school health. Despite some differences, Williford (2015) indicated that both certified and noncertified elementary school personnel had similar perceptions of the prevalence of bullying behavior.

Another study surveyed both teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) such as paraprofessionals, custodial staff, and bus drivers (Bradshaw et al., 2013). This study was the first comparing teachers and ESPs on a broad level. Results showed that teachers and ESPs differ in their perspectives of bullying. Teachers were more involved with bullying as they observed it more often, were involved with bullying policies, and saw bullying as a more substantial problem. ESP's were less likely to see bullying as a problem, were less comfortable intervening when bullying did happen, and reported a greater need for training than teachers did. Both teachers and ESPs expressed a desire to have more training on cyberbullying.

Olweus and Limber (2007) indicated school personnel training is a necessary component. When school personnel are not properly trained, they may struggle to identify and report all instances of bullying. This is problematic as students who are bullied may develop physical health problems, such as stomachaches, in addition to mental health concerns of anxiety and depression (HHS, 2017; Kaltiala-Heino et al.,

1999; Kumpulainen et al., 2001; Moore et al., 2017; Olweus & Limber, 2007). Their academic performance has also been shown to suffer (Olweus & Limber, 2007). By not identifying bullies, school personnel might not recognize those students at risk for substance abuse and legal problems (HHS, 2017; Long & Dowdell, 2018; Olweus & Limber, 2007). When school personnel are not able to assist those involved with bullying, it may perpetuate, and the health risks might continue. This could lead to more serious consequences such as suicide and school shootings (Olweus & Limber, 2007; Stassen-Berger, 2007).

Non-certified staff make up a large portion of school staff and are often found in supervisory roles where bullying occurs ((Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O’Brennan, Gulemetova, & Henderson, 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2013). Consequently, it is imperative to understand their perceptions in regard to bullying behavior. If they are vastly different than teachers and other certified staff, anti-bullying efforts become counterproductive. For example, if non-certified staff believe students are always accurate in their reporting of bullying, they may inadvertently label a student as a bully or regard a different student as a “victim” rather than both as students in need of social skills to address conflict or in need of a referral for other supports. If they feel students claim to be victims too much, they may miss identifying actual bullying behavior.

In addition to expanding research to other types of school personnel, previous perception studies tended to focus on prevalence, risk factors, and identification of bullying. Kennedy, Russom, and Kevorkian (2012) compared teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions and found that teachers believed more strongly than

administrators that school personnel had a responsibility to prevent bullying. Teachers also expressed a greater need for training. In a study by Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, and Wiener (2005), teachers were interviewed to understand their knowledge of bullying and the perceptions of bullying victims. They found teachers were not aware of the bullying their students experienced and that incidents involving physical bullying were considered more severe. Teachers regarded both indirect and direct forms of violence as bullying. The seriousness of the two, however, was not equal as some teachers indicated physical bullying was more serious while others felt indirect bullying was more damaging. The majority of teachers in this study did not recognize that repetition was a necessary component of bullying and a few did not include the intent to harm as a necessary factor.

Factors that contributed to intervening with bullying behaviors included the severity of the incident, the responsibility of the student for their victimization, how the student matched up to bullying characteristics such as assertiveness, and the empathetic response of the teacher. These teachers also felt an absence of resources, time, and support in dealing with bullying matters, and voiced a need for more training.

Adding to bullying perception literature was research on risk factors and coping strategies. One study on teacher perception focused more on the risks for both bullies and victims as well as the effectiveness of the coping strategies they used (Rosen, Scott, & DeOmellas, 2017). Findings included that teachers generally believed that retaliation and ignoring bullying were ineffective while reporting bullying behavior and self-advocacy were beneficial strategies. Focusing on these perceptions, although important, is only a small fraction of the perceptions regarding bullying to be explored.

Media Influence

While there is no research to indicate that media reporting impacts bullying prevalence, there is literature supporting that the media negatively influences or contributes to other issues, such as violence and body image (Ata, Ludden, & Lally, 2007; Levin, 2010). Another area more widely explored is the link between media and suicide. Stack (2003) concluded there is a trend that suggests the more media report on suicide, the higher the rate of suicide is. Reportingonsuicide.org (2015) indicated that suicide increases when the media is detailed in reporting details. Pirkis and Blood (2010) also found a similar trend for both rates of completed and attempts of suicide. Reportingonsuicide.org (2015) concluded that how the media describes suicide in their reporting can impact rate, and so a protocol was developed to help guide journalists with reporting on suicide. The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (2007) also had created a document that addresses media reporting on suicide.

Although there have been no studies linking media reporting to bullying consequences, there have been many research studies linking suicide with bullying incidents (Brunstein Klomek et al., 2013; Espelage & Holt, 2013; van Geel, Vedder, & Tanilon, 2014). School shootings have been connected to bullying by the media as well (H.H.S., n.d.). However, some researchers are not convinced that bullying is on the rise, nor do they feel that bullying alone is responsible for serious actions some youth take (H.H.S., n. d.). The media often has highlighted extreme cases of bullying but plays them off like they are common occurrences. Therefore, bullying has gained considerable media attention, likely in part because of its link to school shootings (Stassen-Berger,

2007). When students are bullied, they may become depressed and develop suicidal thoughts. These thoughts can lead to suicidal attempts as well as committals (Olweus & Limber, 2007). Even if bullying instances are not linked to school shootings, suicide and mental illnesses are reported as consequences, which result in media attention as well (Romer, 2010; Kumpulainen et al., 2001).

McBride (2013) suggested that journalists overplay the suicide-bullying link by leaving out mental illness while maintaining that no causality between the two should be expressed in the media. McBride also postulated that not all aggression is bullying as there needs to be a power imbalance present as well as the repetitive nature. With bullying-prevalence rates reported as high as one in three students (HHS, 2014), the suicide rate should match this if there was a direct link, therefore, the media is not reporting other factors. Stemming from a panel of experts on bullying, several other criticisms of the media's influence came to light (Tenore, 2013). Panelists expressed concern that the definitions of bullying can be very different than what the public perceives as bullying. Other insights from the panel included that the term bullying was overused, bullies are "portrayed as villains" which can impact their mental health, and that journalists tend to quickly jump to assumptions about bullying.

Cugler and Mateescu (2007) found that school violence, such as bullying, finds its way into the media when the situation or incident is dramatic enough to sell their point. Incidents involving serious actions such as school shootings or suicide are the bullying cases that are reported by the media in the news. In response to this problem, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014) went as far as to

develop a task force to address the potential harm the media was creating, as well as to provide recommendations to guide media reporting. Such recommendations included: determining if it was actually bullying that was taking place, delivering only factual information, gathering information from all parties involved, and consulting experts. There is belief by experts that the media is causing potential harm in the way they are reporting bullying, thus research attention needs to be devoted to this (H.H.S., n.d.). With the commanding presence the media has on society, it is imperative that this gap in the literature be addressed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL HEALTH

Bullying has been linked to many serious health consequences (Brunstein Klomek et al., 2013; Espelage & Holt, 2013; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; Kumpulainen et al., 2001; Olweus & Limber, 2007; Stassen-Berger, 2007; van Geel et al., 2014) and although some feel the media overplays the bullying-suicide link (McBride, 2013), suicide can be a severe consequence of bullying. Mental health issues, school shootings, and suicide are all very important aspects of safe and healthy schools.

The potential need for school personnel to be better trained in determining the differences between bullying and typical childhood behavior, and between bullying behavior and those inappropriate instances that do not meet bullying criteria, also merits exploration. The National Education Association (n.d.) discussed the importance of being able to distinguish bullying from other forms of violence and stressed the need to not use bullying to describe other forms of conflict. If anti-bullying efforts are going to be effective so we can minimize the health consequences bullying can cause, all school

personnel need to understand what bullying is and to be able to identify that versus other forms of conflict. School personnel may not know, or understand what constitutes bullying versus another form of violence and if they do not, how can they effectively intervene to address this issue. It is equally important to understand if all school personnel feel bullying has increased because the definition is more inclusive. If school personnel believe the definition of bullying is too loose, they may not accurately intervene or deem it important to investigate circumstances of true bullying. If the perception is that all conflict can now be considered bullying, students may inaccurately be labeled as bullies which can lead to consequences for them as well (Olweus & Limber, 2007). These consequences may include emotional, social, and legal problems (Dweck, 2006).

In order for schools to respond with anti-bullying efforts, they first need to understand where school personnel perceive a need. They also need to identify misperceptions that school personnel have so they can effectively train staff and highlight correct information. For example, if school personnel believe the media is completely accurate in their reporting of bullying, they may draw inaccurate conclusions that a victim is suicidal or that a school shooting will happen. Training on anti-bullying programs can be an effective way to address these misperceptions.

Anti-bullying programs significantly reduce bullying (Gaffney, Ttofi, & Farrington, 2018). However, the success of these programs necessitates that all staff are trained (Howe, Marini, Haymes, & Tenor, 2013). Training programs have included several aspects based on research that include: how to stop bullying, how to prevent it,

how to help all students involved in bullying, as well as how to create a school climate that respects all students (HHS, n.d.; Olweus & Limber, 2007; StopBullyingNow.com, n.d.). Ttofi and Farrington (2009) indicated that parent training, improved supervision, and effective classroom management are also essential components of anti-bullying programs. Initial training also needs to be followed up with follow-up support (Sugai et al., 2010).

In conclusion, bullying poses a serious health concern in schools. Closing these gaps in the literature will help schools better identify training needs, which in turn will hopefully diminish bullying behavior and improve student health. All staff need to be trained (Howe et al., 2013) and provided with follow-up training opportunities (Sugai et al., 2010) in order to make anti-bullying efforts the most effective they can be.

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Article 2: Research Study

Overview of Journal

- Title: *Journal of School Violence*
- Rationale for Selection: This journal was chosen as bullying is a very prominent research topic found in this journal. Bullying is a form of school violence, and the research conducted fits the aim of this journal which is to discuss violence occurring in the school system. The implications from the present study address violence prevention and consequences of violence which are often a focus of this journal.
- Scope: The Journal of School Violence publishes studies on violence and victimization occurring in schools. The studies often discuss nature of violence, violence prevention, and consequences of violence as related to teachers, school staff, and students.
- Quality: According to the journal's website, the 2017 impact factor was 2.721. This journal is peer reviewed.
- Author Guidelines:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?journalCode=wjsv20&page=instructions> - prep

Examining the Perceptions of Bullying between Certified and Non-Certified School Personnel

Abstract

Bullying is one form of school violence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). The topic of bullying is heavily researched in many aspects, but current research has not adequately explored bullying perceptions. This study aimed to include the voice of two groups found in K-12 education, certified and non-certified staff. These staff were surveyed on perceptions related to the need for training and on potential legal and employment consequences of bullying.

Keywords: bullying, bullying perceptions, certified versus non-certified staff

Introduction

Bullying has become an important research topic for schools as consequences of bullying are associated with lower academic achievement and attendance rates (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), 2018). Because of this, most schools acknowledge the seriousness of the topic and the detrimental impact bullying can have on students as well as the need to make schools a safe place for all children to learn.

Even though there are many definitions of bullying around, they should contain three consistent elements. For the purposes of this study, the definition offered by Olweus and Limber (2007) was the guiding framework and definition. Olweus and Limber (2007) defined bullying as follows: “A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly over time, to the negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself” (p. 11). The three elements presented in bullying definitions are typically repetition, intent to do harm, and

power differential. One of the components was repetition. Although some single acts may be considered bullying, it is often the ongoing nature that is considered bullying. The second was the intent to do harm through negative actions. Someone who bullies may not fully understand the consequences of their actions, but they know the actions are undesired by the victim. Third, there was a perceived or real difference in power between the bully and the victim. The victim then struggled to defend themselves (Olweus & Limber, 2007).

Bullying also takes on several different forms. One such form is verbal bullying (HHS, 2018; Olweus & Limber, 2007). Examples of this type of bullying include calling someone a name, threatening verbally, and making inappropriate remarks. Another type of bullying is social bullying or relational bullying. Examples of this type of bullying include spreading lies about someone or social isolation (HHS, 2018; Olweus & Limber, 2007). Physical bullying involves physical aggressive acts like hitting, kicking, and/or tripping. It also includes destruction of someone's property (HHS, 2018; Olweus & Limber, 2007). Cyberbullying is bullying through electronic means such as via social media or by texting (HHS, 2018). An example would be posting inaccurate or harmful things about someone online.

When bullying exists, there are consequences for all those involved. Victims may be more susceptible to mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety even into adulthood (HHS, 2018; Olweus & Limber, 2007). Academic consequences of missing school and decreased test scores are also consequences bullying victims experience (HHS, 2018; Olweus & Limber, 2007). For those engaging in bullying behavior, they are

often at risk for dropping out of school, for having legal trouble, as well as for abuse of drugs and alcohol (HHS, 2018).

It is important to understand how those working in the school system perceive bullying so that programs, training, and supports can be geared towards addressing these perceptions. This is especially important as perceptions of school personnel regarding bullying have not always included all staff working in schools. When other staff have been included, such as school psychologists and counselors, the research addressing the differences of perceptions among those working in different roles has been limited (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Newgent et al., n.d). Studies which have included non-certified staff are especially few and far between (Bradshaw, Waasdrop, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2013; deLara, 2008; Espelage, Polanin, & Low, 2014; Gulemetova, Drury, & Bradshaw, 2011; Williford, 2015) sometimes without exploring the difference between the two groups (Espelage et al., 2014).

There are many different employees in a school system often grouped into certified and non-certified staff. Certified staff are required to have teaching licenses and credentials in order to fulfill a position (alleducationschools.com, n.d.). Certified staff typically are considered teachers, administrators, counselors, and therapists. Hired staff, such as bus drivers, paraprofessionals, food service staff, and administrative assistants are non-certified staff. Non-certified staff, also referred to as classified staff, do not require teaching credentials (Walker, 2016).

It is important non-certified staff are included in studies as their perceptions have not been readily studied. Past studies have shown a difference in how teachers and in

how non-certified staff have viewed bullying. In a study conducted by Williford (2015), perceptual differences of bullying prevalence were researched. One of the most noteworthy conclusions was that non-certified personnel found bullying victims were to some extent blamable for the incidents. Non-certified personnel were also more compassionate to bullies as evidenced by their attitude ratings leaning “more favorable” towards bullies and “less favorable” towards victims. In another study, with its findings published in many places, (Bradshaw, Waasdrop, O’Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2013; Gulmetova et al., 2011), teachers and non-certified staff (paraprofessionals, custodial staff, and bus drivers) differed with their bullying perceptions. Non-certified staff were less likely to see bullying as a problem as compared to teachers, possibly due to their inability to recognize bullying. They were also less confident intervening with bullying incidents. Both teachers and support staff reported a greater need for training on cyberbullying. This study was considered the first large scale study to include non-certified staff.

Differences in perceptions can have a significant impact on schools when it comes to bullying behavior. When bullying is not effectively addressed, consequences such as mental illness and decreased academic achievement can happen (HHS, n.d.; Stassen-Berger, 2007). Therefore, it is imperative that all those working in schools understand bullying behavior and how to address is appropriately.

Need for School-wide Training

There are many studies that have asserted teachers and other staff need more training to effectively address bullying in their schools (Bradshaw et al., 2011; Howe,

Marini, Haymes, & Tenor, 2013; Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012; Mischna, Scarcella, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005). This is important as bullying has been linked to health problems such as anxiety or depression, as well as declines in academic performance (HHS, 2017; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; Kumpulainen et al., 2001; Moore et al., 2017; O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Sawyer, 2009; Olweus & Limber, 2007). If all school personnel do not receive adequate training on bully prevention, instances of bullying will go unrecognized. This may cause detrimental consequences, including suicide and mental illness, if bullying is continued for both bullies and victims (HHS, 2017; Long & Dowdell, 2018; Olweus & Limber, 2007; Stassen-Berger, 2007).

All school personnel should be given training on anti-bullying efforts (Bradshaw et al., 2013). In research surveying non-certified staff as well as teachers (Gulemetova et al., 2011), non-certified staff were not typically asked to join anti-bullying efforts and they were also not as likely to be offered training on the subject. This may explain why non-certified staff acknowledged they had reservations with addressing bullying. This is especially troubling as non-certified staff are often put into supervisory positions where bullying is more likely to occur such as playgrounds, lunchrooms, and on the bus (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, Gulemetova, & Henderson, 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2013).

In addition to not being as readily trained, non-certified staff seem to have some misconceptions about bullies and victims. Williford (2015) found non-certified staff placed some of the responsibility on the victims of bullying, such as the need for victims to handle bullying themselves. Non-certified staff were also more understanding of

bullies based on less negative ratings on items addressing a bully's feelings towards victims. Bradshaw et al. (2011) also found that non-certified staff did not view bullying in the same light as teachers and were not as likely to see it as a problem. When staff are presented and trained on anti-bullying programs that adequately address bullying behaviors, these misconceptions can be minimized.

The potential need for school personnel to have better training in determining the differences between bullying and typical childhood behavior, and between bullying behavior and those inappropriate instances that do not meet bullying criteria, also merits exploration. The National Education Association (2015) stressed the importance of not using bullying as a broad term for all conflict because when bullying is correctly identified, the right choice for dealing with the behavior can be chosen. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus & Limber, 2007) also gives guidance on how to distinguish bullying from other acts. They address the need for discussing what bullying is and what it is not by examining the necessary components. In particular, they discuss how to distinguish physical bullying from rough play. Their program has teachers leading class meetings that teach students how to distinguish bullying from other behaviors.

It is important components of bullying are taught as research has shown that teachers do not always understand bullying. In one study (Mishna et al., 2005), interviews were conducted with teachers on their knowledge of bullying. Teachers did not always recognize the components that are necessary for bullying to occur. Some did not include repetition as a factor, while some did not mention intention. If school

personnel are expected to only use the term bullying when appropriate, and if we expect anti-bullying efforts to be effective, personnel must understand the differences between bullying and other forms of violence.

Concern over Legal and Employment Consequences

Another factor worth exploring as related to bullying is school personnel's concerns with legal and employment consequences. This factor is important for inclusion as we live in a litigious society (Rubin, 2010) and lawsuits have resulted from things that happen in schools. Members of the National Education Association (n.d.) are provided insurance against malpractice which could be used in cases of failure to address bullying. It is not known how school personnel perceive the risk of malpractice and legal consequences surrounding bullying. This factor has not specifically been studied, but there has been an increase in anti-bullying efforts (Gumbrecht, 2013) and reforms which suggests school personnel may be aware of their duty to address bullying.

In addition to legal consequences, employment consequences are also a possibility with bullying. Teacher certificates and job dismissals could be possible in most states for reasons that failing to intervene in bullying incidents may fall under (Findlaw.com, n.d.). Reasons such as neglect of duty, inefficiency, incompetence, and refusal to perform duties could pertain to bullying behavior. However, school personnel firings related to a lack of intervening do not appear to frequently occur according to news coverage. In a newsletter put out by Fisher Phillips attorneys McLeod Caminiti and Treibman (2015), it would be easier for private schools to enforce firing of failing to address bullying incidents. Several news report were found for a teacher suspension

following allegations that teachers failed to address bullying incidents (Dolak, 2012; Hui, 2017).

Although there is no federal law prohibiting bullying (HHS, 2018; LaMance, 2018; Ullman, 2018), schools may be held legally responsible if they ignore incidents (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008; Willard, 2007). This is because bullying may also be considered a criminal act such as assault (LaMance, 2018). Bullying behavior may also be deemed harassment if it is based on factors such as race or religion which may violate a student's civil rights (LaMance, 2018; Ullman, 2018) and from a legality standpoint, schools are required to address harassment (HHS, 2018).

In addition, just because there is no federal law against bullying, it does not dismiss schools from responsibility to address this ongoing problem. Schools and districts are required to provide a safe learning space for all students (LaMance, 2018; Ullman, 2018). Therefore, they need to address behaviors that interfere with a student's education (HHS, n.d.). As established above, bullying has been shown to illicit effects that impact students' academic achievement as well as their attendance. Both of these interfere with students' education. Due to this, most states have requirements through laws and regulations to have a policy for handling bullying claims (HHS, 2018). Components of these requirements often have involved investigation of claims, as well as the need to respond appropriately to bullying incidents. Some states also have necessitated the use of anti-bullying programs or teacher training (HHS, 2018). The training should include instruction on what bullying is, and how to meaningfully intervene.

Currently, research regarding the legal aspects of bullying is minimal (Butler, Kift, & Campbel, 2009; El Asam & Samara, 2016; Foody, Samara, El Asam, Morsi, & Khattab, 2017; Gillespie, 2006; Paul, Smith, & Blumberg, 2012; Samara, Burbidge, El Asam, Foody, Smith, & Morsi, 2017). Most of this research has been concentrated on cyberbullying and the possibility to address this problem through legal means (Butler et al., 2009; El Asam & Samara, 2016; Gillespie, 2006). Gillespie (2006) discussed cyberbullying and how there are potential ways to address it through the law. Although it can be addressed through legal means, there are other possibilities such as education on the effects of cyberbullying that may help as well. El Asam and Samara (2016) also concluded there were a several laws in the United Kingdom that could be used to address cyberbullying through the courts including those related to harassment, communications, and computer misuse.

Research has been particularly limited as much of these studies have been conducted outside the U.S. and based on international laws (Butler et al., 2009; El Asam & Samara, 2016; Foody et al., 2017; Gillespie, 2006; Paul et al., 2012; Samara et al., 2017). Within the U.S., Eckes and Gibbs (2012) explored court cases to discuss legalities of bullying of students with a disability. One theme that emerged was the determination of whether or not schools did enough in when addressing bullying. No published research was found addressing school personnel perceptions on the legal aspects of bullying.

Even outside the U.S., few studies have examined the perceptions of addressing bullying through law. Paul et al. (2009) gave targeted worksheets to students in the

United Kingdom for analysis on cybercrime, legality, school consequences, rights, and responsibility. The overall conclusion was that students did not know as much about cyberbullying as they should.

Samara et al. (2017) found through interviews with psychologists and attorneys in the United Kingdom that bullying intervention, through legal means, was necessary due to the effects of bullying. One of the conclusions from Samara et al. (2017) was that more bullying research should be done from a legal standpoint with law enforcement, parents, and schools. If schools and school personnel may be held liable, it is important to understand how they view this potential.

Need for the Study

According to the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP; Olweus & Limber, 2007), bullying incidents have three parts. The first, typically repeated behavior, speaks to how bullying is often a repeated action. The next, deliberate nature, means that there is intent to do harm. The last part is the idea that the bully has power over the victim which may be real power or alternatively, it may be perceived by the victim. For this study, the definition offered by OBPP was used.

It is critical to understand and expand our knowledge of bullying perceptions because bullying is often reported to parents and teachers (HHS, n.d.). The factors chosen for inclusion in this study add to the current research on bullying perceptions as well as fill in important gaps. School personnel's perceptions have not been thoroughly studied in regard to bullying, and with perceptions of legal consequences not at all. This has huge implications for school success. In order for schools to understand where to go

with their anti-bullying efforts, they need to understand where school personnel perceive a need. They also need to identify misperceptions that school personnel have so they can effectively train staff and highlight correct information. For example, if staff believe they will be held liable if they do not report nor address a bullying situation, they may overreport as a way to guard themselves against potential legal matters.

Lastly, this study was important because research including non-certified staff on bullying behavior perceptions is minimal (Williford, 2015). It is imperative to understand their perceptions in regard to bullying behavior as supervision in schools relies heavily on non-certified staff (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, Gulemetova, & Henderson, 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2013). This study aimed to examine differences between certified and non-certified staff on bullying perceptions. Certified and non-certified staff were surveyed on their perceptions of bullying involving legal and employment consequences. The specific research question was as follows: Do certified and non-certified school personnel have different perceptions of bullying in regard to legal and employment consequences? The need for school-wide training was also examined as guided by a second research question: Are there differences in perceptions of training needs among certified and non-certified staff?

Method

Participants and Settings

Two settings were solicited for participation in the study. The first setting was a midwestern school district comprised of approximately 3,745 students in grades pre-

kindergarten through grade 12. The other midwestern school was a middle school serving approximately 505 students in fifth through eighth grades and 61 staff members.

Design and Instrumentation

The instrument contained 15 demographic questions including: age, race, sex, job title, school setting, years of experience, frequency of student supervision, and parental status. Participants were also asked if they were a bully, a victim of bullying, or both a bully and a victim when they were a K-12 student.

The survey included 10 questions (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to use a 6-point Likert-type scale to rate the extent to which they agreed to each statement with 6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = somewhat agree (all some form of agreement), 3 = somewhat disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree (all some form of disagreement). The instrument created for this study was developed using the OBPP (Olweus & Limber, 2007) framework with the following constructs: *legal and employment consequences* and the *need for school-wide training*. The construct, *need for school-wide training*, was defined as the perception of current training of school personnel influences how they identify bullying, how they classify bullying versus other incidents such as accidents, and how they investigate claims of bullying. OBPP discussed the importance of using their program at the school, classroom, and individual level to create a healthy school environment where students feel adults are invested in their wellbeing. Spanning the entire school encompasses all adults in the building. In order to do that, every committee member needs to be trained over a two-day period by a certified instructor (Hazeldon Foundation, 2016). According to the OBPP manual

(Olweus & Limber, 2007), there are several key important members including an administrator, counselor, a teacher from each grade level of the school, a non-certified staff member, parent representatives, and a community representative. The committee members are then responsible for training all other staff in the schools.

Five items comprised this construct: 1) School personnel know how to correctly identify bullying incidents; 2) School personnel can decipher between bullying and other behaviors such as fighting and disagreements; 3) School personnel know the different types of bullying; 4) School personnel can effectively address incidents of bullying; and 5) School personnel are able to effectively investigate reports of bullying. These items are all related to the OBPP framework. In the two-day training, committee members are taught the definition of bullying and how to distinguish bullying from other acts (Hazeldon Foundation, 2016). Within the OBPP manual (Olweus & Limber, 2007), there are sections included on what bullying is, the different forms of bullying, and special attention is paid to deciphering bullying between fighting and other acts. Although OBPP sought to prevent bullying, it also taught committee members to address and investigate bullying (Hazeldon Foundation, 2016). A specific process for dealing and intervening with bullying is laid out in the manual (Olweus & Limber, 2007). This process also includes effective ways to investigate bullying reports when they come up. The questions found on this construct all relate to identifying bullying, distinguishing bullying from other acts, addressing bullying, and reporting bullying which all are aligned to the Olweus curriculum (2007).

Legal and employment consequences was assessed through five survey items.

This construct was defined by the extent school personnel report bullying behavior because they fear not reporting could result in them losing their job and/or because it may result in a lawsuit. The OBPP (Olweus & Limber, 2007) does not specifically address legal and employment fears staff may have. It is mentioned within the manual that bullying can result in lawsuits and therefore, schools need to be aware that some acts are illegal. The development of this construct was more difficult in that, there is no research to draw upon as guidance. Selected items addressing this construct include: 1) School personnel are afraid of a lawsuit for not reporting bullying; and, 2) School personnel are afraid of losing their jobs for not reporting bullying.

Data Collection

Surveys were administered to assess school personnel's perceptions of bullying. The survey was created and distributed in Qualtrics®, a platform used for creating and conducting online surveys. After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval, the survey was electronically disseminated by emailing a link to school administrators. Both school administrators were contacted via email to explain the study in greater detail before they disseminated the survey to their school personnel.

Participants received access to the survey via email from their school administrator. Once participants clicked on the link to the survey, they were provided a disclaimer stating there would be no compensation for participation. Participants were informed their participation was voluntary, anonymous, and that they could withdraw from completing the survey at any time. Participation was taken as consent.

Data Analysis

The instrument results were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 program. The data was exported from Qualtrics into SPSS. For each Likert-type question, a percentage of some form of agreement and disagreement was calculated. Due to the sample size, the construct items were placed into two categories: agreement and disagreement. This allowed the researcher to determine the level of support or agreement for each item. Some form of agreement was also calculated to compare the levels of agreement based on certified and non-certified status.

Cronbach's alpha was used to determine reliability of the constructs. The construct, *need for school-wide training*, had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88. The construct addressing *legal and employment consequences* had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82. Since both constructs had good internal consistency, with over 80% of the variance explained, all items were retained.

Independent-samples *T*-tests were run to compare the difference in means of certified and non-certified staff according to each construct question. Analysis of variance tests were run to determine whether or not there was support/evidence for the constructs based on the selected demographic groups of role, setting, experience, whether or not participants were bullied as K-12 students, and whether or not participants bullied as K-12 students.

Results

Responses from 129 participants were analyzed for this study. All participants acknowledged they work in K-12 education. In addition to being K-12 school personnel,

the majority of respondents were also parents (n=91), worked in an elementary school setting (n=69), and worked full-time (n=125). The majority of respondents were certified staff, specifically teachers, which included special education teachers (n=75). Certified staff such as administrators, counselors, school psychologists, and/or therapists were 23 of the respondents. There were 98 certified staff in total. Thirty-one respondents were non-certified staff, such as bus drivers, paraprofessionals, and food service workers.

Demographic information is contained within Table 1.

Table 1. Participant demographic information for those completing the survey (n=129)

Demographic Information	<i>n</i> = count	Percent
Work Environment		
I work in the K-12 education field	129	100.0
I do not work in the K-12 education field	0	0.0
Role		
I work as a certified staff member	98	76.0
I work as a non-certified staff member	31	24.0
Experience		
I have 1-2 years of experience in education	9	7.0
I have 3-5 years of experience in education	17	13.2
I have 6-12 years of experience in education	34	26.4
I have 13-20 years of experience in education	32	24.8
I have 21-27 years of experience in education	19	14.7
I have 28+ years of experience in education	13	10.1
Missing	5	3.9
Setting		
I work mostly in an elementary setting	69	53.5

I work mostly in a middle school setting	26	20.2
I work mostly in a high school setting	20	15.5
I work equally across all settings	12	9.3
Missing	2	1.6
Past experience with bullying		
I was regularly bullied when I was a K-12 student	12	9.3
I was sometimes bullied when I was a K-12 student	49	38.0
I was rarely bullied when I was a K-12 student	65	50.4
Missing	3	2.3
I regularly bullied others when I was a K-12 student	0	0.0
I sometimes bullied others when I was a K-12 student	15	11.6
I rarely bullied others when I was a K-12 student	114	88.4
Missing	0	0.0

Participants indicated some form of agreement for 10 questions related to the constructs of *need for training*, and for *legal and employment consequences*. In regards to *need for school-wide training*, participants indicated agreement with all of the items ranging from 58.9% to 69.8% agreement. The item with the highest level of agreement, 69.8%, was school personnel can decipher between bullying and other behaviors such as fights or disagreements. Respondents agreed with the item, school personnel know the different types of bullying, at 63.6%. The other three items received agreement percentages slightly below 60%. Disagreement levels ranged from 30.2% to 41.1%. Table 1 lists the survey items that addressed the constructs of *need for school-wide training*.

Table 1 also lists the survey items relating to *legal and employment consequences*. Some form of agreement for items relating to this construct ranged from 41.9% agreement to 62.8% agreement. The majority of participants disagreed (57.4%) with the item addressing employment consequences, but agreed with items relating more with legal consequences. Respondents agreed that zero-tolerance policies increase bullying reporting at 62.8%. This was the highest agreed upon item found on this construct. Participants agreed with the item, school personnel are afraid of being held liable for not reporting bullying incidents at 59.7%. The items relating to lawsuits and being sued over bullying incidents each had around 55% agreement. Disagreement levels ranged from 36.4% to 57.4%.

Table 1. Percent of agreement, disagreement, and missing for each item in the constructs

	% Some Form of Agreement (Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree)	% Some Form of Disagreement (Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)	% Missing
Need for School-Wide Training			
School personnel know how to correctly identify bullying incidents	58.9	41.1	0.0
School personnel can decipher between bullying and other behaviors such as fights or disagreements	69.8	30.2	0.0
School personnel know the different types of bullying	63.6	36.4	0.0
School personnel can effectively address incidents involving bullying.	58.9	40.3	0.8
School personnel are able to effectively investigate reports of bullying.	59.7	40.3	0.0
Legal and Employment Consequences			
School personnel are afraid of a lawsuit for not reporting bullying.	55.8	42.6	1.6
School personnel are afraid of losing their jobs for not reporting bullying.	41.9	57.4	0.8
School personnel are afraid of being held liable for not reporting bullying incidents.	59.7	38.8	1.6
Zero tolerance policies increase bullying reporting by school personnel.	62.8	36.4	0.8
School personnel are afraid of being sued over bullying incidents.	55.0	43.4	1.6

Figure 1: Percent of agreement for items on need for school-wide training construct

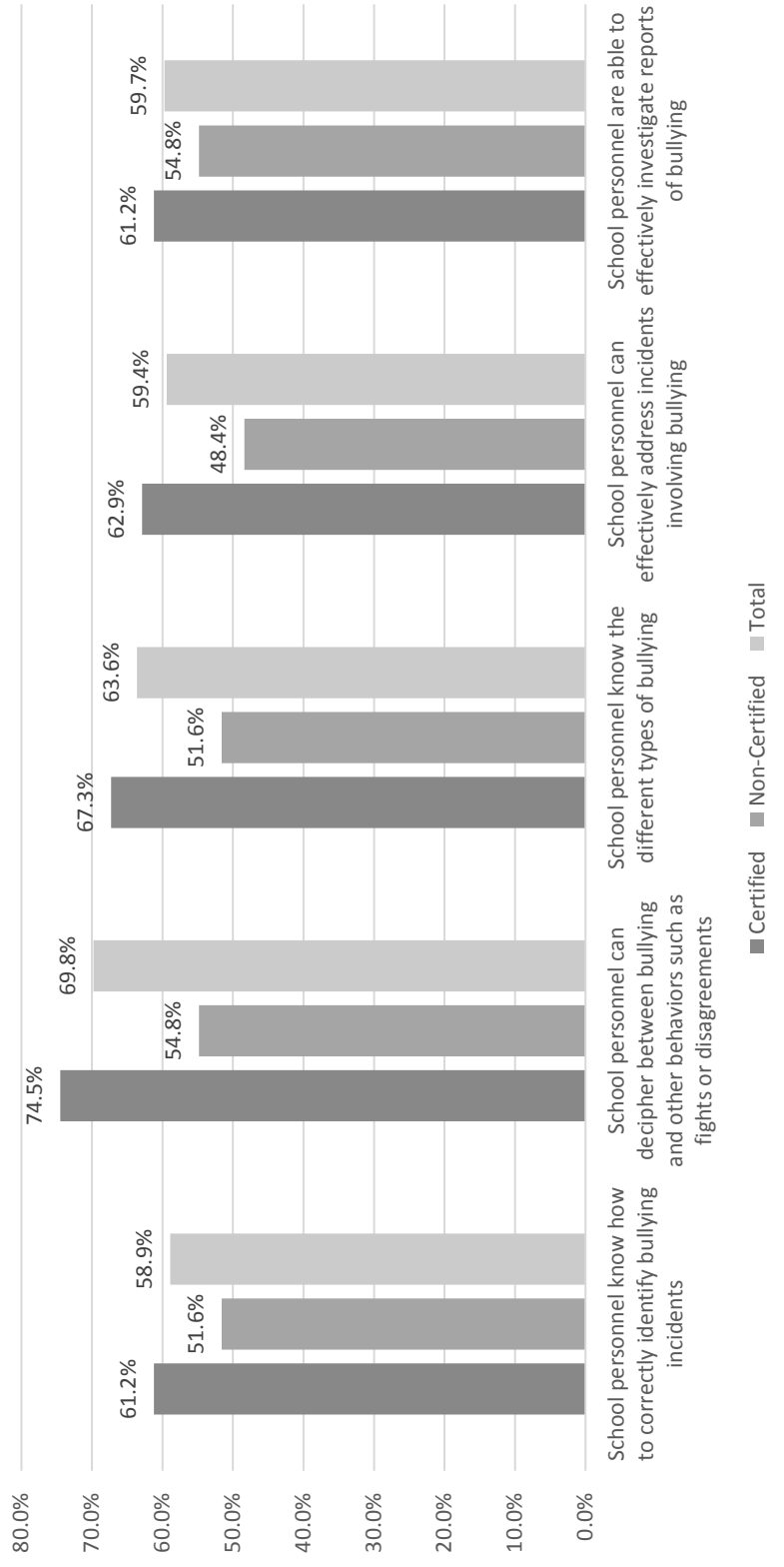
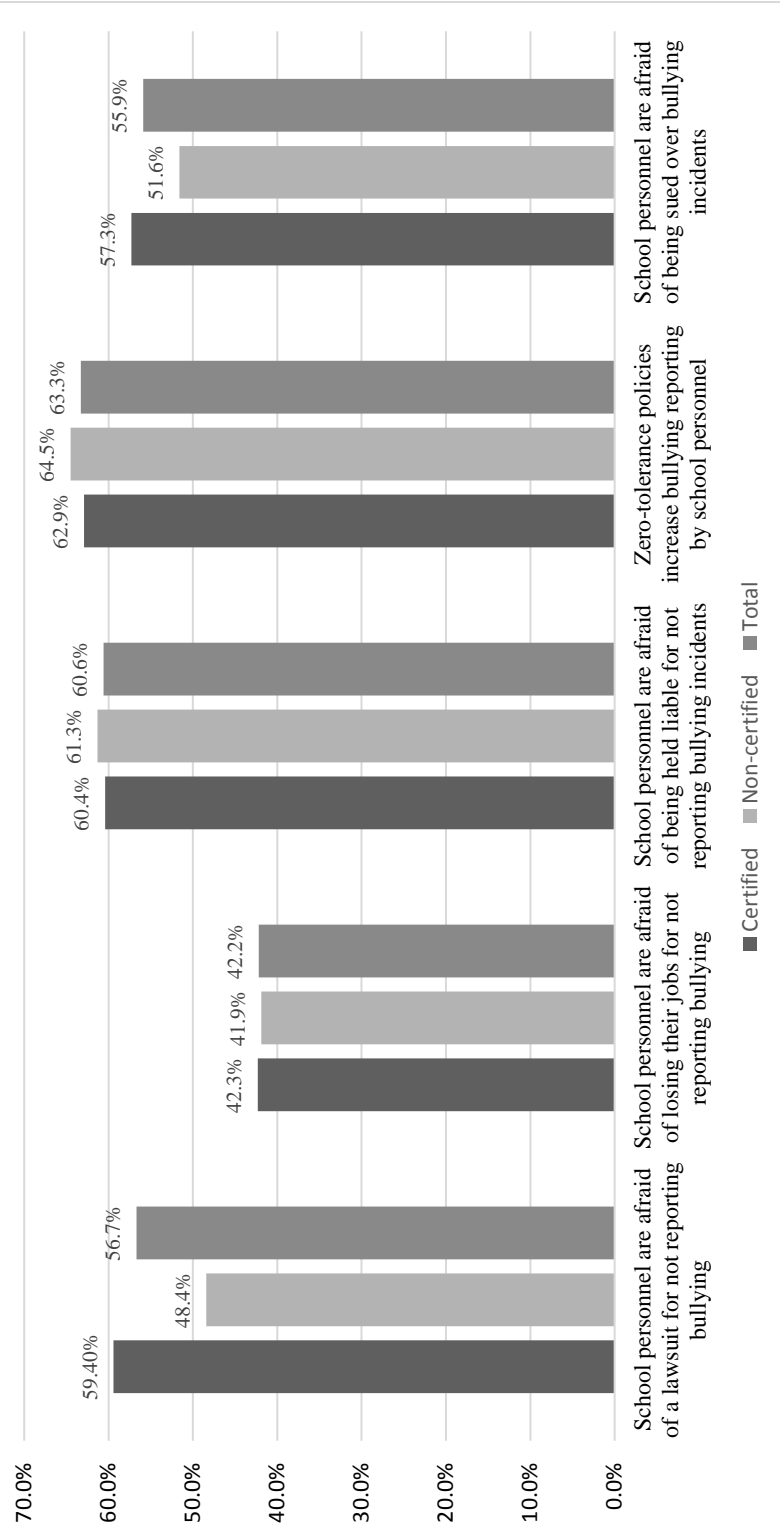


Figure 2: Percent of agreement for items on legal and employment consequences construct



Variation among certified and non-certified staff levels of agreement and disagreement for each *need for training* construct question were also explored. The first question, school personnel know how to correctly identify bullying incidents, had a total agreement of 58.9%. Certified staff had more agreement than non-certified staff with 61.2% as compared to 51.6%, respectively. This difference was not statistically different, however. On the next item, school personnel can decipher between bullying and other behaviors such as fights or disagreements, total agreement was 69.8%. Certified staff expressed higher agreement for this item at 74.5% as compared to non-certified staff at 54.8%. Again, there was no significant difference between the two groups. Respondents agreed with the item school personnel know the different types of bullying with 63.6% agreement. No statistically significant difference was present between the groups. Agreement on this item was again higher for certified staff at 67.3%; non-certified staff had 51.6% agreement. School personnel can effectively address incidents involving bullying had 59.4% total agreement, while certified staff had 62.9% agreement and non-certified staff had 48.4% agreement. Once again, no statistically significant difference. The last item, school personnel are able to effectively investigate reports of bullying, had a total agreement of 59.7%. Certified staff agreed with this item at 61.2% while non-certified staff had 54.8% agreement. No statistically significant difference was found between the two groups. For each item, certified staff expressed more than the total percent of agreement as compared to non-certified staff who expressed a lower agreement level than the total. In addition to examining some form of agreement, an independent-samples t-test was used to explore the differences in the means between certified and

non-certified staff. There were no significant differences found between the means on items among certified and non-certified staff. Figure 1 contains this information.

The levels of agreement for both certified and non-certified staff as related to items on the construct *legal and employment consequences* are found below in Figure 2. Overall, agreement levels on this construct were much similar than on the *need for school-wide training* construct where more variation was found. The first item, school personnel are afraid of a lawsuit for not reporting bullying had a total agreement of 56.7%. Certified staff had a level of agreement of 59.4% for this item while non-certified staff had an agreement percentage of 48.4% so there was some variation here. Level of agreement was similar among staff on the item school personnel are afraid of losing their jobs for not reporting bullying. The total agreement was 42.2% with certified staff having a level of 42.3% and non-certified with 41.9%. School personnel are afraid of being held liable for not reporting bullying incidents had a total agreement of 60.6%. Certified staff had nearly the same level of agreement at 60.4% while non-certified staff had an agreement of 61.3%. The fourth item, zero-tolerance policies increase bullying reporting by school personnel, had non-certified staff showing the highest level of agreement at 64.5%. Certified staff had an agreement level of 62.9%. The total level of agreement was 63.3%. The last item, school personnel are afraid of being sued over bullying incidents, had an overall agreement of 55.9%. Certified staff expressed 57.3% agreement while non-certified staff had 51.6% of agreement. On this construct, non-certified staff had two questions where they expressed more agreement than certified staff whereas on the *need for school-wide training* construct, certified staff always expressed

more agreement. As was the case with the construct of *need for school-wide training*, independent-samples t-tests indicated no statistically significant differences between the two groups.

Examining the construct of *need for school-wide training*, the means indicate relatively neutral responses to these items. The item school personnel know how to correctly identify bullying incidents indicated respondents somewhat agreed/disagreed with this item (Certified M = 3.7; SD = 1.2; Non-Certified M = 3.5; SD = 1.5). On the item, school personnel know how to correctly decipher between bullying and other behaviors such as fights or disagreements, the total mean indicated participants were neutral with this item (Total M = 3.9; SD = 1.1). School personnel know the different types of bullying was rated neutrally (Certified M = 3.9; SD 1.1; Non-Certified M = 3.6; SD = 1.2). School personnel can effectively address incidents involving bullying had a neutral agreement level (Total M = 3.6; SD = 1.2) as did the item school personnel are able to effectively investigate reports of bullying (Total M = 3.7, SD = 1.2).

On the construct, *legal and employment consequences*, responses were again fairly neutral. School personnel are afraid of a lawsuit for not reporting bullying indicated a neutral response (Total M = 3.5; SD = 1.2). School personnel are afraid of losing their jobs for not reporting also indicted a neutral response by both groups (Certified M = 3.3; SD = 1.2; Non-Certified M = 3.1; SD = 1.2). Responses were also neutral for the item school personnel are afraid of being held liable for not reporting bullying incidents (Certified M = 3.7; SD = 1.2; Non-Certified M = 3.5; SD = 1.2). Zero-tolerance policies increase bullying reporting by school personnel fell neutral (Total M =

3.7; SD = 1.2). On the final item, school personnel are afraid of being sued over bullying incidents, the mean again was neutral for both groups (Certified M = 3.7; SD = 1.2; Non-Certified M = 3.3; SD = 1.3). The means and standard deviations for each item can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for construct items

Item	Role	N	M	SD
Need for Training 1	Certified	98	3.7	1.2
	Non-certified	31	3.5	1.5
	Total	129	3.7	1.2
Need for Training 2	Certified	98	4.1	1.1
	Non-Certified	31	3.5	1.3
	Total	129	3.9	1.1
Need for Training 3	Certified	98	3.9	1.1
	Non-certified	31	3.6	1.2
	Total	129	3.8	1.1
Need for Training 4	Certified	97	3.7	1.1
	Non-certified	31	3.3	1.4
	Total	128	3.6	1.2
Need for Training 5	Certified	98	3.7	1.1
	Non-certified	31	3.5	1.4
	Total	129	3.7	1.2
Legal/Employment 1	Certified	96	3.6	1.2
	Non-certified	31	3.4	1.3
	Total	127	3.5	1.2

Legal/Employment 2	Certified	97	3.3	1.2
	Non-certified	31	3.1	1.2
	Total	128	3.3	1.2
Legal/Employment 3	Certified	96	3.7	1.2
	Non-certified	31	3.5	1.2
	Total	127	3.7	1.2
Legal/Employment 4	Certified	97	3.7	1.1
	Non-certified	31	3.6	1.4
	Total	128	3.7	1.2
Legal/Employment 5	Certified	96	3.7	1.2
	Non-certified	31	3.3	1.3
	Total	127	3.6	1.2

Using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests, each construct was compared to several demographic variables to determine if there were significant effects for any of the tested demographic variables on the two constructs. These demographic variables included: school setting, level of school personnel experience, certified versus non-certified status, how much school personnel were bullied when they were in K-12 school, and how often they bullied in K-12 school. There were no statistically significant differences among certified and non-certified staff on items relating to *legal and employment consequences*. In regard to *need for school-wide training*, a statistically significant difference was found between the two groups on the item, school personnel can decipher the difference between bullying and other behaviors such as fighting or

disagreements, $F(1, 127) = 4.4$, $p = 0.04$. The overall lack of significance may, at least in part, be due to the low sample size.

Discussion

Prevalence and the consequences associated with bullying have caused it to become an increasingly important research topic coupled with the fact that bullying is taking new forms, expanding the research base is necessary (Glover et al., 2000; Jose et al., 2012; Kumpulainen et al., 2001). Currently research including all staff in schools is limited, and therefore, it was necessary to expand the research base so that all school personnel have a voice when it comes to bullying perceptions. It is important for all school personnel to be informed of bullying characteristics and to be knowledgeable about how to address it. This study addressed some important research questions on the topic. These included: 1) Do certified and non-certified school personnel have different perceptions of bullying in regard to legal and employment consequences?; and 2) Are there differences in perceptions of training needs among certified and non-certified staff?

Perceptions of Legal and Employment Consequences

In regard to the construct of *legal and employment consequences*, the majority of respondents acknowledged school personnel feared legal consequences of bullying. Perhaps even though the majority of school personnel agreed staff fear lawsuits, some did not feel school personnel have these fears because lawsuits are not common (Brown, 2014). It may also be because 63.3% of respondents felt zero-tolerance policies increased bullying reporting. Respondents may have felt with these policies they have some guidelines for reporting and with a zero-tolerance policy it may make them more aware of the fact they are required to intervene.

Fear of Legal Consequences

According to the study, 56.7% of respondents felt school personnel were afraid of a lawsuit for not reporting. In addition, 60.6% of respondents felt school personnel feared being held liable for not reporting. The majority (55.9%) of staff reported school personnel have a fear of being sued. School personnel fear legal consequences, but some might expect agreement with these items to be higher given we live in a litigious society (Rubin, 2010). This may be because, as stated above, these types of lawsuits have not been common (Brown, 2014). It could also be because bullying is not illegal (HHS, 2018; LaMance, 2018; Ulman, 2018). This may give school personnel some false security. However, even though it is not illegal to bullying, schools are responsible for providing a safe environment where learning can occur (LaMance, 2018; Ulman, 2018). School personnel might need to be informed of this.

When looking at the variations among certified and non-certified staff on questions regarding legal consequences, there was some insignificant variation. Around 48% of non-certified staff indicated school personnel have fears about lawsuits. This was compared to approximately 59% of certified staff. They also reported less agreement with school personnel fearing being sued than did certified staff, although there was less variation on this item. Agreement levels were comparable on the school personnel fear of being held liable for not reporting. Some of this variation might be due to the fact that non-certified staff are often not included in training opportunities (Bradshaw et al., 2013). Therefore, they may be unaware of some of the legal issues surrounding bullying. Non-certified staff are also not in jeopardy of losing their teaching license or credentials which

is a possibility with certified staff (Findlaw.com, n.d.). This might explain why they report somewhat higher levels of fear on two of these items.

Zero-Tolerance Policies Increase Bullying Reporting

Around 63% of school personnel reported they felt bullying policies increase reporting. Non-certified staff had slightly more agreement with this item than did certified staff. Although these policies are intended to address bullying, it is hard for staff to report bullying when they are unsure of some many of the components of bullying. For example, slightly over 40% of school personnel did not agree that bullying can be accurately identified. If we expect zero-tolerance policies to work and to address the need they were designed for, training needs to accompany these policies. School personnel cannot be expected to report every instance of bullying if they cannot identify it or decipher it between other acts.

Fear of Losing Jobs for not Reporting Bullying

Although respondents overall agreed to the legal consequences of bullying, they did not feel school personnel fear losing their job for not reporting bullying. When asked if school personnel were afraid of losing their job over not reporting bullying, only 42.2% of respondents agreed. There really was no variation between certified and non-certified staff which is somewhat shocking. Certified staff often have contracts and perhaps feel somewhat protected from job loss with union backing and malpractice insurance (NEA, n.d.). Non-certified staff however, are much easier to terminate and therefore, it is surprising that they would not fear losing a job more. Perhaps it is because although schools do have responsibility to address bullying (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008;

Willard, 2007), it is not common practice for school personnel to lose their job over it. There have been two media reports of school personnel being suspended based on not intervening in bullying (Dolak, 2012; Hui, 2017). One would speculate if there was more precedence for employment consequences such as losing your job, or even if suspensions were more prevalent, this may be a bigger fear for school personnel. The included respondents worked in public schools and one source indicated it would be easier to hold those working in private schools more accountable which may also contribute to this lack of fear (McLeod Caminiti & Treibman, 2015). In addition, the National Education Association (n.d.) provides malpractice insurance for school personnel and perhaps they also feel protected by this safeguard.

Perceptions of Training Needs

In past studies, school personnel have indicated a need to be further trained on bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Kennedy et al., 2012; Mischna et al., 2005). Results of this study also indicate this need. Since all school personnel need to be trained (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Olweus & Limber, 2007), there is still much work to do in bullying prevention training.

Identifying Incidents of Bullying

Overall, the majority of survey respondents agreed that school personnel understood how to identify bullying. Respondents overall felt school personnel could identify bullying (58.9%) as compared to about half of non-certified staff felt school personnel could. This has huge impacts for student success. With slightly over 40% of respondents feeling school personnel are unable to identify bullying, there is a need for

training whether most school personnel express it or not. This is especially concerning as non-certified staff are often found in supervisory rolls (Bradshaw et al., 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2013; Olweus & Limber, 2007). If only half of these staff feel prepared to identify bullying that often occurs where they are present, bullying will be ignored, missed, or overreported. Bullying can have disastrous effects for both the bullies and the victims (Olweus & Limber, 2007; Stassen-Berger, 2007). Therefore it is important for everyone to be able to identify bullying, so we are not missing students at risk for future problems or unnecessarily labeling students as bullies as that has negative connotations.

Deciphering between Bullying and Other Behaviors

Not only is it important to identify bullying, it is necessary to decipher it from other forms of violence. The majority of respondents, 69.8%, agreed school personnel could decipher bullying from other behaviors which leaves just over 30% of respondents feeling school personnel cannot. When viewing certified staff versus non-certified staff reports of agreement, there is nearly a 20% difference between the two groups. Again with nearly 45% of non-certified staff reporting uncertainties about distinguishing bullying from other behaviors, there is need for training. Non-certified staff are often supervisors (Bradshaw et al., 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2013; Olweus & Limber, 2007). It is vitally important they can understand the difference between bullying and some other act. Sources stress the necessity of being able to figure out if an act is bullying or not (National Education Association, 2015; Olweus & Limber, 2007). When we correctly identify an act as bullying, we can arrive at the right approach for dealing with the behavior. By falsely determining that a child is bullying others, we can label that child as

a bully. This can have negative impacts as bullies find themselves in legal trouble more often and they are also at risk for behaviors such as drinking and smoking (HHS, 2017). If someone concludes a child is being bullied when they are not, the child may not be held responsible for their part of the act.

Identifying Different Types of Bullying

Respondents also concluded school personnel know the different types of bullying with 63.6% agreement. However, only approximately half of non-certified staff felt school personnel could. With several forms of bullying (HHS, 2017; Olweus & Limber, 2007) it is important that school personnel can identify all the different types. Although in Mischna's study (2005) respondents could identify both indirect and direct forms of bullying, they did not do so equally. Overall, physical acts of bullying were often seen as more severe. This has also been the case in other studies as well (Bell & Willis, 2016; Hazler et al., 2001). The ability to recognize all forms of bullying is crucial and around 36% of individuals working in schools do not believe school personnel can do so. In order to effectively address bullying, school personnel have to know and understand all types or bullying will get missed. Non-certified staff have to be included and receive education and training on bullying characteristics and types since around half of them do not know all the types. Physical bullying quite possibly is easier to spot because it can draw more attention to itself. However, indirect acts are just as serious because all bullying can have detrimental impacts on victims (HHS, 2017; Olweus & Limber, 2007; Stassen-Berger, 2007). All forms of bullying need to equally known and addressed.

Effectively Addressing Incidents Involving Bullying

Respondents also indicated school personnel are effective at addressing bullying incidents. Around 60% agreed that school personnel were effective at addressing bullying behavior. However, 48.4% of non-certified staff agreed to this question. Considering only about half of non-certified staff think school personnel can identify, decipher bullying from other acts, and know the different types of bullying it is not surprising that they do not feel those in schools are able to address these acts. Overall, around 40% of all staff do not believe school personnel can address bullying. This leaves much room for training as all personnel need to be able to do so (Olweus & Limber, 2007).

Effectively Investigating Reports of Bullying

Nearly 60% of respondents agreed school personnel could effectively investigate bullying behavior. That leaves nearly 40% of staff feeling school personnel are ineffective with these skills. Interestingly, around 55% of non-certified staff indicated effectiveness of investigating bullying reports which is one of the highest agreement levels on this construct. It is surprising that the skills of identifying and understanding the different types of bullying have lower agreement levels because those skills are very important and necessary for investigating. If schools are to effectively address bullying behavior, and are expected to do so, then training is needed on how to handle reports of bullying. All school personnel need to be able to do this.

Conclusions

Differences amongst certified and non-certified staff were observed when addressing legal and employment consequences. Zero-tolerance policies were viewed to increase reporting of bullying. Certified and non-certified staff reported similar levels of agreement. Overall school personnel agreed with items discussing legal consequences. However, addressing employment consequences, overall staff disagreed. Similar levels of disagreement were present among certified and non-certified staff indicating school personnel did not fear of losing their job over failure to addressing bullying incidents.

Overall, there was a majority of agreement that school personnel are able to identify bullying, determine bullying from other acts, know the different forms of bullying, and can effectively investigate and address bullying. That being said, 30 – 40% of respondents disagreed with items, with non-certified staff reporting overall lower agreement. This supports that much still needs to be done in the area of training. All school personnel need to be included in and trained on antibullying efforts. The findings from this study support others where need for training was expressed even though it does not directly come from school personnel perceptions (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Kennedy et al, 2012; Mischna et al., 2005).

Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are several limitations for the study which indicate further research opportunities. This study aimed to include a population that included not only teachers, however, it was not ensured that the sample included all school staff that are present in schools who may witness bullying. In order to completely address this problem, all

school staff need to be aware of this problem. Further studies should be aimed at specifically getting the perceptions of all types of stakeholders in education. Another possibility for future research would be a large-scale study that examined non-certified staff as different groups to determine differences in perceptions among them. It is likely that bus drivers would have different perceptions from paraprofessionals as they work in different settings. This would be well worth exploring. Exploring these research questions through interviews or open-ended survey questions would also be an important future research direction so more detail and explanation could be gained on the topic.

Another limitation in this study was the content of the survey. This survey only looked at a few of the characteristics of bullying. Many more studies are needed to fully explore all aspects of bullying. Future research should be aimed at not only replicating results from this study, but to also expand and explore variations among school personnel in other areas of bullying.

The utility of the survey tool was also not fully explored. Due to the low level of respondents, complete conclusions cannot be drawn regarding its usefulness. It should be used with more respondents to determine its reliability as it has the potential to be very informative at looking at perceptions of bullying. Future research with the use of this tool may illicit some results that are comparable to the non-certified and certified staff differences observed in other studies.

In conclusion, while bullying has become an increasingly popular topic, there is still much more research to be done in order to effectively address this problem. Glover et al. (2000) indicated that 75% of students are bullied at least once and 7% of students

are chronically bullied. Later research (Cosma & Hancock, n.d.) reported as many as 10-14% of students are chronically bullied. Since chronic bully has serious consequences this problem needs to be addressed in order to protect students from harm and well as to provide them with an appropriate education (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008; HHS, 2017; Olweus & Limber, 2007).

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Article 3: Practical Implications

Overview of Journal

- Title: *Educational Leadership*
- Rationale for Selection: This journal was chosen based on the utility of the results for education leaders. This journal was chosen because of an upcoming theme, Making School a Safe Place. The implications from my study directly related to this theme.
- Scope: The aim for this journal is to provide leaders in all levels of the education, practical advice on education-related topics.
- Quality: Publication decisions are made by editorial staff.
- Author Guidelines:
<http://www.ascd.org/Publications/Educational-Leadership/Write-for-Educational-Leadership/Write-for-Educational-Leadership.aspx>

Addressing Bullying in Schools for all Personnel (working title)

Introduction

Prevalence has caused bullying to become an increasingly popular topic for schools. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS; 2014) reported that one in three students have acknowledged being bullied. In addition to prevalence, bullying has been an important consideration due to complications that can occur. Consequences of bullying have included depression and suicide for both victims and bullies (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Marttunen, Rimpelä, & Rantanen, 1999; Olweus & Limber, 2007). Stassen-Berger (2007) also included school shootings as a consequence

of bullying. Bullies often are at greater risk for underage drinking and smoking as well as for criminal offenses such as shoplifting and vandalizing (Olweus & Limber, 2007).

In a study conducted by Morlock (2019), staff perceptions were explored in regard to bullying. Specifically, the perceptions of certified and non-certified as related to legal and employment consequences and the need for training were addressed. As related to legal and employment consequences, school personnel agreed legal consequences. Overall agreement levels (both certified and noncertified) for *school personnel are afraid of a lawsuit for not reporting bullying*, and for *school personnel are afraid of being sued over bullying incidents*, were similar. When addressing legal consequences, there was slightly higher overall agreement that *school personnel are afraid of being held liable for not reporting bullying incidents*. There were not many significant differences amongst certified and non-certified staff on these items. Virtually no difference, was found when discussing liability. More variation was found with fear of being sued, but the most variation was observed when focusing of fear of lawsuits.

This study also addressed zero-tolerance policies and job loss. There was not much variation among staff in regard to *zero-tolerance policies increase bullying reporting by school personnel*. Non-certified staff indicated slightly more agreement than certified staff did. In regard to employment consequences, school personnel reported overall disagreement with *school personnel are afraid of losing their job for not reporting bullying*, with certified staff and non-certified staff expressing nearly the same level of agreement.

School personnels' perceptions as related to the need for school-wide training was also explored by Morlock (2019). Variations between certified and non-certified staff on perceptions of need for school-wide training was often more present, and overall certified staff presented higher levels of agreement on all items. The first area explored was *school personnel know how to correctly identify bullying incidents*. The biggest variation was observed, with a significant difference between the two groups, found using a one-way analysis of variance when looking at *school personnel can decipher between bullying and other behaviors such as fights or disagreements*. It also had the highest level of agreement overall. Lastly, bullying knowledge school personnel have was assessed by asking if *school personnel know the different types of bullying*. Agreement levels were higher for certified staff.

The last two pieces of the study focused on the ability to address and investigate bullying. The overall rates of agreement for these were similar. Non-certified staff had a level of disagreement for *school personnel can effectively address incidents involving bullying* while certified staff had a level of agreement. When looking at *school personnel are able to effectively investigate reports of bullying*, certified staff had an agreement level higher than that of non-certified staff

Concern over Legal and Employment Consequences

Most acknowledge the seriousness and the detrimental impact bullying can have on students as well as the need to make schools a safe place for all children to learn. Over the years, there has been an increase in anti-bullying efforts and reforms (Gumbrecht, 2013). Currently, there is no federal law that prohibits bullying (HHS, n.d.).

However, depending on the situation, bullying behavior has been subject to criminal and civil consequences such as harassment charges, defamation charges, and intentional infliction of emotional distress (Glover, 2012). Schools are required by law to address behavior that is severe, ongoing, and widespread; that interferes with another student's education; or behavior that violates civil rights (HHS, n.d.). Because schools have a due diligence to address bullying, they may be held responsible if an incident is ignored (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008; Willard, 2007). Therefore, schools have adopted policies for bullying (Gumbrecht, 2013). Bickmore (2011) concluded that more focus should be placed on preventative practices of building relationships rather than on controlling behavior through anti-bullying policies. However, current bullying prevention efforts often focus on reporting rather than prevention and intervention, however (National Education Association, 2012).

Despite there being no federal law regarding bullying, lawsuits related to bullying may be brought against staff, the school or the school district (HHS, 2018; LaMance, 2018; Ullman, 2018). Failure to address bullying behavior can be problematic as students need to be provided a safe, adequate environment for learning (LaMance, 2018; Ullman, 2018). In addition, some bullying behaviors are considered criminal acts such as theft or assault (LaMance, 2018). They may also be considered harassment (HHS, 2018). All of which need to be addressed.

With these policies may come some guidelines for reporting which may cause school personnel to feel protected as long as their behavior is in accordance with the policy. Zero-tolerance policies also might make school personnel more aware they are

required to address bullying behavior as part of their job. Educational leaders need to ensure that their school staff understand these policies and what is expected of them. If school personnel do not know the policies, and are not sure how to handle bullying incidents, bullying will be over reported by some because they over compensate. It will also be underreported in some instances as some will avoid addressing the policy because they are unsure. If districts and schools wish to protect themselves regarding bullying lawsuits, education on these policies have to take place.

When considering employment consequences, although there really is no precedence for it, teachers could potentially lose their job if bullying can be connected to reasons deemed appropriate for job dismissal such as neglect of duty or refusal to perform duties (Findlaw.com, n.d.). That being said, precedence for losing your job over failing to report bullying has not been set. There have been a few instances of suspensions related to failing to report bullying (Dolak, 2012; Hui, 2017). Educational leaders should help school personnel understand potential employment consequences. This is probably especially true with non-certified staff who are easier to terminate. If school personnel are expected to report bullying and to do so in accordance with policies put in place, training needs to take place so everyone is consistent on filling out the paperwork. Protecting yourself against failing to perform a duty or neglect of duty is difficult when there is no guidance on how one is supposed to do that.

With non-certified staff employed without a teaching contract, they are often much easier to terminate. Yet non-certified staff did not fear loss of a job differently than certified staff did. This may go back to precedence of losing your job over failing to

report bullying. If lawsuits and job loss continue to be heard in the media, these fears might go up. With the likelihood of continued bullying lawsuits and employment consequences, educational leaders have to start thinking about protecting themselves, their students, and their school personnel against these possibilities. It might be helpful to use training time to bring in a lawyer or a member of law enforcement to explain how individuals can protect themselves as well as to clear up reporting measures.

Effectively Addressing Legal and Employment Consequences

Based on the above information, it is recommended that school leaders provide their staff with information and training on how to avoid legal and employment consequences. One effective way is to discuss student discipline. According to Ellena, a principal and board director (2014), is to have discussions about discipline every year. This would include how to handle bullying. While handling these conversations, Ellena (2014) recommended bringing in a lawyer to discuss legalities and to provide assistance with procedures. Lawyers can help make discipline procedures sounder. This can alleviate fears for school personnel, and also can mitigate some of the consequences in the event of a lawsuit. By talking with a lawyer, school personnel may get a clearer picture of what they can do to protect their employment. It is best to prevent these issues and to be proactive, then it is to be reactive or forced to examine things because issues have happened.

Another source also recommends the use of lawyers to guide school leaders with decisions (Junge & Krvaric, 2014). By seeking advice from a lawyer on potentially litigious issues, educational leaders can help protect themselves and their staff.

Educational leaders may have received law courses while obtaining their certification or degree, however, these change. Professional development opportunities also do not always keep leaders up to date on changes. Consultation with a lawyer is a good way to keep informed and to protect everyone.

Litigation can also arise from zero-tolerance policies. Ellena (2014) indicated zero-tolerance policies are often subject to litigation due to poor decisions on the part of school personnel. This also demonstrates the importance of involving outside experts, like lawyers and law enforcement, to help tighten up policies as well as to explain and to educate school personnel on how to protect themselves against issues. Consequences surrounding bullying acts can be prevented or lessened by educating school personnel on the issues surrounding it.

Need for School-Wide Training

Children typically have reported bullying to parents and teachers (HHS, n.d.). Therefore, it is absolutely imperative that school personnel are able to effectively intervene when bullying happens. The National Education Association (2015) discussed the importance of being able to distinguish bullying from other forms of violence and stressed the need to not use bullying to describe other forms of conflict. Another such training was the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) written by Olweus and Limber (2007). The OBPP contained a section in the teacher's guide that conversed what bullying is, including a discussion of the components of bullying as well as a description on the types of bullying and how to determine the difference between bullying and normal play. Fighting, an unprecedented event with no power imbalance, was also

discussed and how it differed from bullying. Other sources found support for adult involvement in bullying prevention efforts, but also recognized the need for training for programs to be effective (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012; Yoon & Bauman, 2014). When school personnel are not properly trained, they may struggle to report all instances of bullying leading to poor identification of those at risk for mental health problems (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; Olweus & Limber, 2007). In addition, school personnel could label students as bullies who are not, thus causing potential emotional, social, and legal problems for that student (Dweck, 2006). School leaders need to consider training opportunities for staff. Even if an intensive training opportunity is not feasible, leaders should consider other less expensive ways to educate their staff on what bullying is, and how to determine if it is bullying or another behavior. In order to make schools a safer place, education leaders need to start bringing some of this professional development to the forefront.

Another consideration for schools was the need for all school personnel to be trained. Non-certified staff make up a large portion of school staff and are often found in supervisory roles where bullying occurs (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, Gulemetova, & Henderson, 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2013). It is imperative they are also included on anti-bullying efforts. One study surveyed both teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) such as paraprofessionals, custodial staff, and bus drivers (Bradshaw et al., 2013). ESP's were less likely to see bullying as a problem, were less comfortable intervening when bullying did happen, and reported a greater need for training than teachers did. If non-certified staff believe students are always accurate in

their reporting of bullying, for example, they may inadvertently label a student as a bully or regard a different student as a “victim” rather than both as students in need of social skills to address conflict. If they feel students claim to be victims too much, they may miss identifying actual bullying behavior.

Both teachers and other school personnel have expressed a need for further training (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Kennedy et al., 2012; Mischna et al., 2005). If anti-bullying efforts are going to be effective, all school personnel need to understand what bullying is and to be able to identify that versus other forms of conflict. School personnel need to have better training in order to determine the differences between bullying and typical childhood behavior, and between bullying behavior and those inappropriate instances that do not meet bullying criteria. In an effort to combat this ongoing problem, education leaders need to provide this training to their staff. In the over 10 years I have worked in education, I have not received any training on bullying, nor have I been told about how to identify it or how to distinguish it from other behaviors.

Not only is it important for all school personnel to be trained, it is equally important for students to receive training. Students may have an increased sensitivity to natural conflict, and overreact to accidental physical occurrences. Students also misread social situations. For example, while playing football a child accidentally runs into someone and the other student considers this purposeful. In order for school personnel to intervene correctly, the students need to understand what bullying is if they are going to accurately report it to teachers and other school personnel. The New York City Department of Education (2017) created a document for their students laying out the differences between bullying and different forms of conflict. Within this document, some

situations were provided to show that some conflict is just a difference of opinion and a natural encounter we experience in life. It further goes on to explain what bullying behavior is and gives some examples of those types of behaviors. A lack of understanding is something that can be prevented by training students on anti-bullying programs. One such program, OBPP (Olweus & Limber, 2007), taught students how their actions can make others feel bad. It discussed how nicknames and jokes may not be funny to the person they are about. This indicated students do not necessarily understand bullying and they need to be taught explicit skills in order to combat this problem.

In addition, in my experience working in education, many students have claimed another classmate or peer is a bully without really understanding what a bully is.

Although any form of violence should not be tolerated, not every incidence is bullying (American Educational Research Association, 2013). Children say mean things all the time and do mean things to others but without the components of power differential, intention, and repeated behavior, this behavior should not be labeled as bullying. This could create a stigma for the student labeled as a bully, and mental health issues could arise from it. If school personnel feel that students do not know what bullying is, or are not reporting things correctly, they may choose to ignore this behavior. If students do not feel they are being supported when they report, they may stop telling school personnel. This further demonstrates why it is important to train everyone where anti-bullying efforts are concerned.

It is concerning that around half of school staff appeared to be unable to identify bullying (Morlock, 2019). In addition, non-certified staff are often supervisors (Olweus

& Limber, 2007). Given the impacts bullying has on student academic success as well as mental health (HHS, 2018; Olweus & Limber, 2007; Stassen-Berger, 2007) training needs to take place, and needs to be provided for all school personnel. All school personnel need to be able to identify bullying incidents that happen. However, we cannot expect them to be able to do so without training. School leaders should focus here. Training should start with explanation on what bullying is. There are so many misconceptions around it by adults and children. Time needs to be devoted to really discussing with staff the three components of bullying and what each of them looks like. Then, conversations can take place with students about these features. It would also be helpful to send home literature to parents so they can reinforce this definition to their children. If everyone works together, hopefully a clearer picture can be illuminated.

Another implication for training would be addressing how bullying differs from other aggressive behaviors. There have been some issues distinguishing bullying from other behaviors among non-certified staff (Morlock, 2019). As stated before, non-certified staff often find themselves in supervisory roles (Bradshaw et al., 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2013; Olweus & Limber, 2007). It is vitally important they can understand the difference between bullying and some other act. School personnel need to be able to determine if bullying is occurring or if another behavior act is. If they do not know how to determine this, the approach used may be wrong or may not be as effective. The necessity of being able to determine if an act is bullying or not is addressed by some sources because we need to handle things in the most effective way possible (National Education Association, 2015; Olweus & Limber, 2007). If we do not arrive at the right

conclusion, we may mislabel kids or not be as effective of an intervener. School leaders should again approach handling deciphering bullying the same as defining it; the two are directly related. They should discuss clearly what bullying is and what it is not. Using non-examples such as fighting and disagreements will clear up what bullying is. Students will probably relate to some of these examples and conversations surrounding them can help stop some of the over reporting.

There are many forms of bullying (HHS, 2017; Olweus & Limber, 2007) and therefore in order to be able to identify and address them, school personnel need to be educated on each one. Other research has concluded that school personnel struggle with the different types of bullying. In a study by Mischna et al. (2005), respondents could identify both indirect and direct forms of bullying. However, physical acts of bullying were often seen as more severe. In order to fully combat bullying school personnel need to know and understand all types of bullying. Although it needs to be ascertained that all staff know the different types, non-certified staff especially need to be included as around more of them did not appear to know the types (Morlock, 2019). This too fits with the above recommendations. When defining bullying, it is fitting to discuss the different types. Providing students examples of what might be considered bullying for each type is also necessary. When instances of behavior occur with students, educational leaders should talk with them about why or why not something is bullying and use it in the context of the different types.

Not only is background information necessary for training, all school personnel also need to know how to address bullying when it does occur (Olweus & Limber, 2007).

According to Olweus and Limber (2007), there are several steps staff should take for addressing bullying. Some of which included obviously to stop the act, specifically speak to bullying rules, and provide consistent consequences. All staff need to be trained to effectively perform each of these skills. They all need to be trained to do them the same way in order to ensure consistency. The first step has to involve addressing the characteristics of bullying because if school personnel are not sure if an act is even bullying, they will not be sure on the proper way to intervene.

Not all bullying behavior will occur in front of school personnel. Therefore, school personnel also need to be taught how to investigate accusations of bullying. Olweus and Limber (2007) laid out some guidelines for investigating. Again, these guidelines rely on a solid foundation of bullying characteristics/basics. Training needs to happen for all staff and trainers need to make sure that all school personnel have a good grasp on these foundational skills. In order to investigate effectively, school personnel need to be able to observe behavior, interview other staff, and indirectly ask the student some questions that might illicit more information. It would also be helpful for educational leaders to have law enforcement officers train on bullying investigation. Conversations with school resource officers have made me consider the over reporting of bullying. They often state that the majority of bullying claims are not bullying once it is properly investigated. Bringing school resource officers in to discuss how to determine if something is bullying or not, and how to properly investigate might be worthwhile. School resource officers might be very open to this as it could reduce the amount of false reports that come across their desks.

Effectively Training All School Personnel

Training is a necessary component of education. With so many topics for training, educators need to use the precious allotted time for training effectively. Several sources have laid out some guidelines that make bullying prevention much more effective.

The first consideration is the need for all staff to be trained. As explored earlier in the article, not only certified staff are supervising children. In fact, a lot of supervision has relied on non-certified staff (Bradshaw et al., 2011; Olweus & Limber, 2007). If anti-bullying efforts are to be the most successful they can be, all school personnel need to be trained. This includes bus drivers, whom are often forgotten.

The next consideration is a focus on the creation of a safe school haven (HHS, 2018; Olweus & Limber, 2007). Schools are required to provide a safe learning environment for all children (LaMance, 2018; Ullman, 2018) which includes addressing bullying behavior. In order for school staff to do so, they need to be trained not only on bullying characteristics, but also on how to create a positive climate. Olweus & Limber (2007) discussed several ways to create this climate in their anti-bullying training manual. One consideration was the development of a positive relationship with students. Connecting and building rapport with students is huge. Students do better when they feel accepted and understood. Olweus and Limber also discussed the importance of modeling appropriate interactions when school personnel address one another.

Another consideration is deciding on, and implementing consequences consistently when rules are broken. When everyone in the school system uses the same

language and the same rules, students should not be uncertain as to what is expected of them. Rules and limitations should be explicitly discussed and practiced to ensure success.

Lastly, school personnel need to show students they are willing and actively making school a safe learning space. You can do this by modeling appropriate interactions and addressing bullying behavior when it comes up. If students feel like teachers ignore bullying, they will not be vested in their responsibility with anti-bullying efforts. HHS (2018) acknowledged that it is important to respond immediately and consistently to bullying so students start realizing bullying will not be tolerated.

Prevalence and the consequences associated with bullying have caused it to become an increasingly important for all school personnel to be informed of bullying characteristics and to be knowledgeable about how to address it. This means that all non-certified staff are important to be included in anti-bullying efforts. In order to completely address this problem, all school staff need to be aware of this problem, and need to be properly trained. It is also very important that students are involved in anti-bullying efforts so they can accurately identify when bullying is happening to them. Since chronic bullying has serious consequences, this problem needs to be addressed in order to protect students from harm and well as to provide them with an appropriate education (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008).

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CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, REFLECTION

Conclusions

Schools are required to provide a safe space for all children to learn (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008; LaMance, 2018; Ulman, 2018; Willard, 2007). Therefore it is necessary for schools and school districts to address bullying, as bullying can interfere with a student's academic performance and with their mental health no matter their role in the incidents (HHS, 2018; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; Kumpulainen et al., 2001; Olweus & Limber, 2007; Stassen-Berger, 2007).

Although bullying is, and continues to be a well-researched topic, there remains several gaps in the literature. The inclusion of non-certified staff was an important aspect of this study as research including said staff is minimal (Bradshaw et al., 2013; deLara, 2008; Espelage et al., 2014; Gulemetova et al., 2011; Wiliford, 2015). Non-certified staff are an important part of schools. Therefore, it is very important for all school personnel to be informed of bullying and to be taught how to address it.

This study aimed to examine variations among certified and non-certified school personnel as related to several aspects of bullying perceptions including *need for school-wide training* and *legal and employment consequences*. According to the present study, school personnel believed those working in the schools are able to identify bullying, able to determine bullying from other acts, know the different forms of bullying, and can

effectively investigate and address bullying. There was level of agreement with these items. However, slightly less respondents disagreed with items. Even though the majority of school personnel agreed staff can perform these bullying prevention skills, the results still support that much more training still needs to be done. If even only 10% of staff cannot perform these skills, that is too much. This is why the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (2007) trains school personnel to be trainers. That way when new staff come in, they can easily be trained and understand the anti-bullying expectations. The findings from this study support others which expressed a need for further training as well (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Kennedy et al, 2012; Mischna et al., 2005).

There were some variations amongst certified and non-certified staff when addressing legal and employment consequences as well. Zero-tolerance policies were viewed, similarly by certified and non-certified staff, to increase reporting of bullying. This is a good thing, however, if school personnel are not sure what bullying is accuracy with reporting is difficult. School personnel agreed with items discussing legal consequences expressing agreement with fears about being sued, being held liable, or with having a lawsuit brought against them. However, addressing employment consequences, overall staff disagreed. Similar levels of disagreement were present among certified and non-certified staff indicating neither have a strong fear of losing their job over failure to addressing bullying incidents. Without much precedence for lawsuits against school staff individually, and without instances of staff losing their jobs over not reporting bullying, it is not surprising there is not an extremely high level of fear associated with these items.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Certified Staff

Several recommendations can be made for certified staff in regard to training needs and legal/employment consequences. The most obvious is that school districts need to provide anti-bullying training to all their certified staff. Olweus and Limber (2007) recommended that a teacher from each grade level, an administrator, and a representative for specialists like counselors all be a part of the school-wide committee for bullying prevention. However, that is just the committee responsible for training each and every other staff member, so everyone is on the same page. Zero-tolerance policies and anti-bullying policies are not enough to stop bullying. Teachers and other certified staff need to know exactly how to identify and decipher bullying. They also need to know the correct way to address and to investigate bullying. If anti-bullying efforts are to be effective, then all staff need to be on board and have the knowledge and skills to effectively address these things.

Another recommendation would be for certified staff to bring anti-bullying training to their administrator's attention. Although teaching learning time is limited, quite often certified staff are asked for their opinions on professional development training needs. This most likely would not encompass a full training approach like OBPP, but even some speakers to clear up some of the basic bullying characteristics would be a start in the right direction. Related, teachers are responsible for earning continuing education credits. Certified staff could find some courses related to bullying to fill those requirements but to also expand their knowledge on the subject.

The last recommendations are in regard to legal/employment consequences. In order to protect certified staff against these potential consequences, they could check with their union lawyer representative on how to protect themselves, or even better, a presentation could be organized for those in the school district from said lawyer to illustrate potentials surrounding bullying cases. Certified staff often pay a lot of money to be a part of the union and have malpractice insurance through them. Perhaps some of their money could buy them some preventative focus as opposed to reactive.

A school resource officer could likely clear up the differences between bullying and other offenses, and also explain which offenses would need to be reported as they are criminal acts. This could also help certified members feel more comfortable with reporting and it could also free up the resource officers time in regard to bullying investigations. These conversations may also spur some forward movement towards other training opportunities for certified staff.

Recommendations for Non-Certified Staff

As mentioned above with certified staff, non-certified staff need to be afforded the same training opportunities. Too often non-certified staff are left out of training days. This is one area where they particularly should not be overlooked as they do much of the supervision of students (Bradshaw, 2011; Olweus & Limber, 2007). If non-certified staff are expected to supervise students, they really need to be aware of what bullying is and what it is not. Misconceptions that non-certified staff possess need to be cleared up so they can more objectively address bullying. Since non-certified staff are typically left out of training days, they may need to be more convincing with administration to allow them

to come to these days. Since non-certified staff turnover is greater than certified, it appears to be more difficult to convince leaders to invest in training them, or to even pay them if they do wish to come. Another recommendation related to training is to ask that anti-bullying training be a part of training hours paraprofessionals and other non-certified staff need. Even if they are not trained on an anti-bullying program, just having some education on bullying basics would be helpful.

For legal and employment consequences, it would likely be beneficial for non-certified staff to be a part of the conversations with a lawyer or resource officer as explained above. Non-certified staff can be members of NEA, and therefore, the same opportunities should be available to them. The NEA website (www.nea.org, n.d.) also includes information and resources for non-certified staff which they can peruse on bullying in order to better help protect themselves from legal actions and job loss.

Recommendations for Researchers

As with any study, there are limitations with the present research. The purpose of this study was to address aspects of bullying not currently discussed. One limitation was the representativeness of both certified and non-certified staff. Although staff reported being certified, certain categories of certified staff were lumped together in the survey such as one group for counselors, psychologists, and therapists. Even though it is highly unlikely that enough counselors, for instance, could be surveyed, by separating the groups the researcher would know that at least some counselors, psychologists, and/or therapists were represented. This is also the case with non-certified staff.

Paraprofessionals were a separate job role; however, other types of non-certified staff were addressed under one category.

Low response numbers were also a limitation with several consequences. Due to low response numbers, the two groups had to be broader than intended. It was the hope of the researcher that different groups of certified and non-certified staff could be compared. With the low response numbers, accurate conclusions regarding the usefulness of the survey tool are unknown. The tool should be used with more respondents to determine its reliability as it has the potential to be very informative at looking at perceptions of bullying. The constructs of *media influence*, *student awareness and understanding*, and *definition changes*, may be able to be explored with this tool. With higher response numbers, the reliabilities of these constructs could be reassessed. With higher response numbers, potential areas of significance may also come to light.

Based on the results of the current study as well as some of the limitation, there are several areas where further research can be directed. The first of which is to continue research aimed at examining perceptions from all school personnel. More research may need to be done more globally, but more specific studies where different groups of non-certified staff are compared would also be useful. Non-certified staff have vastly different roles. Paraprofessionals observe students on the playground while a bus driver sees behavior in a different setting. These two groups of non-certified staff may have very different perceptions from one another regarding bullying. It is also important to explore differences among certified and non-certified staff through qualitative methods such as interviews, or by including open-ended survey questions.

Another area of further research is to reliably address the other constructs that were not in this dissertation. The constructs looked promising but with the low numbers, agreement levels had to be combined. Once there was only one group for agreement and one group for disagreement, the reliabilities were too long for those constructs to be interpreted. These three constructs address gaps in bullying literature that need to be explored. By using this same tool with more participants, hopefully valuable information can be gleaned from this measure.

Reflection

As a researcher I have learned that I have certain strengths and weaknesses. Some strengths I have include having a wealth of ideas. As someone who works in K-12 education, I know many of areas of public education where research and training need to be focused. However, it can be hard for me to narrow my focus and not try to tackle too much. Another strength I learned I have as a researcher, is that I remembered quite a lot of statistics information after being taught several years ago. After a bit of refreshing, I was able to recall how to run and interpret many of things I learned in classes years ago.

I think in the beginning of the process, especially when designing my survey, I struggled. My former committee members had concerns with my previous survey and at the time I do not think I quite grasped what their issues were. Through finishing this process, I think I can appreciate their guidance more because I understand better how to put together a proper measure. Although this measure is far from perfect, and I even know can think of things I should have done differently, I think it is a far better product from what I started with. If I could go back, I would include a question on the survey

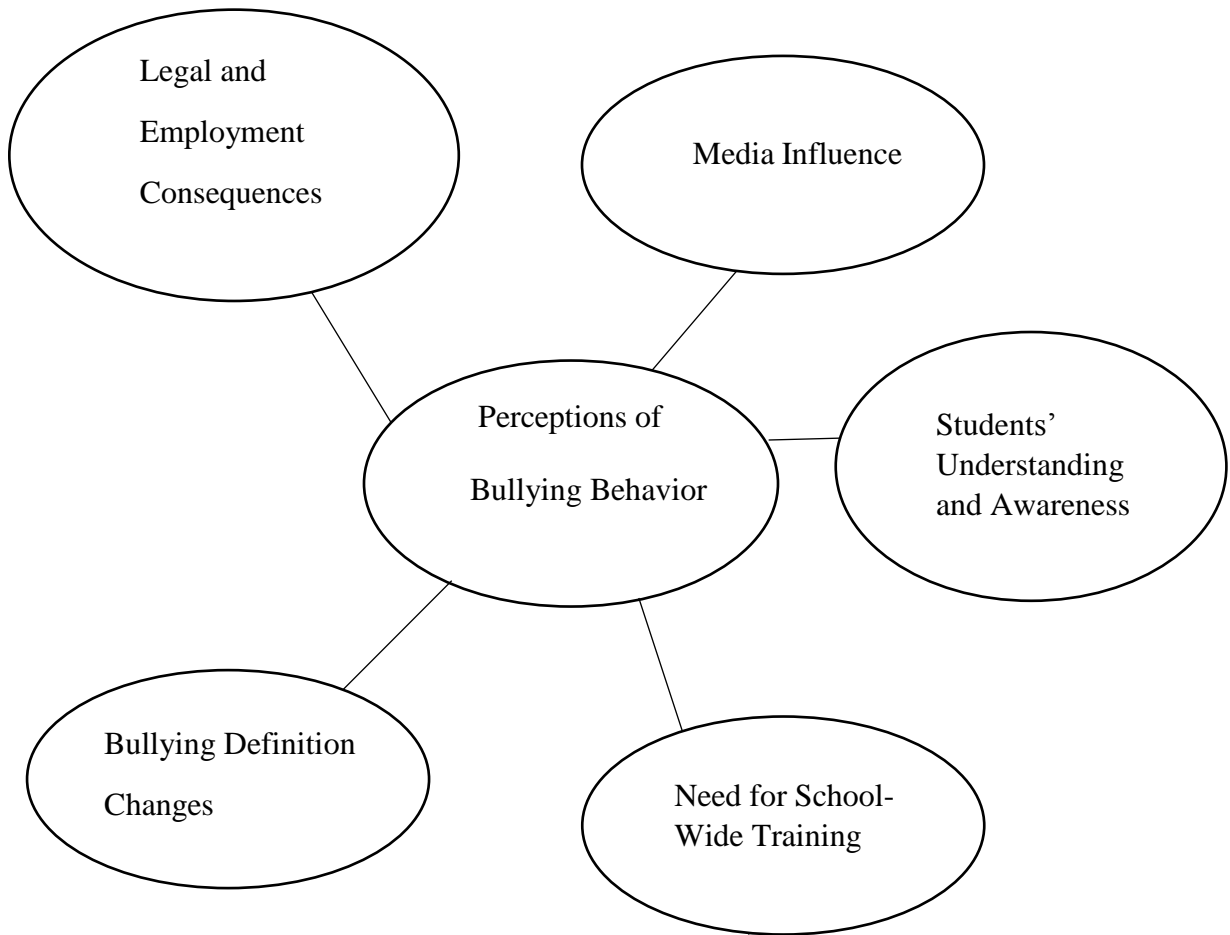
about whether or not the staff member had received anti-bullying training and in what capacity. I cannot believe I did not think to include that question.

Some of my weaknesses include maintaining focus and stamina on my dissertation. Completing this dissertation took much too long. I did not give it much focus for some years because I felt I had other priorities. When I would work on it, I did not have the motivation or drive to finish it. I have worked harder on this project in the last few months than I did in the last few years. That being said, I am not sure the research process is something I want to do much in the future. I joined the Teaching and Learning program with the thoughts of becoming a professor. Given that research is a big part of that, and the fact that I would miss working directly with children, I think I am on the right career path. I do enjoy academia and teaching but perhaps doing it as an adjunct might be more what I am looking for.

As a certified staff member, I learned that so much more training is needed on the topic of bullying. Conversations I have had with the school resource officer where he states that most every bullying case presented is not bullying, also indicate a need for training. That, and the number of comments I hear monthly make me think bullying is over exaggerated, which was the original intent for my study. I know kids, especially younger students, over use the term. They will call each other bullies without any thought. Parents have complained their kids inaccurately report they are being bullied. Even when my nephew was four, he told me he was bullied at daycare. In order to address these issues, a lot of training is needed for all staff and students in schools.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Theoretical Framework



Appendix B

Correspondence Letter

Superintendent
School
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Phone Number

Dear [Superintendent],

My name is Shanna Morlock. I am a school psychologist in North Dakota, and am attending the University of North Dakota, pursuing a doctoral degree in Teaching and Learning. Within the program, I am conducting research of perceptions of factors that influence reports of bullying among school personnel. To assist in this research, I am hopeful you will forward the survey link below to your staff including teachers, administrators, specialists, counselors, social workers, psychologists, therapists, paraprofessionals, lunchroom staff, custodial staff, lunchroom supervisors, playground supervisors, administrative assistants, and transportation personnel.

I would appreciate your assistance and your school personnel's time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email at shanna.morlock@my.und.edu or via phone at 701.391.7908. My doctoral advisor is Dr. Katherine Terras, and she is also available for questions at 701.777.2863 or katherine.terras@und.edu

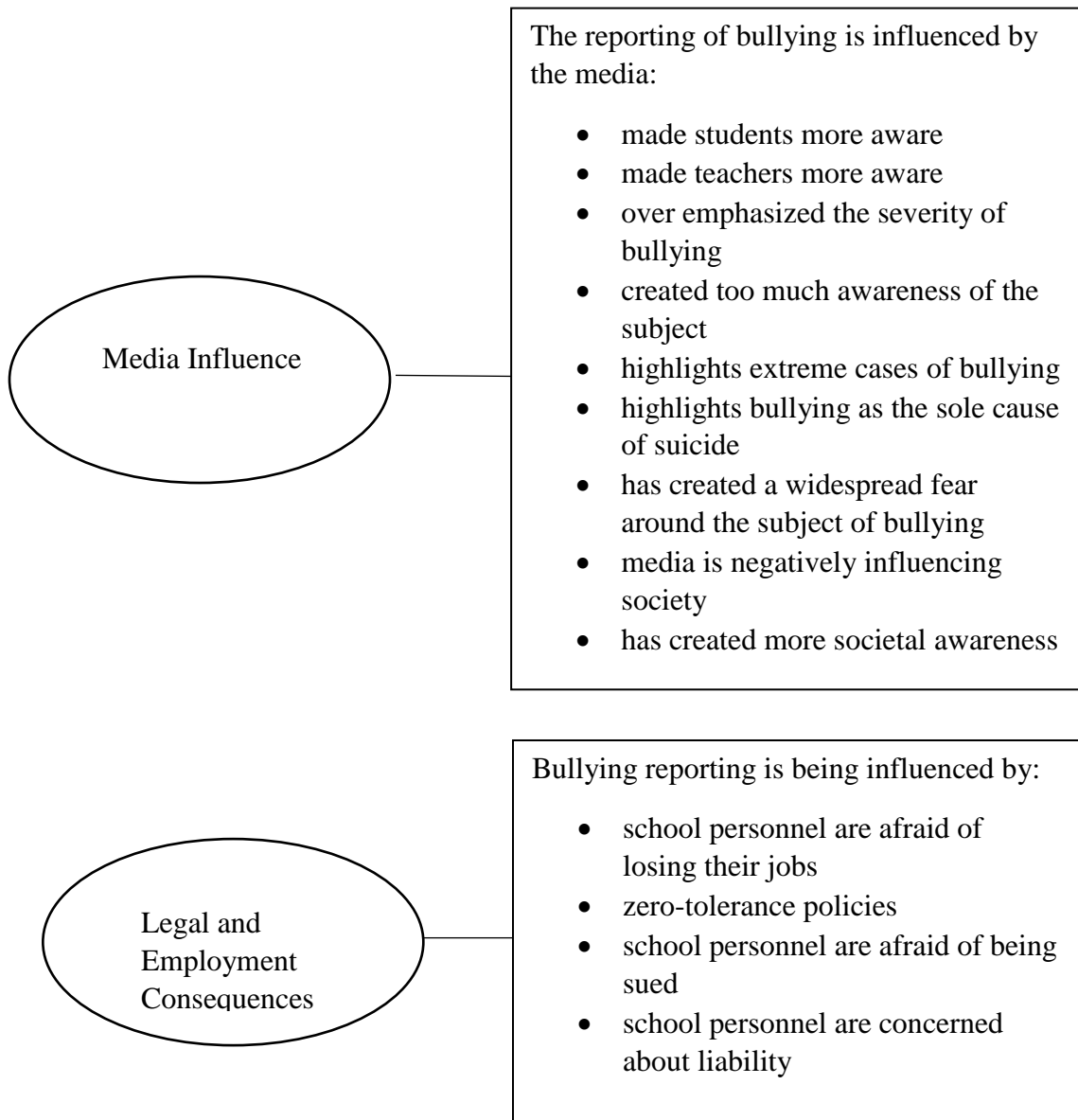
Sincerely,

Shanna Morlock

SURVEY LINK

Appendix C

Survey Alignment with Theoretical Framework



Need for school-wide training

Bullying is being influenced by:

- students not understanding typical behavior
- students not understanding the features of bullying
- students not understanding the different types of bullying
- students misinterpreting social situations
- students over reacting to minor offenses
- are more aware of conflict

Students' understanding/ awareness of bullying

Bullying reporting is being influenced because school personnel:

- lack training in identification
- lack training in deciphering between conflict and bullying
- do not know the different types of bullying
- do not know the definition of bullying
- lack training in how to address incidents
- do not know how to properly investigate

Bullying
definition changes

Bullying reporting is being influenced by:

- more emphasis on considering first-time incidents as bullying
- definition changes over time
- behaviors now being reported as bullying were considered typical in the past
- definition is broader now
- a lack of common definition
- a confusing definition

Appendix D

Instrument

Cover Letter

Thank you for your interest in this doctoral research project. The purpose of this project is to help understand how you, as a school employee, feel about bullying in schools. Approximately 200 respondents are needed for this project. Several demographic questions will be asked first and then survey questions that address media, student's awareness, legality, training needs, and definitions of bullying will follow. The last portion of the survey includes scenarios of bullying.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty to you. Your answers will remain confidential and anonymous, and you can stop the survey at any time. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this survey, and you will not be compensated for your time.

If you would like more information regarding this topic or survey, you may contact Shanna Morlock at shannamorlock@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Q1 I am a parent

- Yes
- No

Q2 Age – text box

Q3 I am (select one):

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

Q4 I am (check all that apply)

- White/Caucasian (1)
- African American (2)
- Black American (3)

American Indian (4)
Mexican American/Chicano (5)
Asian (6)
Pacific Islander (7)
Puerto Rican (8)
Other Latino (9)
Other, please specify [text]

Q5 I work in K-12 Education

- Yes
- No

Q6 I work primarily in

- An elementary school setting (1)
- A middle school setting (2)
- A high school setting (3)
- Equally across all K-12 settings (4)

Q7 I work primarily as

- As a teacher or a special education teacher (1)
- As an administrator (2)
- As a paraprofessional (3)
- As a specialist such as a counselor, speech pathologist, school psychologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, etc. (4)
- In another position such as food service, administrative assistance, custodial, or transportation

Q8 What percentage of time are you employed in a K-12 school setting?

- Less than 25%
- Part-time
- Full-time

Q9 How many years of experience do you have working in schools? – text box

Q10 I supervise students on the playground

- Everyday (1)
- At least weekly (2)
- At least monthly (3)
- Rarely (4)
- Never (5)

Q11 I supervise students in the lunchroom

- Everyday (1)
- At least weekly (2)

- At least monthly (3)
- Rarely (4)
- Never (5)

Q12 I supervise students in the hallway

- Everyday (1)
- At least weekly (2)
- At least monthly (3)
- Rarely (4)
- Never (5)

Q13 As a K-12 student I was bullied

- Not at all (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Regularly (4)
- A lot (5)

Q14 As a K-12 student I bullied others

- Not at all (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Regularly (4)
- A lot (5)

Q15 I feel I am able to manage social media

- Not at all familiar with social media (1)
- Somewhat familiar with social media (2)
- Familiar with social media (3)
- Very Familiar with social media (4)

Media Influence – The perceived influence the media plays in reporting bullying.

Q16 The media presents an accurate picture of bullying in schools today

(1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=slightly disagree, 4=slightly agree, 5=agree, 6=strongly agree)

Q17 The media has increased teacher awareness of bullying

Q18 The media discusses the severity of bullying

Q19 I hear about bullying in the news

Q20 The media often discusses extreme cases of bullying

Q21 The media links bullying as the sole cause of school violence

Q22 The media creates fear about of bullying

Q23 The media has created an exaggerated perception of bullying among the public

Q24 The media influences how society perceives bullying

Need for School-Wide Training – The need for school personnel to be trained on how to identify bullying, how to distinguish bullying behavior from other incidents such as accidents, and how to investigate claims of bullying.

Q25 School personnel know how to correctly identify bullying incidents

Q26 School personnel can decipher between bullying and other behaviors such as fights or disagreements

Q27 School personnel know the different types of bullying

Q28 School personnel can effectively address incidents involving bullying

Q29 School personnel are able to effectively investigate reports of bullying

Student Understanding and Awareness –This is the increased sensitivity to natural conflict (like disagreements), the tendency of youth to misread social situations, and the overreaction to accidental physical occurrences. For example, while playing football a child accidentally runs into someone and the other student considers this purposeful. This construct also addresses whether students understand what bullying is, and the components that are present with bullying.

Q30 Students understand the difference between typical behavior (rough and tumble play) and bullying

Q31 Students do not know the difference between bullying and natural conflict situations such as a disagreement or a mutual fight

Q32 Students understand the different types of bullying such as verbal, physical, or cyber

Q33 Students do not report minor/accidental issues such as someone bumping into them as bullying

Legal and Employment Consequences – The extent to which perceived legal/professional consequences influence school personnel reports of bullying behavior.

Q34 School personnel are afraid of a lawsuit for not reporting bullying.

Q35 School personnel are afraid of losing their jobs for not reporting bullying

Q36 School personnel are afraid of being held liable for not reporting bullying incidents

Q37 Zero tolerance policies increase bullying reporting by school personnel

Q38 School personnel are afraid of being sued over bullying incidents

Bullying Definition Changes – The definition of bullying is different from the past. The definition is now more broad, first-time incidents of conflict can now be viewed as bullying as well as behaviors that were considered typical in the past are now considered bullying.

Q39 The definition of bullying now allows first-time incidents to be considered

Q40 Behaviors now being reported as bullying were considered typical, childhood behaviors in the past

Q41 The definition of bullying has changed over time

Q42 The definition of bullying has become more broad

Q43 There is no common definition of bullying

Q44 I am confused by the definition of bullying

Bullying Scenarios: Please read through these scenarios and based on what you know of bullying, determine if the description is describing bullying or not.

Q45 A fifth-grade student lines up to go outside for recess. While in line, a bigger and stronger fifth-grade boy pushes the student and tells her to move because she is in his way. The girl stands there and does not do anything. The boy pushes her again, harder this time, so she falls over and hurts her arm. At that point a teacher walks over, and the girl reports she got pushed. She also tells the teacher that the other boy does mean things that make her cry all the time such as hitting, kicking, and tripping her. Is this bullying? Yes or No

Q46 A group of female homecoming royalty write about a fellow high school student on social media once a week for a month. They write about how overweight and unattractive she is by saying things like “she looks like a pig” and “needs go on a diet.” As a result, the student is now skipping school and her grades are suffering. Is this bullying? Yes or No

Q47 A third-grade student is out for recess playing football with a group of his peers. The third grader gets bumped into by another student while running on the field. They both continue playing football. Is this bullying? Yes or No

Q48 The sixth graders are playing basketball in gym class. A boy in the class throws a ball at another student and hits him in the stomach. Most of the students in the class start laughing which causes the boy to feel sad. Then, another boy grabs the basketball and throws it at the student. This time it hits him in the back causing him to fall over. The basketball rolls on the gym floor to a girl and she throws it at him next. Whenever the teacher leaves the room, this behavior happens. The boy goes home crying several times a week due to this behavior. Is this bullying? Yes or No

Q49 For a class project, the eighth graders are split into groups of four. As a group, they are using a microscope to identify different parts of a cell and labeling them on a worksheet. After one student finishes looking, she says she found the nucleus and points to her worksheet. A girl in the group says, "Are you sure?" That is not the nucleus." Is this bullying? Yes or No

Q50 You supervise fourth-grade students on the playground. After several days, you notice the same girl is not interacting with any of the other students. You attempt to get her to join another group of girls who are playing volleyball. She refuses and says she likes to play alone. Is this bullying? Yes or No

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