

IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR NON-JAPANESE STUDENTS BULLIED IN JAPAN'S  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this applied study was to solve the problem of bullying for non-Japanese students in an elementary school in Japan and to design strategies, interventions, and training to address the problem. This research study utilized a multimethod approach to investigate the problem of bullying through participant interviews, focus group research, and an online survey in order to identify solutions to the study's problem. Data analysis strategies involved analyzing transcribed participant responses from interviews and focus group research, coding, and interpreting survey participant data. This research project required the researcher to meet, interview, and survey participants in Japan who shared their experience involving the bullying of non-Japanese students in a Japanese elementary school. Based on the responses and data presented in this study, teacher professional development, program guidelines, curriculum resources, and student support strategies were created to address the research problem.

*Keywords:* bullying, *ijime*, *gaijin*, foreigner

### **Dedication**

This research is dedicated to all children and their families who have confronted the issue of school bullying in foreign countries. I pray that this body of work brings encouragement and hope that bullying can be addressed for every student, regardless of race, culture, or nationality.

This study is also dedicated to my family who taught me the meaning of love, strength, and being of service to my people. This is dedicated to my mom, who pushed me to be the man I should be and for my dad who taught me the importance of hard work. This study is for my brother who taught me all things are possible and for my nephew who is the best of us. But, most of all thank you, God, for all that you have given me, for without you I am not me.

### **Acknowledgement**

Thank you, God, for allowing me to continue my education and to be the first in my immediate family to pursue a doctorate. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Gillespie and Dr. Spaulding for their continued encouragement, support, and guidance throughout this dissertation journey. Thank you to retired Navy Seal David Coggins for your YouTube videos that reminded me that on the other side of struggle is greatness. Last, a special thank you is dedicated to all the doctors in my work office. You know who you are, and please know that you are the best!

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT)

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

The purpose of this applied study was to solve the problem of bullying for non-Japanese students in an elementary school in Japan and to formulate a solution to address the problem. The problem is many non-Japanese students are being bullied in elementary schools in Japan. A background section within this chapter provides the historical, social, and theoretical context related to the study's topic. The problem statement and purpose statement follow, detailing the focus of the research. The significance of the study, research questions, and definitions are described in separate sections supporting the study's groundwork. A summary concludes this chapter, discussing the contents of this section and the importance of the research topic.

### Background

Currently, bullying known as *ijime* in Japan is a common occurrence in Japanese schools. Victims of *ijime* have often been influenced to commit socially manipulated acts of self-harm, embarrassment, school dropout, and suicide (Naito & Gielen, 2006). Since 2017, Japan has reported an increasing number of school bullying instances with 414,378 recorded cases and 317,121 occurring in elementary schools (MEXT, 2017). Additional research identified that more than 40% of bullying incidents in Japan's schools involved an entire class bullying a single victim which lasted beyond a week (Mikayo, Takashi, & Simons-Morton, 2005). As a result, *ijime* has become "a problem of epidemic proportions in Japan" (Rios-Ellis, Bellamy, & Shoji, 2000, p. 227).

These concerns of reported bullying involve not only Japanese students but also foreign students who attend schools in Japan. Currently, an influx of foreigners (often referred to as *gaijin*) and their families are choosing to live and work in Japan to support Japan's declining

workforce as a consequence of an aging population (Hennings & Mintz, 2018). As such, many of those families from foreign countries are concerned about Japan's school bullying epidemic and how it has affected and will impact their children's learning experience in Japanese schools (Hilton, Angela-Cole, & Wakita, 2010). To further analyze the consequences of bullying that affect students in Japan and how bullying is perceived within Japanese society, the following historical, social, and theoretical perspectives provide a context of its existence, origin, and influence in Japanese schools.

### **Historical Perspective**

Historically in Japan, school bullying has often been characterized and accepted as a social norm that supported children in developing coping skills needed to conform to Japanese society (Yoneyama, 2015). According to Rios-Ellis et al. (2000), the origins of *ijime* in Japanese schools were “due to the historical roots of collectivism, combined with the rapid industrialization of Japan” (p. 227). After World War II, Japan drastically changed its educational system to teach students the value of collective work and thinking as a means to contribute to Japanese society. As a result, according to Rios-Ellis et al. (2000), Japanese students felt “a great deal of societal stress” (p. 228) and pressure to value the needs of Japanese society above their own. To cope with the external stress and demands of Japanese society, some students responded by bullying other students who appeared physically weaker or different (Woods, 1988). Moreover, collective acts of bullying were often committed by groups of students against one victim as a form of group alliance, cohesiveness, and shared thinking against individuals who were targeted for their differences (Woods, 1988).

As such, conformity, collectivism, and order continue to be valued above individuality within Japanese schools and society. Students who might act, think, look, or talk differently

have been repeated targets of bullying in Japan's schools (Akiba, 2004). This regard for homogenous values remains evident in Japanese school policies which often mandate students to socially conform with “school uniforms, hairstyles, grooming, acceptable places in town for the students to visit, and even the precise routes that students must take on their way home” (Naito & Gielen, 2006, p. 4). Consequently, bullying has been described as a “unique cultural phenomenon” (Yoneyama, 2015, p. 124) because victims are particularly blamed for their inability to conform to school and societal expectations and thus became victims of justified bullying.

Moreover, due to Japan’s historical and cultural acceptance of school bullying, many cases of bullying are unreported (Sakamaki, 1996). Bullying received little acknowledgment as a social concern until the 1980s when more serious student injuries and deaths were cited as a result of the behavior (Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006). Thereafter, according to Rios-Ellis et al. (2000), “the Japanese government, through Mombusho (Japanese Ministry of Education, Sport, and Culture), and the Japan Center for Family and Child Research, has attempted to respond to the ever-increasing incidence of *ijime* among Japanese students” (p. 227).

### **Social Perspective**

Bullying in Japanese schools has also been identified as a social problem. As previously described, discrimination in Japan’s homogenous society can lead victims of school bullying to experience social exclusion because of known differences in character, appearance, or behavior (Kanetsuna et al., 2006). According to research by Yoneyama and Naito (2003), “bullying was first identified as a serious social problem in Japan in 1984 and 1985 when 16 pupils committed suicide in circumstances suspected of victimization” (p. 315). After these reported incidents, bullying was further researched as occurrences continued to rise and the concern was

characterized as a critical social problem affecting schools in Japan (Miller, 2012). Twenty-first century societal issues of bullying amongst students in Japan's schools currently "is seen primarily as an issue arising from factors external to and independent of school life" (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003, p. 316). These external factors have included the pressures of conforming to Japanese societal expectations to be homogenous and harmonious in nature (Naito, 2014). These expectations are comparatively different from many Western cultural beliefs of individualism because collectivism is a shared social value in Japan that encourages its citizens to value group norms over individual perspectives (Morita, 1996). Other external social factors such as sexism, racism, media, and family backgrounds are also used as identifiers to alienate victims of bullying (Yoneyama, 2015).

Research likewise shows that internal factors of bullying can be embedded in a Japanese school culture where victims of bullying can experience intimidation psychologically and physically as a way to punish those who are weak or different (Akiba, 2004). Besides, these negative experiences can lead to bully victims displaying "psychosomatic symptoms and a fear of being bullied while others are merely truant" (Naito & Gielen, 2006). From a social perspective, even those who witness school bullying, including adults and students, are often passive when confronting bullying and instead choose to support the bully as a way to show conformity to the group and school norms (Morita, 2010).

### **Theoretical Perspective**

In Japan, bullying has been theoretically perceived as a rite of passage and not uncommon within Japanese society (Akiba, 2004). To conform to Japan's societal expectations, bullying is often utilized by adults and children to express values of conformity, order, and collectivism against victims who may be targeted for their differences or weakness. To a large



extent in Japanese education, the manifestation of bullying comes from societal pressures to be homogenous in thinking, behavior, actions, and appearances (Naito & Gielen, 2006). Hence, bullying theoretically exists as a form of control to influence the importance of adopting shared cultural and institutional beliefs. About school bullying, Yoneyama (2008) stated, “Even though its political incorrectness may inhibit adults from being explicit about it, indications of tacit approval of bullying are ubiquitous in schools and society at large” (p. 10). Many teachers will ignore the behavior as it allows students to adjust to human relations amongst peers and is evidence that supports a theory that “bullying prepares children for the future” (Yoneyama, 2008, p. 11). As a result of the embedded historical acceptance of bullying in Japan, there have been few systematic attempts to universally change the behavior in schools as compared to other Western countries like America (Morita, 2010). In recognizing societal pressures to conform, school bullying is a key concept to understanding human relations within Japan’s society, work, and school (Ogura, Okada, Hamada, Asaga, & Honjo, 2012). The theoretical perspectives of bullying thus reveal the embedded impacts of bullying within Japanese culture and towards acceptable social behavior.

Research further suggests that group dynamics are an influential factor in the occurrences of bullying. From a collectivist view, in Japan group beliefs are valued over individual opinions within the dynamics of peer groups (Toivonen & Imoto, 2012). This is evident in the research conducted by Akiba (2004) that indicated that when student groups harassed or excluded victims from the peer group, it was because the victims were disliked by others or characterized as non-conformist. Yoneyama and Naito (2010) further labeled these group dynamic actions as a “theory of collective bullying that conformity provides the syntax of vulnerability, and the logic of inclusion and exclusion” (p. 137). Hence, conformity and social acceptance are deemed

important values within the peer group and are determinants for including or excluding others from the group (Toivonen & Imoto, 2012).

Japan's theoretical perspectives on school bullying can also be explained by social learning theories. According to Bandura's (1977b) learning theory, bullying behavior influenced by other individuals or collective groups has an impact on the environment as well as those involved in bullying events. Bandura's (1977b) learning theory could explain why school bullying has become a part of Japanese culture as evident of social values placed on homogeneity, collectivism, and levels of favoritism. Moreover, the research in this applied study further investigates how learning theories could explain why bullying has become embedded as a growing social behavior concern in Japanese schools.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem is many non-Japanese students are being bullied in elementary schools in Japan. As in the United States, bullying is a concern for numerous students in Japan's elementary schools. According to a study conducted by Hilton et al. (2010), "Japanese researchers have found that the number of cases of bullying increases gradually in elementary school and then peaks during the first and second years of middle school" (p. 23) due to many factors of social and cultural influences in Japan. The impact of school bullying, as Hall (2016) stated, "threatens the mental and educational well-being of students" (p. 1) and thereby affects their overall educational experience. This educational experience for non-Japanese students in Japan's schools can be uniquely challenging because "ethnically, linguistically, and culturally, Japan is more homogenous than any other major country" (Naito & Gielen, 2009, p. 2). As a result, non-Japanese students who enter Japan's school system can find it difficult to assimilate and be accepted into Japanese culture because of differences in character, appearance, speech,

and beliefs (Yoneyama, 2015). Consequently, these differences often lead to foreign students being excluded socially in Japan's schools and "given the collectivistic nature of Japanese society, groups often bully persons who deviate from explicit or implicit social standards and break the harmony of the group" (Naito & Gielen, 2006, p. 26).

Additionally, Japan is currently experiencing an influx of foreigners to compensate for Japan's labor shortage, which includes a large percentage of expatriates who work in numerous international and Japanese companies (Hennings & Mintz, 2018). As many foreigners move to Japan and enroll their children in Japanese schools, they are often unaware of the frequency and negative impact that bullying has on students from different countries. This includes the lack of in-school and home support to address bullying and empower non-Japanese students with the opportunity to learn in a safe school environment (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003). Moreover, there is a growing sense of xenophobia that is projected on non-Japanese students due to the influx of foreigners arriving in Japan (Park, 2017). Japan's school systems are subsequently now being criticized for not preventing and protecting these students from being victims of verbal, physical, and psychological harassment by Japanese students (Johnston, 2008). Thus, the importance of this applied study seeks to investigate solutions for helping non-Japanese students create a safe learning environment with support from parents, teachers, and administrators.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this applied study was to solve the problem of bullying for non-Japanese students in an elementary school in Japan and to formulate a solution to address the problem. A multimethod design was used consisting of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The first approach was structured interviews with parents and students. The second approach was

focus group research using participants comprised of educators and administrators. The third approach was an online survey to collect data from participants using closed-ended questioning.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study was to investigate a paucity in research and provide solutions to address the concerns of non-Japanese students bullied in Japan's elementary schools. Contributing research conducted during this study could potentially aid parents, teachers, and administrators to identify effective strategies and best practices for supporting non-Japanese students in confronting bullying in Japanese schools. According to Gordon (2015),

while bullying (*ijime*) is a well-known phenomenon in Japan and happens usually when a child, for any reason, stands out as different from the rest, teachers seldom intervene as it is viewed as a part of growing up and learning one's place in the hierarchy of Japanese society. (p. 527)

For many non-Japanese families, particularly from Western cultures, this societal view of bullying and reluctance to address the concern is unacceptable (Ishikida, 2005). For this reason, the goal of this research was to provide actionable steps for non-Japanese parents and their children to apply when Japanese schools lack effective support strategies to prevent bullying. These foreign families include those in occupational fields at or related to the embassy, military, medical industry, industrial sectors, and other labor fields within Japan.

Additionally, this research could provide a lens for Japan's school leaders and teachers to understand, empathize, and acknowledge the complex challenges that non-Japanese students can encounter when enrolled in Japanese schools. In responding to the transitional experience of newly enrolled foreign students, Japan's schools "face the challenge of educating youth who are not bound by the compulsory education law that otherwise mandates not only attendance but also

qualified teachers who are able to attend to the needs of children and their parents” (Gordon, 2015, p. 519). Hence, this research also aimed to provide instructional strategies and recommended educational resources that Japanese teachers could use to support non-Japanese students and their families who transition into Japanese schools.

On a wider scale, this study was significant in building the capacity of preventive measures to reduce the negative effects of bullying for any elementary school student. According to Shams, Garmaroudi, and Nedjat (2017), “Bullying occurs in almost all schools and the rate of the problem is often more than what teachers and parents know” (p. 2). Thus, through the planned research methods and an analysis of participant responses, this research study identified home, school, and student-level approaches to bullying for practical implementation with potential advantageous solutions.

### **Research Questions**

**Central Question:** How can the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending elementary schools in Japan be solved?

**Sub-question 1:** How would parents and students in an interview solve the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending a Japanese elementary school in Japan?

**Sub-question 2:** How would educators and administrators in a focus group solve the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending an elementary school in Japan?

**Sub-question 3:** How would quantitative survey data inform the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending an elementary school in Japan?

### **Definitions**

Terms pertinent to this applied research study are listed, defined, and cited in this section.

1. *Bullying* – An “aggressive behavior characterized by repetition of actions and asymmetric power relationships or a systematic abuse of power” (Kanetsuna et al., 2006, p. 570).
2. *Collectivism* – The action and value of cohesiveness amongst a group of people prioritizing the needs of the group above individual concerns (Ishikida, 2005).
3. *Ex-pat* – A word describing expatriates or people who live in another country not native to their own (Hennings & Mintz, 2018).
4. *Foreigner* – A non-Japanese person living in Japan who was born in another country or is from another country other than Japan (Tsyuneyoshi, 2007).
5. *Gaijin* – The Japanese word for foreigner or an outsider in Japan (Tsyuneyoshi, 2007).
6. *Gaikoku-jin* – The formal Japanese word for a foreigner.
7. *Gakko* – A Japanese term for school (Tsyuneyoshi, 2007).
8. *Group dynamics* – The behavior, beliefs, and values shared by its members of the social group in Japan (Toivonen & Imoto, 2012).
9. *Ijime* – “A type of aggressive behavior by which someone who holds a dominant position in a group-interaction process, or by intentional or collective acts that cause mental and/or physical suffering to another inside a group” (Morita, 1985, p. 20).
10. *Ijimekko* – The Japanese term for a bully (Tsyuneyoshi, 2007).
11. *Individuality* – Characteristics and qualities of a person that make him or her unique from other people (Hennings & Mintz, 2018).
12. *MEXT* – Japan’s ministry of education which stands for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (Naito & Gielen, 2006).
13. *Victim* – A person who is the recipient of harassment, harm, or affected by the actions or events of bullying (Olweus, 1993).

## **Summary**

In addressing the problem of non-Japanese students being bullied in elementary schools in Japan, this chapter described the purpose of this applied study to solve the problem of bullying for non-Japanese students in Japan's elementary schools and to formulate a solution to address the problem. The background information in this chapter is descriptive in justifying further research to resolve the study's problem and to add to the literature regarding bullying. The outcomes of this applied research study are critical in supporting parents, teachers, and students to make informed decisions and apply effective strategies to resolve bullying within Japanese schools.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this applied study was to solve the problem of bullying for non-Japanese students in an elementary school in Japan and to formulate a solution to address the problem. The problem is many non-Japanese students are being bullied in elementary schools in Japan. This chapter details the theoretical framework and reviews literature related to bullying in schools. Bandura's (1977b) social learning theory (SLT) and Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory (SCT) provide a supportive context for current research related to bullying that will be described in this chapter and will serve as the theoretical framework for this study. Following the theoretical framework is an overview of related literature categorized into major themes to include (a) a bullying overview, (b) bully types and characteristics, (c) victim types and characteristics, (d) bully-victim, (e) school-level responses, (f) home level responses, (g) and bullying effects. The literature reviewed will also demonstrate the negative impacts of bullying in schools. Chapter Two then concludes with a descriptive summary defining the importance of this study and the related literature supporting and informing this research.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study provides a lens through which I will analyze information related to bullying. According to Bickman and Rog (2009), such a framework "explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied—the key factors, concepts, or variables—and the presumed relationships among them" (p. 222). Within this study Bandura's (1977b) SLT provides a conceptual context that I used to view and analyze the research related to bullying.



## **Social Learning Theory**

Bandura's (1977b) SLT prescribed that through observation, behavior is learned and is greatly influenced by one's environment. Bandura (1977b) theorized that through an instinctual process of observation, violence that is internalized through the brain can be a catalyst to violent behavior. To further investigate this causal relationship between observed violence and human reactions, Bandura (1977b) conducted research called the Bobo Doll Experiment. During this experiment, Bandura observed children watching an adult playing and speaking aggressively with a toy doll. Upon watching the adult's interaction with the toy, the children mimicked aggressive physical and verbal behavior when it was their turn to play with the doll. Based on these observations, Bandura concluded that violent behavior can be auditory or visually learned. In comparison to other cognitive and behaviorist theories, Bandura's experiment was in contention with 20th-century research that suggested behavior is constructed through reinforced behavior and internal biological forms of development (Fryling, Johnston, & Hayes, 2011). According to Cook and Artino (2016), Bandura's SLT is credited for bridging cognitive and behavioral learning theories because it extended studies that demonstrated behavior can be reinforced, learned, or conditioned. Moreover, the theory provided a comprehensive model to account for many learned behaviors such as bullying that are related to aggression and violent behavioral characteristics (Bajcar & Babel, 2018).

As such, this applied study is grounded in the theoretical approach of Bandura's (1977b) SLT, which I used to analyze bullying as a learned behavior influenced by the environment through a process of observational learning. For example, children are often conditioned to imitate the behavior that is modeled within their environment (Nabavi, 2014). Agents of socialization, such as friends, family, community members, and social media, sometimes portray

the behavior that children will emulate (Edinyang, 2016). As a result, children may display behavior that they have observed even if such behavior is deemed unacceptable or inappropriate, such as in bullying (Deaton, 2015).

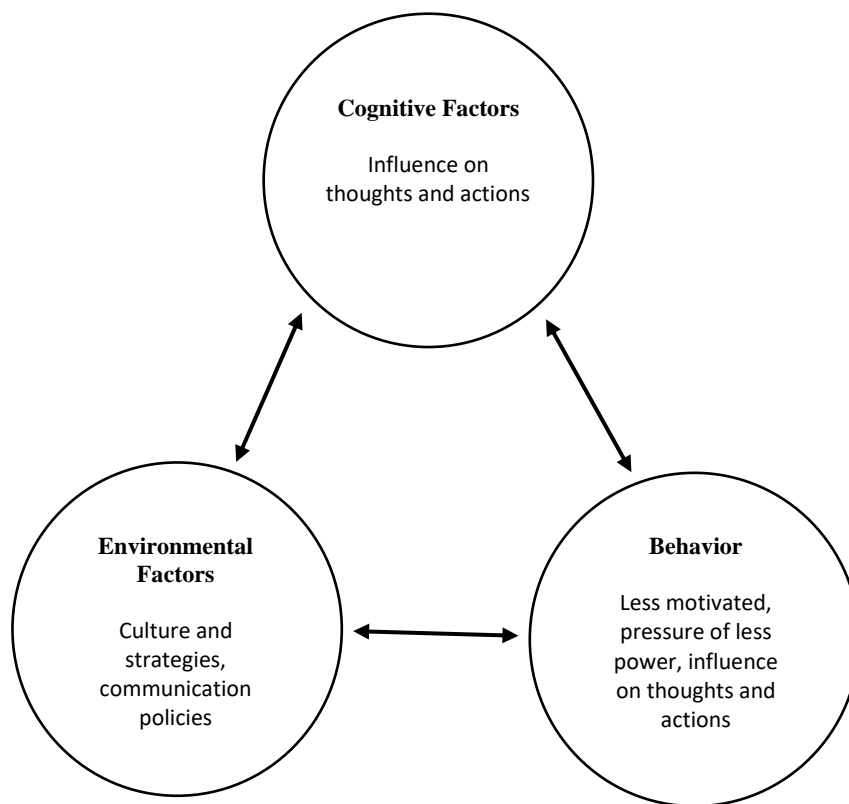
Bandura (1977a) also shared that “most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action” (p. 22). Based on the concept of modeling, Bandura identified three types of observational learning models to include (a) live models, which are actual living individuals exhibiting a behavior; (b) verbal instruction models, that are auditory descriptions of behavior; and (c) symbolic models, that are often behaviors displayed via media through fictional or real characters. From these three models, Bandura (1977a) illustrated that behavior can be influenced by different stimuli gleaned by the observer.

Conclusively, Bandura (1977a) believed that behavior could be self-regulated. This self-regulation of behavior is exercised when observers are able to make sound judgments related to their actions, the environment, and others around them (Edinyang, 2016). Bandura (1986) believed that through continuous interactions, human behavior could be balanced and self-controlled between behavioral and environmental influences. Thus, Bandura’s (1977b) SLT prescribes a theoretical technique for behavior modification through the process of observational learning that could be a corrective solution to address bullying.

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT) expanded on SLT in identifying that behavior is not only learned through observation but also influenced by cognitions. SCT proposed that learning occurs through continuous bidirectional interactions between one’s

environment, internal stimuli, and behavior which Bandura (1986) called reciprocal determinism. Bandura theorized that as the environment can exert influence on behavior, one's behavior and beliefs can also influence the environment. In Figure 1 below, Bandura's (1986) triadic reciprocal determinism theory is diagrammed to illustrate the continuous interaction among the three components of the environment, behavior, and cognitive factors.



*Figure 1.* Diagram of Bandura's (1986) triadic reciprocal determinism.

As in Figure 1, the environmental and cognitive segment of reciprocal causation describes the interactive relationship between social environmental factors and personal beliefs. Bandura (1989) believed that cognitive factors such as human values, thoughts, actions, and emotions are influenced and created by social environmental influences. Through instruction, social persuasion, and modeling, environmental influences can then activate different emotional

reactions and convey information that ultimately affects personal cognitions. These social influences could include factors such as local culture, traditions, or communication practices which are viewed as acceptable beliefs within one's community (Bandura, 1986). Yet, in turn, according to Bandura (1989), "people also evoke different reactions from their social environment by their physical characteristics, such as their age, size, race, sex, and physical attractiveness, quite apart from what they say and do" (p. 3). Bandura believed that a person's social status or conferred role could also provoke different social reactions within the environment. For example, bullies who have a reputation to be overly assertive, physically strong, or display other aggressive behaviors towards their victim often draw different reactions from their peers compared to students who are less assertive and passive. These social reactions could include observers' feeling fear, intimidation, respect, or admiration for the bully (Jensen, 2019). As a result, a bully's reputation, social status, and physical appearance can affect the social environment even before bullying is initiated. Moreover, Doramajian and Bukowski (2015) shared that social reactions will also affect the observers' bias, conceptions about themselves, and the environment that is conducive to bullying behavior. Hence the observers' feelings of inferiority will cause them to support the bully because they feel incapable of preventing the bullying.

The behavior to the environmental segment of reciprocal determination represents the bidirectional relation between the environment and behavior. Theoretically, Bandura (1989) believed that people can be producers and products of their social environment. The ability to exert influence, motivation, power, and action through behavior enables people to create, select, and alter their environment (Zych, Farrington, & Ttofi, 2019). Reciprocally, because an environment is changeable, Bandura (1989) stated that "most aspects of the environment do not

operate as an influence until they are activated by appropriate behavior” (p. 4). For example, students might not become victims of bullying until they arrive at school, or the school bully may not intimidate others until students come to class. Both examples can illustrate how a bully’s behavior is influenced by his or her present environment, and reciprocally creates an environment conducive for bullying. Martin and Rim-Kaufman (2015) said that many bullies are aware of their ability to shape their environment and will choose to display behavior that will allow them to control the environment as well as the reactions of observers around.

Bandura’s (1986) reciprocal causation segment between cognitive factors and behavior describes the interactive link between action and affect. An individual’s beliefs, ambitions, and intentions directly influence one’s internal and external behavior according to Bandura. Behavior and reactions to selected behavior can mutually influence self-perception and cognitive emotions affecting how a person feels about themselves and their actions (Zych, Farrington, & Ttofi, 2019). Concerning bullying, Gini, Pozzoli, and Bussey (2015) stated that a bully’s aggressive behavior is fueled by extrinsic motivation and can affect his or her beliefs that the behavior is acceptable. In turn, as bullying is praised as acceptable behavior, a bully can feel encouraged to maintain aggressive behavior towards his or her victims (Zych, Baldry, Farrington, & Llorent, 2019). Swearer, Wang, Berry, and Myers (2014) concluded that “cognitions regarding support for bullying and beliefs regarding the likelihood of positive versus negative consequences affect the likelihood that youths will bully others” (p. 272). As children can interpret and analyze the benefits or consequences of a behavior, this ability could explain how bullying is a learned behavior that occurs as a result of reciprocal causation.

Bandura’s SCT provides a basis for understanding roles related to bullying. The victim, bully-victim, bully, and bystander are positions created as a consequence of the interaction

between one's behavior and environment (DeSmet et al., 2016). Through repeated episodes of observational social learning, as described in the SCT, bullying as aggressive behavior can be learned and internalized to influence cognitions. As bullying behavior is observed and rewarded through extrinsic motivators, to include status, power, and influence, the behavior is reinforced, eliciting an emotional response to continue aggressive social interactions (DeLara, 2018).

The SCT also describes the importance of self-efficacy as an element that encourages behavior and influences an individual's morals and values (Bandura, 1986). Personal cognitions as values and principles are developed through maturation and can be altered by social experiences and interactions with others. Bandura (1986) stated that within a social cognitive perspective, "maturational factors and the information gained from exploratory experience contribute to cognitive growth" (p. 12). Bandura believed that one's cognitive growth encompassed knowledge, personal responsibility, and self-efficacy as values that are imparted through social interactions and experiences within an environment. In contrast, self-condemnation, self-sanctions, and self-demands function as deterrents against unacceptable behavior (Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy as it relates to school bullying is often the belief that the aggressor can undertake actions and behavior to create a desired outcome (DeLara, 2018). Bandura (1989) explained that "one's own attainments provides a major cognitive mechanism of motivation and self-directedness" (p. 47), and the attainment of desired outcomes can affect a bully's capacity to exercise self-efficacy. The SCT explains that people with positive self-efficacy are assured by their abilities to achieve desired outcomes and will increase their efforts when they are unable to achieve their goals until they ultimately succeed (Bandura, 1986). For example, bullies will continue to engage in victimizing other students until extrinsic rewards are obtained from the victim or observers. If anticipated outcomes are not immediately acquired, the

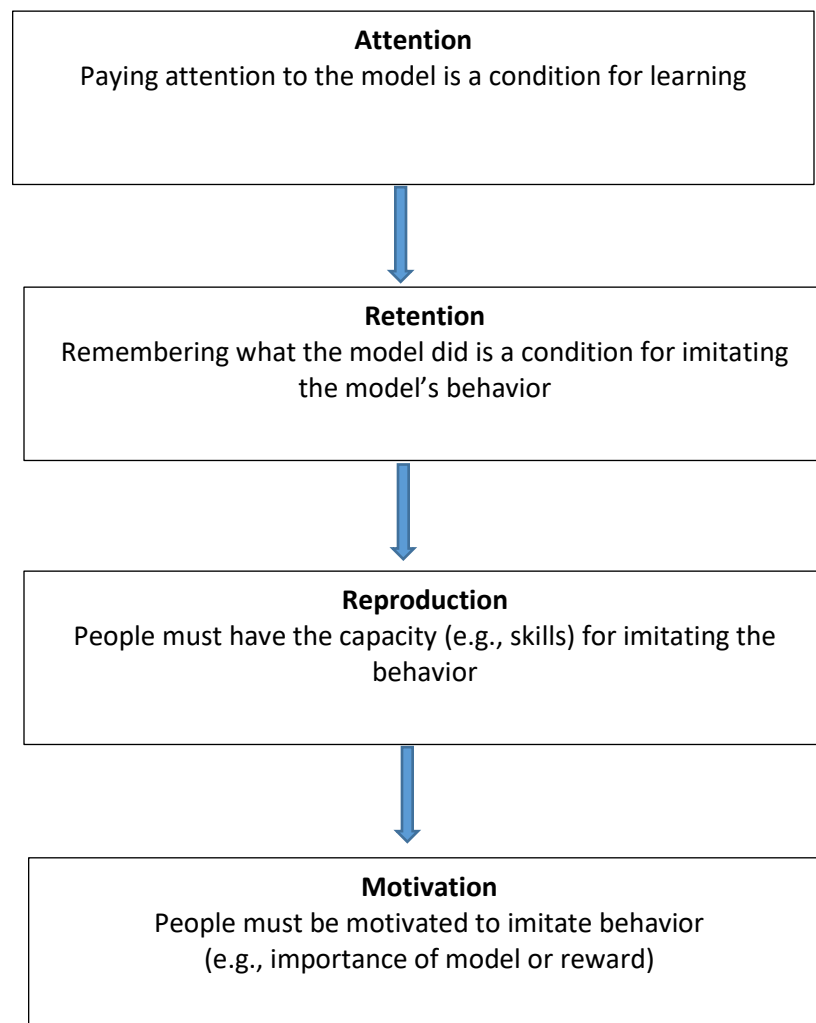
bullying will persist until outcomes are favorable to the bully (Espelage, Hong, & Mebane, 2016). Yet, when confronted with bullying, victims with a low sense of self-efficacy will avoid efforts to find meaningful or productive solutions to the problem, which perpetuates the weakening of their self-efficacy because of their inability to control the situation (Espelage et al., 2016).

Bandura (1986) further suggested that people's self-efficacy is reflective of their confidence to manage their emotions and stress levels in situations that are threatening or uncomfortable. Events involving potential threats and conflict do not cause a person with strong self-efficacy to feel apprehensive or fearful in controlling the situation (Hoetger, Hazen, & Brank, 2015). Those with strong self-regulatory characteristics like many bullies are able to manipulate, control, and dominate encounters that involve a skirmish or struggle. Moreover, as bullies experience success in directing the outcomes of their conflicts, they also further strengthen their self-efficacy and self-regulatory abilities (Espelage et al., 2016).

However, Bandura (1986) believed that when encountered with stressful situations, people with low self-efficacy become emotionally overwhelmed because of their lack of self-confidence. Victims of bullying are often characterized as students who believe that they are incapable of effecting change during a conflict and lack the self-assurance to believe that they can be agents for change (Hoetger et al., 2015). As such, experiencing bullying and the feelings of helplessness to control the event influence a victim's self-worth. Consistent with the findings of Espelage et al. (2016), victims lack an active agency to motivate themselves to overcome bullying because they do not acknowledge and value their self-worth, which is critical for those who can self-regulate their feelings to achieve personal goals (Espelage, 2014).

## Observational Learning

Observational learning is another critical component of both the SCT and the SLT as it relates to the process of learning aggressive behaviors. Bandura (1986) proposed that learning new behavior patterns occurs not only through instruction, but through observation and accepting the consequences that follow. The sequence of Bandura's observational learning theory was composed of four components as depicted in Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* The sequences of observational learning theory (Bandura, 1977b).



The four components of observational learning as described in Figure 2—attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation—describe the sequence of actions that are required for the adoption and development of different behaviors (Bandura, 1986).

**Attention.** The attention component is the process in which an individual notices and is focused on the modeled behavior that can be emulated. Hoetger et al. (2015) characterized that children, in particular, have limited capabilities to maintain attention to events for long periods as well as attending to interpret different types of information at one time. Thus, the SCT suggested that prompting observational learning requires that children experience an attention-arousing event that will compensate for their attentional deficiencies. Similarly, conditions for learning aggressive behavior are created when students are aroused and attentive to the conduct being displayed (McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015).

**Retention.** Bandura (1989) stated that all events observed are not always remembered; therefore retention, the second component, is necessary within the learning process. Bandura (1989) deduced that “retention involves an active process of transforming and restructuring the information conveyed by modeled events into rules and conceptions for memory representation” (p. 24). Through the retention process, learning is further conditioned to allow children to create mental constructs for storing information to be rehearsed or reproduced at a given time. For example, children observing bullying can create perceptions and meanings of what is being seen to compartmentalize the information for recall. However, Patchin and Hinduja (2015) believed that in instances in which the modeled behavior is extremely violent, memory retention could also cause lasting side effects such as anxiety, increased aggressive temperament, and frustration. In order for observational learning to occur, children must identify an extrinsic value that is associated with retention (Bandura 1986).

**Reproduction.** Following retention processing, the observation learning theory suggested that the reproduction phase occurs so that a person can translate thoughts into actions. Bandura (1989) stated that reproducing retained thoughts “is achieved through a conception-matching process in which behavioral enactments are adjusted until they match the internal conceptions of the activity” (p. 24). For example, students that believe they have the ability, knowledge, and skills to reproduce aggressive behavior are confident they can replicate the behavior with success. Thus bullies possess the mental, physical, and emotional capacity to bully others because of their increased sense of self-efficacy (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015).

**Motivation.** Motivation is the fourth component involved in the modeling process of learning. SCT is based on the idea that people do not always reenact every behavior that is observed (Bandura, 1989). Therefore, Bandura (1986) believed that motivation to perform a learned behavior required “three major types of incentive motivators—direct, vicarious, and self-produced” (p. 24). Direct incentives are observable or tangible rewards associated with the display of certain behaviors. Bussey, Fitzpatrick, and Raman (2015) specified that people will mimic modeled behavior when the results are valued, but will be less motivated if the behavior appears unrewarding. For bullies, these direct incentives generate praise, popularity, respect, and other extrinsic rewards that provide value to the behavior (Espelage et al., 2016). Incentive values also change as bullies experience different outcomes related to their actions. Festl and Quandt (2016) affirmed that personal satisfaction and valuable gains recognized from aggressive behavior motivate bullies to increase the frequency and intensity of attacks on their victims. Hence, as bullies continue to reap benefits from their behavior their motivation to behave aggressively is unchanged.

Vicarious motivators are feelings and actions imagined by the observers that provide an indirect influence to replicate a behavior. Bandura (1986) discussed that both adults and children are susceptible to becoming aroused by others' emotional expressions or correlated social experiences. Vicarious arousal occurs as "seeing others react emotionally to instigating conditions activates emotion-arousing thoughts and imagery in observers" (Bandura, 1989, p. 31). For example, it could be explained that as children observe bullying, they are also able to generate emotional responses to cues that are suggestive of the bully's emotional experience. Bandura (1989) further identified that "what gives significance to vicarious influence is that observers can acquire lasting attitudes, emotional reactions, and behavioral proclivities toward persons, places, or things that have been associated with the model's emotional experience" (p. 32). As vicarious arousal operates, many students that observe bullying learn to avoid situations that frighten the aggressor and understand the gratification experienced by the bully.

Self-producing motivation can occur after personalizing an observed experience or after taking the perspective of another's modeled behavior (Kelder, Hoelscher, & Perry, 2016). Personalizing experiences allow the observer to become self-motivated in replicating the behavior because of the perceived and visualized positive outcomes. The observer can imagine that he or she will also have positive or aversive experiences similar to the model's experience with the behavior. In contrast, the form of perspective-taking allows the observer to imagine and understand other's affective experiences with the behavior (Kelder et al., 2016). As a result, people become intrinsically motivated to place themselves in similar situations that will allow them to reproduce similar behavior observed and to feel the affective experience. Further, children who witness bullying often personalize the observed experience as it allows them to

better understand how they would feel and react in similar situations (Aboujaoude, Savage, Starcevic, & Salame, 2015).

The SCT can further help explain the process of bullying as a learned behavior that occurs through observation and is influenced by one's environment. The applicability of all the constructs of the SCT, as stated by Bussey et al. (2015), could provide a framework for further research in identifying solutions to bullying, help children to better self-regulate their emotions when observing aggressive behaviors, and prompt teachers to consider the effect of environment and social modeling.

### **Related Literature**

The literature reviewed in this section provides a synthesis of existing research and knowledge related to the research topic concerning school bullying. The literature review is organized into major themes to include (a) a bullying overview, (b) bully types and characteristics, (c) victim types and characteristics, (d) bully-victims, (e) school-level responses, (f) home level responses, (g) and bullying effects. The choice of literature reviewed also describes what has not been examined in current research and how this study will further an understanding of the research topic.

### **Bullying Overview**

The phenomenon of school bullying has been documented and investigated as a public concern affecting the lives of many students. According to recent education statistics, more than one out of every five students has reported that they have experienced being bullied (NCES, 2016). The data included world statistical reports indicating 13% of 11-year-old students reported that they have experienced being bullied "at least twice in the past two months and 8% admitted to bullying others" (Nocentini, Fiorentini, Paula, & Menesini, 2019, p. 42). Other

statistics indicated that up to 65% of students worldwide have experienced victimization or perpetration related to bullying; this has prompted the need to further research for bullying prevention and interventions (Mazzone, Nocentini, & Menesini, 2018).

Consequently, school bullying has now become a global research interest due to the wide-scale societal implications affecting students' personal development and their overall school experience. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017) reported that globally one 35% of the world's grade school students have been indirectly or directly impacted by the effects of bullying. The impact of bullying has further led to the creation of laws and policies that schools must enforce to ensure students have a safe space to learn and develop socially (Smith, 2018). These policies have also been implemented as a response to the increasing reoccurrence of school violence such as suicides or school shootings, which have often been associated with bullying (Smith, 2018). Despite the implementation of school regulations and supporting laws, bullying continues to be a prominent behavior of social concern. This is particularly true in countries like Japan where school bullying is prohibited by school policy yet has been culturally accepted as part of one's social development (Yoneyama, 2015).

By definition school bullying is described as "aggressive, intentional acts carried out by a group or an individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (Olweus, 1993, p. 48). Although various definitions of bullying exist depending on the context of its occurrence, bullying is commonly described as an aggressive behavior exercised in the attempt to harm another (Volk, Dane, & Marini, 2014). Early research conducted by Dr. Dan Olweus provided a foundational definition of bullying and how it affects students (Volk et al.,

2014). Based on the early studies of Olweus (1993), current research continues to expand in identifying effective ways to analyze and solve problems associated with school bullying.

However, according to Nocentini et al. (2019), more current theoretical empirical data are needed to redefine all that bullying encompasses. Many definitions encompass the idea that bullying is characteristic of repeated actions over time; however, current research debates that some forms of bullying such as cyberbullying are equally or more harmful to victims even in single incidents (Pabian, 2018). Discrepancies in defining what bullying entails can challenge how bullying is assessed, measured, prevented, and understood as a phenomenon. As such, this applied research is inclusive of evidence to support a more unified definition of bullying.

In addressing bullying as a global challenge, Western countries such as the United States, Finland, and England have provided foundational research; however current researchers are also utilizing studies from Eastern countries like Japan to expand interpretations of bullying across the globe (Thornberg, Landgren, & Wiman, 2018). By utilizing both Eastern and Western research related to bullying, in this research, I will investigate further solutions for addressing the topic questions as well as providing potential solutions to the bullying phenomenon.

### **Bully Types and Characteristics**

Various characteristics, qualities, and categories exist that can define and describe the types of bullying often observed in schools. These different forms of bullying include indirect and direct bullying, passive bullying, collective bullying, and gender type bullying.

**Indirect and direct bullying.** Based on the original studies of Olweus (1993), researchers have attempted to identify various forms of bullying. Many studies identify two forms of bullying behavior that is either direct or indirect (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013). Direct behavior includes verbal or physical bullying such as name-calling, hitting, teasing, pushing, or

kicking (Eisenberg, Gower, McMorris, & Bucchianeri, 2015). Indirect behavior is characterized as subtle actions involving rude gestures, spreading rumors, or excluding others from friendships (Eisenberg et al., 2015). Cyberbullying is also currently known as a form of indirect behavior in which students have been victimized through verbal harassment through emails and online social media sources (Litwiller & Brausch, 2013).

According to Olweus (1993), both direct and indirect behaviors are composed of three criteria characteristic of bullying which have been foundational to current research. These three criteria consist of “(a) aggressive behavior or intentional harm doing; (b) which is carried out repeatedly and over time and (c) in an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power” (Olweus, 1997, p. 496). The importance of these three criteria is to serve as a framework to identify common types of behavior that are often associated with bullying and were used to interpret bullying experiences in this research study. For example, aggressive behaviors are inclusive of someone inflicting injury or attempting to cause harm and that could be exhibited in the forms of physical, verbal, or gestured actions towards another individual (Nocentini et al., 2019). Among these different characteristics of bullying, research findings documented the most common forms as (a) verbal victimization, such as name-calling; (b) coercive control; (c) direct victimization, open attacks on peers (d) indirect victimization, similar to gossiping; and (e) relational victimization, typically associated with intentionally excluding others (Mazzone et al., 2018). As impulsivity, violence, and a lack of empathy towards others are also characteristic of bullying behavior, typically bullies value their aggressive behavior and actions more than their peers (Olweus, 1993). Frequently, the distinctive characteristics of bullies are their levels of aggressiveness towards their victims (Hall, 2016). Thus, the aim of the behavior is often to exert control over others as a means to display power and dominance.

Although generalities about direct and indirect bullying characteristics exist, some researchers cited that bullies are not always motivated by power and status, but instead seek material goals (Smith, Kwak, & Toda, 2016). Those goals are achieved when bullies can coerce others to give money, food, or other items of material value. Upon possession of these material items, bullies feel empowered to control their victims (Smith et al., 2016).

The sources underlying bullying behavior are derived from numerous influences such as one's environment, needs for power, family conditions, self-validation, and popularity (Smith, 2018). Some research has suggested that bullies exhibit aggressive behavior because of their internal insecurities and anxieties. Kumpulainen et al. (1998) found that bullies did display some levels of anxiety and insecurity that could be associated with their behavior. However, in a study by Mark, Varnik, and Sisask (2019), the researchers found that many social, mental, and physical factors can have a significant impact on how students manage their behavior and emotional capacity to participate in bullying. Yet, based on the examination of existing information, more research is needed to further identify common factors associated with bullying and why it occurs.

**Passive bullies.** Sometimes students can also be passive bullies or bystanders, in which they are encouraged to support the bully's actions to achieve peer group acceptance. These types of bullies may not always participate in physically aggressive behavior; however, sometimes their presence and verbal taunting can be threatening to victims (Foody, Samara, & Higgins, 2017). Bystanders can include not only other students but adults as well, such as teachers, custodians, and parents who are witnesses of aggressive peer altercations leading to bullying (Gaffney, 2018).

Doramajian and Bukowski (2015) examined the process by which actions or inactions of bystanders, directly and indirectly, influenced the events before, during, and after bullying



situations. Based on the studies of Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, and Kaukiainen (1996), which identified bystander roles as reinforcers, outsiders, assistants, and defenders, Doramajian and Bukowski (2015) were also able to conclude that there is evidence that bystanders have a passive influence to increase the level of bullying that is projected against a victim.

***Reinforcers.*** Salmivalli et al. (1996) described reinforcers as individuals who encouraged bullying by laughing, teasing, criticizing, and mocking the victim. This form of bullying is viewed as a method to gain favor from the bully and also to detract attention from themselves being bullied (Peets, Poyhonen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2015). Gaffney's (2018) research suggested that compared to girls, boys typically participate more often in the role of the reinforcer because it allows them to gain visual acceptance by the bully and those peers within the social group. Subsequently, as bullies acquire more peer support, the likelihood of school bullying often increases (Peets et al., 2015).

***Outsiders.*** Outsiders are those who will witness the alterations but try not to side with the bully nor the victim as an attempt to be a strict observer. The outsider role involves the effort of self-preservation to remain uninvolved and to avoid succumbing to also being bullied (Doramajian & Bukowski, 2015). Yet, to the bully, an outsider's presence can also symbolize support for the aggressive actions inflicted upon the victim (Martin & Rimm-Kaufman, 2015). Moreover, as previously described in the SCT and SLT, observing bullying can increase the likelihood that the outsider might adopt negative behaviors and mimic the behavior of other students. In the study conducted by Sutton, Smith, and Swettenham (1999), 20–30% of students were categorized as outsiders to incidents of bullying, which provided evidence that some students are attracted to this participant role more so than others.

**Assistants.** An assistant helps the bully but avoids directly attacking the victim. Verbal instigating and encouraging the bully is often the assistant's involvement to indirectly support bullying (Martin & Rimm-Kaufman, 2015). Assistants are also characterized as being less empathetic to the victim's situation as evidence in their involvement to help provoke bullying (Machackova, Dedkova, & Mezulanikova, 2015). Consequently, assistants may become desensitized to the plight of the victim by continuously supporting the bully's aggressive behavior (Machackova et al., 2015).

**Defenders.** The role of the defender is characteristically different from other participants because it involves the observer's attempt to intervene and prohibit bullying (Peets et al., 2015). A defender may be able to stop the bullying by physically intervening or eliciting the help of a teacher or another nearby adult (Peets et al., 2015). Typically, many younger students and girls have been identified as defenders because of their level of empathy towards the victim as opposed to older students and boys (Lambe, Della-Cioppa, Hong, & Craig, 2018). Yet, as investigated by Martin and Rimm-Kaufman (2015), it is difficult for many observers to participate in the role of the defender because it requires a level of self-confidence, skill, and execution to succeed in preventing bullying, while not exposing themselves to becoming bullied.

In research conducted by Jones, Mitchell, and Turner (2015) passive bystanders accounted for 85% of the student peers present during bullying episodes. Statistically, the majority of students who witness bullying have been identified to behave in a manner that supports bullying rather than deters the altercation (Jones et al., 2015). Salmivalli et al.'s (1996) study indicated that children typically look for peer input in regards to their behavior and how others might react in response to bullying. The presence of bystanders can thus provide bullies with greater self-confidence and the perception to continue the negative behavior towards the

victim. Additionally, Salmivalli et al. discovered that bullying episodes are prolonged as the number of bystanders increases and when other students are unable to intervene to prevent bullying.

**Collective bullying.** Bullying that is initiated by a group of students against a single victim is defined as collective bullying (Hamada et al., 2016). In Japan, collective bullying is often the most occurring type of *ijime* that is inflicted upon a victim. As cooperative thought, work, and behavior is valued in Japanese society, Yoneyama (2015) noted collective bullying is also a means for students to prove their loyalty to a group and avoid being excluded from the group. For example, the research of Hamada et al. (2016) found that students who participated in collective bullying were better able to self-validate their belonging to their peer group compared to students who were shunned from the group because of not partaking in the collective bullying. Wai-Ming and Taki (2007) further indicated that “in a collective society such as Japan, where group membership is crucial for survival, the ostracism inflicted by social exclusion represents a particularly mean and cruel form of punishment” (p. 379). Collective bullying is thus a means to remain a part of a collective group and a method to avoid the consequences of being socially excluded. Moreover, although students may be aware that bullying is a cruel behavior, Yoneyama (2015) determined that maintaining social group status was more important than going against the collective actions of the peer group. Wai-Ming and Taki (2007) also stated that “although children recognize that social exclusion, teasing, and name-calling are not nice, most of them do not see these as delinquent behaviors” (p. 379) because being a part of the group is culturally more important than being excluded from a group. Hence, in Japan, there is evidence that acts of collective bullying at times supersede the importance of exercising appropriate behavior.

**Male and female bullies.** Both male and female students participate in bullying as well. Research dictates that boys' behavior is more physically aggressive compared to more subtle forms of indirect bullying that girls can exhibit (Foody et al., 2017).

**Male bullies.** Bullying amongst boys is often valued as a symbol of masculinity, strength, and social status, whereas girls tend to bully as a form of relational competition to display popularity or supremacy over others (Smith, 2018). In the foundational research of Bem (1995), it was identified that males often value masculine traits that are displays of an independent and strong personality. Boys that are influenced to display their masculinity often participate in aggressive, forceful, and dominant behaviors as a show of strength and control over others (Francisco, Santiago, & Larrañaga, 2016). Hence, males who bully will usually target victims who are weaker to inflict physical harm upon the victim which could include hitting, kicking, pushing, choking, and other physical aggressive acts (Viala, 2015). Thornberg, Pozzoli, Gini, and Sung Hong (2015) also concluded that "in general, male students are more apt to engage in bullying and display less empathy, greater moral insensitivity, and fewer emotion recognition skills, and higher levels of moral disengagement than female students" (p. 1191). The difference in males' reactions to bullying can be explained by social rules and gender standards established within one's environment. Romera, Casas, Gómez-Ortiz, and Ortega-Ruiz (2019) explained that male children are more likely to commit physical and aggressive acts of bullying in cultures, society, and environments that validate such behavior as being masculine. This validation can come in the form of praise, respect, or encouragement from other male observers and provides evidence that some forms of masculinity could contribute to bullying (Smith, 2018).

***Female bullies.*** Girls, like boys, are capable of expressing aggressive behavior both physically and non-physically as a means of bullying their victims. For many girls, the choice to behave in a specific way is greatly influenced by their environment and social group. For example, Dytham (2018) stated that “girls’ social groups are hierarchical, and girls use manipulation, bullying and teasing to control and exclude others to maintain this hierarchy and the boundaries of their groups” (p. 213). Females are able to influence their social group by bullying their victims and subjugate their peers as a means to solidify their belonging and status in the group (Rodkin, Espelage, & Hanish, 2015). This form of bullying also helps the female bully to control who can become a member of the social group and who will be excluded. However, most bullying committed by girls is indirect, involving spreading rumors, gossip, name-calling, or cyberbullying as a means to attack and separate the victim from the group (Rodkin et al., 2015). As with boys, social values and gender standards greatly influence which traits of femininity are most respected by girls. Bouchard, Forsberg, Smith, and Thornberg (2018) said that the most valued forms of femininity are being popular and nice. However, being overly nice is detrimental to being popular, as it signifies a lack of toughness. Thus, many popular girls have been characterized as mean girls when they bully other females as a way to exert their toughness and power to control their peer group (Bouchard et al., 2018). Comparatively, girls that seek positions and popularity within a group will also bully others as a means to gain acceptance into the group (Frosberg & Horton, 2015). Females who are physically more violent tend to be more threatening and display levels of aggression often associated as a masculine form of femininity (Bouchard et al., 2018). Overly aggressive and violent behavior displayed by females is often feared as with boys and can be used to gain support from the peer group.

*Male and female bullies.* The frequency at which bullying happens amongst the same sex or opposite sex depends on the context in which the bullying occurs. Jamal, Bonell, Harden, and Lorenc (2015) found that the “school environment acts as an ecological determinant of bullying behaviors” (p. 734). The social norms and gender standards influence the most valued traits within a social group while, comparatively, the school environment provides an opportunity for students to create social constructs related to popularity, belonging, or excluding others from the group (Kousholt & Fisker, 2015). Both male and female bullies have the advantage of influencing their peer group by showing their dominance over their victims both indirectly and directly to exemplify their popularity and power (Jamal et al., 2015).

### **Victim Types and Characteristics**

Research does not indicate that victims of bullying possess a specific type of characteristic. However, one study has found that school bully victims are typically insecure, sensitive, small in stature, quiet, and physically weaker than bullies (Volk et al., 2014). Many victims are also described as having low self-esteem because of their perception of failing to be accepted by others or they “look upon themselves as failures and feel stupid, ashamed and unattractive” (Olweus, 1997, p. 499). Moreover, victims are often easily dominated by their peers because of their passive and non-aggressive responses to retaliate against bullying. Often when bullied at school, victims will withdraw by choosing to stay near teachers, avoid isolated areas, or create excuses to not attend school (Arcadepani, Eskenazi, Fidalgo, & Hong, 2019).

However, not all victims choose a passive response to bullying as some research has demonstrated that occasionally students do fight back against their victimization. Sung, Chen, and Valcke (2018) stated that victims might choose to fight back because their “reprisals may be aroused when their negative victimization experiences are continually accumulated to a critical

point and when they cannot get effective assistance from others to improve their victimization” (p. 280). Victims who choose to fight back may also be motivated to achieve improved self-security, emotional stability, or self-image (Sung et al., 2018).

Current research does not definitively explain why some victims are bullied without any initial provocation (Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013). However, physical or behavioral characteristics are often the cause and targets of bullying (Volk et al., 2014). Victims also might not always provoke their aggressors, but the bully may exhibit poor self-regulation and initiate bullying as an impulse or spontaneous action (Pouwels, Scholte, Van Noorden, & Cillessen, 2016).

Smith (2018) presented that more research is needed in describing different types of victimization. For example, research conducted by Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck, and Hamby (2015) identified multiple types of victimization known as *polyvictimization* that involve victims suffering multiple and greater consequences as a result of bullying. The majority of school bullying and victim research conducted has focused on the impacts of in-school or cyber victimizing (Smith, 2018). However, researchers are now debating whether cyberbullying victims suffer more victimization because there exists exposure to larger potential audiences and a lack of respite online, which is quite different from traditional bullying that typically occurs in the confines of school (Finkelhor et al., 2015). As Smith (2018) stated, “The empirical evidence so far is that being a cyber victim has impacts just as severe, and sometimes more so than traditional bullying; while those who experience both traditional and cyberbullying are the worst affected” (p. 423).

## **Bully-Victims**

Relative to this applied research study, it is important to understand the bully-victim behavior as it relates to the potential experiences shared by the study's participants. Bully-victims are identified as students who have participated in bullying and have experienced the impacts of victimization. The difference between bully-victims and bullies, who are sometimes called pure bullies, is that bullies usually do not experience victimization. However, according to Yang and Salmivalli (2013), international prevalence estimates for school bully-victims are steadily increasing, prompting researchers to investigate the causes. Many studies have indicated that bully-victims are initially victims of bullying who later perpetrate bullying on others (Wong, Cheng, & Chen, 2013). Researchers have indicated that more empirical research is needed to understand how and why students become bully victims. For example, Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory (ELT) suggested that one's surrounding environment affects behavior. As a result, the ELT has often been used to explain how a bully-victim's behavior is affected by the environment (Yang & Salmivalli, 2013). In a study by Hong, Kral, and Sterzing (2015), the researchers further stated that hostile, negative, and aggressive environments could be influencers for students to adopt bully-victim behavior. However, other studies theorized that the social information processing (SIP) model, as described by Crick and Dodge (1994), can further explain this behavior phenomenon. Concerning SIP, a victim can become a bully-victim through a five-step process which involves (a) encoding a social situation, (b) creating a schema for the bullying experience, (c) clarifying goals to address the situation, (d) identifying possible responses to the concern, and (e) examining responses and choices and selecting an optimal solution (Crick & Dodge, 1994). The optimal solution, as described by Reemst, Fischer, and



Zwirs (2016), is to initiate bullying by attacking other vulnerable students as a coping strategy and to satisfy personal needs.

Additional research indicates that moral disengagement is a recurrent cause of students' displaying bully-victim behavior. According to Runions et al. (2019), bully-victims, like bullies, can intentionally plan aggressive motives to harm others even though they are aware that bullying is morally wrong. This awareness, as Runions et al. (2019) described, is a characteristic moral disengagement because the bully-victim deliberately plans and is motivated to harm others through bullying. Moral disengagement provides an approach to this applied study to further an understanding of how students conceptualize what is morally acceptable behavior as it relates to bullying in Japanese schools.

By analyzing the experiences of potential bully-victims, through this applied study I could further investigate the effects of the behavior. According to Runions et al. (2019), current research indicates that "bully-victims are at greater risk of subsequent antisocial behavior than are pure bullies and are more likely to be socially isolated than either pure bullies or pure victims" (p. 2). Other research is evidence that bully-victims could be at a greater risk of short and long consequences that could affect them socially, mentally, or physically (Hall, 2016). These bully-victim effects were also noted by Sung et al. (2018), who stated, "Bully-victims show more problems in life adaption, interpersonal relationships, mental health, and academic performance than either bullies or victims" (p. 279).

Currently, there is a lack of empirical data from international studies that would identify the percentage of students in other countries who have experienced the impacts of bully-victim behavior (Sung et al., 2018). Yet, through further analysis of potential bully-victim behaviors in this applied study, I could provide research steps for additional solutions involving support and

prevention. In addition, the outcomes of this research could help to assist educators to effectively support and respond to situations motivating bully-victim behavior.

### **Bullying Effects**

Numerous studies have cited the negative effects associated with school bullying. For example, according to the UNICEF Office of Research studies (Richardson & Hiu, 2018), the short term and long term effects of school bullying impact victims, bullies, and the overall school culture. Moreover, currently 36% of grade school students globally have reported being involved in bullying at least once that has negatively affected their school experience (Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra, & Runions, 2014). Consequently, understanding the short-term and long-term effects of bullying was critical in this research study; it assisted me and may assist others in better interpreting the consequences that occur as a result of bullying behavior.

Some of the most noted short-term effects of bullying that victims experience include anxiety, stress, insecurity, sadness, anger, worry, humiliation, and a loss of self-esteem (Smith, 2018). The lack of self-value, as a result of victimization, often creates stressors that interfere with a student's ability to learn and concentrate. These negative consequences also include symptoms that are psychosomatic such as developing colds, sleeping problems, headaches, stomachaches, or side pains that interfere with the victims' focus in school (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). As victims feel threatened, the concern for safety supersedes the need to learn, and as a result, these students will resort to acts of truancy or miss classes to avoid being bullied (Richardson & Hiu, 2018).

Bullying also has critical long term physical consequences. Victims who have experienced school bullying, particularly over long periods, have been reported to develop health disorders related to depression and anxiety (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). As a result, some victims

succumb to substance abuse, self-harm, and suicide as a coping strategy to address their levels of depression or anxiety. These long-term consequences of bullying are of particular concern in this research study as it has been noted that self-harm is a typical response to bullying in Japanese schools (Yoneyama, 2015).

However, not all research agrees that the long-term effects of school bullying are detrimental to a student's development. According to Smith (2018), some supporters of bullying share that learning social skills and mental fortitude to confront or experience bullying helps better prepare students to live successfully in a changing global society. Bullying is also supported as a rite of passage to adulthood, which is a shared cultural belief in Japan (Yoneyama, 2015), a notion that was further investigated in this applied research study.

Bullies also suffer short- and long-term effects due to their behavior. There is research evidence according to Wolke and Lereya (2015) that those school bullies who have been physically aggressive, violent, and threatening towards others have a higher risk of committing more anti-social and aggressive behavior. For example, students who continuously bully other students are susceptible to committing more serious misconduct such as theft, illegal weapons possession, fighting, or joining a gang (Chan & Wong, 2015). Moreover, according to Gini and Espelage (2014), school bullies are also five times as likely to commit a serious crime before reaching adulthood. Transitionally, as bullies become adults, continued delinquent behavior has been exhibited in the form of substance abuse, felony crimes, and other social menacing behavior (Chan & Wong, 2015). Considering the long- and short-term effects impacting the bully, it is an important consideration in this applied study to identify how Japan's cultural values influence the consequences of bullying behavior.

The overall climate or culture of the school is likewise affected by the short- and long-term impacts of bullying. In Japan, it is a school cultural belief that students who are different from others, such as those who possess a unique appearance, superior skill, or different behavior are often victimized by bullies, and this is viewed as an acceptable school norm (Yoneyama, 2015). However, studies have shown that school cultures that are tolerant of bully behaviors increase the risks of developing unsafe learning environments (Gini & Espelage, 2014). According to Hong et al. (2015), schools that fail to address concerns of bullying have an increased chance of school violence and tension between students. Consequently, a culture of school violence can sometimes lead to increased violence such as school shootings, which can have a more tragic effect on other students (Gini & Espelage, 2014). The negative effects of bullying provide an impetus for schools to create rules and policies that ensure that students are guaranteed the opportunity to learn in a safe environment.

### **School and Home Response**

Researchers have presented the view that school and home responses to bullying can vary depending on the context and location in which it occurs (Pouwels et al., 2016). For example, many schools in the United States have adopted a zero-tolerance policy to prevent bullying (Stives, May, Pilkinton, Bethel, & Eakin, 2019). Such policies are often enforced by teachers, administrators, or resource officers who are charged with the responsibility of preventing bullying and overseeing the safety of students. These zero-tolerance policies are also aligned with many state laws and regulations, which prohibit certain levels of bullying, particularly cyberbullying which has been known to infringe on some students' civil and privacy rights (Pabian, 2018). Established guidance for school bullying also allows officials to investigate bullying and respond with appropriate actions or consequences to prevent the behavior.

In comparison to countries like Japan, traditionally bullying prevention was addressed only by willing classroom teachers or sometimes enforced as a schoolwide policy (Takashi & Gielen, 2006). Similar responses to bullying have been identified in Eastern Asian countries that have often had a higher tolerance and cultural acceptance of bullying compared to some Western countries (Takashi & Gielen, 2006).

As bullying has been described for its negative impacts, often a school response to the behavior will elicit a home response from the parents or guardians of the students. In some countries like the United States, when students are victims of bullying, the parent will sometimes have conversations with their child, the teacher, administrator, or school representative to discuss bullying, preventions, and consequences associated with bullying and other behaviors (Stives et al., 2019). Other parents have been known to demonstrate aggressive responses by encouraging their children to protect themselves from bullying through the use of physical or verbal means (Larrañaga, Yubero, & Navarro, 2018). In more violent cases of bullying, some parents have involved the services of law enforcement officers or lawyers to investigate bullying incidents that have harmed the child (Larrañaga et al., 2018).

Parents whose child perpetuated the bullying will sometimes support school responses by reiterating verbal warnings and actionable consequences that will be implemented to prevent reoccurrences of the behavior (Stives et al., 2019). Yet, sometimes in the absence of a home response, school responses are often effective in preventing further bullying (Stives et al., 2019). In this applied study, the home, school, and cultural responses to bullying were considered as factors that may provide answers to the research questions.

### Summary

According to Richardson and Hiu (2018), “both victims and perpetrators of bullying in childhood suffer across various dimensions, including personal social development, education, and health, with negative effects persisting into adulthood” (p. 1). Considering the many negative impacts of bullying that affect students in various ways, it was critical that this applied study be completed as I sought to further research concerning the bullying phenomenon. Based on the literature reviewed, there is a growing concern that bullying has become a social behavior concern affecting the lives of many students. Based on previous studies conducted on bullying, there is evidence that continued research could further help identify solutions to the bullying phenomenon. Additionally, Bandura’s (1989) SCT provides a theoretical framework for the researcher to analyze the many effects of bullying. About the foundational research regarding bullying characteristics, types, effects, and responses, more in-depth research is examined in this study to not only answer the topic questions but to provide alternative answers to solving bullying as a global social concern.

## **CHAPTER THREE: PROPOSED METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this applied study was to solve the problem of bullying for non-Japanese students in an elementary school in Japan and to formulate a solution to address the problem. The problem was non-Japanese students were being bullied in Japan's elementary schools. This chapter discusses the selected research design, research questions, setting, and participants that were inclusive of this research. The researcher's role, procedures, data collection, and analysis will also be presented in this chapter to articulate the processes involved to investigate the study's topic. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations and a summary to recap the content described in this section of research.

### **Design**

This applied research study utilized a multimethod approach to investigate the problem of bullying through participant interviews, focus group research, and an online survey to identify solutions to the study's problem. A multi-method design was selected for this study as it allowed for data triangulation in the generation of findings. Patton (2016) shared that a multimethod approach allows the researcher to examine both qualitative and quantitative data to support research and test theories. To better understand the causes and impacts of bullying in Japan, the multimethod design allowed me to interpret participants' qualitative and quantitative responses. As a result, I was able to more effectively identify themes, differences, categories, and other important information investigated in the data.

The design of this study was also conducted through an applied research methodology. According to Bickman and Rog (2009), applied research involves the process of identifying a problem that can be solved through the process of research and study. In alignment with

Bickman and Rog's (2009) definition of applied research, this methodology is appropriate in allowing for an in-depth study about bullying and how it can be addressed effectively.

Additionally, the processes followed the conduct of applied research as described by Bickman and Rog (2009), completing the four sequential stages of defining, designing, implementing, and reporting to provide practical and relevant solutions to the research problem.

### **Research Questions**

**Central Question:** How can the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending elementary schools in Japan be solved?

**Sub-question 1:** How would parents and students in an interview solve the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending a Japanese elementary school in Japan?

**Sub-question 2:** How would educators and administrators in a focus group solve the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending an elementary school in Japan?

**Sub-question 3:** How would quantitative survey data inform the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending an elementary school in Japan?

### **Setting**

The setting of this study was in Japan. This study was conducted at a suburban elementary school in the Japanese community of Tokyo, Machida Japan. The elementary school with kindergarten to fifth grade operates under the Japanese school system allowing international students to attend school tuition-free so entrance exams are not part of the eligibility process for acceptance. The 100 students that are enrolled in the school are 80 % Japanese and 20% of foreign nationality to include European, American, African, and Chinese descent. The 10 teachers at the school are all of Japanese nationality and work under the leadership guidance of two administrators who are also Japanese.



The setting was chosen because it allowed for the collection of data to represent participants from different countries living in the same area of Japan and to provide participant perspectives of bullying across Japan. The location was also important as it allowed the researcher to have onsite interactions using a multimethod research approach to investigate participant responses.

### **Participants**

The selection of participants for this applied research involved inviting parents of non-Japanese students who attended Minami Hana School (pseudonym) in Japan and requesting their participation in an interview. Non-Japanese students of the Minami Hana School were also invited to participate in the interview. Participants were selected using a purposeful sampling method as “is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest” (Palinkas et al., 2013, p. 533). These participants were able to speak to the experience of non-Japanese children attending a local Japanese school. This type of purposeful sampling as described by Suri (2011) allows for the production of “new knowledge by making explicit connections and tensions between individual study reports that were not visible before” (p. 63). As a result, participant collaboration helped to elicit new information for study and provide insight into the causes or solutions of bullying.

The demographic population of the interview participants included four parents of either gender whose non-Japanese children attend a local elementary school in Japan. The children were elementary school students of both genders from 5–12 years old. These students spoke mostly English with varying levels of Japanese fluency. This interview participant group included three students and three parents for a total of six interviewees. This selection of

demographics supports this applied research as described by Hammer (2011), who stated that “without the inclusion of such information, researchers risk assuming the stance of absolutism, which assumes that the phenomena of interest are the same regardless of culture, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status” (p. 261). Thus, I needed to involve participants of different races, gender, work positions, and ethnicity to provide authenticity to the research.

The focus group of participants was comprised of eight people, which included six teachers and two administrators from Minami Hana School. Bickman and Rog (2009) stated that “focus groups help define topics and research questions” (p. 405). Hence, the selection of these participants provided opportunities to ask questions leading to further examination of the research topic. Participants were selected via email using the school’s email directory of parents, teachers, and administrators. I received permission first to have access and utilize the school’s email directory. The focus group research also took place in a local community center to allow participants to participate in a relaxed atmosphere. As shared by Bickman and Rog (2009), utilizing a commercial facility creates a conducive environment to conduct focus group research.

An online survey was created to study participant responses to the central question. A five-point Likert-type scale with multiple choice and closed-ended questions was selected to provide participants access and ease to complete the survey. The five-point Likert scale also allowed participants to indicate their level of agreement to the questions without pressure to express their opinion in great length (Finstad, 2010). From a sample pool of 90 Minami Hana School stakeholders inclusive of parents, students, teachers, and administrators, participants were emailed the survey to respond anonymously. Probabilistic sampling was used for the selection of participants to complete the online survey as it “allows researchers to use well-grounded theories and methods to estimate the characteristics of the study population from the sample data

or test hypotheses about the study population” (Bickman & Rog, 2009, p. 78). The total number of survey participants was 25 and within an average range of participants to support an adequate sample of survey data (Creswell, 2013).

### **The Researcher’s Role**

Living overseas for the majority of my life has afforded me the opportunity to attend international schools across the world and learn within diverse classrooms. My multicultural educational experiences have greatly influenced me to pursue a dissertation in the study of students’ experience in attending overseas schools. As I currently live in Japan, the focus of my study was how non-Japanese students attending elementary schools in Japan address concerns of bullying.

In my English teaching experience working within Japanese schools and with Japanese teachers, there is evidence that what constitutes bullying in the United States or other countries does not translate to the accepted definition of what bullying is in Japan. As a result, non-Japanese parents who have children attending Japanese local or international schools are often not equipped with the strategies nor are they aware of the governing rules that address concerns of bullying (Yoneyama, 2015). In addition, many cases of bullying non-Japanese students are viewed by the school as insignificant because they involve foreigners and are often unreported or unresolved (Akiba, 2004). Thus, my motivation was to find solutions to this critical problem that affects many children attending schools in Japan.

My relationships with participants include friends of friends, family acquaintances, families of colleagues, and families known from interactions at previous local Japanese school events. Researcher bias includes knowing that I was born in Japan and advocating for protecting foreign students who are bullied in Japanese schools. Thus, I must consider as Chenail (2011)

shared that “the researcher as instrument can be the greatest threat to trustworthiness” (p. 257) if bias interferes with true participant interactions and responses.

My role as the researcher was to remain unbiased and to interpret data authentically as it was received and transcribed with accuracy. Conflict of interest could have occurred as I worked in the same organization as two of the participants. However, creating purposeful questioning and utilizing effective interviewing methods helped to ensure conflicts of interest did not impede the results of this study.

### **Procedures**

Procedures for permission to conduct this applied research included the committee chair first reviewing the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application before submission. The IRB checklist was also used to ensure all necessary documents and permissions were included in the application. After the chair reviewed the application with approval, it was submitted to the IRB. Permission from the IRB was obtained by submitting documents with institutional permission from every research site including the elementary school involved in the study (see Appendix F). Once IRB approval was granted and informed consent from participants was given (see Appendices G, H, I), the study was initiated.

Logistical procedures involved getting enough participants to voluntarily assist in sharing responses that helped to further research in this study. These procedures included communicating via phone, email, and on-site locations with participants. On-site location interviews involved the researcher traveling by train and car to meet with willing participants.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data collection in this applied research included the multimethod approach to interview, utilize focus group research, and survey.

## Interviews

The first sub-question for this study investigated how the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending Japanese elementary schools in Japan could be solved through interviews with parents and students. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with participants at a local community center. The responses to these participant interviews were recorded, allowing for transcription and analysis.

The data collection strategy was semi-structured. According to Bickman and Rog (2009), “semi-structured interviews provide practitioners with opportunities to develop a rapport with members of the organization and learn about critical areas that are not readily accessed through standardized questionnaires” (p. 336). Developing a level of trust with interviewees allowed participants to be less reluctant to answer interview questions. Patton (2016) stated that semi-structured interviews would also allow the researcher to proctor questions that could elicit new ideas and responses to the research questions.

Data were also recorded using the Transcribe computer program that allows for audio to be recorded through a computer microphone and integrated with a text editor. Analysis of the recorded data allowed me to examine responses in-depth. I also wrote informal notes during the interviews, listened to recorded playbacks, and reviewed transcripts to help recall important information during the interview.

Table 1 demonstrates the questioning that I utilized to better understand the interviewees’ experiences with the phenomenon as related to the central question (CQ), Sub-question 1 (SQ1) and Sub-question 2 (SQ2). Referencing Appendix A, interview questions for children were also created using student grade-appropriate language and identically aligned with the same meaning, intent, and order as the parent interview questions in Table 1.

Table 1

*Interview Questions*

Question	Interview Questions	Research Question
1.	What is your relation to the school? (i.e., parent or student)	SQ1
2.	How have you become aware of any bullying of non-Japanese students at this elementary school?	SQ1
3.	Where did the bullying of non-Japanese students occur in this elementary school?	SQ1
4.	What events led to the incident(s) of bullying non-Japanese students?	SQ1
5.	What are your thoughts about the potential impacts that bullying has on non-Japanese students?	SQ1
6.	What are your thoughts about Japan's cultural influence on school bullying and its impact on non-Japanese students?	SQ1
7.	How has the bullying of non-Japanese students at this elementary school been addressed by the school's teachers?	SQ1
8.	How has the bullying of non-Japanese students at this elementary school been addressed by the school administrator?	SQ1
9.	What school policies exist to prevent and address bullying at this elementary school?	SQ1
10.	How can school policies be improved to prevent bullying and support non-Japanese students who have been victimized by bullying?	SQ1
11.	What best practices and strategies could teachers and administrators utilize to better prevent and address bullying behaviors at this elementary school?	SQ2
12.	What strategies could non-Japanese students utilize to better protect themselves from being victims of bullying?	CQ
13.	What strategies could parents of non-Japanese students utilize to better support their children if they become victims of bullying?	SQ1
14.	How can a home and school partnership better support non-Japanese students from being bullied in Japanese elementary schools?	SQ2

The first question was used to begin the interview and to create an atmosphere of trust and comfort for the interviewees. Creswell (2013) stated that normally leading interview questions are simple enough for participants to answer and allow them to feel comfortable to engage in further social conversations regarding the topic. The first question also allowed participants to state their supportive and affiliated role with the school. Questions 2–3 gave participants an opportunity to discuss where and how bullying incidents at the elementary school occurred. The significance of Questions 2–3 allowed participants to reflect on incidents of bullying, which Bevan (2014) stated would also allow the researcher to gain more information concerning the phenomenon.

Questions 4–5 gave participants the opportunity to share the direct impact that bullying has on non-Japanese students and how Japanese culture has influenced bullying behavior. Moreover, these types of questions, as stated by Bickman and Rog (2009), allowed for the collection of data that can be used as “fallible evidence about the phenomenon” (p. 231) and to test theories about the research topic.

The next group of Questions 6–9 permitted the interviewees to discuss the school level responses to bullying behaviors. An important aspect of Questions 6–9 was that it allowed participants to share realistic school responses to bullying and actions to address the behavior. According to Creswell (2013), using realist questions in an interview allows participants to validate the phenomenon and its impact.

The remaining Questions 10–13 allowed participants to discuss important best practices and strategies that could be utilized to address and prevent bullying behavior. Moustakas (1994) shared that allowing participants the opportunity to suggest opinions and solutions to the research can help provide evidence in solving research questions.

Interview data were analyzed for accurate participant response and transcription. Data were interpreted following the grounded theory as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The grounded theory also allowed me to construct theories based on the data collected. Coding was used as the primary strategy to categorize and analyze participant responses. Patton (2016) discussed that coding allows the researcher to organize research findings to identify similarities and differences in responses. Open coding was used to examine the similarities and differences identified in the categories by highlighting similar responses with a specific color. Moustakas (1994) discussed that open coding can be utilized to conduct qualitative research in the initial stages of collecting and organizing data for interpretation.

Axial coding was used next to confirm that the categories authentically represent participant responses and to examine if some categories are related. The utilization of axial coding helped to ensure that I had identified and investigated all important factors in the questioning (Chenail, 2011).

The third step in data analysis involved identifying concepts within the data. Allen (2003) shared that identifying concepts during the grounded theory process allows the researcher to group data that are similar in content. This final phase of the grounded theory (called selective coding) was completed after analysis of open and axial coding, which helped reveal key concepts in the data.

Tables were created as the final step in analyzing the interview data. Creswell (2013) stated that creating a table would allow for the transfer of categories and concepts into a readable data format for interpretation. A table for codes and a table for the frequency of codes was created, which allowed me to effectively organize and analyze qualitative results.



Based on the sequencing of grounded theory, I was able to conclude the data analysis with a theory that supported the research study. To ensure that I followed the grounded theory correctly, I utilized the computer program MAXQDA, which assists researchers in data coding, organization, and analysis related to qualitative research.

### **Focus Group**

The second sub-question investigated how the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending a Japanese local elementary school in Japan could be solved through focus group research. Focus group research, as described by Patton (2016), would allow for data to be collected via conversations with the participants. Bickman and Rog (2009) also stated that focus group research helps to “add depth to the responses obtained in the more structured survey” (p. 334), which provided supporting and additional data to analyze participant responses.

The focus group questions that were used to elicit participant responses are presented in the following table.

Table 2

#### *Focus Group Questions*

Question #	Question	Research Questions
1.	How long have you been affiliated with Minami Hana school? (i.e., attended, worked, or have children enrolled)	CQ
2.	When have you observed non-Japanese students being bullied at your school?	SQ2
3.	What types of bullying incidents of non-Japanese students have you observed? (i.e., harassment, teasing, physical harm, and name-calling)	SQ2
4.	Can you describe the type of perpetrators that have bullied non-Japanese students at your school? (i.e., girl, boy, group, larger student, or stronger student)	SQ2

5.	What are your thoughts and perspectives on school bullying?	SQ2
6.	What are your thoughts and beliefs about bullying and its potential impact on non-Japanese student victims?	SQ2
7.	Reflecting on your first observation of a non-Japanese student being bullied, how did you address the bully behavior?	SQ2
8.	Reflecting on any of your encounters with non-Japanese students being bullied, what could you have done differently to address the bullying behavior?	CQ
9.	How could school policy better support, prevent, and address bullying of non-Japanese students in your school?	SQ1
10.	How could your school administrator better support, prevent, and address bullying of non-Japanese students in your school?	SQ1
11.	How could the school staff of teachers and administrators better support parents of non-Japanese students who are bullied at school?	SQ1
12.	What would you suggest as strategies and best practices that teachers could use to better address concerns of bullying non-Japanese students at your school?	SQ2
13.	How do you think the problem of bullying of non-Japanese students is prevented?	SQ2
14.	What strategies could you recommend for parents of non-Japanese students to support their children with bullying in Japanese schools?	SQ1
15.	What strategies could you teach your students to better prevent and address bullying at your school?	SQ2

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Question 1 is an opening question selected to begin the interview and allowed the participants to feel a level of social comfort in discussing the research topic. Creswell (2013) stated that beginning interview questions that are easy for participants to answer allow focus group members to feel comfortable in discussing other related research questions. Question 1 also permitted the researcher to collect qualitative evidence to support the research.

Questions 2–4 allowed the participants to share empirical data based on their knowledge and observations of bullying that occurred in the school. Bickman and Rog (2009) shared that participants' observations and descriptive details can help to validate the research and investigate the phenomenon further.

The next set of Questions 5–8 were written and designed to allow the participants to answer the questions in a social context and explain how Japanese culture influences the perception of school bullying. Akiba (2004) stated that understanding how bullying is perceived in Japanese culture is critical to understanding bullying as a phenomenon in Japan. As such, these questions allowed the researcher to better understand the perceptions of bullying in Japan and the influences of Japanese culture.

The last group of Questions 9–15 were created to give participants an opportunity to suggest solutions, strategies, and best practices to address the bullying of non-Japanese students in elementary school. According to Hamada et al. (2016), through a collaborative partnership involving parents, teachers, and school leaders, solutions can be created to solving the problem of bullying in Japanese schools. Thus, this group of questions created a chance for participants to suggest actionable solutions to solve the problem of school bullying.

An analysis of focus group data was conducted following the grounded theory process as articulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Using the computer program MAXQDA that assists researchers in analyzing research data, focus group data were examined to identify similarities and differences in participant responses. Coding was used to analyze the collected data as Belotto (2018) stated that the process of coding allows for “the interpretation of large segments of text and portions of information in new ways” (p. 262) that can be used for interpreting research (p. 262). The coding process of the grounded theory was followed using open, axial,

and selective codes to produce categories for analysis. Following the coding process of identifying similar categories, sub-categories, and concepts, themes were revealed to suggest a potential solution to SQ2.

### **Survey**

The third sub-question for this study examined how quantitative survey data would inform the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending Japanese elementary schools in Japan. An online formatted survey referenced in Appendix B was used so that participants could complete multiple choice closed-ended questioning with ease. However, Bickman and Rog (2009) shared that using closed-ended questions via the Internet has a downside in “that they require time and effort for subjects to complete and programming skills from researchers to ensure that they actually prevent invalid responses” (p. 425). Thus, I ensured that my closed-ended questions were not very difficult to answer and were not overly time-consuming.

The survey was sent to parents and staff of the Minami Hana School to participate voluntarily. Student invitations to participate in the survey were sent via the parent's email address to ensure parent and child consent was maintained. Twenty-five participants were then selected using purposeful sampling. As described by Bickman and Rog (2009), a type of purposeful sampling would help to “generate much detail from a few cases, to maximize the possibility of answering the research questions” (p. 291). Participants were contacted using the school's email directory. Permission was granted before having access to the school's email directory.

The online survey questions focused on content related to the bullying of non-Japanese students within an elementary school. Original survey questions were created along with the use of survey questions from Olweus's (1997) Bullying/Victim Questionnaire. Appendices B and C

describes the survey questions that were created and sent to participants. Questions from Appendices B and C were transferred to Google Forms as the online platform allowed me to organize the questions online and to create a secure survey.

Survey data were analyzed using charts, tables, and graphs to quantify the responses and analyze the participant feedback to identify data meaning in the research. Moreover, using a five-point Likert-type scale permitted me to conduct self-reporting to scale responses identified in the research.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations included minimizing researcher bias to greater support the participants' responses to solving a known problem. The researcher ensured that biases were controlled as recommended by Bickman and Rog (2009) who articulated that researchers who utilize "a series of additional quality controls such as triangulation, contextualization, and a nonjudgmental orientation, place a check on the negative influence of bias" (p. 543). Pseudonyms were used to ensure participant confidentiality. Interview and focus group questions were open-ended and conversational so that any misunderstandings could be corrected as the discussions occurred. Additional considerations included ensuring all necessary approvals, informed consent, and participant confidentiality was maintained. Participant consent was confirmed via email, using IRB-approved participant consent forms (see Appendices G, H, & I). Hence, controlling ethical bias helped to ensure that the research was authentic and reliable.

### **Summary**

Chapter Three provided an overview of the purpose of the study and the research that was conducted to arrive at solutions to the study's problem. The multimethod design selected for this

applied study permitted a triangulation of data to further analyze information related to school bullying. The participant selection was also discussed in the importance of providing authentic participant responses that were used as evidence to support or challenge ideas in this study. The research questions, setting, researcher's role, and procedures provided a framework to further understand the steps that were necessary to conduct valid research involving bullying.

Description of the data collection and analysis process also provided detailed steps involved in organizing and analyzing participant response data. The chapter concluded with the importance of ethical considerations to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this applied study was to solve the problem of bullying for non-Japanese students in an elementary school in Japan and to formulate a solution to address the problem. The problem was non-Japanese students were being bullied in Japan's elementary schools. This chapter details the data analyzed to include descriptions of participants, participant responses, and a presentation of research findings based on the study's investigation of the central question. Data results were further synthesized into themes to reveal correlated participant experiences as analyzed through interviews, focus group research, and an online survey. The analysis of data culminated in three themes: improve school and home communication, improve instruction and learning for multicultural education, and improve school intervention responses to bullying.

### **Participants**

Creswell (2013) wrote that to obtain information relevant to a phenomenon within a large population, a selection of study participants can provide "multiple perspectives on a topic and diverse views" (p. 47). As such, this research required involving multiple participants who could share information and experiences related to the bullying of non-Japanese students in Japanese elementary schools. Thirty-nine participants were involved in this study as described in the summary demographics of Table 3. The participant population from the interviews, focus group research, and a survey also provided an adequate sample size to conduct mixed-method research.

Table 3

*Full Sample Summary of Demographics from Interview, Focus Group, and Survey*

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency (N=39)	Percentage
Gender	Male	13	33%
	Female	26	67%
Age	5–12	8	21%
	25–55	31	79%
Nationality	Non-Japanese	23	59%
	Japanese	16	41%
Position	Student	8	21%
	Parent	15	38%
	Teacher	12	31%
	Administrator	4	10%

### **Interview Participants**

Selected interview participants included three parents who have students at the Minami Hana School and three students enrolled in the school. The six participants were chosen using a purposeful sampling method for a semi-structured interview. As suggested by Bickman and Rog (2009), purposeful sampling provides the researcher with the opportunity to select participants who are knowledgeable about a phenomenon and who are willing to share their accounts.

**Adults.** The three adults consisted of two males and one female adult, referred to in this research by the pseudonyms of Parent One, Parent Two, and Parent Three. Of the two males, Parent One was a 37-year-old Caucasian from the United States, and Parent Two was 42 years old and of African descent from England. Parent One worked for a private computer company in Japan and Parent Two worked at a manufacturing business in Tokyo. The female, Parent Three, was a 28-year-old Caucasian from Canada who worked for a private Internet company in Yokohama, Japan. All adults had lived in Japan for over a year and had one child enrolled in the



school. The adults also shared that they spoke and read various levels of Japanese but were all fluent in English. The average age of all adults was 35 years old.

**Students.** Of the three participating students, two were female and one was a male; they are referred to in this research by the pseudonyms Student One, Student Two, and Student Three. The female students were both American; Student One was a 9-year-old Caucasian fourth grader and Student Two was a 10-year-old, African American fifth-grader. The one male student, Student Three, was an 8-year-old African American second grader from Canada. All of the students shared that they were able to read, write, and speak various levels of Japanese, and all were fluent in English. The average age of student participants was 9 years old.

### **Focus Group Participants**

The focus group participants in this study consisted of six teachers and two administrators. Within this study, the six teachers were referred to by the pseudonyms of Teacher One, Teacher Two, Teacher Three, Teacher Four, Teacher Five, and Teacher Six. The administrators were identified as Administrator One and Administrator Two. All of the teachers were Japanese females who could write and speak at various levels of English. The teachers also shared that they have only taught in Japan and they had at least three years of teaching experience in a Japanese elementary school. Both Teacher One (27 years old) and Teacher Two (33 years old) taught second grade. Teacher Three was 39 years old and taught third grade. Teacher Four taught fourth grade and was 30 years old. Teacher Five, a 31 year old, taught fifth grade, and Teacher Six was 37 years old and taught first grade.

Both administrators were Japanese, one male and one female. Administrator One was a 48-year-old male participant who only had teaching and administration experience in Japanese schools. Administrator Two was a 41-year-old female who also had administration and teaching

experience in Japanese schools only. Both administrators were able to speak and write at different levels of English. The average age of all focus group participants was 39 years old.

### Survey Group Participants

Using probabilistic sampling, 25 participants consisting of teachers, parents, students, and administrators from the Minami Hana School participated in the survey. Simple random sampling was used by assigning numbers to each participant and then randomly selecting from the numbers by process. The numbers selected were then included in the sample population. The results revealed that six students, twelve parents, five teachers, and two administrators participated in the survey. Table 4 describes the gender, age, and position of each participant as it relates to the study. Participant demographic data were categorized and sorted into sub-categories to determine the frequency and percentage of each group of participants (see Table 4).

Table 4

#### *Survey Participant Demographics Data*

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency ( $N=39$ )	Percentage
Gender	Male	9	36%
	Female	16	64%
Age	5–12	5	23%
	25–48	20	77%
Position	Student	5	20%
	Parent	12	48%
	Teacher	6	24%
	Administrator	2	8%

The survey demographic data included both male and female participants with 64% being female and 36% male. The age band of participants from 5–12 years old was 23% and 77% of participants were in the age band of 25–48 years old. The position of participants as it related to their affiliation with the school was 20% students, 48% parents, 24% teachers, and 8%

administrators. This collected survey data was further utilized to analyze responses and correlate results to find solutions to SQ3.

## **Results**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents and students of the Minami Hana School to identify themes related to their experiences of bullying non-Japanese students at the school. Second, a focus group was organized with teachers and administrators to ascertain themes related to their accounts of bullying at the school. Finally, a quantitative Likert-type survey was administered to measure student, parent, teacher, and administrator perspectives concerning the phenomenon. The survey data was also used to corroborate themes supported in the interviews and focus group research. Data collection for all mixed-methods was conducted confidentially in accordance with IRB guidelines and safely following local COVID guidance regarding social distancing. Thus, utilizing a triangulation of data collected from the interviews, focus group, and survey, the results were analyzed to investigate solutions to each research sub-question.

### **Sub-question 1**

SQ1 asked, “How would parents and students in an interview solve the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending a Japanese elementary school in Japan?” Interviews were conducted with parents and students from the Minami Hana School to find themes related to the bullying of non-Japanese students at the school. Open, axial, and selective coding techniques were applied to code interview responses by themes (see Table 5). The coded responses organized by themes were then itemized by frequency to identify the most prevalent themes impacting SQ1 (see Table 6). The themes uncovered in the qualitative analysis were

improved instruction and learning for multicultural education, improve school and home communication, and improve school intervention responses to bullying.

Table 5

*Open, Axial, and Selective Codes From Interviews*

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
A need to understand cultures; student differences lead to more bullying; actively challenge school racism; support for diverse learners; a need for celebrated differences; scaffold learning concerns	Culture awareness needs; increased diversity exposure	Increased learning about cultures and diversity
Segregation of students exists; Ostracized students due to their difference; Japanese student demographics are Japanese homogenous	Less homogenous demographic; more diverse schools	Integrating more Japanese schools
Implementing more Western education curriculum; prepare students for life internationally; less focus on national perspectives in education; adopting more 21st century educational resources	Improved utilization of 21st century resources; less traditional teaching	Adopting 21st century education practices
Translation services; more access to readable school material; translators for foreign families; a need for more in-processing support	Assist language minorities; language challenges	Bridging communication gap between school and foreign families
Bullying often unaddressed; bully protagonists are often admired; the victim receives greater punishment than the bully; current school punishment rarely deters bullying	Bullying recourse; punishment equity	More severe punishments
Cultural acceptance of bullying; kids bullied because of their differences; feeling of self-helplessness; levels of peer victimization; a desire to support children; needs to collaborate with school; collective responses needed; more parent involvement	A collective response to bullying; different intervention	Support for intervention changes

Table 6

*Frequency of Codes, Parent and Student Interviews*

Codes	Frequency
Increased learning about cultures and diversity	30
Integrating more Japanese schools	10
Adopting 21st century best educational practices	20
Bridging communication gap between school and foreign families	27
More severe punishments	15
Support for intervention changes	25

From the interviews, six codes were identified as the most frequently reported and analyzed to reveal three themes. These themes derived from the context of the codes and represented a collation of interview responses to SQ1. The three themes identified were to improve instruction and learning for multicultural education, improve school and home communication, and improve school intervention responses to bullying.

**Theme #1: Instruction and learning for multicultural education.** From interviews conducted with parents and students, improved instruction and learning for a multicultural education was the most prevalent theme in response to SQ1. According to Richard-Amato and Snow (1992), multicultural education is a type of education that incorporates values, texts, beliefs, and histories from different cultures as a means to provide educational equity for every student. Participants shared individual perspectives that supported the need to implement more access and equitable instruction and learning from a global perspective. Through the implementation of more multicultural learning, participants shared that students and teachers can learn a respect for different cultures instead of choosing to alienate others because of cultural differences. For example, Parent One stated,

In Japan students who are physically or culturally different, like many foreign children, are often made out to be targets for bullying because of their differences. Japanese

schools need to teach an acceptance of different cultures, races, and beliefs if they want all students to succeed in school instead of fertilizing environments for bullying.

The viewpoint for improved multicultural instruction was echoed by Parent Three:

The Japanese curriculum is a platform for nationalist propaganda to teach students pride in being Japanese while shunning and downplaying the importance and contributions of foreigners in their studies. How can my child learn a sense of self-worth in school learning from this perspective? It is no wonder why foreign kids are often bullied because even their history is viewed as inferior and unimportant.

Participants shared that because instruction and learning were based on a Japanese perspective, there existed the need to include a more multicultural perspective if all students were to learn the acceptance of different cultures. Parent One also reiterated the idea for multicultural instruction in saying that “in order for Japanese students to be more accepting of foreign students in their class, they need to learn a respect for diversity.” Parent Two agreed, stating that the idea of including diversity as a subject integrated into the Japanese curriculum could eventually help to dispel misunderstandings and xenophobia that is often the cause for non-Japanese children being bullied.

Similar to parent responses, the students shared their concerns in addressing bullying through education. For example, Student One explained that “none of the teachers seemed to know anything about people who aren’t Japanese” and that there existed a need to teach Japanese students more about other cultures to prevent the bullying of children from different countries. Student One’s response was shared by Students Two and Three indicating the lack of teaching and learning concerning global society and different cultures. Supporting the need for a multicultural education, Student Two shared the following:

During our lessons, the teachers only talked about how great Japanese people are and what they did in history. But they really never talk about other people like me, who are not Japanese and what different people have done, which makes me feel bad and left out. The kids in my class have sometimes teased me because they say foreigners are stupid and lazy because they only learn about how great Japanese people are in class.

Commenting that foreign students become targets of bullying because of their foreignness, Student One described the negative and emotional impact related to the lack of cultural diversity instruction. In agreement with the concept of instituting multicultural learning, Student Three continued,

In my school in America we had Black History Month and Spanish History month and I wish we had that in my Japanese school because then Japanese kids could learn more about other kids besides themselves and learn to like other kids who are different instead of trying to bullying them because they are different.

Interview participants all commented on the disparity between the lack of multicultural education and the need to implement improved instruction for diversity and diverse learners to prevent potential incidents of bullying.

**Theme #2: School and home communication.** The second most prevalent theme as revealed in the frequency of 15 responses was the need to improve school and home communications. Each of the interviewed participants commented on the importance of school and home communication and how it impacted the prevention of bullying non-Japanese students. Parent Two offered the explanation that “when bullying has occurred at school, I rarely hear about the incident from the school, but instead I hear about it from my child who explains that the teacher saw it and did nothing.” Parent One added that parents are unable to prevent the

continuous bullying of their children when the school fails to inform parents about bullying events. The lack of communication from school to home was a common response from parent interviewees, in which Parent Two further shared that the school needs to improve the communication with parents if parents are going to help their child prevent bullying and help with their child's transition into Japanese school. The parents described Japanese cultural differences in that Japanese schools do not like confrontation and discussions that could cause confrontations are often avoided. A similar response to this idea of avoiding challenging conversations was described by Parent Three:

Japanese schools expect children to be self-reliant and deal with bullying as a way to build self-confidence, so they rarely share situations involving our children getting bullied. . . . I believe this is poor communication on the school's part and ultimately ruins relationships with the school.

Parents expressed the importance of collaborating with the school to combat the bullying and lessen the responsibility of their child to confront the problem on his or her own. As stated by Parent One,

I always want to be there for my child and show that I have their back no matter what. But, when my child gets bullied at school because they are a foreigner and the school is aware of it, I expect that they need to tell me, otherwise how can I better support my child to confront bullying? How can I show my child that I am there for them? The school has a responsibility to tell me what is going on so that bullying can be prevented and together we can nip bullying in the bud before it gets worse.

Students Two and Three also shared their challenges and experiences with communications between school and home. Student Two said,



I wish the teacher would send more information home in English because my family can't always understand Japanese words and me too sometimes and sometimes the information is about school events and if I don't understand then I go to school and kids bullying me because I didn't prepare for the event like I didn't wear the right color shirt or didn't bring the right thing from my house . . . I don't like that.

The idea that language was also a barrier and catalyst for bullying non-Japanese students was shared by all three student participants. Student Three added that he believed anytime he was bullied for being a foreigner that he could not tell the teacher because the teacher would not tell his parents about it nor would she call the parents of the bully. Student Three's response further highlighted the lack of communication related in advocating for bullied victims. A review of the collective perspectives of interviewed participants revealed evidence that improving school and home communication could be a prevention to school bullying.

**Theme #3: School intervention responses to bullying.** Collated from the participant interviews, the third most frequent theme revealed was school intervention responses to bullying. Participants provided 25 similar responses related to this theme during their participation. The concepts generated from their responses also provide details concerning their perspectives on improving bullying interventions for non-Japanese students. Parent Two commented,

In Japanese culture, shame is often the most severe punishment children face for bad school behavior, by the teacher telling that student in front of the entire class that their behavior is causing trouble for everyone. However, I think most teachers would rather not call shame to bullying happening in class, but instead allow the victim to figure out a way to stop the bullying or to change themselves to be like everyone else so that they

won't get bullied, and this puts my child in a terrible situation and it's probably the same for many foreign children in Japanese schools.

In order to prevent the occurrence of bullying, participants felt that too many of the current school interventions relied on the children being their own advocate and defender. Parent One also discussed the challenges with understanding current school interventions to bullying. He said,

I believe current school bullying interventions are ineffective because they never empower the victim with support to confront the bullying and zero-tolerance policies for bullying need to be adopted to ensure our children are protected in school when we cannot be there for them.

The need to adopt improved school bullying prevention policies that support all students was a reoccurring topic throughout the interviews. Student One also agreed with this sentiment: "In school, there are no rules on the wall about bullying, so I think that Japanese kids and teachers don't think it is an important rule to follow . . . they need to make more rules about no bullying."

During his interview, Student Three shared similar opinions to this theme in commenting,

In my old school in Canada, my class made class rules together and we all said no bullying, but here in Japanese school we don't get to make any rules and I wish we could make new rules about no bullying.

By applying these ideas to implement improved policies for bullying prevention, Student Two stated,

If my Japanese school had new rules that would make teachers stop the bullying and make the bullies not want to bully us, then I would enjoy school more and my other friends who aren't Japanese could enjoy school more also.

## Sub-question 2

SQ2 for this study asked, “How would educators and administrators in a focus group solve the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending an elementary school in Japan?” Eight participants (six teachers and two administrators) responded to open-ended questions in a focus group about SQ2. The qualitative research in this section revealed codes that highlighted the need to address concerns of bullying. Open, axial, and selective coding techniques were applied to code focus group responses by themes (see Table 7). The coded responses organized by themes were then itemized by frequency to identify the most prevalent themes impacting SQ2 (see Table 8). The themes uncovered in the qualitative analysis were improve instruction and learning for multicultural education, improve school and home communication, and improve school intervention responses to bullying.

Table 7

### *Open, Axial, and Selective Codes, Focus Group*

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
Improve student engagement; bridging instructional content across cultures; use instruction to prepare for Japanese society; fusion of Japanese learning with foreign perspectives; misunderstanding foreigners; xenophobia questions	Lack of understanding foreign values; lack of understanding outside cultures	Increased learning about cultures and diversity
Peer learning; build upon foreign student’s experience in Japan; language is a barrier; increased participation in school functions	Low student collaboration; missing integrative opportunities	Increase foreign student social belonging
Student needs for self-efficacy; support foreign family communication problems; helping understand the Japanese way; communicated Japanese school values; language barriers; accepting foreigners as group members	Value of communication; interest in decreasing language barriers	Bridging communication gap between school and foreign families

Becoming silent is not always a resolution; unwanted conflict avoidance; teachers careful not to offend victims/ bully; unsure about intervening; missing solutions; desire to intervene; wants to change	Possibilities for learning; change in approaches	Support for intervention changes
Foreign student needs undervalued; priority for teaching Japanese social skills; foreigners need to respect Japanese thinking; Japanese citizens are a priority	Japanese and foreign students are treated differently; access and equity issues	Awareness of Japanese privilege
Model behavior; priority for Japanese mannerisms; more indoctrination time for foreigners; model importance of group collaboration; group over individualism; Japanese societal expectations; more foreigner assimilation	Japanese behavior expectations; values of social mannerisms	Model Japanese values

Table 8

*Frequency Codes, Focus Group*

Codes	Frequency
Increase foreign student social belonging	8
Bridging communication between school and foreign families	24
Support for intervention changes	15
Increased learning about cultures and diversity	29
Awareness of Japanese privilege	7
Model Japanese values	10

From the focus group, six codes were identified as the most frequently reported and analyzed to reveal three themes. These themes, derived from the context of the codes, also represented a collation of interview responses to SQ1. The three themes identified were to

(a) improve instruction and learning for multicultural education, (b) improve school and home communication, and (c) improve school intervention responses to bullying.

**Theme #1: Instruction and learning for multicultural education.** The most prevalent theme that emerged from the focus group participants was to improve instruction and learning for multicultural education. During conversations with participants, there was a frequency of 29 related comments associated with Theme #1. Discussions during the focus group revealed the concern and support for implementing more multicultural instruction as a strategy to address the bullying of non-Japanese students. Teacher Two, for example, stated,

I am happy that more foreigner student come to our school, but I believe the Japanese student is sometimes afraid of them because they don't learn a lot about other country's people and if Japanese student is afraid or they don't know foreigner, they may feel like they have to bully the foreigner because they are different and not like Japanese.

The idea that non-Japanese students are bullied because they appear different compared to Japanese and the lack of learning about other cultures was also evident from Teacher Five's comment:

At the young age, we teach children the importance of being the same because in Japan we think this keeps peace and everyone happy. But, because more foreigners live Japan, I think it is important that we should teach more about other countries, other culture, other language, and other people. I think if we teach children at young age more about the world and the different people, then there is a chance for them to understand that being different is ok and that because someone is foreigner does not make them wrong, but we can like them also because they are different.

Similar to comments from Teacher Two and Teacher Five, participants discussed how Japanese social values and the lack of multicultural instruction within their curriculum impacted the manner in which non-Japanese are perceived and treated in school. For example, Teacher Two stated,

I wish there was time to teach more about other cultures and countries and foreign ways, but in our curriculum, it is more important to teach about the Japanese way of thinking so that our students will grow up to be good Japanese citizens. But, this type of teaching is not always good because Japan is not only Japanese people now. We have many foreigners living here, we have the Olympics coming, and many foreign restaurants. If we teach students more about foreigners and other country's thinking, I think Japanese students will understand and want to make friends with *gaijin* students instead of thinking of ways to bully.

The idea to implement and embrace multiculturalism in the school to address bullying was encouraged by school leaders as evident in Administrator Two's statement:

In Japan, it is said that the nail that sticks out gets hammered. We teach children the importance of being like the group, behaving like the group, and looking like the group. But, this is sometimes difficult for the *gaikoku-jin* student because they are born looking different from the Japanese and they become easy targets for *ijimekko* because they don't look, sound, and behave like the group. But, I believe it could be very helpful for our students to learn more about other cultures in school as we want them to be able to get along with other country's people not just with Japanese.

Focus group participants shared their value for multiculturalism in the classroom and the potential impact that it could serve in changing Japanese values and beliefs to be more accepting of non-Japanese students and their perceived differences.

**Theme #2: School and home communication.** As the second most reoccurring theme, improving school and home communication was a reemerging response within the focus group. Similar to comments shared during the participant interviews, qualitative focus group responses viewed the importance of communication between school and home as an opportunity to prevent the bullying of non-Japanese students. Twenty-four frequent responses from the focus group provided evidence that school and home communication was a critical factor involving incidents of bullying. Teacher One said,

It is sometimes difficult to explain to foreigner parents the Japanese way of talking about the bully. We try to tell these families that children need to learn to solve this problem so that they can be mentally stronger. But, the foreigner families cannot understand this thinking and they cannot understand when we explain in English, so also there is language problem.

Teacher Six explained that concerns with Japanese language translations that lead to misunderstandings and questions about how bullying is perceived is “also a big reason why many foreign families come to school and want to talk about and complain about their child getting bullied.” Teacher Two shared that there exists a perception amongst non-Japanese families that bullying is not discussed in the school or the classroom, “but this is not true and I wish there was a better way to talk about this with parents so they can help with bullying and talk about bullying like we do to stop it.” Group participants discussed how language barriers present challenges in communicating and collaborating with non-Japanese parents to confront bullying

in school. However, some comments expressed the need for different home and school communication to improve bullying. For example, Teacher Three further explained, “When our foreign families come to school they want to talk about why their child who got bullied or why the school doesn’t always call and send message about bullying problems at school and it is because it is a class problem that students and the teacher should be able to solve without parents helping.” As described during the participant interviews, there exist perceptions that teaching children self-reliance is a valued social skill in Japanese society. Administrator Two further described the importance of communication with non-Japanese families in addressing concerns for bullying non-Japanese students in that “we need to find a better way to communicate and translate our school policies about bullying so we can work together to help non-Japanese student enjoy their time in school.” By working collectively with parents and providing opportunities for open dialogue, participants provided evidence that school and home communication could be improved.

**Theme #3: School intervention responses to bullying.** The third most important theme within the focus group research discussion was improving school intervention responses to bullying. From collected focus group responses there was a frequency of 15 comments associated with school intervention responses to bullying. Teacher Four stated,

At school, we typically stop the bullying like hitting and kicking if we see it, however, we do not always want to interfere with these student problems if there is name-calling and such things, because kids need to learn how to fix this problem by themselves. If we were to interfere and protect the child getting bullied then that child would look more weak and become more bullied besides not being Japanese.



Participants described how they were cautious to intervene during student bullying especially for non-Japanese students because there existed the potential to draw more attention to their differences. Teacher Five explained, “I want to help my students who are not Japanese to enjoy school also and not worry about the bullying, but if I protect too much the bullied student, then other students might not like him or play with him and maybe he will not want to come to school.” Teacher Three added, “I wish there was a better way to protect kids who are not Japanese from bullies because I think it would make their families happy and maybe not worry the child so much.” Participants shared ideas that resonated with the want to improve bullying interventions in school. This idea to improve and support school responses to bullying was also articulated by Administrator Two:

Yes, bullying non-Japanese students in school does happen because they are different and I think they will be more stronger with this experience. But, I believe it would be good to possibly try more Western ways to stop bullying, I’m not sure the best way, but maybe there are some good ideas we can try.

Focus group participants shared the idea that there are opportunities to improve school responses to bullying, which could be implemented to support and protect non-Japanese students.

### **Sub-question 3**

SQ3 for this study asked, “How would quantitative survey data inform the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending an elementary school in Japan?” Utilizing an online five-point Likert-type survey, 25 participants inclusive of teachers, students, administrators, and parents of the Minami Hana School responded to closed-ended questions related to SQ3. The quantitative survey responses were then analyzed to compare and triangulate data and themes collated from interviews and focus group research. Moreover, the responses also represented

how participants perceived the problem of bullying to include interventions, preventions, observations, and opinions about the bullying of non-Japanese students. For each question, a mean and scale score were calculated and outliers were considered against other variables by identifying standard deviations (see Table 9).

Table 9

*Participant Responses to Likert-type Survey Questions*

Question	Scale Score	Mean	SD
1	65	2.6	1.29
2	53	2.12	.97
3	59	2.36	.75
4	57	2.28	.54
5	70	2.8	.95
6	33	1.4	.57
7	33	1.32	.55
8	32	1.28	.54
9	42	1.68	1.06
10	38	1.52	.65
11	72	2.88	1.05
12	70	2.8	1.04
13	72	2.92	1.01
14	73	2.92	1.03
15	76	3.04	.93
16	73	2.92	.9
17	69	2.76	1.05
18	68	2.72	.93
19	67	2.68	.98
20	78	3.12	1.05

A pivot table was also created to further analyze participant responses to the survey questions based on a comparison of means values. Comparative data was generated from the pivot table to corroborate survey data and identify underlying concepts and themes. The generated data for the

pivot table can be seen in Table 10, and a chart of total survey findings can be found in Appendix D.

Table 10

*Pivot Table of Mean Values for Participant Responses from Likert-type Survey*

Questions	S	P	T	A	M
1. I have witnessed bullying at school in the past month to include non-Japanese students being victimized.	3.8	1.91	3.00	2.5	2.80
2. I have observed non-Japanese students being bullied at school in the past month.	3.0	1.58	2.50	2.0	2.27
3. I have seen non-Japanese students bullied verbally.	3.0	2.08	2.50	2.0	2.39
4. I have witnessed a group of students bully non-Japanese students.	2.8	2.16	2.16	2.0	2.28
5. I am aware of non-Japanese students being bullied through social exclusion.	4.0	2.66	2.33	2.0	2.75
6. I am aware of non-Japanese students being bullied online at school (cyberbullying).	1.4	1.41	1.33	1.5	1.41
7. I have intervened to stop the bullying of non-Japanese students at school.	1.6	1.25	1.33	1.0	1.29
8. I Have prevented the bullying of non-Japanese students at school.	1.4	1.25	1.33	1.0	1.24
9. I witnessed the bullying of non-Japanese students, yet I didn't get involved.	3.0	1.08	2.00	1.0	1.77
10. Teachers and the administrator have prevented non-Japanese students from being bullied at school.	1.2	1.16	2.30	2.0	1.67

11. School policies are effective in preventing bullying.	2.4	2.50	3.33	5.0	3.30
12. School policies are effective in preventing the bullying of non-Japanese students.	2.0	2.50	3.33	5.0	3.20
13. Class rules are effective in preventing bullying in the classroom.	2.0	2.50	3.83	4.5	3.20
14. Class rules are effective in preventing the bullying of non-Japanese students in the classroom.	2.0	2.50	4.00	4.5	2.92
15. Teacher strategies are effective in preventing bullying of non-Japanese students at school.	3.0	2.41	3.83	4.5	3.25
16. Teacher, administrator, or school counselor support is effective in supporting non-Japanese students who have been victims of bullying.	2.6	2.41	3.66	4.5	3.43
17. Supportive strategies are available for non-Japanese students to prevent themselves from being bullied.	1.8	2.50	3.33	5.0	3.29
18. The school effectively supports parents of non-Japanese students whose children have been victims of bullying.	2.6	2.25	3.16	4.5	3.15
19. The school effectively communicates problems of school bullying to all parents when events occur.	2	2.16	3.66	4.5	3.12
20. The school effectively supports non-Japanese students to transition to socially and culturally to a Japanese school environment.	3	2.41	4.00	5.0	3.60

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*Note.* S=students, P=parents, T=teachers, A=administrators

An additional table was created to categorize survey questions based on their topic as it related to bullying. The survey topics included witnessing and awareness of bullying, intervening and preventing bullying, the effectiveness of school policies and class rules, and school supports for preventing bullying. Mean scores were calculated across the surveyed topics to provide more comparative data related to the participants' responses (see Table 11).

Table 11

*Calculated Mean Scores of Categorized Survey Questions*

Categorized Survey Questions	Questions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Witnessing and an awareness of bullying	1–6	2.31	.97
Intervening and preventing bullying	7–10	1.49	.74
Effectiveness of school policies and class rules	11–14	3.24	1.02
School supports preventing bullying	15–20	3.28	.97

Data collected from Tables 7–9 were examined to identify trends and reoccurring themes. In the examination of the survey quantitative data, correlations could be made with the three major themes produced in participant interviews and focus group responses. Data disaggregated from the survey responses supported inferences that instruction and learning for multicultural education, school, and home communication, and school intervention responses to bullying were critical themes supported by this quantitative data.

**Theme #1: Instruction and learning for multicultural education.** From the interviews and focus group research, the prominent theme of improving instruction and learning for a multicultural education can be correlated with the survey data. In Table 9, Questions 1–6 of participants' scores indicated a mean of 2.3 and a standard deviation of .97 as it relates to the category of witnessing and awareness of bullying. The mean score revealed that on average

between once or twice a month and up to once per week, there was an awareness and witnessing of bullying occurring at school. Inferences from the data could conclude that the frequency of bullying incidents is prevalent enough to be addressed with intervention. Correlated data can also be gleaned in the pivot table which shows a frequent level of bullying occurrences, with students and teachers having the greatest awareness and observations (see Table 8). Referencing the qualitative data responses from the interviews and focus group research to address bullying within a cultural context, the quantitative data from this survey reflects a need to address the frequency of the bullying problem that could potentially be resolved through instruction and learning for multicultural education.

**Theme #2: School and home communication.** The Likert mean scores calculated across survey questions were also correlated to make implications against the second most prevalent theme of school and home communication. Analyzing responses from Questions 5, 6, and 9 in Table 7, parents, teachers, and administrators reported witnessing bullying less than students averaging once or twice a month, with low mean scores ranging from 1.00 to 2.66. It could be inferred based on the qualitative interview and focus group data that the low scores are attributed to challenges related to home and school communication.

Additional data findings from Questions 18 and 19, as analyzed in pivot Table 7, also reflect the concerns that school and home communication has not been highly effective. The mean score of 2.72 for Question 18 and 2.68 for Question 19 reveal that survey participants disagree that school and home communication is adequate. Thus, it could be inferred from the data that an improvement of communication could be a response to address bullying concerns.

**Theme #3: School intervention responses to bullying.** An examination of the Likert-type survey data also produced results related to the improvement of school intervention

responses to bullying. The quantitative data reflected student, teacher, parent, and administrator perceptions concerning school interventions for bullying which could be derived from Questions 7, 8, 10, and 11–17. In reference to Table 10, Questions 7, 8, and 10 are categorized within the intervening and preventing bullying cluster with a low mean calculated average of 1.49. In reference to Question 7, which asked if participants had ever tried to stop the bullying of non-Japanese students, the responses indicated the frequency of occurrence was between never and once or twice a month. Questions 8 and 10 had similar responses to Question 7 in which participants had never successfully stopped or been aware of school staff members who had prevented the bullying of non-Japanese students. The low mean average score derived from Questions 7, 8, and 10 can imply that participants perceived interventions and preventions to school bullying as ineffective or infrequently used.

Under the categories of the effectiveness of school policies and class rules and school supports for preventing bullying as referenced in Table 10, Questions 11–17 are categorized to reveal additional needs for effective bullying interventions. The mean score of 3.24 for the effectiveness of school policies and class rules category and the 3.28 mean of school supports preventing bullying group represents a neutral response from participants that the school has effective bullying interventions. For example, Question 12 asked if participants believed that school policies were effective in preventing the bullying of non-Japanese students which revealed a mean score of 2.8 and responses ranging from disagree to neutral. Questions 13 and 14 had similar responses which indicated that participants felt class rules were also ineffective against preventing bullying with a mean average of 2.92 and responses ranging from disagree to neutral. The data findings from Questions 15–17 are also supported by results in Tables 8 and 9 which show comparable counts to Questions 11–14 with a mean average response of neutral.

From the data results, it could be concluded that there are opportunities to improve the impact of current school bullying measures. Additional data findings revealed that participants do not agree that current preventive and intervention methods are making an impact to resolve bullying.

### **Discussion**

The theoretical and empirical literature previously reviewed in this applied research examined the effects of school bullying and the growing concerns of the phenomenon as a problematic social behavior that has impacted the lives of many students. Current literature reviewed also draws upon multiple data sources to identify bullying as a global issue affecting schools in many countries like Japan, both culturally and socially (Yoneyama, 2015). From an analysis of preceding scientific studies and written works, the findings in this research confirm, challenge, and extend existing perspectives and theories concerning the bullying phenomenon.

#### **Theoretical Literature**

Bandura's (1977b) social cognitive theory (SCT) provided a theoretical framework to analyze bullying as it relates to this study. According to the SCT, bullying as a learned behavior is acquired through observation and connections with one's environment through bidirectional interactions called reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1986). As such, results from the interviews, focus group responses, and survey provided evidence that bullying can be influenced by the environment, and in turn, the environment could be influenced by the behavior. In this study of non-Japanese students who were bullied, Student One provided an example that bullying never occurred until she went into the classroom which provided an atmosphere for bullying to transpire and for others to participate. Reciprocal determinism could be attributed to Student Two's experience as the classroom created a platform for bullying to manifest and for the behavior to influence others.



The SCT perspective was further validated by other participants who recalled similar events in which both the environment and behavior had bidirectional influences. Participant responses helped to reveal the emergence of Theme #1 to improve instruction and learning for multicultural education. The study's findings provided details within Theme #1 that cultural and social acceptance of bullying greatly influenced classroom environments, making them conducive to bullying. As a result, participants shared that there existed the need to address the environment through multicultural education as a possible solution to SQ1. Moreover, through the application of the SCT, it can be further investigated to examine if improvements to the classroom environment lead to reciprocal outcomes of improved student behavior or decreased opportunities for bullying.

Another theoretical perspective of the SCT confirmed in this study is self-efficacy. Bandura (1986) explained that self-efficacy influences and encourages one's values, morals, and actions. As it relates to school bullying, self-efficacy is the intrinsic belief that the aggressor can employ bullying behavior to achieve desirable outcomes (DeLara, 2018). In this research, participants provided knowledge and empirical evidence of bullies who displayed confident behavior through verbal, physical, and psychological acts of aggression towards their victims. For example, Student Two shared that she knew her bully was empowered to continue his behavior, because every time that she informed the teacher, no actions were taken against the bully to stop the unwanted behavior. Espelage et al. (2016) added when behavior such as bullying is not corrected, the aggressor is motivated to continue victimizing other students until outcomes are favorable for the bully. The findings of this research are also aligned to the SCT, as participant responses revealed that when interventions are not effective, school environments become unsuitable for victims and beneficial for the bully. A bully's awareness of self-efficacy

could additionally be correlated to Themes #2 and #3 as it related to the need of improving the school environment to prevent the bullying of non-Japanese students. Further outcomes of implementing new interventions could discourage bullying and assist victims in developing a sense of self-efficacy to succeed in class.

### **Empirical Literature**

This research also supports and confirms empirical literature related to school bullying. As described by Griffin and Gross (2004), empirical research can be utilized “in order to illustrate the theoretical background from which the construct of bullying has developed” (p. 379). Hence, the empirical literature is reviewed to analyze this study’s findings as it relates to the definitions, types, roles, responses, and effects of bullying involving non-Japanese students.

**Bullying defined.** From the empirical studies of Olweus (1993), bullying is defined as an aggressive act committed by an individual or group repeatedly against a victim. As various definitions of bullying exist depending on the context of the occurrence, this research revealed data aligned to bullying as defined by Olweus (1993). Participants within the multimethod research responded by sharing accounts of bullying as repeated events carried out by aggressors over time with the intention to cause harm. This type of reported and repeated bullying was also often in the form of collective bullying, which Hamada et al. (2016) described as the most common form of bullying in Japanese schools. Quantitative survey data from student and teacher participants also showed that repeated acts of bullying, as defined by Olweus, were observed by student and teacher participants at a frequency ranging from once or twice a month to once per week.

**Types of bullying.** Olweus (1993) indicated that bullying could be displayed directly or indirectly. Participants discussed how non-Japanese males were typically bullied directly by

other males through actions such as hitting, name-calling, kicking, and pushing. However, in comparison, participants commented that non-Japanese girls would be bullied indirectly by other girls through their behaviors of avoidance, ignoring, and spreading rumors. According to the empirical literature of Eisenberg et al. (2015), both indirect and direct behaviors are often typically character roles that students assume during school bullying incidents. This research further confirmed that both genders participated in acts of bullying with girls sometimes bullying boys and boys bullying girls.

**Bullying roles.** Additional literature examines the many roles and characteristics of individuals involved in bullying. These character roles included the bully, victim, observers, reinforcers, assistants, outsiders, and defenders as potential positions filled by those witnessing or partaking in the bullying (Doramajian & Bukowski, 2015). Participants in the survey and focus group research described incidents of bullying that allowed students to fill these different roles. For example, in response to SQ2, Teacher Three described an event in which students in her class all had specific roles in contributing to the bullying which included observers, outsiders, assistants, and the victim. Researched by Doramajian and Bukowski (2015), these various roles played by students would allow them to be directly or indirectly involved in the incident as ways to avoid becoming targets themselves or to confirm their membership to the group. Consequently, this study confirmed that these student roles provided access and contributions to the escalation of student bullying as described by interview and focus group participants.

**Bullying responses.** Empirical literature presents the view that responses to bullying can vary depending on the location and context of the bullying (Pabian, 2018). In Western countries such as America, zero-tolerance policies, state laws, and other guidance have been implemented

to address bullying. However, this study found that in Japan bullying is often regulated by school and class rules or policies. Takashi and Gielen (2006) shared identical findings by noting that established guidelines for bullying in many East Asian countries are determined by local school officials or teachers and are not systemically common.

In addition, this research discovered a direct correlation between existing school rules about bullying and the types of responses that followed when bullying was committed. For example, in teacher and administrator perspectives shared from the focus group and the online survey, some respondents believed school responses were effective against bullying. In comparison, perception data that was analyzed from parent and student respondents revealed a greater need to improve bullying responses as evidenced in the frequency of codes that supported Theme #3.

Other correlated data in this study were examined to compare how different types of bullying were addressed. School responses to collective, physical, indirect, direct, and passive bullying sometimes involved a method of verbally shaming the behavior during class or by allowing non-Japanese students to independently confront the problem. However, based on interview comments as shared by Parent Three, a more Western-style approach was needed to respond effectively to school bullying. Stives et al. (2019) described suspensions, reprimands, parent conferences, and behavior contracts as examples of school responses in Western countries that are aligned to support a zero-tolerance policy for bullying. In consideration of both home and school responses, this study confirms empirical research that responses to bullying are reflective of the environment and influenced by the context of the occurrence.

**Bullying effects.** Empirical literature related to this research examines the physical, mental, and social effects of students' bullying experiences. Both long-term and short-term

effects of school bullying are detrimental to a student's development. Referencing responses to SQ1 and SQ2, participants described many negative effects of bullying that lasted over long and short periods in which students experienced feelings of isolation, withdrawal, sadness, anger, depression, and humiliation.

Expanding on the existing empirical literature, this study found that non-Japanese students, in particular, experienced bullying in the forms of racism and xenophobia. In their interviews, students and parents described how racist and xenophobic factors affected students personally and changed their school experience. For example, Student Three described how he was called "dirty" because his skin color was brown, which made him feel bad because he did not have the same light skin color as other Japanese. Experiences shared by non-Japanese students add to the literature by helping redefine bullying as noted by Nocentini et al. (2019), who indicated that more empirical data are needed to interpret all that bullying encompasses. Moreover, the need to address race issues and culture was indicated as a frequent code that emerged as Theme #1 in this study.

However, this research did find that some participants valued the social skills that could be learned from a bullying experience. Empirical studies conducted by Smith (2018) noted that supporters of bullying believe that confronting or experiencing bullying helps to prepare and equip students with the mental fortitude to face future challenges in their lives. Particularly in Japan, Yoneyama (2015) shared that sometimes bullying is viewed in Japanese culture as a rite of passage to help strengthen individuals to live successfully in Japanese society. Focus group and parent participants shared their awareness that some levels of bullying were valued in Japan, such as Teacher One who said that bullying could help non-Japanese students to be more resilient and achieve more success in school. However, findings from this research generally

supported the idea that bullying is negative and provides reasons to find solutions supporting bullied non-Japanese students.

### **Summary**

This applied research study sought to solve the problem of the bullying of non-Japanese students bullied in Japan's elementary schools. The chapter examined data from interviews, focus group research, and a survey to identify codes, concepts, and themes related to bullying.

Through the analysis of data, three themes were revealed in all multi-methods of research:

(a) instruction and learning for multicultural education, (b) school and home communication, and (c) school intervention responses to bullying. Participants proposed solutions based on the three themes which could potentially help solve the study's problem. Empirical and theoretical literature about bullying was also validated, assessed, and expanded by the findings within the research data. The overall details in this chapter provided reasoning, framework, and data to help generate solutions to the questions within this research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **OVERVIEW**

The purpose of this applied study was to solve the problem of bullying for non-Japanese students in an elementary school in Japan and to formulate a solution to address the problem. The problem was non-Japanese students were being bullied in Japan's elementary schools. This chapter describes the problems investigated through this research and proposes solutions to the problems. The solutions to the problems include improved instruction and learning for multicultural education, improved school and home communication, and improved school intervention responses to bullying. Documented in this chapter are also details for resources and funds required to implement solutions, the roles and responsibilities of research contributors, and a proposed timeline to resolve the problem. The chapter concludes by providing solution implications to the research and an evaluation plan to assess the effectiveness of the solutions to the problem.

### **Restatement of the Problem**

The problem investigated in this research concerned the bullying of non-Japanese students in Japan's elementary schools. Current and historical data indicate the rising concerns of bullying in Japanese schools and a greater need to examine the incidence of non-Japanese students who are bullied (Yoneyama, 2015). In 2019 there were 425,844 reported incidents of bullying in Japan's elementary schools, up from 108,723 compared to the previous fiscal school year (MEXT, 2019). The increased frequency of bullying in Japanese elementary schools is particularly concerning for many foreign families who shared concerns that non-Japanese children are subjected to bullying because they are not Japanese (Yoneyama, 2015). The results of this research study confirmed the occurrence and a frequency of known cases involving the

bullying of non-Japanese students through interviews, focus group discussions, and an online survey. The data collected from the research also indicated the problem was related to a lack of multicultural education, home and school communication, and school interventions to bullying.

### **Proposed Solution to the Central Question**

In this study, an applied research method was conducted through interviews, focus groups, and a survey to solve the research problem and provide solutions to the central question. Utilizing a multimethod approach, data were collected and analyzed to identify themes that provide a framework revealing potential answers to questions in this research. Through the process of data triangulation and aggregation, the three solutions proposed for this study include improved instruction and learning for multicultural education, improved school and home communication, and improved school intervention responses to bullying.

### **Instruction and Learning for a Multicultural Education**

In response to the central question, research data supported the need to increase awareness and respect for different cultures through multicultural education to address the bullying of non-Japanese students. Woolfolk (2010) defined multicultural education as a form of learning that incorporates the values, histories, texts, and beliefs of people from different cultural backgrounds. The benefits of multicultural education help to provide learning access and equity for all students by removing barriers to educational opportunities regardless of their race or culture. For teachers, a multicultural education provides assistance to effectively respond, support, communicate, and educate diverse learners from different cultural backgrounds (García & García, 2016). The implementation of a multicultural education approach could assist the Minami Hana School in creating a more culturally inclusive classroom and address cultural



misperceptions that can often lead to bullying students because of racial differences or perceived stereotypes.

An implementation process would include components to support both students and school staff. Students could benefit from several instructional strategies that involve exposure to diverse literature from other countries, conducting studies about different cultures, celebrating diversity during heritage months, and participating in school multicultural events. Non-Japanese students could also be provided the opportunity to share presentations about their culture or possibly have non-Japanese parents come to school to teach about their cultures, customs, traditions, or foods.

Teacher support should be comprised of professional development that helps build an awareness of cultural diversity in learning. It is recommended that culturally responsive teaching be the focus of this professional development. Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching as an approach that emphasizes “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31). Culturally responsive teaching training would allow teachers to develop culturally relevant pedagogy that supports and responds to the diverse needs of all students regardless of their cultural background. This type of pedagogy also helps teachers to recognize “the importance of including students’ cultural references in all aspects of learning” (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Other benefits of culturally responsive teaching could include improved teaching tolerance for diverse learners, raising awareness for the needs of non-Japanese language minorities, and allowing teachers to help reshape the curriculum to become more inclusive of learning in the context of culture. As optional choices, professional

development for culturally responsive teaching can be conducted as a book study amongst teachers or through culturally responsive teaching courses online.

### **School and Home Communication**

Improvement of school and home communication is the second proposed solution to the research question. As identified in Theme #2 and supported by the research data, improving communication could provide an opportunity to prevent the bullying of non-Japanese students. The recommended plan should create opportunities for the school to implement new communication methods to better inform parents regarding bullying incidents, policies related to bullying, events at school, and updates regarding other critical school information throughout the year.

It is also recommended that the school utilize verbal, printed, and technology-integrated forms of communication. Suggested verbal forms of communication could be supported by the use of human translators or translation devices when language barriers are a concern. The school could hold town hall-style meetings inviting non-Japanese parents to learn more about school culture and updates and engage in conversations with school leaders. School leaders could offer principal discussion times that would allow parents to have conversations with the principal about Japanese school culture and other related topics to bullying in Japanese schools. Other opportunities for increased verbal communication should be through phone calls, parent nights, and school committees that could be used as discussion platforms about bullying.

Some recommended printed or written forms of communication are letters, notes, memos, newsletters, bulletin boards, and pamphlets that would inform parents concerning bullying, school responses to bullying, incident awareness of bullying, and other important school-related information. Moreover, written documents should be translated into English. Supporting this

use of English translations, Nishanthi (2018) described the importance of English as the most common language understood and spoken universally. English printed communication would help non-Japanese families better interpret school messages and would assist the school in better communicating their messages to non-Japanese families.

Integrating technology with all forms of communication is also suggested. Technology in the form of a school website, emails, live chats, and virtual meetings are some communication plans to be included. Utilizing technology can also provide a faster and more efficient means of communication compared to other forms (Natale & Lubniewski, 2018). Technology could also offer more translation options for other languages in supporting non-Japanese families.

Another support idea is to inform school stakeholders concerning the overall problems of bullying. The school should conduct an awareness campaign that communicates the short and long-term effects of bullying in education. Newsletters, posters, pamphlets, online community websites, parent-teacher conferences, and other school public forums can be used to inform stakeholders about school bullying and encourage unified efforts to resolve the problem.

All forms of communication should be consistent, common, and continuous to ensure their effectiveness. All school stakeholders can also work collectively to contribute to the communication plan to ensure that it provides equitable communication opportunities for non-Japanese speakers. Hence, a communication plan could be implemented to support current and future school stakeholders and modified each school year as needed.

### **School Intervention Responses to Bullying**

The third solution to answering the research question is to improve school intervention responses to bullying. Data corroborated during this applied research indicated a need to provide effective bullying interventions that could be used to prevent onsite bullying of non-Japanese

students. In reference to data findings, it is recommended that the school develops and implements an anti-bullying program as a prevention and intervention approach. An anti-bullying program, as described by Ryan and Smith (2009), is a planned series of related actions and measures that provide school stakeholders with strategies to intervene and prevent bullying. Through developing an anti-bullying program, the Minami Hana School can help define what constitutes bullying and communicate the expectations and rules about bullying. It is also imperative that this program includes protocols for reporting bullying and steps designed to get immediate help when necessary. This approach to bullying responds to the needs of both non-Japanese parents and school staff because it provides a common expectation and guidance in the event of school bullying.

Opportunities for teacher and student relationship-building should also be included in the anti-bullying program. According to Huang, Lewis, Cohen, Prewett, and Herman (2018), efforts to build relationships between teachers and students help to open communication and provide students with a supporting adult at school. This type of relationship-building also gives non-Japanese students a safe place with a caring adult whom they can trust and discuss bullying concerns when needed.

As revealed in the data of this research, responses to bullying are also associated with Japanese social and behavior values. Teacher participants shared how they were resistant to interfere in bullying because they did not want to draw more attention to the victim or they allowed the student to address the bullying as a way to build a sense of self-efficacy. Therefore, an anti-bullying program should include specific strategies that teachers could use to intervene in bullying such as proximity standing between the bullying, talking separately to children involved, and responding consistently when incidents occur. New teacher strategies for bully

prevention and intervention could be delivered through teacher professional development facilitated by prefecture teacher trainers or instructional coaches.

Involving school stakeholders in the development process of the anti-bullying program is also important. At the school level, stakeholder surveys can be used to identify the needs and extent of bullying. Assembly or meeting days with school staff, parents, and students could also provide a platform to inform stakeholders and answer questions about the program. At the classroom level, rules against bullying should be discussed and visibly posted for students to see. Based on the study by Olweus (1997), suggested class rules could be related to helping students who are bullied, the intent of not bullying, and including others in group activities so that no one feels left out and bullied. Immediate consequences for bullying behavior at the school level could also be created, such as apologizing, conferencing with the principal or parent, and forfeiting privileges such as recess. Ultimately, the implementation of the anti-bullying program would help to promote embedded school-wide and classroom practices that can intervene and prevent bullying.

### **Resources Needed**

Data analyzed in this research revealed leading themes and supported potential solutions to the study's problem. In alignment with the data, resources are recommended to implement and support improving instruction for multicultural education, improving home and school communication, and improving school interventions to bullying.

Resources needed to implement an improved multicultural education include books written from different cultural perspectives for students. Books about multicultural education and responsive teaching should also be acquired for teachers as professional learning resources. Professional books can also be used during professional development for book studies and active

learning. Materials such as posters about different cultures and artifacts or items from various cultures are also needed to help teach and expose students to the awareness and respect of cultural differences.

School and home communication resources should also be obtained. Items such as phones, computers, notebook paper, pamphlets, marquees, bulletin boards, and posters are suggested to help communicate with parents. Digital translating devices should also be purchased to assist teachers with language translation during conversations with non-Japanese school stakeholders when necessary. Parents could also utilize a school website as a resource to reference all school-related information. Virtual meeting programs such as Skype or Google Meets to hold virtual conferences with school staff should also be acquired.

Resources needed to develop interventions for school bullying are required. These resources should be poster paper to display rules against bullying, parent and teacher handbooks in digital and hard copy forms that provide information about the anti-bullying program, and teacher professional development books about anti-bullying intervention strategies for school use.

### **Funds Needed**

Funding is needed to purchase resources and to ensure the effective implementation of all recommended solutions to the research problem. A budget for resource purchases should be in the amount of \$150,000 to purchase professional development, student, and teacher books. The recommended purchase amount is also necessary to build a sufficient repository of books to be used for multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching. The purchase of these books would also support current student, teacher, and administrator numbers at the Minami Hana School. In addition, budgetary money could be used to fund online classes or courses that

teachers can enroll in to learn more about culturally responsive teaching. The estimated cost of the online program will be dependent upon available online programs and if there is an option for a school discount. Approved educational funding for each fiscal school year will come from Japan's prefectural, municipal, and national governments as is common for all public compulsory Japanese schools.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

A coordinated effort from multiple school stakeholders will be required to implement recommend solutions to the research problem. All school initiatives to support the recommended solutions for improvement must be facilitated and led by the school's two administrators. The administrators' responsibilities include organizing budget money, support committees, and logistics involved in acquiring resources and creating the desired environment for implementation. Parents, teachers, and community members could meet as a committee with administrators to discuss ideas for funding resources. The ideas generated during committee collaborations could help produce supporting recommendations for the implementation process. Another support committee could include teacher leaders and other classroom teachers who could work collectively in researching and creating lists of professional books needed for teachers and student books for classroom use. The lists of books can then be shared with administrators for potential purchase.

Items supporting communication would need to be ordered by administrators. However, principals could create a needs assessment to allow school stakeholders to recommend technology resources that would best support school needs for improved communication. The needs assessment would then allow principals to make informed decisions concerning the resources to order and the funding needed to purchase them.

The development of an anti-bullying program would require the collaboration of parents, teachers, students, and administrators. The administrators should allow all school stakeholder buy-in to ensure there is equity in the process and that the outcomes reflect the needs of the entire school. Thus, at a classroom level, teachers can collaborate and design a children's survey that would allow students to recommend rules and protocols for bullying. The administrators can also create a survey for teachers and parents to provide opportunities for their suggestions for rules and protocols. Following the completion of student, parent, and teacher surveys, the administrators can use the information to help design rules and protocols that would be effective for anti-bullying. Teacher committees could also be created by the principals to allow for teachers to help write and publish guidelines, protocols, and rules that will be used to outline the anti-bullying program for implementation. Also, during this time of planning, developing, and collaboration, administrators can work with teachers to create an awareness campaign against bullying. Communicating this campaign can be done through platforms such as the school website, community websites, posters, and flyers. With these described recommended roles and responsibilities, school stakeholders can work collaboratively and gain a sense of ownership in creating a program designed to benefit the entire school.

### **Timeline**

The timeline for planning, implementation, and evaluation of the proposed solutions to the research problem is projected for 24 months (see Appendix E). This suggested timeline allows for committees to be organized, resources to be researched, and school-wide implementation to occur. The sequence of proposed solutions, described in Appendix E, was selected as processes that scaffold program development, ongoing program evaluation,



stakeholder contributions, and fiscal year budgetary funding to ensure solutions can be embedded systemically.

### **Solution Implications**

The proposed research solutions to solve the problem of bullying non-Japanese students may have both positive and negative solution implications. School stakeholders consisting of parents, teachers, students, and administrators could be impacted directly or indirectly by the results of this study. As the goal of this study is to minimize any negative impacts of proposed solutions, this research examined all possible outcomes and implications of the study.

### **Student Implications**

The benefits of instituted solutions will help create a safe learning environment for students. The classroom could become a safe-space for non-Japanese students to develop a sense of self-efficacy and equity within the class as new rules and consequences would serve to protect them from potential bullies. Japanese students could develop a greater value for different cultures and respect for diversity from multicultural education. However, foreseeable negative effects of this research could result in some Japanese students resisting or hesitating to abide by the rules or policies suggested for bully prevention. Student compliance issues could arise due to the newness of the rules that challenge some traditional Japanese perspectives about bullying. It is recommended that parents of both Japanese and non-Japanese students also assist children in understanding the importance of new bullying policies and how they can help create and improve the learning environment for all students.

### **Parent Implications**

Implications for this research will benefit parents through improved school and home communication. With improved communication, parents will have some assurances that a

systematic communication plan exists. Non-Japanese parents in particular can benefit from the added opportunities for English language translated resources and opportunities to be more involved in the collective development of all suggested research recommendations. Additional benefits would allow parents to be assured that common and consistent bullying prevention practices have been established to address school bullying. There are no known probable negative implications for parents. However, it is recommended that parents, especially non-Japanese parents, collaborate with school leaders and staff during school committee meetings, events, and conferences to ensure that the school works collectively in supporting families through the institution of recommended solutions.

### **Teacher and Administrator Implications**

Solution implication for teachers and administrators could be both positive and negative. The positive benefits of this research would allow principals and administrators to have common practices and processes to address the bullying of non-Japanese students. These benefits include improved strategies to intervene and prevent bullying and consequences to assign after related incidents.

Communication between home and school could also improve for teachers and administrators to help strengthen home and school partnerships with foreign families. The recommended communication plan in this research would also allow the school to better communicate school messages to foreign families and improve reciprocal communication for foreign families between the school.

The potential outcomes of this study could challenge existing Japanese cultural beliefs about bullying. In Japanese society, as described by Toivonen and Imoto (2012), group beliefs and collectivist values supersede the needs of the individuals or new beliefs that challenge

traditional group thinking. The proposed solutions could potentially guide teachers and principals as they strive to adopt new perspectives and actions toward bullying; however, the challenge of learning new instructional methods and classroom behavior management practices could be met with resistance by school staff who value traditional responses to bullying. To address potential negative outcomes, it is recommended that principals continue to highlight the benefits of new approaches with staff and encourage a productive struggle of learning that may eventually lead to solving the problem of bullying.

### **School Implications**

The overall school implications would be positive. The school would benefit from funded programs that can be implemented and utilized for future years drawing from school budgetary fiscal money each year. Multicultural education and culturally responsive instruction would help support the learning needs of all students by creating awareness and respect for diverse cultures. The benefits of the communication plan and the anti-bullying program should help lead to a decline in bullying incidents as revealed in the research's interview and focus group data. The only potential negative school implications could involve the defunding of the recommended initiatives if the results prove unsuccessful. Therefore, it is recommended that the school consistently follows guidelines, plans, and processes to ensure the successful development of all suggested solutions.

### **Evaluation Plan**

Evaluations of program effectiveness should be made following a full year of implementation. An outcome-based evaluation plan would be needed to survey, measure, and examine the success, gains, losses, and challenges of recommended solutions to the central problem. Multiple evaluation resources such as school surveys, feedback forms, meeting notes

about bullying, and bullying incident reports should be included in the evaluation plan.

According to research conducted by Agricola, Prins, and Sluijsmans (2020), multiple forms of feedback would allow participants to communicate their opinions and provide usable information to adjust and improve future actions. Therefore, the data from all evaluation resources will be analyzed and corroborated to evaluate the efficacy of each solution. End-of-the-year surveys will be given to school stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the implemented solutions. Feedback forms will also be made available to stakeholders at the end of the year to examine suggestions and opinions concerning solutions, program successes, and inefficiencies. Based on the survey data, focus groups could then be created to better interpret responses and further discuss solutions to solving identified concerns.

With principal approval, meeting notes from committee, conference, or assembly minutes concerning discussions about implemented bullying interventions would be reviewed and could guide the researcher to better understand the impacts and outcomes of the solutions. In addition, any bullying incident reports could be utilized to interpret the frequency, rate, increase, or decrease of bullying incidents since the inception and use of the new bullying interventions. A triangulation of data will then allow the researcher to make an informed analysis and decision concerning the success of or failure of the solutions.

However, there are limitations to this evaluation plan that could impact the analysis of results. As only one school is being utilized to evaluate the outcomes of the solutions, this research is limited to a small sample size. The Minami Hana School was selected for this research because of its familiarity to the researcher and its sufficient demographic population to conduct measurable research. Furthermore, findings from this study may not present a global representation of the potential impacts of the recommended solutions. To expand this research

through future studies, it is suggested that more schools and participants are included to increase the sample size for increased investigative research. Moreover, as the study was conducted primarily in English, it would be beneficial to have studies conducted in Japanese to offer more opportunities for non-English speaking participants to contribute.

### **Summary**

This applied research study was conducted to solve the problem of non-Japanese students being bullied in Japan's elementary schools. Interviews, focus group research, and a survey were conducted to produce data used to identify themes, concepts, and evidence for solutions to the study's problem. Collected and analyzed data from this study help substantiate the recommended solutions to improve instruction and learning for multicultural education, improve school and home communication, and improve school interventions to bullying.

This chapter also described the required resources, funds, roles and responsibilities, and timeline needed to support the implementation of recommended solutions. The implications of this research were evaluated and compared to delimitations to justify the purpose of the study and to suggest ideas to expand on this research.

The solutions presented in this research could be applied in other Japanese elementary schools to support non-Japanese students targeted by bullying. The study's suggestions for a multicultural education could help to increase racial tolerance and respect for diverse learners from different cultures in Japanese schools. Improvements for school and home communication could help remove barriers created by language, beliefs, and social values which are sometimes factors that lead to bullying. Furthermore, the development of a school-based bullying intervention program would help provide strategies, rules, and guidance to intervene and prevent bullying. The three solutions prescribed in solving the central problem could allow teachers and

school leaders to better understand the challenges that non-Japanese students encounter when bullied in Japanese schools. Moreover, it is the hope of this research that the recommended solutions can assist other Japanese elementary schools in creating safe, equitable, and bully-free learning environments for all students.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Student Interview Questions

#### Interview Questions for Students

Question #	Interview Questions	Research Question
1.	What grade are you in?	SQ1
2.	How did you know kids who are not Japanese get bullied?	SQ1
3.	Where did you see kids who are not Japanese get bullied?	SQ1
4.	Why do you think kids who are not Japanese get bullied at school?	SQ1
5.	How do you think kids who are not Japanese feel after they are bullied?	SQ1
6.	How do you think other Japanese people feel about kids who are not Japanese?	SQ1
7.	What did your teachers do when they saw a kid get bullied at your school?	SQ1
8.	What did your principal do when they saw a kid get bullied at your school?	SQ1
9.	What are the school rules that you know that can stop bullying?	SQ1
10.	What school rules can be changed to help stop bullying?	SQ1
11.	What could your teachers and principal do to help stop bullying?	SQ2
12.	How could kids who are not Japanese help to stop bullying?	CQ
13.	What could parents do for your school to help stop the bullying kids who are not Japanese?	SQ1
14.	What could your parents and the school do together to help stop bullying at your school and protect kids who are not Japanese?	SQ2



### Appendix B: Adult Survey Questions

Questions	never	Once or Twice A month	About Once per Week	Several times per week	Everyday
1. I have witnessed bullying at school in the past month to include non-Japanese students being victimized.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have observed non-Japanese students being bullied at school in the past month.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I have seen non-Japanese students bullied verbally.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have witnessed a group of students bully non-Japanese students.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am aware of non-Japanese students being bullied through social exclusion.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am aware of non-Japanese students being bullied online at school (cyberbullying).	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have intervened to stop the bullying of non-Japanese students at school.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I Have prevented the bullying of non-Japanese students at school.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I witnessed the bullying of non-Japanese students, yet I didn't get involved.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Teachers and the administrator have prevented non-Japanese students from being bullied at school.	1	2	3	4	5

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. School policies are effective in preventing bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
12. School policies are effective in preventing the bullying of non-Japanese students.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Class rules are effective in preventing bullying in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Class rules are effective in preventing the bullying of non-Japanese students in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Teacher strategies are effective in preventing bullying of non-Japanese students at school.	1	2	3	4	5

16. Teacher, administrator, or school counselor support is effective in supporting non-Japanese students who have been victims of bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Supportive strategies are available for non-Japanese students to prevent themselves from being bullied.	1	2	3	4	5
18. The school effectively supports parents of non-Japanese students whose children have been victims of bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
19. The school effectively communicates problems of school bullying to all parents when events occur.	1	2	3	4	5
20. The school effectively supports non-Japanese students to transition to socially and culturally to a Japanese school environment.	1	2	3	4	5

### Appendix C: Student Survey Questions

*\*Students who are unable to understand, interpret or read the questions will have the option to ask for adult support to read or understand the question for them. This survey is for elementary students.*

Questions	Never	1 or 2 Times A month	1 Time each Week	About 3 times per week	Everyday
1. This month I saw kids at school get bullied.	1	2	3	4	5
2. This month I saw a kid at school who is not Japanese get bullied.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I saw kids who are not Japanese get bullied by other kids who said bad things about them.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I saw a group of kids bully a kid who was not Japanese.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I think kids who are not Japanese get bullied when other kids don't let them play or work with them.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I know that kids who are not Japanese can get bullied on the Internet.	1	2	3	4	5
7. At my school, I tried to stop someone from bullying a kid who was not Japanese.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I have stopped a kid who was not Japanese from getting bullied.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I saw a kid who was not Japanese get bullied, but I did not help that kid.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I know that teachers and principals have helped stop the bullying of kids who are not Japanese.	1	2	3	4	5

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. I think our school rules help to stop bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I think our school rules help to stop the bullying of kids who are not Japanese.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I think our class rules help to stop bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I think our class rules help stop the bullying of kids who are not Japanese.	1	2	3	4	5

15. I think teachers can stop kids who are not Japanese from getting bullied.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I think kids who are not Japanese can get help from teachers, principals, and parents if they have been bullied.	1	2	3	4	5
17. At school, kids who are not Japanese learn how to stop bullying.	1	2	3	4	5
18. My school helps the parents of kids who are not Japanese if their child has been bullied.	1	2	3	4	5
19. My school is good at telling parents about bully problems in school.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My school helps kids who are not Japanese to learn, play, and live better in Japan.	1	2	3	4	5

### Appendix D: Chart Of Survey Findings With Response Totals

Questions	Response Totals				
	Never	Once or Twice A month	About Once per Week	Several times per week	Everyday
1. I have witnessed bullying at school in the past month to include non-Japanese students being victimized.	6	6	8	2	3
2. I have observed non-Japanese students being bullied at school in the past month.	6	13	4	1	1
3. I have seen non-Japanese students bullied verbally.	1	16	7	0	1
4. I have witnessed a group of students bully non-Japanese students.	0	19	5	1	0
5. I am aware of non-Japanese students being bullied through social exclusion.	0	12	8	3	2
6. I am aware of non-Japanese students being bullied online at school (cyberbullying).	16	8	1	0	0
7. I have intervened to stop the bullying of non-Japanese students at school.	18	6	1	0	0
8. I Have prevented the bullying of non-Japanese students at school.	19	5	1	0	0
9. I witnessed the bullying of non-Japanese students, yet I didn't get involved.	15	6	2	1	1
10. Teachers and the administrator have prevented non-Japanese students from being bullied at school.	14	9	2	0	0

Questions	Response Totals				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. I think our school rules help to stop bullying.	1	10	7	5	2
12. I think our school rules help to stop the bullying of kids who are not Japanese.	1	11	7	4	2
13. I think our class rules help to stop bullying.	1	10	6	7	1
14. I think our class rules help stop the bullying of kids who are not Japanese.	1	10	5	8	1
15. I think teachers can stop kids who are not Japanese from getting bullied.	0	9	6	9	1

16. I think kids who are not Japanese can get help from teachers, principals, and parents if they have been bullied.	0	10	7	7	1
17. At school, kids who are not Japanese learn how to stop bullying.	1	12	6	4	2
18. My school helps the parents of kids who are not Japanese if their child has been bullied.	0	14	5	5	1
19. My school is good at telling parents about bully problems in school.	0	16	2	6	1
20. My school helps kids who are not Japanese to learn, play, and live better in Japan.	0	10	4	9	2

### Appendix E: Timeline for Solution Implementation

Year	Quarter	Plan Description
1	Quarter 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning phase for all solution initiatives</li> <li>• Create support committees</li> <li>• Research for books needed</li> </ul>
	Quarter 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding requests made</li> <li>• Inform school stakeholders about the upcoming program</li> </ul>
	Quarter 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource purchasing</li> <li>• Create awareness of new programs and initiatives</li> </ul>
	Quarter 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct professional development for teachers</li> <li>• Continue campaign awareness of new programs and initiatives</li> </ul>
2	Quarter 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of all solutions</li> <li>• Collect quarter 1 feedback notes and evidence from school stakeholder</li> <li>• Continue teacher professional development</li> </ul>
	Quarter 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program monitoring using feedback from group and committee meetings</li> <li>• Program monitoring through observation</li> <li>• Continue teacher professional development</li> <li>• End of quarter 2 give mid-year needs assessment</li> </ul>
	Quarter 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct program monitoring</li> <li>• Continue teacher professional development</li> <li>• Continue collecting empirical data and feedback from school stakeholders</li> </ul>
	Quarter 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue teacher professional development</li> <li>• Give evaluation plan at the end of the school year</li> <li>• Give an end of year needs assessment</li> <li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of solutions and make needed amendments for the next school year</li> </ul>

**Appendix F: IRB Approval Letter****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 8, 2020

Corey Algood

IRB Approval 4195.040820: Improving Support for Non-Japanese Students Bullied in Japan's Elementary School

Dear Corey Algood,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Your study involves surveying or interviewing minors, or it involves observing the public behavior of minors, and you will participate in the activities being observed.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

**Research Ethics Office**



## Appendix G: Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional  
Review Board has approved  
this document for use from  
4/8/2020 to 4/7/2021  
Protocol # 4195.040820

### CONSENT FORM

Improving Support for Non-Japanese Students Bullied in Japan's  
Elementary Schools Corey Algood  
Liberty University  
School of  
Education

You are invited to be in a research study on improving support for non-Japanese students bullied in Japan's elementary schools. This study will help to investigate and identify effective strategies, processes, and support programs to address concerns of bullying non-Japanese students in Japan's elementary schools. You were selected as a possible participant because you are 18 years of age or older, English-speaking, and you are the parent of a 5-12 years old student, a teacher, or an administrator at Hinode School. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Corey Algood, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to identify a solution to the problem of bullying for non-Japanese students in an elementary school in Japan. The central question that I am hoping to answer is how can the problem of bullying non-Japanese students attending an elementary school in Japan be solved?

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do one of the following things:

1. Participate in an interview (Parents and Students Only). The interview will be audio recorded for accuracy and transcribing purposes and will last approximately 1 hour.
2. Participate in a focus group (Teachers and Administrators Only). The focus group will be audio recorded for accuracy and transcribing purposes and will last approximately 1 hour.
3. Participate in an anonymous survey. The survey should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete.

\*\* Participants for the interview and focus group will be purposefully selected to include at least 3 parents and 3 students for a total of 6 participants for the interview sessions and 6 teachers and 2 administrators for the focus group session for a total of 8 focus group

participants.

**Risks:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

**Benefits:** Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.

Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records

- Survey responses will be anonymous. Interview and focus group participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews and focus group in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future research studies. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted
- Interviews and the focus group will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### **How to Withdraw from the Study:**

**Anonymous Survey Research:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

**All Other Research:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Corey Algood. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Corey Algood at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the

researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Carol Gillespie, at [REDACTED].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

**\*\*Survey participants, please review the information included above, but do not sign and return this document to the researcher.**

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Signature of Participant

Date

---

Signature of Investigator

Date

## Appendix H: Parent/Guardian Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional  
Review Board has approved  
this document for use from  
4/8/2020 to 4/7/2021  
Protocol # 4195.040820

### PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

#### Improving Support for Non-Japanese Students Bullied in Japan's Elementary Schools

This research study is being conducted by Corey Algood, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University. Your child was selected as a possible participant because they are between 5-12 years old, are English-speaking, and they are enrolled as an elementary school student. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow him or her to be in the study.

#### ***Why is this study being done?***

The purpose of this study is to identify a solution to the problem of non-Japanese students being bullied in Japan's elementary schools.

#### ***What will my child/student be asked to do?***

If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, he or she will be asked to do the following things:

1. Participate in an interview about incidents related to bullying at their school. The interview will not last longer than 1 hour to keep their attention and engagement. The interview will be audio recorded for accuracy and transcribing purposes.
2. Complete an anonymous survey about the bullying of non-Japanese students. The survey should not last longer than 20 minutes. If your child is unable to read or understand the questions they can ask for parent or adult support to read the questions aloud or support in understanding the questions.

#### ***What are the risks and benefits of this study?***

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

#### ***Will my child be compensated for participating?***

Your child will not be compensated for participating in this study.

#### ***How will my child's personal information be protected?***

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Survey responses will be anonymous.
- Interview participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future research studies. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

***Is study participation voluntary?***

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect his or her current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to allow your child to participate, he or she is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

***What should I or my child do if I decide to withdraw him or her or if he or she decides to withdraw from the study?***

**Anonymous Survey Research:** If you choose to withdraw your child or if your child chooses to withdraw from the study, he or she should exit the survey and close his or her internet browser. Your child's responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

**All Other Research:** If you choose to withdraw your child or if your child chooses to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should your child choose to withdraw, any data collected from or about him or her will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

***Whom do I contact if my child or I have questions or problems?***

The researcher conducting this study is Corey Algood. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Carol Gillespie, at [REDACTED].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

***Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.***

The researcher has my permission to audio-record my child as part of [his or her] participation in this study.

---

Signature of Parent

Date

---

Signature of Investigator

Date

## Appendix I: Assent of Child

The Liberty University  
Institutional Review  
Board has approved this  
document for use from  
4/8/2020 to  
4/7/2021 Protocol #  
4195.040820

### ASSENT OF CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

#### What is the name of the study and who is doing the study?

Improving Support for Non-Japanese Students Bullied in Japan's Elementary Schools. The study is being completed by Corey Algood.

#### Why is he doing this study?

Corey Algood wants to study why non-Japanese students are bullied and how to stop bullying.

#### Why am I being asked to be in this study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are an elementary school student who may have seen or heard about bullying at your school.

#### If I decide to be in the study, what will happen and how long will it take?

If you are 5 years old or older, you can be in a 1-hour interview. You will be asked questions about bullying students who are not Japanese. You can also take a 20-minute survey about bullying students who are not Japanese.

#### Do I have to be in this study?

No, you do not have to be in this study. If you want to be in this study, then tell the researcher. If you don't want to, it's OK to say no. The researcher will not be angry. You can say yes now and change your mind later. It's up to you.

#### What if I have a question?

You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can talk to the researcher. If you do not understand something, please ask the researcher to explain it to you again.

Signing your name below means that you want to be in the study.

---

Signature of Child	Date
Witness	Date

Corey Algood  
Faculty Chair: Dr. Carol Gillespie  
Email: [REDACTED]

Liberty University Institutional Review Board,  
1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg,  
VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu