

AWARENESS OF BULLYING AND PEER HARASSMENT BY
9TH TO 12TH GRADE TEACHERS AND THE EFFECTS IT MAY HAVE ON
ADOLESCENTS

by

Sue Halama

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Research Advisor: Denise Zirkle Brouillard

The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout

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The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751

ABSTRACT

Halama	Sue	E.
(Writer)(Last Name)	(First Name)	(Middle Initial)
Awareness of bullying and peer harassment by 9 th -12 th grade teachers and the effects it may have on adolescents		
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The purpose of this study was to survey 9th to 12th grade teachers in a Wisconsin town of 15,000 at a high school of approximately 1,100 students in the winter of 2004 on their level of awareness of adolescent bullying/peer harassment behavior in their school.

Research has indicated that bullying/peer harassment is nothing new. Almost all children or adults can share a time when they were bullied or saw

bullying taking place (McLellan, 1997). The study indicates that bullying/peer harassment does take place in this small school of 1,100. The teachers believed that the bullying/peer harassment behavior is getting worse at the high school. Research would state that bullying/peer harassment behavior is on the rise and worse now than ever before (Fleming & Levine, 2002).

Research indicates that two-thirds of the young people have been teased or gossiped about in a mean way at least once this month (Zimmerman, 2003). Eighty-nine percent of the teachers believed that verbal bullying/peer harassment behavior was experienced the most by high school students. Ninety-five percent of the teachers that participated indicated that verbal bullying was at some point likely to turn to physical bullying. This finding is compatible with the research by Wiseman (2002), that behaviors such as spreading rumors led to acting out physically.

The study found that the majority of teachers report to address bullying in their classrooms or in the hallway. Eighty-two percent of the teachers believed that addressing such behavior decreased the possibility of bullying/peer harassment behavior in their classroom. However about half, 55.5% of the teachers defined the bullying/peer harassment situation at the high school as somewhat of a problem, but getting worse. Research suggests that school-wide programs with all staff on board can help to reduce bullying/peer harassment even more (Viadero, 2003; Wiseman, 2003). With these findings, it would be a benefit for this high school to get a school wide bullying/peer harassment awareness program that all staff can implement.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Two years ago in March, 15-year-old Charles “Andy” Williams walked into his Santee, CA, high school and sprayed his classmates with bullets from his father’s gun” (Viadero, 2003, p. 24). This young man felt bullied everyday at school. He recalled having his skateboard stolen, being teased for his small build, and had lit cigarettes pressed to his skin. To him this was an everyday occurrence, which he was not going to take anymore. Unfortunately for him, he didn’t know what else to do, so he sought drastic measures for always being the victim.

There have been several studies like the ones done by Fleming and Levine (2000), Roland (2002), and Viadero (2003), who have studied the behaviors of the bully, the bully’s victim, and the quiet witness known as the bystander. Dan Olweus, a professor of psychology at the University of Bergen in Norway, was one of the first to conduct studies in this area. His interest stemmed from a case where three young boys ages 10 to 14 took their own lives, because of the constant bullying that they endured each day (cited in Viadero, 2003, p. 24). In the Roberts (2000), Smith and Cowie, Olafsson and Liefhoghe (2002) studies done on bullying, the researchers usually referred to Olweus and what his findings were back in the 1980s.

Fleming and Levine (2000), and Wiseman (2002) believed that bullying in the United States is accepted as something that ‘just happens’ (Viadero, 2003); they found that society views this as just a rite of passage. However, according to Canter (1994), every day 160,000 students are truant from school because of the fear of being bullied at their school. For example, at an inner city school, students may feel threatened by a particular group that seems to have the power. Fear can be prevalent in some students so that as mentioned, they avoid school and

fear for their personal safety. Another example is when this subject was brought up in a high school relationship class that I was teaching. Some of the male students did not understand why seniors putting freshmen through a traditional initiation into their team was not okay. The traditional initiation may have included taking clothes and hiding them while they are showering, use of inappropriate language, ridicule, or other inappropriate actions. Some of the students were interested to hear or learn why the traditional initiation was not okay, while others considered this action as a rite of passage onto their particular sports team. With the wake of violence and the increase of peer harassment in the schools, this rite of passage is getting a second look.

Researcher John H. Hoover from St. Cloud State University stated that he has seen a different attitude in his audiences as he has presented his anti-bullying in-service seminars (cited in Viadero, 2003, p. 25). He recalled hearing 10 years ago, comments from teachers and administrators at in-services saying, "Who cares?" and "Kids pick on kids" (cited in Viadero, 2003, p. 25). But times have changed; those comments are not as evident today. School personnel are trying to take a proactive approach to violence and bullying behavior.

The bullying behavior or peer harassment that is taking place in the schools has become of interest to school personnel, because many students are afraid to come to school. Bullying seems to increase as a student reaches middle school. They fear the taunting, assaultive behavior, and threats to them or their friends. Boys and girls seem to bully differently, with girls starting the rumor mill and boys using strong words or fists. The differences in bullying/peer harassment between how girls and how boys bully is evident in the behaviors observed in the schools. Females may demonstrate intimidating behavior by gossiping and spreading rumors. This can be very evident in some of the writings that have been written in bathroom stalls.

Wiseman (2002) has also witnessed and intervened in a fight between two girls. One girl had started a rumor, so the other girl decided to act out physically. Both students because of fighting on school grounds, received suspensions.

As Wiseman (2002), and McClellan (1997) studied bullying/victim behaviors, they saw a correlation between self-esteem, achievement, and the choices that young people make in their lives. Some of the choices that the young victims of bullying are making are also hurting others. This has become a concern in the United States with the increase of school violence.

Wiseman (2002), Roland (2002), Viadero (2003), Dunn (2001), and Olweus (1978), noted a concern about bullying behavior. The authors had many relevant questions; How are some students singled out to be the victim? What role do some provocative victims play in bullying? These different researchers give many interesting ideas on these questions.

Wiseman (2002) shares that the majority of schools have a written honor code or code of conduct that encourages or condones bullying/peer harassment behaviors. Wiseman (2002) also states that students have been taught to believe in two honor codes, one in the school handbook and the other is what students believe to be the “real” rules. Students learn these “real” rules from school, parents, and educators who believe these same rules. This interferes with directing students to what is the right thing to do.

Roland (2002) studied bullying and found a positive correlation that found some students are both the victim and the bully. Roland (2002), also found that victims were more anxious than their peers. Of course as the bullying persisted, the level of anxiety rose in the victim (Roland, 2002).

Viadero (2003) shares some insights on the dual roles of victim and tormentor known as the provocative bully or bully victims. This group is getting the most attention, as the provocative bully is more depressed and anxious

(Viadero, 2003). Why the attention? These are the individuals that have been known to come to school with a weapon and kill their classmates or teachers. At Columbine High School, Klebold and Harris were labeled bully victims after the massacre that took place in 1999 (Viadero, 2003).

Finally, Dunn's (2001) study shows that students who are singled out as a less powerful person, bullying occurs by the more powerful individual or group. This bullying behavior can be physical or psychological to the victim.

From these varying studies, there seems to be many different combinations that can make up the character descriptions of the bully and the victim.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to survey the 9th to 12th grade teachers in a Wisconsin town of 15,000 with a high school of approximately 1,100 students in the winter of 2004 on their level of awareness of adolescent bullying/peer harassment behavior in their school.

Research Questions

There are three questions that this study will address. They are:

1. What is the relationship between peer harassment/bullying and the teacher's awareness of the act?
2. Did researchers find that students, who are considered victims, feel there was no way to change their situation?
3. Did the teacher's awareness of peer harassment/bullying decrease the amount of bullying behavior in their classroom?

Definition of Terms

There are three terms that will be helpful to have common definitions for in this study.

Bystander – is a student who has watched and not intervened in a peer

harassment or bullying incident.

Peer harassment/bullying – the intimidation, verbally or physically, of a student by another student. The student who is intimidating takes pleasure from someone else's pain, whether it is emotionally or physically inflicted.

Provocative victims -- one who is a victim, but often deliberately provokes the bully.

Bully victims are students who have the dual role of being a bully and also a victim.

Assumptions

There are three assumptions in this research:

1. It is assumed that the study will find a relationship between bullying awareness and the prevalence of bullying in 9th to 12th grade classrooms.
2. Subjects will be able to identify bullying behaviors and the prevalence, along with defining their own attitudes on peer harassment/bullying.
3. Subjects will respond honestly and within the timeline of the study.

Limitations of the study

There are two limitations in this research:

1. A limitation to this study would be that subjects might not respond honestly, or not at all to the survey.
2. This research is limited to a specific demographic area and student age group.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will include a discussion on the history and definitions related to bullying in schools, followed by age and gender differences related to bullying and the school influences or school culture that may discourage or encourage bullying behavior. In addition the influences of family on bullying behavior will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with positive interventions that have been used at school and home to assist both victims and bullies.

History

Bullying is nothing new in schools. The memories of schoolyard or hallway bullying can remain quite clear in the minds of adults. Almost all children or adults can tell about a time they were bullied or saw bullying taking place (McLellan, 1997). In fact, 30 years ago, Heineman and Olweus (1978), started to research this very topic (cited in Roland, 2002). Heineman was the first to write on bullying (cited in Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefhoghe 2002). He was using the Norwegian term *mobbing*. This term meant a group was carrying out a violent act towards an individual that occurred suddenly and was over quickly (Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefhoghe, 2002).

Olweus (1978), a professor of psychology in Norway, is considered the forerunner in research on this topic. His interest stemmed from a case of three 10-14 year old boys who took their own lives, because bullies had tormented them (cited in Viadero, 2003). This incidence of suicide among victims seems to happen because of the feelings of low self-esteem and a realization of being a victim of bullying (Roland, 2002). This may take place over a period of time, with the bully manipulating and blaming the victim for some of their negative

characteristics. The victim then feels as if there really is something wrong or strange about whom they are and thoughts of suicide creep into their minds.

The dynamics or makings of bullying have been present as long as there have been schools (Dunn, 2001). However, the number of bullying cases in school is much higher and more serious today than 15 years ago (Fleming & Levine, 2002). Wilkinson (2003) released that children in sixth through tenth grade, almost one in six, meaning 3.2 million, are victims of bullying each year. A new form of bullying is cyber-bullying. This is when via text messaging, cell phone pictures, web sites, e-mail or chat rooms, bullies can extend their emotional harassment over the wires with just one click. One advantage that a bully has with this form is that the screen name gives the bully a mask of anonymity, making it very difficult to trace (Paulson, 2004).

Americans have viewed bullying as a rite of passage, an inevitable act that will happen to all. However, with the increase of school shootings, Americans are taking a second look at the connection between bullying and school violence. The U.S. Secret Service found that bullying was a key factor in two-thirds of 37 school shootings (Viadero, 2003). The agency found that attackers, the student shooters, had felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked, or were injured by others (Viadero, 2003). This evident connection between bullying and school violence in the United States has created an interest for research in this area. Some of the research, such as Espelage,(2002) found that the bullying in the United States is more complex than the past stereotypes suggest (cited in Viadero, 2003). Espelage also stated that bullies could be both victims, as well as aggressors, and of either gender (cited in Viadero, 2003). She felt there was quite a bit of work to do in this area and that it was unfortunate it took school shootings to make us think more about the issue (cited in Viadero, 2003).

Definitions

Bullying is also called teasing, peer harassment, and intimidation, and can mean a variety of negative actions towards an individual or a group. Olweus (1978) described bullying as the exposure to long-term, repeated negative actions on the part of one or more persons (cited in Roberts, 2000, p.2). In 1999, Olweus added that there are three criteria that characterize bullying: 1) it is aggressive behavior or intentional harm doing, 2) which is carried out repeatedly and over time, and 3) is an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power (cited in Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefhoghe, 2002).

Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz and Kaukauna (1992), identified three categories of bullying behavior: direct physical aggression, direct verbal aggression, and indirect aggression (cited in Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefhoghe, 2002). They defined direct physical aggression as punching or hitting, and direct verbal aggression as name calling or taunting. Indirect aggression was defined as a subtler act. The principle forms would be gossiping and spreading rumors, or social exclusion, deliberately not allowing them in a group (Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefhoghe, 2002).

Crick et al. (1995) described a similar concept as cited in Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, and Liefhoghe (2002). The concept is relational or social aggression, which relates to the consequence of a negative act and the intent to damage relationships for that person.

Two other important groups exist: victims and the bystanders. The victim can be how our culture defines who does not have power, privileges, or respect (Wiseman, 2003). This is known as the passive victim one who displays nonassertive behavior (Juvonen & Graham, 2001). They are bullied because of their submissive behavior and no retaliation (Juvonen & Graham, 2001).

The victim can also be the bully. This is called bully victims. Bully victims

are students who were once bullied themselves (Viadero, 2003). Espelage described how a middle school girl started making fun of others because kids were making fun of her (cited in Viadero, 2003). The two young men responsible for the Columbine High School shootings have been labeled as bully victims.

Provocative victims are targets because of their irritating off-task behaviors that provoke their peers to retaliate (cited in Juvonen & Graham, 2001). It is suggested that the provocative victims might suffer from lack of concentration and attention, also possibly hyperactivity.

Perry described other victims as the aggressive victims (cited in Juvonen & Graham, 2001). These victims he called ineffectual aggressors or high-conflict victims (cited in Juvonen & Graham, 2001). Aggressive victims are children who are involved in emotionally filled conflicts with their peers. Their peers may seek them out because they know they have a short fuse. Their peers will set them up, just to watch them retaliate and receive negative consequences for their actions.

The bystanders are the last group defined. They are the students who are aware of what is going on, but they do nothing; are aware and intervene, whether joining in or reporting it to authorities, or are unaware of the situation (Dunn, 2001).

Depending on the situation, students could be in any of the different groups just described. It would depend upon the situation and time.

Age and Gender Characteristics

Adolescence and the onset of puberty have been found to increase victimization according to Craig, Pepler, Connolly and Henderson (1999) (cited in Juvonen & Graham, 2001). Roland (2002) collected data of eighth grade boys and girls that showed mean levels to not be very different for being bullied. When bullying others was looked at though, the mean score for boys was double that

for girls (Roland, 2002). From this research, the difference was significant, the standard deviation was far greater for boys than for girls when it came to bullying others (Roland, 2002).

In order to get an accurate picture of bullying behavior, a variety of bullying behaviors must be considered. Bullying also includes the nonphysical forms of aggression, and as such, girls tend to bully by spreading rumors or pointedly ignoring classmates (Viadero, 2003). Also, because girls experience puberty changes about two years before boys, harassment may emerge at a younger age for girls (Juvonen & Graham, 2001).

Wiseman, (2003) explained that gender defined who has power by how a particular culture may define masculinity and femininity. She stated that masculinity is still defined as control over oneself and others. Femininity has, however, become more complicated, but still can be defined as needing male attention for validation, and presenting a nonthreatening manner to get attention (Wiseman, 2003). This is called gender ideals.

Wiseman (2003) further defined the “In Crowd” for females and males, by what characteristics each would possess to have to be in that “In Crowd” (Wiseman, 2003). The female crowd or “Act like a woman,” would include the following characteristics: pretty, confident, hangs out with the right guys, nice (on the outside), rich, happy, thin, popular, athletic, in control, and has long hair (Wiseman, 2003). This group of girls would be considered to have the power, and possibly the female bully would have these characteristics.

Outside this female crowd would be girls labeled as: shy, fat, has acne, a loner, no style, too opinionated, cause-oriented, and gay (Wiseman, 2003). This group would become the victims.

The males have other characteristics to be in the “Act like a man” crowd (Wiseman, 2003). The characteristics include: strong, in control, rich, has a car,

has girls, funny, aggressive, tough, athletic, and confident. The opposite would include males who were weak, unathletic, sensitive, mama's boy, tries too hard, gay, acts like a girl, geeky/nerdy, and cries (Wiseman, 2003).

Wiseman, (2003) continued to state that any of the characteristics associated with acting like a girl were not favorable for a male. This may make it difficult for boys because everything they do must prove their masculinity. This gets difficult as they reach high school. For the young teen males, other males will respect them for their "act like a man" characteristics, but females are attracted to males who may have some of the characteristics outside the masculine traits.

School and Family Influences

Pepler and Sedighdellami (1998), stated that bullies are well versed in aggressive behaviors to get something they want, because the lessons were first learned at home (cited in Roberts, 2000). Hazier (1996), stated specifically those humans are most vulnerable to learning appropriate behaviors when they are young. The majority of bullies sees and hears aggressive emotions and behaviors in their families (cited in Roberts, 2000). Praise, encouragement, and humor are quite rare in the families of bullies. The negative behaviors of sarcasm, put-downs, and criticism are more prevalent. Bullies observe aggressive physical, verbal, or emotional behaviors from one or both parents. A seven-year-long study done in Massachusetts found a correlation between peer victimization at an early age and later violent behavior. One of the top two predictors for future aggression was disciplinary practice by the parents of children in the study (Viadero, 2003).

From this violent-filled home environment come children who have learned that power is control. Physical force is shown to be okay to get what they want in life or overcome obstacles that get in their way. The parents of bullies often

support their children, because they see it as their child standing up for himself/herself. The children may bully because they see the less powerful as reminders of themselves in the home environment. This allows them to feel powerful in some instances and to try to forget about their own humiliation at home.

Three forms of parental control have been identified as pivotal in families of victims. The first parenting style is intrusive and overprotective. The second is parental psychological control, and the third is parental coercion (Juvonen & Graham, 2001). These three forms illustrate how even at a young age, children might become victims of bullying because of parenting styles.

Additional findings suggest that close parenting would increase a boy's chance of being a victim, whereas girls in a harsh parenting environment increased their chance of being a victim (Juvonen & Graham, 2001).

The school as Wiseman (2003) explained, can take a stand when bullying is encountered. How a school may choose to enforce their student code of conduct sends a direct message to students. If students believe there is a written student code of conduct and a code the students believe are the "real" rules, unwritten code, the second code silences the students and makes them reluctant to speak up (Wiseman, 2003).

Students will learn this unwritten code from not only peers, but parents and educators too. Wiseman continued to say that when schools don't take appropriate, consistent disciplinary action against bullies, especially if they are from that "Act like a man" box, it sends a clear message to students that the written code is a joke (2003). When the school does this, it only helps the bully and further humiliates the victim, along with sending a message to other students to be silent.

Bullying Interventions

Espelage (2002) explained that bullying might be a group process where educators and children have a part (cited in Viadero, 2003). Xin Ma (2002) pointed out that school-based bullying prevention programs address bullies and victims separately (cited in Viadero, 2003). Ma feels that the two need to be looked at together in order for a bully prevention program to be effective.

One anti-bullying program was developed by Olweus, and reduced bullying by 50% over two years (cited in Viadero, 2003). A South Carolina school tried the same Olweus program and reduced bullying by 25% over seven months.

The key however, as Wiseman (2003) shared is to look at or evaluate the school climate or culture. This would mean convincing administrators, teachers, and all staff that it is not okay for students to bully other students.

Some steps that could help parents and schools, according to Fleming and Levine, are to:

- 1) establish clean, constructive, consistent consequences that will be used in conjunction with rules that are ALWAYS enforced; 2) assist the victims to take back power; 3) teach the life skills necessary to help students to manage potentially difficult life situations; 4) empower the bystanders to report bullying; 5) do not tolerate any form of aggression; and 6) provide training to staff members (2002).

Roberts (2000) pointed out that adults might not recognize bullying behavior when they see it. Questions should be asked on whether or not the behaviors are age-appropriate teasing or inappropriate bullying behavior. Some questions adults may ask are, what is the level of intensity of the behaviors? Is the behavior physical, verbal, or psychological? At what rate does the behavior occur? How does the target of the behavior respond? (Roberts, 2000).

If any answers to these questions seem to be inappropriate age-related behavior that is negative, intense, and frequent, it could be bullying.

Conflict-resolution is a skill that would ask that both parties be involved in the resolution. The relationship of bullies and victims go hand-in-hand. As stated earlier, unsuccessful models were only looking at one or the other, not both. If at all possible, researchers Beane, Crawford, and Bodine, Creighton and Kivel would demand that both parties would have attention in the dispute (cited in Roberts, 2000).

Huesmann (1984) stated that steps should be taken to intervene on behalf of the bully (cited in Roberts, 2000). If children are not provided an alternative to aggressive behaviors, they will continue to victimize others. There are five approaches that could be used with children or adolescents who are engaged in bullying behaviors: 1) making nonthreatening contact with the bullies; 2) intensive listening to what the bully is saying at both the surface and metacommunication level; 3) laying the groundwork for the bully to begin to learn about self and creating opportunities for change; 4) giving individual attention and support; and 5) providing long-term follow up care (cited in Roberts, 2000).

Bullies need to be approached or confronted by adults about their behavior. An adult should have some opening lines created to confront the bully. The adult should at no time accuse the student. This accusation would only set them off and make a bad situation worse.

This is where it would be very important to listen and give the bully a chance to tell his/her side of the story. This doesn't happen very often, so listen and try to pick up more than just the surface details. As mentioned earlier, bullies usually come from a negative home environment and may have more to share than just the incident that happened at school.

Summary

In this chapter there were points made on bullying in relationship to schools and family influences. Interventions that could be implemented at schools or homes were also explained. The points explored provide an interest in identifying teachers' level of awareness on bullying that may be taking place in the 9th through 12th grades.

Pertinent information related to bullying definitions, age and gender characteristics, school and family influences, and interventions would make this research worthwhile.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will include information about how the sample was selected and a description of the sample. It will describe the instrument used, as well as how data was collected and an analysis of the data. The chapter will conclude with the methodological limitations.

Subject Selection and Description

All 9th to 12th grade teachers in a Wisconsin town of 15,000 at a high school of approximately 1,100 students during the winter of 2004 will be given a letter of the intent of the study and will be requested to participate. The respective building principal will be contacted to get the initial approval prior to contacting this group of 9th to 12th grade teachers. There are approximately 70 high school teachers in the district. There will be males and females, a variety of age groups, varied academic backgrounds, and a difference in years of teaching experience.

Instrumentation

A modified survey from Tricia Sturz's study (1998) was developed to gather information on bullying perceptions among 9th to 12th grade teachers. Items on the survey included bullying awareness related to definitions of bullying, ratings of bullying behaviors, interventions, prevalence of bullying, and attitudes on bullying.

The literature review reinforced the need to understand or look at bullying at school (Dunn, 2001; Fleming & Levine, 2002; McLellan, 1997; Roberts, 2000; Roland, 2002; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson & Liefhoghe, 2002; Viadero, 2003; Wiseman, 2003). The survey will collect demographic information related to

gender, age, and number of years in the district. The survey will include 15 items related to bullying interventions, awareness, prevalence, and attitudes, along with a variety of choices and/or ratings to help understand the likelihood of bullying in the school. The researcher's advisor examined this survey and face validity was established.

Data Collection

All 9th to 12th grade teachers were given an opportunity to participate in the study. The researcher distributed the survey via the mailroom to the participants. The participants were informed that participation was voluntary and confidential. The survey reminded them not to write their names on it and to please respond as honestly as possible. Participants were given a two-week time line to return completed surveys to the high school main office, to the administrative assistant, in a sealed envelope. Completed surveys were picked up at the end of each week.

Data Analysis

The findings were tallied at the end of the second week. Items related to definitions were looked at for similarities. Items related to attitudes and bullying/peer harassment behaviors were compared. Also the differences between gender, age and years of employment compared to the different scenarios and how serious they viewed the scenarios.

Limitations

Two limitations in this methodology:

1. The teachers may not see the need for identifying an awareness of bullying/peer harassment in their school.
2. The survey may not be very reliable or valid, since it was created specifically for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will present the results from a survey given to 9th to 12th grade teachers on their level of awareness of adolescent bullying/peer harassment behavior in their school. Group responses to each of the survey's fourteen questions will be reported with frequencies and descriptive statistics. Additionally, seventeen pieces of insightful anecdotal information will be shared following the corresponding research question or scenario. These anecdotal comments provide more descriptive accounts of bullying/peer harassment behaviors, as it existed at this high school.

Demographic Information

The sample for this study consisted of 65% (n = 31) males and 33% (n = 16) females with 2% (n = 1) missing. Age ranges of the respondents included eight respondents in the 22-29 age group, twelve respondents in the 30-39 age group, fifteen respondents in the 40-49 age group, ten respondents in the 50-59 age group and three respondents in the 60 or older group. As far as years employed in the district, twenty respondents indicated less than five years, six respondents indicated between five and ten years, while twenty-two respondents indicated eleven or more years employed by the district. There were a total of 48 respondents, with one respondent not identifying gender.

Results

Scenario One:

Sam avoids going down the Senior Hallway because of daily name-calling and gestures that go on when he walks by a group of students.

Eight percent ($n = 4$) of the respondents rated this bullying/peer harassment behavior as somewhat serious. Fifty-two percent ($n = 25$) of the respondents rated this bullying/peer harassment behavior as serious. While forty percent ($n = 19$) of the respondents rated this bullying/peer harassment behavior as very serious.

Scenario Two:

Josie and Sally wait for Ellen after practice. They stare at Ellen, as she gets ready to go home. Ellen asks them to please stop and the two girls begin to laugh and point at Ellen. The next day Ellen sees Josie and Sally, they have a group of girls by them and they all stare as Ellen goes by. Ellen goes by and heads into the bathroom and starts crying.

Six percent ($n = 3$) of the respondents rated this bullying/peer harassment behavior as somewhat serious. Forty-four percent ($n = 21$) of the respondents rated this bullying/peer harassment behavior as serious. While fifty percent ($n = 24$) of the respondents rated this bullying/peer harassment behavior as very serious.

Scenario Three:

Joe slams Sam's head into the locker. He then continues onto class. Eric who is at his locker watches the whole thing, but does nothing. Sam wonders when this

will stop, but he is afraid to say anything, since Joe mentioned to him that he knows where to find him.

Four percent ($n = 2$) of the respondents rated this bullying/peer harassment behavior as serious. While the remaining ninety-six percent ($n = 46$) of the respondents rated this bullying/peer harassment behavior as very serious.

Scenario Four:

When doing hall supervision, you overhear students gossiping about what happened at a party over the weekend. When the girl they are talking about walks by, the gossiping students begin to stare and snicker, speaking loudly enough so that she hears.

Twenty-five percent ($n = 12$) of the respondents rated this bullying/peer harassment behavior as somewhat serious. Forty-two percent ($n = 20$) of the respondents rated this bullying/peer harassment behavior as serious. Thirty-three percent ($n = 16$) of the respondents rated this bullying/peer harassment behavior as very serious.

Note

One respondent who was included in the somewhat serious percentages wrote, "Choices and consequences, although the group of girls are in the wrong." This respondent believed that what the girls did was wrong, but the girl who evidently behaved inappropriately at the weekend party, had a choice on what to do, so she should be ready for the consequences of her actions.

Research Question 1

Do teachers believe that increased staff supervision would decrease bullying/peer harassment behaviors from occurring on and/or around school grounds?

Seventy-nine percent of the respondents (38 out of 47 respondents to this item) believed that increased staff supervision would decrease bullying/peer harassment behaviors. Sixteen percent (n=8) of the respondents believed increased staff supervision would not decrease bullying/peer harassment behaviors. Two percent (n=1) of the respondents believed “yes” and “no” that increased staff supervision would decrease bullying/peer harassment behaviors.

Anecdotal Comments

The one respondent who indicated “yes” and “no” that increased staff supervision would decrease bullying/peer harassment wrote, “If increased supervision is not accompanied by consistent enforcement of policy, then forget it. Also, bullying is an increasing problem in elementary and middle school that is often ignored. We must teach it then to deter the behavior in high school kids.”

One respondent who indicated “no”, to the question if increased supervision would decrease bullying/peer harassment behaviors wrote, “I am astounded by the frequency of which I see faculty witness harassment by students, shake their head and keep walking. The apathy among my colleagues is exceptionally unprofessional.”

Another respondent who indicated “no”, to the question if increased staff supervision would decrease bullying/peer harassment behaviors from occurring

on and/or around school grounds wrote, “Increased staff is only a way to police the situation. I don’t feel that is the answer somehow the issue needs to be addressed on a regular basis, such as HELP, (HELP is a homeroom, which has a consistent teacher with the same group of students for all four years) open discussion, role play, stories with accepted behavior vs. bullying. I don’t have the answer, as this is an issue that is not addressed in the homes, is accepted and seen in the media. We need to do more than police. We need to address the root of it all.”

Research Question 2

Do teachers address bullying/peer harassment behavior in their classroom or outside in the hallway?

Of all the respondents who answered, 97.9% (n = 47) stated that yes; they do address bullying/peer harassment in their classroom or in the hallway.

Research Question 3

If Yes on #2, do you believe this then decreased bullying/peer harassment in your classroom?

Seventy-nine percent (n =38) of the respondents who answered, “yes” to research question two, believed this then decreased bullying/peer harassment in their classrooms. Ten percent (n = 5) of the respondents who answered, “yes” to research question two responded with “no”, it didn’t decrease bullying/peer harassment in their classrooms. Six point three per cent (n = 3) of the respondents believed “yes” and “no” that it decreases bullying/peer harassment in their classrooms.

Anecdotal Comments

Two respondents who believed that “yes”, it does then decrease bullying/peer harassment in their classrooms stated, “To a point” and the other wrote, “I don’t allow bullying behavior.”

Research Question 4

Do teachers believe that verbal bullying is at some point likely to turn into a situation of pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, punching, etc.?

Nearly 94% (n = 45) of the respondents believed that verbal bullying is at some point likely to turn into a situation of pushing, shoving, hitting, etc. While only 2.1% (n = 1) of the respondents believed “no”, it would not and 2.1% (n = 1) of the respondents believed “yes” and “no”.

Anecdotal Comments

The one respondent who indicated “yes” and “no” that verbal bullying can at some point turn into a situation of pushing, shoving, hitting, etc. wrote, “ Yes with boys and no with girls.”

Research Question 5

In response to if “yes” on #4, how frequently will the verbal bullying progress to physical bullying?

If “yes” to verbal bullying progressing to physical bullying, two percent (n = 1) of the respondents felt that once in awhile this would happen. Thirty-seven percent (n = 18) of the respondents felt that sometimes this would happen. Forty-three percent (n = 21) of the respondents felt that often this would happen and 10.4% (n = 5) of the respondents stated always this would happen. Six

percent ($n = 3$) of the respondents were missing from the data, one of which had responded yes to research question four.

Research Question 6

Which type of bullying/peer harassment do teachers believe high school students experience the most?

Eighty-seven percent ($n = 35$) of the respondents believe high school students experience verbal bullying the most. Ten percent ($n = 5$) of the respondents believed high school students experience equally physical and verbal bullying. None of the respondents believed that high school students experienced physical bullying the most over verbal and both equally.

Anecdotal Comment

One respondent wrote, "The verbal bullying and intimidation is so hard to get a handle on. I think the bullying person can be very sophisticated and are not caught most of the time."

Research Question 7

Has a student ever reported his/her bullying/peer harassment experience to you?

Thirty-five out of 47 respondents, 72.9%, responded "yes", a student has reported his/her bullying/peer harassment experience to them. Twelve out of forty-seven respondents, 25%, responded that "no", a student has not reported his/her bullying/peer harassment experience to them.

Research Question 8

Do teachers believe that a bystander is guilty when they watch and say nothing in a bullying/peer harassment situation?

Seventy-nine percent ($n = 38$) of the respondents believed that “yes”, a bystander is guilty when they watch and say nothing in a bullying/peer harassment situation. The other respondents 13% ($n = 6$), believed that “no”, the bystander was not guilty. While 6% ($n = 3$) believed “yes” and “no” that the bystander was or was not guilty when they watched or said nothing in a bullying/peer harassment situation.

Anecdotal Comments

One respondent who said “no”, the bystander is not guilty wrote, “#8 mentions that a bystander might be guilty for not doing anything when seeing a situation dealing with bullying. Unfortunately I think this would be a harsh view since not many students in our school have enough clout or confidence to standup for what is right. Pleasantly, I have seen students intervene.”

One respondent who didn't circle “yes” or “no” wrote, “ Depends on the severity.”

Research Question 9

Do teachers believe that bullying/peer harassment is an issue that has been dealt with in a clear and preventative manner by high school staff?

Twenty-five percent ($n = 12$) of the respondents believed that “yes”, bullying/peer harassment has been dealt with in a clear and preventive manner by high school staff. However, 70.8% ($n = 34$) believed that “no”, bullying/peer harassment has not been dealt with in a clear and preventive manner by high school staff. One respondent, (2.1%), believed “yes” and “no” bullying/peer harassment has been dealt with in a clear and preventive manner by high school

staff.

Anecdotal Comments

One respondent who said “no”, bullying/peer harassment has not been dealt with in a clear and preventive manner by high school staff wrote, “I think we talk about it, but hide it at times. Think of all the students we have kind of hiding out in various areas during lunch and mornings. (library, LD rooms, other rooms, nurse’s office, etc.)

Another respondent wrote, “I think that when it is observed, it is dealt with, but I think staff needs to be more visible and cut down on more bullying/peer harassment.”

Research Question 10

Overall, how do teachers define the bullying/peer harassment situation at this high school?

Exactly 14.6% (n = 7) of the respondents defined the bullying/peer harassment situation at the high school as a large problem. Fifty-two percent (n = 25) defined the bullying/peer harassment situation at the high school as somewhat of a problem and indicated signs of getting worse. Twenty-seven percent (n = 13) defined the bullying/peer harassment situation at the high school as somewhat of a problem but showing signs of getting better.

Anecdotal Comments

One respondent who defined bullying/peer harassment situation at the high school as somewhat of a problem but showing signs of getting better wrote, “I think we are a typical high school. We deal with what we see. True, bullying is

not acceptable, but this building sees hundreds of thousands of human interactions per day.”

Another respondent who defined bullying/peer harassment situation at the high school as somewhat of a problem but showing signs of getting better stated, “I have been witness to harassment and supportive to victims of harassment many times, especially when I worked with ESL, and the problems with new Hmong students were extremely serious. We had a large “prejudice and discrimination” support group, which increased in size every time we met. The group started out consisting of mostly Hmong, but by invitation (open), more and more concerned American students joined. Other victims of harassment joined as well, fringe groups, fat people. The group really grew way too large to be a support group, but it was a time to share. The new social worker and I continued for a while...changing the focus to how to deal with harassment. We also updated a harassment reporting form and staff was in serviced on how to use it. I’m now more removed from Hmong harassment issues, but my guess is that they’re still there, on a smaller scale.”

One respondent who defined the bullying/peer harassment situation at the high school as somewhat of a problem and showing signs of getting worse wrote, “A lot of bullying happens on the school bus.”

Another respondent who defined the bullying/peer harassment situation at the high school in the same manner wrote, “Consistency is the missing key. We all need to follow the same protocol.”

A third respondent who defined the bullying/peer harassment situation at

the high school in the same way stated, “I don’t think kids file harassment forms when they are the target of this type of behavior for fear of retaliation. I don’t think our administration deals with this type of behavior very well--consequences aren’t a deterrent.”

One respondent who defined the bullying/peer harassment situation at the high school as a large problem wrote “Needs to be addressed.”

Unanticipated Findings

A chi squared analysis revealed that no significant differences were found in responses across age categories. There was also no significant difference found among the respondents when comparing age of respondent, response to the four scenarios and how the respondent defined the bullying/peer harassment situation at the high school. This suggests that observations of bullying/peer harassment behaviors was viewed similarly, even for less experienced teachers.

Summary of findings

This chapter discussed the results of a survey designed to identify 9th to 12th grade teachers’ knowledge of and awareness of adolescent bullying/peer harassment behavior in their high school. The results of this study indicate that teachers at this high school are aware of typical and subtle bullying/peer harassment behavior. Furthermore, the study also indicates that teachers do see a need for consistent interventions to decrease bullying/peer harassment at this high school. The study also shared some specific anecdotal information about how bullying/peer harassment behavior is ignored by some staff members. Because of this, the teacher felt that there would need to be more than just

policing, but true interventions to help decrease this type of behavior.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will briefly review the purpose of this study, and the methodology used. A summary regarding the significance of the study will be shared. Limitations of the study and conclusions about the study will also be presented. Concluding the chapter will be recommendations for further research pertaining to bullying/peer harassment behaviors of adolescents in a high school setting.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather data from 9th to 12th grade teachers from a small Wisconsin town of 15,000 on their level of awareness of adolescent bullying/peer harassment behavior in their school.

Research has indicated that bullying/peer harassment is nothing new. Almost all children or adults can share a time when they were bullied or saw bullying taking place. (McLellan, 1997) Within the high school surveyed, the majority of teachers report to address bullying in their classrooms or in the hallway. Forty-seven responded yes, with one teacher not completing the back section of the survey. Another 82.6% of the respondents also believed that addressing such behavior decreased the possibility of bullying/peer harassment behavior in their classroom.

The 95.7% of the teachers that participated indicated that verbal bullying

was at some point likely to turn to physical bullying. Of those respondents 46.7% indicated this would happen often. This finding is compatible with the research by Wiseman (2002) that behaviors such as spreading rumors led to acting out physically. It is also compatible with the research that defines provocative victims, and aggressive victims. (cited in Juvonen & Graham, 2001) Each of these victims are individuals who are provoked because of their off-task behavior or because of their short fuse.

In this survey, 89.4% of the teachers believed that high school students experienced verbal bullying/peer harassment behavior the most. Physical bullying/peer harassment behavior was also a choice, but there were no teachers that indicated this was experienced the most by high school students. According to new research cyber bullying is on the rise. (Paulson, 2004) This type of bullying would fall under verbal bullying/peer harassment behavior. Additional research states that direct verbal aggression, like gossiping and spreading rumors which is more common among females, and relational aggression, which is the intent to damage relationships for that person, can be very evident in bullying/peer harassment situations. (Smith, Cowie, Olafsson & Liefvooghe, 2002; Wiseman, 2002)

Research also indicates that two-thirds of the young people have been teased or gossiped about in a mean way at least once this month. (Zimmerman, 2003). It is believed that verbal bullying precedes up to 90% of the violence in school. (Zimmerman, 2003)

Emphasis on bullying/peer harassment interventions is crucial to curbing

the number of bullying/peer harassment incidences. Research found that an important step would be to consider and evaluate the school climate or culture (Wiseman, 2003). Other researchers, Olweus (1978), Espelage (2002), and Ma (2002), indicated a school-based bullying prevention program that addresses bullies and victims would help to reduce bullying. (cited in Viadero, 2003)

Seventy-eight percent of the teachers surveyed believed that bullying/peer harassment is an issue that has not been dealt with in a clear and preventative manner by the high school staff. That would mean that 34 out of 47 teachers believe this is an issue that needs to be addressed. According to research, schools that have an anti-bullying program can reduce bullying in their schools by 25 to 50 percent over a couple of years (cited in Viadero, 2003). Additional research states the key is to consider and evaluate school climate and culture, along with educating administrators, teachers, and all staff that bullying is unacceptable (Wiseman, 2003).

About half, 55.5% of the teachers defined the bullying/peer harassment situation at the high school as somewhat of a problem, but getting worse. This would go along with research that indicates that the dynamics of bullying have been present as long as there have been schools and the number of bullying cases in schools is much higher and more serious than 15 years ago (Dunn, 2001; Fleming & Levine, 2002). Research has also shown that bullying was a key factor in two-thirds of 37 school shootings (Viadero, 2003).

Researchers Craig, Pepler, Connelly & Henderson (1999), indicated that adolescence and the onset of puberty have shown to increase victimization (cited

in Juvonen & Graham, 2001). Researchers looked at age and gender differences and bullying/peer harassment incidences and found that girls may experience harassment at a younger age than boys (Juvonen & Graham, 2001). Researchers also found differences in how girls and boys bully or harass others (Viadero, 2003).

The researcher is concerned with the number of anecdotal information pieces related to the lack of consistency with bullying/peer harassment behaviors. For example, when a respondent indicated the frequency of which they see faculty witness harassment and do nothing, increased staff is only a way to police the situation, not the answer to bullying. Another indicated staff talks about it, but hides it at times. Other respondents indicated that consistency is the missing key and needs to be addressed.

However, the majority of respondents believed that increased staff supervision would decrease bullying/peer harassment behavior at the high school, but a high percentage defined the bullying/peer harassment situation as somewhat of a problem and getting worse. The researcher believes that with this data, along with the pieces of anecdotal information, that possibly interventions would assist the respondents when addressing bullying/peer harassment behaviors.

Implications

This study indicates that bullying/peer harassment does take place in this small school of 1100. A portion of the teachers believed that the bullying/peer harassment behavior is getting worse at the high school. Research would state

that bullying/peer harassment behavior is on the rise and worse now than ever before (Fleming & Levine, 2002).

The data suggests that addressing bullying/peer harassment behavior in the classroom and hallway decreases that behavior in the teacher's classroom. Research suggests that school-wide programs with all staff on board can help to reduce bullying/peer harassment even more (Viadero, 2003; Wiseman, 2003). Thus, it would be a benefit for this high school to get a school wide bullying/peer harassment awareness program that all staff can implement. As one respondent stated, there had been a program in place, but it was over five years ago and with 20 of the 48 respondents being in the district less than five years, maybe it is time to update and reestablish this bullying/peer harassment training that was in place over five years ago.

Limitations

The limitations in this study are:

1. The teachers may not see the need for identifying bully/peer harassment awareness.
2. The survey for this study was developed specifically to gather information from 9th to 12th grade teachers on their awareness of bullying/peer harassment taking place in their high school. Reliability and validity measures for this instrument are not available. The results cannot be generalized to elementary or middle schoolteachers.
3. The population for this study was small (n = 48), however the researcher believes that some conclusions can be drawn from the data, by

understanding percentages and frequencies.

Recommendations for further research

The following recommendations were made based on the data and descriptive findings, along with conclusions:

1. Gather more data on where the bullying/peer harassment behaviors take place at the high school.
2. Gather information from students on frequency and types of bullying/peer harassment behaviors.
3. Develop a bullying/peer harassment awareness program to train staff on what to look for and how to report or intervene.
4. Identify bullies, victims, provocative victims and aggressive victims and promote interventions to resolve problem behavior in the early stages of bullying/peer harassment.
5. Educate students and staff on what they can do as bystanders. How they can help without fear of retaliation from the bully.
6. Create a safe place for all students, free of ridicule and blame, a place where they can express their feelings openly and honestly.
7. Involve parents and families in the bullying/peer harassment prevention program. Empower parents to know how to be there for their son/daughter.
8. Make a presentation to the school board on the importance of implementing a bullying/peer harassment awareness program in all district schools.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING IN BULLYING/PEER HARASSMENT SURVEY

I understand that by returning the/this survey, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I understand that some research questions may deal with illegal conduct, however information is not being gathered on what action I took in that situation. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. Those benefits being an increased awareness of what bullying/peer harassment is all about and learning to recognize some of the bullying/peer harassment behaviors that have gone unnoticed previously in the high school. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that only minimal identifiers are necessary and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about the research study should be addressed to Sue Halama, the researcher, at 232-9177 or Denise Brouillard, the research advisor, at 232-2599. Questions about the rights of research subjects can be addressed to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, Stout Solutions, Research Services, 152 Voc. Rehab. Building, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone 715-232-1126.

APPENDIX B

Bullying/Peer Harassment Survey

I would really appreciate it if you would take a few minutes to complete this survey. It is one of the last steps I need to complete for my masters in Guidance and Counseling. Your participation is voluntary and confidentiality is guaranteed. DO NOT write your name on this survey. Please return the completed survey in a sealed envelope to Renee Olson in the front office.

Circle One For Each Category:

- A) Gender: Female or Male
- B) Age Range: 22-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 or older
- C) Years employed by the Menomonie School District:
- | | | |
|-----------|-------|-----------|
| Less than | 5-10 | more than |
| 5 years | years | 10 years |

Please read the following definitions:

Bullying/peer harassment - the intimidation verbally or physically of a student by another student. The student who is intimidating takes pleasure from someone else's pain, whether it is emotionally or physically inflicted.

Bystander - is a student who has watched and not intervened in a peer harassment or bullying incident.

DIRECTIONS:

Please rate each of the scenarios to the seriousness of bullying/peer harassment in each of them.

1 - no problem exists 2 - somewhat serious 3 - serious 4 - very serious

Scenario One:

Sam avoids going down the Senior Hallway because of daily name calling and gestures that go on when he walks by a group of students.

1 2 3 4

Scenario Two:

Josie and Sally wait for Ellen after practice. They stare at her as she gets ready to go home. Ellen asks them to please stop and the two girls begin to laugh and point at Ellen. The next day Ellen sees Josie and Sally, they have a group of girls by them and they all stare as Ellen goes by. Ellen goes by and heads into the bathroom and starts crying.

1 2 3 4

Scenario Three:

Joe slams Sam's head into the locker. He then continues onto class. Eric who is at his locker watches the whole thing, but does nothing. Sam wonders when this will stop, but he is afraid to say anything, since Joe mentioned to him that he knows where to find him.

1 2 3 4

Scenario Four:

When doing hall supervision, you overhear students gossiping about what happened at a party over the weekend. When the girl they are talking about walks by, the gossiping students begin to stare and snicker, speaking loudly enough so that she hears.

1 2 3 4

Using the definitions, from the first page, please respond to the following items/questions by circling your response:

1. Do you believe that increased staff supervision would decrease bullying/peer harassment behaviors from occurring on and/or around school grounds?

Yes No

2. Do you address bullying/peer harassment behavior in your classroom or outside in the hallway?

Yes No

3. If Yes on #2, do you believe this then decreases bullying/peer harassment in your classroom?

Yes No

4. Do you believe that verbal bullying is at some point likely to turn into a situation of pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, punching, etc.?

Yes* No

5. If Yes on #4, how frequently will the verbal bullying progress to physical bullying?

Always Often Sometimes Once in awhile

6. Which type of bullying/peer harassment do you believe high school students experience the most? (circle one)

Physical Verbal Both equally Neither

7. Has a student ever reported his/her bullying/peer harassment experience to you?

Yes No

8. Do you believe that a bystander is guilty when they watch and say nothing in a bullying/peer harassment situation?

Yes No

9. Do you believe that bullying/peer harassment is an issue that has been dealt with in a clear and preventative manner by high school staff?

Yes No

10. Overall, in your opinion, how would you define the bullying/peer harassment situation at this high school. (circle one)

a large problem	somewhat of a problem and showing signs of getting worse	somewhat of a problem but showing signs of getting better	no problem at all
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11. Additional comments:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.