The Impact of Bullying on Academic Success for Students With and Without Exceptionalities

By

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Abstract

Bullying has been recognized as a serious problem in today's schools (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). It is imperative that educators understand the dynamics and consequences of bullying, as well as what they can do to support students in these situations (Allen, 2010). This research study will explore the ways in which students in mainstream and special education classrooms are affected academically by the bullying they encounter. The purpose of the study is to understand how bullying impacts a student's ability to succeed academically so that educators can better support children in their classrooms. Data for this research study was collected by conducting face-to-face interviews with two teachers; one mainstream, one special education. Findings show that students who are bullied have a fear of coming to school because they feel unsafe; thus, they are unable to concentrate and their academic success is hindered. Additionally, students with exceptionalities are bullied more often than students without, which place them at a double disadvantage. According to the participants, these students do not have the social skills to stand up to bullies to protect themselves. Lastly, the findings inform understandings how teachers, schools and parents can better support students who are experiencing bullying.

Keywords: bullying, victimization, exceptionalities, academics, interventions, social skills, support, elementary teachers

Acknowledgements

As I have made my way to the end of this journey, I am truly amazed not only by what I have learned through the two years of the Master of Teaching program, but from this research paper. I have gained valuable experiences that have given me the opportunity to grow as an educator and as a human being. My beliefs and opinions have changed and my practice as an educator has transformed. I wish to acknowledge and thank the many individuals who have aided in the completion of this research paper. First, I would like to thank my research supervisor, Mira Gambhir, who was there to support me academically, professionally, and emotionally throughout the year. I am so appreciative of her ongoing support and feedback. Next, I would like to thank my participants who went out of their way to give me their time and dedication while I conducted interviews. I am grateful for their cooperation in this process. Finally, I would like to thank my family for always encouraging me to chase after my dreams and be the best that I can be.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Research Study

Bullying in schools is a worldwide problem that can have negative consequences for the general school climate and for the right of students to learn in a safe environment without fear (Banks, 1997). According to Olweus (1996), bullying is when "a student is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (p. 275). The relationship is characterized by an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim based on physical size, strength, age or social status. Bullying is the intentional, repetitive harming or injury by one's peers; they are occurrences in which the victim is unable to avoid or stop the victimization (Brank, Hoetger & Hazen, 2012). Bully and victimization have emerged as persistent problems in our schools (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). One in three adolescent students in Canadian schools have reported being bullied (Government of Canada, 2012).

As educators, our job is to try to eliminate bullying as much possible, while providing support for those experiencing it. Teachers see the effects of bullying in many ways. They see it affect students emotionally, physically, mentally, socially, and academically. While all of these aspects are equally important to the well being of a student, this research study is going to specifically examine the impact that bullying has on academic success. Simultaneously, it is going to take a look at the degree to which students with exceptionalities are bullied and reasons as to why they are at a disadvantage.

Purpose of the Study

      The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' beliefs on the effects that bullying has on the academic success of students. Students all around the world are affected by bullying each day, and it is extremely important that educators are aware of the reasons why students are bullied and what they can do to help eliminate this ever-growing issue. This study will take a look at students and their teachers in the mainstream elementary classroom and the special education classroom. The study will primarily focus on how academic success is being hindered by bullying, but it will also consider how teachers' beliefs and practices play a part in the understanding of bullying in the elementary schools.

Research Topic/Questions

      The goal of this research study is to also gain a better understanding of how academic success, of students with and without exceptionalities changes when bullying takes place. Through a series of questions, it examines participant's beliefs on the effects and consequences of bullying, and reasons as to why students with exceptionalities may be bullied more often than students without exceptionalities. As well, it explores what educators can do to support their students who are being affected by bullying.

      My overall research question is: *How do elementary teachers support students whose academic success is being hindered by bullying, particularly students with exceptionalities?*

The sub-questions guiding this research are:

1) How does the impact of bullying on students with exceptionalities affect student's academic success?

2) How might a teacher's observations of bullying inform the academic well being of a student?

3) How do experiences of bullying impact students with exceptionalities?

4) How do teachers adapt their practice for students whose academic success is being affected by bullying?

Background of the Researcher

During undergrad, for the duration of one semester (4 months), I was part of a Community Engaged Learning (CEL) project in which we researched and collected data about cyber bullying from a local public high school. Based on the CEL project experience, my curiosity and interest in bullying, and likewise the effects of bullying grew. This specific project focused on cyber bullying, but it sparked my curiosity for this research study. From this project, I learned that it is important for teachers to consistently integrate anti-bullying lessons into their curriculum, as it is important for students to be constantly reminded about the impacts and consequences that bullying can have on themselves and others.

Since my mind was previously directed in this general idea of bullying, it seemed logical and interesting to me to continue on this path. Bullying has always been something that I have been interested in but also extremely sympathetic towards. As a student with a learning disability myself, I understand the struggles a lot of students encounter both socially and academically. I would like to make an impact in the lives of those struggling from bullying in any-which way I can. As an educator, this research study will be my first step towards contributing to improving the lives of learners and I

plan to continue this commitment in my future career. Following is an overview of what this paper addresses and introduces the various chapters.

Overview

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and purpose of the study, the research questions, as well as how I came to be involved in this topic and study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature that I have read and evaluated in order to better inform this research study. As well, the literature provides insight into bullying, student experiences, and professional recommendations from the field. Chapter 3 provides the methodology and procedure that is used in this study including information about the participant sample and the data collection instruments. Chapter 4 identifies the participants in the study and describes the data as it addresses the research questions. Chapter 5 includes limitations of the study, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and further reading and study. References and a list of appendices follow at the end.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature provides insight into how bullying is defined and the factors that need to be considered when defining it. The literature also gives information on student experiences, highlighting the barriers and challenges for students with or without exceptionalities. It also provides information on professional recommendations for teachers in terms of their beliefs and practices.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is a form of aggression in which there is an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim that occurs largely in the context of the peer group (Mishna, 2003). Bullying is identified as one of the most prominent problems faced by children in the education system, as well as one of the most significant health risks (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). Peer victimization is a serious worldwide problem and is a predictable, accepted, and often unspoken, painful part of childhood (Mishna, 2003). In Canada, reported rates of bullying vary from about 15% to 25% of students being bullied (Beran, Hughes & Lupart). Recognition of the seriousness of bullying has led to the accumulation of a large body of research. Norwegian researcher Dan Olweus has contributed significant research to bullying. By most accounts, youth-on-youth victimization or bullying empirical research began, or at the very least grew, with the focus of Olweus in the late 1970s. Much of the early research was conducted outside the US and focused on overt bullying, but the research has expanded into a much broader scope (Brank, Hoetger & Hazen, 2012). Olweus states that approximately 15% of students are bullied regularly (Banks, 1997). It has been demonstrated that bullying is unpredictable, occurs in all types of schools, is more prevalent in early adolescence, and may have lifelong consequences

(Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

Nansel and colleagues published the first large-scale study of bullying in the United States in 2000. After surveying 15,000 adolescents, found the prevalence of student involvement high, with nearly 30% of students reporting experiences of bullying. The authors also found a substantial relationship between involvement in bullying and lower self-perceived academic achievement (Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara & Kernic, 2005).

In understanding how prevalent the issue of bullying is amoung students with disabilities, it is relatively unclear because research focusing on this demographic is limited. However, experts agree that children with disabilities are harassed by peers at higher rates than their peers without disabilities (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). Bullying can have an overwhelming impact on students' performance, emotional health and well-being, and ability to reach their true potential. Victimization can also hinder a student's ability to learn in the school environment and can impede on the ability of students with disabilities to obtain the education critical to their development (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011).

Academic Considerations

Psychological feelings and achievement score

Victimized children describe themselves as unpopular, unhappy, and unsafe at school. They tend to lack friends and to be rejected by peers. These children report feeling afraid in school, reacting negatively toward school, and consequently avoiding school more often than their peers (Mishna, 2003). Students who reported that they did not feel safe and that they did not belong at school were more likely to be involved in

bullying. Children who said they were sad most days had higher odds of being either

bullies or victims. Lower achievement scores were associated with being a victim or

bully-victim (Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara & Kernic, 2005). Students who are involved in

bullying have decreased motivation and their grades may thus deteriorate (Mishna, 2003).

Research on peer rejection has also considered the relationship with academic

achievement and school adjustment. Woods and Wolke (2004) state that "Peer rejection

is predominantly assessed by standardized scores that are comparable across classes and

school, but does not take into account individual bullying roles within classes" (p. 137).

A study done by Schwartz, Farver, Chang, and Lee-Shin (2002) considered the academic

behaviour and school adjustment of children over the first year of school life and reported

that rejected children had less promising school perceptions, significantly higher levels of

school avoidance and considerably lower school performance (as cited in Woods &

Wolke, 2004).

The victim and achievement

Previous literature supports the hypothesis that bullying impairs concentration and

subsequent academic achievement in victims specifically (Glew, Fan, Katon, Rivara &

Kernic, 2005). Victims of bullying may lose interest in learning and experience a drop in

academic grades because their attention is distracted from learning. Studies have found

that male victims of bullying have lower academic grades than their peers. Nine in 10

victims of bullying experienced a decline in academic grades (Ma, Stewin & Mah, 2001).

Olweus describes victims as socially weak, shy, and anxious (as cited in Brank,

Hoetger & Hazen, 2012). They are more emotionally distraught and socially ostracized

than their non-victim peers. Victims may also perform more poorly in school and avoid

school in order to avoid victimization. Experiencing victimization can lead to poor

academic performance and attachment to school, leading to absenteeism and bad test

scores. Students may avoid school to escape victimization (Brank, Hoetger & Hazen,

2012; Mishna, 2003). Being the victim of bullying can lead to a heightened risk of

psychological side effects, such as depression, suicidal attempts and ideation, and poor

self-esteem. Skapinakis et al. (2011) found that victims were more likely to report

suicidal thoughts than were bullies. These negative psychological effects have been found

to persist into adulthood (as cited in Brank, Hoetger & Hazen, 2012).

  Direct and indirect effects on academics

Victimization experiences serve as a foundation for school adjustment problems

(Juvonen, Yueyan & Espinoza, 2011). Juvonen, Yueyan and Espinoza (2011) claim that:

> bullying experiences affect victims' adaptive functioning and
> academic achievement in both direct and indirect ways. More
> bullying predicted lower levels of standardized achievement
> scores and grade point averages. Predictive associations
> between peer victimization and academic difficulties were
> partly accounted for by increased levels of depression. (p. 154)

The most frequently tested indirect model believes that emotional distress caused by

negative peer encounters inhibits learning and performance. In other words, it is assumed

that a student who is victimized by peers becomes worried about getting ridiculed or

beaten up and therefore stops participating in class or has trouble concentrating on the

academic tasks. Overall, they found that students who are more bullied were more likely

to receive lower grades and engage in less academic tasks than did other students

(Juvonen, Yueyan & Espinoza, 2011).

A recent study reported that children who exhibited poor academic performance in school tended to emerge as frequent targets of bullying (Woods & Wolke, 2004). However, it was only the aggressive victims who were likely to be characterized by poor school performance. Woods and Wolke (2004) posit that the relation between involvement and achievement is unclear: "What remains to be established by research studies is whether poor academic achievement leads to bullying involvement or whether being bullied leads to poorer school achievement, possibly mediated by less participation in school" (p. 137). Their research and review of the literature reveals a noticeable gap concerning the possible causal pathways between bullying behaviour and academic performance and the direction of influence.

Exceptionalities and Bullying

Based on the research and characteristics common to children with Learning Disabilities and children who are bullied, there is reason to believe that children with LD are at greater risk of peer victimization. LD children "and involvement in bullying each pose a risk for problems in academic adjustment" (Mishna, 2003, p. 336). Carter and Spencer's (2006) research on students with a range of exceptionalities (including learning disabilities) demonstrates that a limited social awareness increases vulnerabilities in schools and makes them prone to victimization (Carter & Spencer, 2006).

Academic problems lead to difficulties such as poor self-esteem, frustration, and other barriers to developing social skills. These limitations hinder a student's ability to interact and communicate with other students, causing bullying and victimization to occur more often than not. A finding from Mishna's study of children and youth in

Ontario shows that children and youth with LD are more likely to be rejected and

neglected by their peers. Approximately 25% to 30% of students with LD are socially

rejected, whereas 8% to 16% of their peers without LD experience social rejection

(Mishna, 2003).

One-way that LD has been thought to contribute to problem behavior, is by

affecting children's communicative skills. Successful communication depends on

coordination of: language skills, both syntactic and semantic; cognitive operations; and

social processes, such as social perception of nonverbal cues. Research indicates that LD

children exhibit several shortfalls in the expression and interpretation of verbal and

nonverbal communication (Kaukiainen, Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Tamminen, Vauras, Maki

& Poskiparta, 2002).

Students in special education classes are victimized more often than those in more

inclusive settings. This outcome may be because isolation from the mainstream education

students can limit opportunities to learn social skills and develop a protective group of

peers (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). Several bullying-awareness organizations cite

Mishna's (2003) statistics that children with special needs are two to three times more at

risk of being bullied. They may have particular characteristics which make them an

obvious "target"; mainstream settings are less well integrated socially and lack the

protection against bullying which friendship gives; and, those with behavioural problems

may act out in an aggressive way (Smith, 2013). "Often just being different in a

noticeable way" can put a student at risk for victimization (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012,

p. 101). Although several factors may make students with disabilities more vulnerable to

victimization, basic social skills instruction may decrease involvement. Overall, students

with disabilities must develop a sense of self-worth and belonging in the educational and social setting (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

Educational Interventions

Bullying in the curriculum

A popular way to address bullying is through school and teacher intervention programs. These interventions may be introduced at the individual, classroom, or school level and can be used as a way to prevent or address bullying. In general, these programs focus on educating the members of a school on how to recognize bullying and what to do when bullying is present (Brank, Hoetger & Hazen, 2012). The *Accepting Schools Act (Bill 13),* which was passed in June of 2012, "Requires that all school boards take preventative measures against bullying, issue tougher consequences for bullying, and support students who want to promote understanding and respect for all" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). An anti-bullying program should include training on the importance of respecting others, accepting differences, and bullying empathy. Training should include components in tolerance, empathy, and respect (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). Various individuals, including school administrators and the students themselves, must take responsibility for reducing bullying in our schools. "Initial structures for addressing bullying at the school level, such as collaboration and problem solving, targeted interventions, professional development, and student awareness initiatives, should be in place at each educational facility" (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012, p. 101).

Much of the content of an anti-bullying program can be delivered to students with exceptionalities using the same methods that teachers (both mainstream and special education) already use to deliver academic program content. However, some students

with disabilities may need additional modifications in the delivery of the anti-bullying

program (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). Raskauskas and Modell (2011) believe that "By

providing additional examples of bullying incidents, this will allow for more repetition

and opportunities to practice identifying, responding to, and reporting instances of

bullying" (p. 66).

Since victimized students often lack age-appropriate social skills, teachers must

promote these skills by incorporating social skills instruction into daily teaching. Rose

and Monda-Amaya (2012) provide examples for incorporating social skills into daily

instruction: "During structured group time, teachers could use role-playing, social

vignettes, conflict resolution, and character education that incorporate both academic

attainment and social problem solving. These activities can include, but are not limited to,

awareness training (e.g., understanding disabilities), effective group communication,

taking turns, asking questions, expressing thoughts and ideas, collaboration, and task

completion" (p.104). By incorporating social skills throughout the curriculum, students

have the opportunity to learn and practice their skills in a supportive and comfortable

environment, which could ultimately decrease victimization (Rose & Monda-Amaya,

2012).

Teacher and parent support

Teachers should be aware of particular behaviors that may predispose students

with disabilities to victimization or perpetration (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

Proactive strategies to avoid victimization within a school are to include a whole school

policy on bullying, effective playground supervision, and curriculum work in the

classroom (Smith, 2013). Although early intervention is a vital way to decrease bullying among the school-age population, this level of intervention is not always possible because of the complex social nature of bullying. Therefore, teachers must methodically address bullying in their classrooms to prevent future incidences, decrease the existing occurrences, and address the persistent bullies and victims in the classroom or school (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

The key to any successful anti-bullying program is a "whole-school" approach. This approach creates a supportive school atmosphere, where children feel safe to report incidences and are assured that staff care and will respond to reports of bullying. The whole-school approach involves educating and involving everyone affiliated with the school about bullying and their roles in changing the culture (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). All staff, faculty, and students – as well as parents, need to be included in anti-bullying programs. The inclusion of students with disabilities in bullying programs is critical in order to truly address the "whole school" (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). As a way of getting parents involved in anti-bullying, a parental awareness campaign can be conducted during parent-teacher conference days, through parent newsletters, and at PTA meetings. The goal is to increase parental awareness of the problem and point out the importance of parental involvement as a means of reducing bullying within the school (Banks, 1997).

Research suggests that support from friends and family is important in buffering the effects of victimization. Rothon, Head, Klineberg and Stansfeld (2010) reported that the negative effects of victimization on academic performance were lessened when the student had peer social support. As well, family support decreased the depressive

symptoms attributed to victimization (as cited in Brank, Hoetger & Hazen, 2012). In fact, it was found that middle school–aged females who were bullied, but had parental support, were less likely to display harms from being bullied. Warm and positive family relationships and environments seem to protect children from the negative effects of being bullied. Teachers too can have a positive effect. The positive support of teachers and friends decreases the negative effects of bullying on quality-of-life ratings (Brank, Hoetger & Hazen, 2012).

It is frequently noted that victims of bullying, especially those with disabilities, do not acquire age-appropriate social skills. Therefore, programs or strategies employed to prevent bullying must take into account the suitable approaches for providing students with disabilities sufficient opportunities to learn, practice, and use age-appropriate social skills in a safe environment. Providing structured opportunities in the classroom for group and individual social interactions allow students to develop social skills through connections made with others (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). Rose and Monda-Amaya (2012) suggest: "Cooperative learning groups can serve as a vehicle for teachers to facilitate students' learning and validation of age-appropriate social skills among their same-age peers (p. 101).

The literature shows that students with exceptionalities are bullied to a greater degree than students without exceptionalities, as they often do not have the social skills to interact and communicate with other students. Students who experience bullying by their peers are affected academically as the bullying puts a strain on their desire to attend school and their ability to focus, which in turn inhibits learning and success in the classroom. The following chapter provides the methodology and procedure that is used in

this study including information about the participants and data collection instruments.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research study investigates the effects of bullying on academic success. Aspects that were investigated involved determining how academic success is hindered by bullying, ways in which students with exceptionalities are affected by bullying, socially and academically, and how teachers support students who are experiencing bullying. The following discussion outlines the research methods employed.

Procedure

I first conducted a review of information and research on bullying in education, particularly for individuals with exceptionalities. The literature review provided insight into particular themes and topics that are essential in understanding a study of this nature. I conducted face-to-face interviews with two teachers, one special education teacher and one mainstream education teacher, using informal, open-ended questions. Each interview was 40-60 minutes and took place at their place of work. I digitally recorded the interviews I conducted with my participants. After completing both interviews, I transcribed them and organized the questions and answers into a table format. By doing this, I was able to determine emerging themes from each question. From this, I was then able to complete my findings and discussion sections of the paper.

Instruments of Data Collection

Interviews provide in-depth information pertaining to participant's experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic (Turner, 2010). It is important to my research that I asked questions that are relevant to my participant's experiences but also allowed them to

discuss aspects that were important to them. In my view, the best information comes from individuals who are familiar with the topic.

When conducting the interviews, I used an interview guide that allowed for semi-structured interviews (See Appendix A: Interview Questions). I asked my participants to start off by telling me a little bit about themselves. Some questions included, "How long have you been teaching for?" and "What grades have you taught?" These sorts of questions gave me insight into their backgrounds as professionals. As we made our way into the heart of the interview, I asked questions related to their experiences with bullying and children such as "As a teacher, what has your experience been when it comes to bullying within the classroom?" As the interview progressed the questions became more specific and focused on their beliefs about the impact of bullying on student's academic success.

Participants and Recruitment

I sought participants who met the following criteria: had at least 5 years of experience in the elementary school system, were open to discussing issues of bullying, and represented my two areas of interest--mainstream education and special education. In the end, I had two participants one of whom was teaching in a mainstream classroom (mainstream) and the other in special education. Both worked in the public school system.

As this research topic analyzes how bullying hinders academic success, getting the perspectives of both types of teachers is necessary to truly understand the effects students have academically. The mainstream education teacher was able to provide insight into understanding bullying and its affects on a broad scale, while the special

education teacher was able to speak to specific circumstances of special education students. Criteria among interviewees that is essential for this research is experience. I interviewed individuals who have witnessed bullying in their classroom or in their school and noticed changes in students due to bullying specifically. I recruited teachers who were known to me. I first approached participants by email, sharing my information and consent letter. Once they agreed to participate, I arranged to meet them for a face-to-face interview.

Data Collection and Analysis

I digitally recorded the interviews using recording software on my computer. I then transcribed my interviews for the purpose of analysis. First I organized the transcriptions by putting it into a script format. This way it was easy to see the question and the answer. Then I created a table with 4 columns – question, participant #1 response, participant #2 response, and themes. By having both responses next to each other, I was able to easily see the similarities and differences in the responses, but was also able to pull out important statements and themes. I highlighted responses that were relevant to each other and that fit with a theme. This way I could refer back and decide if certain responses fit with certain themes. I identified three main themes and five sub-themes that emerged from the data. In the writing process, I refined these themes to the information that is presented in Chapter 4 of this paper.

Ethical Review Procedures

I followed the ethical review approval procedures for the Master of Teaching program. Each participant was given a letter of consent prior to participating in the

interview; they were required to read and sign it (see Appendix B: Letter of Consent for Participant). A copy of this form was given to each participant, and another copy was kept for my records. Participants were treated with respect throughout the interview, and were made to feel as comfortable and possible. Participants were informed that they did not have to answer any question that they did not feel comfortable responding to. Participants were informed of who sees the data (myself, faculty advisor, and instructor) and were ensured that it is stored in a safe, unreachable place on my computer with a password required to access the documents. All appropriate measures have been taken to ensure participants cannot be identified through their responses.

Limitations

A major limitation in this research study is the sample size of only two participants; however considering the aim of the research study and the amount of time provided to complete the research, the sample size is relatively appropriate. I would have liked to interview more individuals, but time was not permitting. I planned to interview a social worker, but was not able to do so. It would have been interesting as it would give insight into the social and emotional implications of bullying and how that would impact academic success.

Another limitation is the restricted amount time. Had there been possibility for more research questions in interviews, the study would have been able to go more in-depth and look into other aspects of the topic. Again, given the goal and demands of this study, I carefully selected research questions, which were based on the literature review and gaps in the existing literature.

The next chapter provides greater insights into the participants' backgrounds and describes the data as it relates to the main research question.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS

The findings collected for this study emerged from two interviews there were conducted with experienced teachers. Both participants have had many experiences in the education system, and had a lot of insight into the topic. The participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy. They have been given the names Trisha and Ellen and are both described as females for the purposes of this study and protection purposes. This chapter will begin with an overview of each participant, and continue with a thorough outline of the data that was collected from each interview. The study's findings are presented according to three major themes each of which consists of a subset of themes. These themes emerged from the data collected from the participants. They look at the academic toll that bullying has on a student academically, the various ways in which teachers respond to situations of bullying, and the ways in which students are supported by teachers and family.

Participants chosen to interview have had experiences in the public boards of the greater Toronto area. Each have had varying experiences with bullying in their school settings and provide important insight on how teachers understand and address bullying in their classrooms.

Background Information of Participants

Both participants have their special education qualifications. Trisha has not worked as a special education teacher, whereas Ellen has. Although Trisha has her qualifications, she does not categorize herself as a special education teacher.

Trisha is currently a kindergarten teacher in the public board. She has been a teacher for five years. She has also worked in Grade 3. Trisha has had significant

experiences with bullying in the older grades and takes the matter very seriously. She

believes that working and communicating with her students is a successful way in

avoiding bullying. In her interview she states that teachers should never ignore a situation

with a child, as it is "our duty to respond and act upon any situations that arise at school."

Trisha is very dedicated to attempting to eliminate bullying by teaching it through

academics. Trisha works at a school that is located in a safe, residential area, North of the

city. Trisha explains in her interview that they see quite a bit of bullying with students in

the older grades at the school. Although the school does not have an overall high number

of students with exceptionalities, they do have a number of special education classrooms

that cater to different age groups. Students are supported by educational assistants (EAs)

when they are in the classroom and by the special education teacher when they are pulled

out for particular subjects.

      Ellen is currently a Grade 3 teacher in the public board and has been teaching for

over 30 years. She works in an environment where the students are very kind to another.

Since Ellen has been an active special education teacher in the past, she has had countless

experiences with bullying among students with exceptionalities. In her interview she

states that she believes a lot of the bullying incidents with students with exceptionalities

are caused because of the lack of social skills that these students have. The school is

located in more of the city, on the East side. Ellen stated in her interview that the students

at her school are very kind to one another, and there is not an outpour of bullying

happening. However, she explains that she has witnessed and dealt with a number of

bullying incidents at schools that she has worked at in the past. Ellen's school has a

higher number of students with exceptionalities. They support students both in the

classroom and in the special education classroom. In her 30+ years of experience, Ellen

has taught almost every grade. Her varied teaching experience was valuable for this

research.

Although both Ellen and Trisha bring different professional experiences to the

study, both had very informative responses to questions asked, and offered similar

comments. The key findings reflect themes, and sub-themes that emerged from the data

of the interviews conducted.

Key Findings

After in-depth analysis of the data from the interviews, I was able to identify three

themes, each with a subset of themes. I chose to present the data as three main themes

and several subthemes, allowing my research to be both general and specific on the

experiences of bullying in education. By incorporating subthemes, I could explain my

broad topics in a more condensed way. The themes are as follows:

Theme 1: The academic cost (toll) of bullying on a child

Theme 2: Bullying prevention as part of hidden curriculum

Theme 3: Bullying support involves family and extracurricular care from

educators

Theme 1: The academic cost (toll) of bullying on a child

The toll that bullying has on a child can be very detrimental to their well being,

specifically academically and it is important to understand key factors that are involved

in recognizing the bullying and how the child is feeling. As the major theme is discussed,

three key factors will be explored. The first stating that the consistency of bullying is a

key factor in understanding the degree to which bullying is taking a toll on a student's

academic well being. The other recognizing that teachers observe that students who are

bullied have a fear of coming to school because they feel unsafe; their ability to

concentrate is hindered because of the fear of being bullied. Lastly, that students with

exceptionalities are at a double disadvantage; academically they are behind their peer-

aged counterparts and they experience bullying more often because they do not have the

social skills to stand up for themselves.

Consistency of Bullying

The extent to which a student is bullied and by whom is instrumental in

understanding how the bullying in taking a toll on a student's ability to succeed

academically. Both Trisha and Ellen said that they try to be very cognizant about the

bullying that occurs in their classrooms. They do so by keeping track of student

behaviours. Trisha stated in her interview that she always looks for the consistency of the

bullying when determining the extent of it. Similarly, Ellen states:

> It's also important to be aware of the amount of bullying one
> student or a group of students is experiencing. Is it happening all
> the time or just once? It's important to be aware of these things
> because then I am better able to help out.

Ellen also acknowledged that it is important to constantly observe all students in the

classroom and take note of changes in the children's behaviour. She says:

> Some observations I would notice would be not wanting to
> come to school, they are very quiet, don't participate in class
> like they used to, their grades are changing, and that they don't
> pay attention.

Ellen noted that when she recognizes some of her students experiencing some of

these things, she does not react instantly as she takes the opportunity to really assess the

situation so she can respond to it in the appropriate way. Similarly, Trisha said in her

interview that the impact of bullying on a student's academic success is not easy to

determine. She explained that there are many factors that are involved in a student not

being able to perform to the best of their ability and its important to be able to recognize

the many factors. Yet, social and emotional factors can play a big part in the student's

ability to succeed. The way in which students perceive themselves, as well as how others

perceive them can determine the motivation for bullying and the consistency of it.

According to both teachers, whether the child has an exceptionality or not, if they are

perceived by others to be different, uncool, or weird, the chances of them being picked on

or bullied is greater. However, based on the responses of both participants, it is more

likely that students with exceptionalities are bullied more consistently because they often

don't have proper social skills to interact appropriately with their peers. Both participants

had very good insight into this topic. Ellen said:

> In terms of the special education kids, they have it really hard
> because not only do they struggle with learning but they struggle
> with making friends and keeping friends. In my experience,
> most students in the grade knew who the special education kids
> were and picked on them because they were different.

Similarly, Trisha stated:

> I think that students with exceptionalities are targeted more by a
> bully who is trying to fulfill its own insecurities because they
> feel that that child with the exceptionality is not as good as them
> or you know doesn't have the skills or the social skills to even
> work with other kids or to have other friends so I think that they
> are an easy target.

The consistency of bullying amoung students is important in understanding how

students are affected by the bullying they encounter. How they are affected socially and

emotionally plays into the degree to which they are affected academically.

The Fear Factor

The "fear factor" is something that Carter and Spence (2006) evince is a reality of

bullying. The fear that students who are bullied have when it comes to attending school

and participating in class is extremely sad. Both participants believed that children who

are bullied would have a decreased desire to come to school because of the fear of what

might happen to them. Trisha identified that the fear of being at school hinders their

ability to concrete and perform to the best of their ability. In her interview she shares her

beliefs:

> I think that the student's ability to focus is going to diminish. I
> believe that they are not able to put in a 100% effort. I think that
> they would do the work cause they know the teacher is
> obviously going to be asking for it or there is going to be some
> form of assessment, however I think that the effort or their true
> potential is not really going to show in their work.

If a student is unable to concrete due to their fear of being bullied, than their ability to

apply themselves within the classroom is going to be lessened. Ellen reinforces this

notion by stating:

> Their ability to think critically and problem solve will not be
> good because their ability to focus is being hindered and
> because they are constantly thinking about their bullying
> situation.

Additionally, Ellen indicated that if a student is being emotionally affected by the

bullying then they may feel as though they cannot make appropriate decisions because of

the insecurity they are experiencing. The lack of safety that a student feels within their

classroom can be a big problem. Although any type of bullying is unacceptable, if a

student feels totally unsafe in the classroom, it can lead to many other problems.

However, Ellen believes that the majority of bullying that occurs generally happens

outside at recess where the supervision is sparser. The likelihood for bullying to occur, in

the classroom, where there is direct supervision by the teacher, is not as common, but can

definitely occur. If it does, then there is potential for the fear factor to be amplified.

Double Disadvantage

Trisha and Ellen believe that students with exceptionalities who are bullied

experience the pain twice as much. Not only are they struggling to keep up academically,

but they are also trying to fit in socially. Ellen says it very clearly when she states:

> Having an exceptionality makes the potential for learning much
> harder. Most things are more of a challenge for students with
> exceptionalities, once you add the social factor on top of the
> academic factor than it becomes a whole realm of problems.

Both participants believed that students with exceptionalities are targeted more

often and are affected more academically than students who do not have exceptionalities.

Trisha believed that because of their exceptionality and their inability to socialize, they

were at a double disadvantage. She also believes that students with exceptionalities

already feel judged because of disability they have, so to be bullied on top of that makes

the potential for feeling of worthlessness much greater. Ellen thinks that bullies target

students with exceptionalities more often because they are well aware that they don't

have the social abilities to stand up for themselves.

Trisha brought up a very interesting point that students who have physical

disabilities also experience bullying, and are likewise at a double disadvantage, maybe

even more so then students with learning disabilities for instance. She says:

> I think that a child with a physical disability for example
> cerebral palsy wouldn't be able to physical defend themselves.
> If a bully were in front of their face, they wouldn't be able to
> extend their arms out or even tell them to stop. A child with

> maybe ADHD or learning disability might physically be able to
> defend themselves more or have more of the verbal skills to use
> words to let the know the bully know that they don't like what's
> happening. The bully might take advantage of the fact that a
> child with a disability like cerebral palsy might not be able to
> speak properly or move their bodies.

No matter the exceptionality that a child has, it is pretty clear that they experience bullying more often then a student without an exceptionality. The former is at a double disadvantage because they have to deal with having a disability of some sort, and are trying to keep up academically.

Theme 2: Bullying prevention as part of hidden curriculum

Bully education should be incorporated as much as possible into every school and every classroom. The ways in which teachers do so is important in understanding how anti-bullying is being constantly enforced. The participants shared valuable insights on teacher's beliefs and practices for incorporating bullying education into their everyday curriculum. They believed bullying education does not have to be explicit in its delivery. They prefer to embed it in the every day curriculum. Another finding was that neither teacher has formal training in bullying or bullying prevention. Although, they recognize that it would be good to have, they believe the lack of training does not hinder their understanding of how to incorporate anti-bullying into the hidden curriculum. Ellen said that teachers integrate it into the things they do, often the content is "unintentionally taught when we cover topics such as respect." Similarly Trisha stated:

> I have not received any formal training around bullying training
> however we as teachers know that it is always in the background
> of our teaching and in working and communicating with our
> students. I think it is basically part of the hidden curriculum and
> although its not really subscribed in our curriculum it is
> something we need to consider when we are teaching or

choosing materials and thinking about class dynamics and
making every child feel welcome in our classroom.

Although it is important to consistently reinforce anti-bulling through the hidden

curriculum, it is also important for the culture of the school to be on board with anti-

bullying. Ellen gives us an idea of how bullying becomes part of the official curriculum

at her school:

We have a character trait program in our school where we praise
every month a positive character trait and so we model them
constantly in the classroom and that helps a lot. Although it's
nice for the students to be rewarded for good behaviour or
whatever the character trait is for the month, it's important to
constantly model that in the classroom.

Trisha explained in her interview that role-playing is a very good way to integrate

bullying awareness into the curriculum. She said that it is a good method of learning and

bringing awareness simultaneously. She emphasizes the importance of doing this, as it is

a great way for students with exceptionalities and without, to learn about bullying and to

become confident to stick up for themselves through a more academic approach.

Theme 3: Bullying support involves family and extracurricular care from educators

Both teachers claim that the support that students receive from their teachers and

families is vital in how they cope with the bullying situation they are in. In order for a

situation to be resolved and managed properly, the teacher and parents should work in

unison to support the child. The understanding that teachers support students socially and

academically when they are being bullied by providing them with strategies and

resources, communicating with parents, and offering extra help after class to keep

students updated, will be discussed in this section.

Teacher Supports

It is extremely important that teachers respond to bullying and the effects of bullying in a way that is beneficial to the well being of the student. Trisha states that teacher's roles are not only to teach students their ABC's and 123's but also to attend to, provide, and offer support in a multitude of ways. The support that a student receives from a teacher can often make the biggest of differences. Trisha believes that developing a relationship with her students and creating a respectful and trustworthy rapport will be useful in any situation the child might be in. If a bullying situation does arise, then that bond is already established and the teacher can then dig deep to figure out what is happening. Trisha believes that getting to know a student's life outside of school is also very important in understanding what the student is experiencing. She believes that teachers really need to take the time to get to know their students in order to be able to support them to the best of their ability.

Ellen really provided some valuable insight on how to provide students who are bullied with some strategies and resources in order to be successful. She said that it is very important to make students aware of their own actions as well as continuously reinforce the negative impact of bullying. She teaches them what to do if they are being bullied:

> I would even create steps for the student to go through if they
> are being bullied. For instance, tell the bully that you don't like
> that, ask them to please stop, if they don't listen, walk away, if
> they follow and continue to bully, tell a teacher.

She indicated that this strategy is very useful for students with exceptionalities as it offers a very explicit, rigid system for them to follow. She explained that this system definitely works for students without exceptionalities as well. In addition to providing students with

exceptionalities with of the tools for empowerment, Ellen also identifies ways of making

students who are being bullied feel comfortable in the classroom or in their environment:

> Students can be given a special place to work in the classroom
> or outside of the classroom. If they feel uncomfortable, maybe
> they can work in a special room or with another teacher in a
> smaller group where they would feel more sheltered and more
> comfortable if the bullying was happening in the classroom.

Trisha really understands the significance of supporting students in a variety of

ways other than academically. She sees the importance of supporting them emotionally,

as well as socially. Trisha also values the relationship that a teacher has with their

students. She believes making it known that you are always there for them is essential.

She expresses this when she says:

> I would also support them emotionally. If they felt really upset
> at any point, I would let them know that they can also come to
> me to talk or let out their emotions. Especially with younger
> students, they can get very emotional sometimes so letting them
> know they you can be an outlet for them will often decrease the
> emotions they are feeling and in turn help them focus better on
> their work

In addition to supporting students emotionally, Trisha believes that teachers

should play a role in the way in which young students are socializing with each other. For

students with exceptionalities, it is important to give them the opportunity within the

classroom to interact with others and develop some of those social skills that might be

lacking. Teachers can create these opportunities to also observe the students as they

interact with each other. Trisha believes that no matter the severity of a situation,

teachers should always take bullying seriously because they never know how deep it is or

the extent of the situation. Often students need an adult to work through a situation with.

She supports this by saying:

> When students come up to us and something is going on
> between their peers, sometimes we do tend to brush it off and in
> the end we realize how deep it was. I think we need to take
> even tattle-tailing seriously because it can be the child's way of
> explaining something that's going on deeper between kids
> within the classroom—[something] that we might not even
> know about.

Both participants emphasized the importance of communicating with parents and keeping them in the loop about what is happening with their child at school. It is essential that parents get involved and support the teacher and their child as much as possible. By working together, they can support the child academically, socially and emotionally. Trisha said:

> I would definitely get the parents involved first and foremost, its
> important for them to know what's going on in school so that
> they can assist their students outside of school at home.

Finally, both participants acknowledged that if a child is being bullied, they are likely to fall behind and need extra support to keep them updated with their work. Trisha articulates this by stating:

> In school, I would provide assistance for the students, because
> although they need to focus on taking care of the issue, they also
> can't totally ignore academics altogether, so I would meet one-
> on-one with them to maybe clarify concepts or what we did in
> our lesson, so that incase they weren't paying attention, because
> their mind was elsewhere, they can be filled in on what we
> talked about and learned.

The findings demonstrate that bullying is a serious problem in elementary classrooms that impact students' academic, emotional and social wellbeing. The findings also show that teachers are cognizant of the realities of bullying and trying to find ways to support students, alleviate fears, and create safe spaces in the classroom. The following and final chapter includes limitations of the study, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and further reading and study.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter will be used as a means of reflecting upon the creation of this research study, as well as discuss the findings I have discovered, as they connect to literature. I will also discuss the ways in which I have grown as a researcher and teacher throughout the process of this research study. Finally, I will explore the recommendations and limitations of my research and state suggestions for growth in future research.

Links to Literature

The themes that emerged from the research, which were outlined in Chapter 4 link well with the information in the literature review. The first theme discussed was the academic cost (toll) of bullying on a child. Within this major theme, three subthemes emerged which delved into the topics of consistency of bullying, the fear students have, and the double disadvantage students with exceptionalities face. The literature shows that students who are involved in bullying may have decreased motivation and their grades may deteriorate. As well, they report feeling afraid in school, reacting negatively toward school, and therefore avoid school more often (Mishna, 2003). Both participants mentioned in their interviews that students who are bullied suffer in their academics as the fear of coming to school, and participating overrides their ability to focus and concentrate on their schoolwork. Experts agree that children with disabilities are harassed by peers at higher rates than their peers without disabilities (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). Students in special education classes are victimized more often than those in more inclusive settings. This outcome may be because isolation from the mainstream education students can limit opportunities to learn social skills and develop a protective group of peers (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). Again, both participants believe that students with

exceptionalities lack social skills to make and keep friends, as well as the ability to stand up for themselves in bullying instances. Both teachers in this study believed that children with special needs at risk of being bullied. Like Smith (2013) argues, they may have particular characteristics, which make them an obvious "target".

The second major theme explored that linked to the literature is incorporating bullying education into the curriculum. In Trisha's interview she states the importance of integrating bullying education into the curriculum, and giving students the opportunity to learn about it in an academic way. Proactive strategies to reduce bullying include having a whole school policy on bullying, effective playground supervision, and curriculum work in the classroom (Smith, 2013). Although early intervention is a vital way to decrease bullying among the school-age population, this level of intervention is not always possible because of the complex social nature of bullying. Therefore, teachers must methodically address bullying in their classrooms to prevent future incidences, decrease the existing occurrences, and address the persistent bullies and victims in the classroom or school (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012).

The final theme examined is the support that students who are bullied receive from their teachers and family. By creating an atmosphere within the school that tells the students that bullying is unacceptable, it creates an environment where children feel safe to report and are assured that staff care and will respond to reports of bullying. The whole-school approach involves educating and involving everyone affiliated with the school about bullying and their roles in changing the culture. All staff, faculty, and students – as well as parents, need to be included in anti-bullying programs (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011). As Trisha mentioned in her interview, it is important to give students

opportunities to develop their social skills. Providing structured opportunities in the classroom for group and individual social interactions allow students to develop social skills through connections made with others (Rose & Monda-Amaya, 2012). Both participants also spoke to the idea that parents should be very involved and aware of the bullying situations that are happening with their child and within the school/classroom. As a way of getting parents involved in anti-bullying, a parental awareness campaign can be conducted during parent-teacher conference days, through parent newsletters, and at PTA meetings. The goal is to increase parental awareness of the problem and point out the importance of parental involvement as a means of reducing bullying within the school (Banks, 1997).

Implications and Recommendations

As I have made my way through this process, I can certainly say that I have grown and changed as a researcher and teacher. Participating in this research study has given me the opportunity to explore an avenue that I am very passionate about, but also provided me with the experience to investigate and find things out for myself. I have always been interested in the topic of bullying, but this research study has allowed me to explore it in a whole new way.

As a researcher, I have come to appreciate and understand the scrutiny that such a research study has and the amount of work and dedication that goes into it. It has definitely influenced my thinking on the topic as I now look for, and am intrigued by the specific elements of bullying and how it affects academic success. As a teacher, I want to be continuously educated, so that I can better support my students in every which way.

This study has given me the opportunity to gain valuable information obtained from the literature and my participant's responses, information I will use in my practice.

Through this research I found that there is need for continuing anti-bullying research in schools. It is essential for an ongoing attempt to reduce bullying in schools. From the data I collected, it is evident that teachers are very aware of the bullying that occurs within the school, and they are doing all they can to support students who are experiencing bullying. However, regardless of their efforts to reduce bullying, it will never be eradicated for good. As Misha (2003) says, bullying is unfortunately a painful part of childhood, something that a child experiences at least once. As long as bullying is around, teachers, educators, and administrators need to be at the forefront, combating it from the beginning of the school year, all the way to the end.

This study has given me insight into how students in the mainstream education classroom and those in the special education classroom have varied experiences with bullying. My practice will also be different because of this research. More importantly, I have gained knowledge on how to support all students who are involved with bullying. As well, I have learned that it is essential to incorporate anti bullying education into your curriculum so that it is constantly reinforced.

Strategies to address bullying in practice and curriculum should be provided to teachers in pre-service education. It is important to teachers to enter a working environment with a good understanding of how to handle bullying when it occurs. Pre-service teachers should have a handful of useful strategies they can use upon entry into the profession. It is not good enough to expect teachers to figure it out along the way or on their own. Combatting bullying effectively requires a teacher to be confident in what to do and how to manage it. Additionally, in schools, some PD Days should focus their

attention on anti-bullying and keep teachers up to speed with the latest and greatest strategies out there. Its plain and simple; if a child is being bullied, and they are not receiving the true help that they need, they will ultimately hate coming to school and therefore fall behind in their academics. We as educators need to ensure that this does not happen, and if it does, we are combating it in the best way possible. Additionally, pre-service education should teach to ways of incorporating bullying into their everyday curriculum. Although yearly assemblies on bullying inform students of the expectations and the climate of the school, it does not do enough to send the message and continuously reinforce that bullying is unacceptable. Teachers on the other hand, have the power to incorporate anti-bullying into their everyday curriculum through topics such as respect.

Recommendations for readers of this research; whether you are someone working in the field of education or a parent with a child enrolled in school, please never dismiss or ignore a situation that you notice or that comes to your attention regarding a child's well being. From my research, I learned that it is extremely important to make sure a child is heard. Whether it is tattle-tailing, or complaining, this is their way of expressing themselves, and it is our job to make sure they are heard and appreciated. If we can act quick enough to combat the bullying before it gets out of hand, then we have done our jobs.

Limitations

Throughout this experience, I have gained valuable insights that contribute to my overall understanding of who I want to be as a future educator. As well, I value the experiences I had, and the knowledge I received from it. Without a doubt, I will apply it to my practice as a teacher in the future.

Although I believe that I have provided a clear, well-rounded understanding of the effects of bullying on academic success, no study is without its limitations. Limitations of the study include a small sample size of only two participants. However given the aim of the study and the amount of time provided, the sample size is relatively appropriate. Another limitation of this study is the restricted amount of research questions. In the future, I would like to add more questions to target other areas not covered by this research study and expand my research by interviewing more participants. A third and final limitation that came out of the data was that the participants themselves who did not have any specific bullying training. Although they have a lot of experience with bullying, neither had actually attended training sessions specific to bullying. This training may have changed their understandings of teacher practice or the challenges students face.

Further Study

Although this research study uncovered many findings related to my research questions and literature review, research for the study revealed a number of topics that I feel should be explored further in future research opportunities. One topic that I found particularly interesting was participants advocacy for anti-bullying intervention programs as daily curriculum. Although this research study focuses on strategies classroom teachers beliefs about student experiences and their practice, I would be interested in investigating how intervention programs are conducted in schools and the outcome of these programs on a school context or with a group of teachers. Research on the various experiences of interventions could provide strategies and new knowledge that could be valuable to teachers and administrators.

Although both participants had varied experiences with bullying, neither had any specific training around bullying. I found this to be a limitation within the study. For future study, I would conduct comparative research of participants with and without bullying training to identify the differences in practice and strategies used within the classroom. This would provide interesting insight into whether having specific training around bullying is beneficial and whether there is a significant reduction in instances of bullying within a classroom if the teacher has been trained.

A final area of interest that I believe requires further research are the differences in the forms of and degree to which students with exceptionalities experiences, specifically students who have received social skills training. I am curious to see the differences of bullying between students who have exceptionalities who have received social skills training and those who have not. I would expect there to be a large discrepancy. This would be relevant when determining how students are doing academically, as we know that the social/emotional factors plays a part in a students ability to succeed academically.

In conclusion, this study is important to the education community because many of our students are being academically affected by the bullying they are experiencing. Teachers can take action and help the students be successful in and outside the classroom. School is a place that is meant to ensure safety, free from harm, and provide a well-rounded education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Unfortunately, those experiences have been hindered for some, and it is important that educators have the capacities to help students get on the right track.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Background Information

1) Can you tell me a little bit about your classroom and the age of the students you work with.
    i)   How long have you been teaching for?
    ii) Have you taught any other grades?
    iii) What training have you received, particularly around special education?
    iv) Are you a special education teacher? If so, how long have you been teaching special education?
        (1) What forms of exceptionalities have you worked with as a teacher?
    v)   What kind of exceptionalities have you experienced with children?

Encounters with Bullying

2) As a teacher, what has your experience been when it comes to bullying within the classroom?
    i)   How often do you encounter bullying in your classroom?
    ii) What forms of bullying do you see?
    iii) What are some observations that stand out for you?
3) Have you ever noticed a consistent pattern of behaviour of bullies, victims and/or bystanders?
    i)   If so, can you please elaborate on those behaviours?

Affects of Bullying on Academic Success

4) How might bullying affect a students academic success?
    i)   What part of their education might be more affected? (E.g. testing, assignments, critical thinking, problem solving etc.)
5) What have you noticed about changes in student's academic success when they are involved in bullying (bully or victim)?
    i)   What are some key signs or indicators?

Students with Exceptionalities

6) In your opinion, do you think students with exceptionalities (i.e. learning disabilities) are bullied more or less often than students without exceptionalities?
    i)   What could be some reasons as to why students with exceptionalities might be bullied s
    ii) Have you ever noticed such bullying in your classroom or school?
    iii) What role did the student with exceptionalities play in the bullying event?
7) Are students with exceptionalities affected academically to a greater or lesser degree than students without exceptionalities?
    i)   What strategies would you use to support students with exceptionalities who are being bullied?

        ii) How would the strategies differ than with students without exceptionalities?

8) How does bullying differ among students with different types of exceptionalities (i.e. learning disability, ADHD etc.)?

Supporting Students

9) In what ways do you support your students whose academic success is being hindered by bullying?
        i) What kind of support will a student be provided (i.e. modifications to curriculum, emotional support etc.)
        ii) Do these kinds of support differ when working with students with exceptionalities?

10) Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix B: Letter of Consent for Interview

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
OISE | ONTARIO INSTITUTE
FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

Date: _____

Dear _____,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying **bullying and the effects on academic success** for the purposes of a investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is **Dr. Susan Schwartz**. My research supervisor is **Mira Gambhir**. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 40-60 minute interview that will be digitally recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

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Phone number, email: **416.910.9951**, **nadine.block@mail.utoronto.ca**

Instructor's Name: **Dr. Susan Schwartz**
Email: **susan.schwartz@utoronto.ca**

Research Supervisor's Name: **Mira Gambhir**
Email: **mira.gambhir@utoronto.ca**

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by _____(name of researcher) and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: _____

Name (printed): _____

Date: _____