Bullying and the

School Counselor's Role in Interventions

by

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Abstract

Research indicates that bullying has a weighty and invasive effect on the learning environment of a school (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). It is a pressing issue for schools today, and there are a wide range of recommended practices for addressing this important problem. Previous findings showed that bullying appears to be widespread in schools in every country studying the problem. The purpose of this study was to identify the roles that school counselors play in uncovering the problem of bullying and the interventions they use to reduce the amount of bullying in Wisconsin school districts. The participants were 39 school counselors, including 12 elementary school counselors, 16 middle school counselors, seven high school counselors, and four school counselors from a combination of two or more levels. The research design is a descriptive online survey. The data for this study were collected through the Qualtrics online survey software. Results indicated that general bullying occurred in just about every school and physical, relational, verbal, and cyberbullying were indicated as problems by the participants. Another result indicated only one significant difference by level. Cyberbullying was found to

occur most often at the high school level. No other significant results were indicated. Recommendations for future researchers would be to use a larger sample to be able to have more confidence in the cross-tabulations. The recommendations for future school counselors include additional education about the roles and interventions that are helpful in reducing bullying occurrences.

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As I look back on my time at the University of Wisconsin-Stout in the Master's in School Counseling Program, I realize I owe many people around me an acknowledgement. I have received such amazing support from the family that I have. They have placed stepping stones of success in front of me and lead me into a career of helping others. My family takes pride in their education and have raised me to believe that I can achieve anything. I thank them for the love, wisdom, and pride they place on me every day.

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Finally, I'd like to thank the professors that have guided me on this educational journey. They have shared with me activities, experiences, and stories that will stay with me for a lifetime. Also, they have given me the tools to become a leader in my profession as a school counselor.

As I move forward into my career of being a School Counselor, I will take the education and experiences I have encountered at the University of Wisconsin-Stout and implement them in the schools and lives that I touch.

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Chapter I: Introduction

School should be a place where all students feel safe and can learn to their best abilities. But a common and potentially dangerous form of violence gets in the way: bullying. Bullying occurs in every country, state, city, and school. Studies from different parts of the country confirm high levels of bullying behaviors, with 10 to 29 percent of students reported to be either bullies or victims (Nicolaides, 2002). The prevalence of bullying, as well as the harm it causes, are seriously underestimated by many children and adults. It harms the intended victims, perpetrators, and the climate of the school.

Every administrator, teacher, school staff member, student, and parent needs to be involved in preventing and responding to school bullying. A study done by Bauman, Rigby, and Hoppa (2008) mentions how school officials are generally not very effective when they address cases of bullying. Recognizing the role and responsibility to protect the individuals in the school is a critical and important component that school officials need to know. An effective way to prevent or lessen bullying requires school administrators' commitment and intensive effort to reduce the problem. Providing interventions and strategies in schools is a helpful way to prevent harmful bullying from increasing. Interventions known to decrease bullying in schools today are the school-wide, classroom-level, and individual-level interventions.

The role of school counselors is to contribute to the academic success of all students in their academic, career, and social development (American School Counselor Association, 2005). School counselors have a unique role because of their training and perspectives that puts them in a position to better the entire school when it comes to bullying. Because bullying is considered to be one of the most prevalent forms of school violence, school counselors need to be aware of their roles as protectors of the school and provide programs and interventions for the students.

Statement of the Problem

Research indicates that bullying has a weighty and invasive effect on the learning environment of a school (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). It is a pressing issue for schools today and there are a wide range of recommended practices for addressing this important problem. However, research hardly expresses the role that school counselors play in the intervention process and does not reflect school counselors in the state of Wisconsin. Therefore, the current study will examine the roles that school counselors play in uncovering the problem, identifying the different types of bullying, and implementing interventions in Wisconsin school districts.

Research Questions

The following questions will be addressed during the review of literature.

1. What are school counselors' perceptions about the severity of various types of bullying?

2. What roles have school counselors been involved in as it relates to bullying interventions?

3. What strategy of intervention is taking place in the school system most often?

Definition of Terms

This study includes several terms that may need to be defined for clarity and understanding.

Bullying: "repeated physical, verbal, or psychological attacks or intimidation directed against a victim who cannot properly defend him or herself because of size or strength, or because the victim is outnumbered or less psychologically resilient" (Sampson, 2009, p. 2).

Classroom-Level Interventions: "establishment of classroom rules against bullying, regular class meetings to discuss bullying at school, and meetings with all parents" (Limber & Nation, 1998, p. 2).

Cyberbullying: "harming others repeatedly through the use of technology such as social networking sites and other chat rooms, mobile phones, websites and web-cameras" (Tangen & Campbell, 2010, p. 2)

Individual-Level Interventions: "discussions with students identified as bullies and victims" (Limber & Nation, 1998, p. 2).

Physical Bullying/Aggression: "often hit, kick, or shove their victims" (Milsom & Gallo, 2006, p. 12).

Relational Bullying/Aggression: "focus on excluding one person from their peer group and usually do so through verbal threats and spreading rumors" (Milsom & Gallo, 2006, p. 12).

School-Wide Interventions: "survey of bullying problems at each school, increased supervision, school-wide assemblies, and teacher in-service to raise the awareness of children and school staff regarding bullying" (Limber & Nation, 1998, p. 2).

Social-Ecological Theory: "a child's social development is often conceptualized as emerging, being maintained, and modified as a result of a child's personality characteristics and how these characteristics interact within the larger subsystems or social contexts" (Espelage & Swearer, 2004, p. 1).

Verbal Bullying/Aggression: "use words to harm others through name-calling, insulting, making racist comments, or harsh teasing" (Milsom & Gallo, 2006, p. 12).

Limitations and Assumptions of the Study

While conducting this study, limitations were identified. A limitation of this study is that, although several sources of literature were viewed, all aspects of literature related to bullying were not included. The participants who took the survey were all volunteers. There may have been sample bias, therefore, since participants may not reflect all practicing counselors.

It was assumed that all the resources used in this study were accurate and came from credible, peer reviewed sources. This study also assumed that school counselors being surveyed had answered honestly and felt no coercion by the researcher.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Upon researching bullying and how it has become a common issue in schools today, the following literature was found through the search engine Ebscohost and the University of Wisconsin-Stout library to identify any other research that had been done on this topic. To address the issue of bullying, the interventions and roles of school counselors need to be considered. In order for this to be done, a clear understanding of how prevalent bullying is, the intervention strategies used, and the roles that school counselors play in this terrifying act needs to be addressed. School counselors in Wisconsin were not found in the literature and therefore left a gap in the research. This chapter includes information on the theory that supports this study, how common bullying is, and the different types of bullying. Finally, this chapter includes the interventions being used and the roles school counselors are taking in the school system.

Social-Ecological Theory

The theory that best helps explain my research of identifying bullying, bullying preventions, and roles regarding bullying would be the Social-Ecological Theory (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). This theory explains how the phenomenon of bullying is encouraged and/or inhibited as a result of the complex relationships between the individual, family, peer group, school, community, and culture. This theory assumes that all individuals are part of a consistent system that locates the individual at the center and includes all systems that affect the individual.

The Social-Ecological Theory also targets interventions that are environment and youth-function focused. This is relevant in that research shows that youth who are involved in aggressive behaviors experience problems in multiple areas, including the family, peer group, school, and community. This theory mentions how interventions have proved their effectiveness through multiple assessments across contexts. Best practices demand the assessment of the social

ecology if we are to accurately determine the effects of bullying preventions and intervention programming.

When applying the Social-Ecological Theory to my study, this theory would predict that situations surrounding the student would enable them to act in aggressive or non-aggressive ways. Because the environment around us is always changing, one might feel it is easier to change the environment rather than the individual. In order to change the environment, support and understanding among school staff must be established.

Bullying Prevalence

When we begin to talk about bullying, it is important to know how big of an issue it is in schools today. Compared to other countries, America has higher levels of bullying. Nansel et al. (2001) mentioned that 29.9 percent of sixth through tenth-grade students reported moderate or frequent involvement in bullying, 13 percent reported being a bully, 10.6 percent reported being victims, and an additional 6.3 percent are victim-bullies. This article gives concrete evidence that bullying appears to be widespread in schools in every country studying the problem.

Chapel et al. (2006) examined the continuity in being a bully, victim, or bully-victim from elementary school through college. The study surveyed 119 undergraduates and found a significant correlation between being a bully, bullied, and bully-victim in college, high school, and elementary school. The results from this study showed that students who were involved in some sort of bullying when they were younger continue to experience this effect as they age. These findings indicated that bullying is prevalent from elementary age to college age students. It is clear that bullying is a major issue in schools today.

Psychologist Dorothea Ross suggested that children entering kindergarten could be at high risk for being bullied and should be trained to cope before they ever enter school (Harris &

Petrie, 2003). It is difficult to gather data for the elementary school-aged students due to their usage of vocabulary. Some young students may use the word teasing rather than bullying. A study by Khosropour and Walsh (2001), notes that when children were asked to describe what a bully was like the consistent response was that bullies were people who tease. Most students at the elementary age are being bullied by being called bad names, teased, lied about, hit, isolated, threatened, having things stolen, or being left out on activities. Research also indicated that the school's playground and classroom are the most common locations for bullying to occur.

The middle school years have been described as a time of great risk socially, as well as emotionally, for students. Harris and Petrie (2003) did a study surveying 131 boys and 67 girls in the eighth grade at two middle schools in Texas. A question regarding how often middle school students saw bullying at their school was developed and 92 percent indicated that bullying happened at least "sometimes". This study also indicated that the top two places that middle school students were bullies was at lunch or in the classroom. The main kinds of bullying taking place were reported to be name calling, teasing, and being left out of things. Another interesting result was that 50 percent of students did not report bullying experiences at school because 59.5 percent of students did not feel teachers and administrators were interested in reducing bullying (Harris & Petrie, 2003).

Bullying during the high school years has received less attention in the literature than bullying during the elementary and middle school years. Swearer et al. (2009) examined high school bullying and found that bullying was not as big of a problem compared to other issues going on in the school. They do mention, however, that bullying now takes on the form of harassment and that 81 percent of students experienced harassment during their high school years. On the other hand, Harris and Petrie (2003) reported 72 percent of high school students

saw bullying happen at least "sometimes" on their school campus. These bullying acts were found to take place in class, at lunch, and at extracurricular events.

Another common form of bullying that has been evident in this new decade is that of cyberbullying. This type of bullying is more prevalent in the middle school and high school levels as children have access to a computer or a cell phone. A study done by Tangen and Campbell (2010) indicated that cyberbullying occurs just as often as face-to-face bullying. They did, however, find that students felt that their teachers did not try to prevent cyberbullying and that they themselves were not told about the policies about cyberbullying as much as the face-to-face bullying. Other findings indicated that teachers and counselors need to be as concerned in teaching strategies about cyberbullying as they are for face-to-face bullying (Tangen & Campbell, 2010).

Types of Bullying

Most people are aware of the physical act of bullying. Harris and Petrie (2003) defined bullying as extreme behavior that is abusive and studied two forms of bullying which included direct and indirect bullying. Yet others, including Milsom and Gallo (2006), as well as Tangen and Campbell (2010) believe bullying comes in other forms. These forms of bullying include; physical, verbal, relational, and cyber bullying. From the article, *Bullying in Middle Schools: Prevention and Intervention* (2006), Milsom and Gallo defined physical bullying as the form that is "probably the most obvious of all forms because it can be seen. Physical bullying occurs when a person is physically hitting, kicking, or shoving their victims." Verbal bullying may be the "use of words to harm others through name-calling, insulting, making racist comments, or harsh teasing." Relational bullying would "focus on excluding one person from their peer group and usually doing so through verbal threats and spreading rumors." (p. 12) Tangen and Campbell

(2010) identified a new type of bullying in the forefront as well, cyberbullying. This type of bullying is defined as "harming others repeatedly through the use of technology such as social networking sites and other chat rooms, mobile phones, websites and web-cameras" (Tangen & Campbell, 2010, p. 2).

Roles of School Counselors

Bauman (2008) explored the role of elementary school counselors in reducing school bullying. This study mentioned how the elementary school counselors, given their expertise and role, are in a unique position to be leaders in reducing school bullying, a view that is consistent with the American School Counseling Association National Model for professional school counseling. According to this article, school counselors need to be knowledgeable about the types of bullying and insist that policies, programs, and interventions target more than physical bullying (Bauman, 2008). They need to have specific training and be able to put that training into action in assessment and data collection in order to make decisions. Having data regarding prevalence, types, and location of bullying that is collected prior to implementation of a program design is imperative. The research indicated that elementary school counselors are already delivering guidance curriculum in classrooms, and working with students to teach skills and behaviors to combat bullying; however, addressing the role of the bystander and promoting humanity among students who witness bullying should also be part of classroom lessons.

According to the ASCA National Model (2005), which promotes classroom guidance, individual planning, responsive services, and system support, the school counselor is ideally suited for a central role in a school's anti-bullying efforts. Working with students individually or in a small group would provide both individual and responsive services to the students. Educating staff, collecting data, and consulting with teachers and parents are all services that fall

under the system support. School counselors will not only use this nationally recognized model in their professional status but also their leadership and skills to reduce this serious problem (Bauman, 2008).

Newgent et al. (2009) reported that school counselors need to address the warning signs, causes, and impact of bully victimization. School staff, students, and parents all have a different perspective of what bullying is. According to the ASCA National Model (2005), one of the responsibilities of school counselors is to disseminate information to other stakeholders. Inviting parents to attend workshops or groups related to bully prevention will give them guidance on how to address this topic with their children. Addressing these strategies with individual bullies, their victims, and providing meetings with parents can expand knowledge about the problem of school bullying and can lead to a change in the school system in reducing it.

After developing policies and plans for the school, Bennett-Johnson (2004) believed it was significant to make sure every individual (principals, teachers, staff, students, and parents) was familiar with the plan and that specific roles should be identified within the school. Having an outline of appropriate courses of action that individuals in the school need to do is important to stop bullying at the forefront. These guidelines involve recognizing bullying and knowing who to report it to. Everyone in the school should know their role and how to enforce school policy regarding violence that occurs in the school.

Research done by Young et al. (2009) indicated that implementing a comprehensive system for documenting and tracking instances of bullying is an important component for reducing bullying in schools. This study was conducted over a three year period of time and was targeted at seventh and eighth grade students. Four school counselors were involved in this study as they facilitated large-group and classroom guidance lessons. They used data to seek more

effective and efficient ways to provide comprehensive school counseling services to their students. As a result, they were able to clearly measure how and if students were impacted as a result of their counseling services.

When strategies and programs are put into place to reduce bullying in the school systems, one should know if those plans are working. As mentioned in the last paragraph, it is an important role to document data properly. Another role that Bennett-Johnson (2004) believed could contribute to success in bullying prevention is evaluating those programs. After implementing specific bullying programs into a school system, having tangible evidence that bullying is reducing due to these programs is identified with an evaluation process. Possible ways to determine this is through before and after surveys given to students, individual meetings with students, monthly meetings with teachers regarding bullying behavior, and observation of the bullying behavior decreasing. With documentation and precise evaluation, schools can identify if their programs are working or are in need of a change.

Intervention in the School System

According to Harris and Petrie (2003), "a successful prevention program must intervene on three levels, beginning with the whole school, moving to the classroom, and building relationships with students to address individual needs". Identifying bullying in schools early is a critical component in helping students who have been exposed to violence. With children spending a minimum of 175 days a year and at least eight hours a day in school, school is a major influence on the lives of children. The whole school climate needs to be involved in reducing bullying. School personnel are most likely to be successful in reducing and preventing bullying when they use specific approaches involving the school as a whole, the classroom, and directly with the individuals being involved (Harris and Petrie, 2003).

Limber and Nation (1998) provided an intervention model and studied the effects of this model on reducing bullying. The first of the interventions discussed in this study was the school-wide intervention. This involves surveying of students who are involved with bullying at school, school-wide assemblies, and teacher in-service training to raise awareness of children and school staff regarding bullying. The second intervention, which is the classroom intervention, is more targeted at the establishment of classroom rules against bullying, providing regular class meetings to discuss bullying at school, and meetings with all parents. Lastly, the third intervention mentioned is the individual intervention. This involves discussions with students who are identified as bullies and/or victims (Limber & Nation, 1998). Interestingly enough, these interventions were found to be highly effective in reducing bullying and other antisocial behavior. This program was in effect for two years and both boys and girls reported bullying had decreased by half. Another finding was that truancy, vandalism, and theft rates had reduced as well. The school indicated a more positive school climate as a result of these interventions.

After reviewing literature relevant to this research study, it is evident that bullying is occurring in the school systems. The social-ecological theory is consistent with the amount of bullying in schools because bullying is said to occur at virtually every school and every school level. The literature recommends that school counselors take an advocacy and leadership role in helping reduce the occurrence of bullying. It is also recommended that interventions in the school system are at the school, classroom, and individual level.

Chapter III: Methodology

With school bullying being an evident problem in past literature, identifying the types of bullying and the roles that school counselors play in interventions used is an important component in reducing bullying in the school system. This study identified the problem of bullying, the different types of bullying that occur, specific roles that school counselors are taking part in regarding bullying, and the interventions used in school districts in Wisconsin.

Research Design

The research design involved in this quantitative study was a descriptive survey design. The independent variable used in this study was the school counseling level of the participants (elementary school, middle school, and high school). Dependent variables included bullying identification, types of bullying, roles of school counselors, and interventions used in bullying reduction. The demographic information consisted of the years of experience in counseling. The research survey tool was approved by the University of Wisconsin-Stout Institutional Review Board.

Participants

The participants of this study were randomly selected from a directory listing of school counselors in Wisconsin. One hundred school counselors were invited to take part in the survey. Randomization was used in that all school counselors under the directory were put into a bucket and 100 names and email addresses were pulled out. An online research survey link was then sent to those school counselors. A total of 39 school counselors participated in this study.

Instrumentation

In order to identify the different types of bullying and the roles of school counselors in intervention programs, an online survey was designed (see Appendix A). The survey was sent in

the form of an email which included a description of the study, time commitment, voluntary

participation, and other consent information (See Appendix B).

The survey consisted of one demographic question relating to school counseling

experience in years. There was one independent variable which was the school counseling level.

This was to compare and analyze data from the different levels of schooling. Participants were

asked five questions involving the dependent variable of identifying the severity of bullying and

bullying types, four questions regarding the dependent variable of the roles of school counselors,

and seven questions regarding the dependent variable of interventions used to reduce bullying.

These questions were based on a four point scale which measured the intensity of the

respondents' answers.

The instrument had face validity. Face validity refers to the instrument questions having a

logical connection to the concept and research questions. Because the questions addressed in the

survey were literature-inspired, it was determined that they clearly connected to the identification

of the school counselor's perception of the severity of bullying and the different bullying types,

school counselors' roles in bullying, and interventions used.

Data Collection

To collect the data for this study, the Qualtrics survey instrument was used. I emailed

consent information (See Appendix B) and a survey link to 100 school counselors on March 17,

2011, and the survey closed on April 2, 2011. In order to provide confidentiality and to reduce

any potential pressure, I informed the participants that names were not provided on the survey

and there was no way for me to identify who took the survey or what responses they selected.

Their responses were then recorded through the qualtrics database.

Data Analysis

From the surveys, tables were made based on the variables and responses to each question. Descriptive data were analyzed with numbers forming a table to best represent the data found through my survey. Cross tabulations were run with the independent variable of school counseling level and all the dependent variables.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this study was to identify the roles that school counselors play in uncovering the problem of bullying and implementing interventions to reduce the amount of bullying in Wisconsin school districts.

Demographic Information

Thirty-nine school counselors from Wisconsin school districts, ranging from the elementary school level to the high school level, were sent a survey to help examine the purpose of this study. Of the participants, 12 were elementary school counselors, 16 were middle school counselors, seven were high school counselors, and four were a combination of two or more levels. Counseling experience of the participants ranged from one year to 30 years.

Item Analysis:

The prevalence of bullying is different at each school and there are many different types of bullying that happens. Participants were asked to describe the severity of different types of bullying. The first five questions determined the severity of each type of bullying in their school. Possible answers ranged from not a problem in their school, a slight problem in their school, a moderate problem in their school, or an extreme problem in their school. (See Appendix C for complete data table).

In answer to the first question about the severity of general bullying, one participant responded that it was not a problem, 19 indicated it was a slight problem, 17 reported it was a moderate problem, and two felt it was an extreme problem in their school. In answer to the next question about physical aggression, 10 school counselors answered that it was not a problem, 25 indicated it was a slight problem, four stated it was a moderate problem, and none of the participants felt it was an extreme problem in their school. In answer to the third question about

relational aggression, none of the participants responded that it was not a problem, 16 indicated it was a slight problem, 20 reported it was a moderate problem, and three stated it was an extreme problem in their school. In answer to the next question about the severity of verbal aggression, one participant responded that it was not a problem, 18 felt it was a slight problem, 18 reported it was a moderate problem, and two school counselors reported it was an extreme problem in their school. In answer to the last question related to the severity of bullying types, the question about cyberbullying was addressed. Ten participants responded that it was not a problem, 16 indicated it was a slight problem, 11 reported it was a moderate problem, and two felt it was an extreme problem in their school. The only significant difference by level was indicated in the cyberbullying item ($p < .05$). High school counselors were most likely to rate cyberbullying as a severe problem. However, because cell sizes were small, the chi square should be interpreted with caution.

School counselors play a wide range of roles in education that may or may not include addressing the issue of bullying. Participants were asked four survey questions to determine if they addressed, designed, implemented, or evaluated interventions in their school. Possible answers to Items #6 to #9 ranged from being never involved, seldom involved, sometimes involved, or often involved.

In answer to Item #6, participants were asked if they addressed intervention techniques with the individual bullies and their victims. None of the school counselors reported they were never involved, two indicated they were seldom involved, 17 answered they were sometimes involved, and 20 felt they were often involved in their role. In answer to Item #7 about designing guidelines, two participants answered they were never involved, 11 stated they were seldom involved, seven reported they were sometimes involved, and 19 indicated they were often

involved in their role. In answer to implementing a comprehensive system, six school counselors answered that they were never involved, 10 felt they were seldom involved, nine reported they were sometimes involved, and 14 stated they were often involved in this role. In answer to the last question in this section relating to the roles of the school counselors, a question about evaluating strategies and programs was asked. Four participants indicated they were never involved, four responded they were seldom involved, six stated they were sometimes involved, and 25 reported they were often involved in this role. No significant differences were found by school counseling level.

Schools are using a variety of strategies to combat bullying which include school-wide, classroom-level, and individual-level interventions. Respondents were asked seven questions revolving around bullying interventions. Items #10 through #12 were devoted to school-wide interventions, Items 13 through 15 to classroom-level interventions, and Item 16 to individual-level interventions. Possible answers ranged from considering this kind of intervention for the future, planning to implement this kind of intervention, already implemented this kind of intervention, or does not perceive a need of this kind of intervention.

In answer to Item #10 about the school-wide intervention that involved survey of bullying problems, one participant reported they were not in need of this intervention, 24 indicated they already implemented this kind of intervention, five stated they were planning to implement this kind of intervention, and nine answered that they were considering this kind of intervention for the future. In answer to the next question about the school-wide intervention that involved school-wide assemblies, five school counselors felt they were not in need of this intervention, 27 stated they already implemented this kind of intervention, one reported they were planning to implement this intervention, and six indicated they were considering this kind

of intervention. In answer to the last school-wide question about teacher in-services, three participants responded that they were not in need of this kind of intervention, 16 stated they already implemented this kind of intervention, two felt they were planning to implement this kind of intervention, and 17 reported that they were considering this kind of intervention for the future.

In answer to the classroom-level intervention about the establishment of the classroom rules, Item 13, one school counselor answered s/he was not in need of this kind of intervention, 32 indicated they already implemented this kind of intervention, none of the participants felt they needed to plan this kind of intervention, and six reported they were considering this kind of intervention for the future. In answer to Item #14 about the classroom-level intervention that involved regular class meetings, four participants responded they were not in need of this kind of intervention, 16 answered they already implemented this kind of intervention, three of the participants stated they were planning to implement this kind of intervention, and 14 felt they were considering this kind of intervention for the future. In answer to the classroom-level intervention that involved meetings with all parents, 17 school counselors reported they were not in need of this kind of intervention, three felt they already implemented this kind of intervention, one stated they were planning to implement this kind of intervention, and 17 were considering this kind of intervention for the future.

In answering the only question about an individual-level intervention, a question regarding discussion with students was addressed. One participant answered that s/he did not need this kind of intervention, 34 stated they already implemented this kind of intervention, none of the participants indicated they were planning on implementing this kind of intervention, and

four reported they were considering this kind of intervention for the future. No significant differences were found by the school counseling level among any of the intervention items.

In summary, bullying is occurring in practically every participant's Wisconsin school district. The involvement in roles that school counselors play varies at each school and each level. Interventions are being reported at the school-wide, classroom-level, and individual-level. Every school district is different, and responses varied throughout the survey.

Chapter V: Discussion

Past literature has presented evidence that bullying in schools is a problem in today's society. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the types of bullying that are occurring, the roles school counselors are involved in regarding bullying, and the interventions that are taking place within Wisconsin school districts. More specifically, the study strived to address the following questions:

1. What are school counselors' perceptions about the severity of various types of bullying?

2. What roles have school counselors been involved in as it relates to bullying interventions?

3. What strategy of intervention is taking place in the school system most often?

Summary

The basic design of this study was an online survey design that addressed bullying identification, types of bullying, roles of school counselors, and interventions used in reducing bullying and compared them to the different educational levels (elementary, middle, and high school). All participants in this study were from Wisconsin school districts, and all were school counselors.

The instrument design that was used for this study was an online survey tool. The collection of study data began with formatting an online survey tool to send in email format to the school counselors. The survey was then emailed to 100 school counselors, and any responses were recorded anonymously through the Qualtrics database. Cross tabulations were then made to analyze the data by level of school.

Types of bullying. The four types of bullying this study examined were: physical, relational, verbal, and cyberbullying. The first research question that was addressed was:

- What are school counselors' perceptions about the severity of various types of bullying?

When wanting to know information about the different types of bullying and their severity, we should first understand if general bullying is occurring. Bullying was reported to be occurring in all the participants' schools except for one. School counselors' views on physical, relational, verbal, and cyberbullying were that it is a problem at all levels. Main findings were that physical bullying was not an extreme problem at any level and cyberbullying was evident in high school and middle school, especially in high school, but not a problem or just a slight problem at the elementary school level.

Roles of school counselors. The roles identified in this study were addressing, designing, implementing, and evaluating intervention in schools. The second research question that this study aspired to address was:

- What roles have school counselors been involved in as it relates to bullying interventions?

Results of this study presented different roles performed by some counselors but not others. Most school counselors were involved in some way with addressing strategies, designing guidelines, and evaluating strategies and programs. However, a few school counselors felt they were not involved in implementing a comprehensive system for documenting and tracking instances of bullying.

Intervention in the school system. The interventions in this study addressed the school-wide, classroom-level, and individual-level interventions. The last research question this study aimed to address was:

- What strategy of intervention is taking place in the school system most often?

On a school-wide level, most of the school counselors already implemented surveys for bullying intervention and school-wide assemblies regarding bullying. About half the participants felt they had already implemented teacher in-services regarding bullying but the other half is considering this type of intervention. Classroom-level interventions were also identified as participants had to describe their activity in the establishment of classroom rules, regular class meetings to discuss bullying, and meeting with all parents regarding bullying. Interesting results were that half of the school counselors did not report meeting with parents as an intervention. The last intervention recognized in this study was at the individual-level. This involved having individual discussions with students regarding bullying. The majority of school counselors reported this intervention already was implemented in their schools.

Conclusions

Nansel et al. (2001) found bullying to be present in schools today. The current study also found that general bullying is occurring at relatively all schools. In the current study, school counselors reported that school bullying occurs at all levels of education, and the majority of school counselors viewed general bullying as a slight or moderate problem. This is also congruent with the study done by Chapel et al. (2006), as its findings indicated that bullying is prevalent from the elementary age through college-aged students.

Regarding different types of bullying, many similarities between the literature and this study were found. These included all types of bullying (physical, relational, verbal, and cyberbullying) to be found at all the educational levels, and relational and verbal bullying to be more of a problem at the elementary school level. These findings relate to the study by Khosropour and Walsh (2001), which stated that most elementary school students are bullied by being called bad names, teased, lied about, hit, isolated, threatened, having things stolen, or

being left out on activities. Cyberbullying was found to be more prevalent in the middle and high

school levels in this study, and this is consistent with a study done by Tangen and Campbell

(2010) in which they believe it is more prevalent in the middle and high school level because

students have access to a computer and a cell phone. It was apparent that all kinds of bullying

were occurring at the middle school level, but physical bullying was not a problem at some

schools. This may be because 50 percent of students did not report bullying experiences at school

(Harris & Petrie, 2003). The high school counselors did not report physical, relational, or verbal

aggression to be an extreme problem in any of their schools. This may connect to the study by

Swearer et al. (2009), who mentioned that bullying at the high school was not as big of a

problem compared to other issues going on in the school.

Newgent et al. (2009), Bennett-Johnson (2004), and Young et al. (2009) report that all

educational levels should participate in addressing, designing, implementing, and evaluating

bullying strategies. When addressing the bullying behavior, almost all the school counselors in

the current study were sometimes or often involved. This is an important role as the ASCA

National Model (2005) states that this is a responsibility of the school counselor. In this study,

most of the participants indicated they were often involved in designing policies and plans for

the school. Bennett-Johnson (2004) believed it was significant to make sure every individual,

including school counselors, was familiar with the plan and the specific roles they had. The

current study reported that six school counselors were never involved in implementing a

comprehensive system for documenting and tracking bullying instances. This contrasts with the

literature, as Young et al. (2009) demonstrated the importance of implementing a comprehensive

system and found results that reduced bullying in schools. Most of the participants in the current

study felt they were often involved in evaluating strategies and programs. This will help in

identifying whether or not the program is working and bullying instances are being reduced (Bennett-Johnson, 2004). A small amount of school counselors were never involved or seldom involved in these roles. This could be because their roles as school counselors vary between levels, and there may be other school counselors in the building (Bennett-Johnson, 2004). In other words, specific roles and interventions might be assigned to different school counselors.

Studies by Harris and Petrie (2003) and Limber and Nation (1998) reported that a successful program must intervene on three levels: the whole school, the classroom, and individually. This study found that the majority of participants indicated that they already implemented interventions on all three levels. However, there were differences in the school-wide intervention which dealt with teacher in-services and the classroom-level intervention that involved meeting with parents. Most school counselors in the current study felt they were not in need of this kind of intervention nor would they consider this kind of intervention. This is not supported by the literature, as Bennett-Johnson (2004) believed that staff members and parents should be familiar with the interventions and services provided when addressing bullying at school. The individual-level intervention was sought to be implemented by most of the school counselors which is similar to the literature. The ASCA National Model (2005) mentions how school counselors at all levels of education provide individual counseling and therefore have individual-level interventions in place. Another conclusion that can be drawn from the results of this study was that a few school counselors expressed no need for some interventions to be implemented in their school, due to viewing bullying as not a problem or a slight problem in their school.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, recommendations were formulated. It is recommended that the next step of research would be to use a larger sample to be able to have more confidence in the cross-tabulations. Future researchers should also be aware of the Social-Ecological Theory and how that plays a role in the amount of bullying occurring in schools today.

Recommendations for Future School Counselors

It is recommended that proper education for school counselors, staff, parents, and students on identifying bullying as well as how to report bullying incidents, is crucial. Additional education for school counselors who do not know the full range of interventions may also be helpful, including the half of these participants who do not meet with parents. It is also important to add additional adult supervision to places where bullying is more prominent. In addition, bullying incidents need to be tracked and measured with appropriate data gathering systems. School counselors need to be aware of their role in their school district and consider school-wide, classroom-level, and individual-level interventions of education. School counselors also need to address bullying as a serious problem and provide support for students.

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Appendix A: Survey Tool Instrument

Title: Bullying and the School Counselor's Role in Interventions

Statement of Consent:

By completing the following survey, you agree to participate in the project entitled Bullying and the School Counselor's Role in Interventions

Bullying and the school counselor's role in interventions

1. Currently, how large a problem is general bullying (repeated physical, verbal, or relational attacks directed against a victim) at your school?

☐ An extreme problem in your school

☐ a moderate problem in your school

☐ a slight problem in your school

☐ not a problem in your school

2. Currently, how large a problem is physical bullying (physical aggression like hitting, kicking, or shoving) in your school?

☐ An extreme problem in your school

☐ a moderate problem in your school

☐ a slight problem in your school

☐ not a problem in your school

3. Currently, how large a problem is relational aggression (focusing on excluding one person from their peer group and usually doing so through verbal threats and spreading rumors) in your school?

☐   An extreme problem in your school

☐   a moderate problem in your school

☐   a slight problem in your school

☐   not a problem in your school

4. Currently, how large a problem is verbal aggression (using words to harm others through name-calling, insulting, making racist comments, or harsh teasing) in your school?

☐   An extreme problem in your school

☐   a moderate problem in your school

☐   a slight problem in your school

☐   not a problem in your school

5. Currently, how large a problem is cyberbullying (using technology to harm others) in your school?

☐   An extreme problem in your school

☐   a moderate problem in your school

☐   a slight problem in your school

☐   not a problem in your school

School counselors play a wide range of roles in public education that may or may not include addressing the issue of bullying. The next set of questions asks you to characterize the role you have played with bullying interventions at your school.

6. When an incidence of bullying occurred at your school, how involved were you usually in using established school intervention techniques **with individual bullies and their victims**, including meeting with their parents. Were you...

☐ often involved

☐ sometimes involved

☐ seldom involved

☐ never involved

7. How involved have you been in **designing guidelines** for teachers, students, and staff that outlines appropriate courses of actions if they witness bullying. Would you say you were...

☐ often involved

☐ sometimes involved

☐ seldom involved

☐ never involved

8. How involved have you been in **implementing a comprehensive system** for documenting and tracking instances of bullying as well as the interventions used with specific bullies and victims. Would you say you were...

☐ often involved

☐ sometimes involved

☐ seldom involved

☐ never involved

9. How involved have you been in **evaluating strategies and programs** to reduce bullying in your school. Would you say you were…

☐ often involved

☐ sometimes involved

☐ seldom involved

☐ never involved

Schools are using a variety of strategies to combat bullying. The following section lists a few interventions, and asks about your school's use of specific strategies. Please answer to the best of your knowledge.

10. Using a school-wide intervention that involves **survey of bullying problems** at your school. Which describes your school?

☐ considering this kind of intervention for the future

☐ planning to implement this kind of intervention

☐ already implemented this kind of intervention

☐ not a need of this kind of intervention

11. Using a school-wide intervention that involves **school-wide assemblies** regarding bullying. Which describes your school?

☐ considering this kind of intervention for the future

☐ planning to implement this kind of intervention

☐ already implemented this kind of intervention

☐ not a need of this kind of intervention

12. Using a school-wide intervention that involves **teacher in-services** regarding bullying. Which describes your school?

☐ considering this kind of intervention for the future

☐ planning to implement this kind of intervention

☐ already implemented this kind of intervention

☐ not a need of this kind of intervention

13. Using a classroom-level intervention that involves the **establishment of classroom rules** against bullying. Which describes your school?

☐ considering this kind of intervention for the future

☐ planning to implement this kind of intervention

☐ already implemented this kind of intervention

☐ not a need of this kind of intervention

14. Using a classroom-level intervention that involves **regular class meetings** to discuss bullying at school. Which describes your school?

☐ considering this kind of intervention for the future

☐ planning to implement this kind of intervention

☐ already implemented this kind of intervention

☐ not a need of this kind of intervention

15. Using a classroom-level intervention that involves **meetings with all parents**. Which describes your school?

☐ considering this kind of intervention for the future

☐ planning to implement this kind of intervention

☐ already implemented this kind of intervention

☐ not a need of this kind of intervention

16. Using an individual-level intervention that involves **discussions with students** identified as bullies and victims. Which describes your school?

☐ considering this kind of intervention for the future

☐ planning to implement this kind of intervention

☐ already implemented this kind of intervention

☐ not a need of this kind of intervention

Next, please answer a few questions about yourself -

School Counseling Level: _____(Elementary)

_____(Middle)

_____(High)

School Counseling Experience (in years):   _____

Appendix B: Implied Consent Form

Title:
Bullying and the School Counselor's Role in Interventions

Investigator:
Kendra Pagel – pagelk@uwstout.edu 715-574-2739

Research Sponsor:
Dr. Barb Flom – flomb@uwstout.edu 715-232-1343

Description:
I am currently a student in the school counseling program at UW-Stout. I am doing a research study on types of bullying and interventions in Wisconsin School Districts. The purpose of my study is to identify the various types of bullying that can occur within the school system and the roles that school counselors play as it relates to bullying interventions.

Risks and Benefits:
The risks of taking my questionnaire are minimal because school counselors handle bullying issues routinely, but participant may experience some discomfort in recalling events while responding to the questionnaire statements. Nevertheless, the participant may withdraw at any time during the survey. If support is needed, individuals are encouraged to practice normal job duties and consult with colleagues or professionals about their counseling practice. The main benefit of taking my questionnaire is that it will allow professionals to contribute to the knowledge of the type of bullying and the school counselor's role in interventions relating to bullying. This information will add to past research regarding school counselors' roles and take it one step further to explain the interventions and preventions that are effective at School Districts in Wisconsin.

Time Commitment:
This survey should take no more than 10 minutes of your time.

Confidentiality:
No identifiers are used anywhere in relation to this research. I will be using the qualtrics matrix and in no way will I be able to determine who took the questionnaire or the answers that were given.

Right to Withdraw:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you.

IRB Approval:
This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations

required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor.

This project has been reviewed by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46

Investigator:
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Advisor:
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Statement of Consent:
By completing the following survey, you agree to participate in the project entitled Bullying and the School Counselor's Role in Interventions.

Appendix C: Cross Tabulations

Add Banner

		Next, please answer a few questions about yourself. Currently, what is your school counseling l...				Total
		Elementary School Level	Middle School Level	High School Level	A combination of two or more levels	
Currently, how large a problem is general bullying (repeated physical, verbal, or relational attacks...	not a problem in your school	1	0	0	0	1
	a slight problem in your school	8	7	2	2	19
	a moderate problem in your school	2	8	5	2	17
	an extreme problem in your school	1	1	0	0	2
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
Currently, how large a problem is physical bullying (physical aggression like hitting, kicking, or s...	not a problem in your school	2	4	3	1	10
	a slight problem in your school	8	10	4	3	25
	a moderate problem in your school	2	2	0	0	4
	an extreme problem in your school	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
Currently, how large a problem is relational aggression (focusing on excluding one person from their...	not a problem in your school	0	0	0	0	0
	a slight problem in your school	4	8	4	2	18
	a moderate problem in your school	7	6	3	2	20
	An extreme problem in your school	1	2	0	0	3
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
Currently, how large a problem is verbal aggression (using words to harm others through name-calling...	not a problem in your school	1	0	0	0	1
	a slight problem in your school	7	6	3	2	18
	a moderate problem in your school	3	9	4	2	18
	An extreme problem in your school	1	1	0	0	2
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
Currently, how large a problem is cyberbullying (using technology to harm others) in your school?	not a problem in your school	8	1	0	1	10
	a slight problem in your school	4	9	1	2	16
	a moderate problem in your school	0	6	4	1	11
	An extreme problem in your school	0	0	2	0	2
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
School counselors play a wide range of roles in public education that may or may not include address...	never involved	0	0	0	0	0
	seldom involved	0	0	1	1	2
	sometimes involved	7	6	4	0	17
	often involved	5	10	2	3	20
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
How involved have you been in designing guidelines for teachers, students, and staff that outlines a...	never involved	1	0	0	1	2
	seldom involved	3	3	5	0	11
	sometimes involved	3	2	1	1	7
	often involved	5	11	1	2	19
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
How involved have you been in implementing a comprehensive system for documenting and tracking insta...	never involved	3	1	1	1	6
	seldom involved	3	3	3	1	10
	sometimes involved	3	3	2	1	9
	often involved	3	9	1	1	14
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
How involved have you been in evaluating strategies and programs to reduce bullying in your school...	never involved	0	0	3	1	4
	seldom involved	1	2	1	0	4
	sometimes involved	3	2	1	0	6
	often involved	8	12	2	3	25
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
Schools are using a variety of strategies to combat bullying. The following section lists a few inte...	not a need of this kind of intervention	1	0	0	0	1
	already implemented this kind of intervention	5	11	4	4	24
	planning to implement this kind of intervention	3	2	0	0	5
	considering this kind of intervention for the future	3	3	3	0	9
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
Using a school-wide intervention that involves school-wide assemblies regarding bullying. Which desc...	not a need of this kind of intervention	0	3	1	1	5
	already implemented this kind of intervention	10	10	4	3	27
	planning to implement this kind of intervention	0	0	1	0	1
	considering this kind of intervention for the future	2	3	1	0	6
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
Using a school-wide intervention that involves teach in-services regarding bullying. Which describes...	not a need of this kind of intervention	0	2	1	0	3
	already implemented this kind of intervention	6	7	2	1	16
	planning to implement this kind of intervention	0	2	0	0	2
	considering this kind of intervention for the future	6	4	4	3	17
	Total	12	15	7	4	38
Using a classroom-level intervention that involves the establishment of classroom rules against bull...	not a need of this kind of intervention	0	1	0	0	1
	already implemented this kind of intervention	12	13	4	3	32
	planning to implement this kind of intervention	0	0	0	0	0
	considering this kind of intervention for the future	0	2	3	1	6
	Total	12	16	7	4	39
Using a classroom-level intervention that involves regular class meetings to discuss bullying at sch...	not a need of this kind of intervention	0	3	0	1	4
	already implemented this kind of intervention	7	6	1	2	16
	planning to implement this kind of intervention	1	1	0	1	3
	considering this kind of intervention for the future	3	5	6	0	14
	Total	11	15	7	4	37
Using a classroom-level intervention that involves meetings with all parents. Which describes your s...	not a need of this kind of intervention	6	7	3	1	17
	already implemented this kind of intervention	1	2	0	0	3
	planning to implement this kind of intervention	0	1	0	0	1
	considering this kind of intervention for the future	4	6	4	3	17
	Total	11	16	7	4	38
Using an individual-level intervention that involves discussions with students identified as bullies...	not a need of this kind of intervention	1	0	0	0	1
	already implemented this kind of intervention	10	16	5	3	34
	planning to implement this kind of intervention	0	0	0	0	0
	considering this kind of intervention for the future	1	0	2	1	4
	Total	12	16	7	4	39