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Bullying: Teachers' and Education Professionals' Knowledge and Needs

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze teachers' and other education professionals' needs and knowledge when dealing with bullying situations. Data collection was carried out in two different sessions of the Bullying 101 One-Day Institute at Boise State University, and the participants were educational professionals from several elementary and middle schools. Qualitative analysis of session artifacts revealed that participants had a basic understanding of bullying. Some participants were interested in being change agents when it comes to addressing bullying problems. However, they currently lack self-confidence and appropriate resources to overcome their fears and lack of self-efficacy when intervening.



BULLYING: TEACHERS' AND EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS' KNOWLEDGE AND NEEDS

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I. Introduction

Bullying persists as a problem in our schools, and it affects a large number of students every year. An estimated 25.8% of students were impacted in the state of Idaho, as reported by The Idaho Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2017.

Regarding the bullying and cyberbullying, the literature about the teachers' needs and perceptions taking their role into account is scant (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2013).

In addition, the large number of instances of bullying cases happen unbeknownst to school faculty and workers. That lack of knowledge of the situation permits the bullying to continue, bypassing the effects these attitudes can cause to the students involved (Cajigas de Segredo, Khan, Luzardo, Najson, & Zamalvide, 2004).

The purpose of this study is to analyze Idaho teachers' and education professionals' (counselors') needs and knowledge when dealing with bullying in their schools.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

What are the elementary and middle school professionals' needs and knowledge regarding bullying in Idaho schools?

With this needs assessment, we are pursuing research to develop a list of recommendations for the formation of educational professionals.

Many students believe that situations involving aggression are problems in which they would not normally ask for help from teachers; however, they affirm that they would ask for help from teachers that they trust (Díaz-Aguado, 2006).

Several studies reported that teachers have little confidence in themselves to intervene in abusive situations (Álvarez-García, Rodríguez, González-Castro, Núñez, & Álvarez, 2010).



"The strength of people's convictions in their own effectiveness is likely to affect whether they will even try to cope with given situations" (Bandura, 1977:193).

II. Methods

2.1 Context

This research was performed at the Bullying 101 One-Day Institute that was held at Boise State University by the Idaho Positive Behavior Network (IPBN).

2.2 Timeline

The data collection was carried out in two different sessions of this Bullying 101 One-Day Institute (November 8th 2018 and February 7th, 2019).

2.3 Sample size

A total of 53 teachers and education professionals in several elementary and middle schools in Boise participated over two days (17 in the first session and 36 in the second).

2.4 Research Design and Measures

Participants participated in the activity: "Regarding bullying prevention...What do you know? What do you want to know? What are you excited about? What are your fears/reservations?"

Participants were divided into groups to perform focus group activities (5 groups on the first session and 11 groups on the second session). Each group was given a large poster in which to answer the mentioned questions after discussing them as a group.

This study performed qualitative analysis of those 16 posters categorizing the emerging themes.

The themes were coded in the following manner: K themes for the KNOW question, W themes for WANT TO KNOW question, E themes for EXCITED ABOUT question and F themes for FEARS question. The following figure is divided into thematic quadrants with the frequency of each sub-category in parenthesis:

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT BULLYING?	WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT BULLYING?
K1- TEACH PROACTIVE BEHAVIORS (9)	W1- WHAT IS "BULLYING"? (7)
K2- POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE AND RELATIONSHIPS ARE A KEY FACTOR (7)	W2- HOW TO EMPOWER STUDENTS/PARENTS/ BYSTANDERS TO REPORT AND INTERVENE (2)
K3- DIFFICULTY IN DEFINING AND IDENTIFYING BULLYING (9)	W3- STEPS AND TECHNIQUES TO CHANGE BEHAVIORS (11)
K4- CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE/ANYWAY (2)	W4- APPROPRIATE PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES (6)
K5- SEEM TO BE INCREASING (2)	W5- MORE INFORMATION ON CYBERBULLYING (1)
K6- REPETITIVE AND IMBALANCE OF POWER (1)	W6- HOW TO PREVENT IT (3)
K7- BYSTANDERS FOR PREVENTING THE BULLYING (3)	W7- HOW TO EDUCATE IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND WHAT BULLYING IS (7)
K8- DOCUMENT THE PROBLEM (1)	
WHAT ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT?	WHICH ARE YOUR FEARS/RESERVATIONS ABOUT BULLYING?
E1- TRAINING TO LEARN STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES FOR PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION (13)	F1- LACK OF SELF CONFIDENCE IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE (4)
E2- SEEING A CHANGE IN SCHOOL CULTURE (3)	F2- TEACHER BUY-IN/NO COMMITMENT (5)
E3- ALREADY STARTED TO WORK ON IT (3)	F3- HOW TO MAKE IT SYSTEMATIC (2)
E4- HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT (1)	F4- THE USE OF "BULLYING" WORD LOOSELY (2)
E5- SHARE THE LEARNED INFORMATION (5)	F5- NOT EASY TO RECOGNIZE (2)
	F6- STUDENTS NOT COMFORTABLE TELLING STAFF (1)
	F7- WORSENING THE SITUATION (3)
	F8- NOT KNOWING ENOUGH (2)
	F9- FACING PARENTS (2)
	F10- CYBERBULLYING (3)

III. Results

The resultant categories (according to the frequency of the comments in each category) were the following:

KNOW:

- K1- Teach proactive behaviors
- K2- Positive school culture and relationships are a key factor
- K3- Difficulty in defining and identifying bullying
- K7- Bystanders for preventing the bullying

EXCITED ABOUT:

- E1- Training to learn strategies and resources
- E2- Seeing a change in school culture
- E3- Already started to work on it
- E5- Share the learned information

WANT TO KNOW:

- W1- What is "bullying"?
- W3- Steps and techniques to change behaviors
- W4- Appropriate programs and resources
- W7- How to educate in order to understand what bullying is

FEARS:

- F1- Lack of self confidence in making a difference
- F2- Teacher buy-in/no commitment
- F7- Worsening the situation
- F10- Cyberbullying

IV. Conclusions

There are concerns expressed by teachers about the proliferation of bullying and cyberbullying cases. They are aware of some information about bullying, even if some teachers express confusion or ambiguity about its persistence and prevention.

The most relevant finding of this study is that school professionals express the need for training and appropriate resources they trust. If provided training and resources, they can dismiss their expressed lack of confidence when acting and reacting against bullying and cyberbullying situations.

These conclusions are consistent with many ideas expressed in recent bullying literature (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Eden, Heiman, & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013; Lester; Waters; Pearce; Spears and Falconer, 2018) that found that teachers lack confidence in handling bullying and cyberbullying situations and expressed the desire to receive more training.

Forthcoming research will identify the critical competencies for training teachers with the aim to encourage their likelihood of intervention in bullying or cyberbullying situations.