Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

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Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

by

Emily M. K. Rustman

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of St. Cloud State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Doctor of Education in Educational Administration and Leadership

December, 2017

Dissertation Committee:
John Eller, Chairperson
Roger Worner
Kay Worner
Nicholas Miller
Abstract

The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) defined bullying as a, “repeated, health-harming mistreatment by one or more people of an employee by means of verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, humiliation, work interference, sabotage, exploitation of a known vulnerability, or a combination of any of all of these” (2013, WBI U.S. National Survey). According to a 2010 WBI national survey, “An estimated 54 million Americans report being bullied at work” (2013, WBI).

The purpose of this study was to determine if quality professional development or training had been provided to Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators related to identifying and addressing workplace bullying and the effectiveness of such training.

The study employed a mixed-methodology, which included the use of a closed-ended response survey and follow-up interviews. The research focused on the participants’ confidence level in identifying and addressing workplace bullying. The research questions also provided the researcher with information on if the participants had received any formal training or had an interest to receive professional development focused on strategies to identify and address workplace bullying. As data were gathered and analyzed, various demographic information was collected which allowed the researcher to make correlations based on years of experience as an administrator, school staff size, geographic location of the school, and the participants’ gender.

The study contributes to the current body of research knowledge by providing new research on supporting the need for more professional development in the area of adult bullying in the workplace, the need/desire from school administrators to obtain additional professional development on strategies to communicate more directly with staff regarding the creation of a positive climate and culture within an educational organization and that workplace bullying exists in many different forms and locations.
Acknowledgements

I want to thank my husband, Jesse, and our three children, Seeley, Eunice, and Gladys. Jesse, you endured many nights and weekends as a ‘single’ parent all while supporting our dream. Together we have demonstrated to our children that with ambition, initiative and courage you can accomplish anything, especially when you find someone to help support and encourage you along the way. You are my rock, my encouragement, and the person that pushes me to limits I could only dream of. Seeley, Eunice, and Gladys, don’t ever let anyone tell you that you ‘can’t’ do something. You can.

To my parents, Doug and Pat, for the encouragement and the push to keep moving forward no matter what barriers would manifest and to never take NO for an answer.

To my committee members at St. Cloud State University, Dr. John Eller, Dr. Roger Worner, Dr. Kay Worner, and Dr. Nicholas Miller. Your out-of-the-box thinking, connections to districts throughout Minnesota, and encouragement have assisted me in the completion of a great study with great findings.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction

The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) defined bullying as a “repeated, health-harming mistreatment by one or more people of an employee by means of verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, humiliation, work interference, sabotage, exploitation of a known vulnerability, or a combination of any of all of these” (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2013). “Workplace bullying gained attention in the 1980s after The Harassed Worker by Brodsky (1976) set the stage for exploring the phenomenon in the United States” (Astrauskaite, Kern, & Notelaers, 2014, p. 220). “Violence, verbal abuse and mistreatment at work have been growing areas of interest among researchers in the field of occupational health and safety” (Einarsen, Matthiesen, & Skogstad, 1998, p.564). Workplace bullying is a widespread problem in the American workplace that damages organizations and is overwhelming towards targets of bullying (Carbo, 2009; Trepanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2013).

“Workplace bullying ranges from behaviors that are fairly subtle to those that are explicit and identifiable (Samnani, 2012, p. 120). Bullying may influence how an organization functions and how employees interact and form relationships with one another. “Workplace bullying strips targets of their most fundamental human rights, including the rights to dignity, esteem, and voice in the workplace” (Carbo, 2009, p. 116). Rex-Lear, Knack, & Jensen-Campbell (2012) described peer victimization as a pronounced form of social rejection that is visible in all ages, race, gender, and socioeconomic status (p. 222). Over the last 20 years, research on bullying in the workplace has increased. That research has confirmed that it is prevalent in several countries including “the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Italy, Norway, Japan, and more (Samnani, 2012, p. 119).
Beirne and Hunter (2013) estimated that approximately, “20% of the occupied population experience bullying at work and that unchecked mistreatment has a ‘ripple effect’, radiating negative results beyond victims to witnesses, bystanders, colleagues who offer support or castigate perpetrators, and officials tasked with investigating reported grievances” (p. 596). Targets of workplace bullying are often fired, forced out, transferred, or quit more often than the perpetrator being punished, terminated, or quit themselves” (Namie, 2014, p. 14).

Whitaker (2012) stated, “Workplace bullying is a current form of workplace violence that is prevalent in many organizations throughout the world” (p. 115). He implied that the workplace may turn into an environment where employees “fear for their mental and physical safety because the bullying actions of their co-workers can contribute to reduced productivity, increased stress among workers, and even violence” (p.115). Targets of workplace bullying have often experienced symptoms of depression, sleep disorders, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and even suicidal thoughts (Whitaker, 2012). Like individual employees, organizations also suffer when bullying behaviors are present. Whitaker (2012) reported that organizations experience higher turnover rates, increased use of sick leave, increased absences, reduced employee motivation, morale and productivity, increased compensation costs, and poor company image.

**Conceptual Framework**

The study investigated the perceptions of Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators in eight central Minnesota school districts to determine if participants had observed bullying behaviors between adults, in what locations within the educational setting bullying behaviors were observed, the participant’s confidence level in identifying and addressing bullying between adults, how many hours of training they had received, and the
participants desired additional training in the area of bullying in the workplace. Data were systematically gathered and analyzed to provide support for possible explanations regarding bullying in the workplace.

**Statement of the Problem**

Although there has been an emphasis on training and expectations to eliminate bullying among students, educational leaders may not have been provided the same level of training to identify and address bullying between adults within their organizations. There are several professional journals that indicate that bullying in the workplace has been observed in different types of organizations within their employee groups including: higher educators, nurses, restaurant workers, electricians, psychologists, industrial workers, and social workers (Rex-Lear et al., 2012). While there is ample research regarding bullying among school-aged students, there is not comparable research to illustrate that training has been provided to educators to combat bullying among adults in the workplace.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to determine if quality professional development or training had been provided to select Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators in eight school districts related to identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace and the effectiveness of such training. The study was designed to examine Minnesota principals’, assistant principals’, and licensed administrators’ knowledge regarding workplace bullying and determine whether or not there was a need for additional training on the topic of bullying in the workplace. The results of the study are intended to assist universities, school districts, and educational leadership organizations in planning and disseminating future training
and development programs for educational administrators in the identification of bullying behaviors and in resolving bullying among staff members.

There has been little research of bullying among staff in educational organizations or training of educators on bullying in the workplace. Because school districts and schools are organizations in which bullying occurs, it is requisite that administrators be able to identify and address bullying in the workplace much like they identify and address bullying among students. The study is believed to be valuable that it will assess the status of training for select Minnesota elementary principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators on this timely, salient topic.

Assumptions of the Study

Roberts (2010) defined assumptions as the aspects of the study that you “take for granted” (p. 139). The following assumptions were identified by the researcher in conducting this survey design study:

- Study participants answered the questions honestly and without reservation.
- Study participants understood the meaning of “workplace bullying.”
- Responses received from participants accurately reflected their professional opinions.
- The convenience sample studied was not representative of the total population of Minnesota’s practicing principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators.

Objectives of the Study

Following approval by the dissertation committee, the researcher completed the following:

- Received approval from St. Cloud State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).
• Obtained email addresses for 139 principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators from eight Minnesota school districts through each of the school district's webpages.

• Developed and sent an informational and recruitment message that described the purpose of the study, the informed consent provision, researcher information in the event that there are any questions or concerns, and a link to the online survey to the 139 principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators.

• Data were collected through the online survey tool, Survey Monkey, which were then downloaded into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets where they were later imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), for analysis using the results of the online survey.

• Developed a 30-minute follow-up interview in which survey participants could express interest to participate.

• Contacted participants via their email address to facilitate the 30-minute follow-up interview.

**Delimitations**

Roberts (2010) described delimitations as the researcher’s method of narrowing the study’s scope. The delimitations of this study include:

• The researcher selected the time of year in which the study was conducted.

• Participants were selected from within school districts in Central Minnesota were selected based on their volume of principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators.
Participants were practicing principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators at the time during the study was conducted.

Participants were asked about their experiences with the professional development opportunities and quality exclusively related to bullying in the workplace.

**Research Questions**

The researcher surveyed principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators within eight central Minnesota school districts. Principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators were asked about their professional development experiences related to workplace bullying and the prevalence of bullying in their organizations.

1. To what extent did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators research believe bullying in the workplace occurred in their buildings?

2. How did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators rate their confidence level in identifying bullying in the workplace?

3. What strategies do Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators utilize while addressing bullying in the workplace?

4. To what extent did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators identify their interest in receiving training on identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace?

5. How many Minnesota school principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators have received training on bullying in the workplace?

6. How do the answers to Questions 1-5 differ based on demographic information such as years of experience as an educational leader, years of experience within their current building, school staff size, geographic location of school, and their gender?
Definition of Terms

Conflict. An interactive process manifested as incompatibility, disagreements, or dissonance within or between social entities (i.e., individuals, groups, and organizations) (Rahim, 2001).

Cyberbullying. Cyberbullying involves the use of “information and communication technology and devices such as cell phones and computers to knowingly harass, intimidate, and threaten to harm targeted individuals” (Rex-Lear et al., 2012, p. 229).

Harassment. “One type of illegal discrimination . . . defined as offensive and unwelcome conduct, serious enough to adversely affect the terms and conditions of a person’s employment, which occurs because of the person’s protected class, and can be imputed to the employer” (Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, 2011, p. 3).

Licensed administrator. School administrator that holds a current Minnesota administrative license who is practicing as a Dean of Students.

Mediation. “A process by which an impartial third party helps two (or more) disputants work out how resolve a conflict. The disputants, not the mediators, decide the terms of any agreement reached. Mediation focuses on future rather than past behavior” (Liebmann, 2000, p. 10).

Rural. Rural population below 10,000.

Suburban. Population between 10,000-100,000.

Urban. Population 100,000+.

Workplace bullying. “Repeated, health-harming mistreatment by one or more people of an employee by means of verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, humiliation, work interference,
sabotage, exploitation of a known vulnerability, or a combination of any of all of these” (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2013).

**Summary**

Chapter I presents the study’s introduction, conceptual framework, statement of the problem, purpose, assumptions, delimitations, research questions, and definitions. Chapter II provides an overview of the literature related to workplace bullying, characteristics of bullying behaviors, types of conflicts, conflict resolution strategies, and the effects of workplace bullying on individuals, organizations, and leaders. Chapter III describes the survey design research method, the design methodology, and provides rationale for the method chosen. The chapter also described the procedures employed to gather and analyze data to address the research questions. Chapter IV describes the results of the study. Chapter V presents conclusions drawn from the findings of the study and includes recommendations for professional practice and further research.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The researcher surveyed principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators in eight Minnesota school districts. The purpose of the study was to determine if quality professional development or training had been provided to Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators related to identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace and the effectiveness of such training. The study was designed to examine Minnesota principals’, assistant principals’, and licensed administrators’ knowledge regarding workplace bullying and their determination as to whether or not there was a need for additional training on the topic of bullying in the workplace.

Through the review of related literature, the researcher focused on four different themes: characteristics of workplace bullying, types of workplace bullying, bullying prevention and resolution in the workplace, and the impact of workplace bullying. These themes assisted the researcher to identify the physical and emotional characteristics of workplace bullying along with the different types of bullying that can occur. In addition to that, the researcher was able to identify how and if workplace leadership is preventing and resolving bullying in the workplace. The final theme addressed the impacts of bullying in the workplace and the effects it has on the people within the organization, the organization itself, and leadership.

Characteristics of Workplace Bullying

The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (2011) defined workplace bullying as, “repeated unreasonable actions of individuals (or a group) directed towards an employee (or group of employees), which are intended to intimidate, degrade, humiliate, or undermine; or which create a risk to the health or safety of the employee(s)” (p.1). Bullying is
intended to cause, “fear, distress or harm to the victim; an imbalance of power, absence of provocation, with repeated incidents” (Carbo, 2009, p. 99). Workplace bullying could be described as a situation in which the target feels constantly surrounded by negative behaviors (Astrauskaite et al., 2014; Trepanier et al., 2013).

“Regardless of age, race, gender, or socioeconomic status, peer victimization is not an isolated episode of arguing, fighting, or teasing, it is a series of episodes where there is the intention to aggressively intimidate or harm the target” (Rex-Lear et al., 2012, p. 220). Workplace bullying is continuous over at least six months (Simons, Stark, & Demarco, 2011) and may be done deliberately or unconsciously but causes harm to individuals and interferes with work performance (Einarsen et al., 1998). “Being the target of bullying is frequently referred to as peer victimization” (Rex-Lear et al., 2012, p. 220).

Carbo (2009) and Jenkins (2011) explained that there was no agreed upon definition of bullying, though, there was widespread agreement on several characteristics included in bullying such as physical, verbal, and psychological attack or intimidation. Many researchers believed it is sufficient to list the behaviors and characteristics of bullying or to list the various categories of behaviors in order to define bullying (Carbo, 2009; Ferris, 2004; Jenkins, 2011; Trepanier et al., 2013; Woodrow & Guest, 2014). The term workplace bullying was often exchanged with other negative behaviors such as incivility, harassment, workplace violence, counterproductive behaviors, or abusive supervision (Jenkins, 2011). Workplace bullying and the behaviors exhibited in such bullying is a violation of human rights and may cause anxiety, stress, and fear that interferes with the target’s ability to be productive in the workplace (Carbo, 2009). Cortina (2008) hypothesized that workplace bullying could be the new form of discrimination in the workplace. “Bullying is most frequent in workplaces with a negative and stressful working...
environment” where the targets of workplace bullying may not have support from coworkers or their supervisors (Hansen et al., 2006, p. 63). When the workplace is supportive, the organization has the capability to protect its employees from the harmful effects of workplace bullying (Hansen et al., 2006).

“Bullying progresses in four stages, the conflict (stage one), triggers bullying (stage 2), personnel management (stage three) and expulsion (stage four)” (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013, p. 292). The four stages described by Branch et al. (2013) aligned with Einarsen’s (1999); however, Einarsen placed more emphasis on the personnel management phase. Einarsen (1999) made it clear in his theory that sometimes when a supervisor or third party becomes involved, it only furthers the organization to bully the target.

Samnani and Singh’s (2014) categorization of workplace bullying included the frequency of bullying behaviors, persistence of the perpetrator, intensity of the behaviors, and the perceived power imbalance between the perpetrator and the target. Workplace bullying has been described as being persistent exposure to negative and aggressive behaviors which would encompass psychological, verbal, or physical behaviors executed by an individual or a group (Cemaloglu, 2011; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). Leymann (1996) described workplace bullying behaviors as being systematic and directed by an individual or individuals towards one target where the target feels helpless and defenseless. Other examples of bullying behaviors included excessive criticism, blaming unfairly, and sabotage (Simons et al., 2011).

In 2011, the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries reported examples of bullying that included “unwanted or invalid criticism, blame without facts, being treated differently than others, being sworn at, being excluded or isolated, being made fun of, excessive monitoring, being micromanaged, or given unrealistic deadlines” (p. 1). Bullying within
organizations could include acts committed on subordinates by their superior but also, by a group of subordinates to their superior (Cemaloglu, 2011).

**Types of Workplace Bullying**

Cemaloglu (2011) described three types of workplace bullying that could be observed including, “(a) downward bullying, (b) peer bullying, and (c) upward bullying” (p.500). Bullying within the workplace may occur in many forms including open verbal or physical attacks (e.g., name calling, hitting, pushing), indirect and subtle acts of aggression (e.g., gossiping, excluding from peer group), cyber (e.g., via email, text messages, social media), and could be both intentional and unintentional (Mathisen, Øgaard, & Einarsen, 2012; Rex-Lear et al., 2012). Einarsen et al. (1998) described bullying behaviors as being aggressive; aggressive behaviors can be direct or indirect with the most preferred style among adults being indirect. Direct aggression is aimed at the target including teasing, scolding, threats, while indirect aggression may take a more subtle form including social isolation and withholding information (Hansen et al., 2006).

Workplace bullying may include such behaviors as intimidation, insults, violence, belittling, excessive monitoring of an employee’s work, receiving meaningless tasks, not providing credit when earned and rumor spreading (Samnani & Singh, 2014). Because bullying has four defined stages—the conflict, the exhibition of bullying behaviors, the involvement of a supervisor, and expulsion—workplace bullying is considered to be a form of conflict escalation (Baillien & De Witte, 2009; Branch et al., 2013; Jenkins, 2011).

A study by Simons et al. (2011) concluded that the most common types of bullying behaviors experienced by targets included being assigned an “unmanageable workload (71%) and being ignored or excluded (58%),” while the least common types were “threats of violence or actual physical abuse (5%)” (p135). Another study by Einarsen et al., 1998) specified that “the
targets of bullying behaviors reported that serious slanders were the most common method of bullying, with 45.5% reporting it occurred very or quite often” (p. 566).

**Harassment**

Workplace bullying and conflicts present themselves in multiple forms. One common form is harassment. In 2011, the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries described harassment as, “one type of illegal discrimination defined as offensive and unwelcome conduct, serious enough to adversely affect the terms and conditions of a person’s employment, which occurs because of the person’s protected class, and can be imputed to the employer” (p. 3).

Harassment can be both a direct and indirect form of confronting someone. Persons in a supervisory role or lower in the organizational hierarchy use harassment techniques to bully colleagues (Bjørkelo, 2013). According to the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA), the recommendation for Minnesota Schools is to incorporate school climate language and initiatives that support anti-bullying and anti-harassment throughout district policies; MSBA’s website is utilized across the state when district school boards are developing and revising their policies. When an employee feels that a colleague has spoken to them or about them in a negative manner, the employee feels helpless and unable to cope or fight back (Bjørkelo, 2013).

**Interpersonal Conflicts**

“Individual factors that have been related to workplace victimization are personality characteristics, demography (e.g., age, tenure, gender), target’s behavior, and structural factors (e.g. hierarchical position and position in informal networks)” (Mathisen et al., p. 541).

Liefooghe and Davey (2001) summarized that “negative working conditions within an organization may increase interpersonal conflicts” (p. 376). Hodgins, Maccurtain, and Mannix-Mcnamara (2014) reviewed studies that identified a strong correlation between workplace
bullying and incivility and problems of interpersonal behavior. Dispute-related bullying and predatory bullying both address interpersonal conflicts; dispute-related bullying occurs as a result of an argument or personal conflict between individuals, and predatory bullying occurs as a result of venting stress and frustration towards a co-worker (Baillien & De Witte, 2009).

Many sources for interpersonal conflict comes from differences in working styles, perceptions from employees, lack of proper staffing, vision and mission disagreements, and competition (Kantek & Kavla, 2007). Jenkins (2011) reported that most workplace bullying emerges from an escalation of conflicts where the bully targets an individual or group of individuals less powerful than themselves. Organizations may experience more interpersonal conflict when there is evidence of unsuccessful conflict management causing increased stress, power struggles, employee dissatisfaction, and increased costs (Iglesias & Vallejo, 2012).

**Cyberbullying and the Workplace**

“As technology develops, the tactics used by perpetrators are also likely to vary, requiring ongoing examination” (Branch et al., 2013, p. 281-282). Cyberbullying is an extension of the more traditional means to bully others involving the use of “information and communication technology and devices such as cell phones and computers to knowingly harass, intimidate, and threaten to harm targeted individuals” (Rex-Lear et al., 2012, p. 229). Rex-Lear, et al. (2012) advised employers to be aware that staff who receive offensive emails, phone calls, and texts from colleagues may be the victims of cyberbullying. With all the benefits that technology provides to individuals and organizations, it also allows a means for individuals or groups to convey negative messages via emails and through social-networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, as well as posting videos which instantly reaches a wider range of people (Rex-Lear et al., 2012). These messages can be difficult for employers to trace, therefore,
address. “Although the prevalence of cyberbullying in the workplace is still unknown there are growing concerns about the physical and psychological health of employees in multiple organizational climates exposed to cyberbullying” (Rex-Lear et al., 2012, p. 230).

**Men vs. Women**

Workplace bullying has been observed in both men and women, however, O’Farrell and Nordstrom (2013) explained that in terms of “perpetrators of bullying, bullies tend to be males with aggressive behavior patterns who typically occupy supervisory positions” (p. 7). Research has shown that men express their aggression through physical means where women express it through indirect methods (Dellasega, 2009). In 2013, Salin and Hoel found that women rely on social manipulation including different forms of communication, social relationships and reputation, whereas men prefer negative acts towards the targets that may appear to be typical behavior. The researchers also discovered that, “women are more often bullied by colleagues than men and men more often by supervisors and line-managers” (Salin & Hoel, 2013, p. 237).

Dellasega (2009) claimed that women use relational aggression, a type of bullying that is covert or indirect which may stem from females being more biologically likely to respond to stress differently than males. More often than men, women desire to form a relationship with coworkers which may increase their bullying behaviors or how often they are targeted for bullying. Salin and Hoel’s (2013) analysis of their study data demonstrated that gender was “not only relevant for the way bullying is expressed, but also for how people make sense of and appraise the negative behavior” (p. 242).

**Bullying Prevention and Resolution in the Workplace**

Organizational leaders may spend much of their time resolving employee conflicts (Iglesias & Vallejo, 2012). Conflict resolution strategies range from simple, conventional
methods of addressing conflict to more complex methods where organizational leaders are lead
to develop and implement policies and procedures (Beirne & Hunter, 2013). The outcome of the
type of conflict resolution method practiced is dependent on the type of leadership exhibited
within the organization (Beale & Hoel, 2011). “Employers, unions, government bodies and
voluntary organizations are increasingly promoting policies and procedures with declared aims
of preventing or discouraging workplace bullying” (Beale & Hoel, 2011, p. 6).

The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (2011) stated that “employees
should first regain control themselves and to then realize that bullying is out of control and has
nothing to do with their individual performance” (p. 3). Ferris (2004) described the first step in
resolving the conflict as seeking assistance from the supervisor or someone in charge of
managing employee problems. Ferris said, “. . . the supervisor may side with the bully, dismiss
the concern, or threaten the employee who complains, resulting in further harm to the employee”
(p. 389). In correlation to Farris’s statement, Leymann (1996) explained that poor managerial
performance provokes bullying behaviors by the supervisor either getting too involved or
denying that a conflict exists.

More current research by Beirne and Hunter (2013) suggested that effective leaders work
diligently to create a climate that is motivated to take action against bullying to increase overall
employee performance. Proactive workplace behavior can be increased by actively searching for
employees portraying personality characteristics that reduce wrongdoing, the chance of
retaliation and workplace bullying (Bjørkelo, 2013).

**Methods of Conflict Resolution**

Supervisors may be directly involved with conflict resolution, be part of the workplace
bullying, or be a target of workplace bullying (Hansen et al., 2006). Lachman (2015) stated that
when addressing conflicts, the top-level administrator should be involved with the resolution of the problem because the perpetrator may not respond to someone in a lower status. Organizational leaders must recognize that their conflict resolution style may impact the overall outcome of the situation for both the target and perpetrator. Iglesias and Vallejo (2012) described five different approaches to conflict resolution to include: compromising (assertive and cooperative allowing both parties satisfaction), accommodating (unassertive and cooperative allowing one party to dominate), avoiding (both unassertive and uncooperative taking no action), competing (assertive and cooperative allowing personal or positional power), and collaborating (assertive and cooperative allowing direct attempts to solve conflicts). Their discoveries were (a) that women would primarily utilize compromising and accommodating while men were more prone to utilize competing and forcing and (b) that in the nursing field, compromising and competing resolution styles were used more often and collaborating was used least often. Lincoln (2001) described that at the core of effective conflict resolution strategies, effective listening and communication skills (both speaking and receptive listening) are needed to diffuse conflicts.

**Conflict Resolution Education**

The two most common methods for reporting or understanding workplace bullying come from self-reporting or peer reporting (Jimerson, Swearer, & Espelage, 2010). “Defusing heated arguments, identifying issues, setting emotions aside, and learning new ways to communicate enables the disputants to incorporate the processes and problem-solving skills of mediation, negotiation, and collaboration” (Lincoln, 2001, p. 29). Conflict resolution education has been a popular strategy among students and has increasingly been a strategy to prevent and address adult conflicts (Lincoln, 2001). Through conflict resolution education, facilitators would be able to model and integrate conflict resolution strategies and communication skills to assist in
analytical thinking, re-framing issues, and empathizing someone else’s point of view (Lincoln, 2001). Workshops are held throughout the United States, in which seasoned negotiators, educators, social workers, and legal experts are brought together to employ meaningful training to resolve conflicts in nonviolent ways (Lincoln, 2001). Lincoln (2001) described benefits from conflict resolution training as: “improved social interactions, family dynamics, relationships, community-and-school-related activities, learning environments, vocational training, and lifelong experiences” (pp. 30-31).

**Policy and Procedure Development**

“It is important that all organizations define what bullying is, and also outline what it is not, in their anti-bullying policies and complaint processes” (Jenkins, 2011, p. 27). “An explicit policy is important because it goes together the separate components, forming the primary source of information before anyone involved in bullying and acting like a mechanism of communication with the workforce” (Woodrow & Guest, 2014, p. 40). Devonish (2013) explained that it is within the supervisor of an organization’s job descriptions to do his/her best to ensure that while at work, the environment is a safe place free of bullying behaviors through the development and implementation of HR systems.

While many countries such as France, Canada, and Sweden, and the common law such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Germany, the United States has done very little to combat bullying in the workplace through the legislative system (Carbo, 2009). Carbo (2009) stated that there are two areas that the United States has attempted to do work around bullying in the workplace:

First, under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and under most state human rights laws, harassment based on the protected status such as race or gender is unlawful. The
second type of protection against such behavior comes via state common law, most notably in the form of claims of IIED and, potentially, in the form of other tort claims. (p. 100)

Bartlett and Bartlett (2011) described one of the major barriers to human resource development regarding bullying in the workplace is being able to understand the acts of bullying and then being able to identify how it impacts the individual and the organization. Carbo (2009) said that the laws prohibiting bullying in the workplace, specifically harassment, may not address adequate resolution strategies for employers to follow. Carbo has stood by the fact that, “In the American workplace little has been done to address workplace bullying” (p. 98).

According to the Workplace Bullying Institute [WBI] (2010), 16 states have introduced some form of workplace bullying legislation; however, many of the laws in place leave the target vulnerable and open to more attacks. When organizations are drafting policies and procedures around bullying-free workplaces, the knowledge about the bullying acts and the impact they have will assist the organization to strategically address the problem (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). Dzurec (2013) provided some examples from the State of Washington that would require acknowledgement of staff members to be aware of the zero tolerance for bullying, mandate administrative responsibilities to assure the environment is safe, and to provide staff members with a structured grievance procedure.

Carbo (2009) stated that “current legal practices of protecting targets of bullying in the workplace are falling short” (p. 105). The Healthy Workplace Bill was proposed in 2004 which would make it an illegal practice to subject employees to an abusive working environment (Carbo, 2009). With the bill’s overall ambiguity, it has not moved forward within the legislation due to its vague cause of action in fear of potential defendants misusing its original intention (Carbo, 2009). Many policies and procedures surrounding the issue of bullying within the
workplace do not hold merit due to the supervisor’s requirement of proving intent; intent that the perpetrator is intentionally targeting an individual or group of individuals (Carbo, 2009).

Many times, organizations will produce written policies and procedures to assist supervisors in dealing with acts of bullying or increased conflicts among employees. Cooper-Thomas et al. (2013) reported that for an approach to be effective in addressing conflict, it must be system-wide to ensure a clear process to address unacceptable and inappropriate behaviors and which create positive working relationships.

Although the development of policies and procedures of bullying-free workplaces has been the way many organizations address with this issue, Beale and Hoel (2011) stated that there is “serious doubt on the effectiveness of employers’ anti-bullying policies . . . the fact that managers themselves are usually the perpetrators of bullying is problematic” (p. 8). When higher management attempt to enforce these policies, the buy-in is typically divided with regard to the significance of the issue(s) and how to tackle it (Beale & Hoel, 2011). Branch et al. (2013) explained that organizations should be .” . . cautioned against relying on a narrow, legislative framework to regulate a complex problem; particularly without appropriate prevention efforts, interventions and rehabilitation processes throughout society and organizations, and specific training for all stakeholders, including management, employees, and trade union representatives” (p. 289). Any law or policy addressing bullying in the workplace should focus on the targets of workplace bullying, their rights as individuals or groups of individuals, and what the effects of the bullying behaviors have on them (Carbo, 2009). Organizational leaders also must understand that when/if a target of workplace bullying follows a grievance process they may contemplate leaving the organization (Glambeck, Matthiesen, Hetland, & Einarsen, 2014).
Mediation

One common type of conflict resolution used by many organizations is mediation. Mediation is typically utilized in the early stages of interpersonal conflict because both parties are interested in settling their differences (Jenkins, 2011). Baillien and De Witte (2009) stated that when bullying behaviors occur in a bullying-free organization, conflicts are typically settled through negotiation and open communication. Mediation is most successful before the conflict becomes escalated and the parties become aggressive (Jenkins, 2011). Saundry, McArdle, and Thomas (2013) described mediation as a “linear, technical process through which organizations are better able to resolve specific disputes” (p. 214).

Bennett (2014) suggested that mediation offers potential savings to the organization through the dispute resolution model. Bennett explained that organizations often find mediation as an acceptable approach to resolving differences which will amount to a final agreement. Mediators process the situation with each party individually in order to outline the objectives to further negotiate an agreed upon outcome. Jenkins (2011) explained that a successful mediator will typically address some of the environmental aspects to the conflict (i.e., organizational environment, characteristics of the perpetrator and target, and the social environment) to create a sustainable settlement between both parties. This approach has been successful because most often there is a power imbalance between the two parties (Jenkins, 2011). With the addition of conflict resolution education, the elements of a cooperative environment would allow employees to realize that conflict is natural, differences should be acknowledged, conflict could be viewed as a solution-building opportunity, and when the parties involved could build upon their strengths to find solutions that the overall climate turns from a negative to a positive (Lincoln, 2001).
Mediation is viewed as a process of open negotiation to appease the counterpart’s interests (Baillien & De Witte, 2009). This practice is reflective of a higher concern of what the other person is wanting versus being concerned about one’s own goals or interests (Baillien & De Witte, 2009). Mediation is one of the most common conflict resolution tools used by organizations because it allows both parties to examine and reflect upon what they contributed to the conflict (Jenkins, 2011). As quoted by Jenkins (2011), targets may conclude that their inability to “stand up for themselves, their lack of coping resources, their shyness, or poor conflict management skills may have contributed to the bullying” (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994).

Although mediation can be a successful approach to conflict resolution, there are contradicting views on whether or not mediation is an effective model for leaders to use when intervening with individuals and their conflicts. In 2010, the World Bullying Institute’s (WBI) national survey stated that mediation is, in fact, not the solution to address workplace bullying; mediation is an act of violence. Ferris (2004) described that although mediation may be appropriate for some situations, mediation would not be advised in which the bullying behaviors have been directed to more than one target, where there are power imbalances (e.g., supervisor to employee), or if the bullying behaviors have resulted in significant suffering to the target. Ferris’s statement directly correlates with the viewpoints of WBI; WBI (2010) explained that because complaints from individuals lead to revenge, mediation perpetuates the bullying and has the potential to increase the conflict.

In effort to make mediation more successful, targets of bullying behaviors including increased conflicts with others, are encouraged to assume the responsibility of documenting the occurrence of bullying. According to the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries
employees should keep a diary, obtain/maintain copies of anything documented on paper, and have witnesses with them during any encounters with the perpetrator. Through the mediation process, the organization’s focus should be to ensure that “strategic efforts are made to improve the psychological well-being of employees who have been victims of workplace bullying through workplace interventions such as counseling, training, and other rehabilitative programs” (Devonish, 2013, p. 641) which could be part of the mediation process.

Impact of Workplace Bullying

“Considering the amount of time individuals invest in working environments, it is unsettling to think that many individuals are experiencing detrimental health outcomes as a direct consequence of victimization at work” (Rex-Lear et al., 2012, p. 222). Devonish (2013) explained that, “workplace bullying is a form of social stressor that influences the psychosocial work environment in ways that can be seen as harmful and devastating for both employees and the organization itself as any other form of job stressor” (p. 631). The results of bullying behaviors for the target can include substantial psychological trauma and physical illness (Hutchinson & Hurley, 2013).

Impact on People

“There is still a need for a clearer, deeper understanding of workplace from the targets’ perspectives” (Carbo, 2009, p. 118). As an individual or group’s well-being is harmed and their sense of belonging or feeling worthy is taken away from them, the more likely an organization is going to experience bullying behaviors (Mathisen et al., 2012). Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (2011) stated that “Workplace bullying can be instigated by coworkers, supervisors, contract workers, or labor representatives” (p. 1). “Workplace victimization may take many forms, from open verbal or physical attacks, to rather indirect and subtle acts of
aggression” (Mathisen et al., 2012, p. 540). The substantial physical and psychological trauma may lead the target of bullying behaviors into a financial loss, and in some instances, the inability to sustain employment (Hutchinson & Hurley, 2013). Mistry and Latoo (2009) studied different forms of bullying from the targets’ perspectives and identified two forms of bullying: physical and emotional.

**Physical impacts.** In a poll completed by WBI (2013), it was determined that 71% of targets reported having been being treated by a physician for work-related symptoms to include hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic headaches, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Mistry and Latoo (2009) stated that the symptoms of physical bullying may lead targets to include sleeplessness, nausea, migraines, heart palpitations, skin irritation, frequent sweating/shaking, stomach problems, backaches, loss of appetite, and overall lethargy. Other outcomes may include risky behavior such as substance abuse and alcoholism (Rex-Lear et al., 2012).

**Emotional impacts.** Mistry and Latoo (2009) described the emotional symptoms that targets are lead to could include anxiety, the feeling of being isolated, loss of confidence/self-esteem, depression, panic attacks, mood swings, lack of motivation, and suicidal thoughts. Cooper-Thomas et al. (2013) noted additional symptoms of bullying that indicated lower self-esteem, more negative emotions about life, fatigue, burnout, and depression to the list of how the acts of bullying affect targets. Researchers have discovered that when employees experience bullying behaviors themselves, that the excess stress may turn them into a bully (Samnani, 2012).

The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (2011) claimed that “targets of bullying exhibited reduced self-esteem, musculoskeletal problems, work withdrawal and
sickness, sleep and digestive concerns, increased depression, family tension and stress, and financial problems due to frequent absences” (p. 2). Hodgins et al. (2014) described that individuals who witness bullying behaviors have an increased probability for reduced health and well-being and have more influence over all other work-related stressors combined.

Bartlett and Bartlett’s (2011) study revealed common health conditions which resulted from being a target of bullying including clinical depression, psychological health issues, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide. These conditions increased individual’s ability to concentrate, lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence, and feeling powerless. Devonish (2013) explained that when employees experience high levels of work-related depression also experience a reduced level of mental health which further creates “negative emotions, feelings of low self-worth and confidence, and a sense of deprivation” (p. 632). Carbo (2009) also described the effects of workplace bullying as damage to the target’s psyche, morale, and dignity. Specific to teachers, there has been a negative correlation found between bullying in the workplace and the relationships in the school, their ability to be an effective teacher in the classroom, and a decreased ability or want to participate in professional decision-making (Powell, Powell, & Petrosko, 2014).

One of the greatest concerns for the targets of bullying behaviors is the impact of the behaviors on the target’s dignity and the lack of protection that an employer can offer to its employee (Carbo, 2009). Einarsen et al. (1998) claimed that the targets/victims of bullying behaviors are often isolated and avoided or made fun of within the organization. This being said, the target must prove to the employer that his/her dignity has been impacted by describing “outrageous” behavior in order to have an actionable claim (Carbo, 2009, p. 103).
**Job performance and satisfaction.** Teachers will frequently experience heavy demands which creates overall stress and exhaustion which may decrease work performance, increase turnover rates, increased absenteeism, and increase alienation of certain employees (Cemaloglu, 2011). Einarsen et al. (1998) explained that targets of bullying behaviors reported symptoms of “burnout, lowered psychological well-being as well as more somatic health complaints than their fellow coworkers” (p. 564). Astrauskaite et al. (2014) described the threat of being rejected by others as one of the greatest fears a person can experience. WBI reported in 2013 that when employees become stressed, they become ill.

Bartlett and Bartlett (2011) conducted a study which revealed “factors such as worker safety, job satisfaction, humiliation, fear, decreased group cohesiveness, job loss, and reduced performance” as individual results of bullying (pp.76-77). Individuals within an organization also reported decreased commitment to work, lower job satisfaction, poor morale, and lower performance (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). A study by Devonish (2013) described employees who were not satisfied with their employer and organization's work environment were likely to experience bullying behaviors and work-related depression. Continued exposure to workplace bullying will eventually cause employees to feel powerless and insecure about their position within the organization (Glambek et al., 2014).

Even though the effects of bullying are long-lasting, some individuals or groups of individuals hesitate to report perpetrators. Mistry and Latoo (2009) described reasons for the underreporting of bullying was due to fear that such reporting would make things worse and a belief that nothing would be done about it. They further stated that individual targets fear increased victimization, possibly being labeled as a troublemaker or a failure, and that the organization has implied that bullying behaviors are acceptable.
Targets and witnesses of bullying in the workplace face many challenges; when compared to workplaces which no one is bullied, witnesses to bullying within the workplace report more health symptoms (Vartia, 2001). Targets and witnesses that experience repeated exposure to negative behaviors cause them to think negatively resulting in significant negative impact on ethical behaviors within the organization and trigger feelings of shame, fear, anger, and injustice (Hutchinson & Hurley, 2013). Many targets spend the majority of their time examining why they are the target and thinking about their future employment and the relationship they have with others within the organization, therefore, many targets and/or witnesses will guard themselves by withdrawing or avoiding situations in which they feel threatened (Hutchinson & Hurley, 2013).

The overall effects of being targeted by bullying behaviors could be summarized as the inability to, “communicate effectively, maintain collegial relationships, maintain personal reputation, occupational management” and extreme physical ailments (Leymann, 1996, p. 170).

Impact on the Organization

“Workplace bullying kills competitiveness and costs money” (WBI, 2013). When organizations have a culture of bullying behaviors, the “losses include: turnover, recruitment, and training costs; absenteeism and increased sick leave use; fatigue-caused errors and accidents; stifled team productivity; litigation, arbitration, settlement expenses; workers compensation and disability claims” (WBI, 2013). Devonish (2013) explained that employee performance determines and maintains organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and when workplace bullying behaviors are present it ultimately threatens the organization’s profit and credibility.

Additionally, when an organization experiences bullying in the workplace, it may experience lowered staff retention and/or increased absenteeism which ultimately means
financial loss and decreased productivity (Hutchinson & Hurley, 2013). The costs to an organization fall into three categories—training costs for new employees upon the replacement of targets (productivity), assisting the existing staff through coping with the occurrence of bullying (costs), investigating bullying incidents, potential legal action, and loss of company reputation (culture) (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, 2011).

**Productivity.** Workplace bullying causes targets to miss work and could increase the entire organization's absenteeism which decreases overall organizational performance when individuals miss deadlines, decrease creativity and lose time (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). Many employees choose to resign from the organization noting a loss in self-confidence in a high-stress situation (Cemaloglu, 2011. Devonish (2013) explained that when organization places effort into improving job satisfaction and happiness in the workplace, this assists in decreasing the chance for the organization to experience the effects of poor performance and counterproductive behaviors.

**Costs.** Due to the extreme nature of bullying behaviors, organizations may see an increase in healthcare costs due to health-related issues for targets of bullying (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). There is also an increased risk of observing higher turnover rates which then leads to the organization having to post positions, interview, rehire, and train new employees (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011).

**Culture.** “Factors of organizational climate and working arrangements can contribute to the incidence of bullying” (Smith, Singer, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003, p. 176). Bullying behaviors have a negative impact on the organization's climate and culture (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). When the work environment has a combination of a social climate which instills hostility and
aggression and an organizational culture that tolerates bullying behaviors, bullying behaviors tend to increase (Einarsen, 1999).

Bullying behaviors significantly increase the creation of a negative culture if the bullies within an organization believes that the organization allows them to bully (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). The reputation of the organization is also in jeopardy; if there is a high turnover and the organization reflects negativity, the organization will struggle to find highly qualified employees (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011).

Jenkins (2011) described the organizational environment as how the work of the organization is defined and how the leadership functions; evidence suggested that if the workplace is stressful or disorganized, conflict will increase among employees which may turn into bullying behaviors which then may increase absenteeism thereby decreasing the organization’s productivity. Because targets of bullying behaviors take more days off, report unclear expectations of task performance, have reduced job satisfaction, have reduced commitment to the organization, lack work motivation, and are more likely to leave the organization than non-targets, the morale of the organization is affected (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). Organizations attempt to create rules, form codes of conduct, and manage culture to reduce the effects of bullying behaviors and conflicts (Beirne & Hunter, 2013).

“Perceptions of injustice can lead to attitudes and behaviors being adjusted downwards, which can explain the negative impact upon the work environment, including bystanders” (Branch et al., 2013, p. 284). Devonish (2013) strategized that if the organization encourages positive work climates and cultures that are able to cultivate cooperation, team-work, friendliness, and interpersonal harmony the are more likely to prevent bullying behaviors among
employees. Brady (2010) explained that one characteristic that supports a positive work environment is being collaborative and respectful with effective communication among colleagues. There have been several researchers that have concluded that a positive school (work) climate lead to reduced aggression and violence, reduced bullying, improved self-esteem, and improved academic achievement due to the teacher’s dedication and ability to be an effective teacher (Powell et al., 2014).

**Impact on Leadership**

Dzurec (2013) stated that leaders within an organization have the responsibility to “address and contain bullying” as an informal role (p. e2). Part of that informal role is to positively influence the culture of the organization, sustain relationships, watch over social processes within the workplace, and to guide communication among staff (Dzurec, 2013). Although this is part of a leader’s role, Dzurec described that many times, leaders tend to not respond to reports of bullying behaviors, especially if they themselves utilize bullying behaviors as a management technique.

Devonish (2013) described that abusive supervision may impact the bullying behaviors within an organization. He stated that “the use of intimidation, withholding important information, use of humiliation, and direct and indirect intimidation, caused a negative impact on employees who then experienced negative emotions” (p. 632). Carbo (2009) also stated that “as leaders may lack leadership skills to address bullying in the workplace, training may not be an appropriate strategy if the supervisor intended to bully the target(s)” (p. 113).

Leadership acts have an impact on the employees within the organization’s attitudes and behaviors supporting improvement and creativity; when the overall organization is experiencing increased stress and exhaustion (which significantly impacts bullying behaviors), communication
is most likely to decline which can be seen as detrimental to the organization’s health (Cemaloglu, 2011). O’Farrell and Nordstrom (2013) also suggested that organizational leaders be transparent and accountable to inhibit the prevalence of bullying behaviors, however, the organization must align job descriptions and roles/responsibilities for transparent leadership. Evidence from Fox and Stallworth (2010) and Hauge, Skogstad, and Einarsen (2007) supported the belief that the leader within an organization may initiate bullying behaviors among staff members or neglect negative behaviors to avoid having to manage a stressful situation.

A review of literature by Cemaloglu (2011) described two leadership styles: transformational and transactional. Transformational leaders show interest in the employees of the organization and are always seeking new perspectives and creating leaders from within (Ertureten, Cemalcilar, & Aycan, 2012). A study by Cemaloglu (2011) described results that within a healthy organization, employees under a transformational leader were often less stressed and exhausted and the bullying behaviors experienced by teaching staff tended to decrease. A healthy educational organization was defined by Hoy and Feldman (1987) as having significant communication between staff members and materials are efficiently used. Cemaloglu (2011) discovered was that when a leader is transformational, the leader is perceived as being charismatic, motivational, and supportive when moving forward; transactional leadership was described as being micromanaging, avoids making decisions, and shunning responsibilities.

Transactional leadership typically involves single exchanges between the leader and the employee in which following the exact direction of the leader the employee is rewarded (Ertureten et al., 2012). This interaction creates a “mutual dependence between the parties in which both sides’ inputs are rewarded” (Ertureten et al., 2012, p. 207). Transactional leadership
has been reported as an effective leadership style as it reduces the stress on the employee through the creation of clear targets and active monitoring performance (Ertureten et al., 2012).

Authoritarian leadership is a different type of leadership that may employ more negative behaviors which increases workplace bullying (Ertureten et al., 2012). Hodgins et al. (2014) described organizations that have authoritarian leaders as having many regulations and restrictions and employ many power imbalances. Authoritarian leaders have an increased amount of bullying behaviors within their organization versus transformational leaders (Ertureten et al., 2012). Austrauskaite et al. (2014) stated that transformational leadership is one of the most effective styles to combat bullying behaviors within the workplace. Austrauskaite et al. described transformational leaders as creating an ethical and creative climate which establishes teamwork, collaboration, and vision to empower others within the organization to cope with stress and deal with conflict in a positive manner.

The leader within an organization may demonstrate both positive or negative approaches to conflict and problem-solving; leaders influencing a more positive and collaborative approach are prone to deter bullying behaviors or conflicts among staff (Austrauskaite et al. 2014). Research by Zellers, Tepper, and Duffy (2002) explained that when leaders present a positive attitude towards conflict, those positive feelings may foster effectiveness and positive organizational citizenship behaviors. When a target approaches the organizational leader to address workplace bullying, the leader should be thoroughly reassured that his/her position not decrease the target’s insecurity (Glambek et al., 2014).

Balducci, Fracaroli, and Schaufeli (2011) discovered that “personality and work-environmental factors were independently related to bullying, suggesting two possible different paths to workplace victimization” (p. 509). Interpersonal conflict that escalates has been
revealed as one of the strongest predictors of the prevalence of workplace bullying (Baillien & De Witte, 2009). Specifically, conflicts that are managed poorly or ignored suggests to staff within the organization that bullying behaviors are acceptable, this only increasing bullying behaviors among staff (Baillien & De Witte, 2009). “Poor psychosocial conditions at work (e.g. role ambiguity and role conflict) may trigger interpersonal conflicts, which if not properly managed may escalate into bullying” (Balducci et al., 2011, p. 500).

Job demands and job resources would be considered work-related environmental factors that may impact the prevalence of bullying behaviors (Balducci et al., 2011). Bjørkelo (2013) described the factors within an organizational culture that impacts on whether individuals report wrongdoing include “vigilance, engagement, credibility, accountability, empowerment, and courage (p. 309). Hodgins et al. (2014) summarized various studies that stated employees who experience bullying behaviors are more frustrated with poor responses from their supervisor and the inability or unwillingness of the organization to address or implement approaches to prevent bullying behaviors. “When bullying behavior is observed, it is important that it be discouraged through administering adequate disciplinary actions” (O’Farrell & Nordstrom, 2013, p. 14).

Powell et al. (2014) concluded from their study that leaders who address school climate as part of their school’s improvement plan in efforts to ensure a positive climate and are culture ultimately committed to improving student achievement, report less bullying in the workplace. Through the school improvement process, educational leaders should focus on four areas: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the institutional environment (Powell et al., 2014). Within those four areas, the leader should address components to shape the culture so that employees are prepared, supported, ask for help, and seek assistance when they encounter bullying behaviors (Cleary, Hunt, Walter, & Robertson, 2009). Leaders must understand that
workplace bullying may impact individual team members as well as overall climate and team performance (Brotheridge, 2013). Organizational leaders should encourage teamwork and respect among employees and also model that philosophy throughout their leadership practices (O’Farrell & Nordstrom, 2013).

**Synthesis of the Review of the Research**

According to a 2010 WBI national survey (WBI, 2013), “An estimated 54 million Americans report being bullied at work.” The national prevalence of Americans having suffered abusive conduct at work is 27%, while another 21% have witnessed it, and 72% are aware that workplace bullying happens (Namie, 2014). The 2014 survey further stated, “72% of the adult American public is familiar with workplace bullying ranging from a painfully intimate immersion to a superficial use of the term without knowing many details” (Namie, 2014, p. 4). Hutchinson and Hurley (2013) reported that 80% of employees within the healthcare fields experience bullying at some point of their working lives.

Schools are organizations in which bullying takes place. There has been little research of bullying among staff in educational organizations or training of educators on bullying in the workplace. Because school districts and schools are organizations which bullying occurs, it is requisite that administrators be able to identify and address bullying in the workplace much like they identify and address bullying among students. The study is believed to be valuable that it will assess the status of training for select Minnesota elementary principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators on this timely, salient topic.

**Summary**

Through the review of related literature, four different themes were at the core of the topic: the physical and emotional characteristics of workplace bullying, different types of
workplace bullying, how and if workplaces are preventing and resolving workplace bullying, and finally the impacts of workplace bullying. Bullying behaviors do not discriminate against age, race, gender, or socioeconomic status where an aggressor intentionally intimidates or harms a target repeatedly over time (Rex-Lear et al., 2012). Workplace bullying behaviors are systemic and directed towards one target; behaviors often include excessive criticism, blaming unfairly, and sabotage (Simons et al., 2011).

Conflict resolution strategies range from simple, conventional methods of addressing conflict to more complex methods where organizational leaders are lead to develop and implement policies and procedures (Beirne, 2013). Beirne and Hunter (2013) suggested that effective leaders work diligently to create a climate that is motivated to action against bullying to increase overall employee performance. Self-reporting or peer reporting are the two most common methods for reporting workplace bullying (Jimerson et al., 2010). Jenkins (2011) explained the importance for organizations to define what bullying and harassment are within their own policies and define what the complaint process would be if it occurs to employees.

Devonish (2013) explained that “workplace bullying is a form of social stressor that influences the psychosocial work environment in ways that can be seen as harmful and devastating for both employees and the organization itself as any other form of job stressor” (p. 631). The results of bullying behaviors for the target can include substantial psychological trauma and physical illness (Hutchinson & Hurley, 2013). Bartlett and Bartlett (2011) conducted a study which revealed “factors such as worker safety, job satisfaction, humiliation, fear, decreased group cohesiveness, job loss, and reduced performance” as individual results of bullying (pp.76-77). Individuals within an organization also reported decreased commitment to work, lower job satisfaction, poor morale, and lower performance (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011).
Leadership acts have an impact on the employees within the organization’s attitudes and behaviors supporting improvement and creativity; when the overall organization is experiencing increased stress and exhaustion (which significantly impacts bullying behaviors), communication is most likely to decline which can be seen as detrimental to the organization’s health (Cemaloglu, 2011).

Chapter III will describe the survey design research method, the design methodology, and provides rationale for the method chosen. The chapter also described the procedures employed to gather and analyze data to address the research questions. Chapter III will discuss how the research questions were designed to coincide with the concepts of workplace bullying discovered in the related literature review.
Chapter III: Method

Introduction

The purpose of the study focused on examining the perceptions of a convenience sample of principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators located in eight central Minnesota on their training and ability to identify and address adult workplace bullying. Convenience sampling is defined as selecting participants that are willing and available to participate in the research study (Creswell, 2008). In addition, the study focused on identifying locations where incidents of bullying behaviors have been observed, frequencies of bullying incidents, and different types of adult workplace bullying has occurred over the last year within their buildings. Furthermore, the study focused on examining professional development topics identified as most valuable by the principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators in assisting them in identifying and addressing adult bullying in the workplace.

Research related to bullying in the workplace described, “An estimated 54 million Americans report being bullied at work” (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2013). The national prevalence of Americans having suffered abusive conduct at work is 27%, while another 21% have witnessed it, and 72% are aware that workplace bullying happens (Namie, 2014). There are roughly 37 million United States workers who reported being subjected to “abusive conduct” while 65.6 million are affected by “abusive conduct” (Namie, 2014). Of those 37 million workers, “69% of bullies are men; 60% of bullied targets are women; and women bullied choose women targets 68% of the time (Namie, 2014, p. 6). Surprisingly, “56% of bullies are bosses (holding higher rank), 33% of all abuse came from peers (same level), and 11% came from subordinates” (Namie, 2014, p. 10). Regarding workplace bullying, it is estimated that 72% of
American employers’ reactions either condone or explicitly sustain bullying; less than 20% take actions to stop it” (Namie, 2014, p. 12).

**Research Questions**

The researcher surveyed principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators within eight central Minnesota school districts. Principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators were asked about their professional development experiences related to workplace bullying and the prevalence of bullying in their organizations.

1. To what extent did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators research believe bullying in the workplace occurred in their buildings?
2. How did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators rate their confidence level in identifying bullying in the workplace?
3. What strategies do Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators utilize while addressing bullying in the workplace?
4. To what extent did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators identify their interest in receiving training on identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace?
5. How many Minnesota school principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators have received training on bullying in the workplace?
6. How do the answers to Questions 1-5 differ based on demographic information such as years of experience as an educational leader, years of experience within their current building, school staff size, geographic location of school, and their gender?
Participants

The researcher surveyed 139 principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators from Minnesota school districts. The researcher obtained email addresses for principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators through each of the school district's' webpages. An informational and recruitment message that described the purpose of the study, the informed consent provision, researcher information in the event that there are any questions or concerns, and a link to the online survey were developed. The informational and recruitment message was distributed to all superintendents, principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators from the eight selected school districts.

Informed consent describes the potential risks that could occur as a study participant and provides assurances that the participant may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2005). Informed consent is required by the St. Cloud State University’s Institutional Review Board. The process of informed consent is described as an ethical practice to inform participants of the potential dangers of participants in the study and permitting them to decline participation. Eligible participants must employ the following characteristics:

- Obtained a current Minnesota K-12 Principal License.
- Employed as a practicing principal, assistant principal, or licensed administrator in the state of Minnesota.

Human Subject Approval

Following approval by the dissertation committee, the researcher completed the required application for the St. Cloud State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is a, “committee made up of faculty members who review and approve research so that the research protects the rights of the participants” (Creswell, 2008, pp. 157-158). In the IRB application, the
researcher described the specific details of the study, the study’s ethical implications, and the procedures that were implemented to protect the participants and the data collected during the study process. The application was submitted to the IRB for its consideration and feedback. Any concerns related to the study design during the application process, adjustments were made to protect the study participants and secure IRB approval. The study commenced upon the approval from the IRB committee.

**Instruments for Data Collection and Analysis**

The primary data collection device was a survey instrument followed by an open-ended voluntary follow-up interview. An instrument is described as the tool to measure, observe, or document data (Creswell, 2008). Survey Monkey was the tool used to collect data then downloaded into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and reviewed by the St. Cloud State’s Statistical Center.

**Research Design**

Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from Minnesota school principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators. In this mixed-methods research study, an electronic closed-ended survey and a semi-structured interview were used to gather important data to use in examining this topic in detail. The survey was designed utilizing information acquired from the related literature regarding bullying in the workplace. Once the initial survey and interview questions were designed, the questions were field tested with a panel of educational leadership professors who provided feedback on the study questions, the close-ended response choices, and the format of the instrument. The study was designed to provide information of the experiences and training in identifying and addressing workplace bullying related to the research questions through the lens of the building administrator.
The feedback was used to refine the survey’s questions. Following refinement of the questions, the survey underwent a second field testing with a cohort of doctoral students and a group of Superintendents. The doctoral cohort pilot was administered the survey, reviewed the interview questions, and shared feedback related to question clarity, response clarity, time to complete the survey, and survey question alignment with the study research questions. The group of Superintendents were provided the survey questions where they provided the researcher feedback related to the content of the research questions.

Feedback from these field testing process was used to facilitate further refinements and adjustments to the survey and interview questions. Upon the refinement of the survey instrument, the questions were uploaded into an online survey on the Survey Monkey site. Survey Monkey is an electronic survey administration tool that delivers surveys to defined participants for online completion. The instrument “Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?” identified principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators reported level of competency to identify and address workplace bullying.

Section I required participants to answer close-ended response questions regarding demographic information. The seven questions contained within section one of the survey instrument were:

1. How would you categorize the district in which you are employed?
2. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal, or licensed administrator?
3. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal, or licensed administrator in your current building?
4. What educational setting are you a principal, assistant principal, or licensed administrator?

5. What is your role as an educational leader?

6. What is your identified gender?

7. What is the total staff membership in your building?

Section II consisted of eight rank-ordered close-ended response questions regarding the participants’ perception of frequency and location that workplace bullying occurs within the participants’ building, the participants’ confidence level in identifying and addressing workplace bullying, and the participants’ interest in further training in the area of identifying and addressing workplace bullying. At the conclusion of the survey, participants had the opportunity to volunteer to be interviewed by the researcher.

**Treatment of Data**

The data analysis procedures used the results from the online instrument utilizing the information from Survey Monkey. Data were downloaded into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets where they were later imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), for analysis using the results of the online survey, the researcher developed themes. A coding process was used to analyze the open-ended comments received through the survey.

To answer Research Question 1, participants were asked to rate how many times they have observed bullying in the workplace. Participants were also asked to rate the frequency in which they have observed bullying in the workplace in their current building within the last twelve months. If the participants answered that observations of bullying in the workplace were made, there was a question that asked them to identify different locations within the environment in which bullying behaviors were observed and the frequency of those incidents. For Research
Question 2, participants were asked to identify their confidence level on being able to identify bullying in the workplace. For Research Question 3, participants were asked during the follow-up interview to describe the strategies they utilize to address bullying in the workplace. For Research Question 4, participants were asked to identify their level of interest in obtaining professional development on identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace. For Research Question 5, participants were asked how many hours they have received professional development on identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace. Participants were also asked to rate the need for additional professional development opportunities. Participants were able to identify if they would like to participate in a follow-up interview and provide contact information. For Research Question 6, the first seven questions of the survey provided the researcher with demographic information.

**Procedures and Timelines**

The researcher developed an informational and recruitment message including the statement of consent and the survey link which was distributed to study participants. The Survey Monkey site automatically collect participants’ responses. Study participants received their first email invitation to participate on January 30, 2017. This invitation contained researcher contact information, the statement of consent, a description of the research study, and the link to the survey. The researcher was able to monitor the return of completed surveys. A return rate of 50% or greater was desired from the sample group.

Approximately two weeks after the initial survey information was delivered to the sample group, a follow-up message to the sample group members encouraging those who had not yet completed the survey to do so was sent. The researcher continued to monitor survey
completions. A final reminder and encouragement message was sent to participants approximately four weeks after the first reminder, closing the survey on February 28, 2017.

The researcher emailed a total of 139 participants the informed consent, background information, a description of the research study, and a link to the online survey. The researcher contacted St. Cloud State University’s Statistical Consulting and Research Center on a weekly basis to evaluate participant response rate. The researcher sent weekly reminders to participants who had not completed the survey. On February 28, 2017, at the close of the survey, the researcher had total response rate of 90 participants (64.5%).

Study participants had the ability to volunteer to participate in a follow-up interview through the online survey. The St. Cloud Statistical Center provided the researcher with the contact information for those participants. The researcher contacted participants via their email address to facilitate the 30-minute follow-up interview.

Summary

The study used an online survey consisting of seventeen items divided into two survey sections and a follow-up interview. The first section of the survey contained questions about the participants’ demographic information. The second section of the survey gathered information regarding the participants’ perception of the frequency and location that workplace bullying occurs within their buildings, their confidence level around identifying and addressing workplace bullying, and their interest in receiving professional development around workplace bullying.

An internet-based program, Survey Monkey, served as the platform for the survey. The program allowed the study participants to access the survey at their leisure. The program compiled the participants’ responses to completed surveys for data analysis.
The target population for the survey were eight central Minnesota public school district principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators. Each participant in the target population received notification of the research.

In Chapter IV, the results that were obtained in the research study are described. The data addressed each of the six research questions. The results assisted in identification of the quality of professional development opportunities for principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators in the area of bullying in the workplace. The results also assisted in the identification of where bullying in the workplace occur within the educational organization and whether or not principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators have the confidence to address the bullying incidents they have witnessed.
Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

Although there has been an emphasis of training and expectations to eliminate bullying among students, educational leaders may not have been provided the same level of training to identify and address bullying between adults in their organizations. There are several professional journals that indicate workplace bullying has been observed throughout different types of organizations and impacts their employees including: higher educators, nurses, restaurant workers, electricians, psychologists, industrial workers, and social workers (Rex-Lear et al., 2012). While there is ample research on training to address bullying among school-aged students, there is not comparable research to illustrate that training has been provided to assist educators in combating bullying among adults in the workplace.

The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) (2013) defined bullying as a “repeated, health-harming mistreatment by one or more people of an employee by means of verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, humiliation, work interference, sabotage, exploitation of a known vulnerability, or a combination of any of all of these.” Workplace bullying is a widespread problem in the American workplace that damages organizations and is overwhelming towards targets of bullying (Carbo, 2009; Trepanier et al., 2013). “Workplace bullying ranges from behaviors that are fairly subtle to those that are explicit and identifiable (Samnani, 2012, p.120).

Bullying may influence how an organization functions and how employees interact and form relationships with one another. “Workplace bullying strips targets of their most fundamental human rights, including the rights to dignity, esteem, and voice in the workplace” (Carbo, 2009, p. 116). Rex-Lear et al. (2012) describe peer victimization as “a pronounced form of social rejection that is visible in all ages, races, genders, and socioeconomic statuses” (p. 222).
Over the last 20 years, research on bullying in the workplace has increased. “Targets of workplace bullying are often fired, forced out, transferred, or quit more often than the perpetrator being punished, terminated, or quit themselves” (Namie, 2014, p. 14).

The purpose of the study was to determine if quality professional development or training had been provided to Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators related to identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace and the effectiveness of such training. The study was designed to examine Minnesota principals’, assistant principals’, and licensed administrators’ knowledge regarding workplace bullying and determine whether or not there was a perceived need for additional training on the topic of workplace bullying. The results of the study are intended to assist universities, school districts, and educational leadership organizations in planning and disseminating future training and development programs for educational administrators on the identification of bullying behaviors and methods for resolving those bullying behaviors among staff members.

**Description of the Sample**

The study identified 139 central Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators in the initial sample group. St. Cloud State University’s Statistical Consulting and Research Center created an online survey through Survey Monkey, a site that automatically collects participants’ responses. The researcher developed an informational and recruitment message including a statement of consent and the survey link which was distributed to study participants. Study participants received their first email invitation to participate in the study on January 30, 2017. This invitation contained researcher contact information, a statement of consent, a description of the research and a link to the survey. The researcher was in a position
to monitor the return of completed surveys. A return rate of 50% or greater was desired from the sample group.

Of the initial 139 identified potential participants from eight school districts in central Minnesota, 89 participants (64.0%) responded to the online survey. Once the Statistical Consulting and Research Center began the review of the data, it was discovered that 18 participants failed to answer many of the survey questions. In order to achieve a more comprehensive data set, those 18 participants were removed from the data for a total of 71 respondents, a response rate of 51.1%. Of the participants who responded to the demographic question related to their educational administrative position, 27 were principals, 28 were assistant principals, and 13 were licensed administrators. Three administrators did not respond.

**Research Findings**

**Research Question 1**

*To what extent did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators believe bullying in the workplace occurred in their buildings?*

Table 1 data describe the frequency of bullying observations respondents observed over the past twelve months and the frequency of incidents of workplace bullying that respondents observed over their careers as educational administrators.

The study participants chose an indicator (Never, 1-2 times, 3-4 times, 5 or more times) to rank the frequency with which they observed workplace bullying. To analyze the responses of the frequency of observations, frequency and percentage data were utilized. To analyze responses from different types of school administrators, a homogenous subset utilizing the Tukey HSD was conducted.
Table 1

*Frequency of Observations of Bullying in the Workplace*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observations of the last 12 months</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations over their Career</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 68 respondents, 34 or 55.9% observed workplace bullying one or more times over the previous 12 months. Of the 68 respondents, 55 or 80.9% observed workplace bullying one or more times over their careers as educational administrators; 13 or 18.3% of respondents had never observed workplace bullying over their careers.

Table 2 data identifies frequencies and specific locations in which respondents identified workplace bullying within the previous twelve months. Participants were then asked to indicate the locations that workplace bullying occurred along with the frequencies at those locations. The first column of the table indicates which locations the educational administrators observed workplace bullying. The second column of the table reports the number of times the educational administrators observed the occurrence of workplace bullying. The third column of the table cites the number of respondents who reported each of the frequency of occurrences. The fourth column of the table indicates the total occurrences from all of the respondents (ex: Staff Lounge = [1x3] + [4x1]).
Table 2

*Frequency and Location where Respondents Identified Observing Bullying in the Workplace within the Last Twelve Months*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Frequency of Occurrences</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Total Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff Lounge</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallway</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Meetings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Lot</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Meetings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data revealed that educational leaders, the majority of respondents being assistant principals, reported multiple incidences of bullying occurred in the workplace in the following environments (listed according to large frequency to small frequency): during collaborative meetings (i.e., professional learning communities, work groups, committees, etc.), the hallway, during staff meetings, the classroom, cyber (i.e., using cell phones, computers, and other forms of technology), other, the staff lounge and the parking lot. The three main locations in which workplace bullying was observed were collaborative meetings with a frequency of 47+ (18.3%), the hallway with a frequency of 23 (8.5%) and staff meetings with a frequency of 22 (12.7%).

In summary, participants responding to the frequency of observations of workplace bullying were as follows: 38 respondents or 55.9% observed bullying one or more times in the workplace over the previous 12 months, and 55 respondents or 80.9% observed workplace bullying one or more times over their careers.

Although during interviewing participants were not specifically asked if they had the observed bullying in the workplace, Participants one and two alluded to the fact that they had observed bullying in the workplace. Interviewees cited that the most common locations in which they observed workplace bullying occurred in collaborative meetings, staff meetings and hallways.

Research Question 2

How did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators rate their confidence level in identifying bullying in the workplace?

Table 3 presents study participants’ ratings of their confidence levels in identifying workplace bullying. The data were categorized through measures of ratings and frequencies.
Within the study protocol, participants were asked to choose an indicator (No Confidence, Somewhat Confident, Confident, Highly Confident, Extremely Confident) to express their confidence levels in identifying workplace bullying. The responses of the participants and the frequencies (number of participants responded) of the indicators were analyzed through the chosen indicator.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Confidence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Confident</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Confident</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Confident</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 data reveal that 56 respondents or 78.9% ranked their confidence in identifying workplace bullying as confident and highly confident. Six participants (8.4%) reported they had no confidence and were somewhat confident in identifying workplace bullying, while two participants (2.8%) reported high confidence in identifying workplace bullying.

Table 4 reports the educational roles of the respondents (principal, assistant principal, licensed administrator) employing a one-way descriptive statistic including an ANOVA. A one-way ANOVA was utilized in the data analysis to determine whether or not there were any statistically significant differences between the means (averages) of three or more unrelated groups. The sum of squares was also utilized to determine if there were significant differences or variations between the groups. Column one indicates the participant’s administrative role,
column two cites the number of participants who responded to the question, and column three reports the average of the responses.

Table 4

Confidence Level in Identifying Bullying in the Workplace by Administrative Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative Role</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SD Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.480</td>
<td>.58595</td>
<td>.11719</td>
<td>3.2381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.2963</td>
<td>.77533</td>
<td>.14921</td>
<td>2.9896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Administrator</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.0833</td>
<td>.90034</td>
<td>.25990</td>
<td>2.5113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.323</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.662</td>
<td>1.231</td>
<td>.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>32.786</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>.537</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The descriptive data confirms that principals were identified as confident to highly confident in identifying workplace bullying (M = 3.480, SD = .58595), assistant principals were identified as confident in identifying workplace bullying (M = 3.2963, SD = .77533), and licensed administrators were identified as somewhat confident to confident in identifying workplace bullying (M = 3.0833, SD = .90034). The confidence levels in identifying workplace bullying was not significantly different among the three types of educational leaders, F (2, 61) = 1.231, p=.299. The information established that among the three groups of educational administrators, their confidence levels in identifying bullying in the workplace were found to be similar.

In relation to the survey results, Participants 1 and 3 reported they were not oblivious to the fact that workplace bullying was occurring; however, their beliefs were that bullying was not
as significant when a safe, respectful climate and culture was established. Participant 1 stated, “Adult bullying in the workplace is . . . a characteristic of the culture of the work environment that is established, and it is also an individual behavior that is a behavior choice that is made when a staff member is, for whatever reason, not feeling supported or feeling in crisis and not feeling like they have more productive options.” Participant 2 explained, “I think the best strategy is having the relationships with staff that those who are feeling bullied or feeling intimidated are willing and able to come talk to me so that we can make a plan.” Participant 2 also stated, “To be honest I don’t feel that I’ve had to address it a lot . . .” Within their roles the interviewees stated they had been primarily assisting staff in understanding the function behind negative behaviors and understanding multiple perspectives to develop a common resolution.

In summary, principals’ responses identified that they were more confident than responding assistant principals and licensed administrators; however, the differences between the three respondent groups were not significantly different. Of the respondents, 56 (78.9%) ranked their confidence levels either average or highly confident in identifying workplace bullying; there was no significant difference between the principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators on their confidence in identifying workplace bullying.

**Research Question 3**

*What strategies do Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators utilize while addressing bullying in the workplace?*

Table 5 presents the strategies the four study participants who provided follow-up interviews implemented to address bullying in the workplace. Representation from all educational administrator levels were included in the sample: two principals, one assistant principal, and one licensed administrator. The table provides the participants’ roles in their
school districts, the sizes of the districts in which they worked and a summary of their responses to the interview question.

Table 5

*Strategies Utilized to Address Bullying in the Workplace*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>District Size</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Clarifying the school’s mission, vision, and common commitments (Commitments) statements about treating each other with respect, accepting our similarities and differences Being clear about expected behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Listening to the staff Understanding the issue from the recipient’s perspective Understanding the function behind the behaviors Assisting the staff member to see that the behavior exhibited is perceived by others differently than their intentions Assisting staff to clarify personal boundaries around what is appropriate behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Create a supportive environment to address concerns Listen and understand their perspective Listen to figure out the root of the problem Address the root Bring people together for mediation Address it based on how it fits into the norms, expectations, and culture of the building Assist people in identifying their own tone, demeanor, and body language or how they are perceiving the situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Boundary setting Be direct with the ‘bully’—specifically with the behaviors that are inappropriate Report the bullying behaviors to the district Refrain from becoming emotional about the situation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: P = Principal, AP = Assistant Principal, LA = Licensed Administrator

Participant 1 focused on addressing bullying in the workplace through the creation of a positive climate and culture within the educational environment. The participant stated, “The strategy that I would long term, big picture try to create a positive work environment is to make sure you are hiring the best possible people you can.” The participant also encouraged a strong, diverse staff in order to maintain a collaborative approach with one another. The participant was
quoted, “You have a teacher induction model that is supportive of the staff member and also acknowledges or recognizes their individual strengths and emphasizes their capacity and their skills in the area of collaboration with colleagues.”

Participant 2 expressed a lack of experience with addressing bullying in the workplace; however, the participant offered, “I think it is just a matter of helping the staff person see how their behavior is perceived by the other person . . . also trying to understand what they are trying to get out of it…more of a functional behavior approach . . .” Throughout the interview, the participant focused on having conversations with the involved parties to assist one another to understand all sides of the “issue.”

Participant 3 stated, “I don’t believe we come from a place where we have adult bullying, but I am also not naive to the fact that it’s not happening.” The interviewee also indicated, like the second participant, not having had large quantities of hands-on experience with addressing workplace bullying. Participant 3 stated that relationships are important, . . . authentic trust that is established so that people feel comfortable having different opinions, having their voice heard, having a supportive environment that they can go to share what they are feeling.” In a manner similar to Participant 1, Participant 3 offered that with the creation of a positive climate and culture, positive relationships may be built, trust formed, and collaboration developed.

The fourth participant stated boundary setting is a strategy utilized to address workplace bullying. The interviewee stated, “Be direct about what you do not like about his/her behavior and let him/her know that if he/she continues you will report him/her. Try not to get emotional when you are talking to a bully because he/she will likely use this against you.” Direct communication is a strategy that Participants 1 and 3 concluded were successful in addressing workplace bullying.
In summary, all participants concluded that bullying behaviors should be addressed directly to sustain the, “. . . integrity of that safe workplace, safe culture in the workplace . . .” (Participant 3). Participants 1, 2, and 3 reported that maintaining a safe, respectful culture and climate and reviewing the commitments with all staff were imperatives when establishing and maintaining clear expectations. The four interview participants explained the importance of communicating effectively, listening to staff, and investigating situations to view multiple perspectives from the parties involved which may then lead to further discussion with the parties in order to develop a resolution.

**Research Question 4**

`To what extent did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators identify their interest in receiving training on identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace?`  

Within the study protocol, participants were asked to choose an indicator (Not Interested, Somewhat Interested, Interested, Highly Interested, Extremely Interested) to express their interests in receiving training regarding identifying and addressing workplace bullying.

Table 6 provides a summary of the participants’ interests in receiving additional training on identifying and addressing workplace bullying. A one-way ANOVA was utilized in the data analysis to determine whether or not there were any statistically significant differences among the means (averages) of three or more unrelated groups. The sum of squares was also utilized to determine if there were significant differences or variation among the groups.
Table 6

Respondents’ Interest to Receive Training on Identifying and Addressing Bullying in the Workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Interested</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Interested</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Interested</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Interested</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.935</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.645</td>
<td>1.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>41.815</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43.750</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The mean difference is significant at the .0.05 level

The data indicate that 58 or 81.7% of the participants indicated interest on some level in receiving additional training regarding identifying and addressing workplace bullying. In addition, 52 (73.3%) of the participants indicated they were either somewhat interested or interested, which confirmed a strong level of interest in receiving additional training. There was no significant differences between the three types of educational leaders, F (3, 60) = .925, p=.434 on their interests in receiving training on identifying workplace bullying.

During the follow-up interviews, participants were asked to identify professional development topics that would be relevant and/or related to successfully identifying and addressing workplace bullying. Participant 1 cited additional training on identifying characteristics of which employers should be aware during the hiring process. Participant 1 stated that obtaining additional training on creating a “mission, vision, and collective commitments that would be considered inclusive and that would honor the diversity among the
individuals within the staff and reinforce how important it is to collaborate in a healthy, productive, and professional way,” would be of assistance in performing his/her role as an educational leader.

Participant 2 reported that he/she would have high interest in receiving more training in workplace bullying. The interviewee expressed an interest in receiving “... training for staff or training for administrators to provide training for staff around how to identify what is appropriate collegial behavior or not.” “Helping people clarify personal boundaries around what is appropriate for a colleague to maybe persuade us of something versus when it feels like we are being manipulated in a way that is inappropriate.”

Consistent with Participant 1, Participant 3 expressed the desire to attend training on how to create a positive culture in the workplace. Participant 3 commented, “I don’t think there has ever been workshops out there that talk about how to create culture in the workplace.” Participants 1 and 3 explained as an educational organization, the students’ social-emotional, academic, and physical well-being are always addressed, however, those areas are lacking in the adult world. Participant 3 stated that his/her goal is to create a climate and culture, “Where we learn to work through the struggles that come with education and the good and the bad throughout the course of the year. And do that cooperatively.”

Participant 4 indicated that no additional training was necessary. When asked, the participant responded, “None.”

In summary, three of four of the interview respondents expressed an interest in further training in identifying and addressing workplace bullying. Topics of interest stated by participants during their interviews included: strategies to build a strong, positive climate and
culture, observable/measurable characteristics to look for when hiring new staff, and how to better address the overall well-being of our adult population.

**Research Question 5**

*How many Minnesota school principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators have received training on bullying in the workplace?*

Research Question 5 data were gathered through two survey questions: the hours of training participants’ received on identifying and addressing workplace bullying and the participants perceived need to receive additional training.

According to the study protocol, one of the survey questions asked participants to choose an indicator (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16+) to express the total number of hours of training they had already received on identifying and addressing workplace bullying.

Table 7 data illustrate the frequencies and percentages with which the participants responded about the numbers of hours of training they previously received on identifying and addressing workplace bullying.

**Table 7**

*Total Hours of Training Previously Received Regarding Identifying and Addressing Bullying in the Workplace*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 data indicate that 57 (80.3%) respondents previously received 0-5 hours of training regarding identifying and addressing workplace bullying.

According to the study protocol, one question asked participants to choose one of the
following indicators to express their perceived needs to receive training regarding identifying and addressing workplace bullying: Not Needed, Somewhat Needed, Needed, Highly Needed, Extremely Needed.

Table 8 data illustrate the frequencies and percentages with which participants expressed their perceived need to receive training on identifying and addressing workplace bullying.

Table 8

*Respondents’ Perceived Need to Receive Training on Identifying & Addressing Bullying in the Workplace*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Needed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Needed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Needed</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Needed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 data reveal that 56 (85.9%) respondents indicated that additional training on identifying and addressing workplace bullying was needed. Participants 1, 2, and 3 also expressed this sentiment during their interviews. Eight (11.3%) respondents expressed that no additional training was needed, including Participant 4 interviewee.

Participant 4 commented that staff are highly involved with bullying prevention training, positive behavior interventions and supports for/with students. The training staff members had attended provide them with strategies to utilize with students; therefore, some generalization towards adults in the workplace may apply. Participant 4 stated no specific training had occurred for staff to assist them in building a repertoire of strategies for coping with conflict, addressing non-preferred behaviors from colleagues or creating a culture of a positive and safe working environment.
Participants 2 and 3 expressed that they have never experienced or heard of any professional development opportunities tailored to educational leaders in the area of workplace bullying. The most similar topic that Participant 3 could identify was mental health training. Participant 4 attended no trainings on workplace bullying.

In summary, 80.3% of study participants reported they had received only 0-5 hours of training regarding identifying and addressing workplace bullying. Respondents who identified a need or high need for training on workplace bullying totaled 20 (28.1%) of the sample group. The participants interviewed also indicated they had never attended or heard of professional development opportunities for educational leaders or staff on how to specifically identify or address workplace bullying.

**Research Question 6**

*How do the answers to Questions 1-5 differ based on demographic information such as years of experience as educational leaders, years of experience in their current buildings, school staff sizes, geographic locations of schools and gender?*

The survey was designed by the researcher to examine the six study questions in relationship to five types of demographic information. Participants’ demographic information included the sizes of their current districts, the numbers of years as educational administrators, the numbers of years as school administrators in their current buildings, their current educational setting levels (i.e., elementary school, middle school, high school, other), their current roles as educational administrators (i.e., principal, assistant principal, licensed administrator), their identified gender and the staff memberships (population) in their current settings.

**Demographics.** Table 9 data describes the sizes of the respondents’ districts, how many total years’ experience as administrators, how many years as administrators within their current
buildings, the buildings’ organizational levels (i.e., elementary school, middle school, high school or other), participants’ roles as educational administrators (i.e., principal, assistant principal or licensed administrator), staff membership and their identified gender. For the purpose of the study, rural areas were considered to have school district populations below 10,000, suburban areas populations between 10,000-100,000 and urban areas have populations of at/exceeding 100,000. Table 10 data describes demographic information related to the participants responding to the follow-up interview.
Table 9

Demographics: Participants from the Online Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of District</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Years as Administrator</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 or more</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Years as Administrator in Current Building</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 or more</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Level as an Administrator</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Administrator</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Staff Membership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-75</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-100</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101+</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identified Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 data illustrates the following information:

- Respondents were comprised of 27 principals (39.7%), 28 assistant principals (39.4%), and 13 licensed administrators (19.1%).
- Respondents were comprised of 31 (45.6%) identified as being elementary school administrators, 18 (26.5%) middle school administrators, 16 (23.5%) high school administrators and 5 (7.4%) other administrators.

- Respondents were comprised of 35 males (49.3%) and 32 females (45.1%).

- Nearly three-quarters of the respondents (74.6%; n = 71) reported having 0-5 years of experience as a licensed school administrator, while 17 or 23.9% of respondents cited experience as greater than six years.

- Respondents’ district types included 45 suburban districts, 10 urban school districts and 7 rural school districts.

- Respondents’ staff membership included 9 (12.7%) with 0-50 staff members; 59 (83.1%) schools with staff sizes of 51-100+ and 50 schools with staff sizes of 76-100 (36.6%).

Table 10

Demographics: Respondents who Participated in the Follow-up Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>District Size</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Male/Female</th>
<th>Total Years as Administrator</th>
<th>Years in Current Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P = Principal, AP = Assistant Principal, LA = Licensed Administrator

In summary, the majority of the participants were either male or female elementary school principals or assistant principals employed by suburban school districts who had 0-5 years of administrative experience during their career, 0-5 years of administrative experience in their current building and were employed in suburban school districts supervising over 101 staff members.
Statistically non-significant differences. Findings related to the demographic of participants’ administrative levels revealed that there were no statistically significant differences with other variables.

Statistically significant differences. Findings related to the demographic of district size revealed a statistically significant difference between district size and the training hours participants previously received on identifying and addressing workplace bullying (rural administrators received more).

Findings related to the demographic of total staff membership revealed that statistically significant differences existed among the total staff membership (school size) and the hours of previous training that was received on identifying and addressing workplace bullying (school administrators with a staff membership between 51-75 received more training).

Findings related to the demographic of hours of training that participants previously received related to identifying and addressing workplace bullying revealed statistically significant differences between the identified genders; male participants were more confident than were female respondents in identifying workplace bullying.

Findings related to the demographic of total years as an educational administrator revealed statistically significant differences between the size of the district and the hours of training for identifying and addressing workplace bullying participants previously received. Respondents with 11-15 years of experience had received the most training.

Summary

Data from Minnesota licensed principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators survey respondents who served at the elementary school, middle school and high school levels, and included representatives from eight rural, suburban and urban school districts, were analyzed
to identify the number of hours of training they had received, the need and for interest in future training and the participants’ levels of confidence regarding identifying workplace bullying and possible strategies utilized to address workplace bullying.

The data revealed that educational leaders identified at least one observation of bullying in the workplace in the following environments: the staff lounge, the classroom, the hallway, during staff meetings, in the parking lot, during collaborative meetings (i.e., professional learning communities, work groups, committees and more), cyber (i.e., using cell phones, computers, and other forms of technology) among other locations identified by the respondents.

The three primary environments in which workplace bullying was observed were: collaborative meetings, in the hallways and staff meetings.

The data illustrate that principals were identified as being confident to highly confident in identifying workplace bullying, assistant principals were identified as being confident in identifying workplace bullying and licensed administrators were identified as being somewhat confident to confident in identifying workplace bullying. Through follow-up interviews, Participants 1 and 3 observed that bullying was not as observable when the environment, climate and culture were safe and respectful.

The four interview respondents who participated in the follow-up interviews concluded that the strategies they has utilized to address bullying between adults included: maintaining a safe, respectful climate and culture and reviewing the staff’s commitments to guide universal expectations for all, being an effective communicator, listening to others, and performing an investigation to secure multiple viewpoints of an alleged situation prior to attempting to resolve the issue.
The majority of the study’s participants (80.3%) indicated they had received 0-5 hours of training related to identifying and addressing workplace bullying. The majority of the study’s participants (74.6%) also cited that additional training on the topic workplace bullying was ‘somewhat needed’ to ‘needed’. Through follow-up interviews, participants commented that although they had been involved in identifying and addressing student-to-student bullying, their strategies to assist adults to cope with conflict, address non-preferred behaviors from colleagues and create a safe and respectful environment were lacking.

Chapter V summarizes the findings, compares findings to the review of the literature and presents conclusions on suggested future training topics in order to support school administrators in identifying and addressing workplace bullying.
Chapter V: Discussion

Introduction

There are several professional journals that indicate workplace bullying has been observed in different types of organizations and among their employees including higher educators, nurses, restaurant workers, electricians, psychologists, industrial workers and social workers (Rex-Lear et al., 2012). While there is ample research about training for educators regarding bullying among school-aged students, there is not comparable research to illustrate that training has been provided to educators on combating bullying among adults in the workplace.

The purpose of the study was to examine Minnesota principals’, assistant principals’, and licensed administrators’ knowledge regarding workplace bullying, ascertain the extent of their training on identifying and addressing workplace bullying and determine whether or not there was a need for additional training on the topic of workplace bullying.

The results of the study are intended to assist university educational administration professors, school district administrators and leaders of other educational organizations in planning and disseminating future training and development programs for educational administrators on identifying bullying behaviors and resolving bullying among staff members.

Chapter V summarizes the findings of the study. The data were analyzed and findings organized to match each research question. This study was driven by the following questions:

1. To what extent did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators believe bullying in the workplace occurred in their buildings?
2. How did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators rate their confidence level in identifying bullying in the workplace?
3. What strategies do Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators utilize while addressing bullying in the workplace?

4. To what extent did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators identify their interest in receiving training on identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace?

5. How many Minnesota school principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators have received training on bullying in the workplace?

6. How do the answers to Questions 1-5 differ based on demographic information such as years of experience as an educational leader, years of experience within their current building, school staff size, geographic location of school, and their gender?

Of the identified 139 potential study participants, 89 completed the survey. Of those 89 participants, there were 18 participants who failed to answer a number of the survey questions. To obtain a more accurate reflection of the data, those 18 participants were removed from the sample group, resulting in a total of 71 respondents or a response rate of 51.1%. Educational Administrators who elected to participate in the study were asked to complete an online survey, “Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?”

The Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to analyze the data obtained from the online survey. In analyzing the research questions, frequency and percentages were computed along with descriptive ANOVA tests.
Discussion

Each research question is discussed according to the related literature and the study’s findings. Along with each research question, the researcher’s feedback and possible outcomes of the study are provided.

Research Question 1

*To what extent did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators believe bullying in the workplace occurred in their buildings?*

Workplace bullying has been described as persistent exposure to negative and aggressive behaviors which would encompass psychological, verbal, or physical behaviors executed by an individual or a group (Cemaloglu, 2011; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2013). Workplace bullying may occur in many forms including open verbal or physical attacks (e.g., name calling, hitting, pushing), indirect and subtle acts of aggression (e.g., gossiping, excluding from peer group), cyber (e.g., email, text messages, social media), and could be both intentional and unintentional (Mathisen et al., 2012; Rex-Lear et al., 2012).

Workplace bullying may include such behaviors as intimidation, insults, violence, belittling, excessive monitoring of an employee’s work, receiving meaningless tasks, not providing credit when earned and rumor spreading (Samnani & Singh, 2014). The data from the online survey revealed that 46 (64.78%) of the participants had observed bullying in the workplace at least once over their career; 34 (47.89%) had experienced observing bullying in the workplace over the previous 12 months.

The participants who responded to the follow-up interview were not directly asked about how frequently they had observed workplace bullying or which locations that observable bullying had occurred, however, Participants 2, 3, and 4 explained that they had not directly
identified or addressed behaviors from staff that they would consider to be workplace bullying.

As data were further analyzed from those who were involved in follow-up interviews, the interviewees communicated that although they had not directly witnessed bullying between staff members, they were aware that it was occurring in their buildings. As an educational administrator, it is recognized that conflicts arise between staff members; however, the definition of conflict is much different than bullying. In that regard, educational administrators are encouraged to support staff members in addressing staff-to-staff conflicts, but their responsibilities in addressing workplace bullying requires more affirmative actions than in dealing with mere conflicts.

Carbo (2009) and Jenkins (2011) explained that there was no agreed upon definition of bullying, though, there is widespread agreement on several characteristics that bullying includes such as physical, verbal, and psychological attack or intimidation. The researcher concluded from study data that educational administrators are exposed to bullying in the workplace almost yearly and will have little choice but to learn to identify and address bullying behaviors between staff members at some point in their careers.

**Research Question 2**

*How did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators rate their confidence level in identifying bullying in the workplace?*

Jenkins (2011) reported that most workplace bullying emerges from an escalation of conflicts where the bully targets an individual or group of individuals less powerful than themselves. “Workplace bullying ranges from behaviors that are fairly subtle to those that are explicit and identifiable” (Samnani, 2012, p. 120). Bullying may influence the manner in which an organization functions and the employees interact and form relationships with one another.
The online survey data indicated that 56 (78.9%) of the participants ranked their confidence level as either average confidence or highly confident in identifying workplace bullying. Six participants (8.4%) ranked themselves as having either no confidence or low confidence, while two participants (2.8%) ranked themselves as having extremely high confidence in identifying workplace bullying. The confidence level in identifying workplace bullying was not significantly different among the three types of educational leaders; however, when the data were disaggregated, principals and assistant principals were found to have ranked themselves more confidently than the licensed administrators. In relation to the interview responses, Participants 1 and 3 commented that they were not oblivious to workplace bullying occurring; however, their belief was that bullying was not as significant when a safe, respectful climate and culture were established in their schools.

The researcher could infer from the survey results and through the interviews that most school administrators, principals and assistant principals, felt more confident in identifying workplace bullying than would deans or interns in their schools. Principals and assistant principals were more likely to address reported incidents of workplace bullying between staff members than were other licensed administrators, providing them with more experiences in resolving such issues with staff members. As a result of numerous participants observing bullying behaviors one to four times during their careers, the data would suggest they were able to identify bullying behaviors more effectively than were less experienced educational administrators.

There were significant differences identified by the data between participants who identified themselves as either male or female and their confidence levels in identifying workplace bullying. Male educational administrators were found to be more confident in
identifying workplace bullying than were their female colleagues. In relation to the literature review, the researcher assumed that female educational administrators may seek to avoid workplace conflict rather than identifying and addressing conflicts between staff members. Dellasega (2009) claimed that women use relational aggression, a type of bullying that is covert or indirect which may stem from females being more biologically prone to respond to stress differently than males. More often than men, women want to form a relationship with coworkers which may increase their bullying behaviors or the number of times they are targeted for bullying (Dellasega, 2009). The researcher could infer that female educational administrators focus more significantly than males on forming relationships with others, and those relationships may influence their levels of confidence or ability to identify incidents of workplace bullying.

Research Question 3

What strategies do Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators utilize while addressing bullying in the workplace?

Organizational leaders may devote much of their time to resolving employee conflicts (Iglesias & Vallejo, 2012). Conflict resolution strategies range from simple, conventional methods of addressing conflict to more complex methods where organizational leaders are led to develop and implement policies and procedures (Beirne & Hunter, 2013). The outcome of the type of conflict resolution method practiced by organizational leaders is dependent on the type of leadership exhibited within the organization (Beale & Hoel, 2011). The study concluded that each educational administrator employed their own strategies which depended on individual situations. Some of those strategies included communication of the school’s mission/vision/commitments, communication of universal expectations regarding appropriate conduct, listening to staff and their concerns, assisting staff to establish boundaries with others or
communicate clearly to colleagues about their own expectations, and addressing the root of the problem.

These findings were directly correlated to the literature which stated, in part, that there is no one strategy to resolve bullying in the workplace, and it may require that multiple strategies convened are from different perspectives. Research by Beirne and Hunter (2013) suggested that effective leaders work diligently to create a climate that is motivated to take action against bullying to increase overall employee performance. The principle concept communicated during the four participants interviews was that, when the educational administrator is able to establish a safe and respectful climate and culture for staff, the incidents of workplace bullying decrease.

The four interviewees inferred that bullying behaviors should be addressed directly to sustain the “integrity of that safe workplace, safe culture in the workplace” (Participant 3). Participants 1, 2, and 3 reported that maintaining the culture, climate, and commitments are important to establishing clear expectations for all staff members. The four interviewees also explained the importance of communication, listening to staff members and investigating the situation to formulate an overview of the multiple perspectives that may exist and need to be discussed directly with staff in order to resolve the situation. These perspectives led the researcher to believe that school administrators may need to secure greater information on how to create a safe climate and culture where staff members are able to develop commitments and clear expectations on appropriate behaviors among colleagues.

Proactive workplace behavior can be increased by hiring employees who portray personality characteristics that are counter to workplace improprieties including workplace bullying (Bjørkelo, 2013). When staff members are provided with the tools to stand-up for themselves, establish common commitments regarding appropriate behavior and secure support
from their school’s administration, there is a trust that forms, and the climate and culture of the organization shifts from negative to positive. Changing an organization’s climate and culture is never a quick process. It requires time and strategic planning, though the benefits of a healthy working environment are significant.

**Research Question 4**

*To what extent did Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators identify their interest in receiving training on identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace?*

In educational organizations, addressing bullying-type behaviors is typically focusing on the safety and wellbeing of students, not staff. Resolution strategies to address bullying behaviors range from simple, conventional methods of conflict resolution to more complex methods where organizational leaders find themselves required to develop and implement policies and procedures (Beirne & Hunter, 2013). Beirne and Hunter (2013) suggested that effective leaders work diligently to create a climate that is motivated to take action against bullying to increase overall employee performance.

The study’s survey data revealed that principals expressed they were interested in receiving additional training on identifying and addressing workplace bullying and assistant principals and licensed administrators were identified to being somewhat interested in receiving additional training on identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace.

The follow-up interviews requested that participants identify different relevant professional development topics related to successfully and confidently identify and address workplace bullying. Participant 1 stated he/she would like additional training on how to identify characteristics employers should look for during the hiring process. Participant 1 also mentioned
identified the value of additional training on strategies to create a “mission, vision, and collective commitments that would be considered inclusive and that would honor the diversity among the individuals within the staff and reinforce how important it is to collaborate in a healthy, productive, and professional way.”

Participant 3 expressed an interest to attend training on how to create culture in the workplace directly correlated with Participant 1; he/she explained that as an educational organization, the students’ social-emotional, academic, and physical well-being was always addressed; however, those focuses were believed to be lacking in the adult world. Participant 2 focused on desiring further professional development for both administrators and staff on boundary setting, collaboratively defining the expectations of appropriate collegial behavior and assisting staff in defining appropriate personal boundaries. Participant 4 did not express the necessity of any additional training.

The researcher concluded that school administrators prefer additional training on establishing a positive climate and culture, one that provides the social-emotional, academic, and physical well-being of students but allows staff members to establish personal boundaries with colleagues. The results also concluded that the majority of respondents would be interested in training on identifying and addressing workplace bullying along with establishing a safe and respectful climate and culture for all staff members.

**Research Question 5**

*How many Minnesota school principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators have received training on bullying in the workplace?*

In the online survey, Research Question 5 was answered through data gathered from two different questions: one related to the number of hours of training respondents had received on
identifying and addressing workplace bullying and one related to the respondents’ need to receive additional training. This question was also addressed through follow-up interviews.

Related literature was limited on this issue. Nonetheless, it may be assumed that many of the participants had received at least limited training regarding conflict resolution. Many of the anti-bullying programs directed toward students identify conflict resolution strategies and interventions. Conflict resolution education has been a popular strategy among students and has increasingly been a strategy employed to address and prevent adult conflicts (Lincoln, 2001). Workshops have been conducted throughout the United States where seasoned negotiators, educators, social workers, and legal experts have been convened to provide meaningful training on resolving conflicts in nonviolent ways (Lincoln, 2001).

Interviewees expressed that they had attended many professional development programs that treated the concept of zero tolerance of student bullying. The researcher concluded that student safety is a school’s highest priority, and that strategies to resolve conflict may be utilized with both students and staff; however, it is perceived that there is a lack of training on strategies to establish a positive climate and culture for adults in the workplace.

Study participants divulged that 80.3% had received 0-5 hours of training related to identifying and addressing workplace bullying. The majority, 70.6%, also expressed that additional training on the topic was needed by the educational leaders.

Participants 1, 2, and 3 expressed additional training on identifying and addressing workplace bullying was needed. The interviewees cited that they had been significantly involved in training regarding the identification and strategies to address bullying of students, but they had not received training on effective strategies to address non-preferred behaviors by adults.

The study’s data revealed that there were significant differences between the hours of
training that participants had received and their school district types, staff memberships, and the years they had been employed in their educational administrative positions. The researcher concluded that, because the majority of study participants were employed by suburban school districts with staff memberships of 76-100+ those school districts may have more resources at their disposal to provide to staff members. The majority of the participants (47) reported having had 0-10 years of administrative experience, which caused the researcher to conclude their administrators may have had the training and experiences required to address workplace bullying when compared to the more experienced participants (23) who had 11+ years of experience.

In conclusion, the researcher discovered that the majority of the participants had never attended professional development sessions related to workplace bullying. Indeed, the participants expressed belief that professional development on identifying and addressing workplace bullying was necessary. The researcher suggests the design of staff development programs that include conflict resolution strategies for both adults and students in which strategies and interventions are also incorporated to assist educational administrators, staff, students, families, and other stakeholders to create a safe, bully-free, respectful learning and working environment for both students and staff members.

Research Question 6

How did the answers to Questions 1-5 differ based on demographic information such as years of experience as an educational leader, years of experience within their current building, school staff size, geographic location of school, and their gender?

Resolution strategies range from simple, conventional methods of addressing conflict to more complex methods where organizational leaders are lead to develop and implement policies and procedures (Beirne & Hunter, 2013). “Considering the amount of time individuals invest in
working environments, it is unsettling to think that many individuals are experiencing detrimental health outcomes as a direct consequence of victimization at work” (Rex-Lear et al., 2012). Devonish (2013) explained that “workplace bullying is a form of social stressor that influences the psychosocial work environment in ways that can be seen as harmful and devastating for both employees and the organization itself as any other form of job stressor” (p. 631). The results of bullying behaviors for the target can include substantial psychological trauma and physical illness (Hutchinson & Hurley, 2013).

Workplace bullying has been observed in both men and women; however, O’Farrell and Nordstrom (2013) explained that in terms of “perpetrators of bullying, bullies tend to be males with aggressive behavior patterns who typically occupy supervisory positions” (p. 7). Research has revealed that men express their aggression through physical means where women express it through indirect methods (Dellasega, 2009). The study identified that the majority of the respondents consisted of male elementary school assistant principals employed by suburban school districts. In the literature review, researchers Salin and Hoel (2013) discovered that, “women are more often bullied by colleagues than men and men more often by supervisors and line-managers” (p. 237). Iglesias and Vallejo (2012) noted that women would primarily utilize compromising and accommodating (strategies for resolving conflict) while men were more prone to utilize competing and forcing. The researcher concluded that, because the majority of the current study’s participants were males in administrative/superior roles, there were significant differences between the approaches males employed in the identification of bullying behaviors and their female colleagues.

The majority of respondents stated they had 0-5 years of administrative experience and 0-5 years of administrative experience in their current buildings which involved, on average, the
supervision of 101 or more staff members. Lachman (2015) stated that when addressing conflicts, higher-level administrators should be involved in the resolution of bullying activities because perpetrators may not respond to someone at a lower organizational level.

In summary, there were significant differences noted in the number of hours received on identifying and addressing workplace bullying and the type of school district, the years employed as an educational administrator and staff membership size. There was also a significant difference between the participants’ gender and their confidence level in identifying workplace bullying.

**Conclusions**

The purpose of the study was to determine if quality professional development or training had been provided to select Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators in eight school districts related to identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace and the effectiveness of such training. Educational administration leadership is complex and multifaceted.

Tables 7 and 8 of the study indicated that principals identified themselves as interested in receiving additional training on identifying and addressing workplace bullying ($M = 2.6400, SD = .86023$), while assistant principals and licensed administrators were expressed they were somewhat interested in receiving additional training on identifying and addressing workplace bullying ($M = 2.2963, SD = .91209$ & $M = 2.3333, SD = .49237$). For follow-up interviews, respondents revealed that professional development related to creating a positive climate and culture with universal commitments and expectations that define appropriate behavior between colleagues was imperative when there was a desire to decrease workplace bullying.
“Considering the amount of time individuals invest in working environments, it is unsettling to think that many individuals are experiencing detrimental health outcomes as a direct consequence of victimization at work” (Rex-Lear et al., 2012, p.22). Devonish (2013) explained that “workplace bullying is a form of social stressor that influences the psychosocial work environment in ways that can be seen as harmful and devastating for both employees and the organization itself as any other form of job stressor” (p. 631). Multiple researchers concluded that a positive school (work) climate leads to reduced aggression and violence, reduced bullying, improved self-esteem, his/her and improved academic achievement due to the teacher’s dedication and ability to be an effective teacher (Powell et al., 2014).

Limitations

According to Roberts (2010), limitations are aspects of the study that negatively affect results or the ability to generalize outcomes in which the researcher has no control. The limitations that occurred in the study include:

- Results were limited to the self-reported perceptions of the on participants’ based on their knowledge and understanding of identifying and addressing workplace bullying.

- Results were based on a convenience sample of respondents and districts and may not be generalizable to all school districts in the state of Minnesota.

- Only a limited number of participants were willing to engage in follow-up interviews on workplace bullying.

- Research was limited to the literature that was reviewed and the scope of the topic.

Recommendations for Further Research

Several topics for further research have been identified from the findings of the research study. The following research topics may be considered for additional study:
1. It is recommended a study be conducted to examine the educational practices of P-21 educational organizations that are currently being implemented to ensure workplace bullying is being addressed within the educational organization.

2. It is recommended a study be conducted to examine the higher-education materials in the state of Minnesota and curriculum to provide aspiring school administrators strategies for preventing, identifying and addressing adult workplace bullying within educational leadership and administration preparatory coursework.

3. It is recommended a study be conducted to assure educational policies for P-21 educational organizations in the state of Minnesota define a clear process and procedure for administrators and staff to utilize to identify and address workplace bullying.

4. It is recommended a study be conducted to identify successful implementation models related to the creation of a healthy, positive and safe climate and culture to then replicate those characteristics into educational settings.

**Recommendations for Practice**

The following recommendations are tendered to school district and university leaders who are committed to preparing current or future educators on how identifying and addressing workplace bullying.

1. It is recommended that educational leaders focus their efforts on ensuring a safe and welcoming place for staff members to work and educate students.

2. It is recommended that university leaders and professors of education develop training modules to identify and address workplace bullying.
3. It is recommended that educational leaders identify and receive training on specific interventions that have been determined to decrease or eliminate adult workplace bullying.

4. It is recommended that educational leaders provide coaching for school-level administrators methods for identifying and addressing conflicts among adults.

5. It is recommended that educational leaders review policies and procedures in school districts to ascertain whether or not they provide an effective deterrent against workplace bullying.

6. It is recommended that educational leaders survey staff members to determine if workplace bullying is occurring.
References


Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Emily Rustman
Address: 
Email: emily.rustman@gmail.com

Project Title: Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals and assistant principals confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?
Advisor: Dr. John Elfer

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: APPROVED

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:
- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (e.g., research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).
- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.
- Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.
- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.
- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (e.g., research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-3290 or email ri@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Institutional Official:

_____________________
Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
Interim Associate Provost for Research
Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

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<td>Exempt Review</td>
<td>1/17/2017</td>
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<td>2nd Year Approval Date:</td>
<td>3rd Year Approval Date:</td>
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<td>1st Year Expiration Date: 1/11/2018</td>
<td>2nd Year Expiration Date:</td>
<td>3rd Year Expiration Date:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Continuing Review / Final Report

Principal Investigator: Emily Rustman

Project Title: Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals and assistant principals confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

If the project has been completed (no longer collecting data on human subjects) please indicate your project's status under Final Report and complete questions 1 through 5. If you have completed collecting data on human subjects but continue to analyze the data, as long as no new data is being obtained, your project would be considered completed.

If the project has not been completed (you are collecting data on human subjects) please indicate the status of your project under Continuing Review/Project Continuation and answer questions 1 through 5.

Final Report

The Project has been completed.
Project has not and will not be conducted. Explain:

Continuing Review/Project Continuation

Data collection continues with enrolled participants.
Participant recruitment continues following approved IRB protocol.

Have any changes been made to your research project (changes in subject recruitment, informed consent documents, design, methodology, procedures, etc.) since it was approved by the IRB?

No
Yes, explain:

Final Report and Continuing Review/Project Continuation, please answer the following:

1. How many participants have participated in your study _______________

2. Have any adverse events (complaints, unexpected reactions, discomfort, or problems) occurred during this research project?

   No
   Yes, explain:

3. Have any participants withdrawn from the research, either voluntarily or at the researcher's request?

   No
   Yes, explain:

4. Has any new information been identified that may affect the willingness of subjects to participate in this research project?

   No
   Yes, explain:

5. Have any changes been made to your research project (changes in subject recruitment, informed consent documents, design, methodology, and procedures, etc.) since it was approved by the IRB?

   No
   Yes, explain:

Principal Investigator's Signature ___________________ Date _______________

SCSU IRB#: 1683 - 2079
Appendix B: Request Letter to Participants

Dear Colleague:

My name is Emily Rustman. I am a special education supervisor with the Anoka-Hennepin School District. While in the Anoka-Hennepin School District, I have primarily supervised the 3-5 year old Early Childhood Special Education program, K-21 Speech-language pathologists, and elementary buildings and the students and staff within that program and schools. In addition to my administrative duties, I am a doctoral candidate in St. Cloud State University’s Educational Administration and Leadership Doctoral Program and am in the process of conducting my dissertation research.

I am researching a topic that has been an eye-opener in my career - bullying among adults in the workplace. My dissertation topic is Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

As esteemed colleagues, I am asking for your assistance with my study by participating in an online survey. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The information is anonymous and no personally identifying information will be collected. You are free to withdraw from the survey at any time. The data that your responses will provide are invaluable. A copy of the study will be provided to each of the school districts participating in the study. The link to the survey is below.

Thank you so much for your assistance.

Yours in education,

Emily MK. Rustman
St. Cloud State Doctoral Candidate
Appendix C: Survey

Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study was to determine if quality professional development or training had been provided to Minnesota principals and assistant principals related to identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace and the effectiveness of such training. The study was designed to examine Minnesota principals', assistant principals', and deans who obtain an administrative license knowledge regarding workplace bullying and determine whether or not there was a need for additional training on the topic of bullying in the workplace. The results of the study are intended to assist universities, school districts, and educational leadership organizations in planning and disseminating future training and development programs for principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators on the identification of bullying behaviors and in resolving bullying among staff members.

Informed Consent for Participation in this Study
THE INFORMATION ON THIS PAGE IS REQUIRED TO INFORM YOU OF THE BACKGROUND, POTENTIAL RISKS, AND THE VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THIS SURVEY. BY CLICKING ON "NEXT" AND ANSWERING THE SURVEY QUESTIONS, YOU ARE AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND PURPOSE
The purpose of this study was to determine if quality professional development or training had been provided to Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators related to identifying and addressing bullying in the workplace and the effectiveness of such training. The study was designed to examine Minnesota principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators knowledge regarding workplace bullying and determine whether or not there was a need for additional training on the topic of bullying in the workplace. The results of the study are intended to assist universities, school districts, and educational leadership organizations in planning and disseminating future training and development programs for principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators on the identification of bullying behaviors and in resolving bullying among staff members.

PROCEDURES
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an anonymous survey using the survey tool Survey Monkey. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your survey information will be analyzed as an aggregate group. Date will be presented in aggregate form (add hyperlink to define aggregate form) or with no more than one or two descriptors presented together. Some of the data will be analyzed based on the various demographic information (how many years as a principal, assistant principal, or licensed administrator, how many years in current building, gender, size of current building, etc.). If you have questions on the procedures of the survey, contact the researcher, Emily Rastman, emily.rastman@gmail.com or (212) 951-5986.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks associated with your participation in this study.

* 1. I agree to participate in this study having read and understood the above consent form.
   - [ ] Yes  - [ ] No

Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

Demographic Information

2. How would you categorize the district in which you are employed in?
   - [ ] Urban  - [ ] Rural  - [ ] Suburban

3. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal, or licensed administrator?
   - [ ] 0-5  - [ ] 6-10  - [ ] 11-15  - [ ] 16 or more

4. How many total years have you been an elementary principal, assistant principal, or licensed administrator in your current building?
   - [ ] 0-5  - [ ] 6-10  - [ ] 11 or more
5. In what educational setting are you a principal, assistant principal, or licensed administrator?  
☐ Elementary School ☐ Middle School ☐ High School ☐ Other

Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

6. What is your role as an educational leader?  
☐ Principal ☐ Assistant Principal ☐ Licensed Administrator - Dean

7. What is your identified gender?  
☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ I prefer not to answer

8. What is the total staff membership in your building?  
☐ 0-25 ☐ 26-50 ☐ 51-75 ☐ 76-100 ☐ 100+

Survey: Bullying in the Workplace:  
NOTE: The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) defines adult workplace bullying as a "repeated, health-harming mistreatment by one or more people of an employee by means of verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, humiliation, work interference, sabotage, exploitation of a known vulnerability, or a combination of any of these" (2013, WBI U.S. National Survey).

Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

9. Have you observed adult bullying in the workplace?  
☐ Never ☐ 1-2 times ☐ 3-4 times ☐ 5 or more times

10. How frequently have you observed adult bullying in the workplace, in your current building, over the last 12 months?  
☐ Never ☐ 1-2 times ☐ 3-4 times ☐ 5 or more times
11. Please enter the number of times within the last 12 months, you have identified adult bullying in the following workplace locations. (Enter zero for never or if they do not apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff Lounge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking Lot</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative Meetings (ex: professional learning communities, work groups, committees)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber (ex: using cell phones, computers, and other forms of technology to knowingly harass, intimidate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify)</td>
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Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

12. What is your confidence level in identifying adult bullying in the workplace?

- [ ] No Confidence
- [ ] Low Confidence
- [ ] Average Confidence
- [ ] High Confidence
- [ ] Extremely High Confidence

13. How many hours of training have you received on identifying and addressing adult bullying in the workplace?

- [ ] 0-5
- [ ] 6-10
- [ ] 11-15
- [ ] 16 or more

14. How would you rate your need for training on identifying and addressing adult bullying in the workplace?

- [ ] Not Needed
- [ ] Somewhat Needed
- [ ] Highly Needed
- [ ] Extremely Needed

Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?
15. How would you rate your level of interest for training or further training on identifying and addressing adult bullying in the workplace?

- Not interested
- Somewhat interested
- Interested
- Highly interested
- Extremely interested

* 16. If you have received training identified and addressed bullying in the workplace, would you agree to do a follow-up interview with the researcher?

- Yes
- No

Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

Please click link to provide contact information.

Follow-Up Interview Contact Information

Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals, assistant principals, and licensed administrators confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Appendix D: Qualitative Interview Questions

Bullying in the Workplace: Are principals and assistant principals confident identifying and addressing adult bullying?

Follow-up Interview Questions

1. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal, or licensed administrator (ex: Dean)?

2. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal, or licensed administrator in your current building?

3. Please name a strategy that has assisted you with identifying adult bullying in the workplace?
   a. Type of strategy
   b. How has this strategy been helpful?

4. Please name a strategy that has assisted you in addressing adult bullying in the workplace?
   a. Type of strategy
   b. How has this strategy been helpful?

5. Has there been a professional development workshop and/or training that you have attended that has impacted your ability to identify and address adult bullying in the workplace?
   a. Specifically, how has this workshop and/or in-service impacted your ability to identify and address bullying in the workplace?

6. What professional development topics would you like to have offered to assist you in identifying and addressing adult bullying in the workplace?
Appendix E: Interview Transcripts

**CANDIDATE 1**

1. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal or licensed administrator (ex: Dean)?
   
   *I am finishing my seventeenth year. I was an assistant principal for three years and I’m finishing my fourteenth year as a principal. All seventeen years have been here in the same school building.*

2. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal or licensed administrator in your current building?
   
   *Seventeen years with three years as the assistant principal and fourteen years as the lead principal here at *** school.*

3. Please name a strategy that has assisted you with identifying adult bullying in the workplace?
   
   a. Type of strategy
   b. How has this strategy been helpful?
   
   *That is a loaded question. There is a lot involved in that. Adult bullying in the workplace is I believe it’s a characteristic of the culture of the work environment that is established and it is also an individual behavior that is a behavior choice that is made when a staff member is for whatever reason is not feeling supported or feeling in crisis and not feeling like that have more productive options. The strategy that I would long term big picture try to create to create a positive work environment is to make sure you are hiring the best possible people you can. You are hiring strong staff. You have a teacher induction model that is supportive of the staff member and also acknowledges or recognizes their individual strengths and emphasizes their capacity and their skills in the area of collaboration with colleagues. So one thing I often say with staff at staff meetings, with individuals and so on is that a diverse staff is a stronger staff. So when we have diversity in our staff and I don’t necessary mean that we look different, I mean that we have different perspectives and we have different ways of viewing situations and different ways of intervening with students that we will be stronger if we choose to collaborate and work together. So big picture long term strategy that we can create a positive work environment is one that I have given lots and lots of time and effort over the past 17 years and that is a characteristic I look for when I’m hiring individuals. I look for people who can deal with adversity, who can manage conflict because conflict does occur. It is part of life and how they manage that conflict is really an important characteristic I look for in folks that we are hiring to join our team.*

4. Please name a strategy that has assisted you in addressing adult bullying in the workplace?
   
   a. Type of strategy
   b. How has this strategy been helpful?
   
   *Okay so another strategy or another staff wide strategy that I utilized was the process of clarifying our mission and our vision and our collective commitments. So we have a mission, vision and collective commitments. All of those statements (I could share those with you if you would like) but all of those statements pertain to the adults in our school setting. They are all about treating each other with respect, accepting our similarities and differences. We are working together to problem solve in a productive way. They are all about the way we conduct ourselves as adults. Now there was a quite a process involved in getting us to agree to a mission and to a vision and to collective commitments because my staff often times wanted to make rules for kids and that isn’t what a mission, vision and collective commitments process in the way I understand it through my training and learning and going to the PLC at work training through Solution Tree. That mission, vision, collective processing involves the adults in the school setting. Not to the students. That has been a proactive strategy that we have at all of our school leadership team committee meetings. Our mission, our vision, our collective commitments are part of that meeting. We review those, discuss those and work on those as a full staff meetings. I encourage our staff when they have department meetings, or other meetings or PLC meetings to have norms that are based on our mission, vision and collective commitments so that the behavior norms are front and center. Because what happens when people don’t behave correctly and engage in bullying and bottom line or below the line behavior is often times they aren’t keeping in the front of their mind the purpose of the collaboration and*
the purpose of the meeting and the importance of hearing the collective commitments that we’ve created as a staff. So new staff that we bring on board, they wouldn’t know that so they have to be through the mentoring process, through the process of dealing with challenging situations they have to look around and see how their colleagues work with those situations then they have to try to apply that in their own practice. That is probably more than you wanted but I think those, our mission, our vision and our collective commitments are a staff wide strategy that I have found effective to really make sure staff are clear on what’s expected.

5. Has there been a professional development workshop and/or training that you have attended that has impacted your ability to identify and address adult bullying in the workplace?
   a. Specifically, how has this workshop and/or in service impacted your ability to identify and address bullying in the workplace?
   That was a good question. I saw that in your survey as well. There is a need for more training and for more specific learning to happen in that area. Because what I’ve referenced with you as far as hiring and looking for that specifically with staff that we are bringing on board like can you collaborate, can you problem solve, how do you deal with adversity. Then our mission, vision and collective commitments that we have in our school building. Those are proactive kinds of cultural ways to work with our culture to have our culture be as positive as we can make it. They are not specific to staff bullying. We don’t use that term of staff bullying in either of those processes and we do have the Ovais Bullying Prevention Program and we are heavily invested in PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Supports) for our students so to a certain extent we model what productive way are to work with bullying behavior. We have our teachers leading class meetings with our student, with curriculum material that we share about bullying but that is about student bullying. That is not about adult bullying. There is a difference there. There could be some transfer that occurs in those areas but those are different pieces. We haven’t specifically had… I haven’t had training on staff bullying and I haven’t brought forward to my staff training on staff bullying but I recognize that can and has occurred in our school setting although since we’ve engaged in the things I’ve referenced with you and I’ve been here for 17 years we’ve shrunk that quite a bit. I don’t think you asked for quantifiable information about number of instances of staff bullying and so on and I don’t have that on the tip of my tongue either so there is a need for professional development around creating positive work environments and specifically addressing bullying behavior that staff may demonstrate.

6. What professional development topics would you like to have offered to assist you in identifying and addressing adult bullying in the workplace?
   Some of the things I would say off the top of my head are characteristics of individuals that you should look for in the hiring process. The creation of a mission, vision and collective commitments that would be considered inclusive and that would honor the diversity amongst the individuals on your staff and reinforce how important it is to collaborate in a healthy, productive and professional way. Those are key pieces. Another quote that I use a lot is the measure of the character of an organization is how they respond during difficult and challenging times because that’s when the character of the organization becomes very apparent. During challenges and difficult times. For example I’ve used that statement twice with my staff this year. Once was during our budget reduction staff meeting where I was talking about all the reductions that we need to make in our building and in our school district. Being specific about positions that would be reduced for the coming school year. I asked staff to do their very best, to be very positive and professional and demonstrate their character. This staff is filled with character and I know we will get through this challenging time. Another time that happened was at the beginning of our school year where we had a staff member suddenly unexpectedly pass away. It happened overnight and the next day she was gone. So that was a very challenging situation where emotions ran high for that duration of time and everyone deals with grief and loss in a different way and so that was a challenging scenario. Was there bullying involved well no. When people are grieving, anger is one of the emotions that people deal with and so there was a lot of interpretations that staff were interpreting this person as being aggressive or is upset with me for some reason because all of my staff were grieving. They had lost a colleague suddenly unexpectedly and that grieving process will test the character of an organization just like budget cuts most recently did with us. You know those are the main areas where I think personnel development could be helpful but then I think how do you train that. How does the trainer try to package that information so that
staff who attend have a chance to digest it, interact with it and create some kind of a plan in their own sites to work with that kind of scenario. So those are my thoughts.

CANDIDATE 2

1. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal or licensed administrator (ex: Dean)?
   
   I’ve been an administrative since 2002 so fifteen.

2. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal or licensed administrator in your current building?
   
   Four years.

3. Please name a strategy that has assisted you with identifying adult bullying in the workplace?
   
   a. Type of strategy
   
   b. How has this strategy been helpful?
   
   Even the word bullying is so laden in our work field. On one hand we are cautious to not use it as a descriptor for all poor behavior that it is a very specific kind of poor behavior. So I think just that word actually makes answering the question more complicated. But I would say in general, when staff are displaying any kind of poor behavior with colleagues, I think the best strategy is having the relationships with staff that those who are feeling bullied or feeling intimidated are willing and able to come talk to me so that we can make a plan.

4. Please name a strategy that has assisted you in addressing adult bullying in the workplace?
   
   a. Type of strategy
   
   b. How has this strategy been helpful?
   
   To be honest I don’t feel that I’ve had to address it a lot so it’s a little interesting to answer the question but when I have dealt with things that could be that could be that. Could be a form of adult bullying. It is usually in some way having the staff person understand the situation from the recipient’s perspective. Because as in cases with kids who bully there is usually something they are trying to get out of it but their intention is not always to bully but their intention is to get what they want out of it. I think it is just a matter of helping the staff person see how their behavior is perceived by the other person but then also trying to understand what they are trying to get out of it so more of a functional behavior approach to it as far as is what they were trying to get out of it appropriate. If it is, let’s find a better way to get that to happen.

5. Has there been a professional development workshop and/or training that you have attended that has impacted your ability to identify and address adult bullying in the workplace?
   
   a. Specifically, how has this workshop and/or in service impacted your ability to identify and address bullying in the workplace?
   
   I’ve never had any formal training on that. I think my training around that would be the application of my background in behavior in general since we, as humans, tend to function somewhat similarly throughout our lives. I’ve never had a workshop that was directed specifically directed at adult behavior.

6. What professional development topics would you like to have offered to assist you in identifying and addressing adult bullying in the workplace?
   
   That is a good question. I think some of it would be a matter of either training for staff or training for administrators to provide training for staff around how to identify what is appropriate collegial behavior or not. I think to the degree that adult bullying happens often times people tend to defend it as other things even if they are the recipient of it. Helping people clarify personal boundaries around what is appropriate for a colleague to maybe persuade us of something versus when it feels like we are being manipulated in a way that is inappropriate.
CANDIDATE 3

1. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal or licensed administrator (ex: Dean)?
   One

2. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal or licensed administrator in your current building?
   One

3. Please name a strategy that has assisted you with identifying adult bullying in the workplace?
   a. Type of strategy
   b. How has this strategy been helpful?
   So I hope my information is useful because as I talk with a one year experience, I’m just going to talk and you can discern from it what you can. I hope some of it is relevant. I don’t believe we come from a place where we have adult bullying but I am also not naive to the fact that it’s not happening. Where do I think a strategy, I think it has to be grounded in relations first. Authentic trust that is established so that people feel comfortable having different opinions, having their voice heard, having a supportive environment that they can go to to share what they are feeling. But again I am not naive to the fact that it happens. I think it is a matter of finding, setting expectations, setting a culture of expectations so that people know the common vision that we are in and we can have critical discussions that allow for difference of opinions but in a respectful manner. So as far as identifying a strategy, I don’t know that I can identify a specific strategy other than addressing it when we do hear of it but I think it has to be more of that proactive creating environment that is tolerable of different opinions and having the respectfulness to say I disagree however or so I don’t know if that helps you. That’s what I know at this point.

4. Please name a strategy that has assisted you in addressing adult bullying in the workplace?
   a. Type of strategy
   b. How has this strategy been helpful?
   I think that when dealing with adult bullying or dealing with any type of conflict, I think that it’s creating a situation or a sit down environment, whatever that situation looks like that is supportive. It’s putting people at ease so they are diplomatic so that you can listen to them and understand their perspective. Not that you have to walk in their shoes but I think you have to understand the experience that got them to that point. And so I think then it is a listening and trying to figure out where the root of the problem of the bullying or the miscommunication or whatever that is. I think it is important to address it. If it’s one avenue of administrator to another adult in the building or if it’s bringing both people together for a mediation, I think that really depends on the situation. I don’t think there is a canned answer for that. I think you are dealing with people and we have to be very sensitive to that. But I also think you have to address it and how does it fit into the norms, expectations, culture of our building and maybe I sometimes wonder if they don’t even realize they are bullying. So again, I’m just talking off the top of my head. I sometimes wonder if people don’t realize that their tone and their demeanor and body language that is interpreted as bullying and I think you have to help people see how they present or the situation how it was perceived. And then move forward from there. I think you have to listen a lot and then help them to understand what that looks like from their end and how it was perceived. But I don’t think you can be afraid to have those difficult conversations because I think it’s the integrity of that safe work place, safe culture in the workplace.
5. Has there been any professional development workshop and/or training that you have attended that has impacted your ability to identify and address adult bullying in the workplace?
   a. Specifically, how has this workshop and/or in service impacted your ability to identify and address bullying in the workplace?

   I’ve never ever, so even in my own district or any of educational publications that come, I’ve never seen anything on adult bullying so I think your topic is … I think the closest is mental health or culture or taking care of staff. I have never seen anything that is identified/titled adult bullying.

6. What professional development topics would you like to have offered to assist you in identifying and addressing adult bullying in the workplace?

   We were talking about this the other day. I don’t think there has ever been workshops out there that talk about how to create culture in the workplace. We do such a good job of taking care of kids. We do such a good job of their social emotional, academics, physical well-being, do we address that within our own adult world in education. I don’t think nor have I seen ... again we have talked about the mental health piece but where is anything that talks about how you create culture and how you learn. I think we just assume so much for staff that we can manage it, we can take care of it, we will figure it out. We will walk out at the end of the day and it’s done. I don’t think that is accurate at all. So I’m wondering where those things are where we learn how to respectfully disagree, where we learn to close our mouth and listen. Where we learn to work through the struggles that come with education and the good and the bad throughout the course of the year. And do that cooperatively. I really think that it comes with this give and take philosophy and we all believe it’s our own business venue and we all believe that our classroom is the most important at that moment but how do we do that in the bigger scheme of what we are trying to accomplish in a building for 10 months. I would love to talk about… I think you specifically were talking about bullying but I think bullying as a part of culture like creating culture and taking care of staff. Not just that mental health, we’ve seen that time and time again but how do you, like I just assume it just happens and I haven’t seen a lot of that avenue. I think our building could use that personally. So I guess that’s what I’m asking for.

CANDIDATE 4

1. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal or licensed administrator (ex: Dean)?
   Three years

2. How many total years have you been a principal, assistant principal or licensed administrator in your current building?
   One year

3. Please name a strategy that has assisted you with identifying adult bullying in the workplace?
   a. Type of strategy
   b. How has this strategy been helpful?

   I have never been Bullied: But If the bullying continues and is not a one-time incident of mean behavior, report it to your supervisor. And if the bully is your supervisor, go to his supervisor. Be sure that you have documentation of the incident, including dates, times and witnesses. Be sure your presentation is as professional as possible. Stick to the facts and ask for a resolution to the issue.

4. Please name a strategy that has assisted you in addressing adult bullying in the workplace?
   a. Type of strategy
   b. How has this strategy been helpful?

   Boundary setting: It is also a good idea to set boundaries with a bully. Be direct about what you do not like about his/her behavior and let him/her know that if he/she continues you will report him/her. Try not to get emotional when you are talking to a bully because he/she will likely use this against you.
5. Has there been any professional development workshop and/or training that you have attended that has impacted your ability to identify and address adult bullying in the workplace?
   a. Specifically, how has this workshop and/or in-service impacted your ability to identify and address bullying in the workplace?
      No

6. What professional development topics would you like to have offered to assist you in identifying and addressing adult bullying in the workplace?
   None