

***TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ANTI-BULLYING INTERVENTIONS AND
THE TYPES OF BULLYING EACH INTERVENTION PREVENTS***

EMMA ELISE ROBERTS

Abstract

Teachers have a central role in the management and prevention of bullying within schools and are in turn involved in the implementation of anti-bullying interventions (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008). Therefore an assessment of teachers' attitudes towards bullying interventions is needed to determine how helpful they perceived interventions to be. This study investigated teachers' attitudes towards anti-bullying interventions and the types of bullying they perceived the interventions would prevent. A 26 item questionnaire analysing teachers' attitudes towards four 'global interventions'; 'teacher implemented', 'student implemented', 'non-teaching staff implemented' and 'specific'. The results indicated that teachers perceived 'non-teaching staff implemented' as the most helpful in preventing bullying and was also identified as the most effective in preventing physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion. Overall the results indicated a consistent pattern which could be analysed further and would benefit schools, local authorities and the government in preventing bullying.

Keywords: *Anti-bullying interventions, bullying, bullying in schools, teachers' perceptions.*

Introduction

Over the past few decades bullying among children and young adults has considerably expanded as a research issue (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005). In 1984-86, Kidscape carried out the first UK nationwide survey on bullying, in which 4,000 children took part aged 5-16. The results indicated that 68% of the sample had been bullied at least once (Elliott, 2002). Over two decades have passed and the problem of bullying has increased, this can be shown by the research carried out by Childline who reported in 2001 that they had received over 20,000 phone calls relating to bullying (Elliott, 2002). These statistics demonstrate that bullying is a prevalent problem and gives reason for why it is of high importance on research agendas.

Within the school environment bullying has been found to have a negative impact on the school climate (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). This is because it has been found that bullying creates anxiety within the school and in turn may affect student's academic performance (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Rigby, 2000) and school attendance (Reid, Monsen & Rivers, 2004). Bullying behaviour not only affects the victim and the bully but it has an impact on the other children and adolescents who witness the bullying incident (Salmivalli, 1999; Atlas & Pepler, 1998). In a range of studies, the majority of students have been found to act in a way that may encourage the bullying behaviour to continue rather than diminish it (Whitney & Smith, 1993, cited in Salmivalli, 1999). This demonstrates that bullying behaviour affects many within the school environment; this could be students, teachers and other school personnel.

School personnel play an important role in preventing bullying, as demonstrated by Yoon and Kerber (2003) "teachers play an important role in creating

a positive school climate” (p27). Teacher’s responses to bullying behaviour can influence future bullying behaviours within the school (Yoon, 2004). Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier (2008) say that teachers have a very central role in managing and preventing bullying and are highly involved in the implementation of bullying interventions within their school. The bullying problem is likely to be smaller when a school discusses bullying with students, has an interest in stopping bullying behaviours and will intervene when bullying takes place (Payne & Gottfredson, 2004). Teacher’s attitudes also have an effect on student’s attitudes and behaviours towards bullying. When teachers ignore bullying behaviours, students may feel that they cannot count on the teacher for protection and in turn feel that the teacher accepts the bullying behaviour (MacNeil & Newell, 2004, cited in Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). This highlights that having an understanding of teacher’s perceptions is important especially when trying to tackle bullying. There has been a great deal of research into teacher’s perceptions of what constitutes as bullying, such as that carried out by (Boulton, 1997). However there is very little research carried out on teacher’s perceptions of bullying interventions and the types of bullying these interventions prevent.

Crothers, Kolbert and Barker (2006) carried out a study on student’s perceptions of bullying interventions using a 15 item questionnaire known as the Bullying Intervention Survey (BIS). The results showed that students preferred interventions which were ‘teacher implemented’ rather than interventions which were ‘student implemented’ or ‘non-teaching staff implemented’. Samara and Smith (2007) carried out a piece of research on teachers perceptions of the interventions they were

most satisfied with. Their results indicated that teachers were highly satisfied with the interventions which a school devised themselves and the whole school approach. These two pieces of research demonstrate that teacher's and student's perceptions of bullying interventions are of important interest. However there is no literature to the researcher's knowledge that investigates teacher's perceptions of bullying interventions and the types of bullying these interventions prevent within one study.

Until fairly recently there have been five known types of bullying, these are physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation (Rivers & Smith, 1994), social exclusion (Boulton, 1997) and social alienation (Throckmorton, 2005). Research has shown that different types of bullying have different effects on the victim. The most stressful form of bullying was indirect bullying which includes intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion (Sharp, 1995). Further research has indicated that a bullying intervention may have a dramatic effect on one type of bullying but no effect on another type (Rigby, Smith & Pepler, 2004). This indicates that if an intervention is used but is not suitable for that type of bullying, the bullying behaviour is likely to continue. Teachers are those who are the most likely to implement the bullying intervention when a bullying behaviour takes place. By having awareness of teacher's perceptions towards bullying interventions and the types of bullying they perceive the intervention to prevent, schools and local authorities can use this information to design anti-bullying programs which are suitable for their school which their teachers will use and can use effectively on bullying behaviours.

Aims

Based upon the findings made by Crothers, Kolbert and Barker (2006) which found that students perceived ‘teacher implemented’ interventions as more effective in preventing bullying, the first issue of this study aimed to measure whether teachers perceived ‘teacher implemented’ interventions as more effective than ‘non-teaching staff’ interventions, ‘student implemented’ interventions and an added section namely ‘specific’ interventions (see list 1). The second issue of this study was to examine whether teacher’s perceive ‘teacher implemented’ interventions as more or less effective than ‘student implemented’, ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ and ‘specific’ interventions in preventing physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion.

List 1: ‘Individual Anti-bullying Interventions’ categorised into the scales ‘Teacher Implemented’, ‘Student Implemented’, ‘Non-Teaching Staff Implemented’ and ‘Specific’ Interventions.

‘Teacher Implemented’ Interventions

Assessment of Bullying

Anti-Bullying Curriculums

Classroom Management

Student Code of Conduct

Video Monitoring

Assertiveness, Social Skills, Skill Replacement Training

Drama and Role Play, Children’s Literature

Peer Mentoring, Peer Tutoring, Cooperative Group Work

Conflict Resolution Training, Conflict Management Techniques

‘Student Implemented’ Interventions

Parent and School Collaboration

Telephone Hotline

‘Non teaching Staff Implemented’ Interventions

Student Watch Programs

Counselling, Support Groups for Victims, Peer mediation Programs

Accurate Information and Training for Students and School Staff

‘Specific’ Interventions

Whole School Approach

Second Step Violence Prevention Program

Dracon

Cognitive behaviour Therapy

Methods

Participants

The participants were 78 qualified school teachers who taught in infant, primary and secondary schools across the North East and West of England. Within the sample, seven teachers worked with infants (six females and one male), two females worked with both infant and primary school children, 19 worked in primary schools (15 females and 4 males), 46 worked in secondary schools (32 females and 14 males)

and four participants gave insufficient data. The teachers career lengths ranged from 1 to 40 years (mean= 16.1). In adherence with ethical guidelines consent was gathered from all participants and they were informed that they could withdraw at any time and that their responses would remain anonymous.

Materials

The present study used a 26 item questionnaire of which 18 items referred to 'individual anti-bullying interventions'. For each intervention there were 4 questions; 'Have they used the intervention?' for which there was a 4 point response: Very frequently (scored 3), Sometimes (scored 2), Not very often (scored 1) and Never (scored 0). 'How much training they have had using the intervention?' which there was a 4 point response: A lot (scored 3), Adequate (scored 2), Very Little (scored 1) and None (scored 0). 'How helpful the intervention was at preventing bullying?' which there was a 4 point response: Almost always (scored 3), Sometimes (scored 2), Not Very (scored 1) and Never (scored 0). And 'What types of bullying is the intervention most effective in preventing?' which participants indicated whether they perceived the intervention prevented physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation, social exclusion. For each sub type of bullying there were two responses, 'yes' in which participants underlined that subtype of bullying (scored 1) and no (scored 0).

The 18 'individual anti-bullying interventions' were categorised into four scales, 'Teacher implemented', 'student implemented', 'non-teaching staff implemented' and 'specific'. Eight items were used to measure 'teacher

implemented' interventions in regard to how helpful teachers' perceived them in preventing bullying. An average score across the eight items was computed and this is referred to as 'teacher implemented'. A high score indicated the more helpful teachers perceived 'teacher implemented' anti-bullying interventions to be at preventing bullying. This process was repeated for 'student implemented', 'non-teaching staff implemented' and 'specific'. Two items were used to measure 'student implemented' interventions, three items were used to measure 'non-teaching staff implemented' interventions and four items were used to measure 'Specific' interventions.

Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed by post and email to teachers who had consented to take part. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire in their spare time and enclose it in the stamped addressed envelope enclosed with the questionnaire if sent by post, or collected by the researcher at an arranged time. Questionnaires were then coded, recorded and analysed.

Results

Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the internal reliability of the 'global intervention' scales ('teacher implemented', 'student implemented', 'non-teaching staff implemented' and 'specific'). This was used to determine whether the items within the four different 'global interventions' yielded similar results. The Cronbach's alpha score for 'teacher implemented' was 0.740, for 'non teaching staff implemented' 0.802 and for 'specific' 0.837 these results indicate high internal reliability. The score for 'student implemented' was 0.518 which is lower than 0.7 and therefore indicates low internal reliability.

Issue 1: Are teacher implemented interventions more helpful than the other three ‘global interventions’; ‘student implemented’, ‘non teaching staff implemented’ and ‘specific’, in preventing bullying?

This was tested using a one-way repeated measure ANOVA with the four ‘global interventions’ as the four levels of the independent variable. To determine which interventions were significantly different, a post hoc Bonferroni test was employed.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics from one-way repeated measures ANOVA analysing whether ‘teacher implemented’ is perceived the most helpful intervention.

Perceptions of helpfulness	
‘Global Interventions’	Mean (SD)
‘Teacher Implemented’	1.64 (.52)
‘Student Implemented’	1.07 (.73)
‘Non-Teaching Staff Implemented’	1.75 (.61)
‘Specific’	1.43 (.82)

The descriptive statistics indicate that ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ bullying interventions were perceived as most helpful in preventing bullying. The main effect of perceived helpfulness was $F(3,66)= 13.52$, $p<0.001$. Post hoc analysis indicated that ‘teacher implemented’ interventions were perceived as significantly more effective than ‘student implemented’ interventions. There was no significant difference between ‘teacher implemented’ and ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ or ‘specific’.

Issue 2: Are ‘teacher implemented’ interventions perceived more or less effective in preventing physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion?

For each type of bullying, physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion, a one-way ANOVA was used with the four ‘global interventions’ as the four levels of the independent variable. To determine which interventions were significantly different, a post hoc Bonferroni test was employed.

The descriptive statistics indicate that teacher’s perceive ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ interventions to be the most effective at preventing physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion.

Table 2: The descriptive statistics representing teacher’s perceptions of whether ‘teacher implemented’, ‘student implemented’, ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ and ‘specific’ interventions are effective in preventing physical bullying.

Perceptions of effectiveness	
‘Global Interventions’	Mean (SD)
‘Teacher Implemented’	0.58 (.28)
‘Student Implemented’	0.32 (.34)
‘Non-Teaching Staff Implemented’	0.69 (.39)
‘Specific’	0.41 (.40)

The main effect of perceived effectiveness in preventing physical bullying was $F(3, 150) = 26.276$, $p < 0.001$. Post hoc analysis indicates that ‘teacher implemented’ interventions were perceived as significantly more effective than ‘student

implemented' and 'specific' but significantly less effective than 'non-teaching staff implemented' when preventing physical bullying.

Table 3: The descriptive statistics representing teacher's perceptions of whether 'teacher implemented', 'student implemented', 'non-teaching staff implemented' and 'specific' interventions are effective in preventing verbal bullying.

Perceptions of effectiveness	
'Global Interventions'	Mean (SD)
'Teacher Implemented'	0.65 (.22)
'Student Implemented'	0.30 (.35)
'Non-Teaching Staff Implemented'	0.78 (.30)
'Specific'	0.48 (.32)

The main effect of perceived effectiveness in preventing verbal bullying was $F(3, 153) = 45.991, p < 0.001$. Post hoc analysis indicates that 'teacher implemented' interventions were perceived as significantly less effective than 'non-teaching staff implemented' but significantly more effective than 'student implemented' and 'specific' when preventing verbal bullying.

Table 4: The descriptive statistics representing teacher's perceptions of whether 'teacher implemented', 'student implemented', 'non-teaching staff implemented' and 'specific' intervention are effective in preventing intimidation.

Perceptions of effectiveness	
'Global Interventions'	Mean (SD)
'Teacher Implemented'	0.47 (.30)
'Student Implemented'	0.23 (.34)
'Non-Teaching Staff Implemented'	0.56 (.39)
'Specific'	0.36 (.32)

The main effect of perceived effectiveness in preventing intimidation was $F(3,153) = 22.741$, $p < 0.001$. Post hoc analysis indicates that 'teacher implemented' interventions were perceived as significantly more effective than 'student implemented' interventions when preventing intimidation.

Table 5: The descriptive statistics representing teacher's perceptions of whether 'teacher implemented', 'student implemented', 'non-teaching staff implemented' and 'specific' interventions are effective in preventing social alienation.

Perceptions of effectiveness	
'Global Interventions'	Mean (SD)
'Teacher Implemented'	0.37 (.25)
'Student Implemented'	0.15 (.27)
'Non-Teaching Staff Implemented'	0.48 (.38)
'Specific'	0.29 (.31)

The main effect of perceived effectiveness in preventing alienation was $F(3, 153) = 24.669$, $p < 0.001$. Post hoc analysis indicates that ‘teacher implemented’ interventions were perceived as significantly less effective than ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ interventions and significantly more effective than ‘student implemented’ interventions when preventing social alienation.

Table 6: The descriptive statistics representing teacher’s perceptions of whether ‘teacher implemented’, ‘student implemented’, ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ and ‘specific’ interventions are effective in preventing social exclusion.

Perceptions of effectiveness	
‘Global Interventions’	Mean (SD)
‘Teacher Implemented’	0.31 (.27)
‘Student Implemented’	0.18 (.30)
‘Non-Teaching Staff Implemented’	0.44 (.40)
‘Specific’	0.29 (.33)

The main effect of perceived effectiveness in preventing social exclusion was $F(3, 150) = 12.951$, $p < 0.001$. Post hoc analysis indicates that ‘teacher implemented’ interventions were perceived as significantly less effective than ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ but significantly more effective than ‘student implemented’ interventions when preventing social exclusion.

Discussion

Issue 1: Are ‘teacher implemented’ interventions perceived as more helpful than the other three ‘global interventions’; ‘student implemented’, ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ and ‘specific’, in preventing bullying?

This study investigated whether teachers’ perceived ‘teacher implemented’ interventions as the most helpful in preventing bullying when compared to the other three ‘global interventions’ (‘teacher implemented’, ‘student implemented’, ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ and ‘specific’). The results of the study found that teachers perceived ‘non-teaching staff implemented intervention’ as the most helpful in preventing bullying. Interventions which were categorised as ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ within the study were ‘Student Watch Programmes’, ‘Counselling, Support groups for Victims and Peer Mediation Programs’, and ‘Accurate Information and Training for Students and School Staff’. These results support research carried out by Samara and Smith (2007) which reported that teachers had high satisfaction with interventions such as counselling by staff and increased staff training. Their research also found that teachers make high use of interventions such as counselling and working with victims (Samara & Smith, 2007).

However research by Crothers, Kolbert and Barker (2006) suggested that students prefer ‘teacher implemented’ interventions. This would give reason that teachers too would prefer this approach, although the results of this study prove otherwise. Although ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ interventions were perceived as the most helpful, teachers did perceive ‘teacher implemented’ interventions significantly more helpful than ‘student implemented’. This difference in opinions between teachers and students does support Brown’s (2002) opinion that there is a

difference in opinions towards which intervention is most appropriate. This indicates that interventions have to suit the needs of both sides. This is because a teacher may perceive one intervention as being helpful but the student may have a difference of opinion and in turn this could affect the bullying behaviour. This suggests that when a teacher or student feels an intervention is an inappropriate way of preventing the bullying behaviour they may be less likely to participate in the intervention being implemented and therefore this may lead to a continuation of the bullying behaviour.

Issue 2: Are ‘teacher implemented’ interventions perceived more or less effective in preventing physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion?

This study investigated whether ‘teacher implemented’ interventions were perceived as more effective than ‘student implemented’, ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ and ‘specific’ interventions when preventing physical and verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion. Previous research has suggested that some interventions will create significant changes in one type of bullying behaviour but not in another (Rigby, Smith and Pepler, 2004). The results of this study give an indication into whether this view is justifiable. The results show that ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ interventions were perceived more effective than ‘teacher implemented’, ‘student implemented’ and ‘specific’ interventions at preventing physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion. This consistent pattern amongst the results implies that teachers have a positive perception of the effectiveness of ‘non-teaching staff implemented’ interventions. This indicates that there could be some characteristics which ‘non-

teaching staff implemented' interventions have that the other three types do not, and that it is these characteristics which is why teachers perceive these more effective. Further research would be needed to determine what these characteristics are, and in turn these could then be implemented into the school environment and used to tackle bullying.

Overall the results of this study suggest that teachers perceive 'non-teaching staff implanted' interventions as the most helpful in preventing bullying. Teachers also perceive 'non-teaching staff implemented' interventions as the most effective in preventing physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion. One of the bullying interventions which is classed as 'non-teaching staff implemented' intervention is counselling. This suggests that teachers perceive counsellors to have an active role in preventing bullying. This may be because teachers have large workloads and in school counsellors are trained in methods of helping victims and bullies. Trendall's (1989) research found that teachers were under both physical and mental strain, and the most frequent reasons for this were lack of time, large classes and teaching workload. Further research could investigate the use of counsellors as a way of preventing bullying. This could be by looking at the perceptions towards the use of different types of counselling in preventing bullying and whether these different types of counselling prevent different types of bullying. This would provide a more in depth look at one of the types of intervention teachers perceive most helpful in preventing bullying.

This study has highlighted that teachers perceive 'non-teaching implemented' interventions as the most helpful in preventing bullying and in tackling physical

bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion. Although this research brings to light that teachers favour this approach, further investigation should be advised to delve further into these conclusions. The sample used within the present study is very small in comparison to the number of teachers within the UK. This means that the results from this study may not be representative to the population. To identify that these results fully represent the opinions of teachers, the researchers advise that the study should be replicated and in turn these results should be used with caution. However, the results do demonstrate that teachers do perceive 'non-teaching staff implemented' interventions as a more helpful way of preventing bullying. This is useful data for teachers and local authorities to use as it demonstrates their opinions and what approaches are most likely to be used by teachers.

The data was collected via questionnaires and does not fully demonstrate teacher's perceptions. Although teachers are saying what they believe, it does not represent their actions. Teachers may have certain beliefs but do not act upon them. Therefore teachers may say they perceive 'non-teaching staff implemented' interventions as more effective, however they may not be more inclined to use them. By looking into teacher's reasons for perceiving 'non-teaching staff implemented' interventions as more effective, this will provide data for why they have those beliefs and can in turn create understanding as to whether they are more likely to use a bullying intervention.

This study has investigated areas of importance which previous research has not delved into. Although the sample size was small, this study has uncovered areas of

interest and in turn could inspire future research. The results have suggested that teacher's and student's perceptions towards the most helpful way in preventing bullying can differ and can be similar. Further research could delve into this by looking at why this is the case and identify the characteristics which both groups are looking for in a bullying intervention. However it should be noted that any future research which is looking into bullying interventions and the types of bullying they prevent should use cyber bullying as one of their types, as this is a new phenomenon which is rapidly affecting school climates.

Conclusions

In conclusion this study has indicated how helpful teachers found 'teacher implemented', 'student implemented', 'non-teaching staff implemented' and 'specific' interventions. The results suggested that teachers found 'non-teaching staff implemented' interventions as the most helpful in preventing bullying overall and the five sub-types of bullying: physical, verbal, intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion.

References

- Bauman, S. & Del Rio, A. (2006) 'Preservice teachers' responses to bullying scenarios: Comparing physical, verbal, and relational bullying'. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98, p219-231.
- Boulton, M. (1997) 'Teachers' views on bullying: Definitions, attitudes and ability to cope', *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 67, p223-233.
- Brown, K. (2002) Bullying and school non attendance. Ed. M. Elliott. *Bullying*, p92-103. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Camodeca, M. & Goossens, F. A. (2005) 'Children's opinions on effective strategies to cope with bullying: the importance of bullying role and perspective', *Educational Research*, 47, p93-105.

- Crick, N.R, Bigbee, M.A.(1998) 'Relational and overt forms of peer victimization: A multi informant approach', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 66, p337-347.
- Crothers, L.M., Kolbert, J. B., & Barker, W.F. (2006) 'Middle School Students' Preferences for Anti- Bullying Interventions', *School Psychology International*, 27, p475-487.
- Elliott, M. (2002) Bullies and Victims. Ed. M. Elliott. *Bullying*, p1-11. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Kochenderfer-Ladd, B. & Pelletier, M. E. (2008) 'Teachers' views and beliefs about bullying: Influences on classroom management strategies and students' coping with peer victimization', *Journal of School Psychology*, 46, p431-453.
- Payne, A. A. & Gottfredson, D. C. (2004) 'Schools and bullying: school factors related to bullying and school based bullying interventions'. E.d. C. E. Sanders & G. D. Phye. *Bullying implications for the classroom*, p2-18. London: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Reid, P., Monsen, J., & Rivers, I. (2004) 'Psychology's contribution to understanding and managing bullying within schools', *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 20, p241-258.
- Rigby, K. (2000) 'Effects of peer victimization in schools and perceived social support on adolescent well-being', *Journal of Adolescence* , 23 ,p57-68.
- Salmivalli, C. (1999) 'Participant role approach to school bullying: implications for interventions', *Journal of Adolescence*, 22, p453-459.
- Samara, M., & Smith, P.K. (2008) 'How schools tackle bullying, and the use of whole school policies: changes over the last decade', *Educational Psychology*, 28, p663-676.
- Sharp, S. (1995) 'How much does bullying hurt? The effects of bullying on the personal well-being and educational progress of secondary-aged students', *Educational and Child psychology*, 12, p81-88.
- Trendall, C. (1989) 'Stress in teaching and teacher effectiveness: a study of teachers across mainstream and special education', *Education Research*, 31, pp52-58.
- Throckmorton, W. (2005) 'Bullying Prevention Information: Resources for Schools', Retrieved 12th October 2008 from <http://www.drthrockmorton.com/respectandthefacts/documents/bullyingprevention.pdf>
- Yoon. J, S. & Kerber, K. (2003) 'Bullying Elementary teachers' attitudes and intervention strategies', *Research in Education*, 69, p27-35.

About the author

Emma Roberts is a second year IPhD Education and Communication student at Newcastle University.