

7-22-2015

Primary Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions of Bullying

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PRIMARY TEACHERS' AND PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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August 2015

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This qualitative case study examined the perceptions of primary teachers and parents regarding the physical, verbal, and indirect bullying by identifying the individual teacher characteristics that influenced teacher responses to bullying and parents' understanding and responses to bullying. The research was designed to (a) identify how primary teachers and parents defined bullying, (b) understand how personal and professional experiences and other factors impacted primary teacher and parent perceptions of bullying, (c) determine differences in perceptions and actions in primary teachers and parents in schools that had a formalized anti-bullying program and those that did not have a formalized anti-bullying program, and, (d) examine how primary teachers and parents responded to bullying situations.

The purposeful sample for this study consisted of six primary teachers and thirteen primary parents from two rural school districts in western Pennsylvania. Teacher data was collected through six semi-structured teacher interviews and through an open-ended vignette questionnaire called the Bullying Attitude Questionnaire – Modified version (BAQ-M) that was completed by each teacher participant before the interview. Parent data was collected through two parent focus groups. The researcher piloted the interview and focus group protocol with two primary teachers and two primary parents outside of the formal participant pool. Participant feedback provided evidence of the study's reliability and validity. After the pilot's success, the researcher conducted the formal study and analyzed the data.

The findings and conclusions of this study showed that teachers and parents differed on their understanding of the definition and types bullying and in responding to bullying situations. While both groups emphasized the importance of intervening in bullying situations, parent responses indicated a desire for increased communication with schools on bullying incidents. Additionally, both participant groups discussed the need for teacher training and parent workshops on the topic of bullying. Recommendations were based on how school districts could improve communication between school and home and include professional development opportunities on bullying for teachers.