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The Relationship Between Pre-Service Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs & their Knowledge of School-bullying Prevention Strategies

Christina Garchinski
PhD Candidate
Brock University

Heather Woods
PhD Candidate
University of Ottawa

Abstract:

School-bullying prevention training intends to prepare pre-service teachers to effectively manage incidents of bullying during their teaching practicum, initial years of teaching, and beyond. Teacher knowledge about bullying prevention and beliefs concerning commitment to reduce bullying are key determinants to effective bullying management (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003). These key components of knowledge and beliefs are central to Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief that he/she has the knowledge and power to exercise influence over events (Bandura, 1997).

Based on the relevance of self-efficacy theory to teacher candidates' ability to intervene in bullying incidents, this pre-post survey-based study will examine pre-service teacher's knowledge of bullying prevention as it relates to levels of perceived self-efficacy for implementing effective bullying management in the classroom. Pre-service teachers will complete the Teacher Bully Prevention Efficacy Scale (TBPE) and provide a critique identifying strengths and weaknesses of four bullying prevention programs.

The results will identify links between efficacy beliefs and bullying prevention knowledge, and propose refinements to the Classroom Management curriculum according to key understandings such as the goal-directed nature of bullying and the role of power imbalance in the bullying relationship.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine pre-service teacher's perceived self-efficacy for implementing effective bullying management in the classroom as this ability relates to his/her knowledge pertaining to the strengths and weakness of four different bullying management programs.

Research Questions:

The study seeks to address the questions of:

1. How do pre-service teachers understand bullying prevention practices in terms of their potential strengths and weaknesses;
2. What are pre-services teachers' level of bullying prevention self-efficacy; and
3. How does pre-service teacher's understanding and knowledge of bullying prevention practices relate to their level of perceived bullying prevention efficacy?

Theoretical Framework:

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory posits that learning occurs in a social context. This applies not only to students learning from their teachers, but also how teachers learn from their peers. In the current study, social learning theory is applied to teachers' bullying prevention efficacy beliefs about their ability to prevent and intervene in bullying situations. Four types of experiences influence self-efficacy: (a) mastery experiences, (b) physiological/affective states, (c) vicarious experiences, and (d) verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1997).

The current research seeks to understand how pre-service teacher's knowledge of bullying prevention may influence their efficacy beliefs regarding bullying prevention programs. Teacher candidates' efficacy beliefs may be influenced by their experiences as students, and the degree to which they gained mastery over bullying prevention training provided during program curriculum/practicum.

Techniques/ Methods:

Participants will consist of approximately 80 first year teacher candidates who are enrolled in a Teacher Education program within Ontario, Canada. Participants will be asked to complete a paper-based survey consisting of two parts.

Participants will first complete the Teachers' Bullying Prevention Efficacy Scale (TBPE; Woods, 2015). Following this, participants will review and critique four bullying prevention programs, including: the Olweus Prevention Program, the Magical Anti-Bullying Presentation Program, Beyond the Hurt, and Roots of Empathy. Participants will be asked to report what they believe are the positive and negative attributes of the program, along with what and why they think the program may or may not work.

One week later, students will be asked to describe their beliefs about their ability to intervene in bullying incidents and to complete a TBPE post-test to explore potential changes in their self-efficacy after critically engaging with the bullying prevention programs. Responses to the critique of the bullying prevention programs will be coded using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Freeman, 1998). Code frequencies will be calculated and compared with TBPE scores using a chi-square test, to explore patterns. Potential themes may be goals achieved through bullying, peer power dynamics, and empathy.

Data Sources:

Triangulated sources of evidence will include researcher observation notes, TBPE scores, and qualitative critiques identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the four different bullying prevention programs covered during the bullying prevention class session (Levin, Nolan, Kerr, Elliott, & Bajovic, 2016). The specific four programs include: the Olweus Prevention Program, the Magical Anti-Bullying Presentation Program, Beyond the Hurt, and Roots of Empathy.

Pre and post-tests of the *Teachers' Bullying Prevention Efficacy Scale* (AUTHOR) will consist of seven questions assessing teachers' beliefs regarding their ability to intervene in bullying situations. The TBPE was adapted from the Classroom Management subscale of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES, $\alpha = .86$; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). However, the original subscale does not adequately capture the construct of bullying intervention/prevention. The questions were adapted to capture teachers' sense of efficacy as it relates to bullying specifically, such as, "How much can you do to prevent bullying amongst students?" and "How much can you do to prevent cyberbullying amongst students?" (AUTHOR). Items are rated on a nine point scale (1-Nothing at all to 9- A great deal; $=.867$).

Open-ended survey questions will invite participants to review the short descriptions of the bullying prevention programs. After reading through the programs, they will be asked to make a list of the strengths and weaknesses of those programs. Additionally, they will be asked to explain why they think the program may or may not work.

Results / Interpretations:

The results will elucidate the potentially reciprocal relationship between efficacy beliefs and bullying prevention knowledge, and allow the researchers to identify key curriculum material that positively influenced pre-service teacher self-efficacy.

Educational Importance of the Study:

This study has practical implications for Teacher Education training as it will propose key components of curriculum that are essential to the development of bullying prevention self-efficacy beliefs in pre-service teachers. Additionally, results will shed light on how teacher candidates understand and view bullying prevention programs.

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