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School Counselors' Roles and Responsibilities in Bullying Prevention: A National Survey

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Abstract

We examined school counselors' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in addressing bullying. This study also investigated the prevalence of bullying prevention training, policies and laws, and various school problems. School counselors reported differences between their perceptions of their roles and responsibilities and what they believe are their principals' expectations of school counselors. We discuss the results, implications for school counselors, and recommendations for research.

Keywords

antibullying, principals, role, school counselor, survey research

Bullying and peer victimization in school settings are primary concerns for both staff and students. According to DeVoe and Bauer (2011), nearly 28% of students report being victimized each year in U.S. schools. This statistic is concerning because of the psychological maladjustments bullying causes, which may include elevated levels of depression, helplessness, and feelings of isolation, and risks to academic achievement and overall declines in school participation (Hoglund, 2007; Iyer, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Eisenburg, & Thompson, 2010). Furthermore, the negative effects can extend beyond the students who are targets and perpetrators of bullying to bystanders, with the psychological and emotional toll of bullying affecting all involved (Blake, Banks, Patience, & Lund, 2014). Therefore, to be effective, bullying prevention efforts should be universal and involve students, school staff, and families.

The prevalence and negative effects of bullying have influenced all states to enact antibullying laws (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2014b). Characteristics of these laws mandate that schools conduct appropriate investigating, responding, recording, and reporting of bullying. Many state laws mandate that local education agencies develop and implement policies that prohibit bullying and require prevention programs (HHS, 2014b). Antibullying legislation directly points to school staff to create and uphold these policies and procedures, including principals, teachers, school psychologists, and school counselors. School resource officers also have an increased presence to help prevent violence, including bullying (Robles-Piña & Denham, 2012). How antibullying laws are implemented in schools, however, varies across states and school systems, which has led to inconclusive findings about the effectiveness of policies and programs in much of the bullying prevention literature (Yeager, Fong, Lee, & Espelage, 2015).

Defining Bullying and Its Consequences

According to Olweus (1993; Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999), bullying encompasses peer aggression in which the perpetrator exhibits (a) an intention to harm, (b) repetition of the behavior, and (c) a power differential between the bully and the individual(s) experiencing bullying. Bullying behaviors consist of physical, emotional, or interpersonal aggression to humiliate, alienate, and ultimately harm the individual experiencing bullying. Although the Olweus definition provides specific criteria, schools continue to have difficulty identifying acts of bullying and effectively intervening. Intentionality may also be difficult to determine because the perpetrator may convey a lack of malice. Students may suggest that their acts were accidental or just teasing. Moreover, if bullying behaviors must be observed as repetitious, this can minimize the significance of a one-time aggressive act.

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Power differences between targets and perpetrators of bullying may be easier to detect during physical aggression when one student is physically larger, while in relational or verbal bullying, such differences may be less apparent. A lack of direct adult supervision might also contribute to difficulty in detecting acts of bullying, especially for less observable types of bullying (e.g., relational bullying, cyberbullying), and in busy, more unstructured areas such as playgrounds, hallways, and restrooms; however, bullying can also go unobserved in classrooms (Payne & Gottfredson, 2004; Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Although physical and verbal bullying are overt and easier to detect, indirect or relational bullying, in which the relationships of the individual being bullied are targeted and ultimately damaged, is at least as harmful as physical bullying (Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008).

Both students who are the targets of bullying and those who bully others exhibit social, emotional, behavioral, and academic problems of concern. Individuals targeted for bullying may experience psychological maladjustment including depression (Kodish et al., 2016; Piquero, Connell, Piquero, Farrington, & Jennings, 2013), suicidal ideation (Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007), self-harm (Fisher et al., 2012; Hay & Meldrum, 2010), eating disorders (Duarte, Pinto-Gouvela, & Stubbs, 2017), and overall school-related fears (Bachman, Gunter, & Bakken, 2011). Conversely, bullies may externalize their behavior, which affects their relationships with peers and teachers, thus affecting their school experience (Reijntjes et al., 2011; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Similar to students who experience bullying, students who bully may also report higher levels of depression and suicidal ideations than those less involved in bullying (Klomek et al., 2007). Students who commit acts of bullying also are often among the most popular (Rodkin, Ryan, Jamison, & Wilson, 2013).

Blake, Banks, Patience, and Lund (2014) used the term bully-victims to describe students who both bully others and who are bullied. These students appear to exhibit the highest degree of psychological maladjustment (Blake et al., 2014; Dukes, Stein, & Zane, 2009). In particular, students who are bully-victims report a greater level of depression, anxiety, and loneliness than individuals who are either bullies or targets of bullying (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Swearer, Song, Cary, Eagle, & Mickelson, 2001). Students who were bystanders, those who observed the bullying but did not become directly involved, reported greater feelings of helplessness when witnessing the bullying acts than those who did not observe bullying (Rivers & Noret, 2013). With its array of negative social/emotional outcomes, bullying affects all students. As a result, bullying prevention is a crucial issue for school counselors. Although the ASCA National Model (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012) calls for school counselors to apply universal programs consistent with bullying prevention, only a few studies to date have examined how school counselors perceive their roles in bullying prevention (e.g., Goodman-Scott, Doyle, & Brott, 2013).

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School Counselors' Roles in Addressing Bullying

The ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012) defines school counselors as being systemic change agents in developing and delivering a comprehensive school counseling program focused on academic, career, and social/emotional development. Although the ASCA National Model does not include recommendations specifically related to bullying prevention, it requires school counseling programs to include the delivery of direct services (e.g., classroom lessons, small groups, individual sessions) and indirect services (e.g., consultation and collaboration with teachers, parents, community mental health providers, and others). The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2014) include standards, such as social skills (e.g., use effective oral and written communication skills and listening skills; demonstrate empathy), that school counselors may want to focus on in facilitating classroom lessons, small groups, and individual sessions on bullying prevention. Regarding bullying, the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2016) specifically state that school counselors "provide services to victims and perpetrators as appropriate, which can include a safety plan and reasonable accommodations such as schedule change, but school counselors defer to administration for all discipline issues for this" (Standard A.11.a, p. 5).

Although literature related to school counselors' roles in bullying prevention is limited, some researchers have broadly discussed the roles and responsibilities of school counselors in addressing bullying and imply counselors' importance. Specifically, Goodman-Scott, Doyle, and Brott (2013) found that school counselors endorsed their roles in schoolwide bullying prevention as instrumental in providing leadership in conducting lessons, facilitating presentations, and using resources. Several researchers have concluded that school counselors are well suited to take the lead in antibullying programming within schools (Bauman, 2008; Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007; McCormac, 2014) and coordinate bullying prevention efforts with other school staff (Bradshaw, O'Brennan, & Sawyer, 2008; Young et al., 2009). Other studies have compared school counselors' roles to responses to bullying from other school staff. For example, Bauman, Rigby, and Hoppa (2008) compared school counselors' and teachers' responses to a bullying scenario and found that school counselors were more likely to engage in antibullying strategies than teachers. Lund, Blake, Ewing, and Banks (2012) found that school counselors and

school psychologists recognized the negative effects of bullying and reported relational bullying as most frequent. Researchers also found that school counselors received more reports of bullying incidents than school psychologists (Blake et al., 2014; Lund, Blake, Ewing, & Banks, 2012). Jacobsen and Bauman (2007) identified a positive relationship between school counselors' training in bullying and their perspectives on the prevalence and severity of bullying. Given inherent difficulties in identifying many forms of bullying and the importance of effective intervention strategies, school counselors should be knowledgeable about bullying among students and effective programming.

School counselors' roles in preventing bullying in schools make sense practically, but limited literature addresses these specific roles and responsibilities of school counselors. Further research is needed that investigates school counselors' perceptions of and behaviors related to bullying prevention programs. To further explore school counselors' roles in administering bullying programs, a helpful step is considering the difference between school counselors' perceptions of their own responsibilities and what they believe their principals expect of them. Another vital step for school counselors may be refining their beliefs about their roles in bullying prevention and intervention in comparison to what other professionals in schools (e.g., principals, teachers, school psychologists) believe about school counselors' roles. Having a sense of support from administration may assist the school counselor in implementing a successful school counseling program. Thus, the purpose of this study was to provide an extensive examination of school counselors' perceived roles and responsibilities in addressing bullying. We addressed four research questions: (1) What is the prevalence of training for school counselors in addressing bullying, violence, and harassment? (2) What do school counselors cite as relevant policies and laws and requisite programming for students in addressing bullying, violence, and harassment? (3) What is the prevalence of specific problems presenting as challenges in schools? (4) What are the differences between school counselors' perceptions of their own responsibility in relation to what they believe their principals perceive as the school counselor's responsibility?

Method

Participants

The target population for this study was school counselors working in elementary, middle, and high schools in the United States. Prior to beginning the study, we conducted an a priori test using G*Power 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) to determine sample size. To have power at .80, a α level of .05, and an effect size of .5, we found that 34 was the recommended sample size for a dependent t test. A total of 228 school counselors participated in the study. Of the participants reporting gender, 185 (81%) were female and 35 (15%) male. Race/ethnicity was reported as 201 (88%) White, 12 (5%) Hispanic, 4 (2%) Black, 1 (0.4%) Asian, and 1 (0.4%) other. Regarding age, 25 (11%) reported being in the 21–30 age range, 53 (23%) in the 31–40 range, 63 (28%) in the 41–50 age range, 52 (23%) in the 51–60 range, and 26 (11%) reported being 61 or older. Most participants ($n = 196$; 86%) had a master's degree, 11 (5%) had a doctoral degree, 10 (4%) had a specialist degree, 1 (0.9%) had a bachelor's degree, and 1 (0.4%) reported another degree. Regarding the length of time working as a school counselor, 54 (24%) reported 1–5 years, 44 (19%) reported 6–10 years, 32 (14%) indicated 11–15 years, 46 (20%) reported 16–20 years, 22 (10%) indicated 21–30 years, and 5 (2%) reported 31 or more years. Finally, participants reported the years worked at their current school: 112 (54%) reported 1–5 years, 34 (16%) reported 6–10 years, 33 (16%) worked 11–15 years, 20 (10%) worked 16–20 years, and 8 (4%) reported 21 or more years.

School counselor participants represented schools located in 27 different states, with 6 states in the Midwest, 5 in the Northeast, 8 in the Southeast, 3 in the Southwest, and 5 in the West. Of the 209 participants reporting the locale type according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 39 (19%) were in rural locales (remote [12], distant [24], fringe [3]), 39 (19%) worked in town locales (remote [14], distant [10], fringe [15]), 68 (33%) were in suburban locales (small [2], midsize [13], large [53]), and 63 (30%) worked in city locales (small [27], midsize [34], large [2]). Two (1%) of the schools were private and 217 (95%) were public. Regarding grade level, 97 (43%) participants worked in schools with Grades K–5, 67 (29%) with Grades 6–8, 28 (12%) with Grades 9–12, 9 (4%) in schools with Grades 6–12, 8 (4%) in K–12 schools, and 7 (3%), in schools serving pre-K–8th grades. In terms of school enrollment, three (1%) reported less than 100 students, 23 (11%) reported a range of 100–299 students, 65 (30%) had 300–499 students, 64 (30%) had 500–699, 30 (14%) had 700–999, and 29 (14%) worked in schools with 1,000 or more students.

Participants estimated the ethnic/racial composition of their student body. According to the school counselors, White students comprised less than 25% of students in 28 schools (14%), 25–74% of students in 81 schools (40%), and 75–100% in 92 (46%) schools. Hispanic students were reported as comprising less than 25% of the students in 146 schools (76%), 25–74% of students in 40 schools (21%), and 75–100% of students in 5 schools (3%). Black students were reported as making up less than 25% of students in 168 schools (85%), 25–74% of students in 23 schools (12%), and 75–100% of students in 7 schools (4%). Asian students made up less than 25% of the student body in 150 (98%) schools, 25–74% of students in 3 (2%), and 75–100% of students in 0 (0%) schools. Multiracial students comprised less than 25% of the student body in 157 (94%) schools, 25–74% of students in 9 (5%), and 75–100% of students in 1 (0.6%) school. Finally, students who were other race/ethnicity comprised less than 25% of the student body in 74 (91%) schools, 25–74% of students in 3 (4%), and 75–100% of students in 4 (5%) schools. To estimate the socioeconomic status of the represented school communities, participants reported the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Thirty-

six (18%) school counselors reported less than 25% of the student body, 62 (31%) indicated 25–49% of students, 56 (28%) reported 50–74% of students, and 47 (23%) reported that 75–100% of students received free or reduced lunch.

Instrumentation

The survey addressed three areas: (a) problems related to school bullying, (b) school counselor's perception of their responsibility to address bullying and what they believe the principal expects from them, and (c) demographic questions. The first section was based on school climate literature (i.e., https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/edscls) and contained 27 items related to school problems. Participants assessed how much of a challenge each of the problems currently was at their school using a 4-point scale ranging from *not a challenge* to *serious challenge*. We used the literature to guide the selection of these items to focus on the specific school problems that we wanted to assess in this study. The second section was based on bullying prevention literature (i.e., HHS, 2014a; National Association of School Psychologists, 2010; Olweus et al., 2007) and included 29 items. Participants rated how much the item represented their responsibility and their principal's perception of the task as the school counselor's responsibility using a 4-point scale ranging from *not at all responsible* to *primary responsibility*. We developed these items from the literature because we were unable to find an existing instrument that measured this area of focus. Finally, the demographic questions included items about (a) the participating school counselors, (b) their schools, (c) bullying, violence, and harassment training for school counselors, and (d) laws and policies regarding bullying, and bullying, violence, and harassment programs for students. Prior to data collection, the authors and other experts (school counselors, school counselor educators, and instrument development experts) reviewed the survey for content, structure, and length.

Procedures

After receiving approval from the institutional review board at our university, we randomly selected states in each of the five regions of the United States (Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and West). We then randomly selected school districts within the four NCES geographic locales (city, suburban, town, and rural) in each of the states. Next, we identified websites for each school district and selected schools within the districts to obtain contact information for school counselors. For schools with more than one school counselor, we randomly selected only one school counselor. We then e-mailed the school counselors a link to complete the survey in Qualtrics, an online survey portal.

Data Analysis

We examined the first three research questions using descriptive statistics to determine the prevalence of bullying prevention training; laws, policies, and programs; and school problems. With 228 participants, the sample had sufficient power that we could conduct *t* tests to examine the fourth research question, determining differences between the school counselors' perceptions and what they believed were their principals' expectations. We found deviations from normality in the data prior to conducting the *t* tests. Although nonnormality is less of a concern due to the large sample size, we analyzed the data using both a dependent *t* test and a Wilcoxon signed-rank test, and both tests yielded the same results.

Results

Research Question 1

In regard to attending violence and bullying prevention training, 101 (44%) of the school counselors reported that they had attended training and 119 (52%) reported that they had not (see Table 1). Of the 139 participants that responded to an item about training sponsorship, 52 (63%) reported that their school sponsored the training, while 87 (37%) reported that their school did not. For those reporting hours of training received ($n = 79$), 15 (19%) reported 1–2 hr, 15 (19%) 3–5 hr, 29 (37%) 6–10 hr, 17 (22%) more than 10 hr, and 3 (4%) reported that the number of hours varied. Finally, of 133 participants that responded to an item about the helpfulness of the training, 38 (29%) reported that it was very helpful, 54 (41%) reported that it was somewhat helpful, and 3 (2%) reported that it was not helpful at all.

Research Question 2

The school counselors were asked whether their school district followed an antibullying policy or law. Of the 210 responding, 176 (84%) reported following both a policy and law, 6 (3%) reported law only, 22 (10%) reported policy only, and 6 (3%) reported neither (see Table 1). Participants reporting that their school district followed a policy or law were asked how strictly it was followed. Of the 206 respondents, 117 (57%) reported that the district followed very strictly, 88 (43%) reported somewhat strictly, and 1 (0.5%) reported not at all strictly. Those reporting that the school district followed a policy or law were also asked whether it was useful; of the 202 responding, 160 (79%) answered yes and 42 (21%) answered no.

Regarding a prevention program, 133 participants (62%) reported that their school had a bullying, violence, and harassment program, and 83 (38%) reported that their school did not have a program. Of the 147 participants responding, 87 (59%) reported that all staff implemented the program, and 60 (42%) reported that not all staff implemented it. Regarding staff involvement in the program, of the 136 participants responding, 71 (52%) reported that all staff participated, and 65 (48%) reported that they did not participate. Regarding student participation, of the 131 respondents, 96 (73%) reported that all students participated, and 45 (34%) reported that they did not all participate. For those that had established antibullying

Table 1. Prevalence of Antibullying Training and Policies/Laws.

Item	Responses				
Prevention training	Yes	No			
	101 (44%)	119 (52%)			
School-sponsored training	Yes	No			
	52 (63%)	87 (37%)			
Hours of training	1–2 hr	3–5 hr	6–10 hr	11+ hours	Varied
	15 (19%)	15 (19%)	29 (37%)	17 (22%)	3 (4%)
Training helpful	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not at all helpful		
	38 (29%)	54 (41%)	3 (2%)		
Follow policy or law	Policy and law	Law only	Policy only	Neither	
	176 (84%)	6 (3%)	22 (10%)	6 (3%)	
Strict in following policy/law	Very strict	Somewhat	Not strict		
	117 (57%)	88 (43%)	1 (0.5%)		
Useful policy/law	Yes	No			
	160 (79%)	42 (21%)			
Antibullying program	Yes	No			
	133 (62%)	83 (38%)			
All staff implement program	Yes	No			
	87 (59%)	60 (42%)			
All staff participate	Yes	No			
	71 (52%)	65 (48%)			
All students participate	Yes	No			
	96 (73%)	45 (34%)			
Monitor effectiveness	Yes	No			
	88 (64%)	49 (36%)			
Evaluation methods	Student survey	Teacher survey	Discipline referrals	Student verbal report	Other methods
	46 (50%)	32 (36%)	71 (79%)	44 (49%)	22 (24%)

Note. Response rate varies by item.

programs, we asked participants whether they monitored the effectiveness of the program, and 88 (64%) of the 137 responding participants responded yes, while 49 (36%) responded no. Ninety participants reported strategies for measuring effectiveness, including student questionnaires ($n = 46$; 50%), teacher questionnaires ($n = 32$; 36%), discipline referrals ($n = 71$; 79%), student verbal reports ($n = 44$; 49%), and other methods to monitor effectiveness ($n = 22$; 24%).

Research Question 3

Survey responses identified seven problem areas that at least 50% of the school counselors rated as a moderate or serious challenge within their schools (see Table 2). These problems, with participant rankings, included teased by same sex (62%), teased (61%), social exclusion (60%), absenteeism (58%), uninvolved parents (57%), unmotivated to learn (53%), and cyberbullying (51%).

Research Question 4

The fourth research question focused on the differences between school counselors' perception of their roles as compared to their perception of their principals' beliefs about the school counselors' roles and responsibilities. We found statistically significant differences at the .05 level for 18 of the 29 items related to school bullying initiatives (Items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, and 29; see Table 3). School counselors perceived greater primary responsibility in each of these areas than they believed their principals perceived, except for Items 7 and 13 (report incidents to parents and develop school policies about consequences). School counselors perceived themselves as having less primary responsibility for reporting incidents to parents than they perceived their principals to support. They also perceived themselves as having a less primary role in developing policies than they perceived their principals believed to be the school counselors' role.

Discussion

The present study contributes to the literature through examining the prevalence of antibullying training, policies and laws, problems presenting challenges within schools, and the roles and responsibilities of the school counselor in addressing bullying. Regarding training, policies, and laws, a majority of school counselors reported that they follow school policies and state laws, have antibullying programs, and that all staff and students participate. However, nearly 40% of school counselors reported that school policies and programs were not applied universally. We were surprised to find that less than half of the school counselors surveyed reported that they had training specific to bullying prevention. This finding is concerning because researchers report that comprehensive training for faculty and

Table 2. Prevalence of Problems as a Challenge Within Schools.

Issue	Not a Challenge	Minor Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Serious Challenge
Tardy	10% (22)	46% (105)	35% (79)	10% (22)
Absent	6% (13)	36% (83)	36% (81)	22% (51)
Fight	30% (69)	52% (118)	13% (30)	4% (10)
Threaten/bully	8% (17)	51% (117)	33% (75)	8% (19)
Steal	33% (74)	56% (128)	10% (22)	1% (2)
Weapons	80% (182)	16% (36)	2% (4)	2% (4)
Teased	2% (4)	37% (84)	46% (105)	15% (34)
Social exclusion	5% (11)	35% (79)	45% (103)	15% (35)
Teased by same sex	3% (7)	35% (80)	48% (109)	14% (32)
Teased by different sex	8% (17)	50% (115)	35% (79)	8% (17)
Sexual harassment	36% (83)	47% (107)	12% (27)	5% (11)
Cyberbullying	13% (30)	35% (80)	32% (73)	19% (44)
Vandalism	49% (111)	42% (96)	7% (15)	2% (4)
Drugs/inhalants	69% (158)	23% (52)	4% (8)	4% (9)
Alcohol	76% (174)	19% (44)	2% (5)	2% (4)
Gangs	78% (176)	16% (35)	5% (11)	2% (4)
Disrespect teachers	19% (43)	43% (98)	28% (63)	10% (22)
Unmotivated to learn	8% (17)	40% (90)	36% (82)	17% (38)
Uninvolved parents	12% (26)	32% (72)	37% (84)	20% (44)
Racial tension	36% (81)	50% (114)	13% (29)	1% (3)
Sarcasm/put-downs	6% (14)	47% (107)	36% (81)	11% (25)
Overinvolved parents	33% (76)	40% (90)	22% (49)	5% (12)
Students ignore bullying of others	11% (25)	49% (111)	34% (78)	6% (13)
Teachers ignore teasing	44% (100)	42% (95)	12% (27)	2% (5)
Teachers put down students	31% (71)	54% (122)	13% (29)	3% (6)
Inadequate teacher supervision	38% (87)	42% (96)	17% (39)	3% (6)
Homelessness	15% (35)	45% (102)	25% (57)	15% (34)

staff is a crucial component of an effective antibullying program (Young et al., 2009). In a study of school counselors, Jacobsen and Bauman (2007) reported that trained school staff were more likely to identify bullying problems and intervene appropriately in bullying incidents. At least half of the school counselors in the current study identified four bullying related problems as being a moderate or serious challenge in their school (i.e., teased by same sex, teased, social exclusion, and cyberbullying), which suggests that counselors viewed these relational forms of bullying as important to address within their schools. This finding fits with previous surveys of school counselors and psychologists who reported high rates of bullying as somewhat of a problem (70%) or a serious problem (20%) and identified relational bullying as the most frequent form (Lund et al., 2012).

We were surprised to find that less than half of the school counselors surveyed reported that they had training specific to bullying prevention. . . . At least half of the school counselors in the current study identified four bullying-related problems as being a moderate or serious challenge in their school.

On more than half of the items, school counselors reported differences in their own perceptions of their roles and responsibilities and what they believed to be their principals' expectations. A majority of these differences (12 of 18) were focused on the initiation of bullying programming, with school counselors perceiving greater primary responsibility for direct services than they believed principals to perceive about the school counselor's responsibilities. These direct services included providing lessons or psychoeducational resources to students on topics associated with bullying (assertiveness, supporting the individual experiencing bullying, student role, examining beliefs and practices, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and introduce schoolwide rules and activities), responsive services (encouraging reporting, intervening in incidents, facilitating conflict resolution, helping the individual experiencing bullying), and assessment (conducting schoolwide assessment). In other words, school counselors believed they should be more involved in direct bullying interventions than they believed their principals thought they should. This may be related to school counselors perceiving that their principals view bullying as a discipline issue. This finding is surprising because the provision of direct services is a key responsibility of school counselors as defined by the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012). Goodman-Scott, Doyle, and Brott (2013) found that the school counselor's role in these activities (i.e., conducting lessons) was crucial in the success of a bullying prevention program. In view of prior research that shows school counselors often hear reports of bullying incidents (Blake et al., 2014) and are more likely to intervene than teachers (Bauman,

Table 3. School Counselors' Perceptions of Their Roles and Responsibilities in Addressing Bullying and What They Believe Their Principal Thinks About School Counselors' Roles and Responsibilities.

Item	School Counselor: No Responsibility	Principal: No Responsibility	School Counselor: Assist	Principal: Assist	School Counselor: Equal	Principal: Equal	School Counselor: Primary	Principal: Primary
1. Investigate bullying incidents	8% (17)	10% (23)	51% (116)	47% (108)	31% (70)	30% (68)	10% (23)	11% (26)
2. Encourage students to privately report	0.4% (1)	2% (5)	14% (32)	18% (42)	63% (144)	63% (144)	22% (49)	15% (33)
3. Introduce school-wide rules and activities	1% (3)	7% (15)	16% (37)	20% (46)	39% (88)	33% (75)	43% (98)	39% (88)
4. Intervene in incidents observed	0.4% (1)	0.4% (1)	4% (8)	7% (15)	47% (107)	50% (113)	48% (110)	41% (94)
5. Provide lessons on how to support a victim	2% (5)	9% (20)	8% (19)	15% (33)	18% (41)	18% (41)	70% (160)	56% (128)
6. Provide lessons on difference of assertive and aggressive	3% (7)	12% (28)	10% (23)	14% (31)	22% (51)	22% (50)	64% (145)	50% (115)
7. Report incidents to parents	14% (31)	12% (28)	38% (87)	33% (74)	38% (86)	40% (92)	10% (22)	13% (29)
8. Handle problem privately with individual student	4% (7)	4% (9)	26% (59)	24% (54)	45% (102)	50% (114)	25% (58)	21% (47)
9. Provide lessons on roles students can take	3% (6)	10% (22)	9% (21)	14% (31)	20% (46)	21% (48)	67% (153)	54% (122)
10. Develop school policies about reporting	17% (39)	22% (50)	43% (97)	38% (86)	32% (72)	28% (63)	7% (16)	11% (25)
11. Introduce school-wide rules and activities to staff	8% (19)	15% (33)	31% (70)	26% (60)	38% (87)	36% (83)	21% (48)	22% (50)
12. Discuss and model conflict resolution	1% (3)	2% (5)	11% (26)	20% (46)	33% (76)	38% (87)	53% (120)	37% (85)
13. Develop school policies about consequences	25% (56)	29% (67)	44% (101)	32% (73)	25% (58)	25% (57)	4% (8)	13% (29)
14. Help a student victim learn how to respond	0% (0)	0.9% (2)	7% (16)	16% (36)	26% (60)	33% (74)	66% (150)	50% (113)
15. Facilitate conflict resolution with classes	5% (12)	9% (20)	14% (32)	21% (48)	31% (71)	33% (74)	49% (111)	36% (81)
16. Inform parents of school's policies	17% (39)	17% (39)	43% (97)	35% (79)	32% (72)	34% (78)	7% (16)	12% (27)
17. Train teachers on lessons for student roles	19% (44)	21% (47)	28% (64)	33% (75)	27% (61)	25% (58)	24% (55)	20% (46)
18. Help students examine beliefs and prejudices	4% (10)	8% (19)	13% (30)	20% (46)	36% (81)	37% (84)	45% (102)	32% (72)
19. Inform students of school's policies	5% (12)	8% (17)	29% (66)	28% (63)	42% (96)	44% (101)	22% (50)	19% (44)
20. Help families locate counseling resources	1% (3)	4% (10)	8% (19)	18% (41)	18% (42)	21% (49)	70% (160)	55% (125)
21. Train teachers on lessons to support victim	20% (46)	22% (51)	27% (61)	28% (63)	27% (62)	24% (55)	23% (54)	24% (55)
22. Teach students systematic problem solving	1% (3)	8% (17)	15% (34)	22% (51)	30% (68)	29% (67)	53% (120)	39% (89)
23. Inform teachers about policies	22% (49)	24% (55)	36% (81)	32% (72)	26% (59)	26% (60)	15% (34)	17% (38)
24. Consult with teachers about how to respond	0.9% (2)	2% (5)	11% (26)	18% (42)	43% (98)	45% (103)	43% (97)	32% (72)
25. Train teachers to provide lessons on differences of assertive and aggressive	21% (47)	26% (59)	25% (58)	28% (63)	25% (58)	23% (52)	25% (57)	22% (50)
26. Conduct school-wide assessment of bullying	17% (38)	24% (55)	23% (53)	22% (49)	29% (65)	27% (61)	30% (69)	26% (60)
27. Train teachers to provide conflict resolution	20% (45)	25% (57)	31% (70)	27% (62)	28% (63)	26% (60)	20% (46)	20% (45)
28. Train teachers to provide classroom discussions on students' beliefs and prejudices	22% (49)	26% (60)	32% (73)	30% (69)	25% (56)	21% (48)	20% (45)	21% (48)
29. Serve on a committee for prevention efforts	13% (29)	15% (35)	20% (45)	20% (45)	38% (86)	41% (94)	28% (64)	22% (50)

Note. Response options: school counselor perceives no responsibility for this area, school counselor perceives their principal thinking that the school counselor has no responsibility for this area, school counselor perceives responsibility for assisting with this area, school counselor perceives the principal thinking that the school counselor should have responsibility for assisting with this area, school counselor perceives equal responsibility for this area, school counselor perceives the principal thinking that the school counselor has equal responsibility for this area, school counselor perceives primary responsibility for this area, and school counselor perceives the principal thinking that the school counselor has primary responsibility for this area.

Rigby, & Hoppa, 2008), this finding is problematic. If the school counselor is not providing these direct student services, then who is? According to Smith-Adcock, Swank, Greenidge, and Henesy (2019), teachers reported often feeling uncertain and lacking confidence in how to respond to bullying and wanting help and support from experts on bullying, which includes school counselors. Consistent with Bradshaw, O'Brennan, and Sawyer's (2008) findings regarding school counselors' role in coordinating antibullying programs, school counselors in the current study endorsed their role in working with teachers (training teachers on conducting lessons, consulting with teachers) and parents (providing resources to families). Goodman-Scott, Doyle, and Brott (2013) similarly acknowledged the importance of the school counselor collaborating with stakeholders (i.e., parents, teachers) in the success of bullying prevention. Finally, school counselors endorsed their involvement in related administrative tasks (i.e., serve on prevention committee). These organizational and leadership roles are also crucial, with Bauman (2008) reporting the establishment of a steering committee as an important first step in having an effective antibullying program.

In comparison to their own beliefs about their roles, school counselors believed that their principals expected them to take less prominent roles and responsibilities in addressing bullying. This finding is unfortunate because school counselors are often well prepared to play a lead role in antibullying programming (Bauman, 2008). Disagreement between their own beliefs and their perceptions of principals' expectations about providing antibullying direct services likely contributes to school counselors being underutilized in schoolwide bullying prevention. For example, Lund et al. (2012) reported that, despite their mental health knowledge, school counselors and school psychologists had a limited role in selecting antibullying curricula, with administrators most often selecting the curriculum. School counselors' perceptions that principals do not endorse many of their roles in bullying prevention as highly as the school counselors do may discourage counselors' leadership efforts. This finding is of particular concern because researchers found that antibullying lessons led by school counselors decreased bullying incidents, and the use of data to demonstrate outcomes to administrators and other constituents is crucial to program effectiveness (Young et al., 2009).

In comparison to their own beliefs about their roles, school counselors believed that their principals expected them to take less prominent roles and responsibilities in addressing bullying.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has limitations to discuss in considering the results. First, we did not directly collect data from principals, and principals' perceptions may differ from school counselors' beliefs about those perceptions. Although the current study did not include surveying principals, school counselors' perceptions of their principals' views are also important for the counseling profession. School counselors' beliefs about their principal's expectations reflect their experiences and arguably influence how they fulfill their roles and responsibilities, even though counselors' perceptions may vary from their principal's actual beliefs. Future research may focus on comparing school counselors' perceptions to principals' regarding the school counselor's roles and responsibilities in bullying prevention. Regarding sample representation, the number of male participants and individuals of diverse racial/ethnic groups were limited. In conducting future research, scholars may seek to have larger representation of these groups. Regarding instrumentation, future research may focus on further examining the items pertaining to roles and responsibilities used in this study to determine the extent to which they are accurate for school counselors and whether aspects are missing, in light of the fact that we developed these items for this study because no existing measure focused on this topic. Although the current study focused on examining school counselors' perceptions related to antibullying activities, we did not assess the amount of time school counselors spent on these activities. Future studies may also focus on school counselors' engagement in and amount of time spent on specific activities to further understand their perceived versus actual roles and responsibilities in addressing bullying, while also examining who shares in these roles and responsibilities within schools. Thus, future research may involve both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to further examine the roles and responsibilities of school counselors related to bullying prevention.

Implications for School Counselors

Although this study revealed that a majority of schools had antibullying programs, less than half of school counselors had training in bullying prevention, and many reported not having universal (schoolwide) programs or not including all school staff in providing interventions in their schools. School administrators may assume that school counselors have extensive knowledge and expertise in addressing bullying and that additional professional development is not needed; however, graduate programs cannot extensively address all aspects of bullying in counselor training. Therefore, school counselors must advocate for support and funding in attending professional development related to providing antibullying interventions to students (e.g., classroom lessons, small groups) and must take a leadership role in coordinating universal antibullying programs. Furthermore, a discrepancy between what school counselors identified as their role versus what they perceived that their principal expects suggests the need for school counselors to educate principals about their roles and responsibilities related to bullying prevention and intervention programs. To promote systemic change, school counselors can use the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012) to help advocate for their

role in conducting universal antibullying lessons. School counselors can also present research findings to principals and other constituents (e.g., parents, school staff) about the prevalence of bullying, its consequences, and possible outcomes of antibullying programs led by school counselors. An important foundation of successful school counselor advocacy efforts is developing a strong working relationship with the principal and engaging in shared decision-making (Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009). School counselors may seek to develop partnerships with researchers at universities to assist with evaluating the effectiveness of their interventions.

School counselors must advocate for support and funding in attending professional development related to providing antibullying interventions . . . and must take a leadership role in coordinating universal antibullying programs.

Conclusion

Bullying is a prominent issue in schools and necessitates the implementation of comprehensive antibullying programs. Although prior literature suggests that school counselors are well suited to facilitate programs to address bullying, this study revealed that many school counselors did not have specific training in antibullying programming. School counselors viewed themselves as taking on prominent roles and responsibilities in addressing bullying in their schools. However, school counselors' perception of their roles and responsibilities differed from what they believed their principal's perception to be. Thus, we encourage school counselors to seek professional development opportunities and advocate for their role to ensure that bullying does not go unaddressed.

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