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Understanding School Bullying in Chinese Secondary Schools

By

Siqi He

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Education
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada
2021

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Understanding School Bullying in Chinese Secondary Schools

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Bullying has been defined as a person or several people who were affected negatively by another individual or group over and over again (Olweus, 2013). It has been reported that both the victims and perpetrators of bullying are more likely to have suicidal ideation and other suicidal behaviours. Moreover, bullying can be a precursor for school violence and can contribute to poor academic performance. The purpose of the study tends to raise awareness on the subject among teachers, parents, and people who work for school health and administrators on the prevalence and factors associated with bullying among adolescents in China. It should lead to efforts to establish courses and policies for school health and youth health. It should also help to establish trends in the prevalence of bullying actions.

Key words: School bullying, Bullies, Victims, Prevention, China

DEDICATION

*To the holy grace of God,
to my parents Jianxi He and Haiyun Fan,
to my advisor Dr. Smith,
to my tutor Jason Horn
and to all people who supported me.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/SYMBOLS

OCP: One-child policy

KFC: Kentucky Fried Chicken

ICT: Information and communication technology

CINIC: China internet network information center

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

NSSC: National school safety center

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the Chinese film, *Cry Me A Sad River*, a young girl who attends a local high school is the victim of salacious rumors and aggressive bullying. The pain is so intense that she eventually commits suicide by drowning. Though a fictional narrative, it is emblematic of a common problem in China's schools: bullying. There are an increasing number of Chinese students who report being victims of bullying (Han et al., 2017). However, it is difficult to get information on this topic as data on this is often suppressed by Chinese media because it is considered to be sensitive information. As a result, there is limited information on the factors that have contributed to the rise in bullying in China, the forms that it takes, the impact it has on victims and bullies, or approaches that can be used to reduce the occurrence and impact of bullying. To address this growing concern, it is critical that research be conducted to provide insights into these gaps. This study identified the factors that shape this trend and established recommendations to address the issue and for future research.

Background of the Problem Situation

School bullying in China is under-investigated, though it has become a national concern recently (Zhang et al., 2013). The rates of bullying that have been reported are startling: over 26% report being victimized, over 9% report bullying others, and almost 29% report witnessing bullying (Cook et al., 2010). In a review of school bullying in China, conducted by Chan and Wong (2015), the self-reported prevalence of victimization from 2014 to 2015 ranged from 2% to 66%, respectively, in Mainland

China, 24% to 50%, respectively, in Taiwan, 20% to 62%, respectively, in Hong Kong, and 26% to 78%, respectively, in Macau.

Table 1. Victimization Rate

	2014	2015
Mainland China	2%	66%
Hong Kong	20%	62%
Taiwan	24%	50%
Macau	26%	78%

Note: Data sources are from Chan and Wong (2015).

Bullying is a major source of victimization among youth. Although there has been growing interest in the topic in the last 20 years, studies that have been reported have mainly come from Europe and the United States. There are also some reports from Hong Kong, India, and Korea. Wong (2004) has reported that if left ungoverned, bullying can be an omen of school violence and crime. Besides, both the victims and perpetrators of bullying were more likely to report suicidal ideation and other suicidal behaviours than those not associated with bullying. Wong (2004) previously reported that bullying of girls in China contributed to low academic achievement. Therefore, bullying has an important public health significance. While most reports on bullying are from studies conducted among youth and in-school children, it is also important to recognize that bullying may also occur among adults and in out-of-school settings (Moon & Alarid, 2015). Bullying may occur at work or within prison settings. For the current study, however, interest is in adolescents in in-school settings. Even though there is growing interest in adolescents' in-

school bullying, there are limited data from the emerging economy nations, such as China. In order to raise awareness on the subject in China, therefore, the researcher conducted a secondary analysis of the Beijing Global School-Based Health Survey (2003) to investigate the prevalence and correlates of having been bullied among in-school adolescents. Nationally representative surveys from 2005 to 2009 found that 28% of young people in junior school and high school experienced school bullying (Arseneault et al., 2010).

Definitions

It is important to define bullying and outline critical background information relating to this phenomenon. Given all efforts made to analyze and estimate the prevalence of school bullying, it is important to consider whether there are differences in rates based on gender and ethnicity to gain a better understanding of the definition and impact of school bullying. Before exploring school bullying, what factors shape it, and how it impacts both bullies and victims, it is important to define the term. Arseneault et al. (2010) suggested that school bullying is a form of unilateral bullying and adds that in unilateral bullying one child can cause physical or mental injury to another child on purpose. They likewise note that the power between the individuals involved is unbalanced, which leads to one person possessing a physical and/or mental advantage that allows the person to hurt the victim physically or mentally. Such aggressive actions could inhibit students' academic achievement and personal development, eventually causing long-term injury that can reach into adulthood (Moon & Alarid, 2015).

Bullying in school often refers to instances in which a student is regularly a victim of harmful aggression over time from one or more classmates (Olweus, 2013).

Bullying often occurs without provocation and takes the form of peer abuse (Olweus, 1994). More specifically, bullying involves four properties. First, bullying behaviour must take place over an extended period instead of being a single act of aggression. Secondly, it must involve an imbalance of power, with the powerful one taking advantage of the powerless one. Thirdly, bullying should take a verbal, physical, or psychological form. Fourth, sometimes bullying does not involve only one individual against another, but also a group against another group or a group against one individual.

Statement of the Problem Situation

“There is ample evidence that the experience of having been bullied is associated with poor outcomes in both physical and mental health for both school going children and adults” (as cited in Chalamandaris & Piette, 2015, p. 132). Approaches to prevent and solve school bullying could be successfully developed if more was known about the causes and contexts of bullying. For instance, some researchers suggest that the dramatic changes occurring in Chinese society has led to the emergence of bullying and peer victimization (Qiao et al., 2009). First, the rates of divorce have recently risen which has led to an increase in single-parent households. Children who are from divorced families were found to lack self-confidence and, therefore, were easily affected by the negative environment in school (Qiao et al., 2009). For instance, Qiao et al. (2009) reported that students from divorced families had notably higher rates of bullying victimization than children from complete families. Second, there are many children who came from one-child families, having no siblings to communicate with at home and were over-protected by their parents. As a result, these children developed poor social skills, making them vulnerable to bullying victimization in school (Chan & Wong, 2015). Third, due to the

high value Chinese culture places on academic achievement, students' behavioural problems have been overlooked by teachers and school officials. Teachers and school officials have focused primarily on promoting students' academic engagement and performance and not on addressing students' behavioral issues.

Children are affected deeply by the family environment because many customs, norms, and societal rules still flow to children through the medium of family. Good parenting skills have been found to influence children's behaviour. If parents can establish good communication and firm family circumscription to restrict children's behavior, they can build a protective foundation for their children (Zhu et., 2018).

Purpose of the Study

In the 21st century, with China's economic and social development and the continuous advancement of building a better society in an all-round way, education reform and development have also entered a new stage of striving to achieve the modernization of education. Primary and secondary schools are the main social organizations and places in which a country or region conducts national grassroots education activities. Safety and harmony are urgently needed, and the educational environment provides an important foundation for the better development of the school and the healthy growth and comprehensive development of students. Frequent campus bullying in primary and secondary schools has a direct impact and serious harm on civilized and harmonious campus education and the overall development of students' physical and mental health. Moreover, its negative impact can affect students' adulthood and engagement in society.

The Office of the Education Steering Committee of the State Council of China issued the "Notice on the Special Management of Campus Bullying" in 2016 which requires primary and secondary schools in various places to implement of punishment in bullying and insult to the harm caused by the deliberate or malicious use of limbs, language among students. This is the first time that the problem of campus bullying has risen to the national level in China. The central government has begun to pay attention to the problem of campus bullying and to develop special policy documents on campus bullying.

In China, school bullying has been identified as a serious problem plaguing school students nationwide (Zhang et al., 2019). Significant research attention has been directed toward identifying risk factors for bullying and victimization. Thus, a more accurate profile of the characteristics of perpetrators and victims of school bullying can now be sketched (Cook et al., 2010). However, given that protective and promoting factors also play an important role in the etiology and the developmental course of adolescent problem behavior, scientific attention should be broadened beyond its traditional preoccupation with risk factors to encompass protective and promoting factors, so as to inform school bullying prevention strategies for adolescents to aim to reduce the risks and strengthen the protective factors (Ttofi & Farrington, 2012). Future orientation, which refers to an individual's thoughts, plans, and motivations, has been identified as a protective and promoting factor for adolescents. In some degree, the results of this study should raise awareness among parents, teachers, people who work for school health, administrators, psychiatrists, and psychologists on the prevalence and correlates of bullying among

adolescents in China. Up to a point, it also would lead to efforts to develop priorities and to establish programs and policies for school health and youth health.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated concepts, which guides the research, determining what things measure, and what statistical relationships to examine. Theoretical frameworks are central to establishing effective deductive methods that can assess the data collected in a study. Social learning theory was selected as a theoretical framework due to it being very specific and widely accepted.

Social Learning Theory

School bullying involves a complex social dynamic that can be understood by using various theoretical frameworks. Social learning theory is a theory of learning process, which states that learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context. It can occur purely through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement. Social learning includes three aspects: learning by direct experience, informative function of reinforcement, and motivational function of reinforcement. Researchers have used social learning theory broadly to understand both how behaviour is learned and later performed (Cooper & Klein, 2018). It could also help to better understand the motivations behind bullying, bullying's negative effects on victims, and the ways in which school culture plays a role in the prevalence of bullying.

Learning by Direct Experience

Direct experience is a source of learning which is managed through the awarding and penalizing consequences that result from specific actions. Sometimes people try to solve

problems that occur over and over with different approaches. Some of their attempts may be successful whereas others may not be. Through this process of differential reinforcement, successful modes of behavior are eventually selected from exploratory activities, while ineffectual ones are discarded. It is commonly believed that responses are automatically and unconsciously strengthened by immediate consequences. Simple performances can be altered to some degree through reinforcement without awareness of the relationship between one's actions and their outcomes. However, human cognitive skills enable people to profit more extensively from experience than an unthinking organism. Within the framework of social learning theory, reinforcement mainly provides information and encourages future behaviour, even if it also has response strengthening abilities. According to this theory part, we could explain how and why bullying happened. At the same time, we could analysis the approaches on how to prevent school bullying through this theory.

Informative Function of Reinforcement

When people engage in various actions, they learn by studying the outcomes of differential consequences associated with different behaviours. Based on this, they develop hypotheses regarding how certain behaviours correlate with outcomes (Cohen et al., 2017).

Accurate hypotheses give rise to successful performances; however, incorrect ones will lead to ineffective courses of action (Cohen et al., 2017). The differential consequences of overt behaviour that occur outside of the original event can validate or invalidate cognitive events that are the basis of a hypothesis and contribute to the learning of social behaviour (Cohen et al., 2017).

Motivational Function of Reinforcement

Humans have the ability to anticipate outcomes and consider the incentives of an action; thus, the outcomes and conditions of an act may reinforce certain behaviours. As a result, human behaviour is not typically dictated by immediate external reinforcement but long-term gains (Cohen et al., 2017).

Based on prior experiences, people hypothesize that certain behaviours will help them secure desired outcomes whereas others may garner no significant outcomes or could have undesired results. Thus, behaviour is often regulated by anticipated consequences.

Empirical Questions/ Research Hypothesis

This research paper will inquire into the issues of school bullying in China to increase awareness and encourage parents, teachers, and schools to take proactive measures.

1. What factors have led to school bullying?

Specific questions are asked to determine the factors that have led to school bullying (e.g., how do you think the bullying happened?)

2. What are the perceived short- and long-term effects of bullying on bullies and victims?

In the light of the qualitative data collected from participants, the study explored participants' past experiences as bullies, victims, and/or bystanders of bullying incidents to learn about their perceptions of the short- and long-term effects of bullying.

3. How can education serve to reduce rates of bullying?

Based on the data that are collected, the study explored suggestions and strategies for teachers, parents, and school administrators that aim to prevent school bullying.

These three questions are asked to explore the current situation of school bullying in China. The purpose of the study was to raise awareness on the subject among teachers, parents, and people who work for school health and administrators on the prevalence and factors associated with bullying among adolescents in China. The study, likewise, seeks to equip teachers and parents with the knowledge needed to support students who encounter bullying at school. To this end, the study also seeks to provide insights that will help school administrators develop rules and policies that address bullying and create a healthy academic atmosphere for their students.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

To effectively apply the findings developed from this study, it is important to consider both the study's scope and its limitations. Because there is limited research on school bullying in the context of China, the current study serves as a preliminary study that seeks to identify potential trends for future research. Therefore, the findings may not serve to immediately inform policy. With respect to the study's limitations, two participants were interviewed after having graduated from high school. As a result, their recollections may not be as clear, and the direct emotional impact that they had experienced in real time may be minimized.

Alternately, one student who was interviewed was currently in school, and in this context, the participant might be too close to the event to provide objective data. By combining data from both participants who have been years removed from their experiences with bullying and those who were still close to these events, the study will hopefully balance out these potential limitations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children experiencing bullying victimization is a serious social issue in Chinese society. Bullying can be shaped by relational and/or social contexts and can be manifest through physical and verbal abuse (Olweus, 2013). There are many researchers who have studied the psychological consequences of the one-child policy implemented in China on children without siblings since the one-child policy was implemented in 1979. The one-child policy could have impacted school bullying. To understand this phenomenon, it is critical to first understand the contributing factors of school bullying, and in the context of China, it is also critical to understand how China's One-Child-Policy has contributed to this issue.

School Bullying

Rates

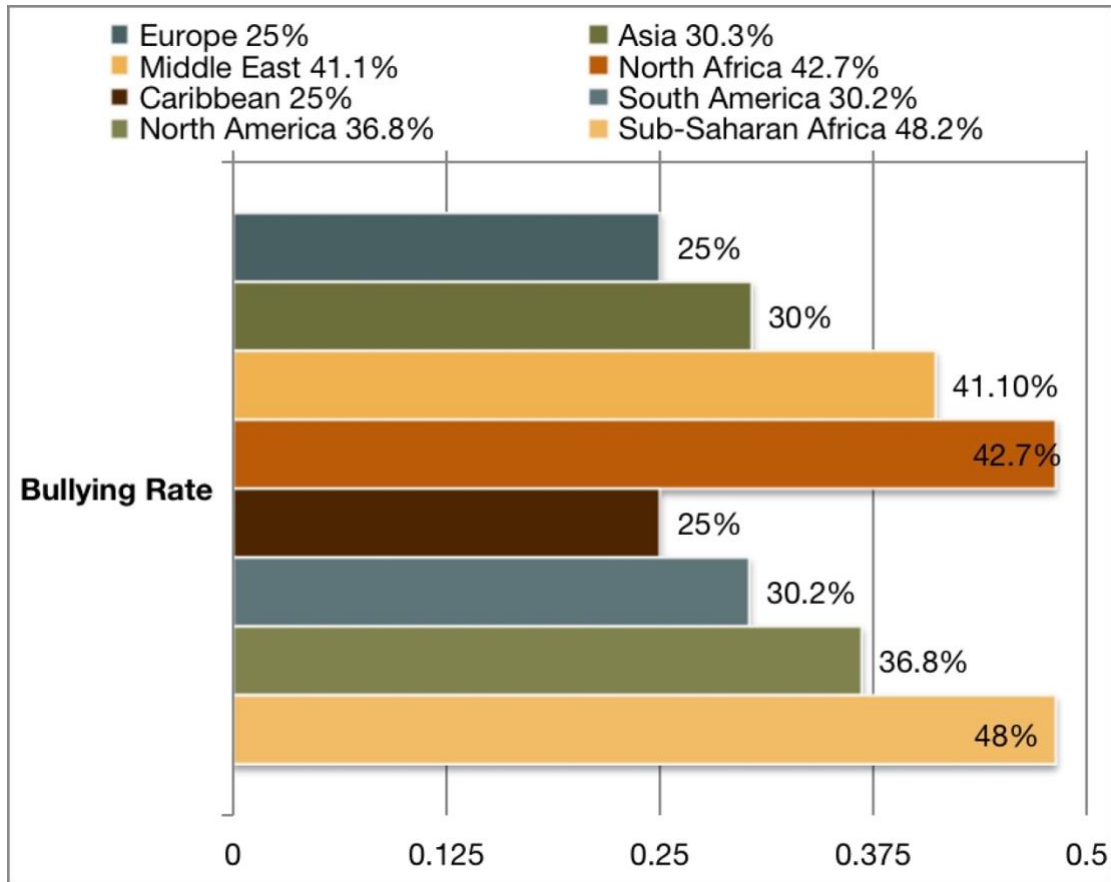
Bullying represents a significant problem in Chinese schools, affecting approximately one in three children. Studies based on national representative data showed that there were around 20% of Chinese young people in China who experienced school bullying (Han & Zhang, 2017). For example, schools from urban area report as many as 26.10% of students being bullied, and students from elementary schools, especially boys, are more likely to engage in bullying actions (Han & Zhang, 2017). However, the rates may be even higher. Zhu and Chan (2015) reported that 54.9% of students in Xi'an, an urban area in China, have been bullied in their lifetime. During the prior year, 44.6% of students reported being bullied. In rural areas, the issue is

significantly worse. Children who come from rural areas do not think there is any problem regarding sneering at their classmates, which is partly due to loose disciplinary rules and poorer quality of teaching (Zhang, Zhou, & Tao, 2019). An investigation of victims of school bullying in rural China could significantly contribute to the understanding of the problem in the vast child population of the developing world. A study, using a nationally representative dataset, found that dropout rates across junior high schools in 2010 were as high as 14% (Li, 2006). According to a study completed in 2012 in rural China, 14% of students dropped out of school by the first month of grade seven (Yiet al., 2012). Yiet also found that nearly 13% of students left school between the beginning of seventh grade and the beginning of eighth grade. This dropout rate might have been influenced by children's experiences with bullying.

Ethnic Differences

A recent report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) demonstrated that the global prevalence of self-reported bullying victimization is 22.8% in Central America, 25% in the Caribbean, 25% in Europe, 30.2% in South America, 30.3% in Asia, 31.7% in North America, 36.8% in the Pacific, 41.1% in the Middle East, 42.7% in North Africa, and 48.2% in Sub-Saharan Africa. School violence and school bullying have become a global concern (Olweus, 2013).

Figure 1 Bulling Rate of 10 Areas Worldwide



Note: Data resources are from UNESCO (2019).

Gender

Studies conducted in mainland China have shown that the prevalence rates of self-reported bullying victimization and perpetration range from 2% to 66% and 2% to 34%, respectively, while the prevalence rates of self-reported cyberbullying victimization and perpetration range from 14% to 57% and 3% to 35%, respectively Li (2006). Gender seems to be an important factor in understanding the experiences of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Keith and Martin (2005) found that female students are more prone to engaging in cyberbullying because it is a mode of verbal or relational aggression. Li (2006) reported that more male students respond as being a traditional

bully and cyberbully. There were notable differences with respect to bullying between males and females in China: 75% of bullies and more than 50% of victims are males (Li, 2006). A study found that those who are involved in bully and victim issues were usually boys who had lower social status, and victim students displayed serious difficulties in relationships (Keith & Martin, 2005). It was also found that females are better adapted and more involved in the social climate of the classroom than males. All these results suggest that social aspects contribute to maintain bullying among contemporaries, which may give a reasonable explanation about why levels of bullying do not reduce and why boys are more likely to engage in bullying than girls (Li, 2006). Males have been considered the more aggressive gender in research on bullying and aggression for decades (Espelage & Horne, 2008). Chinese researchers have also continuously found that males are significantly more likely than females to be engaged in bullying actions. Consistent with international research findings, that male students in middle and high schools are involved in public physical forms of aggression, whereas females were more likely to be engaged in non-physical bullying such as spreading rumours and relational aggression (Lefler & Cohen, 2015). They also reported that males were notably more likely to be engaged in school bullying. Moreover, boys showed physically aggressive actions. However, girls were more prone to express verbal bullying. To some extent, gender acts as a distinguishing factor in how students perceive the situation; for instance, in the type of aggression, most of the boys indicate insults and threats, but girls add rejection. Gender also is a factor with regard to the frequency of aggression. For boys, it occurs more frequently than for girls.

Age

Several research findings have indicated that prevalence of bullying and peer victimization seems to be much higher among younger children than older children and adolescents in China (Chen, 2001; He, 2002; Qiao et al., 2009). To illustrate, He (2002) reported from a sample of 688 students, from 11 to 16 years old, students from elementary schools are more likely to be engaged in bullying than students from junior schools. Qiao et al.'s (2009) study, including a sample of 187,328 students from junior and high schools in an urban area, also found that high school students reported fewer incidences of bullying, compared to junior school students. There are several explanations for why younger children are more easily involved in bullying than older children. When children mature, they experience the changes of physical and psychological development, which can protect them from peer victimization in school (Qiao et al., 2009). Moreover, older youth have greater self-control than the younger children, which successfully suppresses attack tendencies. Finally, younger children may report being victimized by their peers more frequently than older children, as suggested by several international study findings (Beran et al., 2004).

Cyberbullying

With the popularization of the Internet and development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), online communication has become a common mode of communication. With this change, social phenomena existing off-line have begun to appear online. Cyberbullying is an example of this trend, which has received increasing attention because of its potentially serious consequences and increasing prevalence.

Cyberbullying is the action of intentional, invasive and occurs several times conducted by

a person or a group instrumentally using ICT (Marees & Petermann, 2012). Although many schools take actions to reduce cyber bullying by prevention programs, the victimization of cyber bullying are far away from being eradicated.

Definition

Cyberbullying can be defined as antagonistic or aggressive behaviors performed through information and communication technologies (ICT) that are intended to harm or hurt other people (Camacho et al., 2018). It has been regarded as a serious concern in school worldwide and is one of the most common and potentially serious forms of school violence. With the improvement of technology, those who have access to it face related problems. One example, growing in reach and frequency is cyberbullying, defined as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Camacho et al., 2018). Although varying definitions have been provided by scholars, this version is the most comprehensive and captures the most important elements. First, cyberbullying includes aggressive action conducted over and over again. Secondly, many victims of cyberbullying suffer pain, including mental and physical pain. Overall, cyberbullying involves communication technology usage to harass, threaten, or harm other people with the forms of sending vicious messages or posting libelous information. The potential for cyberbullying has grown with the increasing availability of network and mobile phones for the public. Examples of cyberbullying include receiving threatening messages, having private text messages or emails forwarded, and spreading embarrassing pictures or rumours online. Cyberbullying occurs all over the world.

Background

The significant development of communication technologies has brought meaningful changes in the patterns of lives and learning environments for children and youth. Many children and adolescents use personal or public websites, social networking, chat rooms from the Internet, text messages, and email or digital image messaging in order to acquire news, communicate with people, and enjoy games (Cross et al., 2016). Despite the many advantages resulting from these high-speed changes of technology, one negative aspect has been the facilitation of cyberbullying, which is becoming a worldwide phenomenon (Cross et al., 2016).

Although researchers in many Western countries (e.g., United States, Australia, Europe) have been conducting research on cyberbullying, research in non-Western countries (e.g., Korea, China, Taiwan) has begun more recently (Li, 2008). Cyberbullying is becoming a serious social issue globally, and it is predicted that its prevalence will increase as information and communication technologies continues to develop and become more accessible to young people around the world(Li, 2008).

Rates. In Mainland China, the prevalence of self-reported traditional school bullying victimization ranges from 2% to 66%, whereas rates of self-reported perpetrated school bullying ranges from 2% to 34% (Li, 2008). There are 18.4% of 2,992 Taiwanese youth were cyber victims, 5.8% were cyber bullies, and 11.2% were cyber victims–cyber bullies(Li, 2008).

The China Internet Network Information Center (CINIC, 2012) reported that the total number of Chinese Internet citizens reached 537.6 million in June 2012, with adolescents (10- to 19-years-old) occupying 25.4%. This has made cyberbullying among adolescents a serious concern for the society. Indeed, the prevalence rate of self-reported

victimization has found to range from 14% to 57% while self-reported perpetration has shown to range from 3% to 35% (Li, 2008; Zhou et al., 2013). According to the studies in recent years in China, the prevalence of cyberbullying ranges from 8.9% to 70%. However, research on cyberbullying among adolescents in school has just started in mainland China. Both cyberbullying perpetrators and victims are at risk of having physical, psychological, and behavioral issues which was shown by previous research. there is a survey in China indicated that cyberbullying victims suffered from poorer health and more severe depressive symptoms than the general population, as well as posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms.

Relative to younger children, older children or adolescents are more able to protect themselves from peer victimization at school as their physical and psychological features are becoming stronger and more mature. Meanwhile, older children or adolescents were more likely to have a higher level of self-control, which in turn better inhibits their aggressive tendencies (Chui & Chan, 2012). Children who were overweight and obese were also likely to be victimized by their peers, especially verbal victimization. Like traditional school bullying, males were more likely to engage in and to experience cyberbullying (Zhou et al., 2013). Adolescents with lower academic achievement were also more likely to victimize their peers in the cyber world. The popularity of Internet use among Chinese adolescents makes cyberbullying a social phenomenon deserving of attention.

Contributing Factors of School Bullying

About 10% of children are regularly victimized by school bullying, with the rates increasing and stabilizing around late elementary school (Nansel et al., 2001). Bullied

children are more likely to experience negative academic outcomes, including greater school avoidance, decreased classroom engagement, and lower academic achievement (Buhs, 2005). Many studies focus on the factors that cause children to become bullies; however, teachers and parents also need to understand what factors might cause children to become victims of bullying.

Contributing factors: Bullies.

Even if there are some differences in the form of bullies, they may have similar personalities which conduce to bullying. Bullies are generally aggressive and destructive, and they are often in a dominant position among students (Carney & Merrell, 2001). Meanwhile, they tend to have the personality of being easily angered and impetuous and they tend to have a fear of failure (Olweus, 1994). It is often difficult for bullies to understand the messages well from society and they frequently misunderstand other peoples' actions in a negative way, even if they do not mean to do it (Carney & Merrell, 2001).

Research findings illustrate that a variety of contributions lead to bullying behaviours. For instance, school bullying may result in lack of support at home, disruptive behaviour at school, poor self-esteem, or low self-efficacy (Carney & Merrell, 2001). There are some empirical research studies that show that an individual who has low self-control usually lacks compassion. A person who does things suddenly without thinking about them carefully first are more likely engaged in school bullying. A research study, conducted by Cornell in 2003, showed that the reasons for bullying may not only include low self-control but could be attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Contributing Factors: Victims

In some situation, victims could be the opposite of perpetrators. Two-thirds of victims are amenable, and one-third hold aggressive attitudes (Glew et al., 2005). When we observe the figures of victims and bullies, we can discern that most victims are smaller and weaker than bullies, which means that victims are less able to protect themselves from school bullying. These physical features place boys at risk of victimization.

Victims feel anxiety about their body and hold a passive attitude to force. It is possible for them to fail in sport or other physical actions (Olweus, 2013). Many victims will be crying or retreating when they face bullying, especially the students in primary school or in the lower grades. Unspeaking, careful, anxious, insecure, and sensitive are the characteristics of many victims, and they tend to have less well-developed abilities to solve problems (Glew et al., 2005). As a result, these children lack confidence and may have a fear of starting conversations with other students. Consequently, many victims are isolated by other children, have few to no friends, and often play or eat alone (Olweus, 2013). Research shows that victims tend to express poor social communication; for example, they experience difficulty in making friends with people and often feel lonely (Nansel et al., 2001). Another research study indicates that the relationship between victims and parents/teachers are better than their peers (Olweus, 2013). Moreover, low self-esteem often confuses victims (O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001), which make them think of themselves as failures—unattractive and unintelligent. It is possible that these negative cognitions could cause victims to incorrectly blame themselves (Carney & Merrell, 2001). Victims are more likely to lack self-esteem to support themselves which made

them unwilling to talk about school bullying. The unwillingness to reveal their situation may act as a signal for predators and may cause these victims to be targeted again and again.

Carney and Merrell (2001) note that victims may unjustly blame themselves as a result of negative cognitions. Lacking sufficient self-esteem and assertiveness make victims unwilling to report the bullying. This unwillingness to reveal their victimization may act as a signal for bullies and may cause these victims to be targeted repeatedly. Academically, victims may perform average or better in elementary school, but usually tend to be less successful than other children in middle school (Olweus, 2013). This deterioration in academic performance may be due to the negative impact of the bullying experience on the victim's sense of bonding or engagement with school.

One-Child Policy (OCP)

China's one-child policy is probably the largest social population experiment in human history. Each family is allowed to give birth to only one child under this policy, especially in urban areas. There is a quota set for women to give birth. Once they give birth to more than one child, they will be punished (Cooney & Li, 1994). The policy started in 1979, which has influenced the lives of more than one billion people in what is now the most populous nation in the world. This policy was implemented to slow the rate of population growth and control the size of the total population. The implementation of the one-child policy could influence school bullying and become one of the contributing factors.

Background

More than four decades have passed since the implementation of the one-child policy in China in 1979. The population has increased dramatically in China, partly as a result of better health care, decreased baby mortality rates, and lengthening life expectancies (Lewis, 1987). According to national statistical data, China was faced with a nearly continual shortage of food from the mid-1950s until at least the late 1970s (Lewis, 1987), which brought about the implementation of the one-child policy. Compared to rural areas, the government has more abilities to control the urban population because urban registration brings people to employment and important welfare benefits, for instance housing, health care, and children's education, which could be withheld for violations of the policy (Cooney & Li, 1994). Parents from cities do not need children to provide old age security. The costs of housing and caring for children were higher in the urban area than in the rural area (Deutsch, 2006). In response to many social pressures, especially the concern for the future population decreases, the one-child policy has been relaxed in some instances. For instance, when the husband and wife are each an only child, they are allowed to give birth to two children. By 2013, all 31 provinces and municipalities in mainland China had relaxed the policy. China loosened the two-child policy in 2013, specifically in instances in which one parent is an only child.

Relationship Between OCP and School Bullying

Chinese families believed in Confucian ideals for centuries, which include the values of filial piety toward their parents, and respect, obedience, and the obligation to care for elderly parents and respond to their needs (Deutsch, 2006). Women must follow the will of their fathers, husbands, and sons. They will eventually leave their original

families and become part of their husband's families (Crowell & Hsieh, 1995). Sons were preferred because they provided for their aging parents and carried on the family name. People in China today worry about creating a generation of "little emperors." Some parents buy everything for their kids. When children lose their temper, some parents are said to give up Chinese food themselves to accommodate their children so that they can have the meal they like, such as McDonald's or Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) meals. A previous research study found that, in some limited aspect, the one-child policy affects personality characteristics and depresses mood in students with siblings (Deutsch, 2006). Since traditional Chinese families favored the concept of having many children, especially many sons, it was hypothesized that the children without siblings would be more egocentric, more maladjusted, and less cooperative than children with siblings. However, other researchers argued that there are no personality characteristic differences between the children from one-child family and children from families with siblings (Deutsch, 2006). Others reached the conclusion that children from one-child families have lower levels of fear, anxiety, and depression and higher academic achievement than children with siblings.

The issue of the behaviour consequences of one-child policy has been of interest in developmental psychology for many years. China's OCP provides us with a natural experiment that allows us to identify the causal impact of being a single child. Parents who only have one child may be more responsive to their needs, which may produce a greater sense of security, confidence, and intellectual competence (Deutsch, 2006). Parents of children without siblings may also be more able to interact with their children in ways that promote desirable development (Deutsch, 2006). More attention from

parents can, however, come with down sides in terms of higher expectations and pressure to succeed in life. Children without siblings are often viewed as disadvantaged because of "sibling deprivation," which may lead to their being self-centered, less cooperative, low in self-control, and less likely to get along with peers. Arseneault et al. (2010) found that the majority of empirical studies suggest that people with low levels of self-control typically lack empathy and can increase school bullying.

With the development of the economy, the most people have seen their disposable incomes increase, which means there are more opportunities for children regardless of the family size. The parents who are allowed to have two children or more generally come from the lower economic class. There are very small differences between sibling families and one-child families (Arseneault et al.,2010). They concluded that being an only child may confer some benefits.

Short-term and Long-term Effects of School Bullying

It is also important to study the short- and long-term influence of bullying on the bullies themselves, although there are many previous research studies that focus on the short- and long-term effect of bullying on the victims. There is a strong connection between depression and engagement in bullying (Bosworth et al., 1999; Van der Wal et al., 2003). Kumpulainen, Rasanen, and Henttonen (1999) concluded from their follow-up research that young people engaged in bullying, no matter as bullies or victims, who showed significantly more psychiatric symptoms than other children. Glew et al. (2005) found that bullies and victims were more likely to feel sorrow and unsafe than witnesses at school.

Effects on Victims

Victims may consider themselves as failures which is one of the influences of bullying. There is an important positive connection between victimization and internalizing disease (Susan, 2010). Young female students may suffer from eating disorders. There is research that shows that victims often have attention-deficit disorder (Susan, 2010). They experience a number of issues, including chronic absenteeism, a decline in academic performance, increased apprehension, isolation, and even suicidal ideation (Susan, 2010). School bullying takes place in school which causes many students who were bullied to be afraid of going to class. At the same time, they may have psychosomatic symptoms, for instance, headaches or stomach pains when they get up every day. One study indicates that more than 20% of students are frightened by bullies during their school time (Glew et al., 2005).

Experiencing bullying affects many different aspects of children's physical and emotional health. For instance, children who are bullied tend to express more anxiety than others (Susan, 2010). Being bullied was an important factor affecting young people who seek out psychiatric services, with depression being diagnosed in the majority of cases (Susan, 2010). Kaltiala-Heino et al. (1999), in Finland, found that there is an increasing risk of depression and suicide to victims of bullying. At the same time, depression was equally likely to happen among the children who were victims and who were bullies. For primary school children, Van der Wal et al. (2003) concluded that depression and suicidal ideation were common outcomes of being bullied for both males or females, and that these associations were stronger for indirect rather than for direct bullying. People could be influenced detrimentally by long-term bullying in social,

emotional, and psychological areas (Susan, 2010). In a study of 276 adult members concerning school experiences related to bullying and its long-term effects, Hugh and Smith (1999) found that most victims reported immediate detrimental effects and 46% reported harmful long-term influences.

Effects on Bully-Victims and Bullies

Young people who are both bullies and victims often experience social anxiety. For example, Glew et al. (2005) discovered that victims and bully-victims were most likely to report feeling that they did not belong to school. Nansel et al. (2001) found that victims do not have better abilities to adjust to emotional society and problem behaviours. Ranta (2007) found that, among 8-year-old children, the most psychologically disturbed group were those who were both bullies and victims. Those students who were identified as both bullies and victims are more likely to have depression issues (Nansel et al., 2001) They discovered that those students who were engaged in school bullying have more suicidal or self-injurious behaviours and suicidal ideation, compared with no-bullying students. Anxiety, depression and psychosomatic symptoms (for instance, neck and shoulder pain, low back pain, stomachache, feeling tensed or nervous, irritation or tantrums, difficulties to get asleep or waking up at night, headache and fatigue) were most frequent among bully-victims.

According to a survey of 1,639 primary school students, that bullies were most likely to have high psychosomatic health problems, for example, poor appetite and worry about going to school. They also discovered that among boys, eating disorders were especially associated with the bully. Bullies were significantly more likely to be boys,

experienced frequent psychosomatic symptoms, reported being alone, and were current smokers (Nansel et al., 2001).

Bullies have several negative consequences for themselves, although they are the aggressors. Nansel et al (2001) discovered that drinking problems and drug abuse more likely occurred to bullies than victims. Bullies' individual academic performance can be negatively impacted by their anti-social behaviour. There is a connection between becoming a bully and antisocial development. Previous research indicated that when bullies reach 30 years of age, they were more likely to engage in criminal actions and traffic violations than other people. Researchers also found that the role of bully and victim could be exchanged to each other when the victims grow up, making the victim the bully (Carney & Merrell, 2000). Thus, aggressive behaviours may continue from one generation to the next.

The Role of Students in School Bullying

In the existing research on school bullying, most researchers have studied and analyzed the perpetrators/bullies and victims/bullied who were involved in the bullying incident. The perpetrators and other students around the victim have less attention and analysis. In the field observation of primary and secondary schools, researchers found that, in addition to involving victims and perpetrators, surrounding students and bystanders also played a significant role in school bullying incidents. According to the different roles involved, there are five types of subjects: bullies, bullied, accomplices, bystanders, and resisters.

Bully. A bully on campus refers to a student who directly commits bullying in a school bullying incident, causing harm to the person being bullied and causing them to experience painful feelings (Wang et al., 2018). Bullies may also be bullied. A certain student or some students become bullies due to deliberate acts of bullying against other students. However, at the same time, these bullies may be innocently subjected to campus bullying by third-party students in their interactions with third-party students. Therefore, in primary and secondary schools, managers cannot use a simple dichotomy to define whether a student involved in a bullying incident is a bully or a bullied person. To determine whether a student is a bully or a bullied person, it is necessary, according to the specific behaviour of the students, to specifically screen and judge, otherwise, there will be improper handling of campus bullying.

The Bullied/Victim. A bullied person refers to an individual student who is attacked without provocation by a bully and who experiences pain and suffering as a result (Wang et al., 2018). Students who have poor social skills and do not integrate with their peers due to their inability to effectively navigate interpersonal relationships often become the target of bullies. Some researchers argue that all students are potentially vulnerable to bullying and that gender, age, and social class are not determining factors. However, the bullied person often has some distinctive features, such as abnormal physical characteristics or behavioral habits, alienated or difficult interpersonal relationships, and obscurity. The China Education Development Report (2016), issued by the 21st Century Education Research Institute, shows that bullying victims often remain silent about their abuse and tolerate it, which can sometimes embolden bullies and lead to more intense bullying. Such practices make it difficult for victims to get support in a

timely fashion, which can exacerbate the impact that bullying has on their lives. Thus, the characteristics and behavioural habits of the bullied person sometimes makes them easy targets. For the purposes of the current study, the word ‘victim’ will be used to refer to bullied persons.

Accomplice. An accomplice refers to a student who helps a bully in a bullying incident. Accomplices are generally not responsible for direct hands-on of bullying (Wang et al., 2018). However, they are responsible for planning, providing support, and cheering. They are active behind campus bullying incidents and play an important role in helping the germination and formation of campus bullying incidents. In school bullying incidents, accomplices are generally not easy to identify or are difficult to identify in a short period of time if they do not conduct in-depth analysis and investigation.

Accomplices who have been confirmed to have been involved in school bullying will typically be punished by the school for their participation in a bullying incident. This punishment typically involves educational sessions about the impact of bullying.

However, many of the accomplices in campus bullying incidents are not identified, as their behaviour is concealed since other students fear them; consequently, they are not punished or educated about the effects of bullying.

Bystanders. When school bullying occurs, bystanders gaze purely from the side without affecting bullying activities, neither supporting nor dissuading the events, thereby placing themselves outside the bullying incident (Wang et al., 2018). Classes and schools are the collective of students. As a member of the collective, the behaviour of bystanders is essentially a behaviour that breaks away from the collective, weakens and hurts the collective cohesion, and objectively defaults to bullying and the formation and

occurrence of bullying incidents. In the context of campus bullying incidents in high schools in China, the number of bystanders is not small, and some studies have pointed out that bystanders make up more than 50% of students. This has a significant causal relationship with China's traditional habit of not becoming involved with personal issues that they are not directly related to. This is encapsulated by the Chinese expression, "The lamp that hangs too high for me to reach is irrelevant." This means that something that is out of reach of somebody is not their responsibility. Because many people adopt this attitude, there is a lack of interaction among students and collective awareness in schools, as well as selfish indifference. A large proportion of bystanders have a certain conducive and encouraging effect on the germination, development, and deterioration of campus bullying incidents. When the number of bystanders is large, and the potential for resistance to bullying in school is small, the result is a more frequent bullying incident.

Defender. A defender refers to a student who actively and proactively stops bullying behaviour when bullying occurs, and these students actively counter and resist bullying behaviours, protecting the bullying victim (Wang, 2018). The defenders' anti-bullying behavior is conducive to preventing bullies from harming or further harming the bullied person in a timely manner, and it can stop the development of the bullying behaviour and reduce the possible harmful consequences of bullying in schools. During a bullying incident, the existence of the defenders, as well as their words and actions to fight back, offering significant support to victims, especially psychologically support. Defending behaviours have the potential to reduce the impact of bullying, especially the consequences of mental injury. Conversely, in school bullying incidents in which no defenders have resisted, the victims will feel isolated, extremely frightened, and helpless,

and the psychological consequences of their injuries are more serious (Wang et al., 2018).

The students who are the defenders are the justice people in the bullying incident. They are also the main students to prevent and resist the bullying behaviour.

Table 2: Main Roles and Characteristics of School Bullying

The role of students in school bullying	Subject behaviour characteristics
Bully	Deliberate attack
Victim	Get hurt and feel pain for no reason
Accomplice	Participate in planning, active activities behind bullying
Bystander	School bullying is none of their business
Defender	Actively resist bullying and protect and assist victims

Note. Data is form Wang et al (2018).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

Introduction

Given the limited amount of research on the topic, this study sought to perform exploratory research regarding traditional bullying in China. Specifically, it sought to establish the factors that make one likely to become a victim of bullying. The study, likewise, sought to understand the impact that bullying has on victims. According to Creswell (2003), qualitative research is an ideal approach when a study seeks to explore social problems related to individuals or groups. Because the current study explored a social issue that relates to a group—China’s high school students—qualitative research is an ideal approach. In this context, it is important to consider several other elements relating to the research process, including the research site, the participants, data collection and analysis, reliability and validity, ethical considerations, and methodological assumptions. Careful consideration of each of these elements helped to inform and establish an effective research approach for the study.

Research Design: Qualitative Study

Qualitative research implies the use of words rather than numbers. It focuses on the attitudes towards understanding, experiences, and interpretations by humans of the social world, and how to inquire about all of these (Sandelowski, 2001). There are several purposes of qualitative research, for example, description, explanation, reporting, creation of key concepts, theory generation, and testing.

Site

In China, school bullying is a prevalent social issue; however, there is a paucity of research on this topic. Most studies draw on national representative data and have demonstrated that, among Chinese students, approximately one in five students have been bullied (Han et al., 2017). Ideally, a study looking at bullying in China's schools should take place in China and typically through a Chinese university. However, citing security reasons, the Chinese government restricts access to Google, Facebook, and other websites, which can make it difficult to access some information. Thus, conducting research in a Western nation, such as Canada, that is host to a large number of Chinese international students, allowed ease of access to data and ensured that approval of such research would not be impeded by political conflicts. Examining school bullying among Chinese adolescents could not only contribute to our understanding of school violence and bullying in China but also add valuable knowledge to this field worldwide.

Participants

A convenience sample was used to recruit the four participants. One classmate of the researcher was very interested in the research and volunteered to participate in interview. After the interview, she shared the names of individuals she knew who have been affected by bullying. The researcher asked these persons if they know someone, and so on, until the total number of participants was reached. There are invitations for the participants to make sure that they want to join to the interview voluntarily in the research. With respect to the current study, there are two key factors involved to consider when selecting participants: recruitment and inclusion criteria.

Recruitment

Participants for the study were recruited from a university in southwestern Ontario, Canada.

The university from southwestern Ontario that was selected for the current study was chosen for several reasons. First, it is a comprehensive university with more than 200 undergraduate degree programs, which hosts over 3,700 international students, many of whom are from China. Thus, the school has a large sample size from which to draw. China has the largest education system in the world. With almost 40 million students and over 27,000 schools (Overview of Chinese Education, 2016), its sample should provide insights into what a typical or model school in China is like.

Compensation

As the one-on-one interviews required students to invest more than an hour of their personal time, the researcher provided compensation in the form of a \$20 gift certificate to the participants. Given that many of the participants come from relatively affluent families and are able to afford an international education, it is reasonable to assume that a \$20 gift card would not be a significant enough form of compensation that it would 'induce' participation. Thus, the use of an incentive within this context seemed like a reasonable form of compensation for the participant's time.

Inclusion criteria

This study explored traditional bullying in China and learning from it. The researcher recruited four people. Those participants needed to meet at least one of the two inclusion criteria:

1. One of the participants must be from a one-child family.
2. One of the participants must have experienced school bullying.

Students who met at least one of the two inclusion criteria were chosen to take part in an interview.

3. The individuals must have been of Chinese descent and have grown up/attended school in China.

Data Collection

The current study used semi-structured, open-ended interviews to collect data. The research design established the available body of facts needed to address the purpose of research, objectives, and questions. It is the logic that support the relation among purposes, objectives, questions, data and conclusions. Miles and Huberman (1994) identify two types of qualitative research designs: loose and tight. The two types are used in the study. Loose research designs have broadly defined concepts and areas of study, and, indeed, are open to changes of methodology.

Loose research is more suitable for the school bullying topic when the research is investigating new fields or developing new constructs, like the flexibility and openness of theoretical sampling. People can speak freely about their experiences in interviews and express their opinions. By contrast, a tight research design has narrowly restricted research questions and predetermined procedures, with limited flexibility.

One-on-One Interview

One-on-one interviews were used in this study since this research is a social, interpersonal encounter, not merely a data-collection exercise. The interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, seen, spoken, heard and, indeed with online interviews and written. The order of the interview was controlled while still giving space for spontaneity, and the interviewer pressed not only for complete answers, but for responses about complex and deep issues. Hochschild (2009) notes that the interview can do what surveys cannot, which is to explore issues in depth, to see how and why people frame their ideas in the ways that they do, how and why they make connections between ideas, values, events, opinions, behaviours, etc. They can be used to cast further explanatory insight into survey data, or indeed to set up a survey. In short, the interview is a powerful tool for researchers.

There are two conceptions of interview and the first conception is that of a potential means of pure information transfer. Accurate data may be obtained if the interviewer establishes rapport, puts questions in an acceptable manner, and if the respondent is sincere and motivated to answer without lying or giving purely a socially desirable response. A second conception of the interview is that of a transaction which inevitably has bias which must be recognized and controlled. The interview is best understood in terms of a theory of motivation which recognizes a range of non-rational factors governing human behaviour, like emotions, unconscious needs, and interpersonal influences (Hochschild, 2009). According to the first conception, the interviewer establishes rapport, puts questions in an acceptable manner, then they may obtain accurate data. During the one-on-one interview, conversations with the participants were

in Chinese since their English skills are limited. For the participants, it is easy to tell their past experiences and express their opinion of bullying in Chinese. When they spoke Chinese, they felt relaxed and engaged in better communication. After the interview, audio files were translated to English and then added to the research records as data for the study.

Online Interview

Online interviewing takes several forms, for example, text-based only (e.g., chat rooms, social networking sites, discussion forums, blogs, email, SMS), a combination of text and visuals (e.g., social networking sites, discussion boards, instant messaging), audio only (e.g., WeChat, WhatsApp, conferencing), and audio and visual interviews (e.g., Skype, net meetings and conferences). Some of these are synchronous-real-time-messaging (e.g., chat rooms and services, SMS, instant messaging, Skype, online meetings). Others are asynchronous (e.g., email, discussion boards, blogs, WeChat, WhatsApp). Some online interviews take place through private contact (e.g., emails), others through public sites (e.g., blogs), and researchers need to consider the issue of privacy. Due to the coronavirus, it was better for me and participants to have online conversations. The advantages of these methods are that time and location presented few or no challenges, as there is great flexibility in contact times, and both parties did not necessarily have to be present at the same time for some of these methods.

Conversations were recorded between the participants and the researcher with an audio recording device. Specifically, the researcher used an old I-phone 7 plus without access to the cloud or a SIM card, ensuring there was no chance of connecting to the Internet. Once transcribed, the digital recording was deleted. All participants were over

18 years old. Before the interview, the researcher made sure that the participants provided informed consent. Each participant saw this item and the researcher made sure that they joined in the interview voluntarily. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher asked a few questions about the participants to let the participants feel relaxed. Then, questions about school bullying were asked. During the interview, the researcher paid attention to the emotional changes of the participants. When participants felt uncomfortable or embarrassed, the researcher changed the questions. At the end of the interview, the participants were sent an email of appreciation.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis concerns how researchers move from the data to understanding, explaining, and interpreting the phenomena in question (Taylor & Gibbs, 2010). Qualitative data analysis focuses on in-depth, context-specific, rich, subjective data. It focuses on the meanings people make based on their experiences in various situations, with the researchers themselves serving as a principal research instrument. Data analysis is often an ongoing process that takes place during the research as well as afterwards, during the process of coding, analysis, and writing. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) suggest that “analysis and interpretation are concurrent with data collection and are more or less completed by the time the data are gathered” (p. 160). The qualitative data analyst must identify and locate raw data and link data to the research questions and findings.

According to Wellington (2015), there are seven elements of qualitative data analysis: separating the data into ‘units of meaning; categorizing and grouping the units

of meaning; including new units of data into these groupings/categories; searching for categories that are similar and/or that can be compound into a single category; reviewing groupings that contain large amounts of data to limit whether they can be divided into smaller categories; verifying that the categories include all the data and are equally exclusive; and looking for connections, contrasts, and comparisons between the kinds. The current study used each of these approaches to analyze the data (Navarro& Maldonado, 2007).

Narrative research takes researchers and educators together collaboratively to set up school experiences (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). A story in narrative research is a oral telling from first people or retelling of events related to the individual. Researchers narrate the plot and identify themes or categories that appear from the story in the process, which lead the qualitative data analysis may include descriptions of the story and themes that emerge from it (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

Reliability and Validity

In interviews, inferences about validity are made too often based on face validity (Creswell, 2003); that is, whether the questions asked look as if they are measuring what they claim to measure. One way of validating interview measures is to compare the interview measure with another measure that has already been shown to be valid. If the two measures agree, it can be assumed that the validity of the interview is comparable with the proven validity of the other measure.

Due to the participants' limited English abilities, interviews were appropriate in that any instant natural responses generated by the interviewee were captured by the

investigator. The researcher's related experience and professional background enabled her to select the best questions, and be responsive and flexible to the participants' answers, and to explore further into the issue. Educational research is sensitive and has the potential to become sensitive (Fahie, 2014); the question is one of degree. The researcher must be sensitive to the context, the cultures, the participants, the consequences of the research on a range of parties, the powerless, the powerful, people's agendas, and the like. Being sensitive is as much about ethics and behaving ethically as it is about the research itself. Researchers must be very careful on a variety of delicate issues.

Methodological Assumptions

According to Creswell (2013), methodological assumptions refer to the assumptions that researchers make regarding the methods they choose to use. To understand the potential limitations of a given research process, it is important to understand the assumptions made when constructing the methodological process. The current study tended to develop an understanding of school bullying from both the survivors' and perpetrators' perspectives. This information was collected through a qualitative approach that featured one-on-one interviews that are guided with open-ended questions. To this end, several methodological assumptions were made.

First, it is assumed that, to understand this phenomenon, one must ask people who have been victims of bullying or who have engaged in bullying behaviours, including bystanders, about their experiences. This assumes that these experiences will offer insights into the phenomenon under the pretense that there are pre-existing patterns or laws that govern such interactions. If those who are asked had certain experiences, then

the same experiences or similar ones will be experienced by others in similar situations. This is consistent with a positivist approach, which suggests that the social world operates under a set of laws in a manner analogous to how the physical world operates under the laws of physics (Macionis, 2012). This is a form of inductive reasoning, which means one uses one's own past experiences and observations to form patterns and then develop as general truth.

The methodology also makes other assumptions. For example, it assumes that, when asking the participants how they felt, as a result of their experience surrounding bullying, that they will be able to discern whether a given feeling was the result of their experience. Likewise, when asking participants as to their reasoning behind given actions, it assumes that they will be conscious of and be willing to honestly share their reasoning. The research likewise assumes participants will be honest and that the most effective way to collect data is through open-ended questions that allow participants to speak to any experiences they determine to be important, as opposed to close-ended questions or self-reporting scales. Based on experience and an understanding of the participants' culture, the researcher also assumed that participants will be more likely to open up in a one-on-one setting, rather than a group setting as privacy is an important concern.

Ethical Considerations

The proposal for this study was submitted to the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Windsor. The study was launched once the research ethics review was completed. Accordingly, the participants were informed of their rights to voluntarily participate. They made decisions based on clear information about the foreseeable risks

and potential benefits of the study and were not coerced or influenced. Participants' autonomy was completely respected, and their anonymity was assured. The confidentiality of the research data was guaranteed. To safeguard the privacy of participants' views, each participant was identified with a code number, rather than their names.

The risk of slight discomfort was present when participants either communicated their feelings or suggested negative feedback during the learning process. During the interview, they were invited to provide their opinions about bullying and were not asked any sensitive questions that would cause stress. They were also informed that they had the right to stop the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable with the discussion.

With respect to the benefits of participation, the researcher anticipated that participating in the study had the potential to increase participants' understanding of school bullying and how it impacted them. This could, in turn, help them cope with any potential trauma associated with it and critically evaluate themselves. In addition, the insights they offered could inform future policy and research that could help reduce and minimize the effects of bullying.

Summary

Bullying is becoming an increasing concern around the globe, and China is no exception. Therefore, it is critical to develop exploratory research to identify potential trends inform future research models and eventually shape policy. Because this is a social phenomenon, and in-depth data are required to understand it, a qualitative research model is ideal. One-on-one interviews have the potential to prove particularly beneficial as they provide the privacy and intimacy that could provide participants with the space of

comfort required to share more personal and in-depth data. Though the proposed research model would rely on self-reported data and would likely have some limitations, the findings could provide guidance for future research that could in turn validate or provide broader context for these findings. In doing so, more empirical support could be used to guide future intervention to prevent and reduce the rates of school bullying among Chinese children and adolescents by enhancing the quality of social and educational environments in Chinese societies. Empirical data could also be used to provide support to the survivors of bullying and help them cope with the impact it has on their lives.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to offer insights regarding school bullying. Within this context, it is important to consider the participants' demographics and background. Regarding the data collected from the participants, several patterns emerged. First, each participant offered reasons as to why victims may have been vulnerable to bullying or why they may have been singled out as well as the impact that it had on the victims. They likewise outlined some of the personal motivations or factors that compelled bullies to engage in such harassment and the impact that instances of bullying had on the perpetrators themselves. Participants likewise noted that bullying consistently begins with more moderate forms of bullying or microaggressions before escalating to more overt and serious forms of bullying. This was often tied to teachers and parents' responses, for which the participants also provided a rationale. Finally, the participants also offered proposed solutions to help address bullying.

Participant Experience

After recording the one-on-one interview, which relied on semi-structured and open-ended questions, conversations were transcribed into Mandarin (Appendix A, B, C, and D), and then translated into English (Appendix E, F, G, and H).

Demographics/Background

It is indeed a bit difficult to find participants due to the pandemic. The researcher was only able to find participants online and could not conduct face-to-face interviews. However, those four participants' experiences provides a sufficient sample for the

research. Whenever analyzing data, it is always important to consider the demographics of the participants. The current study had four participants: participant one (P1), participant two (P2), participant three (P3) and participant four (P4). All of the participants are Chinese. All 4 participants attended elementary and high school in China.

The ages of the participants were 25, 24, 18, and 28 years, respectively. And participant 1 and 2 are female, the participants 4 and 5 are male. They had witnessed or experienced school bullying 15, 10, 2, and 12 years ago, respectively. P1, P2, and P3 were bystanders in their school bullying stories. The bullying they witnessed/took place in school in China when they were growing up. P4 was involved in an instance that can be described as bullying, though he did not define it as such himself. P4 was bullied by a classmate, however, he fought back. The role turned around. P4 is from a one-child family. To better understand school bullying in China, a participant who is from a one-child family was selected. Within Chinese culture, people are hypervigilant about preserving their reputation, which is known as avoiding *diulian* (丢脸). This word roughly translates to ‘shame’ in English. Thus, when speaking in public context with people whom one does not know intimately, many Chinese people tend to avoid sharing information that might bring *diulian*. Thus, people who were either bullies or victims may be unwilling to talk about their personal history. As a result, it is difficult to find a participant who will opening talking about bully from a perspective other than bystander.

Reasons for Targeting Victims

To understand how to prevent bullying, it is critical to understand why certain students are selected. Participants’ responses suggest that victims of bullying might be targeted based on their personality, socioeconomics, and grades.

Personality

Both P1 and P2 noted that victims were sometimes chosen because they were less sociable. For example, P1 reported that the victim he spoke about was introverted and seldom interacted with others. This was echoed by P2, who reported that the victim he witnessed was less sociable and talkative. P2 went on to state that victim became even more withdrawn after being bullied. Past research has found similar findings. For instance, Wang et al (2012) found that students who were seen as introverted or antisocial were more likely to get bullied. Such students may be vulnerable because they are less likely to have a social network of friends who would advocate for them or who would socially distance themselves from people who bullied their friends. However, with few or no friends, there are fewer social consequences for bullies who select victims who are introverted. However, it is important to note that being a victim might cause somebody to be withdrawn. This is reinforced by P2, who noted that bullying made the victim he discussed more withdrawn. P4 was an anomaly among the victims described by the participants. P4 described himself as a better-tempered person who got along well with everybody in the class. Before framing this data as something that challenges which people are most vulnerable to bullying, it is important to note two things. First, P4's perception of how he gets along with others could be biased as people may be inclined to think of themselves more highly than others might be inclined to. Thus, P4 may not have an accurate conception of how others perceived him. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, P4 did not perceive the conflict he encountered as bullying, though it could be defined as such. Furthermore, he had the courage to defend himself and was therefore not vulnerable to such bullying. Thus, though a broad range of students, including both

introverts and extraverts, may be targets of bullying, the data collected in the current study certainly suggests that it is the introverted students who are most vulnerable.

Socioeconomics

Socioeconomics may also play a role in who gets targeted by bullies. For example, P1 noted that students whose family's socioeconomic background was lower than others were often targeted by bullies. Though P1 did not specify how students knew the target came from such a background, students may often be able to identify this based on the style, age, or condition or one's clothes, amongst other factor. This is supported by other research. For example, Olweus (2013) found that students who experienced poverty were more likely to get bullied.

Academic Performance

Academic performance was also a potential factor that may have made victims targets. P2 noted that the bullying victim whom she knew was not an exceptional student and/or did not perform well in class. Because the bully made a point of throwing the victims schoolwork in the garbage and throwing the victim's notebook in his face, it seems that the signifiers of the victim's academic work were targeted during the bullying instances. In China, one's academic performance is closely tied to their social standing; thus, one's inability to achieve the social standard may make them vulnerable to bullying. This is in consistent with previous studies on bullying as Zequinão et al. (2017) found that students with lower grades were often bullied because they were seen as socially vulnerable.

Broad Conclusions

Though the factor mentioned by P1 and P2 differ slightly, there is a consistent theme in that victims do not conform to social expectations, which in turn make them socially vulnerable. One's socioeconomic status, academic performance, and personalities are potential categories that could make one a bullying target. However, given that the nature of the study is exploratory, it is unlikely that this is an exhaustive list of social determinants that could make one socially vulnerable. Thus, it is important for teachers and parents to identify any social determinants that might be singled out by potential bullies, such as place of origin, religion, accents, and disabilities.

Impact of Bullying on the Victim

Based on the data collected from the participants, bullying impacted the victims in a variety of ways. For example, it inhibited their willingness to socialize with peers and had a negative impact on their academic performance in some instances.

Socialization

Based on the data reported by the participants, the most obvious impact that bullying had on victims was with respect to their ability to socialize. P3 noted that though the victim did have a bit of a bad temper, he was an outgoing boy with a warm heart before bullying. However, following the incident, the victim's friends were less inclined to socialize with him because they did not want to become targets and the victim in turn became even more withdrawn. Likewise, the victim became less interested in socializing with the bully. As a result, he did not have as many friends. This paralleled the narrative outlined by P2, who noted that though the victim he witnessed was less sociable and talkative, he did have a small circle of friends. However, his friends were likewise less

inclined to socialize with him following the bullying incident. Thus, the most observable impact that bullying may have on the victim is their ability to socialize with others. This has the potential to create a feedback loop because being socially isolated is what made these people targets in the first place; thus, by becoming even more socially isolated could make them more vulnerable to future victimization.

P4 is the outlier in this context. As a victim of bullying himself, he is the only participant who can provide first-hand information as to the effects of bullying. However, he is also the only victim who defended himself. Though he claims that the experience had no effect on him whatsoever, he does note that he was sure to strategically develop a casual friendship with his bully after defending himself. This was done to ensure that the bully did not make attempts at any reprisals, either directly or through other friends. Thus, the experience did encourage him to socialize with others in a manner that he may have been disinclined to do prior to having been bullied.

Academic Performance

While many may assume that the impact of bullying is entirely negative, one of the participants noted that a bullying victim saw an improvement in their academic performance. P3 reported that, after enduring bullying, the victim he knew became more withdrawn and started to focus more on his academic studies. As a result, the victim saw his academic performance improve following the incident. This seems to support the trope that victims of bullying are often socially awkward, academic savants that will eventually see more success in their careers than do their bullies. However, neither P1 nor P2 reported similar findings. Moreover, research challenges this stereotype. For example, both Faryadi (2011) and Juvonen et al. (2011) found that bullying had a negative, long-

term impact on the academic performance of victims. Thus, P3's observations may be anecdotal in nature and would warrant longitudinal observations to determine if this were true. P4 notes that the bullying had no impact on him; however, it is important to note that he, unlike the other victims, defended himself. This suggests that being able to defend oneself may mitigate the long-term effects of bullying on the victim.

Reasons for Bullying

While it is important to understand why victims are targets, it is likewise vital to understand why certain students become bullies. Participants' responses suggest that students engage in bullying for several reasons, namely apathy and an inferiority complex.

Apathy

Based on feedback from the participants, one of the reasons that some people engage in bullying is because they are apathetic. For example, P3 mentioned that a common characteristic among bullies is their apathy. He notes that the bully he witnessed did not feel guilty when the bully talked about the incident to the school and teachers. The bully even expressed that he wanted to do it again and did not care that the victim had been hurt, either physically or emotionally. Neither P1 nor P2 mentioned apathy directly when recounting the incidents of bullying that they detailed; however, neither did they describe the bullies demonstrating empathy following the event. Thus, it seems fair to assume that apathy on the part of the bully could be a contributing factor to incidences of bullying.

Inferiority Complex

Another potential contributing factor to incidents of bullying is the fact that many of the bullies seem to have an inferiority complex. One common feature of bullies, according to each of the participants, is that they were all “problem students.” Their academic performance was lower than most of their peers. In China, poor academic performance is often cause for teachers to single out students, either by yelling at them or forcing them to stand in the corner of the classroom. This can be an embarrassing process that can cause students to lose confidence in themselves. As a result, they may feel the need to assert themselves in other ways to compensate.

Escalation and Forms of Bullying

Based on the participants responses, the bullying universally began with smaller incidences and graduated to more extreme forms of bullying. For example, P1 observed that bullying began with excluding the victim. Once this boy was excluded, other students stopped socializing with him. This, P1 notes, moved to verbal assaults and personal insults. Though P4 did not mention being socially excluded by the person with whom he had a conflict, he did note that the conflict began with name calling and personal insults. Thus, the bullying could begin with either exclusion or personal insults. P2 details the ways in which bullying escalates: When the bully he described saw that neither teachers nor peers took issue with excluding and insulting students, the bully engaged in theft and attacks on the victim’s property. This included knocking the victim’s schoolbooks out of his hands. When teachers did not respond to this, the bullying then escalated to physical assaults on the victim. This escalation, however, did not occur in

P4's narrative as P4 defended himself, assuring the potential bullying that there would be repercussions for the name calling that the bully engaged in.

P3's narrative fit the same pattern: verbal conflicts escalated to insults, threats, and then finally a physical altercation. This suggests that the bullies themselves are uncertain as to how far they can take the bullying in the initial phases and are testing boundaries. When the victim, peers, and teachers do not offer any pushback, the bullies push the boundaries further.

Bystander Response

Each of the bullying incidences involved bystanders, either in the form of teachers or fellow students. However, the bystanders' responses, or lack thereof, failed to prevent the bullying from escalating to the point of physical conflict.

Bystanders: Student Peers

Though two of the participants expressed a desire to intervene, only one did so. Moreover, none of the participants mentioned having seen student bystanders intervening on behalf of the victim. Their narratives suggest that there were three reasons for this lack of intervention: apathy, a lack of responsibility, and fear.

Apathy. According to all three participants who were bystanders, other students often did not intervene because they believed the conflict was not their business. For example, P2 reported that most of the students thought that such conflicts were none of their business. This demonstrates both apathy on their part and a lack of responsibility. In assuming that the bullying is not their business, the students demonstrate an inability to recognize how other students who are being bullied feel and in turn fail to recognize that they themselves could be victims. As a result, they do not feel it is their concern.

Lack of Responsibility. Likewise, students did not believe that it was their responsibility to intervene based on the participants' responses. Each of the participants reported that they felt it was not their duty to protect victims of bullying. Instead, the participants reported that they felt it was the responsibility of the teachers to address bullying. Moreover, there seemed to be a sentiment that suggested that if teachers were not going to intervene, then the students would certainly not intervene themselves. This suggests that the teachers' lack of intervention was interpreted as tacit permission to bully. In each case, there were multiple witnesses, which might also suggest that the more witnesses there are, the less likely people are to intervene. This is supported by Caplan and Hay (2007), who observed that the more people who witness an act of school bullying, the less likely someone is to step up and intervene because responsibility is shared by all of the witnesses, which results in no one acting. When participants were asked about their actions, the participants explained that it was the teacher's responsibility to help, again echoing the sentiments expressed by P1, P2, and P3.

Fear. Fear was another factor. P1 was the only participant who reported having intervened on behalf of the victim. She noted that she empathized with the victim and wanted to intervene; however, she was concerned that she was not strong enough and worried that she might become a target herself. Likewise, P2 was angered by the bullying and therefore confronted the bully about his behaviour. However, the bully threatened her, so P2 did not intervene any further as she was worried that she could become a target and may not have been able to defend herself. P3, however, did not mention any desire to intervene. These reports suggest that a primary reason as to why bystanders might not intervene when bullying is taking place is due to fear for their own safety.

Teacher/Parents

Though it is easy to understand why vulnerable peers might not intervene when they see bullying take place, the lack of response from teachers and parents is more disconcerting and problematic, especially given that they are in positions of authority.

Teachers. Based on responses from the participants, one of the central issues seems to be that teachers respond too late, fail to respond, or offer an insufficient response. For example, P1 reported that adults are reluctant to address bullying when it takes the form of exclusion or social isolation, and even when the bullying graduates to verbal attacks, teachers do little. Instead, they wait until there is a physical attack of some kind, by which point at least some damage has already been done in many cases.

However, P2 reported that, even in the face of physical bullying, teachers do not typically address the issue. Moreover, when they do, the response is insufficient. For instance, the teacher may simply adjust seating in the classroom so that the bully and victim can avoid interpersonal contact. Then, if bullying still occurs, the teacher may stop it, but by that point they are treating the symptoms and have failed to address the root cause.

Parents. Not all the participants were able to detail parental responses to bullying; however, P2 notes that there was an absence of parental engagement in the instances that she outlined. She noted that, when the bullying incident occurred, and the parents were notified, the victim's parents were not present. Instead, the victim's grandfather came to the parent-teacher meeting, while the victim's parents did not show up. P2 hypothesized that the victim's parents may not have taught the victim to defend himself and failed to intervene when he was growing up. However, based on what seemed to be the participant's limited personal connection with the victim, this later part

seems like conjecture. However, the parents did not show up. Unfortunately, the participants did not offer much in the way of the behaviours of the bullies' parents outside of P3 noting that the bully's victims apologized and offered compensation to the victim.

P4 offered perhaps the most insightful information regarding parental engagement with bullying. He reported that his parents had taught him not to tolerate bullying and to defend himself. Moreover, when he responded to verbal bullying by first warning the bully to stop the behaviour and then assaulted the bully when the behaviour continued, his parents recognized that P4's response was justified in some respects. Thus, when parents speak to their children about bullying, they may be better equipped to defend themselves.

Suggested Resolutions/Responses

When asked for recommendations to prevent bullying, the participants made several recommendations regarding both teachers and parents.

Teachers

Regarding teachers, the participants expressed concerns about teachers' failure to adequately address bullying in the early stages of its evolution. Thus, they recommended that teachers need to develop appropriate responses to the exclusion of and verbal attacks on bullying victims, rather than waiting for a physical conflict. This, P3 notes, could help prevent the escalation of bullying to a physical conflict. However, P3 also expressed concern that, if teachers do not allow students to sort out small conflicts on their own, it could also escalate the situation and create greater tension between the students. P4 expressed that the teachers who give the school bullying class should be very

professional. He noted that the content of prevention bullying class should be proper in case the over-reaction of students. For example, when teachers talk about students defending themselves, there should be a limit. If students overreact, the effect will be counterproductive. Secondly, P4 notes that a clear definition of bullying in school is also important and that schools should give students typical examples and tell them the consequences.

Parents

According to the suggestions from all the participants, communication between parents and children is critical. They recommend that parents must listen to children when children talk about what happens at school as this could help parents understand their children's mental status. This, they suggest, could help parents build relationships with their children and help the children develop their self-esteem. P2 also noted that parents should attend parent-teacher interviews to stay informed about the culture of the school, how their children are engaging with others, and if there is any concern about bullying. This, P2 argues, could allow parents to be proactive about bullying as it relates to their children.

P4's experience suggests that proactive communication is critical. His parents had spoken to him about bullying before he himself was bullied by a classmate. Thus, when he encountered this behaviour, he was able to recognize it and defend himself, first by verbalizing his displeasure with the bully's behaviour to the bully and eventually taking actions to put an end to the bullying. Though P4's response was extreme, as he hit his bully over the head with a chair, this does demonstrate how parents can empower their

children by educating their children about bullying and ensuring that the children understand that they have the support of their parents.

Overall

Based on the findings, there are several important trends to consider with respect to school bullying. For example, there seems to be several reasons why certain students are targeted. Personality was a key issue. Students who seemed introverted and have small social circles seemed to be targeted most frequently, though students from families with lower socioeconomic status were also singled out. Academic performance also seemed to be a factor; however, both students who do extremely well and those who struggle more than most might both find themselves targets of bullying. Parents could take some actions to better help their children like asking children questions about their school life, observing children's behaviors, and teaching them about school bullying.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

School bullying is a complex process that is shaped by both individual and social, as well as educational and legal factors. These concerns intersect during the formation process and are dynamically changing phenomena. Therefore, to understand these complex and intersecting factors, it is critical to analyze them using an appropriate theoretical framework. Because bullying is shaped by social influence, social learning theory has the potential to provide critical insights that can help educators, students, and parents understand this social issue. Social learning can be broken down into three key processes: learning through direct experience, informative function of reinforcement, and motivational function of reinforcement. Analyzing the data through these processes can help to develop an understanding of bullying and in turn develop both recommendations for interventions and directions for future research.

Learning Through Direct Experience

The direct experience is the source of learning pattern which is managed through the awarding and penalizing results that go with any specific action. This concept can both explain the source of bullying behaviour as well as the means that could be used to combat bullying.

Direct Experience: Facilitating Bullying

For example, P2 reported a situation in which a bully's behaviour became increasingly aggressive in response to the social setting in which the behaviour occurred. In this case, the bully may have begun by socially excluding the victim, and when that action saw no repercussions, the bullying graduated to the level of personal insults. At this point, there was no discipline, so the negative reinforcement that is often associated

with learning through direct experience was absent. Thus, there was no motivation to stop the behaviour. Worse still, the bullying behaviour may have given the bully a sense of empowerment in being able to assert authority over somebody else. He likewise could have been emboldened by his peers' responses as they may have laughed and/or socially excluded the victim based his social influence. Thus, the positive reinforcement associated with learning through direct experience likely exacerbated the bullying behaviour. As a result, the bully's behaviour escalated further when the bully began to attack the victim's property by knocking his books out of his hands. Had some sort of intervention been put into place to address this behaviour earlier, the bullying may have stopped.

Direct Experience: Combatting Bullying

In contrast, P4's narrative demonstrates how an intervention has the potential to stop bullying behaviour. P4's bully reportedly insulted other people's parents in a jovial manner, and nobody seemed to challenge him on this behavior. In fact, some of the bully's other friends greeted each other in a similar way, which demonstrates how this behaviour is rooted in experience: This was acceptable or funny behavior among the bully's friends. However, others outside of the bully's close social circle did not approve of this. When P4 asked the bully to stop the insensitive behaviours, there were no consequences for the bully, so he continued to insult P4's parents. However, when P4 hit the bully over the head with a chair, the bully responded to this retaliation by suspending the behaviour. It goes without saying that schools should not implement such extreme measures to curtail bullying; however, it is also clear that some form of punishment (e.g., physical retaliation) has the potential to curb bullying.

An important additional note to add to this anecdote. To ease the relationship between P4 and the bully, P4 for made friends with the bully, though only in a casual social context. This was done to express that there was no lingering animosity on P4's part, but also to ensure that the bully was motivated to maintain the new status quo between them and not escalate the conflict. This demonstrates that positive reinforcement, in the form of a new social relationship, could likewise curb bullying, suggesting that restorative approaches could be used in addition to, or perhaps in place of, punitive approaches.

Informative Function of Reinforcement

When people engage in various actions, they learn by studying the outcomes of differential consequences associated with different behaviours. Based on this, they develop hypotheses regarding how certain behaviours correlate with outcomes (Cohen et al., 2017). Accurate hypotheses give rise to successful performances; however, incorrect ones will lead to ineffective courses of action (Cohen et al., 2017). People will support thoughts or hypotheses which are more likely to be successful, according to the informative function of reinforcement and based on the feedback or information, which would be their guidance of future. Accurate hypotheses give rise to successful performances; however, incorrect ones will lead to ineffective courses of action. The differential consequences of overt behaviour that occurs outside of the original event can validate or invalidate cognitive events that are the basis of a hypothesis. An incorrect hypothesis could reinforce bullying behaviour, either by encouraging bullying or discouraging victims from engaging in healthy social behaviours. That said, effective

informative function reinforcement could likewise inhibit bullying. Both potentialities were described by the participants.

Informative Function of Reinforcement: Facilitating Bullying

While bullying behaviour is often learned by imitating how others behave and respond to direct experience, the reinforcement of such behaviours can shape thinking as well. This is consistent with participants' responses. For example, the bully that P2 described personally insulted the victim and was not disciplined. In this case, P2's bully learned that there were no negative consequences and, as a result, may have hypothesized that the bullying behaviour is socially acceptable. Moreover, the bully described by P2 might have found that he was personally empowered by the bullying behaviour, that it increased his social currency among his peers, made him an influencer, and/or that it intimidated people into listening to him. Based on this, he might have hypothesized that the bullying behaviour was meritorious for a variety of reasons. As a result, he may continue to engage in such behaviour in the future. Likewise, P4's bully engaged in greetings that involved insulting other people's parents. The bully's friends engaged in this behaviour, so the bully may have hypothesized that others outside of his small social circle accepted this same kind of language. As a result, he practiced social behaviour that was unacceptable and harmful to others.

Informative Function of Reinforcement: Unhealthy Victim Responses

The informative function of reinforcement can also lead victims to engage in behaviours that are socially isolating to protect themselves. For example, P1, P2, and P3 each observed that, when victims of bullying were unable to defend themselves, the bullying escalated. As a result of the bullying, the victims who P1, P2, and P3 described

become withdrawn and socially isolated. The victims might have assumed that being less socially visible would make them less of a target. However, having less social support could in fact make them more vulnerable to bullying.

Informative Function of Reinforcement: Combatting Bullying

Though the informative function of reinforcement can lead to negative outcomes, it has the potential to lead to positive outcomes as well, though it is not always executed in an ideal way. For example, P4 was unhappy with the way in which his bully spoke to him. He hypothesized that simply letting the bully know that the behaviour was unwanted would suffice, but it did not. Having been taught that one must defend oneself, and having given his bully a warning, P4 took the continued bullying as justification to defend himself. Thus, he hit his bully over the head with a chair, correctly hypothesizing that this would give his bully pause before engaging in the bullying behaviour again. He likewise correctly hypothesized that, unless he developed a positive social relationship with the bully, the bully might retaliate. Thus, he initiated a casual friendship with the bully that proved to serve its intended purpose. Though a physical assault is an extreme response, it is certainly clear that the behaviour was effective in compelling the bully to end the bullying behaviour. Moreover, maintaining a casual social relationship with the bully seemed to prevent any retaliation.

Motivational Function of Reinforcement

Humans have the ability to anticipate outcomes and consider the incentives of an action; thus, the outcomes and conditions of an act may reinforce certain behaviours. As a result, human behaviour is not typically dictated by immediate external reinforcement but long-term gains (Cohen et al., 2017). The respective bullies described by P1, P2, and P3

were not punished by a teacher, which allowed the bullying to escalate. This suggests that teachers should intervene in some way to prevent escalation. However, if teachers effectively address the bullying behaviour, it may exacerbate the conflict between bullies and their victims. Thus, it is critical to determine how teachers can effectively intervene when they witness or hear reports of bullying behaviour amongst their students.

According to the motivational function of reinforcement, educators could draw lessons from laws and regulations to formulate anti-bullying school policy. If a student includes classmates in activities and promotes social engagement among all students, then the student might get bonus marks some classroom privileges such as allowing students to use class time to do alternate studies.

Motivational Function of Reinforcement: Combatting Bullying

Due to the school environment, the respective bullies described by P1, P2, and P3 were not punished by a teacher, which escalated bullying.

According to the motivational function of reinforcement, educators could draw lessons from foreign laws and regulations when formulating anti-school bullying laws. If the teachers get involved and there are punishments, or at least interventions, for the bully, the bully may take it out on the victim and the teachers may not be able to control the conflict.

Recommendations

Anti-bullying programs significantly decrease bullying perpetration and bullying victimization (Gaffney et al., 2019). These results suggest that anti-bullying programs reduce school-bullying perpetration by approximately 20% and school-bullying victimization by approximately 16%. However, it is important to identify which

programs would most effectively address bullying in China. Thus, just as social learning theory guided the interpretation of the data collected in the present study, it likewise can inform recommendations to address school bullying. This is particularly true of the informative function of reinforcement and the motivational function of reinforcement.

Recommendations: Informative Function of Reinforcement

Most anti-bullying programs are delivered to adolescent youth because bullying behaviors are typically associated with developmental stage. However, it is also important to ensure that teachers are effectively equipped to address bullying when it occurs in a school setting. The informative function of reinforcement suggests that behaviour is, at least to some degree, learned; thus, providing students and teachers with workshops and lessons on the impact of bullying and how to address it could offer some solutions.

Workshops and Lessons for Students. Schools might consider using information sessions on bullying, which might include speeches from guest speakers, workshops, or lessons that are part of a curricular initiative.

Guest Lecturer. Schools might proactively invite guest speakers to address the school each year via a school-wide assembly. The content could include a definition of bullying, why students bully, how to deal with bullying, and how students can prevent school bullying. Employing guest speakers can be an advantageous pedagogical approach as it can draw students' attention to important content and specific detail while providing students with a change of pace (Fanguy et al., 2017). If the guest speaker delivers content at a school-wide assembly, framing it as a special event might encourage students to pay more attention, and it would ensure that the entire student body is familiar with the

content. Moreover, Cappy (2019) found that school assemblies can help students establish moral identities, especially when the morals and ethics share a social context like an assembly. This can help frame bullying behaviour as unethical or immoral and in turn discourage students from engaging it by stigmatizing bullying. If the guest speaker simply lectures to individual classes, it would provide the students with a break from their regular class content and from their teacher. This new voice might also be advantageous because they would be perceived as experts and would not have pre-existing relationships with students as a teacher would. Thus, if students are disinclined to listen to their own teacher due to a poor relationship, they may give the content of the lecture more credence if it is delivered by somebody else.

Curricular Initiative. Likewise, schools might consider incorporating lessons on school bullying into their curriculum. A standardized school-bullying prevention course could provide students with a systematic teaching model. When guest speakers deliver workshops or lectures, the content may differ from one presenter to the next, and the content may not cover all the issues that a school wants address. However, by designing a standard curriculum, school administrators can ensure that all the issues they want addressed are addressed, and the content will be consistent across the school board. In this context, the course could be repeated to deepen students' understanding and could also be broken up into smaller pieces so that students are not overwhelmed. This approach has the added benefit of ensuring that teachers are familiar with the content, which may not be the case when a guest lecturer delivers a lecture or workshop.

Ideally, the bullying-prevention class should be mandated because teaching students about the impact of bullying can help them avoid forming inaccurate hypotheses

about bullying behaviours. The bullying-prevention classes could be extracurricular; however, this may be less effective as students may not take the initiative to attend such courses.

Training for Teachers. As noted by several of the participants, teachers seldom became involved in the bullying prior to it becoming manifest in a physical way; thus, it is also important for teachers to learn how to respond to bullying when it occurs. Teachers are often the first adults whom students can contact when they witness or are victims of bullying in schools. When confronted with bullying, teachers can react in several ways, including intervening, observing the situation, not intervening, or ignoring and trivializing the bullying (Rigby, 2014), but not all these approaches are effective. Because teachers can monitor bullying incidents and are in an influential position as educators and agents of socialization, it is essential that they be able to decide how to appropriately respond to bullying or proactively prevent it. Thus, they are vital to promoting healthy relationships among students and preventing bullying behaviours. This is supported by Smith et al. (2004), who asserts that teachers can create a positive climate of support and empathy within the classroom. Teachers play a critical role with regard to bullying intervention, which is underscored by the fact that students seek support from teachers and expect them to intervene when bullying occurs (Rigby, 2014). Thus, it is critical that teachers likewise receive training to ensure that they are equipped with the tools and knowledge required to proactively minimize bullying and respond when it occurs. This training could occur as part of teachers' continued education and could also be incorporated into pre-service education.

This is consistent with Khalifa et al. (2016), who note that schools should provide ongoing training that develops culturally responsive leadership. As observed by Newkirk (2009), this can be enhanced by creating spaces in which teachers can discuss the barriers and challenges they encounter and the effectiveness of the strategies they use to overcome them.

Continued Developmental Training. The field of education has only recently begun to place a proper emphasis on bullying; thus, many current teachers may not have been equipped to deal with this during their pre-service education. As a result, they may need continued, professional developmental opportunities to ensure they are equipped with the tools needed to addressing school bullying. Such training could take the form of workshops or courses and could help to improve the ability to promote empathy and pro-social skills, not only in bullies and victims but in the entire classroom. Furthermore, training should highlight the central role that teachers can have in stopping the bullying. Specifically, students who were bullied require specific and timely support. These students are particularly vulnerable and need to be placed in a class that can accommodate them, not isolate them. Inclusive education itself may offer opportunities for students to interact with peers.

Pre-service Teachers. Though continued, professional developmental opportunities are advantageous, it is ideal that new teachers be equipped to effectively address school bullying upon entering the field. Thus, pre-service education programs should ideally offer courses on school bullying that outline the strategies teachers can use to proactive establish a bully-free culture in their classroom and handle bullying in an

effective way should it occur. Moreover, these courses should be compulsory to ensure all new teachers have this background.

Recommendations: Motivational Function of Reinforcement

The motivational function of reinforcement can also provide insights into how to address school bullying, and there is a key approach that could be employed: restorative approaches.

Restorative Approaches. Restorative Approaches. Restorative justice practices could use for the school setting and the aim of restorative practices (RP) is to repair the harm brought by collision of school bullying. it could provide alternatives to the punitive interventions that have been traditionally used in the past (Weber & Vereenoghe, 2020). They emphasize on letting the bullies take their own responsibility at the same time strengthening social connection, either aggressor or victims, from feeling isolated from or refused by the school community. Some studies suggest that the use of RP in schools might reduce rates of bullying and develop the relationships between students and teachers, although evidence remains limited (Weber & Vereenoghe, 2020).

Restorative discipline basically tries to educate students to be a law-abiding citizen of their school and communities (Meyer & Evans, 2012). Teachers need some approaches to effectively put this concept into practice. When responding to bullying, these more concrete strategies could include restorative chats and restorative conferences (Weber & Vereenoghe, 2020).

Restorative Chats. Restorative chats involving a conversation between a school educator and a student following an incident, which is the informal end of the continuum

(Winslade et al., 2014). Restorative chats include both affective statements and questions, which explore how the parties involved have been influenced by the incident.

Restorative Conferences. Restorative Conferences. Restorative conferences involve establishing a community of care, growing the number of rights of speech in the chat, addressing the need for relationship recovery (Winslade et al., 2014). Restorative Conferences include lots of programs and preparation and may serve diverse purposes. they may be used as a reply to a critical conflict that has occurred. Besides, they may be used for students return to school after a suspension or expulsion. The process aims to make each participant identify the problem and the influence, addressing what needs to be done to make things right. it also asking every participant to contribute views toward a solution and assigning responsibility to everyone for project implementation (Winslade et al., 2014).

Limitations

The limited number of participants who took part in the current study may decrease the transferability of the research findings. Moreover, the present research lacked in its ability to capture first-hand insights from bullies and teachers. To better understand school bullying in China, the perspectives of bullies and teachers should be studied. A wide range of qualitative data collection will possibly present the true situation in China. Another limitation was that no participants who had experienced cyber bullying were able to be recruited. This is because it is difficult to find a student who has engaged in cyber bullying because high school students in China are not allowed to have phones. Moreover, youth are not allowed to use computers for the most of their time, which

reduces the occurrence of cyber bullying. Other limitations that should be included are recruitment of young/emerging adults rather than youth (i.e., retrospective responses), potential biases from the method of recruitment, the potential of not having achieved saturation (in participants' responses). Besides, the limitation that these were all international students and thus may have a different perspective from those who did not study abroad.

Conclusion

School bullying is a critical but a neglected social issue in China. This research makes an inquiry into the experiences, influence, and opinions of the students who witnessed incidents or school bullying or who were engaged in school bullying. Socioeconomics and academic performance can be potential factors that may have made victims targets. Based on the data reported by the participations, the negative impact that bullies had on victims was with respect to their ability to socialize and their academic performance. Participants' responses suggest that students are perceived to engage in bullying for several reasons, namely apathy and an inferiority complex. According to the research, the educator's intervention in the bullying situation is necessary. Specific training in courses could improve teachers' chances of a more effective intervention. These courses should focus not only on the mere concept of bullying, its nature and causes, the protagonists, and the possible coping strategies with respect to the perpetrators and to the victims. Had COVID not restricted my research, I would have conducted face-to-face interviews, which could have facilitated more meaningful communication. For example, I would have been able to record notes regarding body

language. In addition, it may have been easier to build a stronger rapport with participants, which could have in turn helped me collect more meaningful and honest data.

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Appendix A: Interview questions

General questions:

1. Have you ever experienced bullying? Which role did you play?
 - a. Bully b. Victim c. Accomplice d. **bystanders** e. Defender
2. Do you realize that you were experiencing school bullying at that time?
How you feel about it?
3. Do your parents, teachers and school know about it? (Did they do anything for you?)
4. How did this impact the way you socialized with peers?
5. What kind of support would have needed at the time?

Questions for the participate who is from high school:

1. Did school bullying affect your study performance? How?

Questions for the participate who is from one child family:

2. Do you think one-child family are relevant with school bullying?

Questions for the participate who has been through cyberbullying:

1. How does having engaged in this make you feel about yourself now?

Appendix B: Recruitment notice
关于“中国校园欺凌的探究和防治”的研究

参与者招募启事

为了更好的理解中国校园欺凌的现状，成因和影响，以及如何能够有效针对这一问题进行预防和解决，为中国的青少年创造更良好的校园氛围。本人学术研究项目即将启动，现公开招募访谈参与者两人。

如果您是来自独生子女家庭，曾经经受过校园暴力或者网络暴力，欢迎您来参加。访谈会在7月举行，具体时间经和参与者协商后确定。

Appendix C: Consent to participate in research

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study titled “Research on Understanding and Prevention of School Bullying in China’ in Windsor: A interview” conducted by Siqu He from Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. According to coronavirus today, the interview will be held by online talking. You are welcome to participate. The interview will be held in July, and the specific time will be determined after consultation with the participants.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Siqu He

Vita Auctoris

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