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Bullying Behaviors in Middle School Special Education Settings

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A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Science In Human Development and Family Science

Introduction

This capstone project focuses on adolescent bullying behaviors in middle school Special Education settings. Adolescent bullying behaviors occur directly and indirectly through name-calling, social exclusion, engaging in physical altercations, and spreading rumors. Research shows bullying rates in early adolescence are at peak at age 14 and bullying has been linked with psychological problems showing symptoms of depression and anxiety on victims of bullying (Fujikaweta et al., 2021). Adolescents with learning disabilities have a more difficult time understanding social cues than their peers without learning disabilities, leading to lower reports of bullying when presented. Furthermore, research shows students with disabilities experience more victimization than their peers without disabilities (Rose et al., 2015). My project will first introduce adolescents to the definition of bullying. Second, the project will discuss classroom-based bullying and how to identify them. Lastly, the project will address the different ways in which adolescents can make proactive choices when bullying is presented. This project will raise awareness among students so they can make healthier and safer choices with their peers. My Capstone project addressed this by providing a three-lesson plan incorporating various activities and a final assessment. The lessons will be delivered in a middle school, with participants in grades 6th-8th grade in a Special Education/ Mild-Moderate classroom in person.

Needs Statement

Adolescents receiving special education services encounter many challenges related to their developmental needs. Within these challenges, bullying victimization stands out as a social issue in an educational setting. Research on bullying and students receiving special education services suggests that there are significant connections that deserve more in depth attention such as disciplinary practices, social skills deficits, and demographic variables (Swearer et al., 2012). This provides a clearer understanding with the connection between bullying and victimization towards students in special education. This capstone project aims to address the need to educate adolescents with learning disabilities aged 10 to 14 and in grades sixth to eight, about bullying behaviors. It will focus on the definition of bullying, the identification of bullying behaviors, and empower students to become proactive against bullying. Adolescents with learning disabilities need support learning about bullying victimization and the potential consequences that it may have on themselves and their peers. Equipping them with the right tools will empower students receiving special education services to minimize bullying in middle school settings. This project focuses on the need to understand the definition of bullying, identifying bullying behaviors, and strategies on how to become proactive against bullying.

Bullying is defined as intentional and repetitive aggressive behaviors towards a student or group of students in a direct and/or indirect manner through social exclusion, physical altercations, name-calling, and spreading rumors due to an imbalance of power (Fujikawa et al., 2021). Bullying can be transmitted in two ways, direct and indirect. Direct bullying consists of physical and verbal actions, while indirect consists of social exclusion and spreading rumors. This part of the criteria of bullying is easily misinterpreted during adolescent social development. The definition of bullying is different across various school levels. Bullying incidents do not get

reported by teachers or students due to the lack of consistency. Adolescents receive various versions of the definition leading to behaviors being overseen and endangering social development. Additionally, research shows bullying tends to increase during the middle school years, leading to a 21% prevalence rate of bullying, with the majority (66%) of bully victims reporting incidents happening once or twice throughout the school year, 19.3% being bullied monthly, 9.6% being bullied weekly, and 4.2% reported being bullied daily (Marsh, 2018). Therefore, the main focus when defining bullying should be centralized around the dynamics of the imbalance of power between the bully and the victim. Given the confusion about what bullying is, my project aimed to teach adolescents receiving special education services the meaning of bullying in their own terms stemming from an imbalance of power between peers.

Adolescents with learning disabilities experience higher bullying victimization due to various arising factors based on unique challenges and social dynamics within educational settings. Research indicates the impact that poverty, neighborhood social, economic, and physical environments have on bullying victimization focusing on poverty as the most important risk factor for adolescents with mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders (Iyanda, 2021). Additionally, Iyanda (2021) discusses the impact of prior generational school attendants and teen parenting increasing the chances of being raised in poverty leading to equal increment in bullying victimization targeting. Social dynamics, socioeconomic status, neighborhood conditions, and family background contribute to the potential causes of bullying victimization in adolescents with learning disabilities in middle school settings.

Adolescents with disabilities experience a learning impairment in which an Individualized Educational Plan needs to be in place to support adaptation skills for daily functioning. In a classroom setting, educators implement accommodations to promote student

well-being, and during socialization times outside of the classroom they are exposed to general settings. Middle school adolescents with disabilities must engage socially and develop healthy relationships. Unfortunately, adolescents with disabilities have difficulties in social competence making them vulnerable to social exclusion and bullying due to lower social power, and communication skills necessary to avoid victimization (Berchiatii et al., 2021). Overall, adolescents receiving special education services continue being at risk of being victimized by bullying behaviors due to their cognitive developmental needs, and providing them with information about bullying can increase their social awareness.

Middle school adolescents with disabilities experience more bullying than their peers without disabilities, and they face difficulties in social participation (Berchiatti et al., 2021). Research on students with disabilities shows that 10% to 33% of these students report victimization by peers in a school setting (Berchiatti et al., 2021). No gender differences have been found in bullying of adolescents with learning disabilities. However longitudinal data suggests that disability status plays a major factor in repeated bullying victimization through name-calling, making fun of, and physical altercations (Rose et al., 2015). Social development is significant during the adolescent stage. Various aspects support well-being, including friendships, self-esteem, and self-identity. Middle school adolescents with disabilities have a more difficult time processing social cues, consequently falsely leading adolescents that their peers' intentions are well intended when in reality they are being bullied. For example, research shows higher rates of Special Education teachers reporting bullying rather than the students themselves, proving that students misinterpret their interactions with their peers (Swearer et al., 2012).

Furthermore, research continually elaborates on the higher challenges faced by students with disabilities in communication and socialization. These presented challenges lead to students' negative experiences, such as peer rejection, and struggles with problem-solving, and competence. Hence, students with disabilities are more vulnerable than their peers without disabilities. Students with disabilities experience bullying at a prevalence rate of 34.1% which is higher than both elementary school (24.5%) and high school (26.6%) rates (Marsh, 2018). The lack of social competence in students with disabilities places this group at risk for the prevalence of bullying involvement than their peers without disabilities (Marsh, 2018). Adolescents are prone to be more susceptible to peer influences due to social acceptance and self-identity, making the adolescent stage a vulnerable time for social development. Consequently, bullying leads to higher levels of depression, emotional symptoms, and lower achievement scores in middle school adolescents with disabilities (Berchiatti et al., 2021).

Bullying contributes to long-lasting effects on development during the adolescent years. Continuous bullying has an impact on adolescents' well-being by affecting them psychologically, socially, and physically. Research further proves that bullying during the adolescent stage can severely impair a person's physical, psychological, and social functioning contributing to issues such as risky behaviors, anxiety, depression, low academic achievement, suicidal ideation, suicidal behavior, or self-harm (Man et. al, 2022). Moore et al. (2017) discusses adolescent bullying victimization corrupts mental health outcomes with mental health issues including depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and attempts, social phobia, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Additionally, Moore (2017) elaborates on the association between bullying victimization and substance, alcohol, and tobacco use (Moore et al., 2017). Adolescents with special disabilities function at a lower social competence level making them more susceptible to

bullying victimization. Rose & Gage (2017) suggest that adolescents with learning disabilities experience negative effects of bullying victimization with higher levels of physical harm, emotional problems, and psychological distress than their peers without learning disabilities. Deficits in social and communication skills place adolescents with learning disabilities at greater risk of bullying victimization, furthermore, consequences of bullying victimization have a greater impact than adolescents without learning disabilities. Repetitive bullying behaviors become normalized in peer relationships making it difficult for peers to properly identify it as it continually occurs. Research further suggests that peers who have a poor understanding of bullying effects have a negative influence on adolescents, leading adolescents to continue bullying others to gain social acceptance from a group (Gustina & Ulfah, 2020).

Analyzing the imbalance of power between the bully and victim relationship is crucial to help middle school students with disabilities identify bullying from other acts of aggression (Aalsma & Brown, 2008). Shifting the definition of bullying by incorporating the identification of an imbalance of power will help minimize the confusion in adolescents, and enhance the probability of bullying reports from peers. Behaviors need to be identifiable within direct and indirect bullying. Direct bullying consists of behaviors such as hitting and name-calling, and indirect bullying includes spreading rumors and social exclusion. Adolescents' confusion lies within these guidelines commonly mistaking the presented behaviors as socially acceptable under false pretenses of good intentions. Leading to a lack of bullying reports by the students themselves, or their peers. Adolescents with learning disabilities require more support with proper identification of bullying behaviors due to cognitive development impairment, than their peers without learning disabilities. Additionally, implementing students' accommodations to support learning will ensure student academic success. Meeting the needs of students with

learning disabilities will promote an inclusive learning environment, and it will properly equip students with the knowledge and skills to identify bullying behaviors when presented.

Learning about coping strategies for dealing with bullying is crucial for middle school students with learning disabilities, as it empowers them to navigate social struggles and helps build resilience. The research discusses various coping strategies for adolescents in school environments such as cognitive distancing (ignoring the stressor and resisting negative thoughts), internalization (keeping negative emotions inside and deviating from disclosure to others), and externalization (projecting negative emotions onto others). While these coping mechanisms might temporarily satisfy the issue, it is rather unhealthy to avoid processing the negative impact caused by bullying. Potart et al. (2021) found that for that reason, approaching anti-bullying strategies must be practiced, such as problem-solving skills and social support seeking. Problem-solving skills support cognitive development through critical thinking. Rahman (2019) identifies the skills developed with critical thinking and problem-solving to provide the ability for adolescents to reason efficiently, ask clear questions, assess alternative perspectives, and reflect critically on choices and procedures. Practicing the presented skills can be used as tools by adolescents when confronted with bullying situations. Miloseva et al. (2017) define adolescent social support as the quality of emotional support provided by family, friends, and significant others. Miloseva et al. (2017) also discuss the association between social support and reduced psychological distress reinforcing the concept of social support as a coping mechanism for stressful life events such as bullying. Furthermore, seeking social support enhances adolescents' advocacy skills promoting healthy relationship practices.

This capstone project focused on bullying behaviors in middle school special education settings, centralized around adolescents with learning disabilities. It is imperative to provide

adolescents with the proper tools to support healthy development and a safe educational

environment for themselves and their peers. Adolescents with learning disabilities lie at a greater

risk of being targeted for bullying due to cognitive development impairments than their peers

without learning disabilities. Three main components that help minimize bullying behaviors in

adolescents with learning disabilities are clearly defining bullying, helping them identify

bullying behaviors when presented, and teaching them strategies and coping mechanisms against

bullying. This project included 20 middle school students in a Special Education setting

receiving Mild/Moderate support with Learning Disabilities. Lessons for this project were

delivered in a special education environment and the curriculum needed adaptations that met the

students where they are in their development for successful learning. Additionally, lessons were

age and developmentally-appropriate by expanding the curriculum through various examples and

scenarios.

Theory

This project was influenced by Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

Bronfenbrenner believed in social environments' impact on a child's development.

Bronfenbrenner believed that individuals were influenced by various factors through multiple

layers of environmental contexts and interconnectedness of the systems (Crawford, 2020). .

Bronfenbrenner also believed in bidirectional influences that impact an individual's

development. He believed that environmental interactions shaped the individual, and the

individual shaped his environment through the various levels of context (Kuther, 2021).

Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory provides the foundation for a holistic approach

towards mental health support systems. Kuther (2021) elaborates on Bronfenbrenner's theory by

describing in depth the theory's approach to interactions between the individual and the

microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Closest to the

individual, and the most influential, is the microsystem consisting of immediate physical

interactions such as family, peers, and school. The mesosystem refers to the relations between

contexts in the microsystem, such as the interaction between an individual's family and their

school. The exosystem refers to an individual's influences through a setting in which they do not

directly participate in, however still participate. The macrosystem includes cultural beliefs,

societal norms, attitudes, and national policies. Finally, the chronosystem indicates the

bioecological changes that influence an individual such as wars or natural disasters.

Conclusively, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory has a holistic approach that

acknowledges all systems connected to an individual (Kuther, 2021).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a comprehensive framework for

understanding adolescent development throughout the various environmental systems. This

theory particularly relates to the development of students receiving special education services as

it makes connections between teacher interactions and the manner in which bullying experiences

are addressed. Special education students face difficulties with socialization skills. In the concept

of bullying the microsystem highlights the importance of school, peer groups, and the

community as possible support networks. Within the context of the microsystem, students

receiving special education services face specific challenges such as negative interactions with

peers and lack of support from educators. Therefore, emphasizing the importance of building

rapport and engaging in positive relationships with staff and peers. In a larger context, the

mesosystem focuses on the interactions between the individual, school, and family. Therefore,

the experience of student's bullying should be handled with close communication between these

systems otherwise it can lead to traumatizing bullying with negative consequences. Considering

these two systems, it is essentially important to maintain high communication between these systems, as they equally contribute to the risk and protective factors associated with bullying behaviors. Therefore, there is a high need for a developmentally appropriate curriculum for students receiving special education services to address the issue of bullying effectively.

Consideration of Diversity

This project was implemented at Rolling Hills Middle School in Watsonville, California. Rolling Hills Middle School is a predominantly Latino school with a population consisting of 97.1% Hispanic, 95.8% socioeconomically disadvantaged (meaning students are eligible for meals at no cost, or their parents did not receive a high school diploma), 48.3% are English Learners (students typically requiring instruction in English and another language), and 19.5% are students with disabilities. The population of students represented diversity in age, gender, and language. All individuals who participated in this project were individuals with a learning disability requiring mild to moderate academic support. Additionally, all participants had an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) in place to support their learning. For each lesson, safety and developmentally appropriate curriculum was prioritized due to the variety of learning disabilities within the population. The curriculum was specifically designed to meet the needs of each student in an inclusive manner considering various learning styles such as, but not limited to role-playing, repetition, frequent check-ins with students, visuals, additional time for responses, small breaks, and one-step directions. Considering that bullying is a sensitive topic, an important part of this project was to build rapport with the students before discussing the topic.

During the delivery of the curriculum it was important for me to consider the language diversity in the classroom. All of my participants were of Hispanic background whose parents work in agriculture and their main language is Spanish. Taking this into consideration I observed

the students engage with each other, listened to the language they used, and responded with the language they preferred when they addressed me. Speaking their native language and English helped build rapport with the students and created a safe environment for everyone. English language skills were developed enough to understand the content, and no translation of the material was required.

In order to deliver developmentally appropriate lessons I made sure to speak with the teacher about specific learning disabilities that I should be aware about. The teacher shared reading material she uses for her lessons and discussed reading levels for this group of students ranging from third to sixth grade. A variety of learning styles and student accommodations were also taken into consideration during the development of the curriculum such as working as a class, providing visuals, repeating instructions, delivering single-step instruction, providing extra time to respond, hands on activities, listening activities, reading activities, and allowing physical movement during the activities. Additionally, the teacher reviewed the curriculum before it was delivered to ensure students' developmental needs were being considered.

Learning Outcomes

Middle school students in Special Education settings misunderstand social cues leading to underreported bullying incidents. There is a need for a curriculum that helps special education students deal with bullying. Participants for this project consist of 10 middle school students in a Special Education setting receiving Mild/Moderate support with Learning Disabilities. The project had the following three learning outcomes:

1. SPED students will be able to know what bullying is by defining bullying in their own words.

2. SPED students will be able to identify 3 bullying behaviors.

3. SPED students will learn two strategies on how to become proactive against bullying to decrease the amount of bullying at their school.

Method

Location and Participation

This project was conducted at Rolling Hills Middle School in Watsonville, California. Three lessons were delivered over three days, each lesson targeting a different component connected to bullying behavior in middle school special education settings. The participants were 8 males and 2 females between the ages of 10 through 14 years old, and grades ranged from sixth to eighth. All of the participants were Hispanic and with a learning disability. Participants were also bilingual with Spanish being their native language. To recruit the participants I emailed three Special Education teachers, one being the school site Special Education Department Chair, and asked if I could carry a three-lesson curriculum with their class. They all responded, however they all agreed that this particular group of students would benefit the most from my lessons. Therefore, participants were selected by teachers preference. Furthermore, participants were all students who are enrolled in Special Day Classes and General Education classes.

Procedures and Materials

The first lesson focused on defining bullying and included a total of ten students . I initiated the lesson by asking students whether they knew the definition of bullying. It is important to emotionally prepare students for upcoming sensitive subjects that might have the potential to activate emotional reactions. Allowing them to voluntarily participate in the initiation of the sensitive subject allows students to feel in control of how much they would like to share, and understand that it will be respected. Two students raised their hands and they took turns sharing with the class what they knew about bullying and what they believe the definition

is. Afterward, I thanked the students and explained to them what the activity would be along with

student expectations during the time of the lesson, agreeing as a group that everyone's ideas and

opinions would be respected. . I continued with the lesson by demonstrating a short 5-minute

video about the definition of bullying. We openly discussed our thoughts on the video and made

connections between the video's definition and definitions they have heard since elementary

school. I provided a worksheet for the students titled "Defining Terms" with four sections. Each

section had specific instructions, all leading to the development of the definition [See Appendix

A]. I then asked the students to share one important idea that they believe needs to be in the

definition of bullying. After passing out the worksheet, I read the instructions to the group. Eight

students took turns sharing their opinions about specific wording they believed should be in the

definition. I tested the student's knowledge level by asking them to come up with their definition

of bullying. At the end of the lesson, students were assessed. I assessed the students in clarity of

definition, the language they used, and their engagement level. Throughout the assessment, I

walked around and asked each student if they needed help. I openly repeated the instruction two

times for all students. Additionally, I supported a sentence starter written on the classroom's

whiteboard in big letters with a black whiteboard marker, as well as working on the first three

sections of the worksheet as a class.

The second lesson targeted students' ability to identify bullying behaviors, and it was

delivered to ten students. I initiated the lesson with an open class discussion about the definition

of bullying. Then, I asked them to think about what that would look like in person, with actions. I

gave a small example, and then they began to share their examples of behaviors connected to

bullying. As we continued the discussion three students shared a bullying experience. Afterward,

I explained the activity to the students and began to play "Bully Bingo" [See Appendix B]. The

Bully Bingo card was composed of various bullying behaviors, many of them were direct observations of my time at the school site. It was important to me to help these students realize when they are being bullied, therefore I incorporated many of the behaviors onto the card. Throughout the game, I repeated each card two times, walked around with the card to provide a closer view of the wording, and helped two students identify three items. At the end of the game, to test what they learned , I asked each student to share with the class three behaviors they believed could be easily misinterpreted by their peers. I assessed the students in identifying three bullying behaviors by listening to their answers.

The third lesson targeted teaching ten students different strategies to become proactive against bullying. I initiated the lesson by asking students about their knowledge of school behavior expectations, and what they would do if they came across a situation where they were being bullied. Taking turns all students shared school-wide behavior expectations, and two students shared whom they've reached out to for help when they were bullied. As a school, it is important to ensure that students are provided with enough tools to minimize bullying victimization. Research by Sivaraman et al. (2019) discusses the effectiveness of school-wide approaches toward minimizing bullying victimization. By initiating the discussion of school resources I am also making students aware of their options for support against bullying. Afterward, I explained the activity to the students and asked them to take out their computers. As a class, we played an online quiz game called Kahoot! which was the tool also used to conduct the assessment for Learning Outcome 3. The Kahoot! consisted of 5 multiple-choice questions and 5 true or false statements. The Kahoot! game was 20 minutes long. To assess this knowledge I looked at students' total scores at the end of the game [See Appendix C].

Results

Learning Outcome 1 focuses on SPED students being able to give a definition of

bullying. Learning Outcome 1 was assessed through written content using four criteria worth

one point each on a four-point rubric. The written assessment focused on defining the term;

bullying, in the student's own words. The targeted outcome consisted of a spelling of the word,

main idea, important words, and the definition at the end.I assessed the students in clarity of

definition, the language they used, and their engagement level. Throughout the assessment, I

walked around and asked each student if they needed help. I openly repeated the instruction two

times for all students. Additionally, I supported a sentence starter written on the classroom's

whiteboard in big letters with a black whiteboard marker, as well as working on the first three

sections of the worksheet as a class.   Nine out of ten students with learning disabilities passed

the Learning Outcome with a score of 75% or higher. One of the students (10%) did not pass the

Learning Outcome with a score of 0/4. Nine out of ten participants fully met the Learning

Outcome.

Learning Outcome 2 focuses on SPED students being able to identify 3 bullying

behaviors. This Learning Outcome was assessed by listening to the students identify three

bullying behaviors. Students individually shared the behaviors with the class. To ensure students

met the outcome, I allowed behaviors to be repeated only once and then asked students to think

of a different bullying behavior. All middle school students with learning disabilities were able to

share three different bullying behaviors. Therefore, the second Learning Outcome was fully met.

Learning Outcome 3 focuses on SPED students learning two strategies on how to become

proactive against bullying to decrease the amount of bullying at their school. To assess the

students' learning of two strategies against bullying I recorded the final scores of the students

from the Kahoot! quiz game in which 10 was the highest score possible. The Kahoot! consisted

of 10 short bullying scenarios in which students had to select the proactive strategy. The answers were a mixture of 5 multiple choice and 5 true or false. For Learning Outcome 3, 1 out of 10 (10%) of the students correctly identified 7 strategies that can be used against bullying. One out of ten (10%) students correctly identified 4 strategies that can be used against bullying. One out of ten (10%) students correctly identified 2 strategies that can be used against bullying. One out of ten (10%) students was not able to successfully identify any of the strategies against bullying. Six out of ten (60%) students successfully identified 8 or more strategies that can be used against bullying. Learning Outcome 3 was partially met.

Discussion

Successes

The capstone project focuses on raising awareness among adolescents with learning disabilities about bullying behaviors. Students with learning disabilities are more vulnerable to becoming victims of bullying than their peers without learning disabilities due to their impairment in socialization skills. Swearer et al. (2012) discuss the difference between bullying incidents reported by staff being higher than reports from the students themselves. Students participated without any hesitation, and engagement with the curriculum was consistent across the three days from the whole group of students. The students expressed joy when they received the worksheet on the first day when they saw the small images I had added. They mentioned the small images made the worksheet look fun. On the second day, they complimented the Bully Bingo cards and were intrigued by the colors and font that were used. On the third day, they enjoyed the idea of playing Kahoot! as a way of testing their knowledge and becoming competitive with each other at a healthy level. I found that creating the materials in a fun and interesting way supported the student's engagement level, therefore leading to positive results.

Prioritizing a curriculum that was developmentally appropriate for students with learning disabilities was the greatest factor contributing to the success rates of the lessons. Students connected with the material at a personal level, concluding that they will use the knowledge gained in a positive way to promote healthy development throughout their adolescence.

Limitations

Students' depth of engagement leads to lifetime learning experiences. However, some limitations opposed to the development of the project were: Using the term "victimization" to describe adolescents who have experienced bullying. Certain terminology should be avoided when discussing emotionally sensitive topics to avoid further negative self-identity. Implementing this term to describe an individual only reinforces feelings of weakness and helplessness leading to assumptions that might not properly reflect an adolescent's capabilities. Instead, more constructive language to acknowledge these experiences should be used to ensure that adolescents feel empowered to overcome these obstacles.

Another limitation of the project was student attendance. Students who were absent due to severe bullying were not present to participate in the lesson. Truancy is a common sign of bullying victimization, it commonly happens when students do not feel safe in their environment or physically well to be present at school.

Openly discussing bullying victimization, leads to possibly activating a student's traumatic experience with a negative outcome. Sharing personal emotional experiences can result in reliving traumatic experiences and unwanted feelings. Therefore, discussing a sensitive subject for a brief time was not too adequate, and left students with the need to connect with their teacher to further discuss the activities and lessons learned. Consequently, finishing the project leads to limited time to properly process emotions.

Future Directions

Considering the limitations of this project, teaching students to identify bullying behaviors should be followed up with an in-depth conversation as needed. To expand on this project, I would like to further develop the social-emotional component through interventions for bullying victims and bullying perpetrators. Additionally, expanding this area would also provide a different insight into physical altercations which have an impact on the educational system through suspensions and expulsions. I would also recommend facilitating conversations through small support groups being led by students themselves, but supervised by counselors or teachers. Through this method, students will learn to expand their supportive networks.

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[Appendix A]

Defining Terms

Name: ▮▮▮ **Date:** ▮▮▮

BRACE YOURSELF
DEFINITIONS ARE COMING

I abc ✓

Spell the word you are defining.

Bullying

What is the main idea?

when someone is being mean, it can be your friends.

What are some important words you believe should be in the definition?

• Power (imbalance)
• Group bullying
• intimidation

Write in your definition here:

Bullying means regularly bothering others.

[Appendix B]

Bully BINGO

POSTING MEAN PICTURES ON SOCIAL MEDIA	NOT LETTING SOMEONE PARTICIPATE	TEASING SOMEONE	TAKING THINGS FROM SOMEONE WITHOUT ASKING
MAKING MEAN COMMENTS ABOUT SOMEONE	STEALING SOMEONE'S STUFF	NOT LETTING SOMEONE SIT WITH YOU ON THE BUS	IGNORING SOMEONE
SPREADING RUMORS ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE	HIDING SOMEONE'S STUFF	CALLING SOMEONE A MEAN NAME	TELLING OTHER PEOPLE A SECRET YOU WERE TOLD
HITTING SOMEONE	BULLY FREE ZONE	SAYING SOMETHING MEAN ON PURPOSE	SENDING MEAN TEXTS TO SOMEONE

[Appendix C]

Report

Report options ⋮

School Expectations ✎

| Summary | **Players** (10) | Questions (10) | Feedback |

| **All (10)** | **Need help (2)** |

Nickname ⌄	Rank ⌄	Correct answers ⌄
▬▬▬	1	100%
▬▬▬	2	90%
▬▬▬	3	80%
▬▬▬	4	80%
▬▬▬	5	80%
▬▬▬	6	80%
▬▬▬	7	70%
▬▬▬	8	40%
▬▬▬	9	20%
▬▬▬	10	0%

Bullying Behaviors in Middle School Special Education Settings

Maria Teresa Reyes-Ortiz

Human Development & Family Science

Introduction

- Adolescent bullying behaviors occur directly and indirectly: name-calling, social exclusion, physical altercations, spreading rumors

- Research shows bullying rates in early adolescence are at a peak at the age of 14

- Bullying has been linked with psychological problems showing symptoms of depression and anxiety in victims of bullying.

- Adolescents receiving special education services are at higher risk of being bullying due to their cognitive developmental needs

(Fujikawera et al., 2021)

Problem

Adolescents with learning disabilities:

- more difficult time understanding social cues

- lower reports of bullying

- difficulties in social competence make them vulnerable to exclusion and bullying due to lower social power

- lack of the communication skills necessary to avoid victimization

- Statistics prove they experience more victimization than their peers without learning disabilities.

(Rose et al., 2015; Berchiatii et al., 2021)

# Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner

- Believes Individuals are influenced by various factors through multiple layers of environmental contexts- interconnectedness systems.

- Emphasizes development as interactions between biological, cognitive, and socioemotional changes.

- Interactions shape the individual, and the individual shapes its environment through the different levels of contexts.

(Crawford, 2020; Luther, 2021)

Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner

- **Microsystem:** immediate physical interactions

- **Mesosystem:** interaction between an individual's family and their school

- Exosystem: setting in which they do not directly participate in, but still impacts the development

- Macrosystem: cultural and societal forces that contribute to development

- Chronosystem: bioecological changes
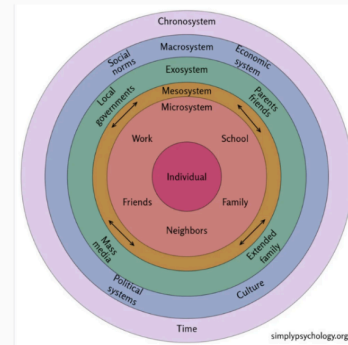
Learning Outcomes

I designed a 3-lesson curriculum that was delivered across three days to a classroom of ten participants in the grades 6th through 8th, with a learning disability. The curriculum focused on the following learning outcomes:
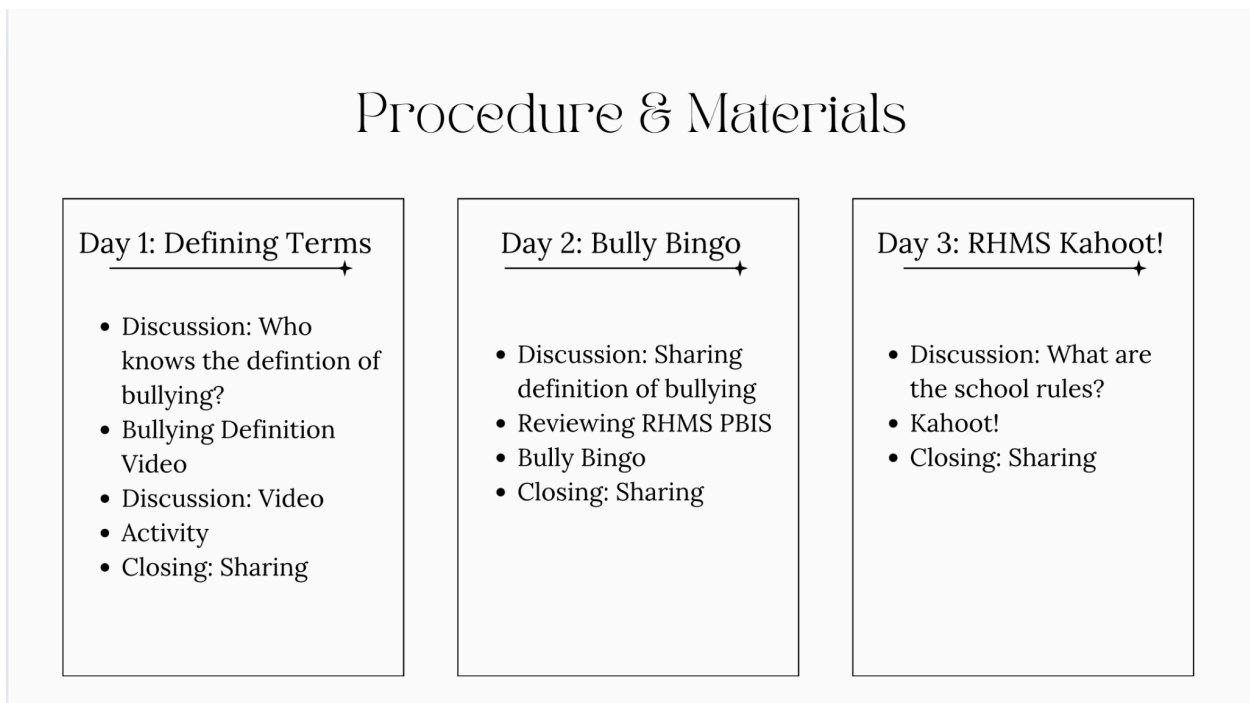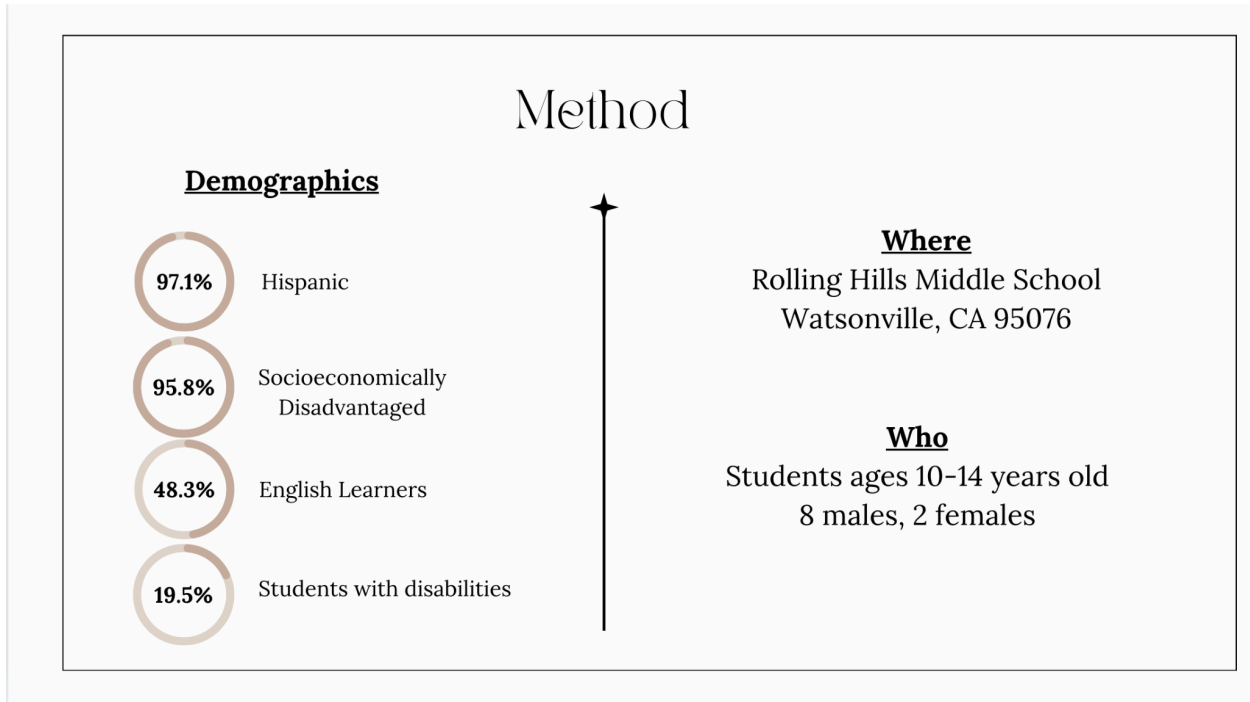
#1: SPED students will be able to define bullying in their own words

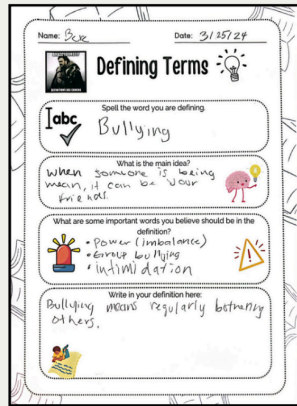#2: SPED students will be able to identify 3 bullying behaviors

#3: SPED students will learn two strategies on how to become proactive against bullying.

Method

Demographics

97.1% Hispanic

95.8% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged

48.3% English Learners

19.5% Students with disabilities

Where
Rolling Hills Middle School
Watsonville, CA 95076

Who
Students ages 10-14 years old
8 males, 2 females

Procedure & Materials

Day 1: Defining Terms

- Discussion: Who knows the defintion of bullying?
- Bullying Definition Video
- Discussion: Video
- Activity
- Closing: Sharing

Day 2: Bully Bingo

- Discussion: Sharing definition of bullying
- Reviewing RHMS PBIS
- Bully Bingo
- Closing: Sharing

Day 3: RHMS Kahoot!

- Discussion: What are the school rules?
- Kahoot!
- Closing: Sharing

Assesment Results

LO 1: Be able to define bullying in their own terms.

9/10 students successfully defined the term bullying in their own words

- students were assessed through a 4-point system

- score of 75% or higher

- fully met

Assesment Results

LO 2: Be able to identify 3 bullying behaviors

10/10 students successfully identified 3 new bullying behaviors.

- students were assessed by sharing 3 new bullying behaviors

- score of 66% or higher

- fully met

Assesment Results

LO 3: Learn 2 proactive strategies against bullying.

6/10 students successfully learned 2 strategies.

- students were assessed by their automatic scores on Kahoot!

- score of 80% or higher

- partially met

Report   Report options ⋮

School Expectations ✎
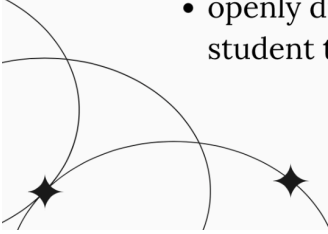
Summary   **Players** (10)   Questions (10)   Feedback

All (10)	Need help (2)	
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▬	5	⭕ 80%
▬	6	⭕ 80%
▬	7	⭕ 70%
▬	8	⭕ 40%
▬	9	⭕ 20%
▬	10	⭕ 0%

Discussion: Successes

- Students complimented the materials

- Curriculum was developmentally appropriate for students

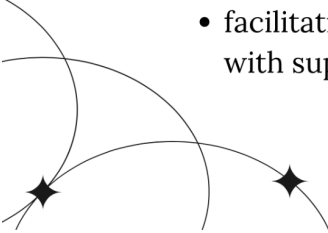- Students connected with material at personal level

Discussion: Limitations

- Term "victimization" reinforces feelings of weakness and helplessness

- student attendance, truancy and bullying

- openly discussing bullying leading to possability of activating student trauma

Discussion: Future Directions

- Further develop on social-emotional component through interventions for bullying victims and bully perpetrators

- implement interventions as an alternative to suspension to minimize suspension rates

- facilitating conversations with small groups led by students with supervision, to expand support network

Thank you