

Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of the Bullying Prevention Policies in Taiwan

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Taiwan enforced the *Regulations on the Prevention of Bullying on Campus* policy in 2012 and was the first East Asian country to enforce a national policy that addresses bullying in schools. Employing a mixed-method design, this study investigated teacher's and administrative staff's perceptions and experiences of anti-bullying policy implementation. A total of 116 teachers and administrative staff participated in the survey and 15 teachers and administrative staff participated in interviews. The results indicated that a lack of anti-bullying education for teachers coupled with endemic heterosexism perpetuated school climates that prioritized improving students' academic performance over implementing anti-bullying policies. The important role of teachers in policy implementation as well as school principal's commitment to addressing school bullying were highlighted as key in reducing bullying behaviors. Finally, the report discusses recommendations and direction for future research.

Keywords: Anti-bullying policy, bullying prevention, guidance teachers, school climate.

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Bullying is regarded as a worldwide phenomenon that severely affects the well-being of children and youth (Craig & Pepler, 2003). There is a consensus that bullying occurs when an individual is exposed to unwanted, adverse and hurtful behaviors repeatedly and over time, and that the individual being bullied has difficulty successfully addressing or terminating the situation in which the behavior occurs (Olweus, 1993, 2009). Additionally, there is an inherent imbalance of power between the person who is being bullied and the person who is engaging in the bullying behavior. Specifically, bullying can be verbal, relational, physical, racial, sexual, and/or cyber, and may include behaviors such as, damaging belongings, taking money or valuables, and being forced to do actions against one's will (Smith et al., 2008). Moreover, several studies focusing on exploring the risk and predictive factors of school bullying suggested that sexism, gender stereotyping, and homophobia in schools play a significant role in influencing bullying among students (Meyer, 2015; Morales et al., 2016).

Scientific evidence is unequivocal in its documentation of the negative effects of bullying on children, schools, communities, and society at large. In particular, researchers have shown that children and youth who are bullied are likely to experience depression, low self-esteem, somatic complaints, decreased academic performance, and suicidal thoughts or behaviors (Bauman et al., 2013). Additionally, perpetrators of bullying display other antisocial behaviors such as, frequent aggressive interactions, theft, vandalism, and use of alcohol and illegal substances (Graham & Bellmore, 2007). Observers of bullying may feel afraid and powerless to stop the bullying, which may result in guilt over their non-action, or feeling tempted to participate in the bullying behavior (Olweus, 1993, 2009). Thus, schools are adversely affected by an environment characterized fear and disrespect, making it difficult for children and youth to learn. Subsequently, families, communities, and the broader society are negatively impacted upon by bullying (Greene, 2003).

A systematic review conducted by Vreeman and Carroll (2007) examined the efficacy of bullying prevention programs that utilize anti-bullying curriculum, holistic school intervention, social skills groups, mentoring programs for bullying victims, and social work supports. Their findings indicated that the overall effectiveness of these programs appears to be mixed, with some programs actually realizing an increase in bullying after the program's implementation (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). Thus, these scholars cogently argue for systemic solutions to address the problem of bullying. As a result, Greene (2003, 2006) and others

(e.g. Benbenishty & Astor, 2005) insist that individual, group, and family counseling are not effective intervention modalities for addressing bullying unless they are accompanied by a systemic school-wide bullying prevention initiative. Yet despite these consistent recommendations and calls for systemic interventions to address the problem of bullying, there is a limited understanding of the key components that must comprise such school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Moreover, there is even less research available that examines how changes in schools' systems inform changes in policy and broader communities.

The results of these North American studies (Graham & Bellmore, 2007) are echoed in the bullying research being conducted in Taiwan. In particular, Taiwanese studies looking at bullying in elementary schools focus predominantly on: (a) surveying individuals about bullying in schools (Wang & Chen, 2018), (b) analyzing bullying prevention interventions and course design (Fang, 2016), and (c) evaluating potential dangerous and safer spaces on campuses (Chang et al., 2014). While these studies are important in identifying how bullying behavior starts early on in the Taiwanese educational system, research indicates that the problem becomes exacerbated as students get older resulting in increased levels of bullying in junior high school (Taiwan Ministry of Education (TMOE), 2017). Taiwanese studies examining bullying in primary and secondary schools indicate that the most prevalent form of bullying is physical, followed by verbal, relational, and cyber bullying (TMOE, 2017). Though less studied, cyber bullying also appears to be on the rise (Shih, 2017). Moreover, Taiwanese studies indicate that bullying results in serious psychological consequences for the victim including low academic performance, academic maladjustment, and low self-esteem (Chang, et al., 2013; Tsai & Teng, 2019).

Given the profound consequences of bullying, some researchers have focused on those factors that contribute to bullying and how students cope when they are bullied (Liu, 2011; Shen & Chao, 2018). The most prevalent factors related to bullying are teachers' attitudes, intervention (Liu, 2011; Wang et al., 2017), parent-child relationships (Shen & Chao, 2018; Wang et al., 2020), the personality traits and peer relationships (Liu & Tung, 2018; Wu et al., 2013; Yen & Chen, 2018). More specifically, several studies that examine how students cope with bullying indicate that victims usually blamed themselves for being a victim of bullying, which can lead them to ignore or tolerate the bullying instead of seeking out social support (Tsai & Teng, 2019; Wang & Chen, 2018).

Further, there are studies that examine anti-bullying interventions which focus predominantly on; (a) therapy for the victims (Chang, 2013), (b) remedial education for the bullies (Tu, 2015), (c) anti-bullying courses (Chen & Lee, 2015; Lin, 2018; Wang & Lee, 2018), and (d) teachers and pre-service teachers' abilities to identify bullying behaviors (Chiu & Chang, 2012; Sung & Chen, 2017). Additionally, results of a survey conducted by Wang and Lee (2018) indicated that there is a lack of anti-bullying courses developed for school guidance teachers. As such, anti-bullying interventions were left to be carried out by individual teachers. Such intervention or anti-bully campaigns were often perceived as ineffective by students (Wang et al., 2017). Thus, largely speaking, bullying studies focus predominantly on individual's experiences at the individual-level and classroom-level, with little attention given to the systemic factors such as school climate or policy implementation that contribute to bullying. Simply stated, even though bullying has been identified as a serious systemic problem starting early on in elementary school (TMOE, 2017), little research has been conducted to understand how to change a school climate influenced by bullying and how effective change in schools affects policy and community life.

It is noteworthy that in Taiwan, the relationship between policy and practices in schools is of significant interest as the government itself has actively developed anti-bullying policies for schools. In 2012, Regulations on the Prevention of Bullying on Campus (TMOE, 2012) was put in place to address the rising incidence of bullying in Taiwanese schools. Specifically, this mandate requires that all school authorities should formally report bullying incidences to the Ministry of Education, including the provision of remedial education to the offenders and victims, the provision of prevention education to all students on gender equity and ethics, the provision of continuing education to all teachers, staff, and personnel. As such, Taiwan is the first country in Asia to enact a national policy that addresses bullying in schools.

Although the establishment of such national policies was a major step toward addressing bullying and gender equity in schools, only a few studies were conducted to explore the implementation of the policies. For example, Chen (2018) investigated the effect of anti-bullying strategies in schools and reported that there were no significant effects on increasing teachers' anti-bullying awareness or decreasing the prevalence rates of bullying in schools. Yet, little is known about how these policies are perceived and implemented at the school level. That is, unlike principals, who reportedly demonstrated the highest level of policy

literacy (TMOE, 2010), teachers reported that they lacked both a comprehensive understanding of the national policies' content and the options afforded to them for policy implementation (Hwang & Kan, 2014). Additionally, these teachers' willingness and abilities to carry out the policies were also negatively affected due to a larger class sizes and consequently a larger workload (Chiu, 2014; Liu, 2014). Guidance teachers reported that policy implementation was difficult due to (a) multi-role conflicts, (b) gender stereotypes that are deeply embedded in Taiwanese society, and (b) parents' lack of understanding of these national policies (Chiang, 2019; Sung, 2016). Furthermore, when it comes to investigating a reported sexual bullying incident, encountering there is specific challenges as it is difficult define sexual bullying, parents may interfere with the investigation, and principals often dismiss disciplinary decisions (Hsieh, 2016). However, research has indicated that junior and senior high school teachers are more willing to enforce anti-bully strategies when school principals demonstrated the commitment to enforce the policy and a zero bullying school campus (Li et al., 2017).

Therefore, given the rising concerns regarding bullying in Taiwanese schools, and the clear indication that a systemic understanding of school bullying and policy implementation is warranted, the researchers proposed the following research questions for this study: (a) In what way the educational and societal systems (such as school climate) may inadvertently support gender inequities and bullying in high schools? (b) What is the awareness and understanding of teachers and administrative staff of the high school community as to the definition of gender equity, bullying, national, policies, and interventions? (c) To which degree have the national government bullying policies been implemented in the high school? and (d) how policy implementation impacts behaviors.

Methods

Models of organizational consultation have been specifically developed to assess the nature of complex problems within institutions. These models provide a structure through which a researcher can systematically analyze institutional systems, policies, and procedures through the perspective of cultural diversity, as well as the resultant effects on how individuals and groups treat each other within a system. Accordingly, systemic problems can

be identified, and interventions can be developed.

Since anti-bullying policies in Taiwan are being enforced at all school levels, it is important to understand how this enforcement may vary across individual school contexts. Therefore, the application of an organizational consultation framework is ideally suited to address school personnel's perceptions of policy implementation and enforcement. For the purposes of this project, the researchers applied the Integrated Social Justice Consultation Model (ISJCM) as the epistemological framework (Sinacore, 2011, 2014), which draws upon the works of Sinacore and Enns (2005), Sue and Sue (2008), Sue and Constantine (2005), and Vera and Speight (2003). The ISJCM was developed with an international and cross-cultural focus. Thus, this model can be applied in Taiwan as it does not employ restricted definitions of gender and other socio-cultural factors. That is, the ISJCM is a dynamic model that allows individuals to define their own unique identities (e.g., gender, sexual orientation), as well as, their unique Taiwanese societal contexts (e.g., cultural and systemic values). In addition, the ISJCM rests upon four principles: (a) inequities are a bi-product of the environment and exist because organizations are located in unjust societies; (b) power dynamics in organizations contribute to, and result in, the silencing or marginalizing of individuals; (c) intersecting multiple identities must be understood in through the analysis of social interactions, decision making processes and the distribution of power and resources; and, (d) organizational social and structural change necessarily leads to conflict which can lead to positive change (Sinacore, 2011).

When applying the ISJCM, equal power and voice are given to the experiences of all teachers in an organization or system (Sinacore, 2011). As such, employing this model, the researchers offered an opportunity for teachers and administrative staff of the Taiwanese school community to share their perceptions of how governmental anti-bullying policies are implemented, and to elaborate upon the socio-cultural challenges that may arise in the organizational structure as a result. Thus, the researchers were able to assess how policy interpretation and implementation facilitated and/or inhibited successfully addressing gender based and other forms of bullying and harassment.

Methodology

This project employed a mixed-methods approach triangulation design using an online survey, followed by semi-structured interviews. The main purpose of combining two methods in this study were to address different aspects of and collect complementary data on the same research questions through which the researchers are able to expand and validate the interpretation of the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Moreover, the researchers drew together the strengths and weakness of qualitative methods (e.g., large number size, patterns) with those of quantitative methods (e.g., in-depth details, small number size) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The survey, containing force-choice, short answer, and open-ended questions, was designed to assess: (a) the perceptions and beliefs about gender based bullying and other forms of bullying; (b) participants' knowledge of the national gender equity and anti-bullying policies and their implementation, and (c) the perceptions about current bullying interventions within participants' schools (e.g., "Which part(s) of the bullying policy have you implemented?")

The qualitative component employed interpretative phenomenology (Forrester, 2010) and data was collected via semi-structure interviews. The interview protocol consisted of parallel questions, including participants' observations of bullying incidents, knowledge of the policies, and perceptions of policy implementation, such that the phenomenon being studied can be understood from multiple points of view. There were 15 interviews to ensure sufficient data for saturation.

This mixed-method design is consistent with the ISJCM theoretical framework and allowed the researchers to analyze participants' understanding of bullying, their interpretation of national policies and their knowledge about how they are implemented, as well as their experiences of gender equity and bullying within the school context. Data from both quantitative and qualitative components were triangulated for the purposes of verification to provide a rich description of the phenomena of interest. That is, two data sets were brought together and merged into an overall interpretation in which the quantitative results were related to the qualitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Participants

The participants were teachers, guidance teachers, as well as administrative staff. Participants were recruited through on-line forums, word of mouth and school list-serves. Recruitment using purposive sampling techniques resulted in 116 and 15 participants in the survey and interviews, respectively. With regard to the 116 participants who filled out the survey, they were most commonly, between the ages of 25 and 34 years old ($N = 44$, 39.6%), women ($N = 67$, 57.7%), married ($N = 73$, 62.9%), and held a bachelor's degree ($N = 59$, 50.9%). The typically, self-identified as heterosexual ($N = 107$, 92.2%), and had more than 10 years of experience teaching ($N = 38$, 32.76%). Participants' primary role in school was as follows: 59 were teachers, 45 administrative staff, and seven guidance teachers.

The 15 individuals who participated in the interviews, their ages ranged from 28 to 45 years old. They were middle and high school teachers recruited from six different cities in Taiwan through online survey and words of mouth. Fourteen participants self-identified as heterosexual and one self-identified as lesbian. Regarding participants' primary role in addition to their teaching role in school, six were guidance teachers and five were administrative staff.

Data Collection

After securing the ethical approval from respective university Ethics Boards, the surveys were administered in pen-and-paper format. A research assistant entered data from the survey into the LimeSurvey software. At the end of the survey, the participants were given the option to accept or decline to be contacted for an interview. Participants who consented to participate in the follow-up interview completed an informed consent and a demographic form. Participants then completed in a 90-minutes interview. Each interview was conducted in Mandarin Chinese, and audio taped

Data Analysis

Quantitative survey data from the forced-choice questions were analyzed using SPSS 23. Using the software, descriptive and Chi-square analysis were conducted. The open-ended portion of the survey was analysed using steps outlined by Miles et al. (2014). The open-ended responses were analyzed using techniques of thematic content analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Data collected through open-ended responses were first coded by a research assistant in Chinese, then translated to English. The co-investigator then verified the accuracy of the translations. Next, codes there collapsed into themes.

The interview data were analyzed using techniques consistent with phenomenological research as outlined in Forrester (2010). First, the interviews were transcribed verbatim in Chinese and verified by participants for accuracy. Then, transcripts were analyzed for focus points with the corresponding line numbers of each focus points documented. Next, these focus points were translated into English and then translated back into Chinese to ensure accuracy. Once accuracy was ensured, the focus points were used throughout the remaining analysis. The English focus points were then collapsed into themes. Thus, themes were analyzed across transcripts and collapsed based on the analysis, and categories were developed. Data units (defined as phrases or sentences) were identified to support those categories. Transcripts were first analyzed individually and then compared across transcripts. A comparative analysis of the data was done employing techniques consistent with mixed method analysis (Smith, 2008). That is, data was triangulated to assess convergent and divergent themes that arose from each of the data sets. This process of triangulation was done throughout the entire analysis of the qualitative data.

Rigor.

Several steps were utilized to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, including member checking, data triangulation, and peer debriefing (Cresswell, 2007). Moreover, methodological reliability was achieved through the creation of an audit trail in which each step taken by the researchers was documented and audited (Shenton, 2004).

Results

Results of this study yielded categories that described teachers' perceptions of bullying incidents, the degree to which the policy has been implemented at the systemic levels, and the school climates.

Teachers' Observations of Bullying Incidents

Using the survey and semi-structured interviews, the participants were queried about their observations of bullying incidents on school grounds. Survey results indicated that bullying incidents are pervasive throughout the participating schools. Participants ($N = 62$) reported observing bullying incidents regularly, about 2.75 times a week. A wide range of bullying behaviors were observed including verbal, physical, sexual, relational, and cyber. When asked to rank the frequency of the types of bullying incidents, participants identified verbal bullying as the most frequent ($N = 74$, 64%) and sexual as the least ($N = 73$, 72%). Additionally, participants ($N = 77$, 64%) reported that bullying is most frequently observed in classrooms.

From the interview data, however, the participants reported that many of the bullying incidents such as cyberbullying occur outside of the school and therefore difficult for them to detect. Thus, participants reported that they rely on students to make reports and identify incidents. However, according to the participants, survivors and bystanders did not report incidents unless they perceive to have a good relationship with the staff member. This means that there are significant numbers of that school staff are not aware of the occurrence of bullying incidents. As one participant stated: "students never came to me, I observed it myself." [A05: 227-229]

Furthermore, the interviews revealed that bullying is not isolated between students, but staff members are also vulnerable to bullying. One participant stated that "teachers need to be protected, [because] teachers can be verbally bullied by students and sometime by students' parents. They can be verbally aggressive and threatening..." [A05: 287-289]

The Relationship Between Attitudes and Policy Implementation

The survey inquired about participants' attitudes and perceptions toward bullying and bullying policies. The results showed that participants have an overwhelming positive

attitude toward the policies. Analysis indicated 89% of the participants ($N = 105$) reported that they believe bullying policies have a positive impact on the school climate. They qualified in the open-ended responses that the policies served to raise awareness of bullying, provided legal protection to survivors, and could lead to better prevention. For these same reasons, the participants reported that the policies are very valuable in addressing bullying on campus. Despite the positive attitudes participants hold toward the policies, they were less optimistic in their reports about the effectiveness and implementation of the policies. That is, while 63% ($N = 74$) felt that the policies are effective in reducing bullying behaviors, while 34% reported not effective in doing the same. In the open-ended responses, participants elaborated that policies will only have partial effect because of the pervasive and systemic nature of bullying. Chi-square analyses revealed that demographic factors are related to the outcome of the responses. Female teachers are more likely than male teachers to report the policies as ineffective in reducing bullying behavior, $\chi^2(1, N = 114) = 8.15, p < .01$; junior teachers (less than 10 years' experience) are more likely to do the same than senior teachers, $\chi^2(1, N = 113) = 10.69, p < .01$; and teaching staff are more likely than administrators to report the same $\chi^2(1, N = 114) = 4.24, p < .05$.

Policy implementation.

When it comes to policy implementation, only about half (58%, $N = 115$) of the survey participants reported that the policies were fully implemented at their schools. In contrast, some participants (37%) reported the policies were only partially implemented. In the interviews, incident reporting and handling were highlighted as especially problematic. Participants highlighted that when cases were reported to schools, oftentimes they were dismissed. One participant recalled: "The student did report it to the school, but the chief of Behavior and Discipline office still didn't do anything. She asked me, 'I did report it! Why hasn't anyone come to help me?' "[A13: 773-735] Interview participants further explained that schools dismissed reported cases to avoid being placed on the three-year period of probation by the Ministry of Education. A participant reported that: "If an incident is reported, the school will be followed up for three years... they think it's too much of a pressure, so they [the school] never reported any incident..."[A15: 339-343] As such, participants stated that they were often discouraged by the senior administrative staff from

reporting incidents and were told not to "make a big deal of such small things."

Participants reported that while bullying cases involving physical violence were more likely to be reported to the school, cases of cyber bullying or relational bullying were more likely to be dropped. After a case is reported, participants shared that the school usually focused more on the disciplinary disposition than providing the perpetrators with adequate remedial education to the perpetrators.

Additionally, mandatory preventive education provided to students by the school, as part of the mandatory implementation of the act, was perceived as superficial and lacking practicality. One participant reported, "I have showed students an anti-bullying video made by the Ministry of Education. To be honest I don't think it's effective. It [the video] is very pretentious." [A06: 665-668] Furthermore, preventive education provided by school usually discontinued after a certain period of time. One participant said:

It was a big deal then... so our school did a lot of things like sending out stickers, making banners, you know, 'Let's end bullying today!' slogans like this. But they are all superficial. Nobody cares once the spotlight is gone. [A01: 764-770]

Interview participants revealed that because bullying policies were not consistently implemented at the school level, teachers and administrative staff were often left to address incidents individually. According to participants' accounts, how staff members address bullying incidents can vary widely depending on their interpretations and attitudes toward bullying. Teachers who took bullying behaviors seriously may attempt to intervene, while teachers who perceived bullying behaviors as not serious might not take action. One participant said, "I always intervened before things got worse. I take it [teasing] really seriously... some students think I overacted to it, but I was like, no, this is non-negotiable." [A02: 465-467] However, participants described some staff members minimizing bullying incidents: "It really depends on teachers' attitudes. Some teachers feel that, 'they are just kids being kids.' Or, 'What are you talking about? Bullying? Nonsense. There's no such thing.' You know, turning a deaf ear to things like this..." [A01: 772-775] The survey results corroborated with these accounts. When asked what elements of the policies participants have personally implemented, 45% of the responses indicated providing education about bullying, 38% creating a bullying-free environment, 28% reporting bullying incidents, and 22% not implementing the policies ($N = 176$).

In the survey, the participants were asked if they felt that their individual implementation efforts were effective. The results were evenly split with 48% ($N = 56$) indicating that they believed their efforts were effective, while 48% did not. In the open-ended responses, those who found their efforts effective reported that their students better understood bullying, developed more awareness around bullying, were able to adjust their behaviors, and observed a decrease in bullying in their classrooms.

In contrast, those who found their efforts ineffective reported difficulty in changing school and social climate; and that bullying was too complex a problem for them to address as teachers. In the interviews, participants also disclosed a lack of impact of their efforts. Other participants described attempting to collaborate with parents to stop students' bullying behaviors, such as advising the parents to recognize and confront students' bullying behaviors. However, the participants reported that parents rarely took their advice, such as establishing rules against bullying behaviors at home. Participants also stated that interventions can only change individual behavior, but they are unlikely to result in systemic changes in the schools. In fact, 51% of the participants ($N = 61$) indicated that there were no bullying-free places in schools, and 61% ($N = 72$) of the participants surveyed opined that the schools will not be able to achieve a bullying-free environment.

Guidance teachers.

Through the interview data, guidance teachers reported that due to the low reporting rate, most guidance teachers were not frequently tasked to provide individual intervention to identified victims or perpetrators as the confirmed and reported cases are few. Nonetheless, through word of mouth and personal observation, some guidance teachers identified potential cases themselves and initiated outreach to students who are victims of bullying to provide counseling or educating perspectives. Moreover, those who were concerned about the negative impact of bullying incidents on students initiated various actions on their own. Consistent with the interview data, survey data suggested that guidance teachers had engaged in multiple activities, including teaching students about bullying in classes, creating anti-bullying course materials, counseling, and participating in continuing education. These guidance teachers taught students about empathy and respecting diversity with the goal of preventing bullying behaviors before the bullying policy became effective. Some guidance

teachers developed materials by themselves and integrated the materials into curriculum, such as asking students to complete reflective journals or role-play.

Despite the commitment to creating a bullying-free environment, most guidance teachers felt as though a bullying-free campus was not yet achieved, nor was it achievable. Participants cited that their interventions were often compromised due to the pressure of keeping up with course schedules, or lacking resources and support from the school. As well, some guidance teachers described the school leadership as discouraging.

From the survey data and the interview accounts, a stark contrast was apparent: the overwhelming positive attitudes toward the spirit of the policies against the pessimistic attitudes that efforts are not effective, and that the policies will not be able to eliminate or reduce bullying incidents. In these accounts school climate was consistently described as the obstacle to policy effectiveness and policy implementation.

School Climate

Based on data analysis, four aspects of school climate were highlighted: (a) prioritizing the school's reputation over incident; (b) discriminatory attitudes toward diversity; (c) normalizing bullying; and (d) victim-blaming.

Prioritizing the school's prestigious reputation.

Participants reported that schools concealed bullying incidents to avoid "losing face." That is, once incidents are formally reported or known to the public, it will result in the school being put on probation by the Ministry of Education, and consequently tarnishing the school's reputation. One participant explained, "I was told by the Dean of Students Affairs that there is no need to report the incident, because having an official record [of bullying incident] will only make the school lose face with the public. Asking the students to talk it through is considered enough." [A13: 554-559] Participants also reported that schools that prioritized its reputation usually used their resources, such as teachers' class hours to improve students' academic performances instead of teaching students bullying preventive education in order to uphold its academic reputation.

Discriminatory attitudes toward diversity.

Participants' accounts highlighted that there is a culture of discriminating against and stereotyping people who represent diverse social locations (e.g., sexual orientation, income-

level). For example, participants reported that some teachers attributed students' bullying behaviors to the parents' low-income status or single parenting. Participants reported that some staff members believe that these families are not able to provide proper learning environments, resulting in students' rebellious and bullying behaviors. One participant said: "Parents' SES really matters. Some of them don't even have a stable job. They don't even care about what's on the news today. Do you seriously think they would care about policy or school development?" [A04: 765-770]

Furthermore, participants reported observing homophobic and discriminatory attitudes from students and school staff toward those who are gay and males whose gender presentation is considered feminine. One participant recalled these discriminatory attitudes vividly, when she was berated by a senior teacher for teaching gender equity education:

He [the senior teacher] said [to the participant], 'How dare you teach students about gender and sexual diversity?' He believed that, same-sex attraction is wrong and there's no such thing as gender diversity. Because he's a senior and we are just newbie... we can't just raise our voices and confront him. [A08: 851-858]

Normalizing bullying.

A salient theme that arose from participants' accounts about school climate was the sentiment that bullying behaviors such as name-calling and teasing are inevitable and normal part of students' development. Participants reported comments from their colleagues such as: "bullying is part of school life that will always happen" and "kids being kids." Further, some staff hold traditional gender stereotypes and believe that bullying and teasing behaviors, such as pushing, or name calling are "normal" male behavior, and dismisses them when perpetrated by boys. Some of participants comments also reflected the belief that bullying is part of social life in on campus: "Big fish eats little fish; the might makes the right... it's always like that." [A02: 475-476]

Victim blaming.

Participants reported observing attitudes from both students and teachers that placed blame on survivors of bullying. Participants reported that teachers tended to perceive survivors negatively, such as "annoying," "no social skills," or "unlikeable," which is connected to their beliefs that survivors a partly responsible for the bullying. One participant

said in the interview, "Well, I agreed it [bullying] is the perpetrator's fault, but what about her [the victim]? Shouldn't she take some responsibility too? Did she try to do something for herself to avoid being bullied?" [A11: 629-632] It was commonly reported by interview participants that some teachers believed that survivors were bullied for a reason, such as poor personal hygiene, poor social skills, or poor grades. As well, they believed that survivors should take responsibility to solve bullying incidents.

Systemic Barriers to Implementation

In addition to the discussion on implementation of the policies, participants were also queried about what they need in the future to better carry out the act. In the interviews, participants reported that while schools provided teachers with workshops and lecturers on bullying policy, these were described as superficial and lacking practicality. The survey results found that teachers identified education on policy implementation (61%, $N = 79$) as which required for teachers to be better equipped to implement the bullying policy. A chi-square analysis showed that teaching staff are more likely to request more education and information than administrative staff,

$\chi^2(1, N = 117) = 14.42, p < .01$. Due to this lack of training, interview participants highlighted significant challenges in identifying and naming bullying incidents. While physical bullying incident are easy to recognize, participants described having difficulty discerning if verbal and relational incidents are indeed bullying. As one participant reported: "... it's really hard to tell. Sometimes they are just making fun of each other... or, they are just joking. We don't know what's really going on in their minds..." [A05: 331-334] As a result, interview participants reported being ill-equipped to identify bullying incidents efficiently and had to rely on their personal experiences. One participant said, "What defines bullying? To what degree should I report the situation? Is it when a student was isolated by the entire classes, or when students have a fight and don't talk to each other for two weeks?" [A11: 682-685]

As well, participants identified parents' lack of cooperation with schools as an obstacle. For example, one participant reported an incident where a parent who took on a leadership role in the Parent Teacher Association blackmailed teachers to drop a bullying case. That is, parents may use their resources and ability to negatively influence policy implementation.

Participants described other challenges to engage parents, however they believed that parents lacked awareness and understanding of bullying incidents, resulting in students bullying behaviors going unchallenged.

Lastly, participants reported needing on-going support to systemically address bullying rather than applying quick fixes such as showing videos and making slogans. Bullying prevention education provided to students by the schools was perceived as superficial and lacking practicality. Furthermore, preventive education provided by school usually discontinued after a certain period of time.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate faculty members and staff's perception of bullying incidents and policy implementation in middle schools. The results provided unique information about the way through which the unique Taiwanese educational and societal systems perpetuate gender inequities and bullying in high schools. Consistent with the literature (Chen, 2018; Huang, 2020; Wang & Lee, 2018), the results of this study revealed that participants perceived the bullying policy as valuable, but for the most part, teachers reported that the policy was only partially implemented due to systemic barriers, such as a lack of staff training or full involvement from the school, resulting in staff and guidance teachers feeling ill-equipped to carry out the policy in an effective manner. Yet, parting from the literature, applying ISJCM in this study allowed the researchers to investigate the ways through which broader social-cultural contexts influenced the staff and faculty's understanding of the policy as well as how school climates perpetuated bullying and power differentials between staff, faculty, and students. That is, gender inequality embedded in society was reflected in schools.

The Societal Level

Heterosexism.

One may infer that gender inequity in Taiwan results from the gender binary concept in that heteronormativity is praised, and the link between biological sex, gender expression, and sexual orientation is surmised. Social roles and power are rendered based on an individual's

assigned sex at birth, adhering to the traditional Confucian concept of "Men outside, women inside" (Sechiyama, 2013). Similarly, these values were observed in participants' responses to include teachers' observations of discrimination against individuals who deviated from the set of heteronormative expectations related to dating and gender expression. Heteronormativity resulted in power differentials that served to privilege individuals who performed gender in ways that met societal hegemonic gender expectations.

The School Level

Principals.

Based on the principles of ISJCM (Sinacore, 2011, 2014), the policies and other decision-making processes must take into account individuals' multiple intersecting identities. In the case of implementing bullying policy in school, the power is rendered to principals, who not only supervise the prevention work but also allocate the resources necessary for successful policy implementation. Consistent with the literature (Sinacore et al., 2018), school leaders who prioritize improving school's academic reputations and students' educational qualification were reported to dismiss a reported bullying case deliberately. Likewise, school leadership who normalized bullying behaviors or held the victims responsible for being bullied were reported to make a minimal effort to implement the policy.

School leadership's lack of direct contact with students or observation of bullying may also influence the degree to which policy is implemented. This lack of comment is because bullying occurs primarily during the recess and restrooms, where school leadership may not be able to observe the behavior. Resultantly, school leaders who have the power to implement the policy may not have the knowledge or information necessary to carry out the policy efficient. Without this knowledge or information school leaders may be able to design effective prevention programs tailored to the needs of teaching staff. Consequently, the lack of adequate training about bullying for teachers also resulted in teachers' lacking understanding of bullying and effective intervention.

Anti-bullying curricular and teacher's training.

One of the integral parts of the bullying prevention policy is the establishment of a training program for teachers and prevention program for students. However, contrary to

Constantine and Sue (2006), who argued that long-term prevention program is more effective in addressing bullying than remediation intervention, participants reported that the training programs and prevention programs were either poorly designed or not in place at all. This lack of effectiveness may be due to the unsupportive and neglectful attitudes from the school leadership, who may not render sufficient resources for faculty and staff to develop an appropriate training program. As a result, teachers' lack the ability to identify bullying incidents or have the confidence to intervene when an incident is reported to them by students. Further, teachers are more likely to consider intervening at the individual level with the focus being placed on changing perpetrators or targeted individuals' behaviors. Likewise, the absence of prevention programs at the school level resulted in systemic problems, such as heterosexism, able-bodyism, or classism going ignored or unchallenged.

School climate.

This study found that school reputation was often prioritized over addressing bullying and as such compromising student safety. That is, school campus culture was characterized by school personnel, specifically leadership and administrative staff, who willingly conceal bullying incidents in order to preserve schools' reputation. Consistent with the literature (Sinacore et al., 2018), the unchallenged biases against individuals whose ways of being do not conform to what is perceived to be societal norms contributed to school climates where diversity was not valued or ignored. Thus, gender non-conforming students, students of lower socioeconomic, or students with other differences were silenced or marginalized. Moreover, school leadership and senior administrators' unsupportive attitudes toward bullying prevention and intervention resulted in the power imbalances between students going unchallenged. When senior faculty and staff made victim-blaming comments, students and junior teachers received contradicting information that hindered the value and spirit of anti-bully policies. Consequently, junior teachers reported being caught up in the dilemma of providing a bullying-free learning environment while the school climate and power dynamics on school campuses undermine teachers' intervention and systemic implementation of the policy.

Individual Level

Teachers.

Results of the study indicated that there was a general lack of knowledge among teachers. Teachers' lacked an understanding of how the definition of bullying behaviors may directly impede their abilities to identify bullying incident and to intervene in an efficient manner. Additionally, teachers were reported to attribute bullying to solely victims' characteristics, ignoring the fact that individuals were often victimized due to the biases against people whose behaviors deviate from the norm. As a result, some teachers blamed the victims or coached the victims to behave differently instead of applying systemic interventions. Moreover, female junior teachers cited the lack of training and support from the school to be the main obstacle to carrying out the policy. Being both female and junior, teachers often resulted in sense disempowerment where they do not have to power to negotiate for the resources and support necessary to implement systemic interventions, resulting in employing less effective individual interventions, such as scolding the perpetrators or encouraging the victims to attend counseling sessions.

Alternatively, guidance teachers were often assigned to provide prevention programs, counsel the victims, and remediate the perpetrators, thus, playing a crucial role in policy implementation. However, consistent with the literature (Sinacore et al., 2018; TMOE, 2017; Wang & Lee, 2018), guidance teachers were challenged by the constraint of time and the lack of resources and training. Moreover, while guidance teachers are cognizant of bullying definition and competent in providing counseling of mental health issues for both victim and bullies, they have fewer chances to observe students' daily interaction between peers, and therefore lacked opportunities to directly intervene in incidents. As a result, guidance teachers, while crucial in providing prevention programs and postvention treatment, were excluded from direct and timely interventions when incidents occurred.

Summary and Conclusions

In closing, the bullying prevention policies were perceived as necessary and educational by staff and faculty in high schools and middle schools in Taiwan. Yet, the policy was not consistently implemented across all school levels due to structural barriers. Results of this study highlighted that successful implementation of the policy and bullying prevention

curricular development rely on faculty, staff, and school leadership receiving continuing education and professional development. As well, the results of this study highlighted that heterosexism and homophobia are often the underlying cause of bullying behaviors and as such, it is essential that gender equity and diversity be addressed simultaneously when address bullying.

Recommendations

Given the systemic nature of the problem, all school personnel could receive professional development and continuing education related social justice competencies. As well, this training should include strategies to address the dilemma wherein the commitment to equity was challenged by internal or external pressure, such that schools' reputation is prioritized over student's safety. More resources can be allocated to improve students' awareness of bullying incidents and ways they can mitigate the situations.

Strength, Limitations, and Future Research

Employing a mixed-method design, this study produced broad descriptive findings which were then contextualized by participants' unique voices across different levels of the school environment. Specifically, this study highlighted teachers' and guidance teachers' unique and crucial roles crucial to the effectiveness of policy implementation. Additionally, the participants in this study were from a variety of school contexts (e.g., urban, rural) which afforded a more comprehensive view of the bullying policy implementation across Taiwan. As well, the ISJCM model facilitated an understanding the way through which heterosexism influenced the school climate and curricular design. Notwithstanding, this study was not without limitations. First, this study had a relatively small sample size which limits the generalizability of the statistical findings. Additionally, this study focused on the experiences of administrators and teachers, thus only providing perceptions of parents and students attitudes and behaviors. Future studies could consider complimenting the existing findings by exploring the role of students and parents in bullying prevention and policy implementation. In conclusion, this study demonstrated the needs for ongoing education for faculty and staff at all school levels, and the importance of school leaders' commitment and action for bullying and discrimination to be reduced in middle schools.

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台灣於2012年實施《校園霸凌防治準則》，成為東亞地區第一個有法源依據防治校園霸凌之國家。身為校園霸凌防治之第一線人員之一，教職員對法條之理解及對校方落實政策之觀察，對校園霸凌防治有著舉足輕重之影響。有鑑於此，本研究探討台灣國高中教職師對校園霸凌防治法條之認知、個人落實法條之經驗，及對校方依法推行霸凌防治工作及處置霸凌事件的觀察，試圖理解教職員觀點下校園霸凌防治準則實施現況及困境。本研究採取混合研究法，結合問卷調查法及配深度訪談，共計訪談15名來自三所國高中之教師，回收116份六所國高中教師填寫之有效問卷。研究結果指出，學校普遍未提供教師充分資源，如反霸凌教育訓練補充教材，加上父權社會根深蒂固之異性戀中心主義，造成學校校園氣氛持續忽略性別歧視、獨重升學率與學生學科表現，而變相忽視實施霸凌防治準則。本研究除強調輔導教師扮演推動霸凌防治準則的重要角色，亦指出校長重視霸凌防治之態度，實為霸凌事件確實依法通報處理之關鍵。作者同時針對未來研究方向以及教育現場工作提出建議。

關鍵詞：校園氣氛、校園霸凌防治準則、輔導教師、霸凌防治。

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