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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND AN ADOLESCENT'S
PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES WITH PEER VICTIMIZATION

by

Vonda K. Rogers

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study was to determine a correlation between an adolescent's spirituality and his ability to cope or abstain from peer victimization. Spirituality is a common phenomenon among adolescents, in which limited research has been carried out. The data from this study will add to the field by establishing the importance of creating opportunities for adolescents to exercise their innate spirituality. This study consisted of 40 adolescents that attended a Christian Youth Ministry that ranged from 11-17 years old. Of the 40 adolescents, 24 (60%) were girls, 21 (52%) were Black/African American, and 22 (55%) were high school students. The research design comprised of a mixed methods approach, which included a sequential quantitative and qualitative phase of data collection. The quantitative data included a modified version of the widely-used survey, the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness and Spirituality (BMMRS) by the Fetzer Institute on Aging Working Group and a modified survey of bullying experiences, the Swearer Bullying Survey.

The survey and interview data facilitated an understanding of an adolescent's spiritual beliefs and how his spiritual practices and experiences supported behaviors that may help him deal with peer victimization. Through the survey and interviews, participants shared experiences of peer victimization, along with characteristics of spirituality. The findings revealed the six themes of the global perspective of spirituality, utilizing a spiritual foundation to deal with bullying victimization, influences of family support on the spiritual development, bullying victimization experience, spiritual or religious practices, and experiences, and the implications of peer victimization. The research findings gave greater insight into the phenomena of spirituality among adolescents and the ability to deal with peer victimization through spiritual practices and

experiences. This study contends that adolescents that possess a spiritual foundation tend to have more resiliencies during life's challenging situations.

Keywords: spirituality, religiousness, adolescent, peer victimization

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a crucial stage of development when young people deal with a plethora of challenges such as peer victimizations, the quest of purpose and meaning in their lives, as well as determination of their identity within a global society. Unfortunately, at this vulnerable stage, adolescents are witnessing and experiencing tremendous violence at school. Research shows that 71% of school shooters were previously bullied (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). Peer victimization, or bullying, has devastating effects on members of our society. Research posits that experiences of victimization have negative short and long-term effects and that some of these reach a peak during middle adolescence (Cosma, Balazsi & Baban, 2018; Bishnoi, 2018). Depression, anger, and anxiety are the direct results of peer victimization (Bishnoi, 2018). Young people are more susceptible to participating in victimization acts and/or become victimized by their peers, during the developmental stages of adolescence, which makes them more vulnerable (Graham, 2016). Not only are the individuals that experience bullying at risk of negative outcomes, but those who witness or bully others are also subject to negative consequences (Graham, 2016; Nishina & Juvonen, 2005) such as depression and anger (Bishnoi, 2018). The emotions stirred by the experience of bullying increase the likelihood that the victims may perpetrate acts of violence that can be detrimental to the well-being of our society. The deep impact of such experiences and the prevalence of these events in the lives of today's adolescents make it imperative and pressing to understand possible resilient factors that can support them. Peer group relationships are a major influence on adolescent development. Therefore, victimization by peers has negative effects on their well-being (Nazir & Nesheen, 2015). Spiritual development in childhood and adolescence as a possible source of resilience is a field of research that needs more investigation.

Research has shown that spirituality is an integral part of the developmental process of adolescents and that it may serve as a source of resilience in adolescent development (Kim & Esquivel, 2011). Studies have found that spiritual and religious practices, family relations, religious and community-based organizations, and global awareness are just a few channels that contribute to an adolescent's spiritual development (Kim & Equivel, 2011; Yust, Johnson, Sasso & Roehlkepartain, 2006). While family relations and social organizations provide support for developing adolescents, scholarly literature reports that an adolescent's conceptions of religion and spirituality play the biggest role in helping them cope with the challenges they encounter (Hart, 2006). Spirituality is an innate part of an adolescent's make-up, which enables him to deal with many of life's challenges (Miller, 2015; Breland-Noble, Wong, Childers, Hankerson & Sotomayor, 2015). Understanding how spirituality can support resilience in the face of difficult times and its impact on an adolescent's well-being warrants more investigation.

Statement of the Problem

Many adolescents experience the devastating effects of violent acts and various forms of bullying far into adulthood (Meltzer, Vostanis, Bebbington, & Dennis, 2011). Peer victimization happening on school campuses result in depression, anxiety, low academic performance and anti-social behaviors (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Flannery, Wester, & Singer, 2004). Peer victimization is a serious problem that calls for effective intervention. However, before an intervention can be effectively designed, the role of factors such as resilience in coping with peer victimization needs to be understood.

Purpose of the Study

Research shows that spiritual attributes and practices have become a viable resource that children and adolescents utilize to cope with the destructive impact of violence and victimization

that may be experienced on a daily basis (Salas-Wright, Olate & Vaughn, 2013; Carter, Flanagan & Caballero, 2013). Kim and Esquivel (2011) reveal that an adolescent's spiritual relationships provide ways of coping during difficult situations. Spiritual practices such as prayer, church attendance, forgiveness and support from the family and congregation help adolescents develop spiritually (Miller, 2015; Van Dyke & Elias, 2007). Theorists contend that the process of spiritual development is a life-long process that emerges during early childhood from awareness but progresses through adolescence to search for purpose and meaning of life (Sperry, 2001). Finding meaning and purpose of life through a spiritual connection to God is essential in bringing about resilience. When an adolescent feels that his life has purpose and meaning, he becomes resilient during difficult situations to fulfill his life's calling.

Spirituality and religious practices serve as a protective factor that enables adolescents to deal with difficult circumstances (Cole-Lewis, Gipson, Opperman, Arango, & King, 2016). Research indicates that spirituality is used as a coping mechanism to protect against harmful behaviors such as teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and depression (Miller, 2015; Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). Research shows that religious and spiritual coping have been associated with positive outcomes to difficult and stressful life circumstances (Pargament, Smith, Koenig, & Perez, 1998). Positive outcomes such as compassion, forgiveness and finding life meaning and purpose are direct results of spirituality. Spiritual perspectives, practices, and experiences play a major role in the development of spiritual coping abilities in young people.

Spirituality, emerging as a professional practice of psychology, has been shown to have a large influence on human behavior (Roehlkepartain, Benson, King, & Wagner, 2006). By studying the relationship of adolescents' development and spirituality, the discipline of behavioral science is attempting to answer the often-overlooked influence of spirituality on an

adolescents' well-being. Studies show a positive association between spirituality and adolescents' inhibition from performing violent acts such as fighting and carrying weapons (Salas-Wright et al., 2013). This study gives insight into an adolescent's spiritual practices and experiences along with their spiritual coping abilities when encountering difficult or stressful circumstances.

The Brief Multidimensional Measure Religiousness and Spirituality (BMMRS) and the Swearer instrument were used to determine adolescents' spiritual practices and experiences along with their peer victimization experiences. It includes a subscale that investigates spirituality as a coping mechanism in difficult circumstances. Spirituality provides a framework for children to exhibit wisdom, faith, forgiveness, and compassion when interacting with society (Hart, 2004; Van Dyke & Elias, 2007; Cole-Lewis et al., 2016). Gaining a clear understanding of spirituality among adolescents can be the catalyst needed to move our society towards finding a solution to the woes of violence.

In this study, the role of spirituality and resilience is linked to the Bible. Peer victimization is a problem that has biblical origins and continues to be a serious problem among adolescents. Seventy percent of adolescents have experienced some form of bullying on school campuses (Elias & Zin, 2003). Bullying in the form of name calling, teasing, taunting, hitting, shoving, and threatening lead to negative mental, physical and academic outcomes (Graham, 2016; Espelage & Hong, 2013). The majority of studies conducted to date focus on adolescents at school. However, this study includes the voices of adolescents from a Christian ministry. Negative outcomes such as depression, anger, and low self-esteem contribute to the profile of adolescents that perpetuate violent acts on school campuses (Keehn & Bolyes, 2015; Gerard, Whitfield, Porter, & Browne, 2016). Understanding of the true impact of bullying as well as the

role of spirituality during challenges has the potential to contribute significantly to interventions that could help solve the problems.

Research findings report that 80% of adolescents believe in God (Carter, Flanagan & Caballero, 2013). This makes spirituality a highly significant topic of discussion to learn about coping with issues of peer victimization. Limited research has been conducted on the use of spiritual coping in dealing with peer victimization, so findings from this study adds to the existing body of literature and help us understand the link between these two constructs. Previous research shows a positive correlation between spirituality and the frequency and severity of bullying (Carter et al., 2013). The data indicated that spirituality, specifically spiritual forgiveness, has the potential to be used as an intervention tool for adolescents dealing with peer victimization (Carter et al., 2013).

Data from this research study provides a better understanding of the spiritual perspectives, practices, and experiences of the spirituality of Christian adolescents and the role that spirituality plays in their abilities to cope with challenges. By collecting qualitative data, the ways by which adolescents cope with bullying experiences and the role of spirituality in coping with these circumstances were explored. Most youth are involved in educational activities for most of their day on school campuses, so programs that nurture the whole child would be beneficial to our society. Implementing spiritual practices or character education at the educational level could provide adolescents with the opportunity to connect on a spiritual level and should foster resilience. Character education is a viable choice at the public school level, made possible by the United States Constitutional policies of separation of church and state (Vermeer, 2010). Integrity, generosity, and kindness are community values that transcend cultures and that enable individuals to live in harmony. Previous research findings show that

spirituality is innate in children and adolescents, and that they should have the opportunity to express its existence (Hart, 2006; Miller, 2015). This study provides valuable information on how adolescents develop spirituality, which has the potential to inform the development of related interventions.

Research Questions

An exploratory approach was used that combined both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the following questions:

1. What are the bullying experiences that adolescents encounter and in what conditions (e.g., in what places, times, or for what reasons) adolescents are more likely to experience bullying?
2. What are the spiritual perspectives, practices, and experiences that contribute to an adolescent's spirituality and coping abilities when dealing with challenging situations?
3. According to adolescents' perspective, how does spirituality contribute to their ability to deal with incidences of peer victimization?

Significance of the Study

This study contributed to our understanding of peer victimization experiences, spiritual practices, experience, and spiritual coping abilities among adolescents. Spirituality is increasingly recognized as a major component of adolescents' developmental process, in which more research is needed, particularly on its impact on adolescents. To date, the majority of spirituality research has focused on adult participants. This study's unique contribution lies in its exploration of the experiences of spirituality and peer victimization aspects of Christian adolescents. The findings of this study informed us about the type of spiritual experiences that

have shaped the adolescent participants' beliefs, the experiences of peer victimization they encounter, and the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism. This study examined the following areas to help bring cohesion to our understanding of spirituality and peer victimization: (a) victimization experiences; (b) spiritual practices and experiences; and (c) coping strategies through spirituality. Existing research posits that spirituality helps adolescents become more resilient, however, additional research is needed to understand how adolescents use spirituality as a source of coping (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003). The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge on spirituality and coping, informing pedagogy and potential intervention plans aimed at addressing the current problem of peer victimization in our schools and society.

Theoretical Framework

The Bible, along with the spiritual development theory, provided a practical framework to organize the process and premises of this study. Spirituality and peer victimization are recurring themes that are prevalent in the Bible. The Bible is comprehensive literature that includes historical facts, philosophy, poetry, and wisdom for living an abundant life. The Bible provides the blueprint on how Christians should live daily, Proverbs 3 1-3 states, "My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity." The Bible scripture of Timothy 2 3:16 states, "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness." These words reinforce the relevance of the principles of the Bible and the depth of God's love for us.

God loves for humanity gives confidence to know that we can handle difficult situations.

The book of Romans, Romans 8: 37-39 NIV states:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Through the foundational principle of love, the Bible gives us a framework for dealing with difficult situations. Many characters of the Bible were victimized including Jesus who stood out as the ultimate model of forgiveness. During a time of great despair caused by betrayal that would lead to His arrest and His crucifixion on the cross, Jesus prayed for comfort in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus' purpose on Earth was to be the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of humanity. Jesus' time in the Garden of Gethsemane was his opportunity to exercise spiritual practices that would model resilience during difficult situations. Through Jesus' sacrifice, humanity has been given the gifts of the spirit, which include, love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5: 22-23, NIV). The attributes of the spirit constitute the framework that humanity must embrace to experience the peace, forgiveness, and respect, which represent the true meaning of abundant life in our society and the world. The Bible serves as a framework that can guide people through personal growth and development.

Spiritual development is a global phenomenon that is inherent to the foundational make-up of adolescents; it serves as the theoretical framework for the current study. Research suggests that spiritual development encourages healthy stages of development, which enhance adolescents' ability to cope while promoting other positive outcomes among adolescents (Kim &

Equivel, 2011). The positive outcomes experienced through spirituality development include mental health, psychological well-being, successful academic learning and resilience (Kim & Equivel, 2011). Research findings indicate that spirituality may build resilience by supporting relationship-building, access to social support, moral values and personal growth and development (Crawford, Wright, & Masten, 2006). Through the spiritual development framework, the impact of spirituality as a coping mechanism to deal with difficult situations during adolescence is explored.

Exploration of spiritual development among youth is an area of research that requires more investigation, in particular, due to its potential to reframe the culture of our society regarding violence. Spirituality is inherent from birth and when fostered during childhood enables a connection with a higher power to be established, which, in turn, promotes compassion for others and the environment. Miller (2015) asserts, "Science now tells us that spiritual faculty is inborn, fundamental to the human constitution, central in our physiology and psychology" (p. 26). Challenges associated with diminished spirituality among adolescents include risk-taking, depression, substance abuse, and severe affective disorders, while the positive attributes include real inner assets, optimism, and purpose for life (Miller, 2015). Spirituality deserves more investigation and dialogue as it can contribute to solutions, which curtail individual victimization within our society and in our world.

Spiritual development among adolescents could be the solution to many woes within our community. First, lack of empathy, accountability, and interpersonal relationships has contributed to building a society that is in need of moral consciousness. Helping adolescents develop academically, socially and spirituality could help with the disengagement often witnessed among adolescents in our community. Second, allowing adolescents to develop and

exercise their spirituality will not only instill a sense of identity, but it also helps combat the violent acts occurring in society. Third, the multifaceted nature of spirituality gives adolescents an avenue to cope with life's challenges while providing a sense of peace and purpose within their lives.

The Researcher's Background

Before going into education, the researcher was a chemist for 17 years. The researcher became an educator because she had a desire to see all students learn and gain the skills needed to be 21st Century leaders, especially in the area of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. As a middle school science teacher, the researcher has seen firsthand the struggles of adolescence. Becoming an educator has allowed the researcher to apply her knowledge and passion for science along with her empathy for students that struggle during adolescence to enhance student learning. The researcher considers the field of education a calling, which has enabled her to make a difference in the lives of students.

The researcher has a strong spiritual background and is active in her local community church. The researcher's strong science education and religious experiences have promoted a passion for understanding the science of spirituality and its implications for adolescents. The researcher has three adult children that have gone through the stage of adolescence. Hence, she has witnessed the challenges that young people experience at this stage of their development. The researcher's daughter experienced bullying at a Christian middle school, which gives a personal connection to the work of the study. The researcher's daughter is now 25 years old and is teaching at the university level. The spirituality of the daughter allowed her to be resilient during that time of bullying as an adolescent. Although she experienced depression and anxiety,

her intimate connection with God and counseling, had allowed her to persevere to fulfill her calling.

Having lived in two different countries, Portugal and Japan, the researcher has an international and global lens and a high appreciation for diverse cultures, perspectives, and global spirituality. She was thus able to look at spirituality as a guiding framework from the context of many countries. From this study, the researcher has gleaned that spirituality is a global construct that provides an international perspective.

Definitions of Terms

This study provides definitions to avoid confusion of terms related to spirituality. In particular, spirituality is a transcendent term that requires a thorough definition to comprehend the concept fully.

Spirituality: “An inner sense of relationships to a higher power that is loving and guiding. The word we give to this higher power might be God, nature, spirit, the universe, the creator, or other words that represent a divine presence. But the important point is that spirituality encompasses our relationship and dialogue with this higher presence” (Miller, 2015, p. 25).

Religiousness: Religiousness refers to beliefs, practices, and behaviors associated with organized religious groups, such as church affiliations and attendance at religious services (Fetzer Institute, 1999).

Adolescent: The period of psychological and social transition between childhood and adulthood is known as adolescence, which ranges from 10 to 19 years old (Burnett & Blakemore, 2009; Christner, Stewart, & Freeman, 2007).

Peer Victimization: Peer victimization is used to describe the experience of children who are targets of the aggressive behavior of other kids, who are not siblings and not necessarily age mates (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).

Physical Bullying: Physical bullying entails hitting, shoving, pushing, tripping, and other kinds of forceful behaviors (Nazir & Nesheen, 2015).

Verbal Bullying: Verbal bullying occurs when an individual experiences hurtful comments, name-calling or teasing (Nazir & Nesheen, 2015).

Social Bullying: Social bullying is the act of using relationships to hurt someone. It involves either excluding or ostracizing someone from friend groups, spreading rumors or giving “the silent treatment” (Nazir & Nesheen, 2015).

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that occurs over the internet or cell phones (Nazir & Nesheen, 2015).

Delimitations of the Study

The study was limited to participants who are adolescents with a spiritual background only. To gain a greater range of data, participants without a spiritual foundation could be included to provide diverse perspectives and have a more representative sample. The participants were faith-based, but data from a general population of adolescents would give a more diverse perspective about the phenomenon of spirituality among this target group. Although we did not have a direct measure of “coping with victimization,” the researcher could draw inferences about potential positive relationships between coping with challenges and spirituality in general.

Assumptions of the Study

The primary assumption underlying this study was that the adolescent has a spiritual background. It is also assumed that participants would possess a positive and compassionate attitude towards others due to their religious and spiritual practices and experiences.

Organization of the Study

This research study was detailed in five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, definition of terms, theoretical framework, research questions, limitations, delimitations and the assumptions of the study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, which includes sections on adolescent development, adolescent spirituality, international perspectives of adolescent spirituality, peer victimization and coping strategies through spirituality. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used for this research study. It includes the selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter 4 presents the study's findings including demographic information, testing the research questions. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the entire study, discussions of the findings, implications of the findings for theory and practice, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Violent acts caused by deteriorating race relations, hate crimes, police brutality, and terrorism have become prevalent within our society (Pearson, 2016). The world we live in has become marked by natural disasters, threats of war, employment insecurity and political and religious unrest; an estimated 91% of Americans believe that the world is becoming increasingly violent and frightening (Miller, 2015). United States citizens are 25 times more likely to die from gun homicide than people in other developed nations (Gregory, Wilson, Park, & Jenkins, 2018).

Violence on our youth is a current problem that causes psychological trauma leading to further negative effects on our society (Cosma, Balazsi, & Baban, 2018; Flannery, Wester, & Singer, 2004). Violence in our schools and communities have become commonplace. It was estimated that over 749,100 non-fatal violent acts occurred at school against youth, aged 12 to 18 years (Understanding School Violence, 2015). Victimization on school campuses is happening at alarming rates. Violent acts against youth take place daily on school campuses, which has raised concern among students, parents, and educational staff (Carney, Hazler, & Oh, 2009; Levine & Tamburrino, 2014; San Antonio & Salzfass, 2007). In the United States, from 2010 - 2014, there was an average of 20 school shootings per year, with 27 deaths alone reported in the Sandy Hook in Newton, Connecticut shootings (Duplechain & Morris, 2014). The litany of violence on school campuses is a major concern and must be addressed with tenacity. Schools should be a place of refuge, where students learn to be productive citizens in society, not where violence is perpetrated (Corradini, 1999).

School violence has prompted the attention of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), which has declared school violence as a major health concern in our society (Understanding

School Violence, 2015). The CDC reported risk factors, such as prior history of violence, drug, alcohol, or tobacco use, association with delinquent peers, low-income family functioning, poor grades and poverty to be contributing factors to violent behavior among youth (Understanding, School Violence, 2015). Along with these risk factors, research indicates that adolescents who are bullied tend to have a higher tendency to perform violent acts on school campuses (Barhight, Hubbard & Hyde, 2013). Duplechain and Morris (2014) have determined that bullying and school shootings are directly linked to each other. Research indicates that 71% of school shooters have experienced bullying (Vossekuil et al., 2002). It has been reported that out of the 37 school shootings identified and studied, 75% of the school shooters felt bullied, threatened, or were attacked or injured by others (Crawford, 2002). The implications of violence associated with bullying and peer victimization make them relevant topics of discussions.

The purpose of this literature review was to establish a framework that addresses the problematic reality of peer victimization among adolescents and their spiritual development. The relationship between these two factors will be explored to provide elements for the design of a viable intervention that will help teens cope with the devastating consequences of violent acts. The following framework was developed from an extensive review of the literature addressing the following areas:

1. Adolescent Development
2. Adolescent Spirituality
3. International Perspective of Adolescent Spirituality
4. Peer Victimization
5. Coping Strategies through Spirituality

The literature review established a theoretical framework to address the concept of spiritual coping abilities among adolescents when they are faced with difficult circumstances, such as peer victimization.

Forms of Bullying

Victimization and bullying are not new phenomena but have taken place since biblical times. Biblical examples of bullying victimization include, David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17), Joseph and His Brothers (Gen. 37), Samson and Delilah (Judges 16), and Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31, 1 Kings 18:4-19, 1 Kings 19:1-2, 1 Kings 21:5-25 and 2 Kings 2:9). These examples help to establish a historical context for bullying while providing a framework for coping abilities from a spiritual perspective.

Peer victimization, which is another form of bullying, is a problem that has plagued the educational school system and drastically affected the academic and behavioral performance of many adolescents (Espelage, Hong, Rao, & Low, 2013; Olweus, 1993). Research shows at least 70% of children and adolescents are affected by peer victimization on school campuses (Elias & Zin, 2003; Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992). Peer victimization such as physical, verbal or relational abuse is a reality for most adolescents in the school environment (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).

Cyberbullying is another form of victimization that has become more prevalent with the emergence of technology and social media in our society. Harassment in the form of electronic messages, pictures and videos have serious consequences and bolsters to the heightened vulnerability that adolescents experience via the internet (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). It is estimated that one in five teenagers have sent or received sexual images of classmates, which can have long-term consequences on their physiological well-being (Ginsburg & Jablow, 2011). As

a result of cyber victimization, adolescents experience negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation (Sampasa-Kanyinga, Roumeliotis, & Xu, 2014)

Peer victimization on school campuses has negative effects on the well-being of adolescents in society (Juvonen & Graham, 2001). Mental health consequences such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies can result from the prolonged and unaddressed accounts of peer victimization among youth, which can lead to difficulties that carry over into adulthood (Meltzer, Vostanis, Bebbington, & Dennis, 2011). Negative physical outcomes can also result from the victimization experiences of adolescents. Research shows that there is a correlation between physical ailments and emotional effects of bullying (Carney, Hazler, Oh, Hibel, & Granger, 2011).

Adolescent Development

The period of psychological and social transition between childhood and adulthood is known as adolescence, which ranges from 10 to 19 years of age (Burnett & Blakemore, 2009). Adolescence is a stage of development, where social behavior can be challenging and awkward for young people. During adolescence, they are trying to determine meaning as well as establish and maintain peer relationships (Juvonen, & Graham, 2001). Moving from childhood to adolescence can be overwhelming for a young person and present emotions that make it difficult to navigate through this crucial stage of development. It is assumed that hormonal growth, social experience, and social change are the factors that contribute to this stage of development. Research confirms that brain development also plays a significant role in development happening during adolescence (Burnett & Blakemore, 2009). The brain of adolescents has been likened to a 747-jet airliner with rapid brain growth, which is accompanied by racing emotions of awe, wonder, and urgency (Miller, 2015). The deepening of the frontal lobe development due to the

environmental adaption to social change contributes to an adolescent's developmental process (Crone & Dahl, 2012). According to researchers, gains in gray matter in the frontal, parietal and temporal lobes of adolescents cause new cell growth of adolescent brains, which contributes to risky behavior, an irresistible attraction to people, places and things and a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty (Giedd et al., 1999). Advances in cognitive neuroscience are providing links between unfolding adolescent social cognition and its physical basis in the brain (Burnett & Blakemore, 2009). Cognitive development in adolescents is a phenomenon that is intriguing to the scientific community.

Researchers Burnett and Blakemore (2009) state that the stage of adolescence is a distinct period of development that exemplifies behaviors such as heightened risk-taking, peer influence, impulsivity, and self-consciousness. These behaviors could indicate maladjustments. Results from a research study suggest that maladjustment behaviors during middle school put youth at risk of experiencing peer victimization by either being bullied or by bullying others (Haynie, Morton, & Nansel 2003). Research has determined that adolescence marks a significant change in patterns of social behavior. During this stage of development, teenagers begin to enjoy the companionship of their friends and spend less time with their families (Burnett et al., 2009). Peer relations and socialization provide the needed validation that adolescents need to feel accepted and confirmed as individuals.

Social cognition is an important phenomenon that specifically takes place during adolescence. Teenagers become increasingly able to assign meaning to religious and spiritual experiences as they develop greater cognitive and metacognitive capacity for reflection and a better understanding of phenomena outside their immediate surroundings (Kim & Esquivel, 2011). Researcher Scarlett (2006) contends that a product of brain development in adolescents is

the capacity to experience spirituality. He also believes that spirituality is given to children by biology, rather than by parents, teachers or culture and that children must be encouraged and supported to attain spiritual development (Scarlett, 2006). Adolescence is a pivotal time of development when young people begin to declare their independence and make personal decisions that will form the basis of adult behavior (Knight et al., 2007).

Spirituality

The implications of spirituality could be an important aspect of a child's life. There has been much discussion in defining the parameters of spirituality and its impact on the lives of individuals. Spirituality is considered to constitute beliefs, experiences or practices such as prayer or meditation; that foster a connection to a higher power that transcends daily physical existence, and which may be unrelated to the practices of any given religion (Lippman & Keith, 2006). Although religious performance can be an expression of spiritual practices, aspects of adolescent spirituality will be the focus of this study. Spirituality and religiousness are often closely intertwined; therefore, it is important to define the differences between these terms to provide clarification. Desrosiers and Miller (2007) state:

Spirituality is defined as a sense of closeness with God, feelings of interconnectedness with the world or an awareness of a transcendent dimension, whereas religiosity is defined as a commitment to a system of beliefs and worship, which may include personal and communal practices. A spiritual experience may occur within a religious system through the practice of religion, or it may occur outside of a religious system of meaning. (p. 1022)

Religion is a conduit for a person to express their spiritual or relational experience with a higher power. Through spirituality, attributes of the spirit can be demonstrated in one's life. A

spiritual mindset brings about humbleness, forgiveness, peace, joy, and persistence. In Galatians 5:22 NIV, the Bible states, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Through spirituality, these qualities provide the tools to deal with the challenges and obstacles that one may experience in the journey of life. Spirituality offers an opportunity to connect with the creator and exercise faith through religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism. The key component of spirituality is the provision of an outlet for connecting with a higher power and reflecting on the aspects of faith.

In the Bible, David's spiritual connection with God led him to be considered a man after God's own heart. In the Bible, Samuel 13:13-14 states, "You have done a foolish thing." Samuel added,

You have not kept the command the Lord, your God, gave you; if you had, you would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people because you have not kept the Lord's command. (1 Samuel 13:13-14, NIV)

Samuel also attests to David's spiritual connection with God and through that connection, he was able to provide peace and comfort. Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him (1 Samuel 16:23, NIV). David's spiritual connection with God provided strength and guidance throughout his life, and that spiritual connection was initiated at an early age.

Spiritual Development

The research on spiritual development focusing on the stages of childhood and adolescence in the social and developmental sciences has the potential to enhance and strengthen the understandings of human adolescent development significantly. However, limited research has the capability of stalling progress in this area (Benson et al., 2003). Researchers, Benson, Roehlkepatain and Rude (2003) contend, "Spiritual development is the process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred" (p. 205). The authors added that spirituality is "the developmental 'engine' that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution" (Benson et al., 2003, p. 205). It is shaped "both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs, and practices" (Benson et al., 2003, p. 205). Spiritual development is inherent from birth and should be fostered by parents to ensure that children have an opportunity to express the ability to connect with a higher power (Miller, 2015). When children and adolescents are allowed to exercise their spirituality by connecting with a higher power through nature, God, or the universe, compassion for others or their faith, confidence from within is fostered (Miller, 2015).

Science and research are increasingly providing evidence of the scientific relevance of spirituality. Neuropsychological research contends that there is a correlation between brain activity and spiritual experiences. "It seems likely that the feeling of the heart racing or of extreme calmness that may occur during different spiritual practices may be associated with alterations in the functioning of the autonomic nervous system" (Newberg & Newberg, 2006, p. 186). Studies show, through neuro[imaging of the right hemisphere, that there is right parietal lobe activity of the brain during spiritual experiences such as prayer and meditation (Johnstone,

Cohen, Konopacki, & Ghan, 2016). The spiritual practice of forgiveness has also elicited responses in the right hemisphere and parietal, frontal lobe (Johnstone, Bodling, Cohen, Christ, & Wegrzyn, 2012). Science has opened the door for greater exploration of the impact of spirituality in the lives of adolescents.

The concept of spirituality among adolescents is not a new phenomenon and is evident in the lives of youth (Scarlett, 2006). Research targeting high school students in the United States show that most adolescents believe in the existence of God (Lippman, et al., 2006). The following data from research indicates that:

United States adolescents also show a strong belief in God and the influence of God over people's lives. Most adolescents have a core faith in the existence of God. They also believe that God is personally involved in the individual lives of people. More than four out of five adolescents (84%) believe in the existence of God; 12% are unsure in their belief in God, and only 3% do not believe in God. Two-thirds of adolescents (65%) believe that God is a personal being involved in the lives of people today, while 13% believe that God created the world, but is not involved in the world today; 14% believe that God is not personal and is more like a cosmic life force. The extent of belief in a personal God is reflected in feelings of closeness to God: 36% of adolescents feel extremely close or very close to God, while 35% feel somewhat distant to God, while only 8% feel very or extremely distant to God. (Lippman, et al., 2006, p. 109)

A national Gallup survey also confirms that 95% of teenagers believe in God, 93% believe that God loves them, 80% claim that their religious beliefs are very or somewhat important to them, and 52% have attended a religious service in the past month (Knight et al.,

2007). The findings are indicative that spirituality is a component of adolescent development and is an essential element of their existence.

Based on research by Hart (2004), wisdom, wonder, wondering, between you and me, and seeing the invisible are spiritual phenomena that have been observed in children. Findings show that there are many components to a child's spiritual experience that go beyond the traditional perceptions of just talking to God (Hart, 2004). Through reflection, adults can probably recall some encounter that has taken them to a place beyond their realm of consciousness. Daydreaming, sitting still, or even thinking can be opportunities to make spiritual connections (Hart, 2004). Unconventional forms of spirituality such as inner wisdom and forgiveness can be noticed among children and adolescents (Hart, 2004). Hart's research (2004) shows that spirituality comes in various forms and provides a framework for children to exhibit wisdom, faith, forgiveness, and compassion when interacting with society.

Spiritual practices, experience, and relationships are resources that are used to deal with stressful situations (Pargament et al., 1992). Research also suggests a correlation between spirituality and lower rates of adolescent depression found in girls as compared with boys (Desrosiers et al., 2007). Adolescents with higher levels of daily spiritual practices have lower levels of social anxiety and higher levels of self-esteem (Hall & Flanagan, 2013). Teenagers who turn to God for guidance and direction in making daily choices have lower rates of mental illness, substance use and abuse, depression, conduct disorder, drunk-driving, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, weapon-carrying, poor nutrition and lack of exercise (Miller, 2006). The research indicates that spirituality among children help them cope with an array of challenging life circumstances (Raftopoulos & Bates, 2011). Research asserts that, during the civil rights era, the spiritual and religious foundation of children helped them cope with the

injustices of racism and discrimination, demonstrating higher resilience (Haight, 1998).

Spirituality provides adolescents with a means of coping with difficult and stressful situations (Wright, Olate, Vaughn, & Tran 2013).

Exploration of spiritual development among youth is an area of research that requires more investigation, and that has the potential to reframe the culture of our society regarding violence. According to scientific research, spirituality is inherent from birth and when fostered during childhood enables a connection with a higher power, which in turn, promotes compassion for others and our environment (Miller, 2015). When children and adolescents are not allowed to exercise spirituality, negative outcomes such as risk-taking, depression, substance abuse, and severe affective disorders can result; while a spiritual connection among adolescents, on the other hand, can lead to optimism and a life purpose (Miller, 2015).

International Perspective of Spirituality

Spirituality is a universal concept that crosses all boundaries and cultures. A spiritual foundation in children and adolescents' lives is essential to their developmental process. Spirituality is just as important to an adolescent's development as is his cognitive, academic and physical development. Religion and spirituality are evident in some cultures and societies; Landmarks within the infrastructure and landscape in different countries are a testament to the important place that spirituality and religion has.

In Brazil, The Cristo Redentor or Christ the Redeemer is a statue that shows that religion and spirituality are important in the country. The motivation for the construction of the statute was motivated by "Godlessness" within the society in the 1920's. According to The BBC, "The original idea for a monument of Christ came from a group of Brazilians who, in the wake of World War I, feared an advancing tide of godlessness." Church and the state had been separated

when Brazil became a republic at the end of the previous century, and they saw the statue as a way of reclaiming Rio, then Brazil's capital city for Christianity (Bowater, Mulvey & Misra, 2014). The Cristo Redentor statue is still a standing presence in the Brazilian society, which implies a continued reverence for tradition and spirituality.

Spirituality and religion are concepts that penetrate the fabric of all cultures. Japan is another country where religious symbols are prevalent throughout the culture. It is a commonplace while traveling around Japan to notice the statues of Buddha throughout the country. Buddhism is the dominant religion and encompasses most religious beliefs in Japan. According to the Buddha Dharma Education Association (2004), Buddhism was introduced to Japan in A.D. 538, while being considered to be the official religion by ruler of Baekje, a Korean kingdom. Religion and spirituality are entities within societies that are apparent throughout history and the culture of the country.

Spirituality is a major component of development in children and adolescents. Many countries understand the importance of spirituality; they are taking measures to address the need for spiritual development in youth. Korea is a country where the whole child is considered when developing curriculum; it has become forerunning in meeting the needs of the entire child through their educational system. Spirituality is a major pillar of Korea's plan for fulfilling their holistic view of education (Darling-Hammond, 2010). According to Hammond (2010), there are four supports of learning including learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. "Published goals for education include, along with knowledge and applied skills, emotional skills and qualities, creative/Aesthetic sensibilities, spiritual well-being, and self-knowledge, as well as attributes that support tolerance, peace and respect for others" (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 177).

Korea is a country where students are allowed to express and exercise their spirituality within the context of a school environment. Spirituality can have a lasting impact on the youth's ability to navigate through life. Investigating spirituality among the young people in different countries provides a valid argument as it can contribute to the sustainability of spirituality around the world. Examining the impact of spirituality on adolescents of different cultures provides a more representative working framework that enables researchers to understand how spirituality affects adolescent development regardless of nationality.

Spirituality among youth in Australia contributes significantly to the country's educational framework. According to the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Australians (MCEETYA),

Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion. Schools share this responsibility with students, parents, careers, families, the community, business, and other education and training providers. (Ministerial Council on Education, 2008, p. 4)

The inclusion of spirituality in the educational framework indicates that spirituality is considered to be a major component of adolescent development in Australia. Australia, as well as many other western countries, has similar concerns regarding the challenges of teens in the 21st century. Many of the problems that raise concerns about adolescent's development are materialism, individualism, and the impact of pop culture (Hodder, 2007). Pop culture has had a significant influence on adolescents not only in Australia but other parts of the world. In particular, there is a growing concern that Pop culture is shaping the identity of the youth around the world negatively. Globalization, social media platforms and advances in technology have

shaped our understanding of cultures different from our own, where popular culture play a major role in how identities are constructed within society (Sorrells, 2016). The influence of Pop culture and its significant impact on our youth is a major concern in the Australian culture; many believe that Pop culture is shaping the identity of the young people and drastically affecting the spiritual foundation of youth in the country.

Australians not only address spiritual development within their educational framework, but they also provide guidance and mentoring to their youth. The Australian government provides funding and assistance to ensure that young people receive advice and mentoring on values and moral issues, through the School Chaplaincy Programme (The Age, 2006). The objective of pastoral care provision for students and teachers is to provide spiritual guidance and support, advice in family breakdown situations, support for student grief-stricken by the loss of friends in tragic accidents or the loss of family (The Age, 2006). The Australian government understands the importance of providing students an opportunity to express themselves and of guiding them along the spiritual development pathway. The chance to express their spirituality and guidance is required to help students develop this innate characteristic of development (Miller, 2015). Examining how other countries approach spirituality among young people provides a greater appreciation for the diversity of ideas about educating the whole child.

It is becoming evident that spirituality among youth extends across geographical, racial and cultural boundaries. Adolescents are looking for an outlet to express themselves, and spirituality provides such an avenue, letting them experience the connection to something larger than themselves. Our society does a great disservice to our youth when they are denied the opportunity to gain a spiritual foundation particularly in their adolescence stage. Research contends that youth across very diverse background have very similar ideologies of connecting

with a higher power and have strong beliefs about the role that spirituality plays in their lives (King, Clardy, & Ramos, 2014). A qualitative study from geographically and culturally diverse groups, support the premise that spirituality among several youths is consistent with adolescents globally. The sample represented teenagers from India, Jordan, Kenya, Peru, United Kingdom, and the United States. The group also encompassed religious diversity, which includes a sample of one atheist, one Buddhist, four Catholics, three Hindus, six Muslims, 10 Protestants, one Jew, one Sikh, and one who was of mixed-religion (King et al., 2014). This study provided important findings concerning the social science of spirituality among adolescents, while also providing evidence that spirituality permeates many diversity barriers. The study proved to be very insightful as it provides the different perspectives of young spiritual thinking and mindset.

Spirituality can take many forms in the lives of adolescents and become an integral part of their quest for finding meaning and purpose in their lives (Miller, 2015). One participant in the study conducted by King et al. (2014) described her connection with God as,

Yeah, there's a sense of togetherness among family members. And that's a crucial thing. It's because of the ceremonies, which are held, and it makes people come together, and then sometimes you get a connection with God, a special time with God. (p. 196)

Another example proves that spirituality can keep adolescents, accountable not only to God but to others in the world,

My service was very important; getting involved helped my spiritual life because it was one more demand since I didn't only have to respond to God, but also to the people I was working with. I had to maintain my testimony especially for the kids who were watching me since I was their role model. (King, et al., 2014, p. 201)

Through the qualitative study, relevant information was obtained which is aligned with the notion that spirituality among adolescents transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, supporting a global perspective to spirituality.

From the inception of the educational public school system in the United States, religion has played an integral part in the schooling of children. During the 19th Century, students learned to read and write using the Bible (Kemerer & Sansom, 2009). Historically, schools in the United States have mirrored the Christian-dominated nations they serve, by aligning school district calendars to Christian holidays, such as Christmas and Easter (Heinrich, 2015).

However, the United States has a different view of incorporating spirituality into the educational experience of children. According to Kemerer and Sansom (2009), the California Constitution has provisions restricting government involvement with religion. Article I, Section 4 of the Constitution provides in part the Legislature, which says that Congress shall make no laws respecting the establishment of religion. Article XVI, Section 5 states,

Neither the Legislature, nor any county, city and county township, school district, or other municipal corporation, shall ever make an appropriation, or pay from public funds whatever, or grant anything to or in aid of any sectarian sect, church, creed or sectarian purpose, or help to support or sustain any school, college, university, hospital, other institution controlled by any religious creed. (Kemerer et al., 2009)

Court cases in the United States have set the precedence for the Constitution Establishment of Separation of Church and State of the First Amendment (Heinrich, 2015). In the 1980s, the Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Stone vs. Graham* concluded that the violation of the establishment of the first amendment was evident when state law required that the Ten Commandments be displayed in all classrooms (Kemerer et al., 2009). In the court case,

Five justices wrote that the statute lacked a secular purpose because the Ten Commandments is undeniably a sacred text in the Jewish and Christian faiths and because several of the commandments address religious duties of believers (e.g., worshiping the Lord God alone, avoiding idolatry, not using the Lord's name in vain, and observing the Sabbath Day.). (Kemerer & Sansom, 2009, p. 257)

Conflicts over religion and prayer have been evident for over a century:

Beginning in the 1960s, the court handed religious conservatives a series of major defeats. It began with the landmark 1962 ruling, in *Engel v. Vitale*, that school-sponsored prayer, even if it were not- sectarian, violated the Establishment Clause. Since then, the Supreme Court has pushed forward, from banning organized Bible reading for religious and moral instruction in 1963 to prohibiting prayers at high school football games in 2000. (Lupu, Elwood, & Davis, 2007, p. 2).

The United States ideology of spirituality and religion differ from other countries, but researchers, Hall, and Flanagan (2013) assert that an adolescent's belief in God reduces social distress and fearfulness about negative evaluation and social experiences.

When adolescents believe in a benevolent God whose purposes predominate through all events, their general social distress and fearfulness about negative evaluations and social experiences in both the present and the future are likely to be reduced. Violent acts within our society have become commonplace, and over the years, youth have experienced their drastic outcomes. Spirituality has been investigated to determine if the spirituality has become a protective factor that can help adolescents cope and deal with violence. The involvement of adolescents in youth violence such as gangs has also become a global problem. A quantitative study of Salvadoran youth shows that spirituality plays a significant role in adolescents' ability to

cope with the ramifications of violence. Researchers concluded that religious coping and spirituality are indirectly protecting Salvadoran youth in gangs or considered high-risk against violence. More precisely, greater interest in religious coping and spirituality is associated with the decreased likelihood of antisocial peer bonding. Antisocial peer bonding and the likelihood of participation in violent behaviors are, in turn, robustly correlated (Salas-Wright et al., 2013).

Peer Victimization

Bullying is a subset of peer victimization, which is characterized as intentionally targeted aggression; it leads to an imbalance of power between victim and aggressor (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Olweus, 1993). Children and adolescents experience bullying and peer victimization in the form of physical, verbal, relational or cyberbullying (Hawker et al., 2000; Hinduja, 2015; Nazir & Nesheen, 2015). Examples of physical victimization include pushing, shoving, hitting and kicking, which have become commonplace in schools (Nazir & Nesheen, 2015; Hawker et al., 2000). Verbal victimization can appear in the form of teasing, gossiping, or lying, whereas relational victimization includes a variety of behaviors such as exclusion from peer activities and social groups (Nazir & Nesheen, 2015; Hawker et al., 2000). Relational victimization involves behaviors that are aimed at damaging peer relationships, friendships, and social acceptance, which can have devastating effects on self-esteem and emotional well-being of adolescents (Nazir & Nesheen, 2015). Often, many children and adolescents do not realize the implications of violent practices such as omitting victims from peer activities, withdrawing friendship, or spreading rumors (Sinclair, et al., 2012).

Peer victimization on school campuses is a growing concern (Bradshaw, Sawyer & O'Brennan, 2007). The construct of peer victimization is multifaceted; it integrates different perspectives, such as adolescents that have been bullied, witnessed bullying, or bullied others.

Due to bullying experiences, many adolescents experience depressive attitudes, low self-esteem, and anxiety (Hawker et al., 2000). Research findings show that adolescents exposed to bullying experiences on a weekly basis are more likely to express suicidal ideation (Skapinakis et al., 2011). Children that are bullied are more likely to experience depression compared to their non-bullied peers (Hanish & Guerra, 2002). Witnessing bullying also leads to negative outcomes, such as feelings of anger, anxiety and school dislike (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005). Peer victimization during childhood and adolescence is a risk factor with long-term consequences. It has been documented as a cause of adult mental health problems (McDougall & Vailancourt, 2015). Research findings indicate that increased levels of depression in adults are linked to the bullying experiences they had when they were young (Gladstone, Parker, Mitchell, & Malhi, 2006; Meltzer et al., 2011).

Peer victimization experiences also have negative physical effects on adolescents. Research studies have been conducted that determine the impacts of peer victimization on the physical health of adolescents. A neuro-imaging study showed an association between the part of the brain that exhibits physical pain and the experience of social exclusion (Eisenberger, 2012). Researchers have also investigated the association between exposure to school bullying and levels of adrenocortical activity by taking saliva samples of middle school students before lunch when they are more likely to experience anxiety about potential bullying (Carney, Hazler, Oh, Hibell, & Granger, 2010). Prolonged high levels of cortisol can have negative physical consequences in humans such as Type 2 diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and brain lesions in multiple sclerosis (Nader & Weem, 2011). The findings of the study showed a correlation between higher cortisol levels and internalizing problems (Carney et al., 2010). Victims of bullying suffer from the internalization of problems that translate into physical health

problems such as headaches, poor appetite and sleep disturbances (Pozzoli & Gini, 2013; Graham, 2016). The findings bring a better understanding of the physiological effects of peer victimization on adolescents' well-being.

To get a better perspective of the bullying experience, it is imperative to understand the full range of experiences. Research contends that the most frequent places of bullying are in the hallways, restrooms, playground and cafeteria (San Antonio & Salzfass, 2007). Acts of victimization is a constant re-occurrence in the lives of young people and are evident on school campuses. It was reported that reasons for experiencing bullying included: not dressing right, being overweight, or the perception of being gay, different, or weird (San Antonio & Salzfass, 2007). Peer victimization is a social problem, where spiritual guidance might help adolescents navigate through these difficult experiences at schools and in our society. Understanding the implications of bullying and how to eradicate the cycle of bullying is paramount to establishing a peaceful society.

Coping Strategies through Spirituality

Peer victimization has taken place since biblical times. In the story of David and Goliath, Goliath was a bully that taunted and bullied David. David was a young shepherd boy who had a spiritual connection with God. As the years passed, David carried the spirit of God with him, which allowed him to be successful in his encounter with the bully Goliath. Goliath was an intimidating figure with stature; hence many were afraid to confront him. David's spiritual connection with God gave him the faith, courage, and grace to defeat Goliath and to put an end to the bullying behavior that he experienced.

Through the biblical story of David and Goliath, David's spiritual connection to God gave him the bravery to defeat Goliath. David said to the Philistine:

You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands (1 Samuel 17:45-47, NIV).

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him (1 Samuel 17:48-50, NIV). David's connection with God allowed him to triumph over the victimization of Goliath and become victorious through the grace of God. The story of David and Goliath parallels the lives of many victimized adolescents. Research shows that spirituality among young people is providing coping mechanisms that help them be resilient in difficult situations (Kim & Esquivel, 2011).

Violence can have detrimental effects on adolescents' cognitive, emotional and physical well-being. Research highlights the positive outcomes that spirituality has on young people, particularly, in helping them cope with difficult circumstances. Examination of various demographic factors in research studies indicates that teenagers and adults of various backgrounds use their spirituality to survive many of life's challenges. Affiliation to religious and social organizations provides the youth with an outlet to express their spirituality while building self-confidence, self-esteem and a sense of identity.

Spirituality is a phenomenon that crosses racial, social and economic boundaries. A research study of African American women that grew up in the foster care system showed that spirituality played a significant role in their survival in the system (Daughtery, 2011). The study intended to determine how the foster care system affects the identity development of this group of women. During interviews, as participants discussed their resilience within the foster care system, the researcher noticed that spirituality emerged as a common thread. Spirituality was a profound way to help these women navigate through the foster care system as adolescents. The study confirmed the importance of spirituality in the lives of teenagers (Daughtery, 2011).

A case study of adolescent male sex offenders provided additional data on the impact of spirituality (Gockel & Burton, 2013). The study investigated the impact of religion on delinquency committed by young male sex offenders. Participants were Caucasians, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians with various religious affiliations. The study was thought to be provocative because it confirmed the need for spiritual awareness in education for students. The study elaborated on the fact that, after being incarcerated, adolescents had a higher tendency to embrace their spirituality. According to the study, meditation and yoga interventions were found to be helpful, which provided self-awareness and self-control of the participants. This was insightful because it confirms that spirituality can be a preventive measure to dysfunctional behavior in adolescents (Gockel & Burton, 2013). Children who have positive, active relationships to spirituality are 40% less likely to use and abuse substances, 60% less likely to be depressed as teenagers, 80% less likely to have unsafe or unprotected sex and more likely to achieve high levels of academic success (Miller, 2015). Spiritual recognition encourages adolescents to reflect and adhere to spiritual elements in their lives.

Research asserts that forgiveness is a spiritual attribute that supports the concept of spiritual coping among adolescents (Egan & Todorov, 2009). Literature is increasingly being added to the body of research that posits that a forgiveness ideology is showing positive outcomes for adolescents through spiritual coping, especially when dealing with peer victimization (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; Kim & Esquivel, 2011; Van Rensburg & Raubenheimer, 2015; Van Dyke & Ellias, 2007). Forgiveness is an intervention strategy that reduces negative anti-social behaviors associated with anger (Klatt, 2008; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Spiritual practices among adolescents take many forms, but forgiveness is the construct that is showing promise in the field of adolescent spirituality.

Affiliation with religious and social groups has helped to lay the groundwork for young people to embrace their spirituality. Historically, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) is an organization that had the vision to provide men and eventually, youth, women, and families with an outlet to express their spirituality in a fun and structured atmosphere. The goal of such organizations was to provide programs that helped to support positive behaviors in adolescents such as mentoring to reduce teen pregnancy, smoking and crime (YMCA, 2016). In 1866, the YMCA's purpose was to improve the spiritual, mental, social and physical condition of young men and in 1890, the mission was transformed into improving the spirit, mind, and body. Today, the YMCA expounds their core focus as youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Through the YMCA's efforts for well-balanced young people and adolescents, a partnership with the Search Institute evolved, and work was set into motion to help develop the 40 Developmental Assets for Youth. Asset Number 36, "Peaceful Conflict Resolution," provides an excellent developmental tool to help adolescents navigate the realm of bullying. It encourages a young person to seek to resolve conflict nonviolently (Search Institute, 2007).

Summary

Spirituality and peer victimizations are entities of an adolescent's life that need careful and full consideration when considering the well-being of adolescents. Research asserts spirituality is a viable means to help adolescents navigate through the challenging time of adolescence (Raftopoulos & Bates, 2011). Spirituality is a vital time of development in youth and should be encouraged to help them develop into well-balanced and healthy adults.

Research has proven that prayer and meditation are spiritual acts that have shown positive effects on individuals. In 1962, the United States Supreme Court decided in the *Engel v. Vitale* case, that a prayer approved by the New York Board of Regents for use in schools violated the First Amendment because it represented the establishment of religion. Along the same lines, the following year, in 1963, in *Abington School District v. Schempp*, the court decided against Bible readings in public schools (Kemerer & Sansom, 2009). Although these court cases attempted to disestablish a state sanctioned religion in school, it also disallowed the possibility of student engagement with their spiritual ideology. By creating the precedent that ignores spirituality, students may be forced to downplay core principles and coping mechanisms that are vital to their survival on a daily basis. Fostering spirituality in schools could enable students to journey through life with more self-esteem, compassion for others, and a greater sense of purpose. This research provides data supporting the opportunity for students to connect at a spiritual level, which has the potential to bring about positive outcomes. Research has shown that students that have a spiritual foundation are less likely to experience the ills of life such as drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and depression (Miller, 2015). Addressing spirituality among the youth is paramount in developing well-balanced global citizens.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study described the attributes of bullying victimization experiences and spiritual practices and experiences as well as the associations between bullying victimization and spirituality among adolescents in a Christian community. The study encompassed a mixed methods design, which included quantitative and qualitative phases of data collection. The quantitative data collection of the research study was derived from the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness and Spirituality (BMMRS) instrument (Fetzer Institute on Aging Working Group, 2003) and the Swearer Bullying Survey (Swearer, 2016). The survey on spirituality and bullying was administered via an online service called Survey Monkey. A total of 40 adolescents from a local congregation completed an anonymous survey, and five of these adolescents volunteered to follow up with an interview. The mixed methods approach was used to collect data to answer the following research questions,

1. What are the bullying experiences that adolescents encounter and in what conditions (e.g., in what places, times, or for what reasons) adolescents are more likely to experience bullying?
2. What are the spiritual perspectives, practices, and experiences that contribute to an adolescent's spirituality and coping abilities when dealing with challenging situations?
3. According to adolescents' perspective, how does spirituality contribute to their ability to deal with incidences of peer victimization?

This chapter covers the selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis and protection of participants' confidentiality.

Selection of Participants

Adolescent spirituality and their ability to use spiritual practices and experience to deal with difficult situations such as bullying victimization is the crux of the study. Research asserts that spirituality plays a substantial role in supporting resilience in adolescents (Miller, 2006; Hall & Flanagan, 2013; Raftopolus & Bates, 2011). Therefore adolescent participation in this study was essential. The study included 40 adolescents from a local congregation, which included 24 girls, 14 boys and two that did not report their gender. The young people ranged from 11-17 years old. The congregation was a multicultural congregation with diverse ethnic backgrounds, where the participants possessed a Christian-based ideology.

The participants were members of the youth ministry of a church located in a middle-class community in North San Diego County. The researcher has been associated with the church for over 20 years and has been involved with several ministry groups within the church. The researcher's first teaching job was at the church's Christian School, and other ministry participation included being a prayer partner, small group leader, and greeter. Through involvement in the ministry, the researcher has built a strong relationship with the members of the congregation. The senior pastor has a deep desire to provide activities and outreach programs that reach many members of the community and surrounding areas. Recently, the senior pastor launched a satellite ministry to provide a worship experience for individuals with limited access to a church. Through the development of the new satellite church, the congregation has been able to provide resources to individuals that have been through sex trafficking and homelessness. Through the call and passion of the senior pastor, a multicultural church community has been established that meets the needs of the community in the name of Jesus Christ.

Instrumentation

A mixed methods design was used to obtain data for this research study. The methodology combined both quantitative and qualitative experimental designs. For the quantitative portion, an existing instrument called The Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness and Spirituality (BMMRS) was utilized whereas for the qualitative portion, a researcher-constructed semi-structured interview was used.

Quantitative

The Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness and Spirituality (BMMRS) is the instrument that was used to collect the quantitative data for the spirituality portion of the study (See Appendix D). The brief Multi-Dimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS) is an instrument developed by a national working group supported by the Fetzer Institute in collaboration with The National Institute on Aging (NIA), which is part of the National Institutes of Health (Fetzer Institute, 2003). The short version of the BMMRS, which contains 40 questions, was used for this study. The subscales of the survey included the daily spiritual experiences, meanings, values, forgiveness, private religious practices, religious and spiritual coping, religious support, religious and spiritual history, commitment, organizational religiousness, and religious preference. The BMMRS instrument was available to use without permission.

The BMMRS was initially developed for adult participants in the health field to address measurement issues around religiousness and spirituality from a multi-dimensional perspective. However, psychometric data have been established using the adolescent subgroups (Harris et al., 2008; Fetzer, 1999). The BMMRS showed internal consistency within the subscales through a Cronbach's alpha of $\leq .70$, therefore suggesting the BMMRS is a reliable and valid measure to

be used among adolescents (Harris et al., 2008). Utilizing the BMMRS was advantageous to the field of study, because the demographics of participants in the research study are similar to the adolescent group used in the BMMRS reliability and validity study; they are racially diverse and are from the same age range (11–17).

BMMRS Subscales. The BMMRS consisted of eleven subscales.

1. Daily Spiritual Experience (DSE).

The DSE subscale consisted of six items with Likert scale responses including 1 (*never or almost never*), 2 (*once in a while*), 3 (*some days*), 4 (*most days*), 5 (*every day*) and 6 (*many times a day*). It is designed to measure aspects of daily spiritual connection with God and is essential to the understanding of the foundation of an adolescent’s daily spiritual base. Sample statements included “I feel God’s presence” and “I feel deep inner peace or harmony.”

2. Spiritual Values and Beliefs (SPVB).

The SPVB subscale consisted of two items with Likert scale responses such as 1 (*strongly agree*), 2 (*agree*), 3 (*disagree*), and 4 (*strongly disagree*). This section is designed to measure beliefs and values. Sample statements to which participants had to show agreement or not included items such as, “I believe in a God who watches over me” and “I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.”

3. Spiritual Forgiveness (SPF).

The SPF subscale consisted of three items with Likert scale responses including 1 (*never*), 2 (*seldom*), 3 (*often*), and 4 (*always or almost always*). It is designed to measure the extent of feeling forgiven by God, others and oneself. Sample questions included statements such as “I have forgiven myself for things that I have done wrong,” “I have forgiven those who hurt me” and “I know that God forgives me.”

4. Private Religious Practice (PRP).

The PRP subscale consisted of five items based on a Likert scale, 1 (*never*), 2 (*less than once a month*), 3 (*once a month*), 4 (*a few times a month*), 5 (*once a week*), 6 (*a few times a week*), 7 (*once a day*) and 8 (*more than once a day*). It is designed to measure religious and spiritual practices. Sample questions included: “How often do you pray privately in places other than at church” and “How often do you read your Bible or other religious material?”

5. Religious and Spiritual Coping (RSC).

The RSC subscale consisted of six items with Likert scale responses such as 1 (*not at all*), 2 (*somewhat*), 3 (*quite a bit*), and 4 (*a great deal*). It is designed to measure reliance on God during difficult situations. Sample questions consisted of “I look to God for strength, support, and guidance” and “I work together with God as partners.”

6. Religious Support (RS).

The RS subscale consisted of four items with Likert scale responses 1 (*a great deal*), 2 (*some*), 3 (*a little*), 4 (*none*). It is designed to measure the congregational support. Sample questions include: “If you were ill, how much would the people in your congregation help you out?” and “if you had a problem or were faced with a difficult situation, how much comfort would the people in your congregation be willing to give you?”

7. Religious/Spiritual History (RSH).

The RSH subscale consisted of three items with Yes or No responses. This subscale is designed to determine spiritual life-changing experiences. Sample questions included “Did you ever experience a religious or spiritual experience that changed your life?” and “Have you ever had a significant gain in your faith?”

8. Commitment (SPC).

The SPC subscale consisted of two items with one Likert scale response: 1 (*strongly agree*), 2 (*agree*), 3 (*disagree*), 4 (*strongly disagree*) and one open-ended response. It is designed to determine spiritual and religious commitments. Sample questions were “I try hard to carry my religious beliefs over into all my other dealings in life” and “In an average week, how many hours do you spend in activities on behalf of your church or activities that you do for religious or spiritual reasons?”

9. Organizational Religiousness (OR).

The OR subscale consisted of two items with Likert scale responses 1 (*never*), 2 (*once or twice a year*), 3 (*every month or so*), 4 (*once or twice a month*), 5 (*every week or more often*), 6 (*more than once a week*). It is designed to measure religious attendance or worship activities. Sample questions included “How often do you go to religious services?” and “Besides religious services, how often do you take part in other activities at a place of worship?”

10. Overall Self-Ranking (OSR).

The OSR subscale consisted of two items with 4-point Likert scale responses; 1 (*not religious/spiritual*), 2 (*slightly religious/ spiritual*), 3 (*moderately religious/spiritual*) and 4 (*very religious/spiritual*). It is designed to measure religious and spiritual rating of oneself. Sample questions included “To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?” and “To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?”

11. Meaning (SPM).

The SPM subscale consisted of two items with Likert scale responses such as 1 (*strongly agree*), 2 (*agree*), 3 (*disagree*), and 4 (*strongly disagree*). It was designed to measure the spiritual meaning of one’s life. Sample questions included “The events in my life unfold according to a divine or greater plan. And “I have a sense of mission or calling in my own life.”

The Swearer Bully Survey-Student Version was administered to the participants to gather information about the bullying victimization experiences of adolescents. The survey was created by Dr. Susan Swearer (Swearer, 2016) and permission was granted by Dr. Swearer to use the survey. The survey consisted of parts A, B, and C. Part A included the questions, which focused on adolescents' experiences from the perspective of being bullied. Part B of the survey inquired about whether a participant had witnessed another person being bullied. Part C questioned the participants about whether they had bullied another person. Each component of the survey will help to ascertain, the significance of bullying victimization in an adolescent's life.

The purpose of using the BMMRS and Bully Survey was to provide descriptive statistics, frequencies and data, which will allow for statistical determination of possible correlations that may exist between spirituality and peer victimization (see Appendix F). The instrument has been validated, and psychometric values for Cronbach's alpha have been determined as .79 for physical bullying and .85 for verbal bullying (Hamburger, Basile, & Vivolo, 2011). The Spirituality Bully survey was administered to the participants of the Truth Youth Ministry and the data collected and analyzed to determine if there were associations between spirituality perspectives and the adolescents' practices and experiences with peer victimization. In addition to collecting quantitative data, the surveys will also be used as a medium to obtain qualitative data through subsequent interviews. After administering the survey, the researcher followed up with participants that agreed to be interviewed by the researcher.

Qualitative

The qualitative portion of the study consisted of semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were open-ended and were asked of participants to gain a better understanding of adolescent spiritual and peer victimization experiences. These questions were

constructed by the researcher. The purpose of these questions was to gain a deeper understanding of the adolescents' interpretation of the survey questions, given that the survey was anonymous. These questions were piloted with two adolescents of similar age and Christian background as the participant of this study. When conducting the interviews, the researcher took notes, along with utilizing audio recording, to ensure accurate transcription of participant responses. There were twelve questions included in the interview among which six were open-ended. The questions were:

1. What helps you to be kind to others?
2. Do you know what spirituality is?
3. What activities do you participate in that you believe help you grow in your spirituality?
4. Do you watch or listen to religious programs? If so what types of programs are they?
5. Have you ever been bullied? If so, how did you handle it?
6. Have you ever been bullied because you are a Christian?
7. Have you ever witnessed someone being bullied? If so what did you do?
8. Do you think you could forgive bullies?
9. Why would you forgive someone that bullied you?
10. What are some specific reasons why you do not bully others?
11. Have you ever had a significant gain in your faith? If so can you elaborate?
12. How would you rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 in regards to having a strong relationship and consistent dialogue with God? What are some reasons for your ranking?

Procedure

The youth pastor received approval from the church leadership team for the researcher to participate in the study. The researcher met face to face with the participant to explain the requirements for taking the survey. The survey was administered through an internet service called Survey Monkey. The participants were sent a link to access the survey. The participants had the option of taking the survey during the youth service or at another time after the service. The researcher informed the participants that she would provide an “In and Out Hamburger” gift card valued at \$5.00 for completing the survey. The researcher would also provide pizza to the youth group as well. The researcher made it clear that all participants in the Truth Ministry would be allowed to participate in the pizza party, even if they did not complete the survey.

The participants were informed that the researcher would be the person obtaining consent and assent for the study. Informed parent consent was obtained before the start of the research study. The informed consent document provided a brief overview of the study, outlined the participant’s role, defined the potential risks and benefits, and provided important contact information. The consent permission slips were available in both English and Spanish format for parents and guardians. Each participant signed a student assent form before the commencement of the research study. The assent form was only in English because the participants were English speakers. The step that was taken to minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence was to have the following written statement on the permission slip “Participants do not have to participate in this research. Only participants who wish complete the survey on spirituality and bullying were encouraged to volunteer.” This statement was aimed at making it clear that participation was voluntary so that participants did not feel obligated to participate should they not want to.

To ensure anonymity, participants submitted responses by creating the name of a colored sports team to act as an identifier. Before the participants submitted their survey, they typed in an alias sports team. This name was used to identify the participants to give them their gift cards. The researcher reassured the participants that she would not know the identity of the participants because the surveys would be anonymous. The youth pastor distributed the gift cards to the participants using their colored sports team name aliases. Names were not paired with aliases to ensure complete confidentiality and anonymity of student responses. The intent of using this strategy was to ensure that students were honest and uninhibited when answering the questions of the survey, and, at the same time, provide their anonymity.

The researcher also explained to the participants that they had the option to be interviewed by the researcher if they would like to participate in that portion of the study. The interviews were conducted, at a later date, after administering the survey. Students who agreed to be interviewed by the researcher remained confidential as the researcher created pseudonyms to refer to them in the reporting of the data. All research notes and audio recordings were stored in a locked drawer, when not in use, for data collection or analysis. Computer-generated data were stored on a computer, which was password-protected.

The participants that volunteered to participate in the study were given both the participant assent and parental consent letters for the survey. The participants were asked to review the letters with their parents and return them at the next Truth Youth Ministry meeting. The researcher's contact information was listed on the parental consent and participant assent forms, in case participants or parents had questions regarding the research study. Participants who agreed to participate in the survey returned the consent letters. The option to indicate consent to be interviewed was also available on the survey consent letter.

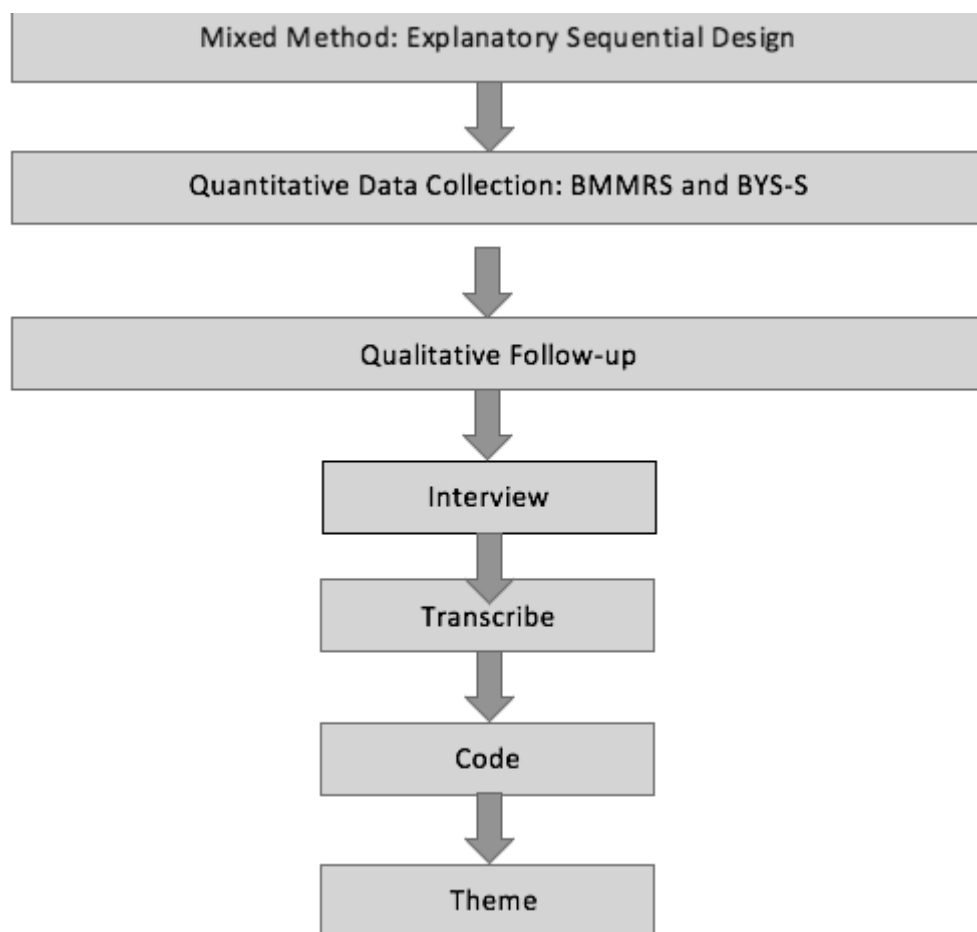


Figure 1. Flowchart showing the data collection and analysis process used in study.

Data Collection

A mixed methods design was used to obtain data for the research study. The Spirituality Bullying Survey was administered to the Truth Youth Ministry once the consent forms had been returned. The data collected from the Spirituality Bullying Survey were analyzed to determine if there was a correlation between spirituality and an adolescent's ability to cope with difficult situations, such as peer victimization.

After administering the surveys, in-depth interviews of volunteer participants were conducted to gain greater insight into the relationship between spirituality and peer victimization among adolescents. According to Creswell (2013), "Often data collection in phenomenological

studies consists of in-depth and multiple interviews with participants” (p. 81). The intent of the meetings was to gain additional knowledge about adolescent spirituality and to examine how their spirituality allows them to cope with challenging situations.

The researcher interviewed five participants who volunteered to be interviewed and who had returned parental consent and student assent forms. The researcher advised participants that their participation was voluntary and that they could stop the interview process at any time during the study. The researcher asked permission from the participants for the interviews to be audio-recorded. The interviews were recorded through handwritten notes as well as through audio recordings to ensure greater accuracy in the data collection. The researcher conducted the interview with professionalism and compassion to make sure that participants felt comfortable and uninhibited when answering the interview questions.

Data Analysis

The data collected from participants from the Spirituality Bullying Survey was analyzed using the StatPlus software. The StatPlus software allowed the analysis of data points to determine statistical information such as means, standard deviations, and Spearman Rho coefficients. The descriptive statistics provided pertinent data, which sought to establish correlations between spirituality and peer victimization among adolescents. Spearman Rho is a monotonic function. Monotonic means that, as the independent variable, spirituality, increases, the dependent variable, peer victimization, either never increases or decreases due to non-parametric properties (Pallant, 2013; Sprinthall, 2012). The Spearman Rho coefficient was used to evaluate the hypothesis based on the scatterplot data, which produced a non-linear relationship between the variables. The non-linear relationship failed to meet the Pearson coefficient criterion, which justified using Spearman Rho for the correlation analysis (Pallant, 2013).

Coding was carried out on interview transcripts to develop themes from the qualitative data. Creswell (2013) states, "Themes in qualitative research (also called categories) are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea" (p. 186). Concept mapping was utilized to analyze the data to determine themes. Logically connecting the concepts after going through the process of coding helped the researcher gain a better understanding of the content. The collaboration of an outside coder was sought to provide a balanced and unbiased perspective in creating the story of the research.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity are major components of research that enhance the credibility of a study. The BMMRS and Bully Survey instruments were selected because they are both reliable and valid research instruments that have been widely used. Selection of the instruments provided reliability and validity strategies to increase the likelihood that the research would provide a strong contribution to the field of study through reliable findings. Clarifying researcher bias was used as a validity strategy to ensure readers understand the researcher's position and assumptions from the outset of the study. By keeping in mind her passion for the topic, the researcher was very careful not to project bias. The researcher also incorporated member checking when conducting the study to promote the credibility of the research findings.

Summary

Chapter 3 explained the methodology, selection of participants and instrumentation used in this mixed methods research study. The data collection process included the subscales of spirituality in an online survey as well as interview questions, which were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. Data analysis along with validity and reliability steps were also discussed in this study. The research findings are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this research study was to describe adolescents' spirituality and their peer victimization experiences as well as the relationship between adolescents' ability to deal with peer victimization and their spirituality. The research design comprised of a mixed methods approach, which included a sequential quantitative and qualitative phase of data collection. The quantitative data was collected through a modified version of the widely-used survey, the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness and Spirituality (BMMRS) by the Fetzer Institute on Aging Working Group (2003) and a modified survey of bullying experiences, the Swearer Bullying Survey (Swearer, 2016). The Spirituality and Bullying survey was administered via an online service called Survey Monkey. A total of 40 adolescents from a local congregation completed the anonymous survey, and five of these adolescents volunteered to follow up with a face-to-face interview. The different forms of data were analyzed to address the research questions, and the findings from these analyses are reported in this chapter.

The survey and interview data facilitated an understanding of an adolescent's spiritual beliefs and how his spiritual practices and experiences supported behaviors that may help him deal with peer victimization. Through the survey and interviews, participants shared their experiences of peer victimization, along with characteristics of their spirituality. After the survey was administered and completed, the data was exported to an excel spreadsheet and then analyzed using StatPlus software to determine descriptive statistics, data frequencies along with correlational data. The data analysis for the qualitative portion of the research consisted of transcribing the interviews via an outside service provider called Transcribe Me. Once the interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were coded, and emerging themes were developed.

The qualitative portion of the study provided validity for findings of the quantitative data. The qualitative and quantitative data provided clarity to the research topic under investigation.

Demographics

The participants of the research study were members of a youth ministry at a local church that the researcher attends. The church congregation was a multicultural set of Christians that believe in the teaching of Jesus Christ. The church does not have a denomination affiliation but adheres to the principles of the Bible. The youth group was comprised of students from different ethnicities and age groups. The study consisted of 40 adolescents that ranged from 11- 17 years old. Of the 40 adolescents, 24 (60%) were girls, 21 (52%) were Black/African American, and 22 (55%) were high school students. The academic performance of the adolescents was listed using “A” and “B” grade letterings. Table 1 summarizes the demographic data of participants:

Table 1

Demographic Data of Participants

Demographic Characteristics	Count	Percent
Gender		
Female/Girl	24	60.0%
Male/Boy	14	35.0%
Not Reported	2	5.0%
Total	40	100.0%
Race		
Latino/Hispanic	8	20.0%
African American	21	52.5%
Caucasian	7	17.5%
Biracial	1	2.5%
Asian	1	2.5%
Not Reported	2	5.0%
Total	40	100.0%
Demographic Characteristics	Count	Percent
Grade		
6	6	15.0%
7	2	5.0%
8	8	20.0%
9	5	12.5%
10	8	20.0%
11	2	5.0%
12	7	17.5%
Not Reported	2	5.0%
Total	40	100.0%
Academic Performance	Count	Percent
Mostly A's	15	37.5%
Mostly B's	11	27.5%
Mostly C's	4	10.0%
<A's and >B's	4	10.0%
<B's and >C's	3	7.5%
<C's and >D's	1	2.5%
Not Reported	1	2.5%
Total	40	100.0%

Descriptive Findings for Subscales of Peer Victimization

Items from the Swearer Bullying Survey were used to answer Research Question 1 by describing the adolescents' experiences of peer victimization. Research Question 1 was "What

are the bullying experiences that adolescents encounter and in what conditions (e.g., in what places, times, or for what reasons) adolescents are more likely to experience bullying?”

Understanding the bullying experience in its entirety is important. Information about the types of responses about, the location of, reasons for, and time frame of peer victimization gave the researcher a clearer and broader picture of the victimization experienced by the participants. The three perspectives of adolescent experiences that were investigated included adolescents who were bullied, adolescents who witnessed bullying and those who bullied others. Any participant could have reported more than one of these types of experiences. The response options were designed to allow students to reflect on their bullying experiences that occurred within the last 30 days, which would help them to conceptualize the experience as a process and not as something that happened as an isolated incident (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Greif & Furlong, 2006). Each question offered a 3-point Likert Scale answer choice, 1 (*one or more times per day*), 2 (*one or more times a week*), and 3 (*one or more times a month*). These responses were inverted in the data coding when necessary to indicate an increasing frequency of each experience. The findings indicated that 30 out of the 40 (75%) adolescent participants experienced at least one form of peer victimization at a frequency of at least one time a month. The total number of incidents was found by combining the number of experiences (bullying, being bullied or witnessing bullying). The 30 participants reported a total of 52 counts of one or more forms of bullying experiences (see Figure 2).

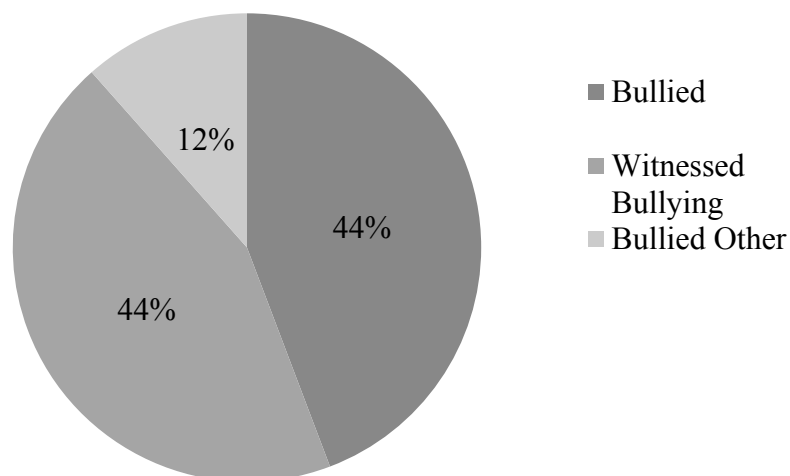


Figure 2. Percentage of bullying experience of adolescents by category.

The percentage for witnessing bullying and being bullied by others is similar and surprisingly large (44%). Recent research supports the notion of heterogeneity of bullying, which claims that children that are bullied are more likely to bully others (Schwartz, 2000). However, in this case, the percentage of participants that were bullied (44%) does not correspond to the percentage of participants who bullied others (12%). This sample does not confirm findings from Schwartz's (2000) study. The sample distribution includes all three experiences. It is thus in line with the total bullying model combining different experiences (Greif & Furlong, 2006) and encompassing all aspects of peer victimization.

The descriptive analysis of peer victimization, also addressed the subscales for location, timeframe, types of, responses and reasons for peer victimization. Participants might have had more than one response to each question if it applied to their bullying experience. The questions were asked of the participants from their perspective of being bullied, having witnessed bullying and having bullied others.

Location

The participants selected responses indicating the location of their bullying experience, which may have included more than one location at which bullying occurred. One participant could have experienced bullying in more than one location from the perspective of either being bullied, witnessing bullying or bullying others, which sums up to the total bullying experience. The data was gleaned from responses about the frequency of bullying from the three different perspectives at each location. Bullying by texting or online was reported more often, in 15 out of 46 (33%) total locations. The percentages along with frequencies of bullying experience at various locations are summarized (see Table 2).

Table 2

Locations of Bullying Experiences (Bullied, Witnessed Bullying, Bullied Others)

Location	# of non-exclusive participant mentioning this location	Total frequency this location was mentioned	Percent
Locker Room	6	8	17%
Online/Texting	11	15	33%
Hallway	9	9	20%
Restroom	6	6	13%
Other	8	8	17%
Total	40	46	100%

Note. $N = 40$

Time Frame

According to the findings, 21 participants reported bullying experiences either before school, during school or after school. The participants may have reported the bullying experience during more than one-time frame throughout the day. The data indicate that the majority of the bullying experiences were during school time frames, 30 (41%) out of 73 reported that bullying occurred during school time (see Figure 3). School time is defined as the

period between the time at which a student arrives at a school site for a designated school session time, until the end of the designated school session time.

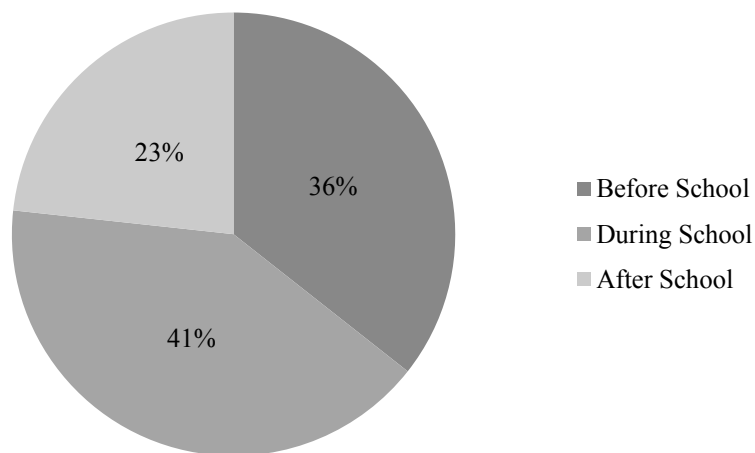


Figure 3. Percentage of bullying out of 73 experiences by timeframe.

Types of Bullying

Data indicated that 30 (75%) out of the 40 participants reported some type of peer victimization. Thirty-nine percent reported they experienced bullying though someone that made fun of them. The data for other forms of victimization are summarized in Figure 4.

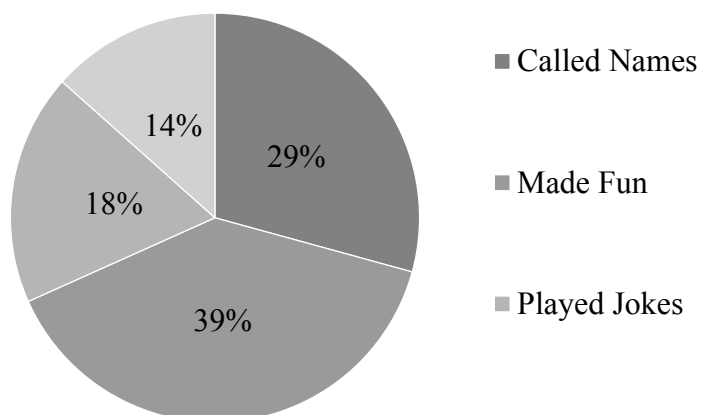


Figure 4. Types of bullying experienced by adolescents.

Responses to Bullying

Findings revealed that 12 (46%) of the participants that were bullied told someone, whereas 9 (35%) avoided the proximity of bullying. The responses for participants that witnessed bullying or bullied others are noted in Figure 5. More than half (52%) of the participants felt bad or sad because of the bullying experience.

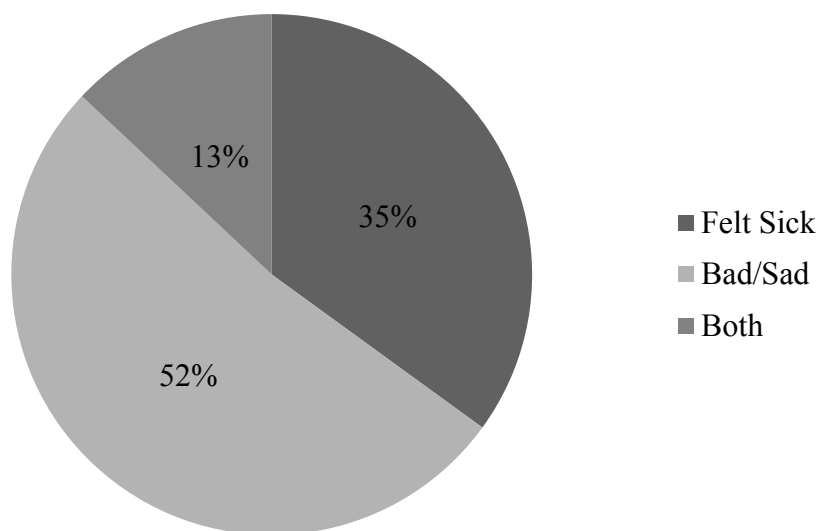


Figure 5. Percentage of participants who felt sick, bad/sad or both due to bullying.

Reasons for Bullying

The reasons for peer victimization were revealed through the adolescents' perspectives. Thirty-five percent of the participants reported that they believed they were either being bullied, witnessing bullying or bullying others because of being different. Bullying due to skin color was reported by 18% of the participants. The percentages are based on the number of responses out of a total of 74 responses. Additional data is represented in Figure 6.

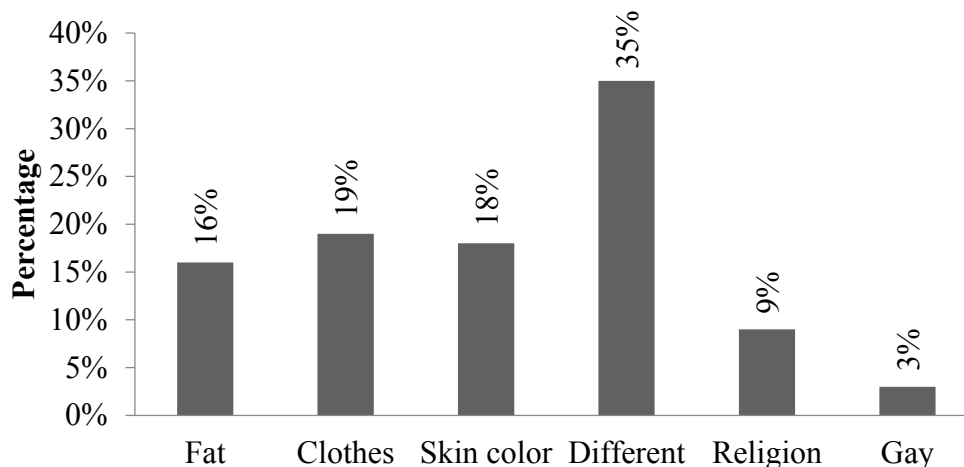


Figure 6. Reasons given by participants for bullying others.

Qualitative Findings for Peer Victimization

The interviews were analyzed and themes were decided by consensus with another coder through inter-rater reliability process. The qualitative data supported the quantitative findings that revealed that the adolescent participants in the study expressed bullying. The five participants who volunteered for the interview all stated that they experienced some form of bullying; either they were bullied or witnessed bullying. The qualitative findings showed through the interviews that four out of the five participants reported being bullied, three out of five reported witnessing someone being bullied, and none of the participants reported bullying others. Although Participants 1 and 4 reported they had not witnessed bullying, they both stated that someone else told them of bullying incidents.

Experience of Being Bullied

The participants shared specific details of their bullying experiences, such as types of bullying, reasons for and responses to being bullied. When asked the interview question, “Have you ever been bullied? If so, how did you handle it?” Participant 1 stated, “I have been called names, but have not been physically pushed or stuff like that, it's just more words than physical.”

This response validates the frequency reported in the survey data reported above. Participant 2 responded, “They were bullying me because of my clothes, like the way I would dress. I would handle it by ignoring them. They would talk behind my back. They’ll be behind me, and I’ll just ignore them.” Participant 4 responded that he had been bullied and stated, “I handled it offensively. I wouldn’t slash out though, Yes, I remember one time, I got pushed down, and then I told the teacher, and then they got in trouble.” A question about their Christian identity was asked, “Have you ever been bullied because you are a Christian?” Participant 5 stated that she had been bullied because she was a Christian. She added:

Oh, last night I had a color guard competition, and I was praying before we went on because I wanted to have a good show and I wanted everybody else to have a good show because a lot of people were nervous. I was praying, and one of my color guard friends was looking at me and when I like said, “Amen,” and I opened my eyes, she was like giving me this dirty look. I was like, “What? I can't pray? She's like, “You can pray.” I was like, “Whatever, just ignore her, this is your show, you got it.” My other friends, the ones I was talking to you about the profanity, they don't understand that I don't like to be a part of that. They'll judge you for it. That's why I don't really hang out with them as much anymore.

Of the four participants that reported being bullied, only one reported being bullied because she was a Christian.

Experience of Witnessing Bullying

The majority of total bullying experiences reported were those where bullying was witnessed by the participants. The quantitative and qualitative data showed that 30 (44%) and 5

(60%) participants witnessed bullying, respectively. The interviews provided relevant data, which offered additional insight into an adolescent's bullying experience through witnessing bullying. Three participants stated that they witnessed another person being bullied. When asked the question, "Have you ever witnessed someone being bullied? If so, what did you do?" Participant 2 stated the following regarding witnessing someone being bullied: "There was one time my friend got bullied because of his haircut and I just told him the same thing, just ignore them." The response from Participant 2 provided insight into the type of bullying experienced and the response to the bullying by the participant. Participant 3 also shared his experience of witnessing bullying. Participant 3 stated,

It was back when I was in the third grade. My friend, "X", was getting bullied by my friend, "Y" at the time. What happened was "X" tried to bring the ball back but "Y" just stripped it away from him, made "X" cry. Then "X" reported it to the office. Since I saw it and I said, "Are you okay, X," since I saw him crying. Then "X" reported me to the office and I told them the truth of what happened. I said that "X" was walking with the basketball after they blew the whistle, and then "Y" came out of nowhere, just stripped it from him and then made him cry. He ran back, and he pushed him, like slight push, a little bit.

The participant's response described an actual bullying incident in detail, which brought authenticity to the bullying experience from the lens of a youth in a school environment.

Participant 5 shared a bullying incident that revealed the feelings she felt by witnessing bullying.

Participant 5 stated,

It made me very angry. Because how could you treat someone like that?

Some of them have no idea they're doing it and it's really sad. I confronted

someone a couple of weeks ago actually. Because someone was dancing on the stage and he's autistic and he's in drama and he was dancing for like their play that was coming up. He was zoning everybody out, he was just dancing for himself. Someone started recording him and laughing about it. I went up to him and I said, "Is that necessary? How would you feel if someone was recording you?" He deleted it automatically then he's like, "I wasn't doing it." I was like, "That's why you just deleted it? Because you weren't doing anything? Treat him the way you would want to be treated. Because how would you feel if someone was out there making fun of you?" Then me and my other friend went up there to go talk to him a little bit so people would leave him alone.

Participant 5 expressed the emotions that she experienced and shared how witnessing her peer being bullied made her feel angry and sad. When asked how witnessing the bullying made her feel, Participant 5 stated:

It made me angry and then it made me sad too because he had no clue. I'm sure that wasn't the first time someone was secretly doing that because he loves to dance and he does it all the time. That's just the first time I witnessed that happening to him. It made me angry and sad.

Experience of Bullying Others

The participants were asked the question "Do you bully others?" All five participants stated that they did not bully others. The follow-up question asked: "What are some specific reasons why you do not bully others?" Participant 3 stated, "Well because I believe it's wrong and you're hurting them." Participant 2 and 5 expressed the implication of bullying others.

Participant 2 stated, “I haven’t bullied because I’ve heard of people committing suicide because of bullying, been like big problems with bullying. That’s the main reason I don’t it. To be honest, it hurts to be bullied.” Participant 5 stated:

Well, you see a lot of death. People are always constantly in fear, and you see students at lunch sit alone because they don’t have any friends and that could just be because when they try to make friends, people judge them.

Although bullying others was not a part of the participants’ bullying experience, they were poignant in sharing the reasons why they did not bully others. The bullying experiences of the participants are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Number of Times Participants Experienced Bullying from Interview Transcripts

Participant	Gender	Age	Bullied	Witnessed Bullying	Bullied Others
1	Male	11	1	0	0
2	Male	11	1	1	0
3	Male	12	0	1	0
4	Male	16	1	0	0
5	Female	17	1	1	0
Total	N/a	n/a	4	3	0

Descriptive Findings for Subscale of Spirituality

Research Question 2 is “What spiritual perspectives, practices, and experiences contribute to an adolescent’s spirituality and coping abilities for challenging situations?”

Spirituality was a construct that was evident in the lives of the adolescents that participated in the research study. Eleven subscales with multiple questions from the BMMRS instrument gathered data to explore the characteristics of an adolescent’s spiritual practices and experiences. The subscale of the Religious and Spiritual History provided data that indicates that 94% of

adolescents have experienced a religious or spiritual event that caused a significant gain or loss in their faith. The Spiritual Meaning subscale showed that 86% of the participants agree or strongly agree that their life is a part of a divine plan with calling and purpose. The descriptive data for the additional spirituality subscales are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Spirituality Subscales

<i>Spirituality Subscale</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Response</i>
Daily Spiritual Experience	82%	21.98	5.82	6 – 36	At least some days
Spiritual Values and Beliefs	81%	6.50	1.50	2 – 8	At least agree
Private Religious Practices	89%	23.9	5.50	8 – 40	At least a few times a month
Religious and Spiritual Coping	87%	16.6	3.86	7 – 28	At least somewhat
Religious Support	67%	8.40	3.01	4 – 16	At least a little
Religious and Spiritual History	94%	4.83	1.15	2 – 6	Yes/No
Spiritual Commitment	74%	5.53	1.93	2 – 10	At least agree and one hour per week.
Organizational Religiousness	76%	8.93	2.25	2 – 12	At least twice a month
Overall Self Ranking	61%	5.53	1.66	2 – 8	At least moderately religious or spiritual
Spiritual Meaning	86%	6.13	1.79	2 – 8	At least agree
Forgiveness	91%	9.45	2.19	3 – 12	At least often

Findings from the BMMRS subscales provided data that garnered a better understanding of what spiritual experiences and practices contribute to an adolescent's spiritual coping abilities. The BMMRS subscales gave better insight into the sources of an adolescent's spiritual base as demonstrated by the self-reported frequency of spiritual experiences. Data from the Daily Spiritual Experience subscale indicated that adolescents have a noteworthy spiritual connection to God; Out of the 40 adolescents that participated in the study, 33 (82%) felt God's presence at least some days or more.

Overall Self-Ranking

To help validate an adolescent's perception of their spiritual foundation, the subscale of Self Ranking was used to determine the spiritual and religious awareness of these adolescents. According to the findings, 44% of adolescents ranked themselves as religious and 43% as spiritual. Adolescents' perception of their overall self-ranking as religious or spiritual were closely related. Figure 5 and 6 detail the findings for adolescent self-ranking for religiousness and spirituality.

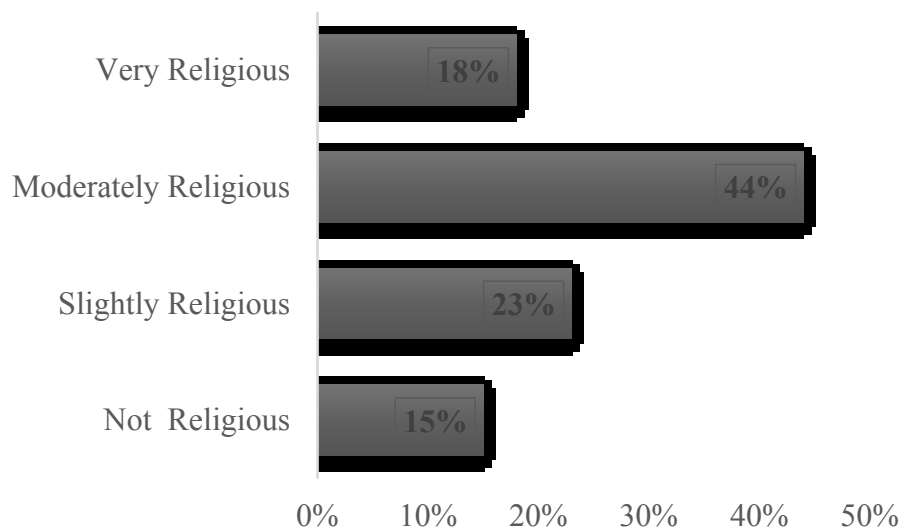


Figure 7. Adolescent overall self-ranking as religious (n = 38).

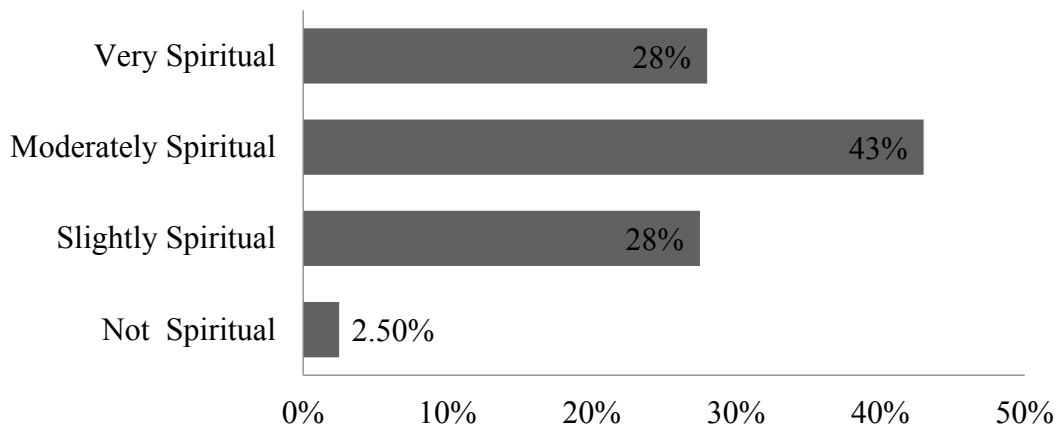


Figure 8. Adolescent overall self-ranking as spiritual (n = 38).

Private Religious Practices

Private Religious Practices was a subscale used to determine how adolescents grow in their spirituality through their efforts. The youth that participated in the study took part in some type of religious practice at least once per week. The findings indicated that 40% of participants prayed or meditated at least once a week, whereas 22% read their Bibles or other religious material at least once a week. The additional data is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Private Religious Practice

Private Religious Practice Questions	Percent respondents choosing once a week or more	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
How often do you pray privately in places other than at church?	4.2%	5.73	2.08
Within your religious or spiritual tradition, how often do you meditate?	36%	5.00	1.30
How often do you watch or listen to religious programs on TV or radio?	12.5%	4.95	2.06
How often do you read the Bible or other religious literature?	22.2%	4.80	1.68
How often are prayers or grace said before or after meals in your home?	25%	3.43	1.68

Note. *n* = 39; 1 = never; 2 = less than once a month; 3 = once a month; 4 = a few times a month; 5 = once a week; 6 = a few times a week; 7 = once a day; 8 = more than once a day

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a foundational characteristic of spirituality and religiousness. Adolescent responses to forgiveness are noted in Table 6. The findings indicate that the majority of the participants reported that they know that God forgives them at least always for things that they have done, whereas 20% have forgiven others that have hurt them at least always or almost always.

Table 6

Spiritual Forgiveness

Forgiveness Questions	Percent respondents choosing always or almost always	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I have forgiven myself for things that I have done wrong.	24%	2.85	1.08
I have forgiven those who hurt me.	20%	2.98	0.86
I have to know that God forgives me.	56%	3.63	0.87

Note. $n = 39$; 1 = *never*; 2 = *seldom*; 3 = *often*; 4 = *always or almost always*; Range = 3-12

Religious and Spiritual Coping

The Religious and Spiritual Coping subscale provided data that gave insight into how adolescents deal with difficult circumstances from a spiritual perspective. The data indicated that 27% of the participants look to God for strength, support, and guidance, whereas 20% understand that their religion helps them deal with stressful situations quite a bit or more. Additional religious and spiritual coping data are provided in Table 7.

Table 7

Religious and Spiritual Coping

Religious and Spiritual Coping	Percent based on quite a bit or more	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I think about how my life is part of a larger spiritual force.	19%	2.89	1.01
I work together with God as partners.	17%	2.63	0.93
I look to God for strength, support, and guidance.	27%	3.56	0.72
I feel God is punishing me for my sins or lack of spirituality.	8%	1.74	0.91
I wonder whether God has abandoned me	1.70%	1.38	0.59
I try to make sense of the situation and decide what to do without relying on God.	7.60%	2.1	0.92
To what extent is your religion involved in understanding or dealing with stressful situations in any way?	20%	2.77	0.93

Note. *n* = 38; 1 = *not at all*; 2 = *somewhat*; 3 = *quite a bit*; 4 = *a great deal*; Range = 7-28

Quantitative Data Analysis for Spiritual Practices and Experiences

Research Question 2 is “What spiritual perspectives, practices, and experiences contribute to an adolescent’s spiritual coping abilities?”

Data from subscales of the Bullying and Spirituality Survey was used to run a correlation analysis to determine associations between spirituality subscales among adolescents. The correlation data provided findings that enhanced an understanding of religious or spiritual practices and experiences, along with spiritual coping abilities of adolescents.

Religious and Spiritual Practices and Experiences

The subscale of Private Religious Practices (reading the Bible, praying, meditating, saying grace before meals and watching or listening to religious programs) was positively correlated with the subscales of Forgiveness, Religious Support, Organizational Religiousness, Religious and Spiritual Self-Ranking, and Spiritual Meaning, which might provide sources of coping or support for bullying experiences. The data is detailed in Table 8.

The correlation data for Private Religious Practice and Forgiveness was positive and statistically significant ($r_s = .34, p < .05$) indicate that the higher the frequency of religious or spiritual practices, the greater their ability to forgive. The positive and statistically significant correlation for Religious Support and Private Religious Practices ($r_s = .52, p < .01$) also indicates that the more support and encouragement the participants had formed the congregation, the more engaged they were on their spiritual practices. Organizational Religiousness was also positively correlated to Private Religious Practices ($r_s = .42, p < .01$). The correlation indicated that the more adolescents attended religious services or participated in other religious activities, the more engaged they were in their private religious practices. Private and Religious Practices and Spiritual Self Ranking ($r_s = .49, p < .01$) showed the more participants engaged in private religious practices, the more religious or spiritual they felt. The correlation between Spiritual Meaning and Private and Religious Practices ($r_s = .41, p < .05$) indicated that the more the participants were engaged in religious and spiritual practices, the more meaning and purpose they felt in their lives.

Religious or Spiritual Experiences

The Daily Spiritual Experiences subscale was statistically significant and positively correlated to the subscales of Forgiveness, Religious and Spiritual Self-Ranking and Spiritual Meaning (see Table 8). The correlation between Daily Spiritual Experience and Forgiveness was ($r_s = .48, p < .01$). The correlation indicates that the more the participants experience God's presence daily, the more they were able to demonstrate forgiveness. Daily Spiritual Experience and Religious and Spiritual Self-Ranking resulted in a statistically significant and positive correlation value ($r_s = .59, p < .01$) showing that the more the participants experienced God's presence on a daily basis, the higher they ranked themselves as religious or spiritual. Daily

Spiritual Experience was also statistically significant and positively correlated to Spiritual Meaning ($r_s = .57, p < .01$). The correlation indicates that the more the participants encounter God's presence, the more they experience a calling and purpose in their lives.

Religious and Spiritual Coping

The Religious and Spiritual Coping subscale was significantly and positively correlated to the subscales of Daily Spiritual Experience, Forgiveness, Private Religious Practices, Religious Support, and Religious and Spiritual Self Ranking (see Table 8). The subscales of Daily Spiritual Experience and Religious and Spiritual Coping showed a strong positive correlation ($r_s = .69, p < .01$). This correlation indicates that the more the participants experience peace and harmony through God's presence daily, the greater their ability to deal with difficult or stressful situations. The correlation between Forgiveness and Religious and Spiritual Coping was also very strong and positive ($r_s = .64, p < .01$). This indicates that the more the participants include forgiveness in their lives, the greater their ability to deal with difficult or stressful situations. Private Religious Practices and Religious and Spiritual Coping were positively and significantly correlated ($r_s = .46, p < .01$). These findings show that the more participants engage in reading the Bible, praying, meditating, saying grace before meals and watching or listening to religious programs, the better they deal with difficult or stressful situations. The correlation between Religious Support and Religious and Spiritual Coping was positive and statistically significant ($r_s = .64, p < .01$) indicates that the more support and encouragement the participants felt, the better were their coping abilities in stressful situations. Religious and Spiritual Self-Ranking and Religious and Spiritual Coping correlation were also statistically significant and positive ($r_s = .62, p < .01$) provided data that indicated that the higher the participants Religious

or Self-Ranking, the better their coping abilities during difficult or stressful situations.

Correlation data is detailed in Table 8.

Table 8

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of Spirituality Subscales

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Daily Spiritual Experiences	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21.98	5.82
Spiritual Values & Beliefs	0.28	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.50	1.50
Spiritual Forgiveness	0.48**	0.26	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.45	2.19
Private Religious Practices	0.20	0.36*	0.34*	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23.90	5.50
Religious & Spiritual Coping	0.69**	0.40	0.64**	0.46**	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18.45	3.94
Religious Support	0.31	0.40	0.21	0.52**	0.50**	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	8.40	3.01
Religious & Spiritual History	-0.30	0.45	-0.31	-0.08	-0.30	-0.07	1	-	-	-	-	-	3.78	0.97
Spiritual Commitment	-0.05	0.13	-0.09	0.26	0.10	0.16	0.15	1	-	-	-	-	8.48	2.48
Organizational Religiousness	0.29	0.43**	0.20	0.42**	0.62	0.51	-0.22	0.36*	1	-	-	-	8.93	2.25
Religious & Spiritual Self Ranking	0.59**	0.38	0.67**	0.49**	0.62**	0.46**	-0.15	0.14	0.24	1	-	-	5.53	1.66
Spiritual Meaning	0.57**	0.63*	0.52**	0.41**	0.59*	0.39*	0.31	0.26	0.31*	0.62**	1	.23	6.13	1.79
Peer Victimization	0.08	-0.08	0.12	-0.07	0.07	0.11	0.15	-0.28	-0.1	0.29	-	1	3.83	3.27

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; $N = 40$.

Qualitative Findings for Spiritual Practices and Experiences

Three themes emerged from the coding that helped to gain a better understanding of the influences that contribute to an adolescent's spiritual perspective, practices, and experiences.

The themes emerging from the data that were used to address Research Question 2 included:

arising from the global perspective of spirituality, influence of family support on spiritual development and spiritual perspectives, practices, and experiences. Some responses to the interview questions included more than one theme.

A global perspective of spirituality was a theme that emerged from the response to the interview question, “What is spirituality?” Participant 3 stated:

What it means to me is your belief in God or different types of gods, but really, it depends on me like what type of background or race you are because some races believe in multiple gods and some believe in none or some believe God doesn't exist or some people might think God didn't even create the world, it was just like an asteroid or aliens or something.

When asked a follow-up question, “What do you think is the source of your spirituality?”

Participant 1 stated that:

I think that just comes from the Bible, and it just comes from what my parents have been saying to me, and how I was raised, and just to respect others really in whatever the race they are, and whatever beliefs they are.

Participant 1 also stated that:

I believe in Christianity and kindness but other people might think of Hinduism or stuff like that. My friend said that he is a Christian, but he also sometimes looks at Hinduism, and it's cool. I totally understand. May you have a different thought of it, maybe you think that's the right religion. Religion is something that you believe in. If you believe in that. That's your opinion. My opinion is Christianity; his opinion might be Hinduism.

The researcher followed up with the question, “Do you respect him any less?”

Participant 1 stated, “No, I don't.” He's still pretty much like me. He's not as a strong Christian

as I am, but that doesn't mean that he's not a strong person". The response from Participant 1 was coded in two themes: the influence of family support and global perspective.

Religious or Spiritual Practices and Experiences

Responses to the interview question, "What activities do you participate in that you believe help you grow in your spirituality?" demonstrated the theme of religious or spiritual practices and experiences. Participant 1 stated that:

Young Marines, that's definitely one. That's a program to physically and mentally strengthen you. Boy Scouts, definitely one of those, and some sports just to keep me physically fit and learn about more people that are out there in the world, that are just like me are entirely different than me.

Participant 2 shared that "I come here to the Youth Ministry. That helps me a lot. It helps me mentally and physically because they pray for me here. It's a weekend school." Participant 3 stated, "I pray, read my Bible, go to church. Two or three months ago in my summer break, I got baptized." Participant 4 shared that

We have an after-school program, where I go. It's usually with some church people. We all just do fun activities with each other. We do a thing that helps us grow. Sometimes we have days planned, sometimes it's an outdoor activity or inside activity. Usually, on Mondays where they talk about God and stuff. Especially at school, we have Christian clubs on Tuesday.

Participant 5 stated:

When I have friends who sometimes have really bad profanity, I don't laugh when others laugh and I stop talking for a while until we start doing better.

Because sometimes they'll be very dirty minded and stuff. Then, I'll stay away

from them for a few days and hang out with my other friends and then they'll get mad. I don't want to be in that kind of environment where people see me as, "Oh, you're one of those people who are dirty minded and you use profanity." I like to surround myself with people who are just nice people overall. They have a good heart.

The interview question, "Do you watch or listen to religious programs?" also provided findings that supported the theme of religious or spiritual practices and experiences. Participant 1 had a response that included both the themes of religious and spiritual practices and the influence of family support for spiritual development. Participant 1 stated that:

When we can't make it to church or something like that, if we're out of town, we watch it on TV, and sometimes I listen to music, gospel music just to keep my religion strong and to just calm me down and I'm having those stressful days.

Participant 1 also stated:

I watch our church service, I also watch that other churches that are online, just there on there. I watch it with my cousins, my family just to get the word in and get my lesson in for the day.

Participant 2 stated that "Actually, I used to watch. I had my other church; we would watch programs. My mom would show me videos on YouTube. Pastors preaching or something, like videos for teens." Participant 3 stated:

From time to time, like if it's on the radio. I don't really watch it; I don't really listen to it consistently. Well, if it's on the radio where they're talking about it. I see them on TV, though. It's just something that's usually on at the house.

Participant 5 stated that she did not watch or listen to religious programs.

Forgiveness is a spiritual practice, and the participants shared their experiences of forgiving others. Participants also responded to the interview question, "Do you think you could forgive bullies, if so why?" In response to the question, Participant 1 stated, "I can. I can forgive bullies; I've done it before. Well, it just feels the right thing to do, maybe they were just having a really bad day and they took it out on someone else." Participant 2 stated that, "I would forgive them. It's not their fault; they're probably either they have problems in their family, and they just have to take their anger out on someone." Participant 3 shared that:

Yes. Well, because sometimes over time, they get nicer and another way is because since I'm a Christian, you're supposed to have peace with everyone in this world, so I just try to make it happen and try to just be friends with them, that actual school year or whatever.

Participant 4 stated that:

Yes. Because I know that they're having a hard time in their lives. That's why they wanted to slash out at people because they want them to feel -- Because they think it's going to make them feel better. They just slash out other people.

The participants were also asked, "Have you ever had a significant gain in your faith? If so can you elaborate? In response, Participant 1 stated:

Yes. When I was six years old, and I was going through a lot, and then my Mom just said, "Come here," and then she started praying and then that's when she accepted God into my heart and then at that same moment when we stopped praying, I just felt this big gain in my heart, like it just opened up ten times bigger. A follow-up question, "Have you experienced anything like it since?"

Participant 1 also shared, "I have. When I let God go into my friend's heart, I felt this joy as well, and at that same time, he said that he felt the same thing and so that really ups my feelings for Christianity." Participant 2 shared:

Yes, there has. One of my cousins, he was in drugs, he was in alcohol, he was in everything. He would get bullied too. One day he ended up in the hospital and then he told me if he doesn't stop smoking, doing drugs and everything, he would probably die. I told him, I was like, "Jesus loves you, and he's gonna help you." He remembered that. He started coming to church. He started being here at my other church, and now he moved to Temecula and he's over there at a church.

Participant 4 stated that "My auntie was demonstrating something that I think I never thought of, and she was talking about, like with the same thing as a bully." She said, 'Always forgive bullies' and everything. That's how I got my gain, I was like, 'Okay,' and then my dad always told me to pray about God every time on that same day. That's where I got my big gain".

Participant 5 shared:

My brother, I believe he was in the sixth grade. It was the day of Halloween or the day before. He was walking to school and our neighbors two Rottweiler and we're not allowed to have Rottweilers. We're not allowed to have really big dogs at all in our neighborhood, and they're Rottweilers, the son forgot to close the gate and they came out, and they attacked my brother. They were at the top, and he was walking up, and he saw them, and he was like stay, and they started chasing after him. He started running, and they're big Rottweilers, and he was a short guy. He's still pretty short. They bit him all over, and he had a lot of scars, and sometimes he doesn't

like to take off his shirt when he goes to the pool because he doesn't want anyone to judge him. They're blending in with his skin right now but they had to take skin from other places, take fat from other places to replace other parts where the dogs bit him and I was at school and I didn't know about it and when my mom called me and said that he is in the hospital because he got attacked by two Rottweilers that was a big day for me because the Lord saved my brother and he didn't have to, and my brother is 19 going on 20 in a few weeks.

Spiritual Ranking was another aspect of spirituality that aligned with the theme of Religious or Spiritual perspectives, practices, and experiences. The Spiritual Ranking also provided clarity on how adolescents viewed their spiritual walk and what activities contributed to their spiritual rating. The Spiritual Ranking of the participants allowed for another interpretation of the perspectives, activities, practices, and experiences of the participants. Of the four students that were asked, for the question "How would you rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 in regards to having a strong relationship and consistent dialogue with God at this point in your life?", 80% of the students rated themselves with a seven or higher. Participant 1 stated,

I would say around a seven to an eight. I am not fully there because I still have a lot of years left in my life, but I'm still pretty strong in my religion. Because I do like to focus on my religion a lot and I do want to make others feel the same way but if they just disagree with me, I personally just let them have their opinion. I don't force them. I just let them have their own opinion.

Participant 2 stated that

With God and at this point, probably an eight. We're not all perfect. We do mistakes. I can't give myself a straight up 10, and a nine is a little bit way too high too. Maybe

because sometimes I talkback a lot. I don't really excite, get angry, and I just say things without thinking.

Participant 3 shared:

I would rate myself a nine. The reason I rank myself a nine is because I feel I am consistent, every time before I eat, I pray. Every time I see something, a miracle happen, I say in my mind or just say silently to myself, "I thank you, Jesus." I go to church consistently two times a week. I read my Bible from time to time. I'm starting to read the Book of Job, how he lost everything, and him going through a trial. I haven't read the whole passage about it, but I know that's so far what I'm reading about that. Because I feel it's so interesting just to get a good feel on how people in the past or in the biblical stories, how they had to go through what they had gone through. When God told them to do something, they did it, and they got great, if not heavenly rewards for it.

Participant 4 stated that

That's a tough one. Because I can still grow closer to Him, so I probably say about seven and a half. Because of course, I could grow really close to Him. Second, Because I gave my heart to God when I was 10 years old, but then every time when I usually get mad or frustrate about something, I put it at the back of my head, and I just be so frustrated and stuff and that's how I think I can be closer to God. If I'm frustrated, I could just pray to Him or whatever.

Participant 5 shared:

It could definitely be better. I would say right now probably a five. I do pray, and I thank Him for everything, but sometimes I only do it when it's hard times

or when I need Him the most and I should do it every day. It could definitely be better, and then I need to come to church more often, it's just sometimes it's school homework, or I have a color guard or basketball. Sometimes it just gets overwhelmed, but I need to let Him take control versus me trying to.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative portion of this study gave greater insight into the phenomena of spirituality among adolescents and their ability to deal with peer victimization through their spiritual practices and experiences. The six emerging themes developed through analysis of the qualitative data included:

1. A global perspective of spirituality;
2. Utilizing a spiritual foundation to deal with bullying victimization;
3. Influences of family support on the spiritual development;
4. Bullying victimization experience;
5. Spiritual or religious practices and experiences; and
6. The implications of peer victimization.

Through the analysis of the qualitative data, the theme of utilizing spiritual practices and experiences to deal with peer victimization emerged to answer Research Question 3.

The themes for the qualitative portion of the study were determined by coding the interview responses, and establishing categories, which led to meaningful themes. The interview questions consisted of 11 questions and were asked of five adolescents that volunteered for the study. To provide validity and reliability, the following research protocol was implemented. The definition of themes was established by reading through each interview response and recording words and short phrases that stood out about the content of the data (Lochmiller &

Lester, 2017). After going through the responses the first time, the researcher connected words and phrases that had similar meanings to establish categories. Analysis mapping was the technique used to track and establish consistency of codes and categories. The categories were established to determine relationships among the various codes. Once the categories were outlined, another person was invited to audit the results to verify the interpretation of the data. The other coder was a professional government employee and doctoral candidate. The other coder confirmed 85% of the categories and codes, which led to a discussion of unconfirmed categories. The researcher and other coder discussed the findings, and a consensus was made to change several categories. After the categories were discussed, the researcher went on to interpret the data and define the established themes.

To provide validity of the study, the researcher engaged time in the field. The researcher attended and observed the Youth Ministry meetings for two months to get an idea of the culture and temperament of the participants. The Youth Ministry was led by a team of two pastors that were passionate about working with adolescents. The participants in the youth group ranged from 11 to 17 years old. Two services were held, and participants had the option of attending either an 8:30 a.m. service or a 10:30 a.m. service. The Youth group meeting room was age appropriate with decor that has an ambiance of youthfulness. Comfy sofas, pool tables, and a flat screen TV made it very inviting and engaging for adolescents. Upon arriving, the young people were greeted by one or both youth pastors along with peers. Before the youth pastors ministered the lesson, participants could be seen playing pool, hanging out with friends, or eating snacks.

Before the lessons began, the adolescents participated in praise and worship, which was led by the youth pastor. The atmosphere was charged as the young people sang and raised their

hands as they participated in the worship experience. On several occasions, the Youth Pastor shared YouTube videos to reinforce the topic that was covered during the lesson. The lessons that were presented by the Pastors were age appropriate and engaging. There were many great lessons, but the one that stood out the most was an illustration of forgiveness. The Pastor used coke and bleach to demonstrate the lesson of sin and forgiveness. The coke represented sins and the bleach God's forgiveness of sins. The participants were very engaged and seemed to grasp the concept of forgiveness through the demonstration. Forgiveness is a major characteristic of the Christian faith. The Bible states "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31-32, New International Version).

In addition to the Sunday service, I also had an opportunity to attend the Wednesday evening service of the Youth Ministry. The Wednesday service was conducted similarly to the Sunday service. The youth pastor conducted a lesson on Wednesdays as well. The young people appeared to genuinely enjoy the activities and fellowship. Four of the participants stated in the interviews that they attend the Sunday and Wednesday services. The observations of the youth meetings enhanced the understanding of religious and spiritual practices of the participants, which added validity to the study.

The qualitative findings along with the researcher's observations provided additional data, which helped to gain a deeper understanding of how adolescents use their spiritual framework to deal with difficult situations, such as peer victimization. The research questions were the driving force for the study. The themes were aligned with the research questions to provide qualitative data which helped construct a framework illustrating adolescents' spirituality and how they utilize their spiritual practices and experiences to deal with peer victimization. The

interview questions consisted of eleven questions and were asked of five adolescent volunteers. The qualitative portion of the study provided relevancy in addressing the research questions under investigation. Table 9 provides a summary of the frequency of key themes as they appear in the transcript.

Table 9

Number of Times Themes Appear in Transcription per Interview Question

Theme	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Total
Global Perspective of Spirituality	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Utilizing Spiritual Practices and Experiences to Deal with Peer Victimization	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
Family Support	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	7
Peer Victimization Experiences	0	0	0	3	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	7
Spiritual or Religious Practices and Experiences	1	7	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	3	4	25
Implications of Bullying	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2

Note. Q1 = Question 1

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 is “How does an adolescent’s spirituality help them with their ability to deal with incidences of peer victimization?”

The qualitative data, specifically the theme of utilizing a spiritual foundation to deal with peer victimization was used to answer this research question. The participant’s responses to the interview questions provided data that shed light on spirituality and how it is foundational to helping adolescents deal with peer victimization. In reference to why he did not bully others, Participant 1 stated:

No. I have not been bullied because I'm Christian, but I have told people that

the reason I'm not punching you, or the reason I'm not picking a fight with you, because I'm a Christian, and that's kind of what makes them understand why I'm not being physical. Their reaction is, "Wow, I never knew that," or "Oh, really," and then they back away, they calm down when I say it. I guess they feel relieved that they're not going to be physically hurt.

Participant 1 also shared:

When I got mad when it got to the point that they push it too far, I shoved them and said, "What's wrong with you?" My mindset was to punch them, but I said, "No, that's just not how it's supposed to go." Really, I just looked into the future, if I did this is what consequences there would be, and also my religion just saying that would be –got to withhold your religion, you got it calm down."

Participant 3 stated,

Well, because sometimes over time, they get nicer, and another way is because since I'm a Christian, you're supposed to have peace with everyone in this world, so I just try to make it happen and try to just be friends with them, that actually school year or whatever.

Participant 4 also shared, "Yes. They sometimes, they're kiddie, like kids. Usually, on a daily basis, they'll include stuff about God in there a little. I watch it usually I think on Wednesdays or whatever, or when I feel depressed or whatever." A follow-up question was asked, "When you said you feel depressed, does it help when you watch it? After watching it?" Participant 4 replied "Yes."

These participant responses provide insight into the various methods that adolescents used to cope with difficult situations or peer victimization. The role of spirituality in an

adolescent's ability to deal with peer victimization was explored from the interview questions that addressed bullying and spirituality.

Quantitative Data Summary

The descriptive statistics and correlation data of the quantitative research provided findings for the constructs of peer victimization and spirituality among adolescents. The findings revealed 41% of peer victimization occurred during school hours, which were defined as the start hour of the school day to the end hour of the school day. Hallways and online/texting were frequent settings for peer victimization incidents. Peer victimization was significant experiences, where 35% of the participants were bullied because they were different. The findings showed that 52% of the participants felt bad or sad after witnessing or bullying others. Correlation data among spirituality subscales provided findings that showed positive inter-correlations between various constructs of spirituality. The findings from the quantitative research laid the foundation for utilizing interviews to validate the significance of spirituality and victimization in the lives of adolescents.

Qualitative Data Summary

The qualitative findings suggested that the phenomenon of spirituality enabled adolescents to either deal with or abstain from peer victimization. The emerging themes which included utilizing spiritual foundation to deal with peer victimization, influences of family support on spiritual development, spiritual practices and experiences, bullying victimization experiences and the implications of bullying brought understanding to the phenomena. The qualitative data supported the hypothesis that the adolescents' spirituality played a role in their ability to deal with difficult circumstances, such as peer victimization. Understanding the activities that enhance spirituality in an adolescent's life, such as the role of forgiveness, family

and their self-ranking, helped to better comprehend the relationship between spirituality and peer victimization among adolescents. The qualitative portion of the study confirmed the hypothesis that adolescents use their spiritual base to deal or abstain from peer victimization.

Conclusion

The construct of spirituality is inherent in the developmental process of children and adolescents (Miller, 2015). Through the quantitative and qualitative data analysis, it was determined that spirituality was evident in the lives of the adolescents that participated in the study. The relationship between peer victimization and spirituality was investigated to determine if there were associations between the two variables. The descriptive data for the subscales of Daily Spiritual Experience, Forgiveness, and Spiritual and Religious Coping for Spirituality supported the idea that spirituality is a distinct part of an adolescent's spiritual foundation. The quantitative data indicated that 91% exercised the construct of forgiveness, while 87% looked to God for strength, support, and guidance and worked with God as a partner at least somewhat.

The qualitative portion of the study allowed for a deeper examination of the thinking of adolescents about spirituality and peer victimization. The data analysis of the qualitative portion informed the research question, "How does an adolescent's spirituality help him with his ability to deal with peer victimization?" The interviews provided evidence that aligned with the hypothesis that spirituality helps adolescents deal with peer victimization experiences. The qualitative findings demonstrated the ways by which adolescents used their spiritual foundation to either deal or abstain from bullying. The mixed methods approach established the framework that addressed the research questions under investigation. The interpretation of the data and its relevancy will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The contents of this chapter provide a summary of the research that addressed the topic of peer victimization and spirituality among adolescents. The previous chapter provided findings from quantitative and qualitative data, which are discussed and interpreted in this chapter. This chapter includes a summary of the study, a discussion of major findings, implications for practice, recommendations for future research and conclusion.

The implications of violence have become a major problem especially on school campuses within the United States and globally. Due to violent acts and forms of bullying, adolescents experience the devastating effects of peer victimization such as depression, anxiety, and suicide, which can carry over into adulthood. The consequences of peer victimization can cause an individual to continue the cycle of victimization, which has disturbing effects on our nation and world. Research asserts that bullying not only impacts the victim but also the person that is witnessing or performing the act of bullying (Flannery & Wester, 2004). Spirituality has become a relevant topic of discussion that may serve as a coping mechanism for dealing with stressful situations such as bullying.

The following research questions were addressed in this study to help understand the topic of spirituality and peer victimization:

1. What are the bullying experiences that adolescents encounter and in what conditions (e.g., in what places, times, or for what reasons) adolescents are more likely to experience bullying?
2. What are the spiritual perspectives, practices, and experiences contribute to an adolescent's spirituality and coping abilities for challenging situations?

3. How does an adolescent's spirituality help them with their ability to deal with incidences of peer victimization according to their perspectives?

This study used a mixed methods methodology, which consisted of 40 participants, aged 11 to 17 years. The qualitative portion entailed five interviews of volunteer participants to gain a deeper understanding of peer victimization and spirituality among adolescents. The quantitative data collection of the research study was derived from the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness and Spirituality (BMMRS) instrument (Fetzer Institute on Aging Working Group, 2003) and Swearer Bullying Survey (Swearer, 2016). The Brief Multidimensional Measure for Religiousness and Spirituality (BMMRS) instrument (Fetzer Institute on Aging Working Group, 2003) was used to explore spiritual perspectives, practices, and experiences of adolescents. The BMMRS consisted of 11 subscales, which comprised of multiple questions with Likert scale responses. The Swearer Bullying Survey (Swearer, 2016) was used to gain knowledge of victimization experiences, which included subscales of being bullied, witnessing bullying and bullying others.

Findings for Research Question 1

Bullying is a major problem in the lives of adolescents, which requires interventions to help eliminate the concomitant problem of victimization. The phenomenon of bullying reveals that three out of four adolescents in this Christian congregation have experienced some form of victimization by being bullied, witnessing bullying or bullying others. Over half of these incidences have occurred in the locker room, restroom or hallway on school campuses, whereas one third has happened online or via text. The emotions that adolescents express varied; over half felt bad or sad when they witnessed bullying or were bullied by others. Being different due

to learning abilities, race, gender or religious affiliation are reasons adolescents believe they are bullied, witness bullying or bully others.

The bullying experience from the standpoint of being bullied, witnessing bullying or bullying others can have lasting impacts that carry over into adulthood (Meltzer, Vostanis, Bebbington, & Dennis, 2011; Miller, 2012;). When discussing the research topic with a coworker, the coworker became very emotional and cried when reflecting on an incident of bullying that occurred to her when she was an adolescent. She commented that at 50 years old, she still gets emotional when thinking about her experience of being bullied as an adolescent. The ramifications of bullying can affect the well-being of an individual.

Bullying during school is a common occurrence among children and adolescents. It is reported that 160,000 students are absent from school daily, due to fear of being bullied (Liepe-Levinson & Levinson, 2005). This is a major concern primarily because two out of five adolescents report having experienced bullying during school hours. School should be the place where adolescents learn to become productive citizens and a place of refuge, but unfortunately, it has become a place of victimization for many youths (Corradini, 1999). Data indicates that adolescents experience bullying in a variety of areas on school campuses, where the bullying is not visible to staff (Levine & Tamburrino, 2014). Students reported that more supervision is needed to mitigate victimization experiences in areas prone to bullying such as hallways (San Antonio & Salzfass, 2007). Adolescents want to feel safe; more should be done to help eliminate the problem of victimization on school campuses. This study supports previous findings on the frequency of bullying and the conditions in which it is experienced.

Embracing the diversity of adolescents within our schools and society is also crucial to addressing the issue of bullying among adolescents (San Antonio & Salzfass, 2007). The

majority of participants reported experiencing some form of bullying due to being different. When adolescents are ostracized because they are different or made fun of, it leads to negative impacts within our schools and society. Research shows a direct link between bullying and school shootings (Duplechain et al., 2014); profiles drawn about school shooters indicate that 71% have been bullied (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2001). The data highlight the importance of addressing peer victimization and violence on school campuses to ensure the safety of all students but also all personnel.

Bullying is recognized as a subset of peer victimization that is intentional, chronic and characterized by an imbalance of power between victim and aggressor (Olweus, 1993). When discussing the bullying experience, we not only have to consider the victim but also adolescents that have witnessed bullying or have bullied others. Exposure to violence either by being a victim or witnessing the act are related to emotional and behavior problems, such as stress, anxiety, anger, depression and aggressive behaviors (Flannery, Wester, & Singer, 2004; Nazir & Nesheen, 2015; Nishina & Juvonen, 2005). The qualitative data supports the quantitative findings about the type of emotions that adolescents feel when witnessing bullying by giving various examples of adolescent's genuine experiences from their perspective. Participant 5 was a high school senior that was passionate and grounded in her faith. She attended the Youth Ministry consistently and actively participated in her high school life through extracurricular activities. It was revealed through the interview that she would like to pursue a career in social work to help others, especially individuals viewed as different. Due to her convictions and faith, seeing another person being treated unfairly, stirred emotions of anger and sadness in her. These emotions are typical of adolescents that experience some form of bullying, which can lead to

anxiety, depression and aggressive behavior. The response from Participant 5 is an authentic example of the victimization experience.

Participant 5 stated that she felt angry and sad when she witnessed a bullying incident, “It made me angry and then it made me sad too because he had no clue. I’m sure that wasn’t the first time someone was secretly doing that because he loves to dance and he does it all the time. That’s just the first time I witnessed that happening to him. It made me angry and sad.” When considering interventions aimed at decreasing the prevalence of bullying, it is imperative to look at the total bullying experience to bring resolution to the problem, while validating the feelings that adolescents feel when they experience any form of bullying.

Findings for Research Question 2

Adolescence is a challenging stage of development, where coping strategies are essential when navigating through difficult life circumstances. Spiritual practices such as forgiveness, private religious practices, and religious-spiritual coping are mechanisms that adolescents use when dealing with challenging situations. The adoption of a global perspective on spirituality, and the encouragement of family, and church congregations support spiritual coping abilities among adolescents. The outcomes of spiritual perspectives, practices, and experiences established through the research study indicate a spiritual framework that fosters spiritual coping abilities among the participants.

Findings from Raftopoulos and Bates (2011) indicate that spirituality is a construct that helps children and adolescents cope with difficult circumstances. The data collected showed that two of the participants in this study showed a global perspective. The global perspective aligned with the literature review reported that adolescents from diverse backgrounds have similar philosophies about the importance of connecting with a higher power to integrate spirituality in

their lives (King, Clardy, & Ramos, 2014). One of the major themes of this study “recognizing and acknowledging that adolescents embrace different religious worlds” revealed the compassionate hearts of the participants. Participant 1 and 3 were middle school students that demonstrated a social consciousness that is typical of adolescents. It was interesting to see their acceptance and compassion for others even when they meet someone who is different from them. This type of ideology is needed in our society to promote love, peace and social justice. The Bible tells us in Mark 12:31 to love your neighbor as yourself. The participants understand the simplistic truths of the Bible, which is a blueprint for the way each person should live his life. The participant responses supported the concept of equality, that is, that everyone should be treated equally, regardless of his background.

Participant 1 stated, “I believe in Christianity and kindness, but other people might think of Hinduism or stuff like that,” and Participant 3 shared that others may believe in different types of God. The outlook of acceptance and compassion for differences is needed to bring awareness to issues of diversity in our schools and society. The participants reported experiencing bullying due to being different, so this ideology of acceptance is essential to promoting tolerance and tearing down preconceived notions of others. The participants’ responses gave great insight into how global spiritual perspectives lead to people being more compassionate towards those with different beliefs.

Spiritual practices such as reading the Bible, praying, meditating, saying grace before meals and watching or listening to religious programs were associated with the spiritual practice of forgiveness. Not only is forgiveness a spiritual practice, but it is also a positive psychological concept, that is defined as: “the reduction in vengeful and angry thoughts, feelings and motives that may be accompanied by an increase in some form of positive thoughts, feelings and motives

towards the offending person” (Wade, Hoyt, Kidwell, & Worthington, 2004, p. 154). It was enlightening to find that over half of the participants know that God forgives them.

The participants had a different view of God compared to the perception the researcher had as an adolescent. The researcher perceived God as an authoritarian figure that looked down from heaven and judged people according to whether they were good or according to the work they performed. The participants appear to have a clear understanding of forgiveness and of what it means to have a true relationship with God. The Bible states that, “for all have sinned and fell short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23. NIV). The Bible also states:

Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law because by the works of the law, no one will be justified.

(Galatians 2:16, NIV)

The qualitative data of the research study for forgiveness support the quantitative data. When the participants were asked if they would forgive a bully, all participants replied yes. The outcomes from both forms of data collection supported the existence of forgiveness as a viable spiritual practice to use when coping with difficult situations. Family support also contributed to the spiritual practices and experiences of an adolescent. The literature review highlights the importance of parental support when nurturing the spiritual development of an adolescent (Miller, 2015). Religious support was relevant to dealing with difficult circumstances; the more support and encouragement the participants felt from the congregation, the more they were able to utilize coping abilities in stressful situations. Family and congregational support were particularly important for adolescents as they navigated through the spiritual development process to establish coping mechanisms that lead to resilience in their lives.

The qualitative data gave a clear understanding of the importance of family support in the development of spirituality. Although adolescence is a stage when peer relationships are an important component of an adolescent's life, in this study, parental influence was also found to occupy an important place. The five participants all emphasized the importance of family support in their lives. Spirituality is inherent from birth, and when fostered during childhood and adolescence, it enables a connection with a higher power, which, in turn, promotes compassion for others within our schools and society (Miller, 2015). The participants shared various aspects of parental support and encouragement in building spirituality in their lives. Participant 2 shared that his mother encouraged him to watch religious YouTube videos of pastors preaching while Participant 1 stated that his mother prayed with him and that, through the prayer, he accepted Christ into his heart. It was evident from the interviews that parents played an important role in fostering spirituality in the participants.

Findings for Research Question 3

Spiritual practices such as reading the Bible, forgiveness, spiritual meaning, prayer, meditation, congregational support, and church attendance contribute to the participants' spiritual perspectives. An adolescent's overall religious and spiritual self-ranking is essential to developing coping strategies, where spiritual practices and experiences play a major role. When adolescents feel that their life has meaning and purpose, they build the resilience to face difficult times (Raftopoulos & Bates, 2011).

Research supports the ideology that forgiveness is a viable means of helping adolescents deal with stressful situations (Van Dyke & Elias, 2007; Van Rensburg & Raubenheimer, 2015). Religious and spiritual coping was significantly and positively correlated with the spiritual practice of forgiveness. The strong correlation indicated that the participants' use of forgiveness

of others helped them cope with negative experiences, such as victimization. Forgiveness allows adolescents to release the feelings of victimization, which may cause a person to feel angry or sad, and, in turn, leads to depression, anxiety, and suicidal behaviors. The qualitative data indicated that Participant 5 felt angry and sad when she witnessed a peer being bullied. She also stated that she would forgive someone that bullied others. Both the correlations calculated from the quantitative data and the qualitative interview data for the spiritual practice of forgiveness indicated that forgiveness is a protective factor for resilience among adolescents. In a quantitative study of Salvadoran high-risk youth, religious coping was found to be an indirect protective factor for coping with violence, although to a lesser extent than spirituality (Salas-Wright et al., 2013). The positive associations among spirituality subscales suggest that adolescents possess relevant spiritual practices and experiences, such as forgiveness, that enhance coping abilities when confronted with difficult or stressful situations, which they can use to deal with peer victimization. The attribute of forgiveness was also evident when the researcher observed the youth pastor deliver an interactive lesson on forgiveness. This supports the importance of congregational and church attendance for youth to build resilience in coping with difficult situations.

Religious and Spiritual Coping was also strongly correlated with Religious Support. The data showed the importance of congregation members in serving as mentors and role models for adolescents. It is important that adolescents know that they can depend on adults to help them navigate through their spiritual development. Research indicates that, in addition to the family, church congregations support the spiritual development and growth of adolescents (Kim & Esquivel, 2011). Family and the religious community support are also protective factors for

building resilience in adolescents (Kim & Esquivel, 2011). The more adolescents feel supported by the family and their congregations, the greater their coping abilities and resilience.

Implications for Practice

The data collection of the research study provided relevant findings that add to the body of knowledge in the field of spirituality and peer victimization among adolescents. The findings could provide parents, educators, and district staff with the needed data to help address peer victimization in a meaningful manner. Development of assessments that address the types of, locations of, reasons and responses for peer victimization are needed to gather current and relevant data that help solve the problem of peer victimization among adolescents.

The literature is limited, but research conducted to date has provided data to substantiate the importance of spirituality in the lives of adolescents. Spirituality is recognized as a protective factor that helps adolescents navigate difficult situations. The spiritual practice of forgiveness has gained more attention as an immediate strategy to help people that have experienced victimization.

Data about forgiveness as a spiritual practice could add to the body of knowledge. Research is now emerging, which asserts that forgiveness is a coping strategy that could potentially help adolescents cope with peer victimization (Wade et al., 2014). Previous research models contend that “Adolescents who reported high levels of forgiveness were more likely to use conflict resolution and advice and support-seeking strategies and less likely to endorse revenge-seeking strategies in response to bullying” (Wade et al, 2014, p. 154). The data from this study showed a large percent (91%) of participants reported they utilized the spiritual construct of forgiveness. The trait of forgiveness needs to be nurtured at an early age to build resilience in adolescents that can help them navigate difficult situations (Mary & Patra, 2015).

Forgiveness used in school settings to promote harmony on school campuses could lead to lower incidences of anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation among adolescents (Van Rensburg & Raubenheimer, 2015).

Limitations of Study

Although the findings added valuable data to the existing body of research, there were some limitations to the current study. First, participants were from faith-based church environments. Recruiting participants from a public setting would have provided data about the spiritual perspectives of adolescents from a variety of settings, outside of the church environment. This would have increased the generalizability of the study and would have led to a sample, which is more representative of a public school student population. The small sample size of 40 participants hindered rigor of data analysis. A measure for depression was not used to determine correlations among the spirituality subscales and the adolescents' well-being. A scale for depression would add validity to future studies on the topic of spirituality of adolescents, particularly of adolescents that consider themselves as religious or spiritual.

Future Research

Future research could incorporate a scale on religious coping in the survey instrument that would allow specific data related to the exact sources of coping to be collected. The Religious Coping Questionnaire (RCOPE) reflects positive and negative religious strategies and would thus be a feasible measure that could be used to determine coping mechanisms of adolescents (Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000). A depression scale could also be added to the survey to gather data about the emotions that adolescents feel when they experience peer victimization.

Recommendations

To intervene on behalf of adolescents, staff and school personnel must be aware of the frequent locations of bullying experiences, such as locker rooms, hallways, and restrooms. The findings show that 41% of bullying occurred at school, whereas 50% of participants reported experiencing bullying in the locker room, restroom or hallway. Relevant training and additional staffing are needed to ensure the safety of adolescents on school campuses.

Forgiveness is a plausible coping strategy that helps adolescents deal with peer victimization. Although more research is needed to gauge the specific impact of forgiveness, based on the research that has been carried out as part of this study and on the literature review, forgiveness has potential beneficial effects and could be incorporated into peer mediation and restorative practices by teachers and administrators. Curriculum development integrating the teaching of forgiveness would also address the social-emotional needs of adolescents. More awareness and training in the educational system about the benefits of spiritual attributes, such as forgiveness, would be a great asset to our children.

Many countries understand the importance of developing a spiritual foundation in adolescents. Australia and Korea have taken steps to ensure that the whole child is considered when providing an educational framework for students. It is hoped that the salient information provided in this study will encourage stakeholders of the education system to help and allow students to exercise their innate disposition to acquire and adhere to a spiritual base. Allowing adolescents to utilize and apply spirituality within an academic environment could have a lasting positive impact on our society for generations to come.

Guiding youth through the crucial stage of adolescence can have a lasting impact on the lives of adolescents. It has been theorized that spiritual development in adolescents is a key

component of development for adolescents. When young people are given the opportunity to connect with a higher power, the anxiety that they feel is lessened and thus peace is promoted. Research asserts that children are innately spiritual and that denying them the freedom to exhibit and practice their spirituality can have devastating effects on their lives. When the youth has a spiritual foundation, they are less likely to experience depression, experiment with drugs and other high-risk activities that can have damaging impacts on their lives.

Spirituality in adolescence provides a balance that promotes resiliency and coping strategies that can propel adolescents into a life of tranquility and purpose. The biblical character of David suggests that a strong spiritual foundation provides confidence, assurance, and strength that can lead to a winning attitude. The lack of spirituality leaves young people vulnerable to a life of confusion and insecurity. On the other hand, when adolescents have spirituality in their lives, they are more balanced and less likely to experience unstable emotions. Insecurities are the catalyst for peer victimization and other violent acts within our society. Empowering the youth, so they connect with a higher power can act as a tool to help curtail the violent acts that are prevalent in our society and the world. As guardians to our youth, it is imperative that teachers give children and young people the opportunity to exercise their spirituality. They must be taught and encouraged to move into their spiritual realm of being. Proverbs, which is known as the book of wisdom in the Bible, states, “train up the way of a child, and when they are older, they will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6, NIV).

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Appendix A

National Institute of Health Certificate



Appendix B

IRB Approval

On May 05, 2017 @ 06:14 am Catherine Webb wrote:

Ticket closed: Approved

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY IRVINE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PROTOCOL
REVIEW

IRB Protocol Number: 3541

IRB Approval Date: 05/05/2017

Ms. Rogers,

Congratulations! Your research proposal has been approved by Concordia University-Irvine's IRB. Please see your approval letter attached. Work on the research indicated within the initial e-mail may begin. This approval is for a period of one year from the date of this e-mail correspondence and will require continuation approval if the research project extends beyond a year.

If you make significant changes to the protocol during the approval period, you must submit a revised proposal to CUI's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Please write your IRB # and "MAED IRB Application Addendum in the subject line of any future correspondence. Please also note: Per IRB regulations, all data must be kept for 3 years, then destroyed thereafter. If you have any questions regarding the IRB's decision, please contact me by replying to this e-mail or by phone at 949-214-3598.

Kind Regards,
Catherine Webb Ed.D.
Ed.D. IRB Reviewer

!

Appendix C

Bullying Survey Permission

On Apr 15, 2017, at 5:11 PM, Susan M Swearer <sswearernapolitano1@unl.edu> wrote:

Dear Vonda,

Thanks for reaching out! Your research study sounds really interesting. Yes, you have my permission to use the Bully Survey in your dissertation. My GA, Ana, will email you the most current version. Ana, please email Vonda the pdf of the Bully Study-Student Version.

Best, Sue

Susan M. Swearer, Ph.D., LP
Willia Cather Professor of Educational Psychology
School Psychology Program
University of Nebraska – Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68588-0345
402-472-1741
sswearer@unl.edu

Director, Empowerment Initiative: [@Empowerment_UNL](https://twitter.com/Empowerment_UNL); <http://empowerment.unl.edu>
Co-Director, Bullying Research Network: [@Bully_Research](https://twitter.com/Bully_Research); <http://brnet.unl.edu>
Chair, Research Advisory Board: [@DrSueSwearer](https://twitter.com/DrSueSwearer); www.bornthisway.foundation

Appendix D

Letter of Informed Consent

PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Parent,

I will be conducting a study to determine if a teenager's spiritual beliefs or background help them to deal with bullying or enables them to not to bullying other students. I have been a partner with New Venture Christian Fellowship for over 20 years. My first year of teaching was at New Venture Christian School, so the students at New Venture have a very special place in the heart, as do all students. Currently, I teach 6th Grade Math and Science with Oceanside Unified School District. I have the heart for adolescents because I see first hand the challenges that they encounter. The study that I am conducting is a part of my dissertation and in the completion of my doctoral degree at Concordia University Irvine, CA.

I am writing to ask permission for your child to participate in the study along with using the data that I collect from your child during this process. Participation in this study involves answering a questionnaire of about 40 questions related to spirituality and bullying. This information gained from this study could add to the importance of allowing students to exercise their spiritual beliefs within a learning environment to deal with challenging situations.

Only Dr. Blanca Quiroz, my university supervisor and I will have access to your child's identity and to information that can be associated with your child's identity. The data and documentation will be destroyed by December 2018.

Use of data from your child is voluntary. You may contact me at any time regarding your child's participation. My phone number is 951-587-1709, and my email is rogersvonda@ymail.com

Sincerely,

Vonda Rogers

Educational Leadership Doctoral Candidate

Concordia University Irvine

Please check appropriate box below and sign the form:

I give permission for my child's data to be used in this study. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form. I have read this form and understand it.

I do not give permission for my child's data to be included in this project.

Student's Name: _____

Signature of Parents/Guardian: _____

Printed Name of Parents/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E

Survey Instrument

Bullying and Spirituality Survey

Please answer all questions truthfully and honestly. The survey is anonymous so no one will know your responses to the questions. Please answer all questions that apply and complete the last question to receive your "In and Out" gift card. Thank you for taking the survey!!

1. Have you ever been bullied? (If your answer is No, go to question 11).

Yes

No

2. If yes, how often have you been bullied?

One or more times a day

One or more times a week

One or more times a month

3. Where have you been bullied? (Check all that apply)

Locker room

Before school

During school

After school

Online/texting

Hallway

Restroom

Other

4. If you checked online/texting, please explain. (Check all that apply)

Facebook

Instagram

Twitter

Online Gaming

Email

Texting

Snapchat

Other

5. How did you get bullied?

Called me names

Made fun of me

Said they will do bad things to me

Played jokes on me

Wouldn't let me be a part of their group

Broke my things

Attacked me

Nobody would talk to me

Wrote bad things about me

Said mean things or made things up online about me (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)

6. Why do you think you were bullied?

they think I look fat

I get good grades

the clothes I wear

the color of my skin

the country I'm from

I am different

my religious beliefs

they say I'm gay

the way I talk

I act too much like a boy

I act too much like a girl

7. Were you able to protect yourself from bullying?

Yes

No

8. If yes, what did you do?

told someone

cried

prayed for them

avoided the place

nothing

other

9. Did your parents know about the bullying that happened to you?

Yes

No

I don't know

10. Is bullying a problem in your school?

Yes

No

11. Did you ever see a student other than yourself who was bullied? (If your answer is No, go to question 19).

Yes

No

12. If yes, how often did you see these student being bullied?

one or more times a day

one or more times a week

one or more times a month

13. Where was the student bullied?

locker room

online/texting

before school

during school

after school

other

14. If you checked online/texting, please check all that apply.

Facebook
 Instagram
 Twitter
 Online Gaming
 IMing
 Snapchat
 Texting
 Email
 Other social media

15. How did this student get bullied?

Called him/her names
 Made fun of him/her
 Played jokes on him/her
 Broke his/her things
 Attacked him/her
 Nobody would talk to him/her
 Wrote bad things about him/her
 Said mean things behind his/her back
 Got pushed or shoved
 Wrote mean things or made up things online about him/her (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)

16. How did seeing the bullying affect you?

Made me feel sick
 I couldn't make friends
 Made me feel bad or sad
 Made it difficult for me to learn
 I didn't come to school
 I had problems with my family
 Other

17. Why do you think this student was bullied? (Check all that apply)

Because:
 (s)he is fat
 (s)he is in special education
 (s)he gets good grades
 the clothes (s)he wears
 the color of his/her skin
 the country (s)he is from
 she is different
 his/her religion
 his/her family is poor
 (s)he is gay
 the way (s)he talks
 (s)he acts too much like a boy
 (s)he acts too much like a girl
 other

18. Was the student able to protect him/herself from the bullying?

Yes

No

19. Have you ever bullied anyone? (If your answer is No, go to question 27).

Yes

No

20. If yes, how often did you bully this person? (Check one)

one or more times a day

one or more times a week

one or more times a month

21. Where did you bully him or her? (Check all that apply)

locker room

before school

during school

after school

online/text

22. If you checked online/texting, please explain. (Check all that apply)

Facebook

Instagram

Online Gaming

Snapchat

IMing

Texting

Email

Other social media

23. How did you bully this person?

Called him or her names

Made fun of him/her

Said I will do bad things to him/her

Played jokes on him/her

Wouldn't let him/her be a part of my group

Broke his/her things

Attacked him/her

Wrote bad things about him/her

Said mean things behind his/her back

Pushed or shoved him/her

Wrote mean things or made things up online about him/her (i.e, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)

24. How much was the bullying you did a problem for you?

Made me feel sick

I couldn't make friends

Made me feel bad and sad

Made it difficult for me to learn

I didn't come to school

I had problems with my family

Other

25. Why did you bully this person? (Check all that apply)

(s)he is fat
 (s)he gets good grades
 the clothes (s)he wears
 the color of his/her skin
 the country he/she is from
 (s)he is different
 his/her religion
 his/her family is poor
 (s)he is in special education
 (s)he is gay
 the way (s)he talks
 (s)he acts too much like a boy
 (s)he acts too much like a girl
 other

26. Was the student able to protect him/herself from the bullying?

Yes

No

27. I feel God's presence.

Many times a day

Everyday

Most days

Some days

Once in a while

Never or almost never

28. I find strength and comfort in my religion

Many times a day

Every day

Most days

Some days

Once in a while

Never or almost never

29. I feel deep inner peace or harmony

Many times a day

Every day

Most days

Some days

Once in a while

Never or almost never

30. I desire to be closer to or in union with God

Many times a day

Every day

Most days

Some days

Once in a while

Never or almost never

31. I feel God's love for me, directly or through others

Many times a day

Every day

Most days

Some days

Once in a while

Never or almost never

32. I believe in a God who watches over me.

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

33. I feel a deep sense of responsibility or reducing pain and suffering in the world

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

34. I have forgiven myself for things that I have done wrong.

Always or almost always

Often

Seldom

Never

35. I have forgiven those who have hurt me.

Always or almost always

Often

Seldom

Never

36. I know that God forgives me.

Always or almost always

Often

Seldom

Never

37. How often you pray privately in places other than at church or synagogue?

More than once a day

Once a day

A few times a week

Once a week

A few times a month

Once a month

Less than once a month

Never

38. Within your religious or spiritual tradition, how often do you mediate?

More than once a day

Once a day

A few times a week

Once a week

A few times a month

Once a month

Less than once a month

Never

39. How often do you watch or listen to religious programs on TV or radio?

More than once a day

Once a day

A few times a week

Once a week

A few times a month

Once a month

Less than once a month

Never

40. How often do you read the Bible or other religious material?

More than one a day

Once a day

A few times a week

Once a week

A few times a month

Once a month

Less than once a month

Never

41. How often are prayers or grace said before or after meals in your home?

At all meals

Once a day

At least once a week

Only on special occasions

Less than once a month

Never

42. Think about how you try to understand and deal with major problems in your life. To what extent is each of the following involved in the way you cope?

I think about how my life is part of a larger spiritual force.

A great deal

Quite a bit

Somewhat

Not at all

43. I work together with God as partners.

A great deal

Quite a bit

Somewhat

Not at all

44. I look to God for strength, support, and guidance.

A great deal

Quite a bit

Somewhat

45. I feel God is punishing me for my sins or lack of spirituality.

A great deal

Quite a bit

Somewhat

Not at all

46. I wonder if God has abandoned me

A great deal

Quite a bit

Somewhat

Not at all

47. I try to make sense of the situation and decide what to do without relying on God.

A great deal

Quite a bit

Somewhat

Not at all

48. To what extent is your religion involved in understanding or dealing with stressful situations in any way?

Very involved

Somewhat involved

Not very involved

Not involved at all

49. If you were sick, how much would the people at your church help you out?

A great deal

Some

A little

None

50. If you had a problem or were faced with a difficult situation, how much comfort would the people at your church be willing to give you?

A great deal

Some

A little

None

51. How often do the people in your church make too many demands on you?

Very often

Fairly often

Once in a while

Never

52. How often are the people in your church critical of you and the things that you do?

Very often

Fairly often

Once in a while

Never

53. Did you ever have a religious or spiritual experience that changed your life?

No

Yes

54. Have you ever had a significant gain in your faith?

Yes

No

55. Have you ever had a significant loss in your faith?

Yes

No

56. I try hard to carry my religious and spiritual beliefs over into other areas in my life.

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

57. In an average week, how many hours do you spend in activities on behalf of your church or activities that you do for religious or spiritual reasons?

1 hour

2 hours

3 hours

4 hours

5 hours

58. How often do you go to religious services?

More than once a week

Every week or more often

Once or twice a month

Every month or so

Once or twice a year

Never

59. Besides religious services, how often do you take part in other activities at a place of worship?

More than once a week

Every week or more often

Once or twice a month

Every month or so

Once or twice a year

Never

60. To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?

Very religious

Moderately religious

Slightly religious

Not religious

61. To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?

Very spiritual

Moderately spiritual

Slightly spiritual

Not spiritual at all

62. The events in my life unfold according to a divine or greater purpose plan.

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

63. I have a sense of mission or calling in my life.

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

64. What is your gender?

Female/Girl

Male/Boy

65. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Choose only one.)

Latino/Hispanic

Black/African American

White/Caucasian

Native American

Biracial

Asian

Middle Eastern

Another race or ethnicity (please specify)

66. If you have been bullied, are you still being bullied?

Yes

No

67. What is your current grade?

6th grade

7th grade

8th grade

9th grade

10th grade

11th grade

12th grade

68. How well do you do in your schoolwork? On your last report card, if you think of all your subjects, what did you get (Check one)

mostly A's

mostly B's

mostly C's

mostly D's

A's and B's

B's and C's

C's and D's

D's and lower

69. I read this survey carefully.

Yes

No

70. Thank you for taking the survey. The survey is anonymous, so in order to receive your \$5.00 In and Out Hamburger gift card, please type in the name of a colored sports team. This is how you will be identified to get your gift card. Examples: Yellow Dolphins, Green Padres, Purple Ducks.

Appendix F

Interview Instrument

1. What helps you to be kind to others?
2. Do you know what spirituality is?
3. What activities do you participate in that you believe help you grow in your spirituality?
4. Do you watch or listen to religious programs? If so what types of programs are they?
5. Have you ever been bullied? If so, how did you handle it?
6. Have you ever been bullied because you are a Christian?
7. Have you ever witnessed someone being bullied? If so what did you do?
8. Do you think you could forgive bullies?
9. Why would you forgive someone that bullied you?
10. What are some specific reasons why you do not bully others?
11. Have you ever had a significant gain in your faith? If so can you elaborate?
12. How would you rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 in regards to having a strong relationship and consistent dialogue with God? What are some reasons for your ranking?