Following up Previously Bullied Pupils: How can Schools Ensure a High-Quality, Systematic Approach?

Kjersti Balle Tharaldsen*

University of Stavanger, Stavanger, Norway

Abstract

Pupils exposed to bullying may experience severe negative consequences, including reduced academic performance and development of mental health problems. Little is known about effective interventions to prevent and/or reduce such consequences. This study explores how schools can follow up previously bullied pupils. Four focus groups were conducted. In three, informants were national experts representing the school system, the health system, attorneys, researchers, and user organizations in Norway ($n = 31$). A focus group interview with a primary and lower secondary school in southwest Norway ($n = 9$) was also carried out. Data were analyzed via content analysis. Findings suggest that school-based psychosocial resource groups can ensure that follow-up work after bullying is systematic and of high quality. Findings provide new knowledge on how schools can organize follow-up work and suggest support systems for schools to provide high-quality follow-up work. Further research on organizing follow-up work and the specific content of follow-up work is needed.

Introduction

Bullying is defined as repeated aggressive behavior involving an imbalance of power, either actual or perceived, between the one - or those - exposed to bullying and the one who bullies, those who bully respectively (Olweus, 1993). The behavior can be physical, verbal, or digitally communicated and, hence, direct and/or indirect. Bullying mainly involves three categories of individuals: the one who is being bullied, the one (or ones) that bully, and the bystanders. All three are equally important to follow up after the bullying is stopped. However, as this study focus specifically on previously bullied pupils only this group is represented here. Although stopping, handling, and preventing bullying has been high on the Norwegian government's agenda, recent national reports indicate that bullying is relatively high. In 2018, 6.1% of Norwegian pupils from the 5th grade (10–11 years old) through upper secondary school reported being bullied in school at least two to three times each month (Wendelborg, 2019). Also, 37.1% reported that none of the adults in school knew about the bullying, and 16.1% reported that the school was aware of the bullying but did not address it (Wendelborg, 2019). These numbers are especially disturbing considering the negative consequences that bullied children and adolescents may face.

Known consequences of bullying include reduced academic performance and development of mental health problems. Bullied children and adolescents experience negative consequences mainly in the following areas (Solberg, 2017): emotional difficulties (e.g., anxiety and depression; Reijntjes et al., 2010), psychosomatic problems (e.g., headaches; Gini et al., 2014), sleep difficulties (Van Geel et al., 2016), reduced self-esteem and self-confidence (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), and suicidal thoughts (Holt et al., 2015; Van Geel et al., 2014). Research further indi-

*Address for correspondence

Kjersti Balle Tharaldsen, Centre for Learning Environment and Behavioral Research in Education, P.B. 8600 Forus, 4036 Stavanger, Norway. E-mail: kjersti.b.tharaldsen@uis.no

cates that bullied children have twice the risk for developing depressive symptoms than children who are not bullied (Ttofi et al., 2011). Bullied pupils report higher levels of loneliness (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kowalski et al., 2014) and an increased risk for developing psychotic symptoms (Cunningham et al., 2016) and post-traumatic stress (Nielsen et al., 2015). Being bullied at school may lead to non-attendance (Havik et al., 2015), reduced competence (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2008), and weaker performance (Juvonen et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2014). Studies indicate that bullied pupils who also have a poor relationship with their teachers experience lower school satisfaction (Troop-Gordon & Kuntz, 2013). A research gap exists regarding interventions that can prevent and/or reduce the consequences of bullying. Research indicates that cognitive behavioral therapy has a positive effect; however, research on effective interventions for pupils bullied in the learning environment is absent (Bru & Hancock, 2017). This is a paradox considering that the school is a main arena for follow-up work after bullying (Breivik et al., 2017; Tharaldsen et al., 2017). The goal of following up previously bullied pupils is to re-socialize them in their learning environment and to ensure that they have a safe environment at school and thrive socially. Ensuring a safe learning environment for pupils is also statutory by law (Opplæringslova, 1998). Most Norwegian schools have established different groups of staff that are responsible for providing a good psychosocial learning environment for the pupils, including anti-bullying work. As it is the respective school leaders that are responsible for providing guidelines for how such teams are composed and how the members collaborate both internally at the school and externally with different support systems within the municipality, there are huge differences between the schools' teams or groups regarding choice of methods and allocation of resources in order to comply with the various guidelines. In continuance of this, a recent national study indicates that follow-up work is unsystematic and coincidental despite bullying's potential risk factors (Tharaldsen et al., 2017). The main consequences are that bullied pupils are not followed up long enough, the schools' administration and leaders do not acknowledge the bullying, and the school nurse is rarely involved in the follow-up work (Tharaldsen et al., 2017).[1]

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[1] 'Follow-up work after bullying' and 'follow-up work' are used interchangeably. Hence, if not otherwise explained 'follow-up work' indicates follow-up work after bullying.

The Role of Schools in the Implementation of Interventions

Schools are one of the most important settings for conducting interventions that promotes prevention and wellness (Greenberg et al., 2005). When addressing the gaps between research and practice it is important to understand capacity (Wandersman et al., 2008), which means paying close attention to the entire process of diffusion (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Both organizational capacity as well as support provided by outside parties are important (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). General organizational features, specific organizational practices and processes, and specific staffing considerations are all factors related to organizational capacity (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). These should be considered when developing and implementing interventions. Overall, implementation work consists of mainly three phases; the pre-adoption phase, the delivery phase, and the post-delivery phase (Greenberg et al., 2005). The pre-adoption phase is where key stakeholders are involved in order to select and implement interventions. The delivery phase involves careful monitoring of program delivery in order to provide the necessary support to carry out the intervention. In the post-delivery phase the intervention ought to be implemented more broadly in the school context, findings need to be disseminated, and the planning of a more long-term perspective for implementing the intervention should be addressed. However, a successful preventive intervention begins with assessment of needs and capabilities as well as targeting identified needs and how to utilize available resources (Greenberg et al., 2005). Furthermore, when planning an intervention there are four dimensions that are specifically of interest, namely the program model, the quality of delivery, the target audience, and participants' responsiveness (Greenberg et al., 2005). The program model involves the content (i.e. essential components), timing (i.e. frequency and duration), dosage (i.e. level of exposure), and nature of the intervention (i.e. that the intervention is socially valid and feasible). The quality of delivery includes the implementers degree of engagement, presentation style of and methods used for communicating the intervention's content as well as techniques introduced through the intervention. The target audience refers to the population the intervention is supposed to reach. Finally, the participants' responsiveness shows to the ways that participants perceive the intervention (i.e.

if participants like the intervention and participate actively).

It is crucial that an adequate support system for carrying out interventions are developed (Greenberg et al., 2005). In addition, certain contextual factors are essential to intervention implementation. Reason is that such factors may influence the delivery and effectiveness of the intervention. The external environment is one such factor, and for school-based programs relevant external factors are the classroom (i.e. teacher characteristics and classroom climate), the school building (i.e. logistical and administrative support), the school district (e.g. parents and school board members), as well as, the surrounding community (e.g. mental health care personnel) (Greenberg et al., 2005). These factors are of such significance that they can improve both social and emotional outcomes (Greenberg et al., 2005).

The Current Study

The target audience for follow-up work in this study are previously bullied pupils. Due to the lack of knowledge on interventions for this target audience it seems adequate to suggest that this work is in its' pre-adaptation phase. Identifying and targeting needs, mapping of available resources and the schools' organizational capacity seems therefore to be a fruitful starting point. The overall aim of this study is to explore how schools can facilitate follow-up work of high quality for previously bullied pupils. The research questions are as follows: How can bullied pupils be followed up at school? How can schools provide a systematic approach to such follow-up work? How can the work be allocated among school staff?

Method

Due to the knowledge gap on follow-up work after bullying an explorative research design was chosen. In order to tentatively obtain in-depth information on the topic interviews were seen as appropriate. Focus group interviews are adequate when the main objective of a study is to explore experiences aiming to develop a specific area of knowledge (Malterud, 2012) and are recommended when a sample's competence and opinions about a given topic will be explored (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Hence focus group interviews was the preferred approach in the

current study. The research questions were tentatively answered by interviewing an expert group including school and health care representatives and members of a well-functioning school-based resource group with experience in following up bullied pupils.

Sample

Expert Group

Three focus group interviews were conducted with a sample consisting of school employees, school owners, representatives from Educational Psychology Services (EPS), school nurses, representatives from municipality and specialist health care services, representatives from interest groups, researchers, and attorneys ($n = 31$). Each focus group was heterogenous, composed to achieve productive discussions considering the perspectives of various actors working with schools on follow-up work after bullying. The experts were recruited by snowball sampling. Through the researcher's national network within the school and health sector key persons were asked to suggest potential informants. These were contacted through e-mail and phone with a formal invitation to participate in the interviews. If they did not wish or were unable to attend, others were suggested and invited. The informants were located throughout Norway.

Resource Group

Through the researcher's network, contact with a school that offers systematic follow-up work after bullying was established. The school has approximately 250 pupils in primary and lower secondary classes, of which 40 have minorities who recently settled in Norway. The school is in southwest Norway. The school recruit pupils from a variety of social strata and cover all courses of study. As differences in pupil samples between Norwegian schools are relatively moderate (Marks, 2006) the current sample is considered to be relatively representative of Norwegian youth in general. The school's follow-up work after bullying is carried out by members of the school's resource group which was established in response to the respective municipality's focus on developing support systems at the school level. The overall aim of the group is to aid teachers and work toward a good psychosocial environment. According to the municipality's guidelines such groups should

have a minimum number of mandatory members, each with a specific area of responsibility; one multilingual coordinator (responsible for cases related to language education for minority pupils), one special education coordinator (responsible for cases related to special education needs), one social teacher (responsible for cases related to the psychosocial environment), the school nurse, and an EPS representative (responsible for connections with other support services in the municipality). Through the resource group the school principal is assured that the necessary competence to address various difficulties within the school's psychosocial environment is available at the school at all times. The school-based resource group had been in operation as described since 2015. In addition to the mandatory members of the resource group the current group consisted of the school's principal, the leader of the after school program (ASP), the school's social teacher, and one special education pedagogue. In addition, a representative from the municipality was present during the interview ($n = 9$).

Data Collection and Procedure

Semi-structured interview guides were developed for the interviews. The focus for the expert groups was experience with follow-up work after bullying and what should (and should not) be done to ensure good follow-up work. For the resource group, the main focus was how the group was composed, chains of responsibility, how group members share the workload when following up bullied pupils, and who carries out the various tasks. Extended focus groups were conducted with both groups (Berg et al., 2004). This procedure involved giving informants a short version of the interview guide approximately one week before the interview, asking the main questions to be discussed during the actual interview. This may increase the chance that informants share their opinions during the actual interview.

The focus groups with experts were carried out in 2016 at a conference hotel at the main airport in Norway. The location was chosen to make it easy for informants to meet with the interviewers. The interview lasted 2,5 hours. The interview with the resource group was carried out in 2017 on school grounds during work hours. The interview lasted 1,5 hour. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and recoded in order to obtain anonymity. All focus groups were conducted by two qualitative researchers experienced with interviews. No funding beyond covering costs regarding travel for the members of the expert group was provided. Although data was gathered in 2016 and 2017 it is considered valid. Reason is that the topic of the current study is still under development in Norway and little has been done systematically and on a national level.

Data Analyses

Data from each sample were analyzed with conventional content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) using NVivo Software 11. A member check was carried out (Miles et al., 2014) which entail as verification of the initial analyses as it gives informants an opportunity to respond to the researchers' data interpretation. This procedure increases the trustworthiness of the findings. For practical reasons, the member check was done by e-mail. None of the informants provided feedback that lead to changes in the initial analyses.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), and voluntary consent was gathered from the participants prior to data collection.

Results

Findings are presented below. To ensure transparency, the findings are supplemented by quotations. To maintain anonymity, the quotations are referred to by the service/organization or the position of the respective informants.

Expert Group

Findings from the expert groups were categorized into three main dimensions: preconditions, intervention components, and organization and responsibility.

Preconditions

The preconditions dimension represents what the informants argued to be important for providing high-quality follow-up work at school. The informants strongly agreed that school staff lack competence in

following up bullied pupils: '*There is little competence, especially regarding the harm that develops quickly (…) and regarding what causes the harm.*' (User representative) and '*These children are going back to the classroom, so we have to increase the teacher's competence.*' (School representative). Informants emphasized the need for increased competence regarding how to identify the need for follow-up work after bullying, knowledge regarding potential negative consequences and procedures for referral to health care services, and competence on how to re-socialize pupils in the learning environment: '*Focus is at school, in good cooperation, several agencies ought to be involved, and that is where this can be solved.*' (Attorney). The school was considered to be main arena for follow-up work, which should be carried out on an individual level and an organizational level. The informants argued that it is crucial to identify the need for follow-up work as early as possible, that the work must continue for a fairly long time (e.g., two to three years) and not end until the pupil expresses that s/he feels good. Respect was fundamental: '*Believe them and take them seriously.*' (Health representative). Interventions should always be documented and evaluated.

Intervention Components

The informants emphasized that one authoritative adult that the pupil trusts should carry out the follow-up work daily: '*One or perhaps two contact persons (…) who follow them for several years afterward (…). A safe base they can contact.*' (Researcher). This person should be responsible for the dialogue with parents. The initial follow-up work should consist of mapping the pupil and identifying necessary components based on the pupil's individual needs: '[We ought to continue] *to work with inclusion and interventions regarding (…) self-image.*' (School representative). The focus should be on how to re-socialize the pupil into the classroom and social skills training: '*It is all about social skills training for children (…), especially empathy. (…) Previously bullied pupils need to receive self-assertiveness training (…) Openness is a big key here. That you are taken seriously and are respected for your opinions.*' (Researcher). The teacher needs to ensure that the bullied pupil feels safe in the learning environment: '*It has a lot to do with class management. If you have a clear class management, it does something with the attitudes in the class.*' (Health representative).

Organization and Responsibility

The informants said that today's follow-up work is unsystematic. As the competence varies among school staff and no recommended systematic approach exists to perform follow-up work, it is also coincidental. The informants left no doubt that the school is the main arena for following up bullied pupils with the school's principal as responsible for the overall psychosocial environment at the school. Hence, the principal should be involved in follow-up work: '*It is the principal's responsibility.*' (User representative). The informants strongly agreed that teachers are responsible for identifying the need for follow-up work among their pupils. Thus, teachers are often viewed as responsible for performing follow-up work. The informants emphasized the need for teachers to receive support: '*The teacher must have a support system.*' (Health representative). Different actors at school and outside the school should complement and aid the teacher. School nurses, environmental therapists, social workers, and similar professionals were suggested to support the teacher. The informants strongly suggested establishing school-based psychosocial resource groups with these professionals as members: '*A resource team, knowledge at the school, is crucial.*' (User representative) and '*Get other competencies at the schools, not only on visits. As an active and integrated part of the school environment, that use problem solving and who cooperates with the principal.*' (Researcher). Organizing the follow-up work in such teams was suggested to ensure that the work is carried out systematically: '*I have much more faith in building a resource team at the school that can take care of bullying as well as all other sorts of tasks.*' (Researcher).

The Resource Group

The findings from the interview with the resource group were categorized into the two dimensions: organization and responsibility, and follow-up interventions.

Organization and Responsibility

The informants gave descriptions of how a resource group could be composed and tasks that could be of importance in promoting a safe psychosocial learning environment for the pupils. These were broad task descriptions. One reason for this is that the

resource group work similarly when following up all pupils regardless of the pupil's challenges. The current resource group was composed in accordance with the municipality's directives. In addition the school's principal, the ASP leader, and a special education pedagogue were members. The group meets twice a month during school hours, giving teachers the opportunity to meet with the group: '*We have undergone a change from random meetings between the social teacher, the former principal and one or two other staff members, to a tighter structure with meeting agendas, reports (. . .) and improved internal forms for the teachers.*' (Social teacher). The resource group offers a platform for the flow of information between school staff and school nurse: '*It is crucial in the follow-up work that we can involve the school nurse (. . .) and I trust their expertise.*' (School inspector).

The informants described initiating follow-up work. The first step is identifying the need for follow-up work by either the pupil's teacher or parents. Usually this need is based on a significant and unexpected reduction in the pupil's academic results or exclusion from the social environment at school: '*There are different levels of severity regarding follow-up work, but it is within the resource group that we can identify who* [is in need of follow-up work]*, where to turn, and if there is a need for long-term follow-up work. The specialist health care services have the competence to make that consideration.*' (Representative from the municipality). The teacher continues to follow the pupil and have close dialogue with the parents. The resource group meets once a year with all the school's teachers, where individual pupils are mapped and teachers become aware of the challenges with specific pupils and within the learning environment. This is a forum in which the need for follow-up work is detected.

After the need for follow-up work is identified, the teacher presents the case to the resource group, the group suggests interventions and decides the next steps. Each member of the resource group has his/her own competence and responsibility. The teachers are assisted based on the pupil's needs. Hence, support from the resource group may change based on each case's specific needs. To ensure that the group members continue to maintain their competences, the members participate in various networks outside the school and municipality, such as networks for social teachers and special education pedagogues. The resource group can invite external resources to help with follow-up work, including the municipality's school resource center, EPS representatives, and representatives from specialist health care services: '*I am here* [in the resource group] *every other week during the meetings (. . .). When new cases are referred to us or updates are necessary, I also speak with the pupil and map (. . .) how they experience their school emotionally (. . .). When unsure, I discuss the case with the group.*' (EPS representative).

Each intervention is documented and evaluated by various tools developed at the school, each with a different purpose. For example, one tool provides comprehensive information about a pupil's symptoms, development, personal characteristics, and upbringing and serves as a platform for the dialogue with parents, the school nurse, and the General practitioner if the pupil is referred to specialist health care services. Educational reports are developed if the pupil is referred to the EPS. School staff members also use logs to document and reveal patterns in the various cases.

Follow-up Interventions

When a need for follow-up work is identified the primary teacher establishes dialogue with the pupil and his/her parents: '*Regardless if it is one of us* [members of the resource group] *who identifies a need, the school nurse or parents that reach out (. . .) we initiate interventions right away.*' (Social teacher). The pupil can also have these conversations with a teacher or the school nurse. Then the teacher discusses the case with the resource group, where further interventions are decided: '*We* [members of the resource group] *talk with the primary teacher, the primary teacher talks with the pupil, and we suggest interventions that will be documented.*' (School inspector). If necessary, pupils are referred to special health care services.

To ensure that teachers are aware about ongoing cases, so-called living checklists are developed. These are partially anonymous lists in which the initials of pupils in need of special attention are written; these lists are accessible to all teachers, including substitute teachers: '*I have asked the teachers to write down regularly on a form, a form that is a "living checklist" where they can take out or add on pupils if necessary. (. . .) Regardless of what they are worried about (. . .) I want it on that list and the teachers are to have the list available (. . .) also to substitutes.*' (Primary teacher). If found necessary, an additional member of the school staff can participate in the learning environment of the previously bullied pupil. Another measure is to keep the pupil that bullied after

school hours until the bullied pupil is beyond the reach of the pupil who previously bullied him/her. The aim is to ensure that no negative incidents happen on the way home from school. This measure is always decided in agreement with parents: '*Recess on different time points in order to make it safe outside. We have also held the pupil* [that previously bullied] *back so that other pupils can walk home without fear. But that is in accordance with the parents.*' (Social teacher).

Information flow is crucial to ensure that school staff members are aware of the ongoing challenges in the learning environment. The staff may ask parents for release from their duty of confidentiality to discuss matters freely with the school nurse and other important parties in the case (e.g., external resources). The school can arrange a day of competence building at the beginning of each school year. The aim is to increase the staff's awareness regarding each pupil's potential challenges and necessary adaptations in the learning environment.

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to explore how schools can facilitate high-quality systematic follow-up work for bullied pupils. Main findings suggest certain organizational factors both on an individual level and between school staff and other parties in the environment.

Systematic Approach to Follow-up Work

Findings suggest that one way to ensure systematic follow-up after bullying is to organize the school's staff in psychosocial resource groups. Such groups may address challenges regarding the lack of a systematic approach to follow-up work, the necessary competence, and the ability to work with the school's psychosocial environment. Thus, the group's work could relate to both the psychosocial work on a general level and the follow-up work on a specific level. Some interventions require collaboration between school personnel and mental health service providers in the community, whereas others require the involvement of parents (Greenberg et al., 2005). This may be the case for follow-up interventions after bullying. An interdisciplinary resource group could improve cooperation between health care representatives and school staff, as well as other pedagogical services in the municipality. This may also ease the work regard-

ing when and how to refer a pupil to other services if necessary which again may increase the possibility of early intervention. Additionally, the resource group could support the teacher. This show to the previously mentioned factors at school-level which emphasize that principals, teachers, and staff need to collaborate adequately when implementing interventions (Greenberg et al., 2005). That principal support is important in school-based interventions has been argued elsewhere (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Kam et al., 2003). It is important that school staff have a supportive school environment including the sharing of common goals, open communication and exchange of ideas and problem-solving strategies, as well as, awareness regarding the intervention and its' possible implications (Greenberg et al., 2005). Following this, findings from this study further suggest that it is important to have clearly defined areas of responsibility among members of this group. Each staff member knowing what to do, and when, may ensure a systematic approach to the follow-up work. Implementation can either benefit from politics or not, meaning that social politics at school level is significant for institutionalizing new procedures and practices, as well as, supporting the infrastructure both regarding finances and administration (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). The findings presented above seem to support previous research suggesting that interdisciplinary cooperation between the school and the health care system can be improved for the betterment of pupils who have been bullied (Tharaldsen et al., 2017). However, there may be a need for support from the municipality to establish such school-based psychosocial resource groups. Furthermore, it may be expedient to have a support system in the municipality so that school staff members know where to seek help.

Ensuring High Quality

Findings suggest that to ensure high quality in follow-up work school staff members need to know what to do, when, and how. Therefore, competence building seem important. In line with findings from this study, such competence could entail knowledge regarding how to identify the need for follow-up work, possible negative consequences of bullying and risk factors regarding such consequences, and the content of adequate follow-up interventions aiming to re-socialize the previously bullied pupil in the learning environment. Different networks for the school staff, aiming to build on each other's experiences and knowledge,

may increase competence and, hence, the quality of follow-up work.

Intervention Content

There was a lack in concrete findings that could help understand the nature of follow-up work. This may mirror the lack regarding knowledge on effective follow-up interventions. Still, findings suggest that detecting a need for follow-up work after bullying as early as possible is important to reduce the risk for negative consequences. It seems important to identify the individual needs of the previously bullied pupil. Findings suggest that mapping the pupil may be one way to tailor an intervention and that one adult, possibly a teacher that the pupil trusts, could follow the pupil and his/her case. Bullying can reveal a fundamental need to trust peers and adults in the previously bullied pupil's environment. This is in line with stress theory (Lazarus, 2006) as the previously bullied pupil may still appraise his/her situation at school as threatening. Hence, trust seems to be an important element. Findings also suggest that it is fruitful to develop a plan for follow-up work, in which both the pupil and his/her parents could be involved. That factors at district level, such as involvement of school staff and administration as well as parents may influence prevention efforts in order to be successful is supported elsewhere (Greenberg et al., 2005). Therefore, it seems fair to suggest that the adult responsible for the follow-up work should establish and maintain a good relationship with the pupil and his/her parents. However, findings also suggest that the adult who carries out the follow-up work on an everyday basis may need support. Having an interdisciplinary school-based resource group, with proper support systems in the municipality, seem adequate. Such a group may provide important competences needed to tailor the follow-up work. As adequate support systems for interventions are crucial for its' success (Greenberg et al., 2005), it may be fruitful to ensure that support is provided both internally at school for teachers and the resource group, as well as, from external support systems in the municipality. Findings emphasize a need for documentation and evaluation of all interventions.

The findings also suggest that one way to identify the need for follow-up work may be to recognize that a previously bullied pupil is experiencing an unexpected reduction in academic performance. Hence, there seems to be a need to follow up the pupil both academically and socially. Regarding the pupil's

academic performance, the teacher could provide instructional support to the pupil which emphasizes how the teacher can implement learning activities to support both cognitive and academic development among pupils (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Hence, the teacher may use knowledge about the pupil and his/her situation to support and provide feedback to the pupil to improve or maintain the pupil's academic level.

According to the findings, facilitating an inclusive learning environment may be important to reach the overall goal of re-socialization. Adequate classroom management can create a safe environment for all pupils, including pupils who have been bullied. Research indicates that classroom organization influences academic and social outcomes (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). A positive classroom climate may influence interventions positively and peer relations should not be underestimated (Greenberg et al., 2005). Furthermore, having an engaged teacher with clear expectations of the pupils and efficient classroom routines is important (Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

It also seems important to provide emotional support in the learning environment. To achieve effective and adequate classroom practice, the teacher must support both social and emotional functioning in the classroom (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Such support seems especially important for previously bullied pupils as they may need to re-establish relations based on trust with peers and teachers. Hence, creating a learning environment that supports the individual pupil may increase his/her coping both academically and socially. Finally, the follow-up work could continue over several years. Duration of a follow-up intervention after bullying, as well as, the dosage of the content may depend on the complexity of each case. Hence both duration and dosage seem relevant in order to make the necessary individual adaptations in follow-up work. This complies with the program model (Greenberg et al., 2005).

Methodological Challenges and Study Limitations

The current study is small scale and barely provides a foundation for future research. As the current study explores what can be labelled as interventions in a pre-adoption phase it is not an evaluation study focusing on changes or outcomes. Hence future research is needed that evaluates and tests follow-up interventions after bullying. However, this is an emerging

field and the current findings suggest ways to bridge the gap between research and practice by introducing and assembling data from experts and practitioners. Some of the main findings from this study has been on the composition and chain of responsibility of the resource group. Reason is that focus has been on how to ensure a more systematic approach for following up previously bullied pupils. Further studies need to go in more detail on the specific content of such interventions.

Concluding Remarks

The main goal of this study was to explore how schools can follow-up previously bullied pupils. Findings briefly consider the program model of implementation as well as the necessity of having an adequate support system to ensure systematic follow-up work after bullying. Findings from the current study may also suggest that one starting point for increasing a systematic approach could be through stimulating fruitful processes on an organizational level to increase organizational capacity. This may be done in cooperation between municipalities and schools, and within schools on the level of the learning environment such as the classroom. Follow-up work could be a natural prolonging of the work with the psychosocial environment at school. Hence the follow-up begins where the bullying ends.

Organizing the school's work with the psychosocial environment, including follow-up work after bullying, in school-based psychosocial resource groups may be an adequate way to systematize follow-up work. Having the members work across disciplines and join competence-building networks can help to ensure high quality of the follow-up work. However, the organizational capacity should be as good as possible and essential contextual factors should be considered. Documentation and evaluation of interventions are crucial.

There is a research gap regarding follow-up interventions and more scientific evidence is called for. Implications from this study bring forth new knowledge of how schools can organize their follow-up work with bullied pupils and suggest necessary support systems for schools to provide follow-up work of high quality. Further research on organizing follow-up work and its specific content is needed. Future research should also include interventions for following up pupils who have bullied peers as well as the bystanders. When testing the potential value of new interventions, the implementation process should be carefully attended (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).

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Bio Sketch

PhD Kjersti B. Tharaldsen is Associate Professor in Educational Psychology at Centre for Learning Environment at University of Stavanger, Norway. She has research experience from the Psychiatric division at Stavanger University Hospital. Her main research areas are social and emotional learning, stress and coping interventions, and follow-up work after bullying. She is experienced within qualitative methodology and mixed methods methodology.