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## **A Systematic Review of Literature: Synthesizing Bullying and Extracurricular Activity Participation Correlations Among Students With and Without Disabilities**

### **About the Author(s)**

Dr. Kaycee Bills earned her PhD in Social Work from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Dr. Bills is now an Assistant Professor of Social Work at Fayetteville State University. Her research interests include children with disabilities, school bullying, and promotion of academic success.

### **Keywords**

Disability, bullying, extracurricular activities



## A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF LITERATURE: SYNTHESIZING BULLYING AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION CORRELATIONS AMONG STUDENTS WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES

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### **Abstract**

Social issues about bully victimization are a topic receiving national attention in social work literature. Therefore, social workers must establish potential predictors of bullying victimization to eliminate them among at-risk populations, such as students who have disabilities. Adolescent and teenage students with disabilities are an oppressed population at risk of experiencing higher levels of bullying victimization. In addition, this population also experiences harsher socio-emotional outcomes because of bullying.

The purpose of this study was to synthesize past literature relating to the direct relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying victimization. Research articles were retrieved across eight databases to assess past research and literature published on this topic. Due to the limited number of articles examining this topic, two separate analyses are provided. The first analysis assesses literature specific to students with disabilities. The second analysis includes literature not specific to students with disabilities. Finally, providing implications for future social work practice and research based on the results.

### **Introduction**

Social issues related to bullying are widespread topics gaining ample attention across the United States (Dupper, 2013). The U.S. Department of Justice (2015) estimates that approximately 5.0 million bullying cases were filed among students 12 and older during the 2013 to 2014 school year. The bullying epidemic occurring in U.S. school systems resulted in 49 states passing legislation to combat the high rates of bullying victimization occurring in schools (Cornell & Limber, 2015). Unfortunately, legislative actions have not been enough to eliminate the bullying prevalence experienced among adolescent and teenage students. Therefore, social workers must assess the potential predictors of bullying victimization to address them among at-risk populations.

When specifically analyzing marginalized populations, students with disabilities are an oppressed student group facing higher rates of bullying than other student groups (Rose, Espelage, & Monda-Amaya, 2009). Past studies have attributed the high frequencies of bullying victimization experienced among students with disabilities to lower social connectedness levels and fewer friends at their school (Reiter & Lapidot-Lefler, 2007). Participation in extracurricular activities has increased friendships and social connectedness among student populations (Brooks, Floyd Robins, & Chan, 2014). Due to the social benefits of participating in extracurricular activities, it is theorized that extracurricular activity involvement could also potentially mitigate the bullying victimization affecting students who have disabilities. To promote social justice, social work researchers must assess bullying literature to determine if past studies have thoroughly examined the relationship between bullying victimization and extracurricular involvement among students who have disabilities.

## **Bullying**

Recent studies found that approximately 1 out of 3 adolescent and teenage students report being victims of bullying (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014).

Conceptually, bullying is portrayed as unwanted physical or verbal gestures (Hicks, Jennings, Berry, & Green, 2018; Gladden et al., 2014). The American Bar Association states the operational definition of bullying for legal purposes is: “Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance” (American Bar Association [ABA], 2013). In addition to the legal definition, the Department of Education identifies four different categories bullying can be perpetrated. These categories include (1) verbal, (2) physical, (3) indirect, and (4) sexual remarks and acts (Cornell & Limber, 2015). Within these four categories, bullying can occur in various forms, including verbal harassment, name-calling, physical gestures, physical attacks, and unsolicited electronic/cyber communication (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & Johnson, 2014).

### **Consequences of Being Bullied**

Bullying perpetration causes several academic consequences among adolescent and teenage students who experience it. For example, in a study conducted by Barber and Olsen (2004), it was estimated that each day, there are approximately 160,000 middle and high school students who skip school in fear of being bullied. As a result, students who are bullied experience an academic decline. Since then, several additional studies have indicated that bullying victimization results in several academic consequences, including lower grades, decreased school participation, and increased psychological distress in the classroom (Dupper, 2013; Hicks et al., 2018; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Contemporaneous with academic consequences faced by bullied students, bullying victimization also manifests in several socio-emotional facets of a student’s life. For example, when explicitly assessing the psychological consequences caused by bullying, bullying victimization can lead to anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation (Hicks et al., 2018; Hymel & Swearer, 2015). All of which have detrimental consequences for adolescent and teenage students across all student populations. This holds especially true among underrepresented populations who experience bullying victimization at a greater magnitude, such as students with disabilities.

### **Bullying Victimization and Disabilities**

Bullying victimization rates are more prevalent among minority groups; however, they are not equal across all minority groups. In comparison to other oppressed populations, adolescents and teenagers who have disabilities are at a higher risk of experiencing bullying in comparison to any other underrepresented population (Rose, Espelage, Monda-Amaya, Shogren, & Aragon, 2015; Hicks et al., 2018; Farmer, Petrin, Brooks, Ham, Lambert, & Gravelle, 2012). For example, in a recent study conducted by Farmer et al. (2012), findings demonstrated that females with disabilities are 4.8 times more likely to be bullied, and males with disabilities are 3.2 times more likely to be bullied than students who do not have a disability. Supporting these results, Rose et al. (2015) also indicated adolescent and teenage students with disabilities were two times more likely to be bullied than other student populations.

Higher bullying victimization rates among students with disabilities are often described as having communication deficits, delayed social skills, emotional regulation difficulties, social isolation, and being portrayed as “different” (Blake, Lund, Zhou, Kwok & Benz, 2012). Due to their diverse differences and needs, students with disabilities are less likely to be included in

social groups and activities (Blake et al., 2012; Rose et al., 2015, Reiter & Lapidot-Lefler, 2017; Cumming, Marsh, & Higgins 2017).

This makes students with disabilities more prone to bullying due to having fewer opportunities to establish a sense of social connection with peers (Kahn & Lindstrom, 2015).

### **Social Connection in Relation to Bullying**

Several studies have demonstrated that schools with higher social connectedness across diverse student populations have fewer bullying instances and reports among underrepresented demographics (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Debnam, & Johnson, 2014; Ruzek, Hafen, Allen, Gregory, Mikami, & Pianta, 2016). In addition, when students establish common bonds and meaningful relationships with their peers, they are more likely to form more meaningful relationships, ultimately decreasing their likelihood of being bullied (Kahn & Lindstrom, 2015). Meaning, it is essential to implement school activities that promote a stronger sense of social connectedness for students who are a part of minority populations to decrease bullying outcomes. To establish a sense of social connection, students must be actively involved in activities that increase socialization.

### **Social Connection and Disabilities**

Several studies reveal that students with disabilities have less access to inclusivity in school settings than their non-disabled counterparts. A lack of inclusivity can unintentionally occur due to the physical or intellectual barriers imposed by their disability. Often, students with disabilities spend substantial amounts of time in a special education setting, separated from the rest of their peers (Gavish, 2017). This lack of integration into the general student population often results in a lack of social connection (Palmer, Heyne, Montie, & Abery, 2011; Amado, Stancliffe, & McCarron, 2013). Not only is this observed in classroom settings, but the lack of mainstream integration can also be observed in school-based extracurricular settings. The lack of inclusivity in school extracurricular activities causes students with disabilities to be isolated from their non-disabled peers, hindering their chances of generating peer relationships (Cumming et al., 2017). These limited social opportunities account for one of the primary reasons students who have disabilities are victimized at higher rates than other student populations (Reiter & Lapidot-Lefler, 2007; Palmer et al., 2011). To decrease bullying and victimization among students with disabilities, it is vital to implement methods to increase their socialization opportunities. One way to achieve this is through extracurricular activity participation.

### **Establishing Social Connection Through Extracurricular Activities**

School extracurricular activities can include athletics, clubs, volunteer work, student government, and other interest groups. Extracurricular activities generate several benefits for adolescent and teenage students. These benefits include increased physical and psychological health (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Concurrent with physical and mental health benefits, critical advantages of participating in school extracurricular activities are increased social benefits and opportunities (Brooks et al., 2014; Anderman, 2011).

When only analyzing socialization, studies indicate students involved in sports and clubs demonstrate an increased social connectedness among their peers (Brooks et al., 2014; Anderman, 2011; Kahn & Lindstrom, 2015). Students involved in extracurricular activities exhibited having more friends and better relationships than students who were not involved in extracurricular activities. Students participating in extracurricular activities also felt more socially and emotionally safe from bullying (Martinez, Coker, Mcahon, Cohen & Thapa, 2016). In addition, Spriggs, Iannotti, Nansel, and Haynie (2007) demonstrated students who did not participate in extracurricular activities did not feel their school promoted a sense of social

connectedness. Consequently, emphasizing participation in extracurricular activities is a way to help students establish a sense of social connection to their school environment.

### **Extracurricular Activities and Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are limited to extracurricular options due to accessibility barriers (Cumming et al., 2017; Blake et al., 2012; Rose et al., 2015). Many extracurricular activities offered in schools are not inclusive or accommodating for students who have varied needs concerning their disability (Norma & Heumann, 2008). This makes it difficult for students with disabilities to find extracurricular activities to excel at and gain a sense of belonging. Since social connectedness and bullying victimization have an inverse relationship, it is vital to analyze the potential impacts of extracurricular activities on students with disabilities experiencing bullying.

In a study conducted by Brooks, Floyd, Robins, and Chan (2014), children with intellectual or learning disabilities demonstrated increased social competence when participating in structured extracurricular activities. Furthermore, the participants who exhibited an increase in social competence reported having more classmates they identified as friends (Brooks et al., 2014). Supporting this finding, other studies have indicated students who participate in extracurricular activities develop longer-lasting friendships than students who did not participate in extracurricular activities (Shaefer, Simpkins, Vest, & Price, 2011). This finding emphasizes how extracurricular activity involvement is critical to the foundation of formulating social connections for students who have disabilities.

### **Exploring the Direct Relationship Between Extracurricular Activities and Bullying**

It has been revealed that establishing a sense of social connection is vital in decreasing bullying victimization across multiple student populations. It has also been shown that one way to generate higher levels of social relationships among students is through extracurricular activity participation. The purpose of this systematic review of literature is to determine if the bullying literature suggests a direct relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying victimization experiences. Since students with disabilities are a population experiencing lower levels of social connectedness and have fewer opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, this study intended to focus specifically on articles analyzing students with disabilities.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the systematic review was to explore the literature discussing the relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying victimization outcomes. Additionally, the purpose of this review is to assess the quality and the quantity of prior literature examining this topic. This review will explore studies analyzing the general population and studies that specifically analyze students with disabilities. A consensus of the article findings, gaps in the literature, and the study methodologies used will also be identified. The results derived from the systematic literature review will contribute to formulating implications for future school social work practice and research on students with disabilities.

## **Methods**

### **Research Questions**

Using the University of Tennessee library databases, a systematic review of the literature was conducted. In addition, the following research questions were tested:

R<sub>1</sub>: Has a direct relationship between extracurricular activity participation and bullying victimization among adolescent and teenage students been established?

R<sub>2</sub>: Do past studies adequately reveal a relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying victimization, specifically among students who have disabilities?

## Data Analysis

A systematic review of the literature was applied to assess the impacts of extracurricular activity on bullying among adolescent and teenage students. The target population of interest for this study was adolescent and teenage students who have disabilities. For an article to be included in this study, the article must have met the following criteria: (a) be published in the English language; (b) be included in the following databases: PsychINFO, Academic Search Complete, Education Source, Social work Abstracts, Sociology Abstracts, EBSCO, CINAHL, and Scopus; (c) Study must be conducted between 2008 and 2018; (d) discuss the direct relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying victimization rates; (e) studies must analyze students between the ages of 12 and 18; and (f) articles did not need to be published by a peer-reviewed journal. Articles that were excluded from this review met the following criteria: (a) article was not written in the English language; (b) article did not analyze the direct impact extracurricular involvement has on bullying victimization; (c) article was not about adolescent students ranging from ages 12 to 18, and (d) article was published within the past ten years (before the year 2008). Various types of bullying that fit inclusion criteria included unwanted verbal (e.g., name-calling, yelling at, making fun of, etc.), physical, sexual, and cyber attacks.

## Justification for Search Criteria

Search criteria had to include articles written in the English language to attain research conducted in areas that are culturally similar to the United States and ensure language interpretation. Due to the lack of literature about this specific topic, articles were not specific to only students with disabilities. Initially, only articles published within the past five years were going to be included. However, this criterion was expanded to articles written within the past ten years due to the lack of literature. Quantitative, qualitative, literature review, opinion pieces, and theoretical overview studies represented varied research methods. To ensure specificity, articles must analyze the direct relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying outcomes.

## Conducting Search

**Phase one.** During the first phase of this study, searched databases included PsychINFO, Academic Search Complete, Social Work Abstracts, ERIC, CINAHL, Education Source, Scopus, and Sociology Abstracts. The terms used during the first search phrase were, "Extracurricular AND bullying AND students AND adolescents AND disability OR disabilities." The time for this search was between the years 2008 and 2018. Using these terms, the researcher found no studies among the eight databases.

**Phase two.** During the second phase, the search terms were broadened by removing the keyword "adolescents." Using the broadened search terms, 18 studies were uncovered that met the full inclusion criteria. These articles derived from PsychINFO ( $n = 3$ ), Academic Search Complete ( $n = 1$ ), Education Source ( $n = 3$ ), Social Work Abstracts ( $n = 1$ ), ERIC ( $n = 8$ ), CINAHL ( $n = 1$ ), Scopus ( $n = 1$ ), and Sociology Abstracts ( $n = 0$ ). The total number of articles retrieved during phase two was ( $N = 18$ ).

**Phase three.** Due to the limited literature on this topic, an additional analysis was added to the study during a third phase. In order to capture more particles, the study was expanded to include articles that were not specific to students with disabilities. The additional boolean phrase for this portion was, "Extracurricular AND bullying AND students." The timeframe and the databases remained the same. During this expansion, the articles deprived from PsychINFO ( $n = 13$ ), Academic Search Complete ( $n = 17$ ), Education Source ( $n = 24$ ), Social Work Abstracts ( $n=0$ ), ERIC ( $n=26$ ), CINAHL ( $n = 4$ ), Scopus ( $n = 16$ ), and Sociological Abstracts ( $n = 7$ ). The

total number of articles retrieved during phase two was ( $N = 107$ ). The combined total number of articles found at the end of all searches was ( $N = 125$ ).

### **Distillation**

A distillation of the articles retrieved during search phase one and phase two was applied. During this phase, all of the articles that appeared in the search were individually examined to determine if they met inclusion criteria. Out of the 125 articles that were retrieved, 102 of the articles were discarded due to the following reasons: duplicates (33), were not in English (3) did not examine the direct relationship between extracurricular activities and bullying (43), did not examine adolescent students (6) and were not articles (17). At the end of the distillation, ( $N = 23$ ) met the full inclusion criteria used for this analysis. Out of the 23 articles being used for this analysis, 13 provided results specific to adolescent students with disabilities, and ten did not provide results specific to adolescent students with disabilities.

### **Results**

There was a total of 23 articles ( $N = 23$ ) that met the full criteria of this systematic review. To expand the results, there are two separate analyses. The first analysis of the systematic review focuses on articles specifically analyzing adolescent and teenage students with disabilities. In the analyses that only reviewed studies specifically students who have disabilities, there were thirteen articles retrieved ( $n = 13$ ). The second analysis in the systematic review is broadened to include articles analyzing this topic among all student demographics. The number of articles retrieved in the supplemental analyses is ( $n = 10$ ).

#### **Analysis One Results: Specific to Students with Disabilities**

**Overview of articles.** There was a total of ( $n = 13$ ) articles that discussed the relationship between extracurricular activity participation and bullying victimization among adolescent students with disabilities. The 13 articles included peer-reviewed journal articles ( $n = 7$ ), unpublished dissertations/thesis's ( $n = 2$ ), book chapters ( $n = 1$ ), government documents ( $n = 1$ ), University articles ( $n = 1$ ), and articles that were published in journals that were not peer-reviewed ( $n = 1$ ). Study methodologies included quantitative ( $n = 4$ ), qualitative ( $n = 3$ ), literature review ( $n = 1$ ), theoretical overview/application ( $n = 3$ ), and opinion pieces ( $n = 2$ ). Empirical evidence supporting the conclusion of findings was provided in nine of the articles. The locations of the studies included United States ( $n = 10$ ), New Zealand ( $n = 1$ ), and United Kingdom ( $n = 2$ ) (See Table 1.1).

**Quantitative article consensus.** The overall findings conveyed that extracurricular involvement would decrease bullying victimization instances among adolescent students with disabilities (Brooks, 2013; Rose et al., 2015; Rose et al., 2018). The quantitative findings revealed significant results when analyzing the direct impact extracurricular involvement had on decreasing bullying victimization. In the two quantitative studies that compared students with disabilities to students without disabilities, students with disabilities were more likely to be bullied and less likely to participate in extracurricular activities (Rose et al., 2018; Brooks, 2013). Researchers assumed this demonstrated a relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying victimization (Rose et al., 2018; Brooks, 2013).

**Quantitative methodology critique.** When assessing the data analysis of the quantitative studies, most researchers used restricted sample sizes within a secondary dataset to represent students with disabilities. Unfortunately, this caused a lack of a comparison group in the analysis. A critique in methodology for the quantitative studies to combat the disproportioned

sample sizes would be to use disabilities as a moderating variable rather than employing a restricted sample size. This would have provided researchers with a better insight into how extracurricular activities impact bullying among students with disabilities than the mainstream population.

The quantitative articles did not define what they considered to be an extracurricular activity. Different extracurricular activities (e.g., clubs, athletics, student government, etc.) may have differentiating bullying victimization outcomes. Given students who have disabilities are often limited to their access to extracurricular activities, it is imperative to analyze the different categories of extracurricular activities separately.

An additional critique observed among the quantitative studies was many of the studies were not derived from peer-reviewed journals. Out of all the quantitative studies uncovered in the analysis, only two were published in a peer-reviewed journal. The other three included articles analyzed were not published in peer-reviewed journals.

**Qualitative article consensus.** The consensus among the qualitative articles supported the findings observed among the quantitative articles. Theoretical themes across studies suggested that students with disabilities felt safer from bullying victimization when involved in extracurricular activities. Specifically, students with disabilities who were involved in sports voiced that they thought they were less likely to be bullied due to the social bonds they formed outside of the classroom (Danes-Staples, Lieberman, Ratcliff, & Rounds, 2013). Even though the qualitative studies used a different approach to studying extracurricular activities and bullying victimization, the consensus was the same as the quantitative studies.

**Qualitative methodology.** The sample sizes were small across the three qualitative studies compared to the quantitative articles ( $n = 7$ ,  $n = 11$ ,  $n = 49$ ). Due to the smaller sample sizes in the qualitative articles, all of them focused on one type of disability. This approach allowed researchers to gain an in-depth perception of the specific experiences unique to that disability category.

**Table 1.1: Articles Analyzing Adolescent Students With Disabilities**

Authors	Study Location	Type of Article	Method of Research	Sample Size	Measures Used	Mention of Disabilities	Key Findings Related to Bullying
Beresford, Clarke, Borthwick, Morris, White, & Bergeron (2010)	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Review of Literature	N=65 Studies	Review of literature	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Across studies, students with disabilities felt their access to extracurricular activities was limited. In addition, studies felt bullying could have been attributed to a lack of inclusivity.</li> <li>• Being segregated due to a lack of activity involvement made students feel negatively perceived by peers.</li> </ul>
Brooks (2013)	United States	Master's Thesis	Quantitative	N=95 Adolescents with disabilities and	Mean comparison	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with disabilities were less likely to participate in extracurricular activities and more likely to be bullied by peers.</li> <li>• A direct correlation was not established.</li> </ul>
Carter, Biggs, & Blustein (2016)	United Kingdom	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Theoretical Application	Not Applicable	Application of theory	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction outside of the classroom can result in more substantial social bonds and less social isolation.</li> <li>• Stronger social bonds and less social isolation often lead to less bullying victimization among students with disabilities.</li> </ul>

- No empirical analysis was provided.
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**Table 1.1 (continued)**

Authors	Study Location	Type of Article	Method of Research	Sample Size	Specific Measures	Mention of Disabilities	Key Findings Related to Bullying
Danes-Staples, Lieberman, Ratcliff, & Rounds (2013)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Qualitative	N=49 adults with disabilities who recounted past experiences	Semi-Structured Interviews ; thematic analysis	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were only two participants who did not experience bullying. Both of those participants were involved in sports.</li> <li>• Athletes were less likely to report bullying. In the athlete sample, 76.6% experienced bullying, while 94.7% of non-athletes experienced bullying.</li> </ul>
Kahn & Lindstrom (2015)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Qualitative	N=8 Adolescents with disabilities who were also LGBTQ	Semi-Structured Interviews ; thematic analysis	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>• Students who were a part of a special interest club for LGBTQ youth felt safer from bullying victimization when around peers involved in the club.</li> <li>• Even though students reported being bullied outside of the club, they eluded that the club helped them gain social connections that allowed them to feel safer at school.</li> </ul>

MacArthur (2012)	New Zealand	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Qualitative	N=11 Adolescents with disabilities	Semi-structured interviews ; thematic analysis	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although the students involved in extracurricular activities experienced less bullying than students who were not involved, they still felt bullied by their peers.</li> </ul>
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**Table 1.1 (continued)**

Authors	Study Location	Type of Article	Method of Research	Sample Size	Specific Measures	Mention of Disabilities	Key Findings Related to Bullying
Montie and Abery (2011)	United States	Informational	Theoretical Application	Not Applicable	Application of Theory	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social theories suggest adolescents with disabilities will have greater access to inclusivity, have more positive reputations, and expanded self-advocacy if they participate in extracurricular activities. Thus, resulting in fewer bullying and victimization experiences.</li> <li>No empirical analysis was provided to support the claim.</li> </ul>
Norma and Heumann (2008)	United States	Department of Education Article	Opinion Piece	Not Applicable	Application of Theory	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students with disabilities are more likely to be bullied and victimized due to the lack of inclusive extracurricular and social involvement.</li> <li>No empirical analysis was provided to support the claim.</li> </ul>

Palmer, Heyne, Montie, & Abery (2011)	United States	Non-Peer-Reviewed Article	Opinion Piece	Not Applicable	Opinion based on the theoretical framework	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authors convey students with disabilities are less likely to be involved in extracurricular activities. Thus, resulting in high levels of social isolation and bullying victimization. No empirical analysis was provided.</li> </ul>
Petrenchik, King, & Batorowicz (2011)	United States	Published Textbook Chapter	Theoretical Framework Overview	Not Applicable	Application of Theory	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with disabilities are more likely to be marginalized by their peers due to not participate in extracurricular activities. This can result in bullying victimization.</li> <li>• No empirical analysis.</li> </ul>

**Table 1.1 (continued)**

Authors	Study Location	Type of Article	Method of Research	Sample Size	Specific Measures	Mention of Disabilities	Key Findings Related to Bullying
Rose, Espelage, Monda-Amaya, Shogren, & Aragon (2015)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Quantitative	N=360 students without disabilities and N=83 students with disabilities	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM); Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)	Yes, but only 23% of the sample included students with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students who had disabilities were twice as likely to be bullied than non-disabled students.</li> <li>• Participation in extracurricular activities had a direct influence on peer social support. In addition, the increase in peer social support decreased bullying victimization among students.</li> </ul>

Rose, Stomont, Wang, Simpson, Preast, & Green (2018)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Quantitative	N=1,055 Students with disabilities and N=1,055 students without disabilities	Mean Comparison; One-Way ANOVA; MANOVA	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students with disabilities who were in the least restrictive environments were less likely to be bullied.</li> <li>Least restrictive environments resulted in more access to extracurricular activities, thus demonstrating how extracurricular activity involvement may deter bullying victimization among students with disabilities.</li> </ul>
Shamel (2013)	United States	Doctoral School Psychology Dissertation (Not Peer-Reviewed or Published)	Quantitative	N=74 adolescents with disabilities	Linear Regression	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extracurricular involvement was not a significant predicting variable of being a victim of cyberbullying. However, results were inconclusive for extracurricular activity participation due to the small number of students involved in extracurricular activities.</li> </ul>

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## Analysis Two Results: Articles for General Student Population

**Overview of article characteristics.** Due to the lack of literature analyzing the relationship specifically among students with disabilities. For example, suppose a relationship is established between extracurricular activity involvements and bullying among a sample of the general student population. In that case, it is possible the same theory can be applied to students who have disabilities. Studies in this analysis still discussed extracurricular participation in bullying victimization but were broadened to adolescent students without disabilities. The total number of articles included in this analysis was ( $n = 10$ ).

All ten articles included in the analysis were peer-reviewed journal articles. Study methodologies included quantitative studies ( $n = 8$ ) and literature reviews ( $n = 2$ ). The locations of the studies included the United States and United Kingdom ( $n = 1$ ). It is also important to mention the same author wrote three of these studies. This author also used the same dataset to formulate three different papers (See Table 1.2).

**A consensus of article findings.** Overall, the consensus of the second review of articles not specific to disabilities supported the analysis of the previous set of articles specific to students with disabilities. Out of the ten articles examined in the second analysis, nine demonstrated that participating in extracurricular activities decreased the bullying victimization outcomes among the observed student populations. One article found that extracurricular activity participation increased bullying and victimization among Hispanic/Latino populations. Lehman (2016) explained that this finding was attributed to Hispanic/Latino students having more exposure to majority students due to their extracurricular activities. The additional exposure essentially led to the students being victimized more due to their extracurricular involvement. A study conducted by Peguero (2008) displayed mixed results by examining classroom-based activities from athletic activities in the analysis. When separating classroom activities from athletic activities, Peguero (2008) found students involved in sports were less likely to be bullied; however, students engaged in classroom-based extracurricular activities were more likely to be bullied.

**Methodology critiques.** A critique of the methodology observed across all these studies is that researchers did not differentiate the different extracurricular activities in their analysis. Most of the studies identified extracurricular activities as one category in the form of a dichotomous variable. Other studies only examined one form of extracurricular activities. A few of the articles focused only on clubs, while others focused on athletics. The articles that focused explicitly on clubs had different results than the articles that only focused on sports. This indicates that the different types of extracurricular activities may influence the results.

Given this observation, past studies revealed in the literature review failed to recognize that different extracurricular activities (e.g., athletics versus non-athletic activities) may reveal varied results. Since two of the studies demonstrated varied results depending on the type of extracurricular activities that the student participated in, it is possible the other studies contained skewed or inaccurate results due to not separating the extracurricular activity types in their analysis. Like the articles that specifically focused on students who have disabilities, a predominant methodology critique would be to incorporate a method that allows different extracurricular types to be measured separately. Due to these findings, social work researchers must employ a methodology that analyzes each extracurricular category separately.

**Table 1.2: Articles that Do Not Mention Disabilities**

Authors	Study Location	Type of Article	Method of Research	Sample Size	Specific Measures	Mention of Disabilities	Key Findings Related to Bullying
Basch (2011)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Literature Review	None provided	Criteria fit; Review of literature	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall, studies demonstrated higher levels of extracurricular activities reduced bullying and aggression among adolescent students.</li> </ul>
Driesse ns (2015)	England	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Quantitative	N=48,904 adolescent students	Secondary dataset analysis of the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE); Maximum likelihood estimates, and correlation matrix	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students involved in sports and clubs moderated the likelihood of participating in bullying activity or being victims of bullying.</li> </ul>
Lehman (2018)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Quantitative	N=13,461 adolescent students who are ethnic minorities	Secondary dataset analysis using Education Longitudinal Study (ESL); Multilevel modeling	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extracurricular activity involvement and achievement were predominating predictors of bullying victimization among minority students.</li> <li>Ethnic minority students were less likely to be involved in extracurricular activities, which resulted in higher rates of bullying victimization.</li> <li>Academically successful students had a tendency to be</li> </ul>

involved in more extracurricular activities. This may have also been attributed to their decreased bullying victimization rates.

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**Table 1.2 (continued)**

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Study Location</b>	<b>Type of Article</b>	<b>Method of Research</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Specific Measures</b>	<b>Mention of Disabilities</b>	<b>Key Findings Related to Bullying</b>
Lehman (2016)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Quantitative	N=1,793 Hispanic/Latino Adolescent Students	Secondary dataset analysis using Education Longitudinal Study (ESL); Multilevel modeling; Ordinal Logistic Regression	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Among Latino students, increased extracurricular involvement increased bullying victimization. It is assumed that this is because extracurricular activities result in increased exposure to other students.</li> <li>• Latino students involved in extracurricular activities who immigrated to the United States were more likely to be bullied than Latino students who were not immigrants.</li> </ul>
Lehman &	United States	Peer-Reviewed	Quantitative	N=8,377 adolescent females	Secondary dataset analysis using Education	No, but disability was a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the number of extracurricular activities increased for both females and</li> </ul>

Dumais (2017)	Journal Article	Longitudinal Study (ESL); Multilevel modeling; Ordinal Logistic Regression	covariable in one analysis	males, verbal bullying instances decreased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bullying victimization decreased when females participated in extracurricular activities; it did not decrease as much as males. The author attributed this to the lack of gender inequality.</li> <li>Females participating in extracurricular activities felt bullied at higher rates than the males who participated in extracurricular activities.</li> </ul>
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**Table 1.2 (continued)**

Authors	Location	Type of Article	Method of Research	Sample Size	Specific Measures	Mention of Disabilities	Key Findings Related to Bullying
Martinez, Coker, McMahon, Cohen, & Thapa (2016)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Quantitative	N=15,004 adolescent students	Multi-Level Regression Modeling	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students who were involved in sports reported higher levels of safety and security from bullying victimization than students who were not involved in sports.</li> </ul>

Mehta, Cornell, Fan, & Gregory (2013)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Quantitative	N=7,058 adolescent students	Hierarchical Linear Modeling	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students who perceived higher levels of bullying at school reported less involvement in extracurricular school activities.</li> <li>• HLM analyses showed bullying climate accounted for a significant proportion of variance in the student's commitment to school and school involvement, more so than the proportion of variance demonstrated by gender, race, and school enrollment size.</li> </ul>
Peguero (2008)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Quantitative	N=7,990 adolescent students	Secondary dataset analysis using Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002; Logistical Binary Regression	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students who were involved in intramural sports were less likely to be bullied.</li> <li>• Students involved in classroom-based extracurricular activities were more likely to be bullied than students who did not participate in classroom-based extracurricular activities.</li> <li>• Consequently, participating in clubs resulted in higher bullying rates.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

Table 1.2 (continued)

Authors	Study Location	Type of Article	Method of Research	Sample Size	Specific Measures	Mention of Disabilities	Key Findings Related to Bullying
Peguer o (2012)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Literature Review	Not Specified	Criteria Fit; Review of literature	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The review of the literature indicated schools that have fewer extracurricular activities have higher levels of bullying victimization. Studies indicate schools with extracurricular activities that are not inclusive to minority populations have higher levels of bullying victimization.</li> </ul>
Riese, Gjelsvik , & Ranney (2015)	United States	Peer-Reviewed Journal Article	Quantitative	N=95,677 adolescent students	Secondary Dataset analysis using National Survey of Children's Health; Mean comparison; Correlation Matrix	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significantly fewer students involved in extracurricular activities reported being bullied (11%) compared to those who did not participate in extracurricular activities (22%). Students involved in both a sport and a club had fewer reports of bullying than students who were only involved in one extracurricular activity.</li> </ul>

## Discussion

When synthesizing past literature about the relationship between extracurricular activity participation and bullying outcomes among students who have disabilities, there were limited studies that adequately demonstrated this relationship. Much of the literature analyzes the positive impact extracurricular activities can have on increasing social connectedness, thus suggesting extracurricular activities could decrease bullying. Since social connectedness reduces bullying rates, many researchers assume extracurricular activity participation also impacts the bullying outcomes experienced among students (Cumming et al., 2017; Deci & Ryan, 2015; Eime et al., 2013). Although the indirect relationship was theorized, few studies tested for a direct relationship between extracurricular activities and bullying (Eime et al., 2013). Even fewer tested this direct relationship among students who have disabilities. More empirical studies observing direct relationships between extracurricular activity participation and bullying are needed

to validate this theory.

Two separate literature review analyses were incorporated to encompass more studies to assess the relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying. The first review was specific to students with disabilities. However, due to small article counts specific to students with disabilities, a second literature review was incorporated that was not specific to students with disabilities. A possible explanation for the lack of literature could be attributed to the limited inclusive extracurricular activities available to students with disabilities (Palmer et al., 2011; Amado et al., 2013; Cumming et al., 2017). Although the two analyses observed two different student populations, it is assumed similar findings could also be applicable to students who have disabilities.

### Synthesis One: Articles Specific to Disabilities

**Theoretical articles.** In the first synthesis, which only analyzed articles related to students who have disabilities, there were a total of 13 articles ( $n = 13$ ). Of these 13 articles, many theoretical application articles did not provide empirical evidence of the direct relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying victimization. In these articles, the authors theorized that extracurricular involvement's social and emotional advantages would impact a student's experience with being bullied. Although the theoretical application of these articles supports a direct relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying victimization, the lack of empirical evidence supporting these claims demonstrates the need for more studies quantitatively testing this relationship.

**Systematic review articles.** Most of the peer-reviewed studies that tested the relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying outcomes were systematic literature reviews. All the literature reviews obtained from the search concurred with the findings of this systematic review analysis. Every study demonstrated that extracurricular involvement could reduce bullying among students with disabilities due to the social benefits derived from extracurricular activities. However, although the studies established an indirect relationship, they did not establish a direct relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying experiences. Additionally, the conclusions of these studies supported the findings of this review by emphasizing the need for more empirical studies to establish a direct relationship between extracurricular activity participation and bullying outcomes for students who have disabilities.

**Empirical studies.** When analyzing the empirical studies obtained from the scope of literature search, all the results of both the qualitative and quantitative studies demonstrated an

inverse relationship between extracurricular involvement and bullying instances. Notably, increased extracurricular activity participation decreased bullying victimization rates among students with disabilities. However, it is crucial to recognize that all the empirical studies uncovered in the search had very small sample sizes; thus, they were not representative of the disability population. Additionally, the small sample sizes could have had unreliable results due to a lack of statistical power. Lastly, it is also important to note that none of the articles looked separately at extracurricular athletic activities and non-athletic extracurricular activities. Therefore, it is possible that different categories of extracurricular activities would produce different results. Overall, results concluded a substantial need for more studies specifically analyzing the direct relationship between extracurricular participation and bullying victimization among students with disabilities.

### **Synthesis Two: Articles Not Specific to Disabilities**

When expanding the review of the literature search to include studies that were not disability-specific, there were ten additional articles found ( $n = 10$ ). Across all the particles synthesized in the second analysis, most demonstrated similar findings to the studies specific to students with disabilities. However, a few studies indicate opposite results of the ones used in the first review of the literature assessment.

Although many non-disability specific articles signified similar results as the analysis that assessed the disability-specific articles, two articles conveyed extracurricular involvement resulted in more bullying among certain student groups. Peguero (2008) found that students involved in classroom-related activities experienced higher rates of bullying victimization than those who participated in athletic-related activities. Hence, indicating bullying victimization rates depend on the type of extracurricular activity being observed. Lehman (2016) also indicated conflicting results by demonstrating Hispanic/Latino students who participated in extracurricular activities faced higher rates of bullying victimization due to having more exposure to majority student populations. These two articles emphasize the need for more related studies to determine if bullying rates differ depending on the extracurricular activity and student population being observed.

### **Implications for Social Work Practice**

Since students with disabilities are a vulnerable population facing higher rates of bullying victimization than other school populations (Rose et al., 2009), social workers must promote social justice by advocating for methods to help decrease bullying in school. If researchers can observe if participating in extracurricular activities lessens bullying outcomes among students with disabilities, social workers must advocate for inclusive school-based activities. Since prior literature demonstrates that extracurricular activity involvement can improve social outcomes for students, students with disabilities must be provided with the same access.

Additionally, a relationship has not been established between the different categories of extracurricular activity involvement (e.g., clubs versus sports) and their impact on bullying. For example, extracurricular athletic activities and non-athletic extracurricular activities may have different benefits. Since the inclusivity of extracurricular athletic activities differs from non-extracurricular activities, it is essential to explore if different categories of extracurricular activities impact bullying at different magnitudes. If social workers can establish a direct relationship between different categories of extracurricular activity participation and bullying, then advocating for more inclusivity across all extracurricular categories may be a possible solution to combat bullying outcomes among students who have disabilities.

### **Implications for Social Work Research**

The more predominant implication to social work research is expanding social work literature to include more studies of students with disabilities. Out of the 23 articles used in this analysis, only one article came from a social work database. None of these articles were found in a social work journal. Although students with disabilities are an oppressed population served by social workers, most of the literature is found in education and psychology journals. Implications for social work research include more studies on disability issues in social work journals and databases.

Despite uncovering 23 articles found analyzing the direct relationship between extracurricular participation and bullying victimization, only 13 of them provided information specific to disabilities. Even though these 13 articles included disability-related analyses, only seven were empirical studies. When assessing the seven empirical studies, they all had very small sample sizes and only looked at one type of disability. This could have caused the results not to provide a broad scope on how extracurricular involvement impacts bullying victimization among students with disabilities. To establish this relationship, social work researchers must use a large sample of students with disabilities.

Lastly, two studies in the second analysis suggested that the different types of extracurricular involvement may have influenced bullying victimization rates. Unfortunately, none of the studies specific to disabilities employed a method that allowed various extracurricular activities to be examined separately. Since students with disabilities are limited to the types of extracurricular activities available (Beresford et al., 2010), this is a vital topic to examine further. Implications for future social work research include implementing a regression that separates extracurricular activities as co-independent variables rather than condensing them into one category.

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