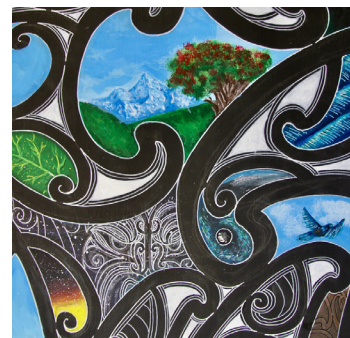


Implementing the 'Indicated Actions' Component of the KiVa Anti-Bullying Programme in New Zealand Schools

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ABSTRACT

The evidence-based anti-bullying programme known as KiVa was introduced into New Zealand in 2015 as an attempt to address high bullying rates. A key component of this programme includes a set of 'indicated actions' that are enacted when bullying incidents are reported. This study looked at the implementation of the 'indicated actions' component in a small sample of schools in New Zealand over a specific time period. Data collection included individual interviews with KiVa team members from each school. They were asked to provide information about the range and frequency of bullying incidents that were identified using the 'indicated actions' procedures, a description of the KiVa procedures in place in the schools, parents and teacher involvement in the KiVa process, and their perceived effects of the programme. Results revealed large variations across schools in the frequency of bullying incidents reported and acted upon. In addition, verbal name-calling was reported by a majority of the schools as being the most prevalent form of bullying. Although all 12 schools reported (and had documentation to show) that they had followed KiVa procedures as outlined in the manual, the use of the screening form was varied and the majority of the KiVa team members perceived the effects of the programme to be positive.

Research Paper

Keywords:

bullying, evaluation, KiVa anti-bullying programme, New Zealand

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is defined as repeated aggression against a person who is powerless to defend himself or herself (Olweus, 1994; Salmivalli, 2010) and it can take a range of forms including verbal or physical attacks and relational manipulation (Olweus, 1993) either in person or through the use of a range of technologies (Monks & Smith, 2006; Olweus, 2013; Olweus & Limber, 2017). Bullying has considerable negative outcomes for the bully, victims and bully-victims such as health problems, poor emotional and social adjustment,

and an increase in high-risk behaviours (Kokko & Pulkkinen, 2000; Ttofi et al., 2014; Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010; Vaillancourt et al., 2013; van der Ploeg et al., 2016).

The rates of bullying in New Zealand appear to be considerably higher than in many other countries (Denny et al., 2015; Kljakovic et al., 2015; UNICEF, 2018). For example, of the 6,322 Year 4 students (~8 years old in New Zealand) surveyed as part of the TIMMS (2015) study, 24% of these New Zealand students indicated that they had been bullied 'about weekly'. By way of comparison, the international average for Year 4 students experiencing bullying weekly was 16%. It appears that similar to other countries, New Zealand has thus far been unable to effectively address this issue (Smith et al., 2016). School-wide programmes that can tackle incidents of bullying and provide teachers with appropriate training is imperative. Indeed, dozens of programmes have been implemented and evaluated worldwide (Smith et al., 2004). A meta-analysis by Ttofi and Farrington (2011) concluded that school-based anti-bullying programmes can be effective and certain factors such as intensity, parent involvement and disciplinary methods are associated with reductions in bullying. A more recent meta-analytic review (Gaffney et al., 2018) has indicated that anti-bullying programmes collectively reduced bullying perpetration by 19-20% and victimisation by 15-16%.

KiVa is regarded as an effective evidence-based anti-bullying prevention and intervention programme that was developed in Finland by Salmivalli and colleagues in 2009 (Salmivalli & Poskiparta, 2012). KiVa is based on the premise that influencing bystander behaviour by informing and emboldening them, can yield significant positive outcomes in reducing bullying by diminishing the social rewards gained by bullies (Salmivalli, 2010; Herkama & Salmivalli, 2014). The programme has demonstrated overall reductions in victimisation and bullying in several countries (Clarkson et al., 2019; Green et al., 2020; Huitsing, et al., 2020; Hutchings & Clarkson, 2015; Kärnä et al., 2011; Kärnä et al., 2013; Nocentini & Menesini, 2016). However, the programme appears

to be most successful with younger children e.g. aged 7-12 years (Kärnä et al., 2011; Kärnä et al., 2013), and there are some conflicting findings with regard to gender. One study has shown a significant reduction in both victimisation and bullying perpetration for girls, but only a reduction in bullying perpetration for boys (Hutchings & Clarkson, 2015). Another found stronger positive effects for a reduction in bullying and victimisation for girls and very young boys (Green et al., 2020). In yet another study, no gender differences were reported (Clarkson et al., 2019).

There are two main components to the KiVa programme - 'universal actions' and 'indicated actions.' The 'universal actions' component is directed at all students and is delivered through the use of lessons, interactive computer games, posters and parent guides. The 'indicated actions' component consists of the KiVa team (who are key staff within the school who receive additional training) tackling individual bullying cases through a series of steps outlined in the KiVa manual. The reported reductions in bullying and victimisation are likely due to both the use of the 'universal actions' and the 'indicated actions.' With regard to what influences the success of the 'universal actions', we know that its effectiveness is dependent in part on teacher attitudes (Ahtola et al., 2012; Veenstra et al., 2014) and fidelity of implementation (Haataja et al., 2014).

Less is known, however, about what impacts the use of the 'indicated actions.' When a suspected incident of bullying is indicated, the KiVa team determines whether a case qualifies as bullying or not. The screening form indicates the nature and frequency of the bullying incident and identifies the students involved. The KiVa team decide whether the case qualifies as a bullying incident. If the case is deemed as bullying, the team organises separate individual discussions with the victim(s) and bully(s) providing a platform for both sides to express their experiences and concerns. The team emphasises support for the victim(s) and adopts either a confronting or non-confronting approach with the bully(s) during individual discussion. If a confronting approach is adopted, it is made clear to the perpetrator that his or her bullying behaviour is not tolerated and that it has to stop. With the non-confronting approach, the perpetrator is interviewed but not accused directly; rather, the team seeks to elicit empathy from the bully for the victim, after which suggestions are discussed to improve the victim's situation. After the individual discussions, a group discussion with the students involved in the bullying perpetration is organised to summarise the key points and strengthen the decisions that were made during individual discussions. Finally, separate follow-up meetings

are conducted after 1-2 weeks with the victim and the perpetrators to ensure that bullying has stopped (Herkama & Salmivalli, 2014).

Garandeau et al. (2014) compared the confrontational and non-confrontational approaches used in tackling acute cases of bullying and found that neither method was superior to the other. However, the confronting approach fared better outcomes with adolescents and when victimisation persisted for a month or less. In another study, Garandeau et al. (2016) investigated the effect of two types of KiVa discussions (i.e. non-confronting vs confronting approach) on bullies' intentions to change their behaviour. They assessed whether the bully perceived that the adults had attempted to arouse empathy, blame the bully and/or condemn the bully's behaviour. Empathy, arousal and condemning the bullying positively influenced the bullies intention to stop further bullying. Blaming the bully, however, did not influence their intention to stop. Apart from these comparisons of the two 'indicated actions' approaches, little is known about the steps before these approaches are implemented; that is, how the screening process is used, how many incidents are reported, and what proportion of these end up being bullying incidents. Furthermore, little is known about the role of parents and classroom teachers in the 'indicated actions.'

As outlined above, the first step in dealing with individual cases of bullying is the process of screening to identify whether a reported incident qualifies as bullying. The present study investigated the frequency of suspected bullying incidents that have been reported through the screening process. Focusing on this initial step in the 'indicated action' process is important because not all victims are identified by school personnel (Haataja et al., 2016). In a study conducted on stable victims, that is, individuals who reported victimisation initially as well as five months after programme implementation, Haataja and colleagues found that victims who received attention from school staff comprised of only 24% of the 348 stable victims considered. This study highlighted the fact that, even within the operation of a structured anti-bullying programme, victim recognition is problematic for school staff. Additionally, it was found that peer reputation as a victim increased the likelihood of recognition, while victims who also engaged in bullying behaviour decreased the chances of being recognised by a teacher (Haataja et al., 2016). Teachers may not have the opportunity to directly observe many cases of bullying and, as such, the screening tool may be filled out by other concerned adults such as parents of victims. Understanding how the screening tool

has been implemented and utilised across different schools can indicate how schools have been identifying and recognising victims (Haataja et al., 2016).

The KiVa programme was introduced in New Zealand schools in 2015 to address the high rates of bullying. When deciding the appropriate anti-bullying programme for New Zealand schools, it was important to consider the high ethnic diversity of the country. Currently ranked as the fifth most ethnically diverse country among the OECD countries (Office of Ethnic Communities, 2016), New Zealand is unique in that it strongly endorses bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism (Kljakovic et al., 2015). This is also reflected in the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). Following an in-depth analysis of the curriculum, a team of teacher professional development specialists at Victoria University of Wellington began exploring possible anti-bullying programmes that would align with values in the New Zealand curriculum. As a consequence, the team decided to introduce KiVa to New Zealand schools. KiVa is now being implemented in over 50 schools across New Zealand (KiVa, n.d.). Presently, there is one published study available on the effectiveness of KiVa in the New Zealand context (i.e. Green et al., 2020). However, to date, the number of bullying incidents reported, and the methods adopted by KiVa schools in New Zealand to address individual cases has not been examined. The present study represents a preliminary evaluation of how the 'indicated actions' component of the KiVa programme is being used in a sub-sample of 12 schools in New Zealand and was designed to inform and further refine future implementation. We sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What procedures have KiVa schools used to address individual cases of bullying?
2. What is the frequency of potential and actual bullying incidents that have been reported by KiVa schools since the implementation of the programme?
3. How are parents and classroom teachers of those implicated in bullying incidents involved in the 'indicated actions' process?
4. What are the perceived effects by the KiVa team of the 'indicated actions' component?

METHOD

Ethical Clearance and Informed Consent

This research was approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (Reference number: 0000023658). Participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study and proposed use of the results along with contact details of the researchers to clarify questions. All participants gave informed consent.

Participants

The participants of this study were members of the KiVa team from 12 schools in New Zealand. For the purpose of this study, only schools that had been following the KiVa programme for more than a year were invited to participate. This criteria was met by 18 schools at the time of data collection. The recruitment process was initiated by the KiVa team from Accent Learning (professional development specialists offering school support services) at Victoria University of Wellington. They contacted principals of the schools with an introductory email alerting them to the study after which the researcher (first author) contacted the principals with details of the study. An information sheet and a consent form was emailed to the school KiVa contact provided by the principal, and the consent form was signed and returned by email. Twelve schools chose to participate by nominating a KiVa team member to be interviewed. One school declined to participate, citing time constraints and five schools did not respond to the emails. The participating KiVa team members comprised of teachers (n=6), principals/directors (n=2) and deputy/associate principals (n=4).

Materials

The interview schedule consisted of 12 specific open-ended questions that were formulated for this project. The questions were designed to first gather factual information about how KiVa procedures were being implemented in the schools. These questions were based on the 'indicated actions' component steps outlined in the KiVa manual (Herkama & Salmivalli, 2014). In particular, participants were asked about the make-up of the KiVa team, how records were being kept, how many screening forms had been received, how many these forms were found to be cases of bullying, specific types of bullying, specific procedures followed, and the approach used to deal with bullying cases. The remaining questions asked participants about the teacher and parent involvement in dealing with bullying cases and the effect of the KiVa procedures on bullying incidents in the school (e.g., "Please describe how

the class teacher has been involved in tackling a bullying incident.”; “Can you tell me how parents have been involved (if at all) in dealing with bullying cases?”; “What has been the effect of the KiVa team intervention on the bullying cases?”).

Procedure

After obtaining informed consent from a participant, a convenient time for the interview was arranged via email. In addition, to facilitate accurate data collection and enable the participant to gather factual information in relation to ‘indicated actions’, each participant was sent a copy of the interview schedule prior to the interview. The interviews were conducted over the phone with 11 participants and one personal interview was conducted at the participant’s school. The mode of interview was decided by the participant and took into consideration the geographical location of the participants. Each interview was approximately 30 minutes. Responses were noted down by the researcher during the course of the interview. The participants who requested a summary of the interview in their consent form were provided with a copy via email.

RESULTS

Demographic Information

The schools that participated in the study represented around 2,789 students with the number of students in each school varying from 45 to 676 (mean = 238.25), located in both rural and urban areas. At the time of data collection, schools in NZ had a decile rating to indicate the proportion of students from low socio-economic background enrolled in the school (Ministry of Education, 2019). Among the 12 schools that participated in this study, 10 were high decile and 2 were medium decile schools. Furthermore, school level data on ethnic diversity indicated that the average percentage of students identifying as belonging to a specific ethnic group in the current sample were 68.12 % NZ European (range 48.19% to 84.14%), 11.23% Maori (range 2.40% to 24.28%), 3.05% Pacific (range 0% to 9.04%), 13.68% Asian (range 0.47% to 27.71 %) and 0.57% other (range 0% to 1.45%). Seven of the schools were full primary schools (i.e. Year levels 1-8 ~ age 5-13 years), four were contributing primary schools (Year levels 1-6 ~ age 5-11 years), and one was a secondary school, (Year level 7-13 (~ age 10-18 years). Although exact gender data was not available, the sample consisted of 10 co-education schools, one girls-only primary school and one boys-only secondary school.

KiVa Procedures

All schools reported having at least three members on the KiVa team, including one to two teachers and a principal or deputy principal. Furthermore, one school reported having the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO), who is the teacher responsible for the support and coordination of students with special needs, as part of the team. When asked about how the team kept records of the incidents, eight schools reported that they preferred keeping a paper file consisting of KiVa forms and four schools reported that they stored information online, accessible only to the relevant staff on either the Google drive (n=3) or the KAMAR system for recording (n=1). KAMAR is a school administration package designed for schools in New Zealand that allows teachers to record and share student information. Schools reporting online storage of KiVa information cited the ease of sharing and accessibility of information as the primary reason for online record keeping.

All 12 schools reported that they had been following the procedures outlined in the KiVa manual for suspected bullying incidents. Following a case being deemed as an actual bullying incident, the participants were asked about the approach adopted by the school during discussions with the bully. Nine schools reported that they used both the confronting and the non-confronting approach. This was decided on a case-by-case basis depending on factors such as the students involved and information available. One school reported that they use only the confronting approach, while two schools only used the non-confronting approach.

Potential vs Actual Bullying Incidents

Data regarding the number of potential incidents and the number of actual incidents of bullying reported in a school since they implemented KiVa were collated. The number of potential incidents of bullying were indicated by the number of screening forms received by the KiVa team. Out of the total number of screening forms received (suspected incidents), the number of cases that qualified as actual incidents of bullying were also obtained. The incidents of bullying reported can include instances of reoffending by the same perpetrator, however most of the schools indicated that the victims were different in each of the cases. As indicated in Table 1, the number of suspected bullying incidents reported (screening forms received) varied greatly across different schools. For example, in schools with a total roll of approximately 300 – 400 students, the number of screening forms filled out ranged from 53 to 203 over two years of implementation (Schools G,

H and I). Additionally, in most schools, not all of the suspected incidents were considered to be actual bullying incidents. The percentage of incidents that ended up being recognised as bullying ranged from a low of 25% to a high of 100%. A chi-square test of independence determined there was a statistically significant association between a school and whether or not a reported incident was actual bullying, $\chi^2(11) = 174.8, p < .001$. The association was strong (Cohen, 1988), Cramer's V = .537. The percent of suspected incidents identified as bullying can be compared between schools, adjusting p-values using the Bonferroni method. We determined that the following schools differ ($p < .05$). Schools C, G and I had a significantly higher percent of suspected incidents that were actual bullying (93.9%, 100% and

94.4% respectively) compared to Schools A (37.0%), B (47.5%), E (33.3%), F (37.0%), H (42.9%), K (25.0%) and L (28.6%). In addition, School G had a significantly higher percent of suspected incidents that were actual bullying (100%) compared to Schools D (77.1%) and J (73.3%). School D had a significantly higher percent of suspected incidents that were actual bullying (77.1%) compared to Schools H (42.9%) and K (25.0%). This variation could be attributed to how the criteria for the use of the screening form varied across schools. One participant stated that, "we included all low level forms of bullying and other minor offences in the screening forms," while a KiVa team member in another school said, "If it comes to writing a screening form, it is most definitely an incident."

Table 1
Number of Suspected and Actual Bullying Incidents.

ID	Years of KiVa Implementation	School Roll	Screening forms (suspected incidents)	Actual bullying incidents	% of suspected incidents identified as bullying	% of student population who experienced bullying
A	1	100	27	10	37.0	10.0
B	1	270	40	19	47.5	7.03
C	1	676	99	93	94.0	13.75
D	1	155	35	27	77.1	17.41
E	1	45	12	4	33.3	8.88
F	1	158	27	10	37.0	6.32
G	2	300	53	53	100	19.33
H	2	390	203	87	42.9	22.03
I	2	354	54	51	94.4	14.40
J	2	164	30	22	73.3	13.41
K	3	167	20	5	25.0	2.99
L	3	80	7	2	28.6	2.50

The interview participants were also asked about the most common form of bullying that was prevalent in their school. Based on the responses, three main types of bullying were identified – verbal name-calling, physical bullying and exclusion. Verbal bullying was found to be the most prevalent form of bullying reported, with 50.0% of the participating schools reporting it as the most prevalent form in their school, followed by exclusion (16.6% of participating schools) and physical bullying (8.3% of participating schools). Three of the schools also reported two different types of bullying to be equally dominant – exclusion and verbal (16.6% of participating schools) and physical and verbal (8.3% of participating

schools). Verbal bullying included unkind name-calling and teasing. Physical bullying ranged from low levels of physical aggression such as poking to more significant acts of aggressions such as pushing. KiVa team members also described examples of bullying through exclusion from peer groups as well as exclusion on online platforms.

Parent and Class Teacher Involvement

The participants were also asked about the involvement of parents and classroom teachers in the KiVa programme. The role played by the classroom teachers was relatively uniform. Most of the schools reported that the classroom teacher

was involved in reporting the incidents, finding more information and in identifying supportive peers for the victim. Furthermore, they were regularly updated by the KiVa team about how the case was progressing. Additionally, two schools also reported that the classroom teacher was involved in doing class activities such as a 'KiVa refresher' in light of a bullying incident. One participant said, *"Following the meetings with children involved, the classroom teacher is informed of the content of these meetings, and is notified as to the child's goals and any identified support people."*

In contrast, parents' involvement in bullying incidents relating to their child was reported as being quite varied. While most schools reported that parents are generally aware of KiVa, six schools reported that parents are contacted about the incident if it is deemed necessary. For instance, a KiVa team member reported that, *"Parents are involved only if absolutely necessary, usually when they request a meeting or when the student (bully) has reoffended more than three times."* One school reported that parents are contacted after seven days for a follow-up while another school indicated that only the victim's parents are contacted. Additionally, two schools stated that when parents are involved it typically means a) that they were themselves reporting the incidents, b) they were making a complaint regarding their child being involved in a bullying incident, or c) their child has told them about an incident involving other children. Another school reported that parents have not been involved at all as they have not had any incidents serious enough to garner their involvement. One school reported that a few of the parents are unhappy with the 'indicated actions' process employed by the KiVa team. The following comment was made by a KiVa team member, *"Some parents are not happy with the interview process because they are not involved. They don't want their child to be interviewed without the parents being informed beforehand and they don't like the idea of their child being interviewed without them being present to advocate for them."*

Perceived Effects of the KiVa Programme

The KiVa team members were asked about the effect of the programme in their school. Eleven of the participants interviewed reported positive effects of KiVa. For example: *"The children have a better understanding of what constitutes 'bullying' ... We have had very few repeated incidents of bullying. We now have more detailed records of bullying incidents and are able to refer back to them."* Another team member commented, *"We have had 99.9% success rate and we are really happy with it."* A school reported that out of the

61 bullying incidents that they have had last year, only two were repeated. A KiVa team member from another school stated the following: *"The children are able to distinguish between a bullying incident and a conflict and they demonstrate a greater willingness to stop it. Our students feel safer and it has led to better awareness."* Other comments from KiVa team members included: *"Hugely reduced"*, *"Resolved satisfactorily"* and *"Stopped in majority of the cases"*. KiVa left *"no room for misinterpretation"* and that *"the main thing is there is more clarity about bullying."* However, the one school who did not see KiVa as having a positive impact reported that, *"While the number of bullying incidents have reduced, unfortunately the KiVa intervention did not have an effect on a few of the cases."* When asked for additional comments, the school suggested that bullying incidents involving students with complex behavioural needs could be accommodated into the process.

DISCUSSION

This research provides preliminary information on the implementation of the 'indicated actions' component of the KiVa anti-bullying programme in a sample of New Zealand schools. In particular, it highlighted the individual differences across schools that are apparent with regard to the implementation of KiVa processes. While some schools used the screening form for most minor incidents, other schools used it only for reporting severe cases of bullying. It appears that some schools are spreading the net as wide as possible to most-likely ensure that no incident is missed. This results in a relatively low number of bullying incidents compared to the number of screening reports. In contrast, other schools appear to be only completing screening forms when there is a strong chance that the incident is bullying. It appears that the criteria for the use of the screening tool has been employed differently within each school. A possible explanation for this variation could be related to school practices with regard to problematic behaviour already in place within schools prior to the introduction of KiVa. If it is common practice to follow up on all incidents (no matter how minor), then it would follow that schools would adopt a similar procedure with the KiVa programme. If, however, the typical practice was to ignore relatively small incidents, then again it would make sense the schools would continue to adopt this approach even with the implementation of a new programme. It is unclear what is the 'best' method with regard to where to draw the line, in terms of screening for potential bullying incidents, as this is yet untested. However, if schools cast a wide net this may have the added advantage of giving students the confidence to come forward and report

incidents with the knowledge that an adult is taking what they have to say seriously (Rigby, 2011). This is particularly important given the lack of recognition by teachers of relational bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006) and the under-reporting of bullying incidents by students (Rigby & Barnes, 2002), both of which are key issues in bullying prevention (Green, 2021; VanZooeren & Weisz, 2018). In addition, even when an anti-bullying programme such as KiVa is in place, there is a significant lack of recognition by teachers of the majority of stable victims (Haataja et al., 2016). The 'wide net' may result in an increased likelihood of students reporting incidents in the future, thereby increasing the chance of bullying incidents being recognised and reported. However, if the bar (criteria) is set too high, then it is possible that (actual) bullying incidents will be missed.

Following the identification of a bullying incident, the majority of the schools in this study appeared to take an individualised intervention approach. The choice of approach for nine schools depended on factors such as the students involved and the severity of the issue. This could be considered ideal as Garandeau et al. (2014) found that the effectiveness of the approach varied as it was based on the nature of the case. However, as the present study did not look at the specifics of the incidents that were reported, it is unclear whether the choice of intervention by the KiVa team for a particular case had any direct bearing on the outcome of that case.

Qualitative evidence of the success of the 'indicated actions' were also reported in the current study. In particular, the majority of respondents specified that addressing individual cases of bullying had led to positive outcomes in terms of reduction or cessation of bullying and increased awareness among students. This is similar to the findings reported by Hutchings and Clarkson (2015). The current study also explored aspects of KiVa procedures including record keeping as well as issues with implementations reported by the KiVa team members. Classroom teachers (who may not have been on the KiVa team) played an important role in reporting the incidents as well as conducting follow-up procedures and identifying support peers for the victim. This suggests the need for all classroom teachers to have access to KiVa documents to keep abreast of the situation and thereby provide appropriate support in class. Although the majority of schools in the current study reported that teachers are kept 'in-the-loop', eight of the schools indicated that reports and forms were stored in paper folders or student files. It is unclear whether all teachers had ready access to these paper files. On the other hand, four schools stated that they used an online

system of storing information and emphasised that this increased access to information for all staff members. Considering the significant role played by a classroom teacher, one could argue that an online recording system may be less time-consuming and more efficient in terms of enabling teachers to have quick access to relevant information. However, storage of such sensitive information online also raises issues of online security and possible consequences of a data breach. Thus it is important for schools that make use of an online storage system to have effective online security measures in place. This issue was not discussed during the course of the interviews in the present study and future explorations of record keeping in KiVa schools may consider best possible ways of maintaining data security.

This study also raises the question of when and to what extent parents should be involved, and how this may differ depending on the cultural context. The KiVa programme recommends that the suspected bully be called into an interview with the KiVa team without prior notice being given to the parents. However, one school reported that eight parents had expressed their disagreement with this process of interviewing their child. In all likelihood, one can assume that these concerns are shared by many other parents. For example, parents who participated in a study by Harcourt et al. (2015) stressed the importance of involving them in the school's response to their child's experience of bullying. The current study has highlighted the tension between parents and school staff with regard to bullying incidents (Harcourt et al., 2015) and in particular their involvement in 'indicated actions', an area worthy of further investigation.

One school also raised the issue of dealing with complex behaviour needs of students involved in bullying. It is evident that mental health issues are strongly associated with engaging in bullying behaviour (Benedict et al., 2014; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000) as are conditions such as autism and ADHD (Montes & Halterman, 2007). It is possible that students who engage in bullying, and for whom the KiVa process is not sufficient to ameliorate their behaviour, may need additional assistance from other professionals such as school counsellors or educational psychologists in order to successfully tackle bullying. Additional exploration is needed to gain more clarity on how the KiVa team can work collaboratively with other professionals to meet the needs of these students.

The current study has several limitations that must be taken into consideration. First, the sample is small and self-selected. Second, the outcomes of the

bullying intervention were those that were reported by the KiVa team members and not the students who were involved in bullying. It is important to investigate whether students who have engaged in bullying behaviour intend to change their behaviour. Along these lines, Garandea et al. (2016) analysed 341 KiVa cases and found that “making bullies feel empathy for the victim and condemning their bullying behaviour increased bullies intention to stop.” (p. 1034). It is an area worthy of additional investigation, particularly in relation to the perceived impact of the ‘indicated actions’ process on overall classroom dynamics. Obtaining more detailed qualitative information from students and their families involved in the KiVa processes would provide a more nuanced picture of the intervention.

There are several implications from these findings for schools who are using the KiVa programme. First, there needs to be a systematic approach to determining how (or whether) parents are to be included in the ‘indicated actions’ process. This may involve the production of a flyer that is given to parents new to the school at the start of the year that clearly outlines the schools procedures for dealing with bullying incidents. Furthermore, these consistent messages could be relayed in school newsletters so that parents are forewarned before an incident arises and emotions are involved. Second, the findings highlight the tension between enabling schools to adapt procedures so that they are culturally- and practically-relevant to their unique context, while ensuring the integrity of the programme. As yet it is unclear just how much variation is possible before the impact of the programme is negatively affected. Despite the need for flexibility, the huge variation in the use of the screening tool found in the present study across just 12 schools highlights the need for further research into the use of this tool. In addition, schools may want to reaffirm their individual school positions on where to draw the line in terms of screening for bullying incidents and may also want to systematically experiment with the size of their net. Given that there is an under-reporting of bullying incidents (Rigby & Barnes, 2002) and a tendency for issues to go unnoticed and therefore unresolved for some time (Burger et al., 2015; Green, 2021), casting a wider net to include seemingly minor incidents for further investigation may be best practice. This approach may pick up students who are stable victims including those at-risk for mental health issues (Coggan et al., 2003) and act as a preventative measure before the bullying incidents become entrenched and more extreme. It may also increase the likelihood of future incidents being reported, as students will see that their concerns are being taken seriously and acted upon.

Conflict of Interest: Although the second author has been affiliated with the introduction of the KiVa programme into New Zealand, she has received no financial or material gain as a result of her association with KiVa.

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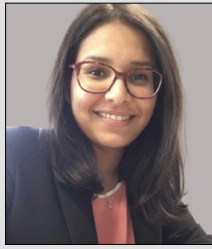
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