

Cyberbullying: A Resource for
Parents and Educators

by

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying has been referred to as electronic bullying, online bullying or cyberbullying. This method of bullying utilizes technological means such as e-mail, instant messaging, websites, chat rooms, and voting booths to intimidate, put down and hurt victims. This new form of bullying allows the bully to remain anonymous and antagonize the victim at school and at home. The effects of this type of bullying can be extreme and have even lead to victims committing suicide as a result of continuous victimization. This form of bullying has experienced an increase of research in the past decade; however, many aspects of cyberbullying and cyberbully victimization have yet to be explored.

The purpose of this study is to review the existing research on cyberbullying and provide recommendations for parents and educators related to this topic. Information regarding the methods of cyberbullying, the prevalence of cyberbullying and what

parents and educators can do to stop cyberbullying were explored. A critical analysis is also provided along with recommendations for future research.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Teens, now more than ever, are using electronic means to communicate with their peers. Some adolescents are also using these devices as tools for bullying. Recent cases of individuals committing suicide as a result of being victims of online harassment and cyberbullying have brought the issue of cyberbullying and communication through the Internet to the forefront of bullying prevention efforts.

One case of cyberbullying victimization occurred in October 2006 when 13-year-old Megan Meier, who was believed to be a victim of cyberbullying, hanged herself at her home (Welch, 2008). Megan had been communicating with someone she thought was a 16-year-old boy named Josh Evans. "Josh" had been sending Megan messages through their Myspace accounts. The messages began as flirtatious and flattering, but when the messages turned negative, this case constituted cyberbullying. One message said that the world would be better off without her. It wasn't until after Megan hanged herself that Megan's parents, Tina and Rob Meier, found out that a neighbor, 48-year-old Lori Drew, had created the fictitious Josh Evans Myspace account. Lori claimed to have created the account to monitor what Megan was saying about her own daughter, who apparently had a previous falling out with Megan. In May 2008, Lori Drew was indicted by a federal grand jury on a charge of conspiracy, along with three counts of computer crime and accessing protected computers without authorization to obtain information used to inflict emotional distress (Welch, 2008).

Ryan Halligan, a 13-year-old boy, also became a victim of cyberbullying (Mckenna, 2007). Ryan was reported to be the victim of traditional bullying at school, but learned kickboxing as a way to defend himself. He became defenseless again once the attacks moved online (Long, 2008). Ryan received threatening and vicious e-mails and instant messages from

classmates. At one point, a popular female classmate pretended to be interested in Ryan, only to share their personal conversations with her friends (Mckenna, 2007). After weeks of humiliation and torment, Ryan hanged himself in October 2003 (Long, 2008).

These are two tragic cases of cyberbullying. The national coverage these and other stories have received has brought the issue of cyberbullying to the forefront of debates and has also brought about many questions regarding accountability and laws pertaining to this new means of bullying. These two instances are examples of how teenagers, and even adults, have used the Internet and other electronic means to bully others. More and more children and teens are using the Internet than ever before.

According to the *Internet World Stats* (2008) website on Internet use, approximately 71% of the population access and use the Internet. This is a significantly large number of people. Undoubtedly, the Internet has also become one of the main forms of communication for adolescents in the United States. Today's adolescents are also the first generations who have lived in a society where the Internet is an integral part of our daily lives (as cited in Raskauskas & Stolz, 2007). Understanding exactly what teens are doing online gives us a better understanding of Internet use.

Teens are using the Internet for a multitude of reasons. It is important to understand what exactly teens are doing online and for what purposes they typically use computers and Internet. Gross (2004) conducted a study to determine what teens reported using the internet to do. Gross looked to examine three main propositions: that there are gender differences in Internet use, that the Internet can cause adolescents to become socially isolated and depressed, and that the Internet is a place for adolescents to use anonymous identities. Gross looked at Internet and computer use of 261 7th and 10th graders from a suburban public school in California.

Gross (2004) found that there were no gender differences between adolescent boys and girls Internet use in the overall sample as it pertained to how much time they spent online. There was a difference when asked how long participants had been using the Internet. In this sample, 10th grade boys had reported being online significantly longer than girls. There was also a small subgroup of heavy game players that mostly consisted of males across grade levels. Gross concluded that the apparent gender gap in time spent online was narrowing.

Gross (2004) also examined how adolescents spend their time online. Most participants, both boys and girls, in this study reported that they primarily spent their time for private communication, particularly instant messaging. Participants spent an average of 40 minutes a day using an instant messaging device. They also reported visiting websites, downloading music, and e-mailing as primary online activities. Participants were found to multitask while online, spending much of their time doing more than one activity.

Adolescents in this study appeared to communicate mostly with people they knew; communication with strangers was quite rare (Gross, 2004). This study failed to find a link between the amounts of time adolescents spent online and psychosocial adjustment, which was assessed through measures of loneliness, social anxiety, depression, and daily life satisfaction. Gross concluded that the computer served a similar social function as that of the telephone.

Computers are also increasingly present in classrooms and help foster the education process in countless ways. Although these devices can help students' learning, these devices may also bring problems that need the attention of educators, such as cyberbullying. Although it may be receiving more attention, many teachers and administrators are not aware of students being harassed online (Beran & Li, 2005). Clearly, examining the dynamics of cyberbullying is, and will continue to be, important for parents and educators.

Statement of the Problem

With increased Internet use by youth across the world and an increasing amount of public attention on cases of cyberbullying, it is important to understand the facts and relevant research regarding cyberbullying. Research on cyberbullying is relatively new, and although many studies have reported rates of cyberbullying, much research needs to be done on the means through which cyberbullies access their targets, laws and policies preventing cyberbullying in schools, and what educators can do to help cyberbully victims and prevent cyberbullying from happening in schools. Teachers and administrators need to become more aware of cyberbullying and what can be done to address and prevent cyberbullying in the schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine what is currently known in regards to cyberbullying. In order to gain a better understanding of cyberbullying, information regarding the methods of cyberbullying, the prevalence of cyberbullying and what parents and educators can do to help stop cyberbullying were explored further. In order to fully understand these areas, a review of the current literature was conducted during the summer and fall of 2008 at the University of Wisconsin Stout's library center.

Research Questions

Four research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What research currently exists on the prevalence of cyberbullying?
2. What are the means through which cyberbullies access their targets?
3. What are the current laws and policies against cyberbullying in our schools?
4. What can parents and educators do to help cyberbully victims and to prevent the occurrence of cyberbullying in schools?

Definition of Terms

One term that needs to be clarified for complete understanding as it relates to this study is:

Cyberbullying- “Variously referred to as electronic bullying, online bullying or cyberbullying, this new method of bullying involves the use of e-mail, instant messaging, web sites, voting booths, and chat or bash rooms to deliberately antagonize and intimidate others” (Beale & Hall, 2007, p. 8).

Assumptions of the Study

One assumption of this study is that researchers cited throughout this paper provided accurate and honest results. A second assumption is that the researchers in studies cited throughout this paper have used valid and reliable instruments to gather their data. A third assumption is that not all possible studies related to cyberbullying will be covered in this paper. This study provided a literature review of the current research on cyberbullying. Therefore, no data were collected to add to the current pool of knowledge relating to the topics covered throughout this paper.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This section will examine the current research and literature on cyberbullying. This will include examining at how cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying, the means through which victims access their targets, the prevalence of cyberbullying, effects of cyberbullying, current laws and legislation for cyberbullying, and what schools and parents can do to combat cyberbullying.

Bullying

Traditional bullying has been researched for many years, yet it is still important to understand traditional bullying in order to understand the differences associated with cyberbullying. Bullying can be defined as “being an aggressive, intentional act or behavior that is carried out by a group or an individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself” (as cited in Slonje & Smith, 2008, p.147).

Bullying is not only a problem in the United States, it happens world wide; often causing effects that can last with a person for many years (as cited in McGuinness, 2007). The main difference between bullying and teasing or quarreling is that there is a power difference between the bully and the victim, whereas quarreling or teasing between equal powered classmates may be somewhat acceptable (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Understanding the fundamentals of traditional bullying will provide a foundation for understanding the dynamic world of cyberbullying.

Four general categories have been identified for bullying behavior: verbal, physical, relational, and cyber (McGuinness, 2007). Verbal bullying involves using verbal assaults against the victim. Examples of this could involve name-calling or racial or gender slurs against the victim. Physical bullying can range in severity. This type of bullying can involve a slight shove in the hallway to breaking someone’s leg. Overt, physical attacks are seen as physical bullying.

Bjorkqvist, Osterman and Kaukiainen found that physical aggression typically declines with age, while verbal and indirect forms of bullying tend to increase as adolescents move through school (as cited in Raskauskas & Stolz, 2007). Relational bullying or aggression, which involves shunning, ignoring or withdrawing victims, has also been identified as a category of bullying (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Victims of this type of bullying typically experience the pains associated with isolation from social groups and humiliation. McGuinness (2007) has also identified cyberbullying as a main form of bullying. Cyberbullying will be discussed in greater detail throughout the remainder of this paper.

Bullying can also be direct or indirect in nature (Harris & Petrie, 2003). Direct forms of bullying could involve such acts as taunting, teasing, hitting, verbal criticism, and threatening stares against victims. These types of bullying can be verbal or physical, as described earlier. Examples of indirect bullying include acts such as influencing others to taunt or tease the victim, spreading rumors about the victim, ignoring or excluding others, and influencing other individuals to physically hurt the victim. Relational aggression is a form of indirect verbal bullying (as cited in Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Relational bullying was previously described, but also fits these characteristics. Bullying can take a variety of forms and methods and understanding these will assist with understanding the complexities of cyberbullying.

According to Harris & Petrie (2003), the two types of bully victims are passive and proactive. Most victims tend to be passive and display characteristics such as being insecure, quiet, and have few friends. On the other hand, proactive victims tend to be more self-confident and assertive, and they tend to ineffectively retaliate more than passive victims. Also, proactive victims may tend to be less popular in their classroom and are viewed as disruptive by their classmates. Victims of traditional bullying tend to experience long-term effects. Some of these

effects may include lowered self-esteem, depression and potentially suicide. Stress levels may affect their ability to learn in the classroom, thus their grades may suffer. Victims may also become socially isolated and may lead students to drop out of school in the later school years.

A framework to view bullying from can be acquired by taking a closer look at Espelage and Swearer's (2004) social-ecological systems perspective on bullying. This system basically states that bullying doesn't occur in isolation. Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that the ecological-systems theory states that individuals are part of an interrelated system, with the individual in the center, and that these systems (school, family, and community) encompass the individual and affect how that person develops (as cited in Espelage and Swearer, 2004). In instances of bullying, the social ecology of an individual influences how they may participate in a bullying situation; either as the bully, the victim or the bystander. (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). These roles will later be discussed as they directly relate to cyberbullying. According to this theory, influences such as gender, family environment, and relationships with siblings are a few examples of influences on the role someone might take in a bullying situation. Accordingly, the school climate and community atmosphere may influence the bullying situation, based upon the system's climate and stance against bullying. Extending even further around the individual, the culture in which an individual lives may also influence the bullying situation. The social-ecology in which an individual lives will dictate the degree of a youth's engagement in bullying a bullying situation.

Raskauskas and Stolz (2007) conducted a study to determine if there was a relationship between electronic bullying and traditional bullying. Their study included 84 participants between the ages of 13 and 18 who completed surveys on their experiences with electronic bullying and traditional bullying. This survey included questions about participation as the

perpetrator of both forms of bullying. The authors found that a significant amount of participants had been involved with electronic bullying, either as the victim (48.8%) or as the bully (21.4%). Also, they found that nearly all traditional bullies also identified themselves as electronic bullies. They also found that traditional victims did not use electronic bullying as a way to retaliate against their bullies. However, victims who were bullied through the Internet or text messages tended to be bullies at school. Overall, the study supported the author's hypothesis that traditional bully victimization would predict electronic bully victimization. Thus, there appears to be a relationship between traditional bullying and electronic bullying.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has also been identified as electronic bullying or online bullying (Beale & Hall, 2007). "This new method of bullying involves the use of e-mail, instant messaging, web sites, voting booths, and chat or bash rooms to deliberately antagonize and intimidate others" (Beale & Hall, 2007, p. 8). Research on the effects of Internet use and how Internet use has changed communication has seen an increase in research (McKenna & Bargh, 2000).

McKenna and Bargh (2000) have identified four major differences between communication through the Internet versus communication in real life. The first difference they identified was that through the Internet, it is possible to remain anonymous. Unlike in personal communication, individuals have the opportunity to hide their identities while online. Second, physical distance between people is eliminated on the Internet. This being said, it is possible to communicate with people from all over the world through the Internet. This eliminates the requirement for physical proximity of a person as it relates to communication. According to these researchers, another difference between communication in person and communication on the Internet is the idea that physical and visual signals and cues are non-existent while

communicating via the Internet. Finally, time becomes less important when using the Internet to communicate. Specifically, individuals are able to communicate with individuals who may not be online at the same time. Likewise, individuals have more time to formulate their responses than with face-to-face interactions. The authors noted that taking these differences in communication into account, it is likely that individuals are engaging in different behaviors while communicating through the Internet, as opposed to communicating in person. Taking these differences into account, the distinction between traditional bullying and cyberbullying will be explored further.

Although some of the results and desired consequences of cyberbullying are similar to those of traditional bullying, cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying in a number of different ways. Slonje and Smith (2008) have identified a number of differences between traditional bullying and cyberbullying. One way that cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying is availability of contact between the cyberbully and the victim. With traditional bullying, the victim is able to avoid physical contact with the bully once they are in a safe environment, such as their home. However, with cyberbullying allows the cyberbullying to contact their victim endlessly; victims can receive text messages and e-mails at any time.

Another difference between traditional bullying and cyberbullying is the number of people who witness or become the audience of cyberbullying (Slonje & Smith, 2008). With traditional bullying, the audience usually only consists of the small audience that witnesses it occurring on the playground, in the lunch room, etc. However, with cyberbullying, bullies can reach a large audience by posting pictures or video clips on the Internet. By using an electronic device, such as a cell phone or the Internet, the cyberbully is virtually invisible and this exchange is no longer a face-to-face experience, which is another difference between traditional bullying

and cyberbullying. The anonymity provided by these technologies removes the bully from the consequences caused by their actions. Electronic bullying is different from traditional bullying because it allows the bully to be removed from their victims, thus they are also removed from the impact their actions have on that person (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Since cyberbullies are virtually removed from their victims, the opportunities for feelings of regret, remorse or sympathy for the victim are removed (Slonje & Smith, 2008). This removal from public situations also decreases the occurrences and opportunities for bystander intervention, which can be helpful for the victim.

Roles/Characteristics

Whether students realize it or not, it is likely that many students who use technology have participated in an act of bullying in one form or another. Three main roles that someone may take in an instance of cyberbullying are being the bully, the target, or the bystander (Willard, 2007a). The bully is the person who harasses or puts down other people. More characteristics of bullies will be discussed later. Individuals may also be the targets. These are the people who are targeted by the cyberbully, and they are sometimes also known as the victim. Although many individuals may think they are not participating in bullying behavior, being a bystander also means that one is involved in a bullying act. Willard (2007a) identified two types of bystanders, helpful bystanders and harmful bystanders. Helpful bystanders are individuals who take action to stop the bully by either protesting against the bullying act, by providing both physical and emotional support for the target, or by seeking the help of an adult to intervene in the situation. Hurtful bystanders, on the other hand, are involved either by supporting and encouraging the bullying behavior or by simply doing nothing to intervene or seek help for the target.

Cyberbullies can be either social climbers or aggressive harassers (as cited in Froeschle, Mayorga, Castillo & Hargrave, 2008). Social climbers tend to use the Internet as a tool to put down individuals who, as they perceive, are inferior to themselves. They also use the Internet as a tool to associate with a particular group or crowd they wish to belong to. On the contrary, aggressive harassers are individuals who have been bullied themselves and use the Internet to harass others in revenge.

Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) found that the caregiver-child relationship was significantly related to whether or not children engage in cyberbullying. In their study, participants who reported a poor caregiver-child emotional bond, as opposed to those who reported a strong emotional, were more than two times as likely to engage in online harassment. This suggests that parental involvement and relationships are a critical factor in whether or not youth will engage in cyberbullying. Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) also examined psychosocial indicators associated with engaging in online harassment towards others. Delinquent behavior, being the target of traditional bullying, and substance use were all psychosocial indicators that significantly influenced whether someone engaged in Internet harassment towards others, as reported by this study. This study also found no gender differences in the rates of males and females reporting that they engaged in the online harassment of others.

Forms and Methods of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying may occur in many different ways through many different means of communication. Identifying the forms of cyberbullying and the ways through which they attack their victims is crucial in understanding the extensive world of cyberbullying. Eight forms of cyberbullying have been identified, along with six major means through which cyberbullying occurs.

Cyberbullies target their victims through communication by potentially threatening them in a number of different ways. One of these ways is through *flaming* (Willard, 2007a). *Flaming* involves public or private online fights using angry, vulgar and offensive messages. Another way cyberbullies target their victims is through *harassment*; this involves continuous and repeated sending of mean, inappropriate and insulting messages to a student. A third way happens when a cyberbully sends rumors about an individual with the intent of ruining that student's reputation or friendships. This is known as *denigration*. *Cyberstalking* involves more intense harassment and denigration; however, these threats are transferred to create significant fear for the target. *Impersonation* occurs when a cyberbully pretends to be someone else and sends or posts information to indicate that person is bad or to damage that person's reputation. *Outing* someone involves sharing an individual's secrets or using images to embarrass someone online. Sometimes cyberbullies will use *trickery* to coax the target into sharing those personal secrets or embarrassing information. Finally, cyberbullies may use *exclusion* to intentionally exclude someone from an online social network or group.

Young people are also finding many different means through which to harass and bully their target victims. It is through these means that cyberbullies are able to pursue their targets and use the forms of bullying previously mentioned to attack their victims on a 24 hour a day basis. Six major means through which cyberbullying may occur are: instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or bash boards, small text messaging, web sites, and voting booths (Beale & Hall, 2007).

Messaging devices provided through *Yahoo*, *AOL* or *MSN* are allowing cyberbullies to attack their victims through means of instant messages. These devices allow users to add other people to their user lists (Beale & Hall, 2007). The devices notify the user when someone comes online, allowing them to initiate a conversation with them. These devices extend students

relationships outside the classroom and beyond the confines of the school. Users are able to exclude particular individuals from contacting them. However, cyberbullies can easily switch screen names that hide their true identities, allowing for potential cyberbullying to continue.

Cyberbullies are able to send threatening e-mail messages to their victims through e-mail (Beale & Hall, 2007). Although most e-mail programs allow for particular individuals to be blocked, these screening devices are limited. Although it may be easy to identify where an e-mail originated, it is nearly impossible to actually prove who wrote and sent the message. The loss for accountability is one thing that may draw cyberbullies to using this mean.

Another form through which cyberbullies harass their victims is through chat rooms or bash boards (Beale & Hall, 2007). These devices allow for real-time conversations to occur between users. A bash board, which is the name for an online bulletin board, allows users to anonymously write anything they want. Bash boards are open to the public and potentially leave the information for longer periods of time and for more people to access.

Small text messaging, or text messaging, occurs between mobile phone users (Beale & Hall, 2007). This allows users to write messages that can contain words or numbers up to 160 characters in length. Personal digital assistants (PDAs) allow for individuals to connect to the Internet and sent or receive e-mails through their mobile devices. Since these devices can be taken anywhere, it allows both cyberbullies and victims to access this information anywhere at any time.

Creating websites is another way that cyberbullies are able to harass their victims through technological means (Beale & Hall, 2007). These sites sometimes contain voting or poll booths that allow creators to chose an unflattering characteristic about their victim and poll Internet users about that. For example, cyberbullies could create a poll for who is the “fattest” person of a

group of students, or asking others if they agree that this person is the “ugliest.” Again, these websites are available for the whole world to see. These are only a few examples of what can be done through websites. It is easy to see how these could be devastating and damaging for a cyberbully’s target.

Research is mixed on what forms of cyberbullying are most popular. Raskauskas and Stoltz (2007) reported that victimization was mostly likely to occur through text messaging, followed by Internet or website use. Similarly, they found that bullies tended to use text messaging most frequently. In support of this, Kowalski and Limber (2007) found that instant messaging, chat rooms, websites and e-mail were the most frequently reported methods for electronic bullying.

Contrary to this, Slonje and Smith (2008) found that e-mail victimization was the most common type of cyberbullying reported in their study, which was based in Swedish Schools. Slonje and Smith (2008) also found that girls tended to be victims of cyberbullying by e-mail rather than boys. This study also found that picture/video clip bullying had the highest impact on the victim, possibly because it is the most concrete and could actually show the victim in an embarrassing situation. Second to picture/video clip bullying in this study, phone call bullying was rated as having the next highest impact. This was believed to be because phone calls are perceived to be more personal because the bully actually took their time find the victim’s number and physically call them. E-mail and text messages were less harmful than traditional bullying, reportedly because it appears to be less personal and the victim often times did not know who the bully was. This could also be due to the idea that e-mail has been used less frequently with the rise of the use of text messaging and mobile phone calls.

Rates of Cyberbullying

The prevalence of cyberbullying has been studied since the beginning phases of cyberbullying research. Understanding how often cyberbullying occurs is essential in determining important intervention methods, along with developing appropriate policies and laws against cyberbullying. Understanding how often it occurs may also help emphasize what a growing issue this is in our schools and in our society in general. Studies across conducted over the last few years will be examined more closely.

A study conducted in 2005 examined how often students from nine junior high schools in Calgary, Canada experience cyber-harassment. Beran and Li (2005) surveyed 432 students in grades 7-9 on their experiences with cyber-harassment. Their results indicated that approximately two thirds of their participants had heard of an incidence of cyber-harassment. Interestingly, approximately 23% experienced cyber-harassment at least a few times. Similarly, about one-quarter of the students in their sample reported that they had used these methods to intentionally harm their peers. Students reported that they were negatively impacted by the cyber-harassment experience. This study found few gender differences within their data, suggesting that male and female experiences with cyberbullying are similar.

This study was limited by the fact that it was restricted to only grades 7-9 in Canadian schools using willing participants. These researchers suggested extending the age range to obtain a more accurate view of cyber-harassment across age spans. Also, more studies need to be conducted to verify the generalization of these results to other populations. As cyberbullying gains ground, more research needs to be done to obtain more accurate data across demographic populations.

A more recent study looked at adolescents' cyberbullying experiences, while also examining their perception of school climates and safety strategies, and potential relationships between cyberbullying and other activities such as academic achievement, frequency of using computers and bullying in school (Li, 2007). Participants in this study included 177 seventh grade students from a Western Canadian city. Participants were asked to fill out a survey which included demographic information and questions regarding their experiences with cyberbullying.

Results from this research indicated that over half of the students were victims of bullying and over a quarter of the students had been cyberbullied (Li, 2007). Results also indicated that almost one in three participants were victims of traditional bullying while nearly 15% reported being victims of bullying using electronic means. Interestingly, over fifty percent of the students knew someone who was a victim of cyberbullying. About one third of the victims reported being cyberbullied by their school mates. Surprisingly, about forty percent reported that they didn't know who had cyberbullied them. Cyberbullying appears to happen quite frequently: 60% of cyberbully victims reported being cyberbullied one to three times and 22.7% of victims reported being bullied more than ten times.

This study also found that the majority of students chose not to report when they were cyberbullied and also didn't report when they knew someone who was being cyberbullied (Li, 2007). More details about this will be discussed when examining reporting issues associated with cyberbullying. Not surprisingly, students who used the computers more were significantly more likely to be cyberbullies. However, no correlation was found between how often students used computers and whether or not they were cyberbully victims. This study also established a relationship between bullying and cyberbullying. According to the results, when compared to non-bullies, bullies tended to be cyberbullies as well. Victims of traditional bullying tended also

to be victims in cyberspace. Interestingly, cyberbullies were also likely to be victims of cyberbullies when compared to those who did not cyberbully. Clearly, there is a complex relationship between bullying and cyberbullying.

This study confirmed previous studies in determining that cyberbullying is a serious and prevalent problem in schools (Li, 2007). Of their participants, 15% reported being cyberbullies and about 25% reported being cyberbully victims. Also, the large amount of students who knew of someone being cyberbullied is valuable in demonstrating how important this issue is in our schools. Relating to this, the majority of cyberbully bystanders did nothing to report or stop the cyberbullying. Unfortunately, many of the students thought that adults in the schools would not try to stop cyberbullying. This study also established a relationship between bullying, cyberbullying and victimization, which supports the significance of holistic approaches for intervention plans and further research. Although this study covered a lot of areas and provided great contributions to research, the sample was somewhat limited in regards to generalization because most of the students had access to computers and that the sample was limited to students from an urban city.

More recently, Kowalski and Limber (2007) conducted a study to determine the rates of electronic bullying among middle school students. Their study included 1,915 girls and 1,852 boys in grades 6, 7, & 8 from middle schools in southeastern and northwestern United States. Each student completed an Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire and a questionnaire that looked at the students experiences with electronic bullying. Of the students in their study, 11% identified as cyberbully victims who had been bullied at least once in the previous two months, 7% were identified as bully/victim, 4% were identified as being in the bully only category and 78% reported that they had no experience with electronic bullying. Their study also found that girls

were over-represented in the victims and bully/victim categories. Differences were also shown in grade levels, indicating that the sixth grade population was less likely to be involved in electronic bullying than the older grades. This study indicated that instant messaging was the most frequent means through which victims were electronically bullied. Chat rooms were second most frequent, followed by e-mail messages and websites, respectively.

This study also supplied some important information about the relationship between victims and perpetrators. In this study, both victims and bully/victim individuals were most frequently bullied by a student at school (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). Interestingly, 12% of victims and 16% of bully/victims reported that they had been bullied by a sibling. Almost half of the victims and bully/victims in this study did not know who had electronically bullied them, supporting the fact that the anonymity of the Internet may help foster a bullying situation.

In a similar study, 360 adolescents were surveyed to identify the nature and extent of cyberbullying in Swedish schools within the last two to three months (Slonje & Smith, 2008). The participants were mixed gender and ranged in age from 12 to 20 and either attended lower secondary schools (ages 12-15) or sixth-form colleges (ages 15-20). Participants were asked general questions, questions about each type of cyberbullying (text messaging, e-mail, mobile phone calls or picture/video clip), the perceived impact of cyberbullying, who bullies and who was told of the bullying. According to their research, 10% reported that they had been bullied in the last couple months and 5.3% reported being cyberbullied inside school. 11.7% of students reported being a victim of cyberbullying either in school or out of school. Cybervictim rates were higher in lower secondary schools (17.6%) and lower in sixth-form colleges (3.3%). Similarly, 10.3% of the overall sample reported cyberbullying others. The rates followed the cybervictim

trends by age with 11.9% reporting this in secondary schools and 8.0% reporting this in sixth-form colleges. Few gender differences were found within this study.

Dehue, Bolman and Völlink (2008) conducted a more recent study that examined students' experiences with cyberbullying and also examined parents' perceptions of cyberbullying. The participants in this study included 1,211 students and their parents. Student participants were equally representative of both male and females. They were each given a questionnaire, specifically developed for either the students or the parents. The questionnaire assessed the participant's background, knowledge and possession of computers, Internet and text messaging. Along with these, the questionnaire examined the methods used to bully or the method through which they had possibly been bullied. This study also examined whether or not the individuals joined in the bullying situation, reactions to being bullied, and whether they tried to stop the bullying behavior. Students filled their questionnaires out in a classroom with a teacher supervisor; parents were sent their questionnaire in the mail and completed it at home.

The results of this study suggested that being the victim of cyberbullying and cyberbullying others continues to exist in the student population (Dehue, Bolman, & Völlink, 2008). Of the 1,211 student participants, 16% reported bullying someone else, while 22% reported being the victim of cyberbullying. Gender differences were found for rates of bullying others: the researchers reported that being the bully was higher for boys (18.6%), than it was for girls (13.4%). Girls appeared to be the victim of cyberbullying (24.7%) significantly more often than boys (19.1%). Of all students who had been bullied, 34.8% reported that they did not know the identity of the bully. Interestingly, the most commonly reported means through which individuals reported bullying others and also being bullied was while chatting on MSN, an instant messaging device. Either pretending to ignore or really ignoring the bullying were the

most frequently reported reactions to being bullied on the Internet. Consistent with previous findings for both traditional and cyberbullying, victims frequently reported feeling angry, sad, and not wanting to go to school as a result of cyberbully victimization. Parent results will be discussed as they relate to reporting issues in a later section.

Results of this study generally supported previous findings (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008). This study was unique in that it related parental perceptions of cyberbullying and Internet use by their children. Reports of students not knowing who had bullied them provide some support for the theory of deindividuation and anonymity on the Internet. One important limitation of this study was that participants were first asked if they had engaged in or been the victim of cyberbullying, and then asked subsequent questions after. The subjective nature of this interpretation may have lead to underestimated results as they relate to rates of bullies and victims. Overall, this study provided another fund of knowledge and supported the idea that cyberbullying is a frequent reality for students. It is an issue that students face every day and measures to understand and prevent this need to be taken seriously.

Reporting Issues

In many of the studies focusing on the rates and characteristics of cyberbullying, large percentages of victims typically did not know who had cyberbullied them (Li, 2007). The idea that cyberbullying has the potential to be an anonymous act and that the Internet provides a means through which to anonymously cyberbully people could potentially be a reason so many cyberbullying cases go unreported.

Student's perception of adult and parents ability to help in cyberbullying situations is crucial in increasing the rates of reporting. In a study conducted by Li (2007), 67.1% of the students in her study thought that adults would make an attempt to stop cyberbullying when they

were informed; this means that about a third of the sample thought that adults would not help the situation. It is unfortunate that only 34.1% of the victims in the study reported that they told adults about the cyberbullying incidents. Of the students who were not necessarily the victims of cyberbullying but knew about a cyberbullying instance, only 34.5% of the students in this study told adults about the situations. Interestingly, 78% of cyberbullies and 70% of cyberbully victims knew safety strategies in cyberspace. Almost half of those students reported that they learned the strategies from parents, schools or multiple sources. Clearly, parents and educators need to make a conscious effort to stop bullying and provide an environment that will encourage children to report cyberbullying instances.

Recent studies on cyberbullying rates have also examined the frequency of reporting cyberbullying cases. Slonje and Smith's (2008) study, 50% of the victims reported not telling anyone about their cyberbullying experience. Thirty-five percent told a friend, 8.9% told a parent or guardian and astonishingly, and no one reported telling a teacher about the experience. When asked about the perceived adult awareness, students in this study thought that adults were less aware of text, e-mail, and phone call bullying than traditional forms of bullying. This may account for some of the reasons why reporting to adult figures is not common. Adult awareness is essential in providing effective interventions and policies against cyberbullying.

In the Dehue, Bolman and Vollink (2008) study, which was described in the previous section, students and their parents were surveyed. Their reactions provided interesting and significant findings related to reporting instances of cyberbullying. Over half of the parents in this study reported that they set rules for how frequently their children were allowed to use the computer and about what they were allowed to do while on the Internet. Many of the parents did not know that their children engaged in cyberbullying or were the victim of cyberbullying.

Clearly, parents' involvement in this manner needs to be more efficient and involved. Interestingly, and in direct relation to reporting instances of cyberbullying, many of the participants reported not talking about bullying others or being the victim of bullying. Very few people reported talking about being bullied to their parents (8.9%) and even fewer to talked about it with their teachers (1.7%). Even lower rates were observed for individuals who talked about bullying others. These results support the notion that cyberbullying is going under reported and children are not talking openly about their experiences with caretakers or teachers.

Effects of Cyberbullying

Victims or targets of cyberbullying experience a number of different psychological effects from cyberbullying. Some of the threats may lead the victim or target to have low self-esteem, experience depression, feel anger, fail in school, and avoid social situations (Willard, 2007a). In some extreme cases, cyberbullying may even lead to school violence or suicide. Although some of the effects of cyberbullying are similar to traditional bullying, cyberbullying is different for many reasons. One reason cyberbullying differs is because targets can be victimized 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Since technology allows for constant contact with a person, there is no place for the target to escape. Cyberbullies can also be anonymous, meaning that the target never knows who exactly is harassing them. Victims may soon fear many people because they don't know exactly where the threats are coming from. Also, teens may be less likely to report cyberbullying because they might think it is their fault, fear greater revenge, be traumatized, or fear that their access and use of the Internet or their cell phone will be restricted. Another impact of cyberbullying is the fact that the material has the potential to be spread around the world and is potentially irretrievable. The effects of cyberbullying vary depending upon the

situation, but understanding the possibilities is essential when providing interventions for victims.

Beran and Li (2005) examined how student victims of cyberbullying were affected. A number of different emotions were felt by victims in this study. More than half of the victims reported feeling angry on several different occasions. Similarly, 36% of the victims reported feeling sad and hurt. Victims also reported feeling anxious, embarrassed, or afraid, and blamed themselves at many times. More than half of the students who reported that they were victims of cyber-harassment also reported being the victims of other types of harassment. This supports the notion that targets of cyberbullying are typically the targets of traditional bullying.

One study examined the emotional and behavioral effects of cyberbullying victimization as it relates to the general strain theory (GST) (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Robert Agnew identified three types of strain that result in negative relationships with others: “failure to achieve positively valued goals; removal of positively valued stimuli; and presentation of negatively valued stimuli” (as cited in Hinduja & Patchin, 2007, p. 93). One way individuals attempt to cope with stressful situations is through deviance. Hinduja and Patchin’s study attempted to find out if cyberbullying is a source of strain that relates to offline problem behaviors. Their study examined 1,388 adolescent Internet users who filled out a survey online. Participants were directed to this survey from five sites that are frequently visited by adolescents. The participants ranged in age from 6-17, with the mean age being 14.7. Participants in this survey spent an average of 18 hours per week online. Participants responded to questions regarding cyberbullying victimization, strain, age, race, gender, and offline problem behaviors that they engaged in during the previous six months.

In order to gain a better representation of their participant's experiences with cyberbullying, examining who was cyberbullied and through what means is important in understanding their results. In their sample, 32% of males and more than 36% of females reported being the victims of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). In this study, cyberbullying victimization most commonly occurred in chat rooms and through computer text messaging. Of the respondents who reported being the victims of cyberbullying, 30.6% reported the emotional response of anger, while 34% reported being frustrated. Understanding that these are frequently occurring emotional responses can help with creating support systems for victims.

The relationship between cyberbullying victimization, strain and offline problem behaviors was also examined through this study. Cyberbullying victimization was significantly and positively related to offline problem behaviors (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Victims of cyberbullying were more likely to report offline problem behaviors such as drinking liquor, cheating on a school test, skipping school, damaging property and shoplifting, among others. This study also found a significant relationship between strain and offline problem behaviors, as noted above. This study reported that strain, as described the GST, mediated the relationship between cyberbullying victimization and offline problem behaviors.

Although this study established an empirical relationship between cyberbullying victimization and offline delinquent and deviant behavior, there were limitations to this research that the authors noted (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). The data collection strategy was one area of concern for these researchers. Since the information was gathered online, the ability to generalize to the general population is somewhat challenging. Also, since participants were directed from websites that were highly visited by teens, the researchers recognize that self-selection to the questionnaire may bias the results to some degree. Despite these limitations, it was agreed that

the sample was relatively representative of Internet using teens and can, with some caution, be generalized to the larger population.

Laws and School Policies

With the increase in public cases involving cyberbullying, states are creating laws to against bullying over the internet (Koloff, 2008). Some individuals suggest that schools are being pushed to take on responsibility over matters that were previously reserved for parents, including computer use. Understanding the impact of current legislation and school policies is critically important, especially as it relates to prevention techniques.

Willard (2007b) has created an extensive resource for how school policies and legislation are impacting cyberbullying, and how schools can create effective policies to reducing cyberbullying in their schools. Willard, and others, suggested that schools must address the issue of cyberbullying, especially as it relates to Internet use on school campuses. Also addressing the use of cell phones, digital cameras, personal communication devices, and personal computers on school grounds is essential. Although the interactions may occur off campus, it is important to remember that the bully and the victim may attend the same school and interact while on their school campus. Willard reported on a legal standard which allows school officials to enforce formal discipline on harmful speech or threats that cause substantial disruption to school happenings or for student's security at school. This standard, referred to as the *Tinker* standard, attempts to balance free speech and student safety. Some individuals, as associated with the American Civil Liberties Union, suggest that laws and policies associated with cyberbullying overstep the free speech rights guaranteed by the first amendment.

Willard (2007b) provided three key recommendations to assist in the creation of school policies and state legislation to address cyberbullying in the most effective means possible.

Willard's first recommendation was that "state statutes and school policies directed at cyberbullying must specifically allow school officials to respond to instances of off-campus online speech that meets the *Tinker* standard" (p. 7). In this case, it would be essentially important to clearly define what cyberbullying is and is not. Including it in a list of prohibited actions on school grounds is recommended. This would make the policy or law clear for all individuals. Secondly, Willard suggests that, although most schools have developed safe school plans in response to the No Child Left Behind Act, actions should be taken to include cyberbullying into these plans. Also, creating effective planning which involves teachers, administrators, students, parents, community representatives and law enforcement would assist in enforcing these plans and preventing cyberbullying. Finally, Willard recommends that specific attention be paid to the language of the policies and legislation. This language should address cyberbullying, along with the additional issues such as unsafe communities that promote risky behavior (cutting, suicide, etc), unsafe or dangerous groups such as hate groups or gangs, and websites that promote risky sexual activities.

Koloff (2008) reported that seven states, including Minnesota, passed cyberbullying laws in 2007 and five more were considering legislation to address cyberbullying that year. Koloff also reported that many of these laws address school computer use and networks. However, Arkansas and Delaware had directly taken action against off-campus bullying as it related to disturbances in the schools. It can be anticipated that states will be increasing their legislation and school policies to directly address cyberbullying. Prevention efforts that families and schools can implement will be discussed further.

Preventing Cyberbullying

While school policies and state laws are still developing against cyberbullying, the involvement of schools and educators in helping students stay safe online and avoid cyberbullying situations is essential in stopping cyberbullying. By intervening and providing a support system, educators and parents can help cyberbullying victims cope (Wolfsberg, 2006). Schools can help work effectively with parents to stop cyberbullying.

There are many different tactics that students who have been victims of cyberbullying can use to help stop and prevent cyberbullying from happening. Wolfsberg (2006) has determined that not engaging the perpetrator is a good way to avoid being harassed online. If it is not possible to avoid online contact with the perpetrator, Wolfsberg recommended consulting with an adult before the victim responds and never to respond with an offensive threat. He also suggested printing everything out so that there is clear documentation that cyberbullying has occurred. Changing one's screen name may also be a way to avoid contact with a cyberbully. Also, according to Wolfsberg, it is never a good idea to share personally identifiable information in chat rooms.

When possible, Wolfsberg (2006) recommended victims should get a parent or teacher involved (Wolfsberg, 2006). As noted in previous studies, the majority of cyberbullying experiences go unreported. Getting a parent or teacher involved is one of the best ways to help stop the threats according to the author. Wolfsberg also suggested that parents of children who are victims of cyberbullying keep their computers in a common area. Parents should also have household rules against Internet misuse. Parents must be sure to address cyberbullying in these rules as well. Involving parents and educators in the fight against cyberbullying is essential.

Wolfsberg (2006) also had recommendations for staying safe in chat rooms. Wolfsberg suggested keeping a generic, unidentifiable screen name to avoid revealing personal details and to stay anonymous. Also, he recommended avoiding meeting the person in real life, as there are many online predators who use chat rooms as a mean to access potential victims. Filters may also be used by parents to block undesirable websites from use by children. When using instant messaging devices, youth should only receive or send information from people who have been approved by the user, and never interact with anyone that users do not know. Also, because many of these devices allow users to block strangers, parents and students should utilize this feature to block unwanted contacts. Wolfsberg also suggested never clicking on links or open attachments as they could lead users to unwanted websites or infect the user's computer. Users of instant messaging devices should never use the automatic log-ins in public places and should always make sure to log off the system. There are obviously many things to keep in mind when communicating online, but when done effectively, it can help make the Internet a safe and trouble free place.

School administrators also play an important role in providing an environment that is safe for all students. Beale and Hall (2007) have also provided a guide for school administration and parents to prevent and intervene in cyberbullying. Schools first need to identify the level of cyberbullying that occurs both at home and at school. This can be done by including cyberbullying as a topic for group and class meetings, along with surveying teachers, parents and students on the subject. Assessing the pervasiveness of the problem allows educators to target specific areas of importance relative to that population. Also, emphasizing the importance of cyberbullying and the consequences associated with breaking school policies regarding harassment and similar behaviors is essential when addressing this issue.

Schools administration can also do a number of things to prevent cyberbullying from happening at their establishments (Beale & Hall, 2007). Providing students with education on Internet bullying as part of a school's bully prevention curriculum is key in raising awareness and knowledge about the subject. Beale and Hall also suggested that counselors should collaborate with teachers in providing guidance lessons on Internet etiquette. Schools also need to address anti-bullying in their school's policy on harassment, including cyberbullying. School policy on Internet use should prohibit Internet bullying, while making a clear statement of what constitutes cyberbullying. These authors also recommended that schools provide parental education on cyberbullying and encourage the discussion of cyberbullying between parents and students. Discussions should include what cyberbullying is, consequences for that behavior, school policies, and state policies, if applicable. Beale and Hall also recommended that schools focus on cyberbullying when conducting professional development seminars to raise awareness and establish their stance against cyberbullying. Schools should also collaborate with other district schools to have a consistent prevention program across schools. Finally, schools should establish a cyberbullying task force of people from multiple disciplines to assist in keeping the school safe.

As it has been emphasized in the previous suggestions, it takes collaboration between multiple resources and personnel within the school to implement effective strategies and policies against cyberbullying. Froeschle et al. (2008) have also designed some suggestions for the actual implementation of programs against cyberbullying within the educational setting. These researchers suggested monitoring student computer use within the schools. Computers are an asset to learning and researching within the schools. Recognizing that these devices can also be used for cyberbullying is important according to Froeschle et al. (2008). Because of this, they

recommended that computers should be located in well trafficked areas that can be closely monitored. They also found that the use of mirrors to help view computer screens that are not in direct line of supervisors has helped decrease students improper use of the Internet. Involving the relevant law enforcement officials in educating students, parents and teachers about safe Internet use and the legal consequences associated with cyberbullying can help reinforce the importance of this topic.

Providing emotional support for the victims of cyberbullying, and also providing a place for bullies to deal with and face the potential underlying causes of their behaviors was found to be important (Froeschle et al., 2008). When working with cyberbullying victims, adults can do a number of different things to help them cope. Weir suggested encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities and clubs that will help them create friendships and potentially raise students self-esteem levels (as cited in Froeschle et al., 2008). Educators can also assign older students, and even adults within the school system, who display the appropriate empathetic characteristics to be mentors to these victims and provide emotional support. As noted before, providing emotional support for the bullies is also important in preventing future occurrences of cyberbullying (Froschle et al, 2008). Many of the same techniques that were devised to help victims can also be transferred to helping cyberbullies address the underlying concerns that are potentially causing the undesired behavior. Providing mentors and counseling groups for bullies can be beneficial in helping them work through potential problems.

School counselors have also been identified as playing an important role in implementing prevention and intervention efforts against cyberbullying (Chibbaro, 2007). School counseling interventions have been identified as important aspects of bully prevention programs. Chibbaro (2007) has identified ways which school counselors can be involved in the school setting. First,

Chibbaro suggested that school counselors stress the importance of school policies against cyberbullying within the school setting. Also, school counselors can assist with raising awareness about cyberbullying with school personnel. School counselors can also suggest intervention strategies for students, teachers, and parents. Chibbaro also suggested that school counselors work collaboratively to assist parents with determining if their child has been a victim of cyberbullying. Most importantly, Chibbaro suggested that school counselors provide support and counseling services for the victim and the cyberbully. Helping the victim work through some of the effects associated with cyberbullying was also identified as an essential role for school counselors. Also, Chibbaro recommended that school counselors can work with cyberbullies to help them recognize the consequences associated with cyberbullying and realize how cyberbullying affects victims. According to this author, school counselors play an essential role within the school setting to prevent cyberbullying, work with victims, and help raise awareness of cyberbullying.

Parents and educators within the school system are the main source of defense against cyberbullying and support for victims of cyberbullying (Willard, 2007b). However, nurses and other support school personnel are equally important in the fight against cyberbullying, and are also equally valued in creating a safe environment. McGuinness (2007) has suggestions for what psychiatric nurses can do to take action against cyberbullying. The first recommendation McGuinness has is to be generally understanding of student's issues and concerns and validate the concerns students have. In union with what previous sources have expressed, nurses can be an anti-bullying advocate within the school system. Collaborating with other school personnel and becoming an advocate will help create the desired zero-tolerance atmosphere that many schools strive to achieve. Nurses can assist in educating parents, teachers, administrators and students

about the realities of bullying and cyberbullying will help in the overall success of anti-bullying programs. Also, nurses can assist with conflict resolution programs that are available to help students work through problems and create a healthier environment within the school. Also, by teaching conflict resolution techniques, nurses will also be assisting in prevention efforts. All in all, everyone involved in the school setting can help make a difference and prevent bullying and cyberbullying from happening in the school setting.

Information regarding roles in cyberbullying, methods of cyberbullying, rates of cyberbullying, effects of cyberbullying, and prevention efforts for cyberbullying are some areas of this dynamic topic that have been researched. Understanding what is currently known about cyberbullying is critical for parents and educators. This knowledge will also help with prevention efforts both in the home and at school. However, there are still several areas related to cyberbullying that have yet to be researched and fully understood.

Chapter III: Summary, Critical Analysis, and Recommendations

This chapter will provide a brief summary of the information obtained in the literature review, as well as provide a critical analysis of the information provided about cyberbullying. This chapter also includes recommendations for future research and recommendations for parents and educators who may deal with child and student cases of cyberbullying.

Summary

Cyberbullying can be defined as “electronic bullying or cyberbullying, this new method of bullying involves the use of e-mail, instant messaging, web sites, voting booths and chat or bash rooms to deliberately antagonize and intimidate others” (Beale & Hall, 2007, p. 8).

Communicating through the Internet has four major differences from face-to-face communication: the ability to remain anonymous, physical distance is eliminated, there is a loss of visual and physical cues when communicating through the Internet, and time becomes less important when communicating online (McKenna & Bargh, 2000). Cyberbullying, as opposed to traditional bullying, eliminates the requirement for physical proximity to the victim, meaning that victims can be harassed while at home, a once safe environment from bullies (Slonje & Smith, 2008). Also, when bullied online, a potentially larger audience can be created for a bullying situation (Slonje & Smith, 2008). Cyberbullying appears to differ from traditional bullying in many ways.

Three main roles have been identified when it comes to a bullying situation (Willard, 2007a). These roles are the bully, the victim or target and the bystander. Bullying can happen through instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms, text messages, websites or voting booths (Beale & Hall, 2007). Cyberbullies are able target their victims by using flaming, harassment, denigration, cyberstalking, impersonation, outing, trickery and exclusion. Rates of cyberbullying

appear to vary, but the highest rate of cyberbully victimization was approximately 23% of students sampled (Beran & Li, 2005). There is a complex relationship between being the victim of traditional bullying and cyberbullying. One study found that victims of traditional bullying were likely to be victims of cyberbullying (Li, 2007).

Students tend not to report instances of cyberbullying, either being the victim or being the cyberbully (Li, 2007). Students reported that adults in the school would not try to stop cyberbullying, and thus it went unreported (Li, 2007). Students feel that adults are less aware of the electronic forms of bullying, as opposed to traditional forms of bullying (Slonje & Smith, 2008). Also, many parents report not knowing if their children engage in cyberbullying or are the victim of cyberbullying (Dehue, Bolman & Vollink, 2008). It appears that the cyberbullying is under reported and not many adults or parents are informed about cases of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying can have many detrimental effects on victims. Willard (2007a) has identified low self-esteem, depression, feelings of anger, school failure and social isolation as some effects of victimization of cyberbullying. In extreme cases, students may even commit suicide as a result of continuous victimization. Cyberbullying has profound and harmful effects on victims, measures should be taken to prevent cyberbullying and educate others about cyberbullying.

Prevention is a key step in creating a safe environment for students and children. Wolfsberg (2006) states that children and students can use several tactics to stop or prevent cyberbullying from happening. Wolfsberg suggests that students not engage the perpetrator, consult with an adult, document cyberbullying by printing everything out, if possible, change their screen name to avoid contact, and never share identifiable information in chat rooms.

Parents can also do a number of things to prevent cyberbullying. Some of these things may be to keep the computers in a common area of the home, establish rules for Internet use,

School administrators can help students stay safe and prevent cyberbullying by discussing cyberbullying in class meetings, conducting a needs assessment to find out the students, teachers and parents perceptions on cyberbullying, and they can make sure that students understand the consequences of cyberbullying, as it pertains to the school. These things can be done by addressing cyberbullying in their school policies on harassment and bullying.

Implementing prevention strategies across the home and school environments requires a collaborative effort from students, parents, teachers and school administrators.

Cyberbullying has seen an abundance of research in recent years and will likely continue to be researched as technology becomes increasingly important in people's everyday lives. It has been established as a relatively frequent problem that has harsh consequences for victims. It is only through education, for all parties involved, that cyberbullying will be fully understood. Hopefully, measures will be taken to implement prevention efforts in the future.

Critical Analysis

There have been many studies on the prevalence of cyberbullying across different parts of the world. It is essential to know the rates of cyberbullying; however, it would be beneficial to conduct a nationally representative study. Only two studies cited in this paper had over 1,000 participants (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Dehue, Bolman & Vollink, 2008). Likewise, it would be important to assess across even younger grade levels, as students are likely using the Internet at younger ages.

There were many articles outlining different prevention techniques. The effectiveness of these techniques is an area that could be further developed. Since this is a relatively new area of

research, and prevention efforts are still developing, it would be interesting to determine the effectiveness of these techniques. Also, these articles lacked means through which to persuade and involve people in prevention efforts.

Although research is currently in its infancy in regards to school policies and prevention efforts in the school, not a lot of research was available in regards to how effective these policies actually are in the school setting. With the push towards implementation of empirically based interventions and programs in the school setting, showing that these efforts and policies actually make a difference in the schools will become increasingly important. This was an area that is relatively underdeveloped.

Research indicating how support staff, such as school psychologists, school counselors and nurses, can assist with cyberbully prevention efforts is limited. Only two articles, one how nurses can assist with cyberbullying and one on how school counselors assist with cyberbullying were found. Nurses are one group of support staff that will work with students who are victims of cyberbullying (McGuiness, 2007). This group will also be essential in utilizing prevention efforts within the school setting and many suggestions for how they do this were provided (McGuiness, 2007). School counselors will also be able to utilize prevention and intervention efforts to assist with cyberbullying (Chibbaro, 2007). School counselors can help raise awareness of cyberbullying within the school setting and can assist victims by providing counseling services (Chibbaro, 2007). School counselors can also work collaboratively with parents to prevent cyberbullying from happening in the home; also, school counselors can help parents in recognizing signs of cyberbullying in their children (Chibbaro, 2007).

It is likely that other support personnel, such as school psychologists, will play a role in preventing cyberbullying and providing a safe environment within the schools for students who

are victims of cyberbullying. How these types of support staff will deal with cyberbullying and cyberbully victimization within the school setting is still developing. Understanding the effectiveness of interventions and exactly how these support personnel function within the school system, as it relates to cyberbullying, will be areas of research that are likely to be highly valued.

Recommendations for Further Research

The means through which students are cyberbullied is an area that is still developing and will continue to be researched as new technology is developed. One area that future research may want to examine is the effects of being cyberbullied when compared to the means through which individuals are cyberbullied. For example, research may want to examine the differences between being cyberbullied through text messaging versus being cyberbullied through an instant messaging device or social networking site.

In general, research will need to be conducted using younger populations. It is apparent that students are using technology at younger and younger ages. This with comes the potential for bullying at younger ages. Research will want to examine how the different aspects of cyberbullying (rates, effects, etc.) are portrayed in the younger populations. Also, a possible longitudinal study could be conducted to track student's experiences across time, starting at the younger populations.

As it pertains to the school setting, future research may want to examine how teachers and administrators plan on monitoring and dealing with cyberbullying within their schools and classrooms. Much research was available on possible prevention efforts, but how do teachers, especially those whose classes are computer based, monitor computer use and possible cyberbullying instances in their classroom. This was an area that I found no research on, and would possibly help educators in the future.

Recommendations for Parents and Educators

Collaboration between parents and educators in the fight against cyberbullying will be essential for success in this area. Parents and educators should acknowledge this problem within the school and home setting and take the appropriate efforts to prevent cyberbullying from happening. Many prevention efforts were previously described and should be taken into consideration within both the school and home settings. One thing parents can do to prevent cyberbullying in their homes is to keep computers in a common area of the house (Wolfsberg, 2006). Also, Wolfsberg suggests that parents establish household rules for Internet use, talk openly with their children about cyberbullying, and teach their children how to safely use the Internet. Parents should also use this document as a tool to gain a better understanding of the multiple aspects of cyberbullying. Aspects of cyberbullying include such things as its prevalence within school settings, the effects cyberbullying has on victims, and the different means through which individuals are cyberbullied. In conjunction with understanding these things, parents and educators can use the prevention efforts to decrease instances of cyberbullying in the home and at school.

Educators can also use this as a tool to understand cyberbullying within the school setting, and to understand how cyberbullying off school grounds can affect students while at school. Educators should also utilize the prevention efforts described in this text to help decrease the effects of cyberbullying on students and decrease the number of cyberbullying instances in their school. Educators need to determine the prevalence of cyberbullying in their school and emphasize the consequences associated with breaking school rules against cyberbullying as ways prevent cyberbullying (Beale & Hall, 2007). Educating students about safe Internet use, collaborating with support personnel to help victims of cyberbullying cope, and establishing firm

school policies to prevent cyberbullying are ways that educators can utilize prevention efforts. Collaboration between multiple resources and personnel is essential in utilizing this document and understanding ways to deal with cyberbullying within the home and school settings.

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