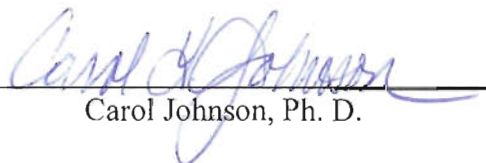Bullying in the Age of Technology:

A Literature Review of Cyberbullying for School Counselors

By

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree In

School Counseling

Approved: 2 Semester Credits

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May, 2011

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Title: *Bullying in the Age of Technology: A Literature Review of Cyberbullying for*
       School Counselors

Graduate Degree/Major: MS School Counseling

Research Advisor: Dr. Carol Johnson

Month/Year: May, 2011

Number of Pages: 29

Style Manual Used: American Psychological Association, 6th Edition

Abstract

With easy access to technology, the problem of adolescent cyberbullying has increased.
Though bullying still occurs in the traditional form of face-to-face contact, cyberbullying is
becoming more common as youth have more access to the Internet, cameras, and text messaging
via cell phones. Cyberbullying has many of the same effects on its victims, such as a decreased
interest in school, lower academic achievement, and depression. The impact and strategies used
in Cyberbullying will be compared to those of traditional bullying. Frequency and demographics
of cyberbullying will be discussed as well as ramifications and steps adults can take to help
prevent and react to cyberbullying instances.

In addition to warning signs that adults can look for to recognize cyberbullying, factors
that put children at risk will also be identified. The literature review concludes with ideas for
educators and parents to consider when helping recognize and prevent cyberbullying.

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Acknowledgements

First, I would like to sincerely thank my thesis advisor and professor, Dr. Carol Johnson. Your continued guidance and dedication to your students is a true testament to what a great teacher looks like. I am extremely thankful that I had the chance to meet you and learn from you. Your amazing spirit and up-beat attitude serve as a model for all school counselors to reach. Thank you for everything, you've taught me more than you will ever know! Also, I would like to give a special thank you to all of the professors whom I have had the privilege of learning from at UW-Stout. You have all touched my life and made me a better person.

I would also like to thank my fiancé, Antoine, for your continued support as I pursued my master's degree in school counseling. You have stood by my side every step of the way as I chased my dream of becoming a school counselor and I am eternally grateful. Thank you for going through this journey with me.

To my parents, I do not know if I would be where I am today if it were not for your constant support and encouragement. You have always been there to push me one step further in order to reach my full potential. Thank you for always believing that I have the ability to make a difference in this world. You have taught me about life, love, and that nothing comes to you without hard work. Thank you for all of these lessons and teaching me to persevere and never give up. Knowing that you were only a phone call away to reassure me is what got me through the challenges I faced throughout my academic career. As I continue into the next chapter of my life, please know that your love and support are the foundation of who I am today.

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Chapter I: Introduction

In January of 2010, six teenagers faced felony charges after a fellow classmate hanged herself in a stairway at her Massachusetts home. Phoebe Prince was a new freshman at South Hadley High School in western Massachusetts and was a recent immigrant from Ireland. After having a relationship with a popular senior boy, Prince became the victim of harassment as her schoolmates began calling her an "Irish slut," knocking her books out of her hands, and threatening her via cellular phone text messages day after day. Prince quickly found herself the victim of harassment and abuse, much of which occurred in the form of cyberbullying. Students frequently attacked her at school, but Prince could not even find sanctuary in her own home, where she received threatening text messages and was harassed via her social networking websites. Prince had endured months of taunting and physical threats from her peers before she took her own life after returning home from school, still dressed in her school clothes (Eckholm & Zezima, 2010).

Another troubling variable in Prince's suicide is the fact that many of the adults at South Hadley High School were aware of the severe harassment Prince was enduring, yet they didn't attempt to stop it. In response to Prince's suicide and the 2009 suicide of an 11-year-old-boy, Massachusetts' legislature drafted an anti-bullying law. The law requires that school staff members report any suspected incidents of bullying to the principals and the principals will be required to investigate those reports. The law also requires that every school teach their students about the dangers of bullying. Forty-one other states have incorporated anti-bullying laws into their legislature already (Eckholm & Zezima, 2010).

In the age of technology, many children have easy access to technological devices such as computers, Skype, cameras, the Internet, and cellular telephones. These technologies can be

used for productive reasons, but have recently become a means for children to become bullies and use the technology to make threats against other children. Cyberbullying has become a serious problem, inflicting psychological, emotional, and social harm to many victims (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

Bullying can occur anywhere, but has historically been associated with behaviors in school hallways, bathroom, or on the playground. Bullying has also been known to occur in malls or restaurants when bullies follow their victims into such venues. Today, bullying is occurring in cyberspace areas including the Internet, personal computers, and cellular telephones. Bullies are now able to send harassing e-mails or instant messages, post abusive messages to online bulletin boards or blogs, and can even develop websites to promote slanderous content about someone. People are now able to use text messages to harass a victim via their cellular telephones as well (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

Cyberbullying offers especially difficult challenges for school personnel because most of the incidences occur outside of school, but the psychological effects of each victim are evident inside schools (Walker, 2010). One major concern about cyberbullying is that cyberbullies can remain anonymous and it is difficult to stop the attacks. Kids are often more likely to say or do things online that they would not normally do or say in person. Also, the hurtful information can be transmitted to a large number of people at the same time and is difficult to eliminate (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

The development of social networking websites has created another means for students to use the Internet to attack their peers. Mesch (2009) found that youth who have an active social network website are more likely to be bullied than those who do not have one, and bullying occurs at a higher rate for youth who interact in chat rooms compared to those who do not.

Research indicates that cyberbullying is not discriminatory based on race or gender (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

Cyberbullying can involve many different intimidation tactics, and many are similar to those of traditional bullying. Like traditional bullying, the most prevalent form of cyberbullying is name-calling and insults. Unlike traditional bullying, a new tactic found in cyberbullying is stealing someone's password in order to harass victims. Other forms of cyberbullying include sharing embarrassing or private pictures of the attackers' victims or identity theft. Attackers also share private information and spread rumors about other students (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). It has also been found that cyberbullying has become more frequent than traditional bullying because anybody can engage in cyberbullying behavior. Previously, bullies were usually socially and physically dominant individuals, however cyberbullies do not need to possess either of these traits to intimidate others through technology. Many students who would never engage in traditional bullying are becoming cyberbullies. In retaliation, students often use cyberbullying to attack those who are using traditional bullying tactics against them (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

Preventing and punishing cyberbullying is extremely complicated. Even when cellular telephones and private Internet use is banned in schools, students usually find a way to use the banned media secretly while in school and/or would still continue to cyberbully after school hours. It is difficult to report incidences of cyberbullying because the bully has the chance to remain anonymous. Many bullies hide their identities so the victim and their families cannot identify the attacker. Viable options to help prevent cyberbullying include blocking all unknown screen names from instant messages, deleting texts from unknown numbers, and encouraging students to report any type of cyber abuse to an adult (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008). The prevention and punishment of cyberbullying is also very difficult

because most students who become victims do not report the incidents of attacks to adults (Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

There are warning signs that adults can look for in children who may be involved in cyberbullying and there are factors that put children at risk of being both a victim and an offender of cyberbullying. Certain demographic factors such as age and high levels of access to technology can increase the chances that a child becomes involved with cyberbullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

There are many steps that adults can take to help prevent incidences of cyberbullying from occurring in homes and schools. Parents and educators are encouraged to speak to their children about cyberbullying and demonstrate the proper use of technology. Stating high expectations and setting rules about technology use are also encouraged, along with using Internet filters and high levels of monitoring (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

In a society where youth are constantly seeking social acceptance, cyberbullying can permanently damage a youth's identity and self-esteem. Victims of cyberbullying may have a difficult time healing emotional wounds when being bullied through cyberspace. Educators and parents have a very difficult time protecting children from cyberbullying because it is sometimes difficult to monitor all children's activities. With the increasing popularity of technology, cyberbullying is becoming more prevalent; therefore, the problem becomes how can parents and educators recognize signs of cyberbullying and eliminate this type of bullying so that all children have opportunity to be safe and to learn and grow?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to review the literature about cyberbullying and the impact it is having on youth. The details about cyberbullying will be compared to those of traditional bullying. Literature about what warning signs adults can look for to recognize cyberbullying and factors that put children at risk is included along with the prevalence and ramifications of cyberbullying. What educators and parents can do to help prevent cyberbullying victims and perpetrators will also be discussed. The literature review will be conducted in the Spring of 2011.

Research Questions

A review of the literature will be conducted to help explore the following questions:

1. How common is cyberbullying and what are some of the common characteristics of cyberbullying?

2. How does cyberbullying compare to traditional bullying?

3. What are the harmful effects of cyberbullying?

4. What are some warning signs that a child may be a victim of cyberbullying?

5. How can educators and parents help prevent cyberbullying?

Assumptions and Limitations

It is assumed that the literature review will be thorough and unbiased. It is also assumed that all of the literature reviewed will be current, valid and empirically based. It is assumed that the participants in the studies were honest about their reports about cyberbullying, but this could also be a limitation. Another limitation of this literature review is that the area of cyberbullying is relatively new and researchers may not even be aware of some of the intricacies that are associated with cyberbullying. Another limitation is that much of what goes on in cyberspace is anonymous and researchers rely highly on the information that participants are willing to report.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in order to help clarify meanings for the reader.

Buddy List: A window offered through most instant messaging programs that allows users to create a list of other people's screen names and view when they are online. They are often used as a quick reference to friends when they are online. Users usually have the option of blocking messages from certain users on the list (Beale & Hall, 2007).

Bullying: The repeated physical, verbal, or psychological attacks or intimidation directed against victims who cannot properly defend themselves. They may not be able to properly defend themselves for numerous reasons, including size, strength, being outnumbered by attackers, or being less psychologically resilient (Mason, 2008).

Cyberbullying: Willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cellular telephones, and other electronic devices (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). It can involve harmful or cruel texts or images using the Internet for instant messages, e-mail, chat rooms, and social networking sites. It can also involve digital communication devices such as cell phones. Many of the cyberbully's attacks involve stalking, threats, harassment, impersonation, humiliation, and exclusion (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

Instant Message (IM): Any online computer program that allows users to instantly send text messages to other online users. Users usually use a screen name and share screen names with friends in order to identify each other via instant message. Users have the ability to hide their identities and screen names can be switched (Beale & Hall, 2007).

Traditional Bullying: Willful and repeated harm inflicted through face-to-face conduct (Mason, 2008).

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter includes a literature review about the signs that might indicate cyberbullying. Chapter two also addresses the prevalence of cyberbullying and describes how children are using technology to attack other students. A description of the kinds of distress the victims of cyberbullying go through and how it affects their education and social development is found in the chapter too. This chapter concludes with how to recognize signs of cyberbullying and how adults can help prevent their children from becoming cyberbullies or victims of cyberbullying.

Prevalence and Ramifications

Patchin and Hinduja (2006) found that 60% of their bullying survey sample had been ignored by others online, 50% had been disrespected by others, almost 30% had been called names, and 21.4% reported being threatened by others while online. Also, many of the youth reported that they had been picked on by others (19.8%) and 19.3% reported that someone had made fun of them online. Another major concern about cyberbullying is that it is very easy for students to spread rumors about others, to a large population. In this study, 18.8% of the respondents had reported that they were the victim of rumor-spreading online. Online bullying has become a large problem within and outside of our schools. In this same study, 30% of adolescent respondents reported that they had been the victim of some sort of online bullying. Though this study involved people from many ages, they limited their conclusions to those who were 9-17 years old.

Patchin and Hinduja (2006) also discovered that gender was not a factor in the prevalence of cyberbullying. Traditional bullying usually occurs among boys more often than girls, but cyberbullying occurs equally across genders. Another study reported that most victims were

cyberbullied by other students in one of their classes (20.7%) or in their same class/year (28.0%). None of the victims reported being cyberbullied by students who were in a lower class/year than them. When the victims were asked to report the gender of their attacker, 25.7% of the victims reported that they did not know the gender of their attackers. Some of the victims reported that they knew they were being attacked by one boy (24.3%) or one girl (21.4%). Cyberbullies oftentimes attack individuals in groups. The victims reported that 18.6% of them knew they were being attacked by a group of girls and 7.1% were attacked by a group of boys. Of the victims, 3% reported that they were victimized by a group of boys and girls (Smith et al., 2008).

Students use different electronic means to harass their victims, but the most common means online involve instant messaging and message boards. Other means of bullying online involve e-mail, cellular telephones, chat rooms, blogs, and social networking cites (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Smith et al. (2008) discovered that 75% of their participants who had been victims of cyberbullying were bullied online for up to one month and 25% of them were victims for several months, or even years.

School authorities across the United States are concerned about finding a solution to the cyberbullying problem that has arisen in homes and in schools. Even though many of the attacks occur outside of the school setting, the psychological ramifications of cyberbullying often have an effect on students while they are in school. Cyberbullying can deteriorate the climate at school and the victims' performance in school can be compromised. Cyberbullying can also put its victims at risk for mental health and safety problems (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). Though much of cyberbullying is indirect harassment, Patchin and Hinduja (2006) discovered that 20% of cyberbully victims experienced threats online and 60% of the victims who responded reported

that the online harassment lead to changes in their online behavior at home, school, and with friends.

The psychological effect cyberbullying has on youth is much like traditional bullying. Even being ignored by their peers online has social ramifications for students. Social acceptance is a universal desire of most American children and adolescents. Being ignored online or de-friended is considered a passive-aggressive form of bullying that can be equally as damaging as other forms of online bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Overall, victims of cyberbullying can experience a wide array of damaging psychological consequences. Many students experience depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, physiological changes, problems concentrating, academic failure, and school avoidance.

Because many cyberbullies remain anonymous, the victims can become very cautious about their environment to avoid any hurtful encounters because they do not know who is trying to hurt them (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). Students who are bullied online reported having an elevated level of distress (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Many students reported feeling angry and frustrated after they had been cyberbullied (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Some argued that cyberbullying may be more hurtful than traditional bullying because cyberbullies usually do or say things online that most children would not in person (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). Even if a student is cyberbullied for a short period of time, the victim may endure severe effects because media can reach a very wide audience in a short amount of time (Smith et al., 2008).

Warning Signs and Risk Factors

Sometimes it may be difficult for adults to recognize if a child is being cyberbullied if the child does not report the attacks to them. Smith et al. (2008) found that out of 71 students who had been cyberbullied, 43.7% did not report the cyber attacks to anybody. The 53.3% of victims

who did tell somebody about the cyberbullying reported that they told friends (26.8%). Only 15.5 % of victims told their parents or guardians and only 8.5% told an adult at their school.

There are some warning signs adults should be alert to recognize. Some victims of cyberbullying are reluctant to use the computer (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). Other students have a general change in attitude about school or become reluctant to attend school. Some students start to fall behind in their homework when they become victims of cyberbullying (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Protection, 2009). A change in a child's behavior or mood can also be an indicator that cyberbullying may be occurring (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). Children may also exhibit signs of sleeping problems, acting sad, and withdrawing from others (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Protection, 2009). Children who are victims of cyberbullying may become nervous or jumpy when they receive an instant message, text message, or e-mail, and may avoid telling adults about what they are doing when they are online (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Victims of cyberbullying are more likely to be Internet risk-takers (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009).

Students who are cyberbullying may rapidly switch the computer screens when an adult enters the room (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Protection, 2009). Children who are cyberbullying others online may consistently be on the Internet at all hours of the night and become unusually upset if they cannot use the computer. Another warning sign that a child may be engaging in cyberbullying is if they use more than one e-mail account or instant message screen name. Sometimes, offenders use screen names that are not their own (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

Another risk factor can be attributed to the parents and guardians of children. Children who live in homes where their parents or guardians are less involved with monitoring their

child's Internet use have a higher chance of becoming a cyberbully offender. Being very computer literate and understanding the high functioning of computers did not increase the chances that somebody would become a cyberbully offender. Unlike high Internet use, the increased use of cellular telephones was not a predictor for a child becoming a cyberbully (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009). That could be because it is easier to trace a cell phone attack than an online message.

It is also important to pay attention to traditional bullying, which is more observable for adults than cyberbullying. Traditional bullies are more likely to be cyberbullies as well and the victims of traditional bullying are also more likely to be victims of cyberbullying. Paying attention to traditional bullying is important as it could be an indicator that cyberbullying may be going on as well (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Ybarra (2004) found that students who reported being a victim of cyberbullying may also be cyberbullies themselves. Some students find themselves harassing their own attackers in retaliation. Students may be actively engaging each other in aggressive interactions.

Age is also associated with the likelihood that a child will be associated with cyberbullying. Attackers and victims are both more likely to be in high school rather than middle school (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Race and gender are not associated with the likelihood that someone will be involved in cyberbullying. Victims of cyberbullying and cyberbully offenders are both more likely to engage in a variety of online activities, experience school problems, engage in substance abuse, and assault their peers (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) found that 20-25% of offenders and victims reported that they used cigarettes or alcohol, and 50% of the victims or offenders reported that their parents poorly monitored their online activities. Also, when students reported confidence in Internet use,

they were 2.5 times more likely to be a cyberbullying offender. Juvonen and Gross (2008) defined heavy Internet use as being logged on to the Internet more than 3 hours the day previous to taking their survey. They found that heavy Internet use significantly increased the chances that a student would be a victim of cyberbullying. Repeated cyberbullying was defined by seven or more experiences of intimidation in the past year. Also, if a student was using instant messaging or webcams, they were about 2.5-2.8 times more likely to experience repeated cyberbullying compared to those students who did not use instant messaging or webcams.

Mesch (2009) found that children who have an active social network have an increased chance of being bullied. Children are also more likely to be bullied if they use chat rooms than those who do not. Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2009) found that children who reported that they talked to people they didn't know online were more likely to be the victims of cyberbullying. It is important to watch for signs of cyberbullying and limit the amount of time spent having internet access.

Prevention

Cyberbullying prevention in the schools comes in many forms, but begins with raising awareness. School personnel can bring knowledge to others about the impact cyberbullying has on the emotional and psychological well-being of children and adolescents. It is important to talk to students about how their actions online affect their peers. When school personnel are aware of the warning signs of cyberbullying and the problems it can cause, adults may be able to identify more students whom are affected by cyberbullying and intervene. Also, when different faculty members are knowledgeable about cyberbullying, they are more likely to provide their support for cyberbullying prevention programs and policies (Diamanduros, Downs, & Jenkins, 2008).

To gain knowledge about cyberbullying, all school personnel should be encouraged to attend workshops, engage in online training, and read informational brochures. Another form of training can be done as an in-service workshop for all faculty members to teach the fundamentals of cyberbullying, how it affects the students, and how common it is in adolescents. Teachers and school counselors are also encouraged to work together to formulate lesson plans to teach the students about cyberbullying. Once the faculty become informed, it will be easier to incorporate prevention and policies on a school-wide basis (Diamanduros et al., 2008). Parents also need training and awareness of what cyberbullying entails. It is not just a school issue because much of the cyberbullying happens in the home and thus a community-wide effort to keep children safe should be part of the total plan.

After school personnel become knowledgeable about cyberbullying, activities can be used in classroom lesson plans to engage students. Class projects have been used to raise awareness about cyberbullying such as asking students to design a cyberbullying awareness brochure. There are numerous online resources, games, and suggestions for lesson plans available online for school personnel who search for them (Diamanduros et al., 2008).

Student education about cyberbullying should be integrated into every school's curriculum. Schools should periodically assess the amount of cyberbullying going on with the students in their school and utilize the data appropriately in order to create and maintain a cyberbullying prevention plan (National Center for Mental Health and Youth Violence Prevention, 2009).

Schools should also make sure to include an antibullying policy that includes cyberbullying. Computers in the school should be highly monitored and schools should incorporate policies about acceptable technology use. The policies about computer and

technology use should be updated as needed to explicitly prohibit using the equipment for any form of bullying. The policy should specifically state what could possibly constitute being a form of cyberbullying and what consequences will occur if a student does engage in cyberbullying. Schools within the district should work together to provide consistent information about cyberbullying prevention to all students as they move through different grade levels and schools (Beale & Hall, 2007). Specifically, bullying policies should include specific definitions of cyberbullying and the consequences that will occur for students who engage in cyberbullying activity.

The policy should also include the procedures someone should take for reporting cases of cyberbullying and how school personnel will investigate the reports. It should clearly state that students will be disciplined whether the cyberbullying behavior takes place during school or after school hours if their cyberbullying clearly disrupts another students' education. A policy should also include options for students, teachers, staff, and parents to learn about cyberbullying (Diamanduros et al., 2008).

School leaders, such as school principals, psychologists and counselors should investigate ways to offer workshops and training sessions about cyberbullying for parents. An opportunity to hold these sessions at PTO meetings should be considered when there is this type of organization in the community. There should be handouts and brochures available for parents to take home and review regarding information that describes the different types of cyberbullying, the impact it has on students, how to recognize warning signs of cyberbullying, and how to report and respond to cases of cyberbullying. Involving the police or local investigation units may help emphasize the importance of the topic and suggest that the school means business in monitoring inappropriate internet use. When meeting with parents, it is also suggested that it is

vital to address the fact that cyberbullying is not a normal part of adolescence and should not be overlooked because it can have damaging psychological effects (Diamanduros et al., 2008).

To help eliminate cyberbullying, parents should keep computers in common areas where they are easily visible, such as a family room or a kitchen to make it easier to monitor their children's online behaviors. Parents should talk to their children about what they are doing online and how they should behave online. Parents should try to make sure their children know the risks of cyberbullying and how it can affect people (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

Parents need to set clear expectations for their children's computer and phone use and their children should know the consequences that will occur if they violate those expectations. When setting these expectations, the use of parent-child technology contracts may be beneficial. Children should know that adults can respect their privacy, but if an adult ever feels the need to review their online communications, they will (Feinberg & Robey, 2009)..

Children should also be encouraged to talk to their parents about any online activity that bothers them. Parents can also install parental control filters and tracking programs on their computers, but should not solely rely on these to monitor their children's computer use. Parents should also be open to the idea that their children are not only at risk for being a victim, but could also be cyberbullies themselves (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

Parents should always document any bullying that they become aware of and contact the police to get help from the proper authorities. Many times parents can file a complaint with the web site or their cell phone company. If any cyberbullying involves serious threats, parents should contact the police (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

Parents can also limit the amount of time their children are allowed to be on the Internet. The finding that heavy Internet use significantly increased the chances that a student would be

involved with cyberbullying, suggests that not only should parents monitor how their children are using the Internet, but they should also limit the amount of time they allow their children to spend in cyberspace (Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

Parents should also become familiar with their Internet service provider's recommendations and regulations against cyberbullying. Many Internet service providers have incorporated policies about harassment online into their own policies. Parents should contact their Internet service provider to find out about their policies and what types of parental controls they offer so that they can monitor their children's Internet activities (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2009).

Assessment

It is important to assess the prevalence of cyberbullying in individual schools. School counselors and school psychologists can develop questionnaires to survey the students in their school. The questionnaires should include questions about how frequently each student used the internet and different components of the internet (such as instant messaging, chat rooms, and social networking sites). The internet frequency data can be an indication of student risk of becoming a cyberbullying victim or offender. Also included in the questionnaire should be questions about direct cyberbullying and indirect cyberbullying. Direct cyberbullying reports would include questions about whether or not the individual has experienced cyberbullying and how frequently. Indirect cyberbullying reports would include the participant responding about instances where they know of other students whom have been cyberbullied or have been a cyberbully offender (Diamanduros et al., 2008).

It is also important to administer surveys to determine how knowledgeable the school's staff is about cyberbullying. Staff members can be surveyed to find out if they perceive

cyberbullying as a concern in their classrooms, what they already know about cyberbullying, and if they know of instances of cyberbullying occurring with their students. Utilizing staff surveys may raise awareness regarding areas where more training is needed and may also address the effectiveness of current school technology policies (Diamanduros et al., 2008).

Reporting and Interventions

Feinberg and Robey (2009) suggested that students who have become a victim of cyberbullying should be encouraged not to retaliate. Retaliation can sometimes escalate the harassment, and make it unclear for authorities to determine who the bully is, and who the victim is. It is also suggested that the victims of cyberbullying should do their best to ignore the cyberbully and ask the cyberbully to stop. Children should also make all attempts to block future communication with their attacker and clear their attackers out of any "buddy lists" they have. All students should be taught that they should not do or say anything online that they wouldn't say to someone in person.

Feinberg and Robey (2009) also recommended that students tell an adult about the cyberbullying in detail and the victim should always try to obtain a hard copy of the electronic material. Victims of cyberbullying should never delete any e-mails or text messages and should make sure they show an adult so that the material is documented. In their study, approximately 90% of youth reported not telling an adult about cyberbullying incidents. The most common reason all students gave for not telling an adult was that they thought they needed to learn to deal with it themselves. Another reason for not telling an adult was that they were afraid that if their parents found out, their parents would restrict their Internet access (Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

It is also important for school counselors to remember that cyberbullies are also probably hurt children and should work with the cyberbullies to determine why they are engaging in

unacceptable behavior. School counselors should work with cyberbullies to promote strategies for changing their behavior. Cyberbullies should always be held accountable for their behaviors, but it should be recognized that they need help as well. School counselors may use activities that promote empathy in order to help the bullies take a different perspective on their behaviors so that they can understand the impact that their behaviors may have on others. School counselors could collaborate with classroom teachers in order to present classroom guidance lessons on safety on the Internet and appropriate Internet behaviors. School counselors could further work with parents to prevent cyberbullying (Mason, 2008). Parents should be informed about how to talk to their children about cyberbullying and the consequences of such behaviors (Beale & Hall, 2007).

School administrators should develop a good relationship with their local police department and report instances of cyber violence. Administrators should attend professional seminars whenever possible, so that they are aware of legal, ethical and confidentiality issues related to cyberbullying. All school personnel should work together to create a climate within the school where students feel comfortable making reports of cyberbullying (Beale & Hall, 2007).

Parry Aftab is a leading expert on cybercrime, Internet privacy, and cyber abuse issues. As an active lawyer, she is one of the founders in the field of cyber law and has helped form law and policy worldwide. Aftab suggested that schools incorporate a policy that gives them the right to discipline students for any act of cyberbullying, even if they engage in the behavior when they are not on school grounds if their bullying affects the safety and well-being of the bully's victim while they are in school (Aftab, 2005). Schools can also establish a task force specifically concentrated on cyberbullying. The task force should consist of educators, parents, students, and

community members who understand technology, and can work together to develop and utilize anti-cyberbullying programs with the goal of keeping their students safe (Beale & Hall, 2007).

School personnel need to be equipped to deal with cases of cyberbullying when it occurs with their students. A team can be established whose sole purpose is to investigate reports of cyberbullying. It was suggested that the team should consist of school psychologists, principals, media specialists, and school resource officers. It is important that the school has a procedure in place to follow when a student reports cyberbullying. The team should be responsible for obtaining and saving evidence of cyberbullying whenever possible and will assess whether or not the cyberbullying victim is in evident danger and respond accordingly. The team may also attempt to identify the cyberbully, and discuss how to stop the cyberbullying from occurring again. They could support the victim and the victim's parents and reassure them that they will do their best to solve the problem, while providing the family with outside resources. The team will strategically try to resolve the problem by contacting the cyberbully's parents, offer counseling services within the school, and trying to pinpoint the cause of the cyberbullying (Diamanduros et al., 2008). If grants are available under safe school programs to sponsor the team, that would be helpful or maybe local civic organizations could help sponsor a team too.

When cyberbullying is suspected, it is important to speak with the victim to determine his or her mental state, and provide the necessary support for the student. It is also important to determine if the student feels safe at school or what kind of modifications can be implemented so that the student does feel safe. It may be beneficial to meet with the victim's parents to discuss their child's well-being and provide them with outside resources if they feel it would help. The parents should be given helpful information about cyberbullying and their child's rights (Diamanduros et al., 2008).

If the cyberbully is known, it is important to interview him or her as well. It is important to try to determine why the student became a cyberbully and try to help him or her solve the problem. It is also vital to assess the current state of the cyberbully and determine whether or not he or she still poses a threat to students. Again, it may be important to consult with the cyberbully's parents about their child's behavior and speak with them about cyberbullying (Diamanduros et al., 2008).

In summary, as students become more technologically savvy, they will find ways to create opportunities to harass other students because it gives them a sense of power and anonymity through use of technology. It is only through a joint effort of parents, educators, and police that community support will be available to help the victims of bullying and discipline the perpetrator.

Chapter III: Summary, Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter will provide a summary of the literature reviewed from the previous chapter highlight key points in a discussion, and offer recommendations for further research.

Summary

Chapter two introduced many aspects associated with cyberbullying. Technology has changed the lives of many, but it has also changed the way students bully each other. With the increasing reliance on technology, student access to the Internet and electronic means of communication has also increased. Though harassment and bullying in schools is not a new development, cyberbullying is a recent misuse of technology that students can use to attack each other.

The psychological ramifications students endure as a result of cyberbullying have introduced new problems in the schools. Though much of cyberbullying occurs outside of school, the atmosphere in schools is often affected. When students are bullied, whether the attacks occur in school or at home, their learning process is affected, and their distress levels rise (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Victims of cyberbullying are not only affected academically, but oftentimes they face mental health problems as a result (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

A startling finding is that girls are just as likely to engage in cyberbullying as boys, unlike traditional bullying where boys are more likely to engage in bullying behaviors. When girls do bully, they tend to use indirect forms of harassment such as rumor spreading. Since much of cyberbullying is indirect harassment, it makes sense that more girls are engaging in bullying behaviors when they have the option to use technology (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

One of the main concerns with cyberbullying is that students do not report the attacks to an adult. There are warning signs that parents and educators may notice in a child who is being cyberbullied. Some warning signs that a child may be experiencing cyberbullying include reluctance to go online, avoidance of school, and even a general change in mood or attitude (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). Sometimes students will not report being bullied because they are afraid that their parent will begin to restrict their Internet access. Students usually do not want their parents or educators to limit their time spent on the computer, so they will not report attacks (Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

Discussion

Even though cyberbullying is a relatively new concept, the research about the components of cyberbullying is vast. There is a lot of information and research available about the frequency and demographics of cyberbullying. Specifically, the research concentrates on the demographics and frequency rates of cyberbullying are empirically based. The research seems to replicate across similar studies, but because the available research was so extensive, this literature review only provides a summary of a small sample of the literature. Researchers tend to agree on how adults can prevent cyberbullying and how they should respond when a child reports cyberbullying.

Even though many researchers tended to agree about how adults and children should react to cyberbullying and how they can work to prevent cyberbullying, most of the research was not empirically based with regards to the best way to prevent cyberbullying. Empirical research to determine if the suggested methods for prevention and reaction actually work is lacking. The access children have to technology is a privilege, and adults can regulate children's access to technology. Because students are afraid that adults will begin to limit their access to the Internet

or even their cell phones, it is important that adults begin regulating and restricting children's access to technology immediately. If children's access to technology is always regulated by adults, then they may be less fearful that their parents will use technology restriction as a punishment if adults are already highly involved in the use of their electronic devices (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Also, parents and educators can encourage children to openly speak with adults about cyberbullying.

The most important thing that parents and school personnel can do is educate themselves about cyberbullying and communicate their knowledge to others. When people are informed about cyberbullying, they can use the recommendations from researchers to implement their own action plans for preventing and responding to cyberbullying. It is important that parents, school personnel, and the community all work together to implement plans for preventing and eliminating cyberbullying.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research is needed to evaluate the most effective ways to prevent cyberbullying. Pretests and posttests could be used in a school that recently made changes in their school to prevent cyberbullying. Data could be collected in a school about the prevalence of cyberbullying among the students before implementing a cyberbullying prevention plan and after a plan has been put into action.

Schools would have to conduct the research to determine which plans work and which plans do not work at preventing cyberbullying. Schools would need to collect data after their specific cyberbullying prevention plan was implemented. For schools that already have cyberbullying prevention plans in place, data about cyberbullying could be compared to previous research about the prevalence of cyberbullying in schools without prevention plans.

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