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Bourassa, Carissa A.L. *Student Cyberbullying: Raising Awareness for School Counselors*

Abstract

Bullying is one the most serious and pervasive challenges facing schools today. Surveys indicate that other than the loss of a loved one, children view bullying as the worst experience of childhood. Being taunted verbally or attacked physically can be a painful ordeal that can leave lasting psychological scars and in some cases life-long consequences. As roughly 81% of bullying acts are not reported to adults, it is extremely important for all individuals to be aware of the signs that cyberbullying may be occurring. Indicators that bullying might be occurring may include: not wanting to go to school, sleeplessness, agitation, sadness, anxiety regarding checking email or social media sites, decline in academic performance and attendance.

It is well established that students who are bullied by their peers are generally at higher risk for internalizing problems. Negative effects linked to traditional bullying victimization may include school problems such as tardiness and truancy, eating disorders, depression, chronic illness and in extreme cases, victims of bullying have engaged in extreme violence toward themselves or other individuals. Bullying can stimulate a climate of fear and anxiety in school, distracting students from their schoolwork and hinder their ability to learn.

Establishing open communication and educating students and parents about the risk and consequences of online harassment toward other students is an important leadership role for school counselors. Offering ways to recognize and report cyberbullying may lead to a healthier school environment for all.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Kids today grow up being very technology savvy because they have been exposed to technology at a very early age. Adolescents in today's society are familiar with a technology-enabled world where they can connect with others through online communication, texting on their phones, chatting by Skype, and video messaging. Many teens seem more comfortable communicating using technology than they do in face-to-face communication. Adolescents are nurtured in a technology-enabled world where social networking, instant messaging, blogs and texts are the prevailing means of personal communication and interaction (Hindua & Patchin, 2008).

Hindua and Patchin (2008) assert that adolescents prefer to use technology for communication, entertainment, and socializing with others even more so than person-to-person contact. While there are both pros and cons to communicating through the Internet, one prevalent trend is students using the Internet to bully other students. This is referred to as cyberbullying and has recently contributed to severe harassment and online hazing that has the potential to push students over the edge emotionally resulting in some students who even take their own lives.

The apparent benefits of using the Internet include: the massive variety of information available at one's fingertips, entertainment use, speed of connection, communication safety line in difficult situations, and participation online via cell phones has favorable aspects of teaching youth social skills (Hinduia & Patchin, 2008). For example, cyberspaces provide an open environment to learn and relate to others, as well as develop the ability to tolerate and respect other's viewpoints and express sentiments in a healthy manner (Berson, 2000). Likewise, this

global network allows for American teens to connect with those in Botswana, Bahrain, Thailand or any other "wired" area in the world. This propels the technological development of youth in communication, socialization, information and learning to an international scale (Louge, 2006). The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (2002) reported that a majority of youth have rapidly acquired a liking for computers and the Internet.

However, the continued and rapid use of communicating online has left serious negative effects on the adolescent population. For instance, if the educational atmosphere of the Internet is hostile or unreceptive to those who communicate online, positive social skills cannot be successfully internalized. As a consequence, adolescents may fall short of certain developmental traits if they are reluctant to explore the Internet and take benefit of all its constructive features that others who do embrace cyberspace will naturally acquire (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). In addition, a rising population of teens communicating online is being exposed to interpersonal violence, aggression, exploitation, and harassment through what as been coined cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

This phenomenon called cyberbullying is being defined as: causing deliberate/intentional harm to others using Internet or other digital technologies (Dilmaç & Aydoğan, 2010). Kids have been bullying each other for years; however, the latest generation has further developed this new form of bullying and harassment by utilizing technology to enlarge their targeted population, and the extent of their harm.

There are two main electronic devices that young bullies can employ to harass their victims from afar. These include Internet-enabled personal computer and cellular phone (Dilmaç & Aydoğan, 2010). By using a personal computer, a bully can send harassing and denigrating emails or instant messages and post obscene, offensive, and slanderous messages to online

bulletin boards, or create Websites to encourage and publicize derogatory content. Equally, harassing text messages can be sent to the victim or third parties via cell phone (Dilmaç & Aydoğan, 2010). Those who cannot adjust to the rapid and constant technology- based advances and changes may all be in jeopardy for those who can and will organize technology as a criminal weapon (Butterfield & Broad, 2002).

Victimization through online threats is a moderately new phenomenon and area of concern. Bullying that takes place via electronic means has created an environment for offenders to veil his or her identity behind a computer or cell phone using anonymous email addresses or pseudonymous screen names (Dilmaç & Aydoğan, 2010). As a result, some teens may not see the serious harm they are causing because they are sheltered from the victims distress. Hiding behind the mask of anonymity, cyberbullies can invade a victim's home without ever entering the door, and feel like they have little chance of being caught. More importantly, it can go on twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (Shore, 2011).

There is no scarcity of possible offenders or victims of cyberbullying because of the prevalent availability of computers and other technology devices developed in today's society. Teachers and principals have even become victims of cyberbullying as a result of students creating false accounts on their behalf sending inappropriate messages to other students and faculty (Smith, 2011). Therefore, cyberbullying is the unfortunate consequence of the combination of adolescent belligerence and electronic communication, and its escalation is giving grounds for concern.

The growing prevalence of this problem could be partly due to the unique setting in which it occurs, or the nonphysical method in which it is carried out. The National Children's Home charity and Tesco Mobile reported in a 2005 survey that of 770 youth between the ages of

11 and 19, 20% of respondents reported that they had been bullied via electronic means. Another finding of the study indicated that 10% of respondents reported that another person had taken a picture of them via a cellular phone camera making them feel embarrassed, uncomfortable or threatened.

These cruel actions of cyberbullying are viral; that is as large number of people at school, in the city and world, can be involved in a cyber-attack on a victim, or find out about it easily, leading to the perception that nearly everyone knows about it (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Therefore, it is not uncommon for cyberbullied students to feel saddened, anxious, and distressed and their relationships at school, in the family, and with friends may be negatively influenced (Dilmaç & Aydoğan, 2010). Research regarding cyberbullying in schools found that every fourth child is a cyber-victim, and children who are cyberbullied experience various negative consequences such as anger and distress (Li, 2007). As with face-to-face bully victims, cyberbully victims experience many of the same problems including humiliation, low self-esteem, anger and depression. Destitute school performance, school avoidance, social withdrawal, and antisocial acts may all occur as a result of the emotional distress left on cyberbully victims. In some cases, severe and ongoing cyberbullying has led some victims to take their own lives (Shore, 2011).

According to Berson, Berson, and Ferron (2002) adolescents may be equating legal behavior with online ethical behavior, and as a result feel uninhibited to engage in online harassment. Individuals might be reluctant to use such hateful words in a face-to-face setting; however, this filter is no longer present when the victim is positioned behind a keyboard and computer screen. A survey of a random sample of 4441 youth between the ages of 10 and 18 from a large school district in the southern United States reported that approximately 20% of the

students in the sample reported experiencing cyberbullying in their lifetimes and two or more times over the course of the previous 30 days (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Students reported cyberbullying examples such as mean or hurtful comments with rumors spread online to be the most commonly used methods. In the same study, approximately 20% of the students admitted to cyberbullying in their lifetimes, and roughly 11% reported offending two or more times over the course of the previous thirty days (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

In some cases cyberbullies have been victims of face-to-face bullying and are using the Internet to fight back in an arena where they feel comfortable as cyberbullying can be done anytime, anywhere and by anyone with an Internet access (Shore, 2011). It does not require the presence of its victim; it only requires access to a computer or cell phone, therefore, the bully does not see the immediate response from the victim.

Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) found through a telephone survey of 1,498 regular Internet users between the ages of 10 and 17 that 19% of youth respondents were either on the giving or receiving end of online aggression. However, the more significant finding was that 84% of offenders reported knowing their victim in person, whereas only 31% of victims knew their harasser in person making it seem that having the ability to keep the offender's identity unknown creates a sense of power and control (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). The alleged secrecy online and the safety and security of hiding behind a computer screen may help individuals free themselves of the pressures of integrity and ethics of society to behave in a normative way. By using pseudonyms emails, the offender may feel a sense of freedom on the Internet, as well as making it difficult for victims to determine their offenders' identity (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Even though a few chat rooms employ hosts in public settings to regulate communication, they are unable to supervise when dialogue is established privately (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

Cyberbullying is a growing concern to parents, educators and school counselors because of the increasing numbers of kids engaged in interactions via computers and cell phones. It has become a significant part of their lives and it is not startling that some have decided to use technology to be malicious or threatening toward others. The fact that teens are connected to technology 24/7 means they are vulnerable to victimization around the clock. Due to the slow response of the severity of this new form of bullying some cyberbullies feel that there are little or no consequences for their actions and never consider how the content they communicate online can inflict pain--and sometimes cause severe psychological and emotional wounds.

Payton Ruth Ann Richardson of Chetek, Wisconsin tragically committed suicide after middle school classmates were bullying her. She was just 12 years old. Despite Payton's Facebook account and messages on her iPod, Chetek-Weyerhaeuser School District told news reporters that there was no merit to allegations of bullying (Dimick, 2012). However, Payton's mother claims bullying lead her daughter to take her own life. "I want something good to come from Payton's death, something positive to help the rest of our youth" (Dimick, 2012).

In a similar story, Phoebe Prince, a 15-year-old, recent Irish immigrant, hanged herself January 14th, 2010 after nearly three months of routine torment by students at South Hadley High School in Massachusetts, via text message, and through the social networking site, Facebook (Goldman, 2010). Older girls who resented her for dating an older football player had reportedly harassed Prince, a freshman. The investigation following her death revealed relentless activity directed toward the young teen, intended to humiliate her and to make it impossible for her to remain at school. The bullying, for her, became intolerable (Goldman, 2010). Nine teens have been indicted on charges connected to Prince's suicide, and six have been expelled from school (Goldman, 2010). However, charges related to cyberbullying are not always predictable.

Payton's family is in the process of developing paperwork to take to the legislative committee to make a law so that bullies are held responsible for their actions and what they are doing to other students (Dimick, 2012).

Unfortunately, not all states have laws and actions against cyberbullying. Furthermore, it is generally not illegal to use texting as a form of communication to harm, harass, or taunt others because of the First Amendment protections, aside from for cases that can be distinctively defined as "cyberstalking" (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Although, as Hinduia and Patchin (2008) noted, behaviors may traverse the legal line into "harassment." It is often complicated for law enforcement to get involved in cyberbullying cases unless there is a serious and considerable threat to one's personal safety.

Despite how cyberbullying is occurring, instant messages, personal e-mails, or public exchanges in chat rooms, or social networking sites, youth are being bullied to such an extent that it could be harmfully affecting them physically, emotionally, cognitively (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Cyberbullying is a growing problem because increasing numbers of kids are using and embracing interactions via computers and cell phones. There are two big challenges that make it difficult to prevent cyberbullying. First, many people do not see the harm associated with it, and some attempt to dismiss or disregard cyberbullying because there are "more serious forms of aggression" to worry about. The second challenge relates to who is willing to step up and take responsibility for responding to inappropriate use of technology.

Therefore the problem becomes:

1. What are the warning signs that cyberbullying is occurring?

2. What impact does cyberbullying have on victims and bystanders?

3. What can parents, teachers, school counselors and communities do to prevent
    cyberbullying?

Purpose of the Study

School counselors, parents, students and other school personnel may gain a better understanding of the seriousness in cyberbullying, the harm it causes, and the roles individuals play in preventing and responding to cyberbullying through this review of literature.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

It is assumed that cyberbullying is occurring in schools throughout the United States. It is also assumed that victims of cyberbullying are emotionally affected in a negative manner and can experience signs of anger and depression. One limitation of this study is the small time frame to review the literature. Likewise, cyberbullying is a relatively new area of study and therefore there may be few reliable sources on the topic.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are explained to give clarification to this literature review.

Cyberbullying. Using the Internet, cell phones or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

Viral. Extensive spreading of Internet rumors.

Cyberspace. Electronic mode of computer networks where online communication occurs.

Victimization. The process of being or becoming a victim.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

Cyberbullying is a fast-growing form of bullying that has materialized with the initiation of technology. It involves sending offensive, humiliating or threatening messages or images through the computer or cell phone. It is most common with middle and high school students, but students as young as eight or nine have also engaged in this high-tech form of bullying (Shore, 2011). It is recognized that youth who are harassed or mistreated by others in a usual setting such as the school playground, bus stop or lunchroom are usually able to escape continued victimization once their school day is over. However, technological advances now provide bullies with the ability to penetrate the home of victims after school hours by contacting them through electronic means (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Cyberbullying, then may significantly inflate the access, and increase the intensity of interpersonal damage that transpires among this population.

Signs that Cyberbullying is Occurring

Bullying is one the most serious and pervasive challenges facing schools today. Surveys indicate that children view bullying as the worst experience of childhood, other than losing a loved one (Shore, 2011). Being taunted verbally or attacked physically can be a painful ordeal that can leave lasting psychological scars and in some cases life-long consequences. According to Hinduja and Patchin (2010), 81% of bullying acts are not reported to adults; therefore, it is extremely important for all individuals to be aware of the signs that cyberbullying may be occurring. Although signs of cyberbullying are not as apparent as traditional bullying there are some and should be taken seriously. It is important for parents and educators to closely monitor computer use as well as other electronic devices and note any behavior that may seem out of the

ordinary. For example, if a child typically enjoys using the computer but abruptly no longer desires to do so, there may be a problem. Similarly, if a child is completely obsessed with interacting online at all hours, there may be reason to investigate. Other signs that a child may be a victim of cyberbullying include: if a child appears nervous or jumping when an instant message or e-mail appears, appears apprehensive about going to school or outside in general, appears to be angry, depressed or frustrated after using the computer, avoids discussions about what they are doing on the computer, or becomes abnormally withdrawn from usual friends or family members (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

In order to help prevent cyberbullying from occurring it is also important to be aware of the signs indicating that a child is cyberbullying others. These behaviors may include: rapidly switching screens or closing programs when an adult walks by, using the computer at all hours of the night, getting angry or offensive if he or she cannot use the computer, laughing excessively while using the computer, avoiding discussions about what they are doing on the computer, and using numerous online accounts or using an account that is not their own (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). These red flags indicate that children may be involved in cyberbullying as either the victim or the aggressor need to be taken seriously and acted upon to help eliminate the psychological distress it places on its victims.

Impact of Cyberbullying

It is well established that students who are bullied by their peers are at higher risk for internalizing problems. Negative effects linked to traditional bullying victimization include school problems such as tardiness and truancy, eating disorders, depression, chronic illness and in extreme cases, victims of bullying have engaged in extreme violence toward themselves or other individuals (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). The existing literature on cyberbullying suggests

that the consequences of cyberbullying may be similar to traditional bullying. As children develop, their health and well-being is increasingly associated with peer context. Peer troubles during childhood and adolescence can frequently impact healthy functioning for those who engage in disturbing behaviors as well as those who are mistreated (Perren, Dooley, Shaw & Cross, 2010). It is well recognized that being a victim of bullying has negative consequences. Many targets of cyberbullying report feeling sad, depressed, angry, and frustrated (Shore, 2011). Victims who experience cyberbullying also reveal that they are afraid or embarrassed to go to school (Shore, 2011).

Lack of peer acceptance and peer victimization is associated with social dissatisfaction and social withdrawal, loneliness, and emotional and behavioral symptoms (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Perren, Von Wyl, Stadelmann, Burgin & von Klitzing, 2006). Findings from several longitudinal studies have indicated that peer victimization and exclusion may also increase children's depressive symptoms and peer rejection may play a causal role in the developmental stages of depressive symptoms (Hodges & Perry, 1999). In addition, much like traditional bullying, there is a significant correlation between cyberbullying and physical and psychological problems.

An Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study reported that cyber-victimization is associated with higher levels of stress symptoms (Cross, Shaw, Hearn, Epstein, Monks, Lester & Thomas, 2009). Not only did victims report higher depressive symptoms such as lack of positive feelings, lack of motivation and energy, and feelings of worthlessness of life but also that they engage in other types of problematic behaviors such as alcohol consumption, smoking habits, physical injury, and poor school grades (Cross et al., 2009). Similarly, a Swedish study found that cyber victimization contributed over and above traditional victimization to adolescents'

social anxiety. Qualitative data suggest that in comparison with traditional bullying forms, cyberbullying evoked stronger damaging feelings, fear, and a clear sense of helplessness (Spears, Slee, Owens & Johnson, 2009). Therefore, being a victim of cyberbullying might be even more strongly associated with depressive symptoms than traditional bullying.

Young people who bully may also experience negative consequences related to their behavior and some are not instantly obvious. Early on, bully's self-concept and social standing often seem unharmed and are comparable to that of observers and markedly better than those who are victims (Perren et al., 2010). These bullies may be judged as positive leaders with character traits such as a good self-esteem and sense of humor allowing them to reach a higher stage of popularity among their peers. However, as children grow older bullying behaviors become gradually more maladaptive. Whereas young children lean to debate problems by fighting, young adults favor negotiation to solve a disagreement. Generally, children who bully do not learn to intermingle and communicate in socially suitable ways and therefore have trouble interacting tolerably with their older peers (Perren et al., 2010). These behaviors often result in maladaptive behavioral patterns; as well as representing a superior danger for serious injury, alcohol dependency, and delinquency (Perren & Hornung, 2005).

These findings suggest that those who bully also show other forms of antisocial behavior and that some of those students show a pattern of life-course persistent antisocial behavior (Moffitt, 1993). Additionally, it is found that adolescents who bully others are found to have more psychological and physical harms than their peers with an increase risk for depression and suicidal ideation (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, M., Marttunen, Rimpela, A. & Rantanen, 1999). Traditional bullying research generally distinguishes between children or adolescents who are only victims, only bullies, or both. Concerning probable outcomes of bullying, it has been shown

that those who bully others and are victimized report the highest levels of externalizing and internalizing symptoms (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999).

Bullying in all forms may also impact students who are not only victims but those who witness these incidents. Those who witness cyberbullying generally do not want to get involved because of the harassment and problems they fear it may bring upon them, yet they often know that what they are seeing is not right and should stop (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). However, by doing nothing, bystanders are doing something. Bullying can stimulate a climate of fear and anxiety in school, distracting students from their schoolwork and hinder their ability to learn.

The benefits of having a positive school climate contribute to more reliable attendance, higher student achievement and other enviable student outcomes (Shore, 2011). A recent study found that students who experienced cyberbullying (both those who were victims and those who admitted to cyberbullying others) perceived an inferior climate at their school than those who had not experienced cyberbullying. Youth were asked whether they "enjoy going to school," "feel safe at school," "feel that teachers at their school really try to help them succeed," and "feel that teachers at their school care about them." Those who disclosed cyberbullying others or who were victims of cyberbullying were less likely to agree with those statements (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Overall, it is vital that educators increase opportunities for respect, and promote a safe and courteous school climate. The effects of a positive school environment will go a long way in reducing the occurrence of many problematic behaviors at the school, including bullying and harassment.

Cyberbullying Prevention

There is a lack of empirical research regarding cyberbullying prevention and intervention approaches that are deemed effective. Nevertheless, there have been a number of approaches

that have been supported by state and local governments, schools, families and students to use when addressing cyberbullying. In general, these fall into three categories: (a) laws, rules and polices to regulate the use of media and to establish controls related to cyberbullying; (b) curricular programs intended to educate children and youth about safe Internet and electronic media use and how to evade and address cyberbullying should it occur including the consequences for cyberbullying; and (c) technological approaches to prevent or minimize the potential for cyberbullying (Snakenborg, Van Acker & Gable, 2011).

A considerable amount of attention has been directed toward the states that are working through the process of developing cyberbullying legislation. In 2008, Congress passed the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Legislation, which among other issues also addresses cyberbullying. Furthermore, forty-four states currently have legislation that addresses school bullying, harassment and intimidation (Anti-Defamation League, 2009; National Conference of State Legislatures, n.d.).

Previously mentioned differences between traditional bullying and cyberbullying such as anonymity, intent to harm, and the nature of the act create a challenge in addressing cyberbullying through current antibullying legislation. As a solution, some states are developing specific cyberbullying legislation. North Carolina, for example, has enacted the Protect Our Kids/Cyberbullying Legislation (S.L. 2009-551) making it a misdemeanor to engage in cyberbullying. Engaging in cyberbullying in Missouri is a crime that can have a consequence of jail time, fines, or both (Stroud, 2009). However, some proposals have been criticized for being too vague or for seeking to regulate behavior that is considered free speech. Experts Hinduja and Patchin (2010) argue that those who feel harassing, threatening, or otherwise intimidating speech or communications as (or should be) protected by the First Amendment are misguided.

School Polices and Prevention

Most authorities agree that it is important for schools to develop polices on bullying and cyberbullying that address the seriousness of the problem and the consequences for engaging in such behavior. One of the major areas of disputation, however, seems to be whether school districts can interfere in the actions or free speech of students that occurs away from the campus. While this is grey in legal matters, some courts have upheld the actions of school administrators in disciplining students for off-campus actions.

For example, in J.S. v. Bethlehem Area School District (2000), the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania reviewed the case where J.S. was expelled from the school for creating a Web page that included threatening and derogatory comments about specific school staff (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). The court made it clear in a ruling that schools do have the authority to discipline students and were well within their legal rights to intervene in cyberbullying incidents, even those taking place off campus, when it can be demonstrated that the incident resulted in a significant disturbance of the educational environment (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). With such controversy surrounding the authority in which schools can discipline students for outside behavior, great care should be taken by school district personnel to review their harassment and bullying policies, and develop a legally defensible policy and approach for addressing cyberbullying within the school.

In addition to developing policies and procedures related to cyberbullying, educating staff about bullying is particularly important, given many students who are frequently bullied do not report the abuse (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007). School administrators should formally assess the extent and scope of the problem within the school by collecting surveys and interview data. Once there is a baseline measurement of what is going on in the school, specific

strategies can be implemented to educated students and staff in creative and powerful ways (Shore, 2011).

Creating awareness about the nature, prevalence, and type of bullying across the whole school community provides a common podium on which to expand skills and competencies to prevent, identify and manage all types of bullying incidences effectively and reliably. Cross et al. (2009) reported that the majority of school staff felt a responsibility to prevent bullying and cyberbullying but felt that their school needed more training to enhance their skills to deal with the range of issues related to incidents. Schools should designate a "cyberbullying expert" who is responsible for educating others about the issues and then pass on important techniques, strategies and interventions to other youth-serving adults on campus (Shore, 2011). Administrators and faculty must ultimately establish a culture in which bullying is not tolerated and there is routine reinforcement of appropriate social norms.

Students may also benefit from education about bullying and cyberbullying. The most important preventative step that administers and educators can take is to educate the school community about responsible Internet use. Many software programs allow a school district to filter or block content based on key words, Website addresses, and specified categories. Most of these programs provide a third party, such as a school administrator, the ability to monitor a summary of violation allowing the identification of potential cyberbullying without the need to review each and every electronic communication (Snakenborg et al., 2011).

Students need to know that all forms of bullying are wrong, and those who choose to engage in harassing or threatening behaviors will be subject to discipline. It is important to discuss issues related to the appropriate use of online communication technology in various areas of the general curriculum. To help reinforce specific rules regarding the use of computers,

Internet and other electronic devices signs or posters should be placed in computer labs, hallways and classrooms to remind students to use technology responsibly (Shore, 2011).

Also, several curriculum-based programs that claim to address cyberbullying in schools have been developed. Integrating these programs with the comprehensive school counseling program may allow the school counselor to reach more students and address the importance of the topic through various classroom lessons. Typically, these programs involve video or Webisodes related to cyberbullying and a series of scripted lessons to help students discuss issues related to cyberbullying and ways to prevent and to address cyberbullying should it occur (Snakenborg et al., 2011).

Research has suggested that students' antibullying attitudes, empathy and positive feelings toward targets of bullying and cyberbullying increase the likelihood of them defending another student being bullied (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2007). Peer mentoring where older students informally teach lessons and share experiences with younger students to promote positive online interactions have also resulted in reducing cyberbullying behavior (Shore, 2011). Students who have initiated or been the victim of cyberbullying should be provided intensive intervention strategies on the basis of the individual needs of the student. Focus groups or individual counseling sessions could be established to increase anger management skills, assertiveness, nonaggressive behavior training and conflict resolution. Schools may wish to utilize these specially created cyberbullying curricula or general information in assemblies and in class discussions. Schools may want to invite specialists and law enforcement to come talk to staff and students to help appreciate the potential seriousness of cyberbullying (Shore, 2011).

Parents and community members can also benefit from cyberbullying education. Parents must educate their children about appropriate online behavior and monitor their children's

exploration online, especially in their early exploration online. Maintaining an open and honest line of communication with their parents may enable children to be more willing to talk whenever they experience something harmful when interacting online or via cell phone (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Furthermore teaching positive morals and values in the home about how others should be treated with respect and dignity can play an important role in developing positive relationships and interactions among youth. Parents may utilize an "Internet Use Contract" and a "Cell Phone Use Contract" to create a clear understanding about what is and what is not appropriate with respect to the use of technology. With these agreements, the parent and the child must abide by certain rules of engagement, and when there are violations immediate consequences will be given (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

If a parent discovers that their child is being cyberbullied, it is important to make sure they feel safe and secure, and demonstrate unconditional support. Parents must convey that they desire the same result: that the cyberbullying stop and that life does not become more difficult (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). This can be achieved by working together to derive a course of action, as it is appropriate and important to implore the child's perspective as to what might be done to improve the situation.

By all accounts, cyberbullying is an increasingly serious problem with sometime devastating consequences. Students, parents, educators and administration all have an equal responsibility in sharing with one another appropriate prevention methods and techniques to ensure a safe cyberspace and school community.

Chapter III: Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

Summary

In conclusion, Hinduja and Patchin (2008) assert that adolescents prefer to use technology for communication, entertainment, and socializing with others even more so than person-to-person contact. While there are both pros and cons to communicating through the Internet, one trend that is occurring is students using the Internet to bully other students. This is referred to as cyberbullying and has recently contributed to severe harassment and hazing.

Cyberbullying is associated with various academic and social problems. They range from withdrawal from school activities, reduced attendance rates, declining academic grades, to eating disorders, substance abuse, depression and even suicide (Mason, 2008). At the very least, cyberbullying demoralizes the freedom of youth to use and explore online resources (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). School counselors, parents, students and other youth leaders need to gain a better understanding of the seriousness in cyberbullying, the harm it causes, and the roles individuals play in preventing and responding to cyberbullying.

In summary, signs that a child may be a victim of cyberbullying include: if a child appears nervous or jumping when an instant message or e-mail appears, appears apprehensive about going to school or outside in general, appears to be angry, depressed or frustrated after using the computer, avoids discussions about what they are doing on the computer, or becomes abnormally withdrawn from usual friends.

It is well established that students who are bullied by their peers are at higher risk for internalizing problems. The negative impact that could result from bullying may include school problems such as tardiness and truancy, eating disorders, depression, chronic illness and in

extreme cases, victims of bullying have engaged in extreme violence toward themselves or other individuals (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

The existing literature on cyberbullying suggests that the consequences of cyberbullying may be similar to traditional bullying. As children develop, their health and well-being is increasingly associated with peer context. Peer troubles during childhood and adolescence can frequently impact healthy functioning for those who engage in disturbing behaviors as well as those who are mistreated (Perren, Dooley, Shaw & Cross, 2010).

It is well recognized that being a victim of bullying has negative consequences. Many targets of cyberbullying report feeling sad, depressed, angry and frustrated (Shore, 2011). Not only did victims report higher depressive symptoms such as lack of positive feelings, lack of motivation and energy, and feelings of worthlessness of life but also that they engage in other types of problematic behaviors such as alcohol consumption, smoking habits, physical injury and poor school grades (Cross et al., 2009).

Although signs of cyberbullying are not as apparent as traditional bullying there are some signs that should be taken seriously. It is important for parents and educators to closely monitor computer use as well as other electronic devices and note any behavior that may seem out of the ordinary such as sudden lack of interest in using the computer or cell phone, appearing nervous or jumping when an instant message or e-mail appears, apprehensiveness about going to school or an unusual withdrawal from friends and family (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). It is well documented that being a victim of bullying has negative consequences.

Many targets of cyberbullying report feeling sad, depressed, angry and frustrated (Shore, 2011). Victims who experience cyberbullying also reveal that they are afraid or embarrassed to go to school (Shore, 2011). Lack of peer acceptance and peer victimization is associated with

social dissatisfaction and social withdrawal, loneliness, and emotional and behavioral symptoms (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Perren et al., 2006).

Discussion

In response, a number of states have enacted some kind of legislation to combat bullying and more recently cyberbullying. All students must be taught appropriate ways to use technology, and potential bullies must recognize there are serious consequences to their behavior, including school discipline, litigation and criminal prosecution (Snakenborg et al., 2011). Furthermore, a growing number of community and school leaders identify the magnitude of developing polices and implementing curriculum intended to address these incidents (Snakenborg et al., 2011). The importance of endorsing understandings about cyberbullying across the school community and facilitating a common-school image and culture that sponsors a safe and supportive learning atmosphere is emphasized to reduce bullying. As technology advances and students become even more capable, it is important that school leaders monitor the system and keep up with trends and changes in order to keep students safe.

Schools need to update training sessions and help families understand the importance of communication with their students. Setting boundaries and clear expectations for computer use at home may discourage students from harassing other students that could result in school suspension or expulsion or even criminal charges against the family. School counselors can play a role in educating students through school counseling lessons, evening presentations for parents, and newsletter or website postings regarding inappropriate online activity. By getting the word out to the students, teachers and youth leaders, the school counselor can advocate for victims of cyberbullying while raising awareness of the dangers. Also, helping bystanders know what to do is critical to improving the school environment. Posting toll-free phone numbers or a help-line

or offering a tip-line that welcomes student's reports of incidents may further diminish the numbers of those harassing other students with technology.

Recommendations for Further Research

Most current cyberbullying programs are based on practical beliefs about prevention and logical approaches rather than scientific evidence. Further research should be executed to identify scientifically based prevention and intervention programs to tackle cyberbullying (Snakenborg et al., 2011). Until more research is known about verified effective ways to address cyberbullying, care should be taken to observe the outcomes of current practices to help ensure that they result in the desired effects (Snakenborg et al., 2011). These understandings need to be supported with professional learning for staff, curriculum learning for students, and education sessions for families to enhance how the whole school community can respond effectively to incidences of cyberbullying.

Researching gender, ethnicity and age groups may also provide insight into how young people are using technology to bully others. Is there more cyberbullying in rural schools, or do more severe cases happen in larger schools? Does adult supervision and computer contracts help minimize harassment from home-based computers? What are the issues that bullies face that lead them to bully others? These questions could all provide further insight into the world of the bully and victim. Children experience enough stress in their lives without the additional burden of being harassed online. More research is needed in this field.

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