

High School Bullies in the 21st Century:
The Cyberbullying Epidemic and Prevention Programs

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Abstract

Cyberbullying, a type of threatening and harassing bullying through use of electronic technology, is a rapidly growing phenomenon among youth. Bullying is not a new concept, however, cyberbullying puts a new twist on the common tactics of bullying, in that it does not cause physical harm to its victims, but the less visible consequences can still be just as problematic. It is a topic that is still up and coming, as it is a fairly new trend. The effects of cyberbullying are similar to traditional bullying, and can often times be harsher and more far-reaching than traditional bullying. This new take on bullying has left parents, schools, and community officials at a loss for how to handle the situations that arise, as there is a whole new level of legal and ethical issues to undertake. The purpose of this research paper is to provide a widespread analysis of the current research on cyberbullying and the issues related to it in order to develop ideas for future research, policies, and protocol. The issues that are covered under this research include traditional bullying, teen social networking, legal issues, and policy implications.

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Introduction

Cyberbullying, which is defined as bullying through the use of technology, is a rapidly growing issue that is seen frequently among youth. Cyberbullying is not a new event, but rather a new twist on the common tactics of bullying. Both types of bullying include a power struggle between a victim and a bully, where the victim is left feeling helpless. The difference between cyberbullying and traditional bullying is that cyberbullying is not face-to-face contact that leaves a victim helpless, but rather an introverted form of bullying, where the bully is able to hide behind the technological tool that they are using to do the bullying. Most cyberbullying incidents do not happen in school, but instead occur within the privacy of one's home or work life. Regardless of this fact, the effects still carry back into the learning environment, affecting victims much the same as traditional bullying.

Over the past 15 years, there have been significant changes in the way we use communication products due to the ever-changing technology. These changes in technology have allowed us to deal with relationships, both positive and negative, at a whole different level. The individuals this change in communication has affected the most is the youth of the world. More than ever before, youth are using social medias as their primary communication, to include social networks, chats, forums, and texting. While there are many positive aspects to these new and improved methods of communication, such as accessibility, mass communication, and social relief; there are also negative aspects, such as missed nonverbal communication signals, a digital divide, and anonymity.

These new methods of communication have led to new forms of aggression. This new availability of bullying tactics has come to be known as cyberbullying, which is bullying that is committed through use of electronic communication, and it is deliberate, repeated, and hostile,

with the sole intent of harming another individual. The aggression is shown through the use of technology, occurring mainly through mobile phones and the Internet (Belsey, 2004; Slonje & Smith, 2008). Cyberbullying has a potential for very serious repercussions for victims, as has been shown through several different incidents, even some severe as adolescent suicide. The information presented in this paper is focused on youth in America, but the problem does not stop there. Instead, it is far-reaching, worldwide, and limitless (Kraft, 2006).

Cyberbullying is appearing to have a prominence among many professionals, including police officers, teachers, parents, and news anchors, as the problems are seen more and more often, and the consequences appear to be getting more severe. Countless times of turning on the news, either locally or nationally, there appears to be another story about bullying or an incident that was the result of bullying. A study by the National Crime Prevention Council in 2006 showed that out of 824 middle and high school-aged students, 43% have been cyberbullied in the last year, and one in every three teens have been harassed via electronic communication (cited in Moessner, 2007). The changes in technology have only widened the options a bully has in how they are going to torment and harass their victims. The use of technology makes it easy for the bully to get away with their destructive behavior without any consequences. And the fact that something put out on the Internet is so difficult, sometimes even impossible, to erase, makes the consequences the victim suffers even more severe. Couple that together with the lack of break a victim gets from the bullying, since there is no weekend escape, and the threat can often end up deadly. This threat is not going anywhere either, and if something is not done to take preventative measures against this threat, youth will continue being threatened by cyberbullies.

As technology has made its many advances, people have found new ways to bully, and use cyberbullying as a way to emotionally bully their victims. Cyberbullying takes place in many

different forms, including: flaming, harassment, defamation, impersonation, outing, trickery, exclusion, cyberstalking, and cyberthreats. These are used as a way to torment, threaten, harass, and embarrass. As technology has made its many advances, people have found new ways to bully, and use cyberbullying as a way to emotionally bully their victims. Cyberbullying involves the use of many different technologies to bully, including SMS, e-mail, chat rooms, and Facebook. (Gilkerson, 2012; Willard, 2006).

Regardless of which form of cyberbullying the aggressor uses, they are most often anonymous to the victim, therefore leading the bully to believe he can be more hurtful than if the victim is aware of their identity. Even when they are not anonymous, the lack of face-to-face bullying often causes the aggressor to say things that he may not otherwise say if the victim were present. Because of this anonymity, cyberbullying often goes unreported. Victims either do not know whom to point the finger at, or feel that they need to deal with it themselves, due to fear of losing technological privileges. Adding this fear of not knowing how to handle the problem or who to blame makes the plethora of problems a victim already suffers from grow, leading them to experience stress, low self-esteem, and depression. Many times, these symptoms that a victim lives with becomes too much, and can lead to suicide or violence (Marr & Field, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that never stops, because it can follow the victim almost anywhere. The bullying starts from the moment they wake up and check their cell phone or e-mail, to the time they go to bed. If the youth does not shut off their phones or computers at night, the bullying can remain with them 24 hours a day. Bullying has always been a prevalent problem among youth and adolescents, especially in a society that focuses on social acceptance.

Bullying is a problem faced daily for some at school and extracurricular activities, often interfering with the mental welfare of the victim, and can leave permanent damages to an individual's identity and self-esteem. Around 10 percent of adolescents have been victims of cyberbullying, being harassed continuously with no reprieve (University of Gothenburg, 2010). It is hard to prevent cyberbullying or even to protect the victims that fall prey to the bullying, because it is not always something that can be monitored. When researching this type of problem, we need to look into how parents and educators can recognize signs of cyberbullying in order to provide a safe environment for all youth. Adults need to be aware of what is going on when the youth are using the Internet, especially parents and school officials who have the ability to prevent this problem.

All students are potential victims of cyberbullying, therefore making it critical for any officials and authority in a child's life to take an active role at preventing and controlling it (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006, p. 148). While the topic is becoming more and more prevalent and well-known, research is lacking on what has been done to combat the problem (Smith et. al, 2008). There are a few places that have policies against cyberbullying in an attempt to prevent or stop it, but there is no way to ensure it was followed. Research has also show that there is very little follow-through on consequences for violations of cyberbullying (Li, 2007). Knowing these issues, it is necessary to delve further into the topic to define and identify the problem and come up with suggestions for curbing it.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is show that cyberbullying is a large problem and the current programs put in place to combat this problem are inadequate and ineffective, and therefore need

to be adjusted so that they can be successful. It is to bring an awareness of the frequency of the problem as it relates to the accessibility of technology, and then to explore prevention strategies and intervention strategies to help combat the problem. This study will present facts on cyberbullying, including a literature review about cyberbullying and its impact on adolescents. It will be geared toward the specific population of high school students. This literature review will seek to identify answers to the following questions:

- What is cyberbullying?
- How common is the problem of cyberbullying?
- What are some of the common characteristics of cyberbullying?
- How are cyberbullying and traditional bullying similar and different?
- What are the effects of cyberbullying?
- How can authority figures help prevent cyberbullying?
- What prevention programs are in place for this problem?
- How successful are the current programs dealing with this problem?

While evaluating the extent of the problem as well as current and proposed programs to combat the issue, this paper will be using social control theory, originally proposed by Travis Hirschi in 1969 as social bond theory. The social bond theory is described as ‘elements of social bonding including attachment to families, commitment to social norms and institutions, involvement in activities, and the belief that these things are important. It emphasizes the fact that where there is an absence of social attachments, there is an increase in juvenile delinquency, focusing mostly on peer groups, with the four basic elements being attachment, commitment, involvement in conventional versus deviant activities, and the common value system in society.

This theory suggests that the traditional figures in an adolescent's life (i.e. parents) make a huge impact in the deterrent of deviant behavior (Hirschi, 1969).

Research shows that cyberbullying has significant psychological and emotional outcomes on its victims, similar to those of real-life bullying. The biggest difference between the two and the main reason cyberbullying is so much worse, is because there is no escape from the bullying; it follows the individual wherever they go. The numbers are significant as well, with nearly 43 percent of today's youth having been bullied online, and 70 percent of minors stating that it happens frequently. A smaller number of youth, 32 percent, claim that they have been the target of annoying or menacing behavior online, but did not know if the menacing behavior could be considered bullying or just kids being kids. With the growth in cell phone use has come the expansion of cyberbullying through text message. 90 percent of youth have seen cyberbullying and ignored it, and only one in ten victims will tell a trusted adult about the abuse. This type of bullying makes a victim nine times more likely to consider committing suicide than a peer. Females fall victim to cyberbullying at a rate 12 percent more than males, and adolescent females are cyber bullied at a rate higher than any other age or gender group. A problem with prevention is that only one in six parents is aware that their child is being bullied (Gilkerson, 2012; Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008).

The facts on cyberbullying and its consequences are alarming, which would suggest that there are numerous programs and prevention programs available to combat this problem. However, research has not shown there to be many programs for prevention, and programs that are available are not proving to be very successful. Some of these available programs include: The Great American NO BULL Challenge, Internet Safety 101, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Stomp Out Bullying, Delete Digital Drama, Cyberbully411, and STOP Cyberbullying

(Hinduja & Patchin, 2012; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Limber et. Al., 2009; Shore, 2006). These programs focus largely on what the individual can do to stop cyberbullying, including suggestions on how to handle the bullying (i.e. refusing to pass along messages and blocking communication with the bully). These programs also help to raise awareness of cyberbullying, including the array of problems that are a result of the bullying.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

It is assumed that the information collected during this review will thoroughly and systematically recognize the seriousness of cyberbullying. It is also assumed that the literature review will be able to distinguish the similarities and differences between the different types of bullying and the differences of the effects between males and females. Last, it will show the different preventions and interventions for parents, victims, schools, and community services. Possible limitations of the study include the newness of the topic, which may lead to limited available research.

The expansion of the Internet and other technological and social networking capabilities has brought bullying to a new level, making it more common and more severe. The information that will be presented will provide a better understanding of what cyberbullying is, how harmful they can be, and how to prevent it from happening. This paper is meant to be used for information and suggestions on prevention strategies.

Significance and Implications of the Study

Prevention programs are created in order to stop a problem before it happens, not deal with the consequences after the fact. When it comes to cyberbullying, this is not happening.

Instead so-called 'prevention programs' are focusing on the role everyone will play in stopping the bullying after it starts. These intervention programs are great for a backup plan if prevention fails, but prevention should be the primary focus. If there is a way to stop a problem before it starts, then it will be easier to intervene when one or two incidents slip through the cracks.

Current programs are too narrow and not widespread enough. Current programs continue looking at how the individual can report the problem or ignore the problem. This simply allows for the individual to have a better grasp on the issue so as not to suffer the consequences. There needs to be more done so that the problem is close to nonexistent, and that it's repercussions are slim to none. Cyberbullying should be stopped before it leads an individual into a killing spree or a suicidal rage.

It is suggested that an individual is responsible for their feelings and for what they allow to hurt them. However, teenagers are not mature enough to always know when enough is enough or even to have the capacity to know how to control their emotions. The teenage years can be tumultuous enough without being a victim to bullying. Add all the issues already being dealt with in a teenager's life to a victim of bullying, and the consequences can be deadly.

Some of the currently implemented anti- cyberbullying programs have seen some success, but only in so far as they discourage bullying. The quantitative measures of these programs are yet to be seen (Kraft & Wang, 2009). This is why it is important to research successful programs that are measureable and can see results.

Review of the literature

Definitions

Bullying behavior of all types is becoming a hot topic in society, and cyberbullying is increasing at a rampant rate. Schools and communities are implementing various anti-bullying programs, such as zero tolerance policies for weapons and violence. As successful as these programs may be, they do not combat cyberbullying, mainly because there has not been a lot of information about the topic until lately.

Defining and clarifying what cyberbullying is the first step to helping to find a solution to the problem. Cyberbullying is defined as electronic or online harassment involving the use of e-mail, instant messaging, web sites, voting booths, and chat room with intent to deliberately antagonize and intimidate others (Beale & Hall, 2007; Willard, 2007; Trolley, Hanel, & Shields, 2006). There are certain terminologies that are incorporated into the term cyberbullying which should be defined in order to have a full understanding of the concept, including: anonymity, pseudonyms, flaming, masquerading, cyberstalking, outing, harassment, and exclusion (Gordon, 2013). Two of these terms refer to a person's identity – anonymity and pseudonym.

Anonymity is when someone is able to hide who they are when making threatening comments. It may be done through use of aliases or pseudonyms, or they find other ways to keep their identity a secret. A pseudonym is another term for a nickname. In reference to cyber bullying, it is a screen name that someone uses to keep their real identity a secret (Dueck, 2006; Trolley, 2010).

The additional terms that are often used in reference to cyberbullying – flaming, masquerading, cyberstalking, outing, harassment, and exclusion – are the ways in which the bullying occurs. Flaming is an intense argument that takes place over the Internet, either in a

chat room, through instant message, or over email. Their emotions are shown through capitalized letters or emoticons to enhance their point of view. Masquerading is when a victim believes the bully is someone different than it really is. The bully creates a false identity through methods of deceit, such as using someone else's name or number to lead the victim into believing they are someone else. For example, an individual will make up a screen name in order to carry out the bullying. In some instances, bullies pose as their victims in adult-only sites, creating the victim to be harassed by the adults (inadvertently and unknowingly) that use that site (Trolley, 2010; Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012).

Harassment involves bullying in which the messages are meant to target an individual or group, often sending messages repeatedly and at odd times of the day or night. An example of this includes posting rumors, threats, or embarrassing information on social networking sites. Cyberstalking is a form of harassment, in which a victim continually sends messages through electronic communication. Victims tend to feel just as intimidated by cyberstalkers as if they are stalked in real life. Another way in which cyberbullying occurs is through the use of the Internet to "out" someone, and make public the fact that someone is homosexual. Outing is a public display of personal communications. This is where the bullies print out conversation (most commonly found to contain personal or sexual information) and show it to everyone. Last, exclusion is when electronic communication, or lack thereof, is used as a tool to exclude someone from a group. Much like being a victim to bullying because one does not have the latest trends in clothes, a victim of cyberbullying is excluded because he or she is not like everyone else and able to use technology (Bauman, Cross, & Walker, 2013; Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012).

Distinctions of cyberbullying

The definition of what cyberbullying appears to be simple and straight forward, but it is actually convoluted and needs further detailed explanation. The reason that cyberbullying is different than traditional bullying is because the modes of communication make the bullying different. There are four different modes of communication via electronic means that clearly show this distinction, including anonymity, location, physical cues, and time.

First, there is the existence of anonymity when using electronic communication, which is something that cannot occur in traditional bullying. The perpetrator can hide who they are or pretend to be someone different when online, a concept that is not seen in traditional bullying. Second, a cyberbully can act out regardless of location, meaning that the bullying can happen anywhere, from anywhere. Another difference between traditional and cyberbullying is the nonverbal cues that do not exist in cyberspace. Body language and paralanguage are typically used as tools of aggression or lack thereof, but if they are not part of the communication, the level or extent of threat is hard to measure. If the same bully used traditional bullying, he may be less intimidating. However, if a victim does not know who is on the other end of the bullying, they can imagine the threat being worse than it really is, much like the fear of the unknown. The last difference is that time loses its importance over the Internet, because even if the victim is not 'present,' the bullying can still happen. A bully can leave a message or an email without the victim being there, and know that they will eventually get the message. It also allows the bully more time to come up with things to say, because the response is not instantaneous (McKenna & Bargh, 2000). All of these reasons leave bullies feeling less inhibited, allowing them to use less effort and act out on their impulses.

These differences in communication styles are significant to defining cyberbullying, but there are many other differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying. One of these differences involves the audience that is present during bullying. More often than not, there are people present when traditional bullying is going on (playgrounds, school hallways, lunch room, etc), but it is not the case when cyberbullying is taking place (Slonje & Smith, 2008). While the audience is not present during the bullying, the audience is a vast amount of people, because the bullying can be seen through posting pictures or information on the Internet. This also protects the bully, because their identity is anonymous, giving them an innate feeling of power and control. A bully of this type rarely, if ever, experiences any consequences for their actions. Cyberbullying also takes away any opportunity for a bystander to intervene (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). The reasons listed allow researchers to believe that cyberbullying is much worse than traditional bullying, and it carries more consequences for the victim than traditional bullying.

Types of Cyberbullies

Research has found various types of cyberbullying, all with their similarities and differences when compared to traditional bullying. The types of bullying have been grouped into four distinct categories: the ‘vengeful angel’ bully, the ‘power hungry’ or ‘revenge of the nerds’ bully, the ‘mean girls’ bully, and the ‘inadvertent’ cyberbully (Overton, 2011; Trolley & Hanel, 2010; Hunter, 2011).

The first of these types can be called the ‘vengeful angel,’ which is a bully that does not see himself or herself as a bully. The power hungry bully feels that they are righting wrongs, helping out someone that has been bullied, in turn bullying someone else. The individual sometimes believes that they need to be the bully first in order to protect themselves from being

bullied, and they feel that they are just teaching the other person a lesson (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012; Trolley & Hanel, 2009).

Another type of cyber bullying is known as the 'power hungry' or 'revenge of the nerds' bully, which involves an individual trying to exert their authority and control others through fear. This type of bully needs an audience to be successful at what he does so that they can be seen as powerful and intimidating, and their ultimate goal is to gain a reaction from the victim. Most often, it is an individual that would not be a bully otherwise, because they are often the victims of traditional bullying. These 'nerds' are technically savvy, and therefore target others to make themselves feel stronger (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012; Trolley & Hanel, 2009; Landau, 2012).

The 'mean girl' is a type of bully that is not out to be a bully, but rather is bored and finds bullying to be a type of entertainment. This type of bullying typical involves females, although it could be a male as well, bullying other females. This type of bullying happens in groups, and wouldn't occur if there was no one there to encourage their behavior. Once the thrill and entertainment value is taken away, the bullying stops (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012; Trolley & Hanel, 2009; Livingstone, Haddon, & Gorzig, 2012).

An 'inadvertent' cyberbully is a bully that is putting on an act for an audience. In reality, they are not tough, and they do not think that they are a bully. There is no premeditation that goes into their behavior; they just act out without thinking about the consequences of their actions. They often are reacting to a post, email, or other communication, and their response is made in anger or frustration, and they do not think about it before they send a message (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012; Trolley & Hanel, 2009).

Effects of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying comes with many negative implications, many which are shared with the consequences of traditional bullying. Most commonly, the effects are found in the form of relationship problems, including break-ups, envy, intolerance, and exclusion (Hoff, 2009; Patchin, & Hinduja, 2010). Bullying also creates an individual to have a higher propensity to suffer from depression and anxiety, suffering from increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, decreased academic performance, and loss in previously enjoyed activities. Research has shown that individuals that fall victim to cyberbullying are more likely to be unwilling to attend school, receive poor grades, have lower self-esteem, and suffer from more health problems. The most harmful of all these problem though, is the fact that many of these effects go unnoticed, as the victim feels the need to conceal the fact that they are being bullied (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008; Tokunaga, May 2010).

Even though the bullying does not take place in person, the emotional and psychological effects of cyberbullying are just as destructive. However, the targets of cyberbullying also suffer some unique consequences, because the type of bullying is different. Victims often feel overwhelmed, because the situation is more than they can handle. Often times, other kids jump in on the bullying, so it's not just one bully, but numerous. The victim feels vulnerable and powerless, finding it difficult to feel safe. In cyberbullying, there is not necessarily a 'safe place' to go, since the technology has the potential to follow the individual anywhere. A victim feels that there is no escape, and not knowing who the bully is adds to the fear. This also leaves the victim feeling exposed and humiliated, because once something is put into cyberspace, it is seen by many before it may even be deleted. Cyberbullying can be seen and shared with multitudes of people, leaving the humiliation to penetrate even deeper. Feelings of insecurity and

dissatisfaction with their own self occur, because the victim is attacked where they are most vulnerable. These types of verbal attacks leave an individual questioning their self worth and value. They are left feeling hopeless; losing interest in life and those activities they once found to be so worthwhile. They feel alone and isolated, with nowhere else to turn (Dehue, Bolman, & Volland, 2008; Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009; Patchin, & Hinduja, 2010).

This then, can lead to feelings of anger and vengeance, sometimes leaving consequences that are potentially dangerous. Victims of cyberbullying are significantly more likely to use alcohol and drugs, skip and/or drop out of school, or become violent offenders themselves. They are angry about what is happening, and may try to find ways to engage in some type of retaliation. Even more devastating than the possible threat of retaliation is the ultimate demise, where the individual feels that suicide is the only escape. Feeling tormented by peers with no escape, they try and find the only way out they can think of (Tokunaga, May 2010; Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009; Willard, 2008).

Cyberbullying has the potential to be devastating for those that suffer from it directly, but it even goes beyond that. Cyberbullying can also be harmful to teachers and other members of the school workforce. When cyberbullying occurs within the learning environment, it undermines the confidences and sense of security that is important in an educational environment. It takes the focus off of teaching and mentoring the students by needing the time of the educators elsewhere to help combat the problem. Not as important as the effects it has on the individual or the learning environment, but it also can cause a negative publicity for the school, adding more stress into the lives of all those involved, and affecting the professional reputation of the school (Hoff, 2009; Li, 2009).

Theoretical framework and Psychological Theories

There are numerous psychological theories and frameworks that can help explain and discuss the phenomenon of cyberbullying, although the research is limited. There are several theoretical frameworks to understanding bullying, and three psychological theories that can conceptualize this topic.

Social Information Processing Theory

Research has delved into finding the theoretical framework that stands behind bullying, attempting to explain why bullying occurs. One of these proposed theories is described as Social Information Processing Theory. This theory attempts to explain that the aggressive and maladaptive behavior patterns in children are the cause for bullying (Crick & Dodge, 1994). According to this theory, people are motivated to develop interpersonal relationships regardless of the lack of personal connection, and find a way to overcome the lack of physical contact and still feel emotionally connected. Online relationships may often involve higher levels of self-disclosure due to the perceived low risk of it affecting their life negatively if it does not go as planned (Walther, 1992).

In the Social Information Processing model, it is proposed that children need to make quick responses in life to the everyday social dilemmas that they face. The process used for decision making is influenced by the youth's inherited biological personality traits and personal temperament characteristics, and further influenced by the individual's past memories. This theory believes that the experiences one encounters in life will set up the way the mind thinks and processes future life experiences, which is how an individual learns to respond to things.

When youth are placed in stressful or overwhelming situations, especially those that involve their social life, they rely on their automatic and trained response to react, because the situation is too much to take in and process all at one time. These responses are based off of the social responses the youth has been learning and trained on neurologically, and become almost automatic (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

Responding based on what the individual knows is automatic and can define the self-esteem the youth develops in life. In the Social Information Processing Model, an individual understands how they fit in based on what others say about them. Therefore, if they are constantly hearing negative comments, which are the bulk of discussion involved in cyberbullying, they are likely to suffer from emotional trauma, such as depression, anxiety, or even suicidal thoughts, sometimes even at a greater extent than traditional bullying (Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007; Biocca, Burgoon, Harms, & Stoner, 2003).

Social Control Theory

In relation to the Social Information Processing Model, the Social Control Theory proposes that socialization processes build self-control, therefore reducing the tendencies one has to indulge in antisocial behavior (Wiatrowski, Griswold, & Roberts, 1981). It has four types of control, as defined by Ivan Nye, which are direct, internal, indirect, and control through needs satisfaction (Hirschi, 1969).

Direct control refers to that by which a punishment is applied for wrongful behavior, as well as how compliance is rewarded by parents and authority figures. Internal control is a control that creates a youth to refrain from delinquency through his own conscience. Indirect control is the identification of those that are influencing the behavior, where the individual is

affected by the consequences of his behavior. An example of this is seeing the pain and disappointment of those loved ones that are hurt by the actions. The final control is control through needs satisfaction, which describes how an individual has no need to participate in delinquent behaviors because all of the individual's needs are met (Hirschi, 1969).

Social Control Theory attempts to explain cyberbullying through the controls. As explained, the controls are those that are in place naturally to prevent delinquent behavior. However, it is difficult for these controls to be implemented when dealing with cyberspace; therefore, it is a behavior that is harder to prevent. Internal controls are one of the few controls that are seen in reference to cyberbullying, and are strictly based on the bully's own conscience. If the bully does not have the proper guidance or conscience, then they will not stop the behavior on the own. The other controls are not seen in cyberbullying, because the anonymity of the act does not allow others to scold the behavior, or allow the bully to see how they have hurt someone. Without social controls, according to Social Control Theory, the behaviors will not stop.

Disinhibition Effect

A relatively new theory that is now being looked at as a source of explanation for online bullying is known as the Disinhibition Effect. This theory seeks to explain how individuals can say things online that they would not be willing or able to say in a face-to-face conversation. This theory pertains to all aspects of online communication, also being able to explain why people can be more open and honest online, many times revealing intimate details about themselves that they would not share with anyone in person. Regarding bullying behavior, this

theory explains how individuals can be more rude, cruel, and critical online than during face-to-face conversations (McKenna & Bargh, 2000; Mason, 2008).

Online anonymity is the deciding factor behind this Disinhibition Effect, because people can hide behind usernames or avatars and do not feel that they are risking having their true identities discovered. Therefore, individuals have a disconnect between their true identity and their online identity, being able to be anything or anyone they want. In addition, the anonymity and slim chance of being found out gives an individual a power to feel that they can say things they normally would not without having to deal with repercussions for their actions. This includes not being able to see the victim's reactions to their bullying, and not having to deal with the guilt of how their actions and words are affecting another person. There is a false sense of security and safety when hiding behind electronics, allowing people to let their guard down more than normal as well as feel that they have a power over others they may not normally have (Suler, 2004; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory, also known as Social Learning Theory, is a theory that has been used to help explain many different phenomena, explains how behaviors are exerted based on an individual's social interactions, experiences, and media influences. This theory believes that people do not learn behaviors solely through trial and error, but rather through the repetition of someone else's actions. If an individual sees the rewards and punishments of someone else that is participating in the same behaviors, they will model their behaviors accordingly. This theory believes that one's survival is dependent on the replication of others' actions (Meichenbaum, 1984; Hultsch & Plemons, 1979).

A social cognitive perspective has been used to deal with adolescent aggressive and violent behavior, because it focuses on the learning, thinking, and reasoning behind the behaviors. It focuses on the premise that social rejection leads to aggressive behaviors, and a lack of social problem solving skills needed for effective interactions with peers (Thornton et al., 2000; Barkoukis & Panagiotou, 2012; Boxer & Dubow, 2002). The research has shown that that this lack of social problem solving skills leads to bullying and antisocial behaviors (Webster-Stratton et al., 2001). In reference to cyberbullying, this theory explains how the behaviors are learned actions, because bullying is a type of peer aggression. The reward for the bullies is the victory over their victims, whether it is real or perceived (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

Social cognitive theory plays into cyberbullying in terms of victimization, because victimization is a self-efficacy component, which is a reward as far as a bully sees, reinforcing his behavior. The self-efficacy is the belief the individual has that he can successfully participate in a behavior in order to achieve the outcome he is looking for. In addition, these beliefs will be the mitigating factor as far as stress is concerned. If the bully believes that there is no threat of being caught or having a repercussion to his actions, then there will be very low levels of stress and anxiety (Bandura, 1997). The application of social cognitive theory to cyberbully victimization explains that the means used to determine response to cyberbullying activity is the level of self-efficacy present in the person. If the victim has a high level of self-efficacy, then they are not easily disturbed by the potential threats the bully is trying to create, whereas those individuals with low self-efficacy skills cannot effectively cope with the bullying, and experience high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

General Strain Theory

The final theory to be discussed is the general strain theory. This theory was introduced in 1938 by Robert Merton, and believes that in life, there is only one source of strain – the failure to achieve one's goal. It is the means used to achieve those goals that can be the source of strain, if the legitimate means do not work and one has to find illegitimate means by which to achieve their goals (Akins, Smith, & Mosher, 2010). An example that is often used when referring to this theory refers to monetary success. In society today, everyone is striving for financial success. When they are unable to obtain this through legitimate means, they lower their standards and participate in illegitimate ways of obtaining their goals.

According to this theory, strain between people can cause different reactions, often sending individuals grasping for that 'success.' In this case, the individual uses cyberbullying, seeking revenge on those that have removed the positive stimuli from their lives (Agnew, 1992; Froggio, 2007). Further argued, researchers find that strain makes people feel angry, frustrated, depressed, anxious, and essentially creates a need for corrective action. This pressure creates a need for the individual to want to alleviate the bad feelings they have, and one of these actions is to cyberbully others, because they feel bad themselves (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Empirical testing of the general strain theory shows that individual reaction to strain is manifested in negative acts and crimes against other people or their property, which is especially true in cyberbullying. Adolescent relationships tend to contain strong emotions such as anger and revenge, which are considered negative emotions. In order to alleviate the distress from feeling these emotions, individuals participate in socially unacceptable behavior, in this case, cyberbullying (Agnew, 1992). This theory also explains how a victim of cyberbully is more

likely to turn into a cyberbully himself, as they lash out in retaliation for the stress they are feeling (Franek, 2005)

Prevention and Interventions

Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that can be limited, although it is difficult to do. In order for this prevention to occur, parents, guardians, and other adults need to be aware of the problem, and pay attention to certain signs that the youth are either a victim or a perpetrator in the offense. Education of the topic is essential to curb this problem. However, if the cyberbullying is not prevented, then there are other skills that can be implemented for intervention of cyberbullying, including prosocial skills training, community advocacy and collaboration, and crisis intervention.

Education

The leading prevention mechanism that can be utilized in regards to cyberbullying is education. Several guidelines can be set into place in order to help or stop a child from becoming either a victim or offender. Once having a full understanding of the issue, parents and other adult supervisors should be able to implement strategies that will help limit the intensity and amount of cyberbullying, in turn limited the consequences it may have on a victim.

Some of the warning signs that may indicate a child is being cyberbullied include behavioral and emotional changes in the youth. Some of these changes include: the child appears to be angry, depressed and frustrated after using a computer or cell phone, significantly decreases their use of technological resources, appears apprehensive about going to school or

other social places, avoids topics about what they are doing on the computer, or becomes abnormally withdrawn from those they normally associate with (“Stop the drama”, 2013).

It is important to recognize whether or not a child is a victim of cyberbullying for obvious reasons, and it is just as important to recognize the signs that the child is the cyberbully. Adults have a harder time recognizing these signs, because cyberbullies can be very different than traditional bullies. Children who normally would not be a bully, such as introverted children, can be drawn to this type of bullying, because of the anonymity surrounding it. Some of these signs include: increasingly participating in cruelty towards others, a heightened secrecy when discussing anything about their communication or online activities, quickly shutting off screens or technology when an adult becomes present, late night activities on the devices, gets abnormally upset when they cannot use their electronic devices, or uses multiple accounts or accounts that are not their own (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011).

According to Hinduja and Patchin (2009), parents must take a primary role in their child’s life when it comes to the use of technology. Parents must set clear expectations with their child, explaining to them clearly what behavior is and is not appropriate when using the computer or other communicative technology. Parents must make it clear that cyberbullying will not be tolerated and there will be consequences if it happens. At the same time, parents and adults need to encourage the child to come forward if they are feeling bullied or threatened via cyberspace, assuring them that they will not be penalized for telling on a bully. After setting these guidelines, adults need to follow through and keep an eye on the youth’s activities. They need to let the child know that they will be checked if there is suspicion of bullying occurring. The adults need to teach the child what is and is not proper, including teaching them not to share personal information, not to respond to messages from people they do not know, and remind

them not to reply to people when angry. If needed, there are also other mechanisms available for adults to use, including parental control filtering and monitoring technologies (Diamanduros, Downs, & Jenkins, 2008).

Prosocial Skills Training

Another prevention strategy that can be implemented towards cyberbullying is prosocial skills training. Prosocial skills are behaviors that are voluntary and intended to benefit another person. It is the behaviors that create positive interactions among people. Teaching these skills starts with the individual, but has a need to expand out to the schools, communities, and entire culture in order to be fully successful. Learning and implementing prosocial skills does more than just mitigate and manage a problem that is already there, but rather creates positive environments and cultures in communities and schools where bullying is not tolerated and anti-social behavior is not supported (Riley, San Juan, Klinkner, & Ramminger, 2008).

Teaching prosocial skills helps in many aspects of the youth's life, including helping them to develop social skills, learn anger management strategies, and enhance their moral reasoning skills. When this is done, youth are able to manage their actions better than when left to their own resources. Some of these skills include: sharing, negation skills, ability to delay gratification, self-calming skills, being aware of one's own emotions, recognizing the feelings of others, and impulse control (Peterson, 1992).

Community Advocacy and Collaboration

Along with teaching prosocial skills and embracing them as a community, community advocacy and collaboration will aid in the prevention of cyberbullying as well. There are

numerous community programs designed for the prevention of cyberbullying, but none that are mandated or the same across all communities. When a whole community is brought together, bullying can be prevented. Communities need to create and implement strategies that not only help define victims of bullying, but also support the victims and change the attitudes of those that are involved with or doing the bullying.

Some communities already have successful anti-cyberbullying programs in effect, and those communities that do not can use those that do as an example and implement the programs as well. Examples of some of the current anti-cyberbullying programs include: Cyberbullying: A Prevention Curriculum, National Crime Prevention Council's PSAs, and Stomp Out Bullying. Cyber Bullying: A Prevention Curriculum is a program that deals with the attitudes and behaviors that are associated with cyberbullying. There are two levels of the curriculum, one for grades 6-12 and one for grades 3-5. This program teaches schools how to deal with the problem of cyberbullying, and gives suggestions on how to implement policies against it ("Cyberbullying: A prevention curriculum", 2013). Another type of anti-bullying prevention strategy put in place by the National Crime Prevention Council (2013) involves public service announcements designed to raise awareness about preventing cyberbullying. Stomp Out Bullying (2013) is a national anti-bullying organization for kids and teens. This program focuses on reducing and preventing bullying, cyberbullying, sexting, and other digital abuse through education, and teaches solutions for responding to bullying and providing help for those that are victims of cyberbullying. Stomp Out Bullying was created to bring awareness and education about the topic in order to decrease the problem of cyberbullying.

Community advocacy and collaboration need to occur across the community. For example, youth sports groups are not always connected directly to the schools, but the coaches

that are involved in these youths' lives can help prevent the bullying. Local businesses can become involved and create 'incentives' to prevent bullying. An example of one of the ways businesses can become involved in anti-cyberbullying is to create and sell t-shirts that have anti-bullying slogans. As people buy and wear these shirts, it becomes a social norm that cyberbullying will not be tolerated in their community. The business can then use the money earned through the sales to contribute to prevention training on cyberbullying. The continual reminder when seeing one of these shirts will remind people why bullying is not the way one should behave, and will help reinforce the message to youth that it is unacceptable. Participating in collaborative efforts includes all community partners, such as businesses, local associations, adults who work with kids, mental health specialists, law enforcement officers, service groups, and faith-based organizations.

Crisis Intervention

As great as preventing cyberbullying is, there is still the chance that it will occur, regardless of how many programs are implemented. Therefore, it is important to know how to handle the situation so that there can be an intervention before there is a devastating or potential deadly consequence, such as suicide. Unfortunately, there is no one single answer to how cyberbullying should be handled.

After acknowledging the signs of a victim, there are several things that can be done to help that individual. First, the person involved in that victim's life should assess how the bullying is impacting that individual and seek the therapeutic help necessary. The adult should continually reassure them that they are not to blame. If necessary, the adult should involve school officials so that they are able to deal with the bully, and even the bully's parents. If the

bullying is too out of hand for a parent or school official to handle on a case-by-case basis, the adult in this situation can involve the police. This is especially true if the bullying has become criminal, such as existing threats of violence, extortion, obscene and harassing messages, child pornography or sexual exploitation. The adult monitoring the victim should save all messages and encourage the youth not to respond back or get involved in the bullying. And finally, the adult should encourage the youth to get involved with other activities that will build up their self confidence again, and allow them to feel safe in their surroundings.

If the youth is the cyberbully, it is also important to handle the situation directly and put a stop to it. Discuss the behavior with the child, because understanding why they are being a bully is critical to stopping the behavior. Explain that the behavior will not be tolerated, and lay out consequences that will occur if the behavior does not stop. Finally, find a way for the child to learn the extent of the consequences that the bullying put on the victim, and find a way for the child to make amends (Kraft & Wang, 2009). Finally, it is essential that the adult involved in the youth's life follows up with the victim, teaching coping skills so that a crisis does not occur if the youth finds themselves victim to a cyberbullying again.

Recommendations

As the research shows, cyberbullying is a large problem in many ways, and as technology grows in sophistication, so does the intensity of cyberbullying, and there has been an observed increase in cyberbullying through the years. Cyberbullying is a problem that is difficult to create a solution to, but it is critical to the youth in America that something is done about the problem. The state of Wisconsin is lacking on programming and prevention methods for this problem, and therefore several recommendations can be in order to curtail the problem.

One recommendation that can be made is to aggressively regulate technology use among youth. This recommendation happens at the lowest level, starting with the individual and then in the home. Youth themselves can keep cyberbullying under wraps by knowing the consequences of their actions. They can lead by example and establish social norms that disapprove of cyberbullying. Beyond the individual, parents need to regulate and monitor the use of technology by their children, both Internet and cell phone.

Another recommendation is that there needs to be education on the topic. Wisconsin can implement an education network or trainings that teach parents, teachers, and other adult mentors how to give guidance, lead by example, and intervene when they see a problem.

Wisconsin can implement laws that criminalize cyberbullying, which can help prevent the behavior, but also provide consequences when it is present. If the bullying occurs, the individual needs to be held responsible, and that falls into the hands of anyone that should be enforcing consequences, whether that be parents, schools, or law enforcement officials. The state of Wisconsin is heading in the right direction with these laws, implementing state statutes that enforce schools to come up with policy. It is recommended that the state follows through with enforcement of the law.

The first of these statutes Wisconsin State Statute 118.13, pupil discrimination prohibited. This statute states that each school board should develop written policies and procedures to implement anti-cyberbullying policies and procedures, and include a process for how these reports will be received and investigated. It is a policy that is written and enforced by the state superintendent and also monitored by the school boards, and carries with it a consequence of a fine up to \$1000.00. The other Wisconsin State statute, 118.46, is a policy on bullying that states how school policies should be created. It requires all school policies to include: a definition of

bullying, a prohibition on bullying, a procedure for reporting bullying that allows reports to be made confidentially, a prohibition against a pupil retaliating against another pupil for reporting an incident of bullying, a procedure for investigating reports of bullying, which also identifies the school district employee in each school who is responsible for conducting the investigation and require that the parent or guardian of each pupil involved in a bullying incident be notified, a requirement that school district officials and employees report incidents of bullying and identify the persons to whom the reports must be made, a list of disciplinary alternatives for pupils that engage in bullying or who retaliate against a pupil who reports an incident of bullying, an identification of the school-related events at which the policy applies, an identification of the property owned, leased, or used by the school district on which the policy applies, and also to develop a model education and awareness program on bullying. This statute states that all schools should adopt said policy no later than August 15, 2010.

Only one county in Wisconsin has gone above and beyond this policy recommendation, and enacted stricter laws. Vernon County has taken this step and passed a law that criminalizes cyberbullying. In this law, the county will penalize those individuals that send electronic information that serves no legitimate purpose and debases a person, carrying with it a consequence of up to \$500 and 30 days in jail (Bradley, 2012). The recommendation for Wisconsin is that they implement and follow through on this. Just because the statute is in place does not mean that it is being followed.

Wisconsin can also implement committees or groups that take an anti-bullying stance. These groups can be set up much like support groups, and combine youth and adults. In these groups, they can focus on the daily pressures youth face as well as positive conflict resolution. Above and beyond this, individual communities in Wisconsin can implement bullying prevention

programs as a means of controlling cyberbullying. There are currently some communities already doing this to an extent. For example, Sparta, WI has created an anti-bullying campaign in response to a criminal case that involved youth bullying. The community has yard signs and banners all over town that encourage putting a stop to bullying. Those participating in the campaign believe that bullying should not and will not be tolerated in their community. While this campaign focuses on all types of bullying, Sparta as well as other communities can take an aggressive approach to cyberbullying as well as traditional bullying.

A final recommendation for the state of Wisconsin is to provide incentives for those that are participating in anti-bullying programs. Much like the DARE program that is implemented in many schools, both the federal and the state government can provide additional funding and resources for those that participate. This funding can be used towards education and training for both youth and adults. It is a way to encourage the schools to implement those statutes that are already in place.

Conclusion

With the millions of people using the Internet and other forms of technology for communication, it is imperative that research, communities, parents, schools, and youth are all educated and equipped to deal with the problem of cyberbullying. Youth are consumed in a society that uses technology as a primary means of communication, through chat rooms, instant messaging, e-mailing, video game systems, personal websites, text messages, and polling websites. With this has come the issue of cyberbullying, as the youth have also learned how to use the technology to hurt one another. The effects of this intentional hurt can have significant repercussions on those that fall victim to cyberbullying, including: depression, withdrawal, fear,

decrease in school attendance, strained relationships with friends, extreme embarrassment, school relocation, drug use and even suicide. In order to combat this problem, it is imperative to have adults and others actively be involved in the lives of the youth, not only to watch for signs and symptoms of the problem, but also to encourage a positive way of using technology.

In Wisconsin communities, cyberbullying has shown to be a cause of many fights, youth bringing guns to school, and even youth committing suicide as a result of the bullying. There is no easy answer to the problem, but the problem needs to be addressed. Technology is great and offers many opportunities for those that use it, but when misused, it can be very hurtful. The most successful approach has proven to be education, focusing on establishing cultural norms that are against cyberbullying. While the most successful, it is also the hardest to achieve, and the hardest to prove effective short term. There also needs to be other options taken into consideration, including law reform and technological supervision. Everyone must be vigilant and knowledgeable on the topic so that a stop can be put to this problem.

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