

Stopping Cyber Bullying: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This study focuses on stopping cyberbullying among adolescents 14-18 years. Research was conducted on a target audience of 26 participants from three different high schools. Cyberbullying refers to bullying, taunting, and harassment through text messaging, on social networking sites, or through other electronic tools. The results show that nearly all of the participants felt that cyberbullying was a direct result of jealousy. Almost half indicated that although they witnessed cyberbullying everyday, they chose to mind their business and walk away. In an attempt to bring awareness to the issue, the participants created a series of Public Service Announcements that illustrated cyberbullying from the perspective of the perpetrator and the victim. The PSA's were aired on three local television channels.

## **Introduction**

Cyber bullying has become a major factor for the schools and communities. According to Simpson (2010), schools needed more help to from resource officers and counselors to deal with problems concerning cyber bullying. It was noted that Internet providers needed to do more to help establish safety for its users. Jing, Iannotti, Luk, & Nansel (2010), noted that cyber bullying has emerged as a new type of victimization due to the popularity and usage of the Internet and mobile phone, by children and adolescents.

### **Literature Review Summary**

The Literature Review altered the original goals and direction of the Capstone project. The Literary Review results demonstrated that the direction needed to be more relevant to real school environments and observations. Knowledge gained from research done for the Literature Review, illustrated that one reason why many parents chose alternate educational paths, as opposed to traditional schooling for their students, was to eliminate the bullying aspect. Davis (2011) discussed how students enrolled in Commonwealth Connections Academy, a cyber school in Harrisburg, Pa., met in different locations each week using a recreational vehicle that converted, into a mobile classroom. The author examined how students gained needed socialization from classes in which they had the ability to collaborate through talking with others, answering questions, contributing to class discussions, and writing on white boards. Student participated in this collaboration while enrolled in online classes. Because of this approach to education, the participating students were not victims of school based cyber bullying. Offering a different perspective, Song & Grabowski (2006) stated that learning environments had a lot to do with a student's ability for success. The growing phenomenon has expanded to include attacks on others through social networking outlets, over the Internet.

Aydogan, and Dilmac (2010) stated that cyber bullying was a deliberate cause of harm to others, through the usage of digital technology. Anderson (2010) warned that cyber bullying, an interaction between minors via cell phones and the Internet, could easily turn into cyber stalking. Cyber stalking was defined as an expansion of cyber bullying, in which a person was victimized constantly over various platforms, such as in chat rooms, through text messages, and on social networking sites.

There were 26 participants' ages 14-18 years of age. The mean age is 16. All participants were high school students enrolled in the 9th-12th grades, and are students, in the Introduction to Television Production class at the Tuscaloosa Center for Technology. The target audience was 80% African American, 10% White, 3% Asian, 7% Latino.

### **Methodology**

The identified problem is cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is a problem that is prevalent in pre-teens and teenagers. Victims of cyber bullying can experience a level of torture and trauma, which are directly related to the emotional reactions caused by bullying. The problem has grown within various school districts, and has led to cases of increased drop out rates, school shootings, and/or suicides.

Two cycles were created to facilitate the research. During Cycle 1's implementation process, the inquiry question that my Target Audience proposed a solution for is "What is the best way to stop bullying if you are a victim or perpetrator?" The proposed solution was to spread awareness about cyber bullying among the target audience, and to stop new cyber bullying incidences from occurring. This was done through a series of informational workshops aimed to educate the target audience about the effects of cyber bullying. Pre and post surveys and

interviews were conducted, as were meetings with the school counselor, group brainstorming sessions, the creation of a series of anti-cyber bullying campaigns using social networking sites Twitter and Facebook, and the creation of anti-bullying public service announcements that were aired on three different television stations, and shown to approximately 5000 students, at three different high schools.

Cycle 1 implementation began with introducing the target audience to life changing stories, which resulted from cyber bullying. Participants viewed these stories on YouTube. A class discuss followed. Some participants described their experience with cyber bullying, while others shared how and why they had become bullies. When asked why some students choose to become bullies, the answers were surprising. Many bullies described their actions as “just playing around.” Moreover, they did not consider themselves bullies. Also, none of them felt that what they were doing was wrong, indicated that they were mean people, or necessarily left an impact on their victims. All of them, who admitted to cyber bullying, felt that they were “just having fun.”

Cycle 1’s public service announcements showed the bully’s perspective of cyber bullying. Cyber bullies were portrayed taunting, and humiliating their victims. Each group was asked to come up with a list of 10 ways to stop cyber bullying. The suggestions from the lists were later used to create the foundation for the first: 30 second Public Service Announcements to stop cyber bullying.

I began Cycle 2 with a discussion about how to stop cyber bullying among teenager’s ages 14-19 years old. During the implementation process the inquiry question that the target audience proposed a solution for was “How do we bring a deeper level of attention to the

problem of cyber bullying, so that the problem can be stopped?” The proposed solution was to spread the message to stop cyber bullying to audiences that could enact change. The participants had previously completed and aired two anti-cyber bullying Public Service Announcements, on BCN-TV. During Cycle 2, the participants were asked what additional information could be included in new Public Service Announcements that would better spread the message of stopping cyber bullying. The majority of the target audience felt that all created Public Service Announcements should express the impact that cyber bullying has on the victim. The target audience broke into groups to brainstorm about how to better spread the message against cyber bullying. Each group-listed ways that they could demonstrate the real impact that cyber bullying has on the victims. Groups wrote, produced, recorded and edited new: 30-second public service announcements that showed the emotional impact that cyber bullying has on the victim.

The 26 participants also decided that they needed to do a better job of spreading the message to stop cyber bullying throughout the school district. It was decided that the PSA's would be shared with the school board and administrators, during Cycle 2. Each group sent emails to parents, teachers, administrators, and members of the community, asking them to view the Public Service Announcements, on BCN-TV. Furthermore, the target audience decided to get to the heart of where cyber bullying is occurring, Facebook and Twitter. Participants created and posted anti-cyber bullying campaigns on the BCN-TV Twitter and Facebook pages. Each participant then asked five friends to re-tweet and re-post the message to five others. Participant also posted banners on their personal pages. Viewers were asked to leave feedback and comments on the BCN-TV Facebook and Twitter pages. Lastly, participants decided to register with the Web 2.0 tool Anonymoustips.com, to encourage a private way to help stop cyber

bullying. Anonymoustips.com is a free crime prevention website used by schools and law enforcement agencies nationwide. The purpose of the website is to gather information anonymously about possible incidences of violence and cyber bullying. The website contains information about preventing cyber bullying. In order to make a greater impact, participants invited their friends, family, and associates to register.

### **Results**

The primary goal of the Action Research Project was spread awareness about cyber bullying, so that bullying behaviors would stop. Pre and post surveys and interviews were conducted to analyze the triggers that led to cyber bullying. According to the pre survey results 42.31% of the participants stated that they witness bullying everyday. 23.08% of the participants indicated that they witnessed others being bullied once or twice a month. Only 15.38% of the participants witnessed others being bullied once or twice a week, while 19.23% of the participants stated that they had never witnessed others being bullied. Pre survey results also revealed that 69% felt that telling a parent, teacher, or another trusted adult was the best way to respond when faced with a cyber bully. While 84% of those surveyed stated that they had never participated in cyber bullying, 19% admitted to being a victim of cyber bullying, and 42% stated that they witnessed bullying occurring daily. However, when asked if they felt that a responsible adult should monitor their activities on the Internet, 62% felt that they should never be monitored. Moreover, 96% of the participants felt that jealousy was the primary factor that led to cyber bullying. However, only 50% of those surveyed felt that a training series on bullying/cyber bullying would help a little. In the same way, 26% of the participants felt that there was nothing that schools could do to control bullying. The participants were asked if they had ever witnessed

a peer being bullied at school, or over the Internet?” According to the results that the survey provided, 42.31% of the participants stated that they witness bullying everyday. 23.08% of the participants indicated that they witnessed others being bullied once or twice a month. Only 15.38% of the participants witnessed others being bullied once or twice a week, while 19.23% of the participants stated that they had never witnessed others being bullied

After the implementation of both cycles, the target audience participated in post interviews and surveys. The interviews and surveys were created to measure the participant’s awareness of cyber bullying. A summary of those surveyed indicated that 37.04% witnessed others being bullied once or twice a month. Moreover, 18.52% indicated that they witnessed cyber bullying one or twice a week. The same percentage of individuals indicated that they witnessed bully everyday. Twenty-six participants were asked on the post survey if they would ever participate in cyber bullying, and 96.30% stated that they would not. A “No Tolerance “ policy on bullying was supported by 37.04%, of those surveyed. The percentage of those who felt that there was nothing schools could do to control bullying was 25.93%. In the same way, 18.52% supported requiring that all students take a course about the effects of bullying. When asked what participants would do when faced with cyber bullying, 77.78% stated that they would tell a parent, teacher, or trusted adult. In the same way, 37.04% stated that they would immediately intervene and attempt to stop the bullying, while 29.63% would report the incident to a responsible adult. After completing Cycle 2, 55.56% felt that the best way to handle a cyber bully was to talk to a responsible adult or law enforcement. Also, according to post survey results, 92.59% felt that jealousy was the leading cause of cyber bullying. Eighty-five of those surveyed felt that appearance was a leading cause. Sixty-seven percent felt that attempting to fit

in with others led to bullying. In contrast 74.07% responded, “Being a member of a certain group”, was a factor. After participating in Cycle 2, 18.52% surveyed felt that a training series on bullying/cyber bullying would help greatly. Twenty-two percent responded that a training series would help a lot. Forty percent now felt that a training series would help a little, while 18.52% felt that a training series would not help at all.

### **Conclusion**

After completing both Cycle 2, and using data collected from group discussions, pre and post surveys and interviews, and the completion of several projects; I concluded that the target audience was aware of cyber bullying. I could also conclude that many of the participants felt that schools were not capable of combatting cyber bullying, since the problem begins on the Internet, through text messages, chat rooms, and/or social media. The data was able to show that my identified problem of my Action Research Plan is relevant. Cyber bullying has become a major problem among youth 14-19 years old. The results of the pre and post survey’s and interviews agreed with the literature surrounding the issue. The conclusion drawn was that more attention needed to be paid to informing 14-19 year-olds, about the seriousness of cyber bullying. This required that the target audience become the catalyst for change.

## References

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