Western
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Adolescent perceptions of cyberbullying in friendships and dating relationships

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LITERATURE REVIEW

With an increased generational dependency on the Internet and social networking, society as a whole has become less reliant on face to face interaction (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Due to this rapidly growing form of communication, traditional bullies have been given an outlet to further victimize their targets through online means (Li, 2008). What is critical about this strategy is the lack, and at times, complete absence of recourse or consequence within the online realm, leaving victims to be continuously re-victimized (Nocentini et al., 2010). However, despite this knowledge, further research is needed to examine the frequency of perpetration and victimization and the manner in which these behaviours are influenced by dating relationships in adolescence.

Scholarly research examining this phenomenon has found that there is a potential link between the roles of cyberbully and cyber-victim, in which both tend to experience psychosomatic problems and high levels of emotional and peer problems (Helenius et al., 2010). As well, adolescents who do not experience immediate consequences after perpetration were more likely to continue these behaviours both online and within their school environments (Li & Beran, 2005).

Cyberbullying is also vastly pervasive in dating relationships, wherein perpetrators are more likely to choose an ex-partner as their victim (Alvarez, 2012). As cellphones and social media are the primary forms of communication for adolescents in this generation, they are more susceptible to being victimized and/or engaging perpetration (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011). This can include multiple and frequent check ups throughout a day, sharing passwords and other important private information, and fear of cyber-aggression during an argument (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011). However, more information is still needed.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first study aimed to determine:
1) How many high school students experience cyberbullying as a victim?
2) How many high school students experience cyberbullying as a perpetrator?
3) How often do they experience cyberbullying in these roles?
4) Is there an overlap between being a cyberbullying perpetrator and a victim?

The second study aimed to determine:
1) At what point in an intimate relationship is cyberbullying most severe?
2) Is revenge a common motive?
3) How are the consequences of these behaviours perceived among adolescents?

ABSTRACT

Undoubtedly, electronic communication and social media have drastically altered the means of communication among individuals. This shift, however, has brought on the emergence of harmful forms of correspondence. Cyberbullying, which is a form of bullying that occurs through online means and is used to harm a person in a deliberate manner (Valkenburg & Jaffe, 2011), is an example of this maladaptive mode of communication. Within adolescence, this behaviour is particularly prevalent and pronounced. The present study combines the findings of two previous studies that examined cyberbullying within the context of adolescent friendships and dating relationships with samples of 145 and 70 secondary school students, respectively. The first study examined the behavioural characteristics responsible for the victimization and perpetration of cyberbullying and the second study investigated adolescents' perceptions of severity, motives, and point in a dating relationship at which it is likely to become most severe. A mixed-methods approach was utilized, with quantitative data obtained through surveys and qualitative data from semi-structured focus group among students in a secondary school in southwestern Ontario. Overall, results indicated that females were more likely to be victims of cyberbullying than males, retaliation and revenge were identified as principal motivations, and students were most likely to report their experiences of cyberbullying to their peers. Additionally, cyberbullying behaviours were deemed to occur most likely upon termination of the dating relationship and the severity of the occurrence was found to generally be minimized. Implications for future research and cyberbullying prevention strategies are explored further within both of these studies.

METHODS

Participants
Study 1) Subset of 16, 145 students from previous study conducted by TVDSB.
Semi-structured focus groups included 112 participants, (54.5% female)
Study 2) 70 grade 12 students (60% female)

Measures
-Cyberbullying questionnaire *(included questions surrounding perpetration, victimization, frequency of data use, and awareness of cyberbullying)*
-Semi-structured interviews *(included questions surrounding victimization, perpetration, and dating violence)*

Procedure
-Participant recruitment through TVDSB
-Completed survey before semi-structured interviews
-2 researchers present for each interview
-Qualitative data translated into major themes

FINDINGS

Study 1	Study 2
Cyberbullying Perpetration -Females were more likely than males to forward someone's email without their permission -Males were more likely than females to spread a rumour about someone online, send a threatening email or text, post an embarrassing picture of someone without their permission **Cyberbullying Victimization** -Females were more likely than males to experience someone forwarding a personal message without their permission, having a rumour spread about them online, being sent a threatening message and having a picture posted of them online without their permission **Overlap Between Roles** -Relationship exists between experiences of victim and perpetrator -Females were more likely to be victims and perpetrators than males, $\chi 2$ (1) = 205.10, p = .0001. **Semi-structured Interviews** -5 main themes: 1) A victim of cyberbullying would also be a perpetrator of cyberbullying for revenge 2) A cyber-bully is usually joking and might not be sure they are cyberbullying 3) A cyber-victim always knows when they are being cyber-bullied 4) Deal with cyberbullying yourself; don't report to parents, teachers or the police 5) The best way to deal with cyberbullying is to ignore it	**Perceptions of Cyberbullying Perpetration** -75% of males indicated that females are more often the perpetrator -50% of females reported that both males and females can be perpetrators **Reporting Cyberbullying Perpetrator Based on Relationship** -70% of females and males would report an ex-partner -52.9% of participants would not report an existing partner **Motives for Cyberbullying** -Common motives reported by males included "not really harmful" (57.1%), "prank" (53.6%), and revenge (46.4%) -Common motives reported for females indicated "revenge" (83.3%), "prank" (73.8%), and "not really harmful" (66.7%) -Chi square revealed females are more likely to perceive revenge as motive for perpetration, $\chi^2(1, N=70)=8.97, p=0.001$

IMPLICATIONS

Research on cyberbullying provides insight on important adolescent topics such as victimization, motives for perpetration and healthy vs. unhealthy friendships and dating relationships (Patchin & Hinduja, 2013). Both studies in this analysis gathered meaningful information about the frequency of victimization and perpetration in adolescent cyberbullying behaviours, and their relationship with dating relationships. This study also emphasized adolescent perspectives as main contributors throughout the methodology as it allowed them to freely express their thoughts surrounding this important topic. Although adolescents may have minimized or overemphasized their experiences, particularly during the semi structured interviews, their insight can significantly influence the cultivation of useful psychoeducational and early intervention programs to teach youth, parents and teachers about internet safety and concerning online behaviours.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

To date, there continues to be limited research examining the behavioural motivators surrounding cyberbullying among adolescents. Although it is clear that this is a growing issue, there is a lack of understanding about the justification behind cyberbullying perpetration, and the underlying components about the real world versus the online world. For example, why is it okay to make rude comments online but not in real life?

There is also a need to examine cyberbullying both universally and culturally to determine if there are meaningful differences across diverse groups. It is unclear if this phenomenon generates a similar experience in every adolescent.

Psychoeducational programs and/or consequences of cyberbullying have also been minimally examined cross-culturally.

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