

**How teachers and young people perceive and respond to cyberbullying  
in the school environment**

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## ABSTRACT

Due to the rise and availability of digital technologies, the nature of bullying has moved from traditional face-to-face bullying to via communication technologies. These bullying behaviours online are collectively known as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying results in negative outcomes for those involved and is increasingly presenting a cause for concern in the educational setting. The research takes a sequential exploratory mixed method approach to address the aims of the thesis looking at (1) how prospective and current teachers perceive cyberbullying when making judgements about how to manage and respond to it, and (2) how young people perceive cyberbullying according to the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying.

Initially, a systematic review was conducted to review the existing literature regarding teachers' perceptions of and responses to cyberbullying. Study 1 was a qualitative thematic analysis of data from nine prospective teachers exploring how they would address cyberbullying. Study 2 was a qualitative thematic analysis of data collected from 63 teachers from 10 focus groups across primary, secondary, and college educational levels. Study 2 explored how teachers perceived and managed cyberbullying in the school. Together the findings from the earlier studies informed Study 3, a quantitative exploration on how young people from England ( $N = 1438$ , 11- to 20-year-olds) perceive and respond to cyberbullying based on the criteria identified by teachers that may inhibit intervention.

Findings from across the studies reported in the thesis suggest that prospective and current teachers recognise that cyberbullying is an escalating issue that presents a problem in the school environment. The teachers also utilised different strategies to manage cyberbullying, particularly in the context of bullying severity and the unique characteristics associated with cyberbullying. The research also found that young people do respond to cyberbullying differently based on the publicity of the act, the anonymity of the bully, the type of cyberbullying perpetrated, and the extent the victim is upset. Through a sequential exploratory mixed method approach, the empirical research presented in the thesis offers a unique contribution to the literature and extends the knowledge base on how cyberbullying is managed in the school environment.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated in memory of 'Poppa', my great grandad, who always told me I can achieve anything in life. My best pal, who I love and miss always.

Eric George Smethurst

9<sup>th</sup> April 1921 – 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2017

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## CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS FROM THE THESIS.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: THESIS OVERVIEW.....</b>	<b>19</b>
1.1 Chapter Overview.....	19
1.2 Background to Cyberbullying.....	19
1.3 Thesis Aims.....	29
1.4 Methodological Overview.....	31
1.5 Original Contribution to Literature.....	33
1.6 Thesis Structure.....	36
<b>CHAPTER 2: CYBERBULLYING: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>39</b>
2.1 Chapter Overview.....	39
2.2 A Brief Overview of Traditional Bullying.....	39
2.3 Emergence of Digital Technologies and Cyberbullying.....	41
2.4 Definitional Issues .....	45

2.5	Unique Features of Cyberbullying.....	53
2.6	The Different Forms of Cyberbullying.....	56
2.7	The Prevalence of Cyberbullying in England.....	59
2.8	The Impact of Cyberbullying.....	63
2.9	Summary.....	65
<b>CHAPTER 3: CYBERBULLYING IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.....</b>		<b>67</b>
3.1	Chapter Overview.....	67
3.2	Government Guidance and Policy on Cyberbullying in England.....	69
3.3	The Role of Teachers in Addressing Cyberbullying.....	79
3.4	Summary.....	86
<b>CHAPTER 4: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES TOWARDS CYBERBULLYING: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW.....</b>		<b>88</b>
4.1	Chapter Overview.....	88
4.2	The Importance of Teachers Addressing Cyberbullying.....	89
4.3	Method.....	94
4.4	Results.....	96
4.5	Synthesis and Discussion.....	111
4.6	Summary.....	130
<b>CHAPTER 5: PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES TOWARDS CYBERBULLYING.....</b>		<b>133</b>



5.1	Introduction.....	133
5.2	Method.....	137
5.3	Results and Discussion.....	143
5.4	Summary.....	168

**CHAPTER 6: TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES TOWARDS  
CYBERBULLYING ACROSS EDUCATIONAL LEVELS.....170**

6.1	Introduction.....	170
6.2	The Role of Severity.....	174
6.3	The Role of Publicity.....	176
6.4	The Role of Bystanders.....	178
6.5	Study Exploring Teachers’ Perceptions.....	181
6.6	Method.....	183
6.7	Results.....	187
6.8	Discussion.....	204
6.9	Summary.....	211

**CHAPTER 7: HOW YOUNG PEOPLE RESPOND TO CYBERBULLYING  
BASED ON KEY FACTORS THAT TEACHERS CONSIDERED IN  
ADDRESSING CYBEBRULLYING.....213**

7.1	Introduction.....	213
7.2	Cyberbullying and Young People.....	214

7.3	Method.....	222
7.4	Results.....	231
7.5	Discussion.....	275
7.6	Summary.....	288
	<b>CHAPTER 8: GENERAL DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>290</b>
8.1	Chapter Overview.....	290
8.2	Aims of the Thesis.....	290
8.3	What does the existing literature report and discuss regarding teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying in the school environment?.....	292
8.4	What are prospective and current teachers' perceptions of factors that should be considered when managing cyberbullying?.....	302
8.5	How do young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying?.....	314
8.6	Implications of the Findings.....	321
8.7	Methodological Strengths and Limitations.....	330
8.8	Future Research.....	338
8.9	Original Contribution to the Literature.....	340
8.10	Conclusion.....	343
	<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>345</b>

<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>412</b>
Appendix A: Study 1 and 2 Ethical Approval (Focus Groups).....	413
Appendix B: Study 1 and 2 Information Sheet (Focus Groups).....	414
Appendix C: Study 1 and 2 Consent Form (Focus Groups).....	417
Appendix D: Study 1 and 2 Debrief Form (Focus Groups).....	419
Appendix E: Study 1 and 2 Participant Information (Focus Groups).....	421
Appendix F: Study 1 Focus Group Schedule (Prospective Teachers).....	423
Appendix G: Study 2 Focus Group Schedule (In-service Teachers).....	426
Appendix H: Study 3 Ethical Approval (Survey).....	429
Appendix I: Study 3 Information and Consent Form (Survey).....	430
Appendix J: Study 3 Debrief Form (Survey).....	432
Appendix K: Study 3 Example Letter to Schools.....	434
Appendix L: Study 3 Scenarios.....	435

## LIST OF TABLES

### Chapter 4

<i>Table 4.1:</i> The study characteristics and main findings of the included studies.....	101
<i>Table 4.2:</i> A summary table showing the included articles and the themes present, marked X.....	109

### Chapter 5

<i>Table 5.1:</i> Summary of the themes and associated sub-themes.....	144
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### Chapter 6

<i>Table 6.1:</i> Information on the focus groups recruited.....	183
<i>Table 6.2:</i> Participants' age and teaching experience across educational levels.....	184
<i>Table 6.3:</i> Summary of the themes and associated sub-themes.....	187

### Chapter 7

<i>Table 7.1:</i> The factor, level and associated phrased used to manipulate each scenario.....	224
<i>Table 7.2:</i> The mean and standard deviation (SD) on perceived severity across scenarios.....	232
<i>Table 7.3:</i> ANOVA summary table for differences in perceived severity according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response.....	235

<i>Table 7.4:</i> Summary of the main findings for differences in perceived severity.....	238
<i>Table 7.5:</i> The mean and standard deviation (SD) type of response towards cyberbullying.....	239
<i>Table 7.6:</i> ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to ignore what was happening according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response.....	243
<i>Table 7.7:</i> ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to encourage the bully according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response.....	248
<i>Table 7.8:</i> ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to seek help from an adult for the victim according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response.....	252
<i>Table 7.9:</i> The mean seek help from an adult for the interaction between publicity, anonymity, type, and victim response.....	256
<i>Table 7.10:</i> ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to seek help from a friend for the victim according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response.....	260
<i>Table 7.11:</i> ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to provide emotional support for the victim according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response.....	264

*Table 7.12: ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to intervene and challenge the bully according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response.....269*

*Table 7.13: Summary of the main findings for differences in how young people respond to cyberbullying.....272*

## LIST OF FIGURES

### Chapter 4

*Figure 4.1: A flow diagram of the systematic review selection process*.....98

### Chapter 7

*Figure 7.1: The interaction between publicity and victim response on perceived severity (with 99% confidence intervals)*.....237

*Figure 7.2: The interaction between publicity and victim response on ignore what was happening (with 99% confidence intervals)*.....245

*Figure 7.3: The interaction between anonymity and victim response on seeking adult help for the victim (with 99% confidence intervals)*....254

*Figure 7.4: The interaction between anonymity and victim response on providing emotional support for the victim (with 99% confidence intervals)*.....266

*Figure 7.5: The interaction between anonymity and victim response on intervene and challenge the bully (with 99% confidence intervals)*..271

### Chapter 8

*Figure 8.1: Summary of the main findings for research question 1*..293

*Figure 8.2: Summary of the main findings for research question 2*..303

*Figure 8.3: Summary of the main findings for research question 3*..315

## PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS FROM THE THESIS

### Chapter 2

The literature review conducted informed a subsequent publication:

Macaulay, P. J., Steer, O. L., & Betts, L. R. (2020). Factors leading to cyber victimization. In Benson, V., McAlaney, J., eds., *Emerging Cyber Threats and Cognitive Vulnerabilities* (pp. 1-25). 1st ed. Elsevier. Doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-816203-3.00001-0

### Chapter 4

Some of the content in Chapter 4 has been reported in a publication:

Macaulay, P. J., Betts, L. R., Stiller, J., & Kellezi, B. (2018). Perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying: A systematic review of teachers in the education system. *Aggression and violent behavior, 43*, 1-12. Doi: 10.1016/j.avb.2018.08.004

The findings from Chapter 4 also formed part of a conference poster presentation:

Macaulay, P.J.R., Betts, L.R., Stiller, J., Kellezi, B., (2018) Perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying: a systematic review on teachers in the education system [Poster Presentation]. In: British Psychological Society Annual Conference 2018, May 2018, East Midlands Conference Centre, University of Nottingham

### Chapter 5

Some of the content in Chapter 5 has been reported in a publication:



Macaulay, P. J., Betts, L. R., Stiller, J., & Kellezi, B. (2020). "It's so fluid, it's developing all the time": pre-service teachers' perceptions and understanding of cyberbullying in the school environment. *Educational Studies*, 1-17. Doi: 10.1080/03055698.2019.1620693

The findings from Chapter 5 also formed part of the following conference oral presentations:

Macaulay, P.J.R., Betts, L.R., Stiller, J., Kellezi, B., (2018) "It's so fluid, it's developing all the time": pre-service teachers' perceptions of cyberbullying in the school environment [Oral Presentation]. In: International Family Violence and Child Victimization Research Conference 2018, July 2018, Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Macaulay, P.J.R., Betts, L.R., Stiller, J., Kellezi, B., (2018) "It becomes socially acceptable": Pre-service and In-service teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying [Oral Presentation]. In: 4th Annual Cyberpsychology Research Group (CRUW) Conference 2018, June 2018, University of Wolverhampton

## **Chapter 6**

Some of the content in Chapter 6 has been reported in a publication:

Macaulay, P. J., Betts, L. R., Stiller, J., & Kellezi, B. (2020). 'The more public it is, the more severe it is': teachers' perceptions on the roles of publicity and severity in cyberbullying. *Research Papers in Education*, 1-28. Doi: 10.1080/02671522.2020.1767183

The findings from Chapter 6 also formed part of a conference oral presentation:

Macaulay, P.J.R., Betts, L.R., Stiller, J., Kellezi, B., (2019). "The name-calling could be the straw that breaks the camel's back": Teachers' perspectives on the roles of publicity and severity in cyberbullying [Oral Presentation]. In: The World Anti-Bullying Forum 2019, June 2019, Dublin.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **THESIS OVERVIEW**

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter provides the context for the thesis. Firstly, the chapter will discuss the theoretical background to the thesis in relation to issues around the conceptualisation of cyberbullying, prevalence of cyberbullying, and theoretical explanations that are pertinent to explaining cyberbullying. Secondly, extending on the theoretical background of the thesis, the chapter will then introduce and outline the aim of the thesis, the research questions, and the specific objectives designed and implemented to meet these research questions. Thirdly, the chapter will provide a brief overview on the methodological approaches used within this thesis. Following this, the chapter will outline and discuss the original contribution the thesis makes to existing literature on cyberbullying more broadly, but also teachers' perspectives on cyberbullying more specifically. This chapter will also draw attention to the original contribution of the thesis. Finally, the chapter will introduce and provide an overview of each of the chapters in this thesis.

### **1.2 Background to Cyberbullying**

Defined as “an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself” (Smith et al., 2008, p. 376), cyberbullying presents a cause for concern within educational settings (Myers & Cowie, 2019). Smith et al.'s definition of cyberbullying extends on

the traditional bullying (i.e., face-to-face bullying) criteria of: (i) the intention to inflict harm on the victim, (ii) the act is repeated by the perpetrator, and (iii) there is a power imbalance between the victim and perpetrator (Olweus, 1999; Smith & Sharp, 1994). In addition to these distinct criteria, cyberbullying is perpetrated using electronic communication methods. However, there is continued debate in the literature around the definition of cyberbullying due to the unique characteristics and ambiguity of the online environment (Bauman, 2010; Brewer & Kerlake, 2015; Olweus, 2013; Olweus & Limber, 2018; Smith, 2019). Some of these definitional challenges can emerge using traditional bullying criteria to define cyberbullying. For example, uploading embarrassing pictures/videos online may be a single one-off event, hence not meeting the repetitive criteria of bullying, however, it is the repeated exposure to the victim and size of the audience associated with cyberbullying that present prolonged consequences to the victim (Dooley, Pyżalski, & Cross, 2009; Smith 2015). This suggests the public nature of cyberbullying (i.e., if a bullying situation is private, semi-public, or public) may play a role in how cyberbullying is considered. In addition, 'physical strength' does not apply in the online environment but may be represented in a different manner by means of greater digital skills or using the feature of anonymity to gain perceived or actual power (Smith, 2015). However, there are definitional challenges in how cyberbullying is defined, which causes a problem when comparing and discussing findings across different studies. As such, there have been recommendations to ascertain and use a consistent definition of cyberbullying (Olweus & Limber, 2018;

Slonje, Smith, & Frisé, 2013). These issues around the definition of cyberbullying are further explored and discussed in Chapter 2: section 2.3.

The debate in the literature on the definition of cyberbullying also has an impact on how cyberbullying is measured. As such, this has caused variations in the reported prevalence of cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Volk, Veenstra, & Espelage, 2017). For example, a meta-analysis across 80 studies identified prevalence reports for cyberbullying victimisation at 15%, and perpetration of cyberbullying at 16% for young people aged between 12-18-years-old (Modecki, Minchin, & Harbaugh, 2014). However, victimisation and perpetration cyberbullying reports have been identified as high as 72% in a sample of 12-17-year-olds in the USA (Juvonen & Gross, 2008) and 60.4% in a sample of university students from China (Xiao & Wong, 2013) respectively. Findings from an international review across 159 studies of young people aged 12-18-years-old found that in the last six months, the prevalence of cyberbullying victimisation ranged from 1.6% - 56.9%, while perpetration reports ranged from 1.9% - 79.3% (Brochado, Soares, & Fraga, 2017). This highlights the complex issue on the extent of cyberbullying (see Chapter 2: section 2.6). Although there is variation in the reported prevalence of cyberbullying, previous studies suggest that cyberbullying is a common experience for many young people, and so efforts to address cyberbullying would be a worthwhile endeavour.

Despite the variability in the literature on reported prevalence of cyberbullying, cyberbullying can lead to an array of negative consequences for those involved. The literature has reported that cyberbullying involvement as a victim can lead to a deterioration in self-esteem as found in Northern

Ireland (Devine & Lloyd, 2012), elevated levels of distress and depression from a sample in the USA (Tynes, Rose, & Williams, 2010), a negative impact on psychological wellbeing as found from a meta-analysis (Kowalski, Giumetti, & Schroeder, 2014), and in some cases, suicidal ideation and attempts from findings in the USA (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; 2019). In addition, a study from Finland suggested that cyberbullying also has an impact on young people in the school setting (Sourander et al., 2010). Similarly, research in New Zealand has reported cyberbullying can impact on the learning atmosphere in the classroom, academic achievement, and attainment (Marsh, McGee, Nada-Raja, & Williams, 2010). As such, cyberbullying presents an additional challenge in the school environment for school staff, as attainment drops due to fear of involvement, as found from a study in England (West, 2015), and antisocial behaviour and negative attitudes rise as reported from a sample of Polish 15-year-olds (Pyżalski, 2012). In terms of the school environment, a review of the literature has shown that teachers acknowledge that cyberbullying is a serious problem, but that they fail to understand how to handle and prevent the situation in the classroom (Beale & Hall, 2007). However, one study in England has identified the importance of positive and supportive school environments (Betts, Spenser, & Gardner, 2017), and the school staff within them based on a study from the USA (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013) in addressing the effects of cyberbullying that are seen in the school environment. As teachers have an important role in addressing cyberbullying (see Chapter 3: section 3.3) within the school as shown from findings of parents and teachers in England

(Monks, Mahdavi, & Rix, 2016), this thesis will focus on how prospective and current teachers address cyberbullying.

The current thesis is designed to explore cyberbullying in the school environment from the perspective of teaching professionals across primary, secondary, and college educational levels in England. For the context of the current thesis, this includes young people aged between 5 to 20 years. The rationale to explore cyberbullying from the perspective of teachers arises from several reasons. Firstly, research on face-to-face bullying from a study in England and a study in Australia indicates that teachers and young people can have different perceptions and understanding towards bullying (e.g., Boulton, 1997; Campbell, Whiteford, & Hooijer, 2019). These different perceptions create challenges in the school environment for the reporting and addressing of these incidences, understanding the trends in the frequency of bullying, and implications on evaluating the effectiveness of anti-bullying interventions. Therefore, this thesis explores how teaching professionals perceive and respond to cyberbullying, in order to gain an understanding of effective management strategies within the school.

### 1.2.1 Theoretical Explanations for Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a social issue and requires a social context (Myers & Cowie, 2017). For example, cyberbullying can be supported by the peer group indirectly; by the reinforcement peers provide online, by the information received within different social situations in the online environment, and how young people perceive the peer group to feel and think, or the values young people perceive them to have. However, despite cyberbullying escalating as a societal issue, there is a limited application of

theoretical reasoning in the literature to understand cyberbullying involvement (Barlett, 2017). It is important to acknowledge theoretical explanations to cyberbullying, so the findings of the current thesis can inform and further develop current theory. As such, the Social Information Processing (SIP) model (Crick & Dodge, 1994), Bystander Effect (Latané & Darley, 1970), Evolutionary perspectives, and the Barlett Gentile Cyberbullying Model (Barlett & Gentile, 2012) will be utilised as the theoretical backgrounds to explain cyberbullying behaviours, and why young people choose to intervene.

One explanation for cyberbullying is a maladaptive or deficient processing of social information. The SIP model was originally developed by Dodge (1986) and revised by Crick and Dodge (1994) in order to explain the behavioural response of young people from social situational cues. The SIP model has been highly influential in research relating to aggression and bullying from findings in the Netherlands and England, as well as an international literature review (Camodeca, Goossens, Schuengel, & Terwogt, 2003; Guy, Lee, & Wolke, 2017; van Reemst, Fischer, & Zwirs, 2016), and has also been discussed to explain cyberbullying behaviours (Dooley et al., 2009; Runions, Shapka, Dooley, & Modecki, 2013). SIP describes the stages young people go through when they process social information, and how biases or deficiencies at any stage result in maladaptive behavioural responses. The SIP model proposes that young people go through mental stages as they receive, interpret, and respond to social situational cues in the environment, according to these stages (Crick & Dodge, 1994):

1. Social situational cues are received and encoded



2. Interpretations are made about the information that is received
3. The desired outcome (clarification of goals) is identified
4. Stored responses are generated
5. Responses are evaluated for approval, desired goal, and outcome expectations
6. The response is implemented

In the context of cyberbullying, young people may be influenced by processing at the early stages of the model where social cues (i.e., others' behaviours or group situations) are interpreted incorrectly. A prominent example of this are hostile attribution biases (for a review, see Crick & Dodge, 1994) in which young people may tend to interpret situations or the behaviour of others as hostile (intending to harm); even when there is not enough information or contradicting information to reach this conclusion. In addition, the goals young people set for what they want to achieve in their social interactions also influence how young people behave in situations and towards other people, based on stored responses from previous experiences. For example, young people that have a higher level of involvement in cyberbullying as a victim or perpetrator in the past, will have a higher level of responses they can refer to, and therefore are more likely to behave accordingly.

In addition, another explanation for cyberbullying, and specifically why young people may or may not intervene, is the Bystander Effect (Latané & Darley, 1970). This theoretical notion argues that in emergencies, people in groups are less likely to help in an emergency compared to individuals. This intervention in an emergency is inhibited by diffusion of responsibility (i.e.,

the reduction of feeling responsible when others are present), audience inhibition, and pluralistic ignorance (i.e., looking to others for cues about how to behave, while they are looking to you; collective misinterpretation).

Lantane and Darley (1970) have suggested that five key things must happen in order for a person to take action. An individual must:

1. Notice what is happening
2. Interpret the event as an emergency
3. Experience feelings of responsibility
4. Believe that they have the skills to help
5. Make a conscious choice to offer assistance

This model has received growing attention in the literature to explain the actions of individuals that witness cyberbullying online, as noted from findings from the Czech Republic (Machackova, Dedkova, & Mezulanikova, 2015). The model was originally developed to explain helping behaviour in emergency situations in the offline environment, but the nature of the online environment raises questions on the applicability of the bystander effect to explain cyberbullying behaviours. Previous research using a sample of 333 derived from online communities has provided empirical support that the bystander effect can be present in virtual environments, and that group size online does influence response behaviour (Voelpel, Eckhoff, & Förster, 2008). As such, there is growing tendency to use the bystander effect to explain incidents of cyberbullying (e.g., Machackova et al., 2015; Obermaier, Fawzi, & Koch, 2016). For example, Obermaier et al., (2016) found that participants in Germany did report less responsibility when witnessing

cyberbullying in the presence of more bystanders, and so were less likely to intervene to support for the victim.

A theoretical explanation that is useful for explaining the motivations for cyberbullying is from the lens of an evolutionary perspective. The evolutionary perspective has largely been applied in the context of traditional bullying (e.g., Volk, Camilleri, Dane, & Marini, 2012; Volk et al., 2016), and is also used to explain cyberbullying (e.g., Wang, Wang, & Lei, 2019; Wyckoff, Buss, & Markman, 2019). The evolutionary theory suggests for bullying to be adaptive, bullying needs to have a genetic component, and the behaviour needs to primarily act on achieving a specific goal to enhance biological fitness (Williams, 1966). In respect to the first criterion, Ball et al. (2008) found from a cohort of 1100 families in England and Wales with 10-year-old twins that heritability of bullying perpetration was 61%, while Veldkamp et al., (2019) recently found in the Netherlands that bullying heritability to be approximately 70%, irrespective of bullying type. The findings from these two studies suggests genetic factors are partially responsible for bullying behaviour in young people. In addition, indirect evidence on the heritability of bullying behaviours also derives from how common it is. For example, bullying is prevalent across many different cultures (e.g., Chester et al., 2015; Pörhölä et al., 2020). This suggests there could be a predisposition to bullying. In respect to the second criterion, there is evidence to suggest that young people engage in bullying and cyberbullying for goal-oriented rewards such as dominance and resources (Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Volk, Della Cioppa, Earle, & Farrell, 2015). In addition, cyberbullies can be seen as more popular and powerful by their peers (Dennehy et al., 2020; Wegge,

Vandebosch, Eggermont, & Pabian, 2016), which can be used to obtain social dominance and adaptive benefits such as resources. Taken together, this suggests that cyberbullying is a strategy aimed at gaining adaptive benefits related to survival.

The Barlett Gentile cyberbullying model (BGCM; Barlett & Gentile, 2012) has been proposed as a learning-based psychological theory to explain the processes involved in why people engage in cyberbullying perpetration. This newly proposed theory offers a theoretical understanding of cyberbullying perpetration that explicitly focuses on factors that are unique to the online environment. This model posits that early cyberbullying behaviours aid in the development of anonymity perceptions and the belief that one's muscularity is irrelevant online. A strong relationship between perceived anonymity (i.e., they are perceived as more anonymous than the victim) and belief in the irrelevance of muscularity for online behaviour lead to the development of positive cyberbullying attitudes, which predict subsequent cyberbullying perpetration (Barlett, & Gentile, 2012; Barlett, 2017). The repeated exposure to cyberbullying perpetration creates a feedback loop which further reinforces anonymity perceptions and a belief in the irrelevance of muscularity for online behaviour, and as such positive attitudes towards cyberbullying and perpetration behaviour.

In summary, cyberbullying presents a cause for concern in the education setting (Myers & Cowie, 2019). As teachers have an important role in the prevention of cyberbullying, the current thesis will explore the perceptions and responses of teachers in the school environment, to further understand how cyberbullying is addressed within the school. In addition, to

further understand how young people respond to cyberbullying, the unique perspectives of teachers will offer an insight on why young people get involved, and the reasons for not intervening.

### **1.3 Thesis Aims**

The aims of the thesis are to investigate cyberbullying looking at (1) how prospective and current teachers perceive cyberbullying when making judgements about how to manage and respond to it, and (2) how young people perceive cyberbullying according to the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying. To address these aims, the thesis will focus on three research questions.

#### 1.3.1 Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What does the existing literature report and discuss regarding teachers' perceptions and management of cyberbullying in the school environment?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are prospective and current teachers' perceptions of factors that should be considered when managing cyberbullying?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How do young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying?

#### 1.3.2 Research Objectives

Therefore, to address these research questions, the following objectives were designed and implemented for this thesis:

- To review the Government legislation and guidance in England to examine how cyberbullying is addressed in the school environment (see Chapter 3: section 3.2).
- To conduct a systematic literature review to examine the existing literature regarding prospective and current teachers' perceptions and responses when addressing cyberbullying in the school environment (see Chapter 4, addressing RQ1).
- To explore the perceptions of prospective teachers towards cyberbullying based on their Initial Teacher Training and the factors they think are important in the management of cyberbullying (see Chapter 5, addressing RQ2).
- To explore the perceptions of in-service teachers towards cyberbullying and their responses when addressing the issue (see Chapter 6, addressing RQ2).
- To explore how young people perceive and respond to cyberbullying situations according to key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying (see Chapter 7, addressing RQ3).

The current thesis provides an insight into the perceptions and responses of teaching professionals from England towards cyberbullying in the school environment. In addition, the thesis examines how young people perceive and respond to cyberbullying situations in relation to the criteria that teachers identified as perhaps influencing any intervention.

## **1.4 Methodological Overview**

Within this thesis a sequential exploratory mixed method approach was employed that involved combining qualitative and quantitative designs in a series of phases to inform the development of the current programme of research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach was used to explore teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying, the factors that should be considered when teachers manage cyberbullying, and how do young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying. In a sequential exploratory mixed method approach, the first phase involves qualitative data collection, for which the findings inform and direct the second phase involving quantitative data collection. This combination means the research questions can be explored in a more detailed manner (Doyle, Brady, & Byrne, 2009). As there is a limited knowledge base concerning how teachers perceive and address the complex issue of cyberbullying in the school, there was a need to take an exploratory research approach regarding teachers' perceptions, in order to explore young peoples' perceptions of the contextual factors teachers' identified to be important in the management of cyberbullying. This approach allowed for a richer and deeper understanding of cyberbullying by utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods. As cyberbullying is a continuously evolving and complex issue, a mixed methods approach provides a useful platform to gain a thorough understanding of the topic. Such approaches are becoming widely utilised in the literature to offer a holistic approach and understanding. For example, quantitative approaches can be implemented to examine if qualitative findings can be generalised, and qualitative

approaches can be implemented to explore the reasons behind quantitative data (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutman, & Hanson, 2003). In the context of the current thesis, a qualitative approach was initially implemented to explore how teachers perceive and respond to cyberbullying in the school environment (see Chapters 5 and 6). Following this, the responses from these qualitative findings are used to explore how young people perceive and respond to cyberbullying situations according to criteria that teachers identified that may influence intervention (see Chapter 7).

To address RQ1, a systematic review was conducted to identify and examine teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying (see Chapter 4). The systematic review was conducted to ensure an explicit, objective, and standardised approach was undertaken following a methodological stance (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016). Following this, and to address RQ2, 2 focus groups with 9 prospective teachers (see Chapter 5), and 10 focus groups with 63 in-service teachers (see Chapter 6) were conducted and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2019). Compared to other qualitative approaches, focus groups provided a greater insight into the attitudes, feelings and perspectives across groups of teachers (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). In addition, due to the complexity of cyberbullying, and the depth required to gain an insight into teachers' perspectives, focus groups provide an opportunity to explore the issue in further detail (Ritchie et al., 2013). Compared to other qualitative approaches focused on individual characteristics and meaning, a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2019) was employed to identify patterns of perceptions



across different educational levels. To address RQ3, hypothetical vignettes were developed from the responses of the qualitative findings addressing RQ1 and RQ2, to explore how young people perceive and respond to cyberbullying situations according to the key factors that teachers identified that may influence intervention (see Chapter 7).

## **1.5 Original Contribution to Literature**

Using a sequential mixed method approach, this thesis contributes to the literature and advances knowledge on understanding cyberbullying in the school environment. Specifically, the thesis provides an original contribution in the following areas of literature:

1. Due to the accessibility to digital technologies and online communications, all young people across different levels of the educational system in England are vulnerable to cyberbullying involvement (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011). Yet, teachers' experience and knowledge of bullying can impact on their preventive strategies to address the issue within the school (Kokko & Pörhölä, 2009; Sakellariou, Carroll, & Houghton, 2012). The current thesis provides a thorough investigation for understanding teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying. The thesis presents a systematic review of teachers' perceptions and beliefs on cyberbullying; no such systematic review currently exists (see Chapter 4, addressing RQ1).
2. Prospective teachers receive training and preparation to address complex issues in the school, with university and initial teacher

training courses having a responsibility to prepare prospective teachers to be more competent when addressing cyberbullying (Musset, 2010). However, the limited research concerning prospective teachers' perceptions, awareness, and responses towards cyberbullying has identified that prospective teachers recognise cyberbullying to be a problem, although their confidence to manage the issue needs developing (see Chapter 5, section 5.1). The current programme of research contributes to the limited research in England exploring prospective teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying. These new perspectives from prospective teachers offer a unique contribution on prospective teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying, which can help guide teacher training courses and schools provide the adequate training to increase their ability to act against cyberbullying.

3. Those in the teaching profession are facing additional challenges when responding to cyberbullying. The thesis explores how in-service teachers perceive cyberbullying and the strategies used to address cyberbullying. Teachers have a key role in the successful implementation of anti-bullying interventions (Biggs, Vernberg, Twemlow, Fonagy, & Dill, 2008; Epstein & Kazmierczak, 2006), with the same being extended to anti-cyberbullying initiatives (Stewart & Fritsch, 2011). However, not all teachers have the knowledge or understanding to effectively address cyberbullying within the school environment (Kokko & Pörhölä, 2009; Sakellariou et al., 2012). In England, there are requirements from the Government to address

cyberbullying in schools (Department for Education, 2017), and so the current programme of research offers a unique account exploring in-service teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying. These views will be explored across primary, secondary, and college educational levels in England, offering a unique contribution to the literature (see Chapter 6, addressing RQ2). This will advance the knowledge in the literature on how teachers perceive cyberbullying, which can be used to implicate recommendations at the school level to promote disclosure of cyberbullying and preventive strategies. To the author's knowledge, this will provide the first comprehensive qualitative exploration on how teachers perceive and respond to cyberbullying in England across different educational levels, specifically reflecting on the roles of bullying severity and the publicity of the incident.

4. While a study in the USA suggest that young people regard cyberbullying as a serious issue in the school (Sobba, Paez, & Ten Bensele, 2017), other research from USA and Australia argue that cyberbullying is an inevitable experience within the online domain (Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber, 2007; Campbell, Spears, Slee, Butler, & Kift, 2012). The thesis explores how young people perceive and respond to cyberbullying situations according to key factors that teachers identified that may influence how they respond to cyberbullying (see Chapter 7, addressing RQ3). The data collected from teachers as part of this programme of research will provide a new insight on this contemporary issue. The perceptions and

responses from teachers about the factors that influence how they manage cyberbullying will be used to guide and inform the development of hypothetical vignettes to measure how young people respond to cyberbullying. This offers a unique and original contribution by employing research informed vignettes, the findings of which will guide teachers' education of cyberbullying awareness in the school environment to help young people. In addition, the thesis makes a unique contribution by exploring how young people perceive the key factors that teachers identified in how they respond to cyberbullying.

## **1.6 Thesis Structure**

The next section of this chapter will provide an overview for the remaining thesis chapters.

In Chapter 2, the conceptualisation of cyberbullying will be discussed, acknowledging the foundation of aggression and traditional bullying literature. Furthermore, Chapter 2 will then discuss the development of digital technologies and opportunities to communicate online, leading to the introduction and escalation of cyberbullying. The chapter will also discuss the definitional challenges of cyberbullying, the prevalence of cyberbullying in England, and discuss the impact such involvement can have on those involved.

In Chapter 3, Government legislation and statutory guidance in England will be discussed, and how this has promoted the reporting of cyberbullying. This will provide an account of how teachers can use such policies and guidance when managing cyberbullying in the school

environment. The chapter will then discuss the role of teachers in the school environment when addressing cyberbullying. In particular, the chapter will outline some of the challenge's teachers face tackling cyberbullying, and the lack of skills and knowledge which may hinder the effectiveness at responding to cyberbullying.

Chapter 4 will present a systematic review on the perceptions and responses of teachers in the education system towards cyberbullying (addressing RQ1). Initially, the chapter will first report on research addressing why it is important to consider teachers' views towards cyberbullying, and as such, the rationale behind the current systematic review. The chapter will then report on the search strategy that will be applied across six databases, which, alongside an inclusion criteria checklist, will identify studies to be reviewed for a narrative synthesis. The themes will be discussed in a narrative synthesis with reference to implications for teachers and for the continued development and review of anti-cyberbullying initiatives.

Chapter 5 will present the results from a qualitative study examining prospective teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying (addressing RQ2). The chapter will discuss how prospective teachers understand cyberbullying, how they would respond to the issue in the school environment, and suggestions for management strategies to combat the issue. In addition, the chapter will also discuss the findings on prospective teachers' confidence to address cyberbullying, and the training received from their initial teacher training courses.

Chapter 6 will present the results from a qualitative study examining in-service teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying (addressing RQ2). The chapter will discuss how teachers respond to cyberbullying according to the severity of the situation, and the nature of publicity in cyberbullying. In addition, the findings on how teachers perceive the role of bystanders in combating cyberbullying will also be discussed.

Chapter 7 will present the results from a quantitative study with young people examining how young people would respond to cyberbullying based on the factors that teachers in study 1 and 2 identified as important in responding to cyberbullying (addressing RQ3). The data collected from teachers as part of this thesis informed the development of hypothetical vignettes to measure the perceived severity of cyberbullying situations, and how young people would respond to cyberbullying. The chapter will discuss the findings on how young people respond to different cyberbullying situations based on their bystander reactions and consider whether the factors that influence teachers' management impact on young people's responses to cyberbullying.

Chapter 8 provides a general discussion of the thesis and will discuss the findings in relation to the three research questions.

## CHAPTER 2

### CYBERBULLYING: LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Chapter Overview

Despite cyberbullying being regarded as a new form of bullying, it is also contextualised within the broader bullying literature. The current chapter will provide a review of the literature concerning cyberbullying, to offer an insight on its conceptualisation. It will first consider traditional bullying at its roots, reflecting on the development from aggression to bullying, and key characteristics associated with bullying. The chapter will then discuss the development of digital technologies and opportunities to communicate online. Then, considering this new form of bullying, it discusses and explores the definitional aspect of cyberbullying, particularly addressing definitional issues when applying traditional bullying criteria. The chapter will then discuss the unique features of cyberbullying, and how they fit in within the overall definition of bullying. Finally, the chapter will explore the different types of cyberbullying, the prevalence of cyberbullying in England, and discuss the impact such involvement can have on those involved.

#### 2.2 A Brief Overview of Traditional Bullying

Within the literature 'aggressive behaviour' is used to describe behaviour that is intended to cause harm either physically, verbally, or psychologically (Liu, Lewis, & Evans, 2013). Specifically, aggression is

defined as behaviour that is intended to harm another individual who does not wish to be harmed (Baron & Richardson, 1994). Traditional bullying (i.e., face-to-face bullying) derives from aggression and is used to distinguish acts that are intentional, compared to those that are not. Dan Olweus (1978) provided the first foundation of understanding bullying in relation to three distinct criteria. As proposed by Olweus, bullying needs to encompass: (a) negative behaviour that is intended to inflict harm on another, (b) the behaviour is repeated over time, and (c) there is a perceived or actual imbalance of power between the victim and bully. In his early research, Olweus (1993) found from surveys of 150,000 children in Norway and Sweden (approx. aged 7 – 16 years) that 15% of children were involved in bullying either as a bully or victim with some regularity. Since then, researchers have continued to explore and examine bullying, and the negative impact it can have.

Traditional bullying can manifest in many different ways, which include forms of physical bullying (e.g., pushing, hitting), verbal bullying (e.g., name-calling, verbal threats), social bullying (e.g., rumour circulation), and relational bullying (e.g., manipulation, exclusion) (Baldry & Farrington, 2004; Paul, Smith, & Blumberg, 2012; Smith 2016). However, due to the emergence of information and communication technologies, bullying has now moved into the online domain.



### **2.3 Emergence of Digital Technologies and Cyberbullying**

The proliferation of digital technology has influenced the growth of social media platforms and applications, allowing more young people to stay connected (Lenhart, 2015). To provide context, household internet access in Great Britain has increased from 25% in 2000 to 90% in 2017 (Prescott, 2017), showing the continued growth and availability for young people to get online. This growth and availability to communicate online has already become an embedded feature of society, particularly predominant amongst young people (Ofcom, 2019). The emergence of information and communication technology has provided an array of social, recreational, and educational benefits for young people (Finkelhor, 2014), particularly the convenience of maintaining social networks as discussed by young people in England (Betts & Spenser, 2017). However, the expectation to use technology by peers in the modern world, means children are spending more time online, limiting opportunities for face-to-face interaction, which in turn, reduces self-monitoring behaviour and can lead to vulnerability to online risks and dangers (Betts & Spenser, 2017; Espinosa & Clemente, 2013; Livingstone et al., 2011). One of the potential risks of using digital technology is that of cyberbullying, often regarded as an 'umbrella' term which also includes online bullying and electronic bullying (Tokunaga, 2010). The widespread development of the cyber world through digital technologies and online communication applications, mean that pupils of all ages across the education system can be vulnerable to cyberbullying involvement (Livingstone et al., 2011). As such, it is important to consider how those in the educational community identify and manage cyberbullying as the

advancement of technology continues to evolve and change. The changing face of technology presents new challenges for those in the educational system to manage and prevent the issue both within and outside the school environment.

Bill Belsey was one of the first researchers to coin the term cyberbullying following the launch of the website (<http://www.cyberbullying.ca>) in 2003 that addressed cyberbullying in Canada (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015). However, the earliest records of the term go back as far as 1995 in a New York Times article (Bauman, 2014). Despite the early emergence and concept of cyberbullying, the literature has continued to debate and seek to clarify a consensus definition of cyberbullying (Brewer & Kerslake, 2015; Slonje et al., 2013). The definitional debate impacts on the conclusions that can be drawn from research and the type of comparisons that can be made across study findings, which limit the opportunity to develop a theoretical understanding of cyberbullying (Barlett, 2017). There are several proposed definitions of cyberbullying that provide a fundamental foundation for understanding this form of bullying. One of the most widely cited definitions was proposed by Smith et al. (2008) in England, building on Olweus's three distinct criteria, by adding the electronic aspect associated with cyberbullying. Smith et al. (2008) defined cyberbullying as "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (p. 376). An earlier definition proposed by Patchin and Hinduja (2006) from the USA, defined cyberbullying as the "wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text" (p.

152). Such definitions of cyberbullying continue to provide the foundation when describing such behaviours.

In a meta-analysis of cyberbullying research, Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, and Lattanner (2014) proposed that the definition of cyberbullying comprises of four components. Firstly, the behaviour needs to be aggressive and intentional on the part of the perpetrator. Secondly, the intentional aggressive behaviour needs to be carried out repeatedly. Thirdly, the cyberbullying behaviour occurs between a victim and perpetrator who are unequal in power. Finally, the behaviour needs to occur through a form of electronic technology. Despite these four components resonating with characteristics of traditional bullying, researchers at times fail to address all these components when measuring cyberbullying, thus impacting on how it is measured. In an international systematic review of cyberbullying definitions between 2012 and 2017, 24 variations of the definition were identified (Peter & Petermann, 2018). Comparisons across these definitions identified five defining attributes. This highlights the large variability in how cyberbullying is defined and consequently measured. The most common attributes to define cyberbullying were: (1) intention to inflict harm, (2) imbalance of power, (3) repetition, (4) direct and indirect cyberbullying (i.e., private versus public cyberbullying), and (5) perception (i.e., if the victim perceived the behaviour harmful or not). It has been suggested that to achieve a consensus regarding the definition of cyberbullying, future research should consider using qualitative research to discuss these attributes with different stakeholders to explore how central these attributes are in how cyberbullying is perceived (Peter & Petermann, 2018). It is also important to consider how unique

features associated with cyberbullying can help explain the phenomenon. The current programme of research therefore explores how prospective and current teachers define and perceive cyberbullying using qualitative approaches (see Chapter 5 and 6, addressing RQ2).

Some of the literature suggests that there is an overlap between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, within the definitional sense and the experience involved. For example, research from UK and Italy suggest that victims of traditional bullying are also victims of cyberbullying, as their aggressors use the online space to target their victims in different ways (Baldry, Farrington, & Sorrentino, 2017; Wolke, Lee, & Guy, 2017). Research from a large UK national sample found that cyberbullying presents very few new victims in comparison to traditional bullying, but rather offers a new medium for bullies to continue targeting victims in a different manner (Wolke et al., 2017). This study supports the notion that cyberbullying extends bullying beyond the school playground, highlighting a continuity on the roles of bullies and victims between the physical and digital world (e.g., in a sample of Italian students, the role continuity approach was also found; Baldry et al., 2017). This suggests the definition of cyberbullying should be considered through the lens of traditional bullying definitions, extending the traditional criteria into the online environment. On the other hand, other scholars in the USA and Ireland argue traditional bullying and cyberbullying should be considered as two distinct issues (Brown, Demaray, & Secord, 2014; Corcoran & McGuckin, 2014). For example, Brown et al. highlighted there is little evidence to suggest an overlap between the two forms of bullying, but rather place more importance on the contextual factors (e.g.,

age and gender) to develop our understanding of different cyberbullying behaviours. However, this has not found support in subsequent literature (Olweus & Limber, 2018). In addition, the fluidity of cyberbullying means aggressors can utilise different online mediums to target their victims, as well as bullying through different realms (e.g., public and private conversations) (Pabian et al., 2018).

As the modernisation of digital technology continues to escalate, these definitions of cyberbullying are often attached to varying mediums and how this affects perpetration. These include mobile phones, email, social networking sites, text-messages (Hemphill & Heerde, 2014), videos, gaming (Pearce, Cross, Monks, Waters, & Falconer, 2011), computers and other devices. One issue aligned to the inclusion of digital technology as a basis for a cyberbullying definition, is the notion that digital technology will constantly be evolving, which could be problematic when it comes to defining cyberbullying. In addition, while fundamental definitions of cyberbullying build on Olweus' three facets of traditional bullying (i.e., intentionality, repetition, and imbalance of power), there is debate around the applicability of these within cyberbullying.

## **2.4 Definitional Issues**

Scholars have debated if characteristics of traditional face-to-face bullying extend to cyberbullying. Some researchers argue that traditional bullying criteria should be applied to define and explain cyberbullying behaviours, differentiated by the use of digital technologies (Olweus, 2013;

Smith, 2019). Definitional challenges can emerge using traditional bullying criteria to define cyberbullying, particularly the debate surrounding repetition and imbalance of power (Smith, 2015). While some may consider cyberbullying to be an extension from traditional bullying, the definitional features in cyberbullying are more ambiguous. For example, a study in Hong Kong found that victims of traditional bullying can engage in cyberbullying perpetration as a form of retaliation (Wong, Chan, & Cheng, 2014). As such, traditional features of imbalance of power are portrayed differently online. As there are definitional issues regarding the extent traditional bullying criteria can be used to explain cyberbullying behaviours (e.g. Kofoed & Staksrud, 2018; Pyżalski, 2012; Slonje et al., 2013), it is important to address the applicability of such features. Therefore, how prospective and current teachers view cyberbullying and how they perceive definitional components is one of the key research questions and the basis for Study 1 (see Chapter 5) and Study 2 (see Chapter 6).

#### 2.4.1 Intentionality

In traditional bullying, the intentionality would involve aggressive behaviour that is intended to inflict harm or hurt another individual. However, in cyberbullying, the notion of intent can be viewed as more ambiguous. For example, studies in England have found that in the online domain, young people often perceive the actions from the aggressor as fun or jokes, with no intent to cause harm (O'Brien & Moules, 2013; Tarapdar, Kellett, & People, 2013). Similarly, in the UK young people also see that acts of cyberbullying could be regarded as banter, implicating the difficulty applying features of intentionality to the issue of cyberbullying (Betts & Spencer, 2017). The

findings of Betts and Spencer suggest that some individuals may be identified as a bully, even though their initial intention was banter. In addition, in a qualitative study with 28 English 11-15-year-old secondary school students, young people recognised the difficulty interpreting online interactions as banter or cyberbullying, due to the ambiguity the online environment presents (Steer, Betts, Baguley, & Binder, 2020). In the context of cyberbullying, the role of intention is somewhat ambiguous. For example, intention within cyberbullying may refer to the degree that the perpetrator is aware of what they are doing and the extent to which they understand that their actions are causing harm to the victim (Menesini & Nocentini, 2009). Further, how the victim perceives the act is also important in characterising cyberbullying because a victim may perceive an act to be cyberbullying, even though it may not have been intended to be one (Nocentini et al., 2010). In addition to this, Langos (2012) proposed that the repetition of an incident and intention to cause harm can be linked elements in cyberbullying. Langos suggested that when perpetrators repeat the behaviour, this might illustrate an intention to harm, by implicating the perpetrators knowledge that they are causing harm to the victim. Therefore, it appears the interpretation of intent in the context of cyberbullying continues to present an issue in the definition of cyberbullying, with intent regarded as a fluid factor that can be influenced by contextual and external factors (Dennehy et al., 2020). One area that has received little attention to date, are the views of those responsible to manage cyberbullying in the school environment. This is important because the teachers' definitions and subsequent actions towards cyberbullying might impact on how young people in the school environment perceive and

understand harm. Therefore, Chapter 4 presents a systematic review of the literature on the issue, to explore existing literature on how teachers perceive and address cyberbullying.

A report from Canada has also explored how victims of cyberbullying may offer an insight on how cyberbullying is defined (Mackay, 2012). In Germany, Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) argued that cyberbullying behaviours do not need to be intentional but should rather be measured according to the emotional and psychological impact of the victim as a result of the behaviour. Therefore, how prospective and current teachers respond to cyberbullying is one of the key research questions and the basis for Study 1 (see Chapter 5) and Study 2 (see Chapter 6).

#### 2.4.2 Repetition

In traditional bullying, the criteria of repetition can be clearly portrayed when bullying occurs consistently in the school playground. In other words, repetition is represented by the number of acts recorded and/or witnessed. However, in cyberbullying, repetition is more difficult to categorise. For example, repetition in cyberbullying could consist of a single one-off event that is viewed numerous times, a repetitive act by a single perpetrator, or the same aggressive act perpetrated by other individuals beyond the initial perpetrator (Slonje et al., 2013). While a single incident of cyber aggression would not meet the definitional aspect of cyberbullying, a single incident could be viewed and/or shared multiple times by other people online, thus meeting the repetition aspect of cyberbullying (Elledge et al., 2013; Obermaier et al., 2016; Slonje et al., 2013). Dooley et al. (2009) noted that



even a single message or image sent to somebody online can lead to widespread humiliation due to the increased accessibility for other people to see it, and further disseminate the message/image. This suggests that while the concept of repetition is more ambiguous in cyberbullying, it could be that repetition is presented online in a different manner to that of traditional bullying; through the continual availability of the victimisation online (Kowalski & Limber, 2007).

In the online environment, cyberbullying may readily “snowball” out of the initial control of the bully (Slonje et al., 2013, p26). For instance, an offensive image or video-clip of someone posted on a website only once may still reflect the essence of repetition. This is because many people may access the website where the image has been posted and go on to make further comments about the image or even circulate it to others (Smith, 2015). Therefore, a single aggressive act can result in continued and widespread ridicule and humiliation for the young person being targeted. As such, it has been suggested that rather than repetition being a distinct criterion of cyberbullying, it should instead be used as an indicator for the severity of the situation (Rodkin & Fischer, 2012). As noted by Dooley et al. (2009), when a single act of cyberbullying is viewed repeatedly by different audiences, this can present an increased impact on the victim via repeated exposure and humiliation. This suggests that for cyberbullying, even though the act itself does not need to be repeated, it is the repeated negative impact for the victim that meets the repetitive criteria. As such, Dooley et al. (2009) argued that the content of the cyberbullying act is more important. For example, if a cyberbullying act is perpetrated in a public domain, and is

potentially accessible to anyone, this can have immediate and prolonged consequences for the victim. Therefore, while repetition may not be an explicitly distinct feature of cyberbullying (Hemphill & Heerde, 2014; Moreno, Suthamjariya, & Selkie, 2018), it is the repeated exposure to the victim and associated impact that may offer a better explanation regarding how repetition is portrayed in the online environment (Srivastava, Gamble, & Boey, 2013).

### 2.4.3 Power imbalance

The third element associated with traditional bullying is the power imbalance between the victim and perpetrator, where the perpetrator has actual or perceived power compared to the victim. While this may have been portrayed through physical strength or social status in the school playground, power imbalance in the online domain is more difficult to identify. In the context of cyberbullying, such power dynamics need to be considered more carefully. While psychological power dynamics may still exist in the online domain, unique features online may offer a better explanation for how power imbalances work within cyberbullying. For example, young people engaged in bullying behaviours online may have increased power from greater technological skills and using these skills to target their victims in sophisticated ways (Corcoran & McGuckin, 2014). In addition, the anonymity feature of online communication means that bullies can target their victims while concealing their identity, which portrays the power dynamics in the online environment (Moreno et al., 2018; Slonje et al., 2013).

However, the notion of power dynamics in cyberbullying can be more challenging to define. For example, victims of traditional bullying that would suffer victimisation due to a physical or psychological power imbalance from the bully, can use online mediums to target their bullies via anonymous means, thus reversing the power imbalance that may have been traditionally portrayed in the school environment (Wolke et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2014). The nature of power imbalance in cyberbullying is potentially different to that of face-to-face bullying. There is some debate in the literature regarding how power imbalances are portrayed in the context of cyberbullying. For example, research in Israel argue that power imbalances are absent in the online environment as the technology and digital devices remove features of power and status (Lapidot-Lefler & Dolev-Cohen, 2015). However other researchers argue that while physical strength or status are removed in the online environment, unique features associated with technology such as anonymity and digital skills act as tools to create an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and victim (Langos, 2012; Slonje et al., 2013; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). While a study in Australia has shown that young people regard power imbalance to be less applicable in the definitional aspect of cyberbullying (Dredge, Gleeson, & De la Piedad Garcia, 2014), another study has found that power imbalance was the most important criterion when defining cyberbullying from a sample of 11-17 year olds across six European countries (Menesini et al., 2012). This suggests those in the position to monitor and intervene in cyberbullying, should consider how this criterion is used.

On the other hand, the notion of power imbalance is also similar between the two forms of bullying. For example, in traditional bullying perpetrators may exclude victims from friendship groups in order to gain a sense of power (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Similarly, in cyberbullying, perpetrators can also exclude victims from online groups and activities to gain this sense of power. However, others argue that the digital technology acts as a barrier between the victim and perpetrator, and so the notion of power imbalance does not exist in the online domain (Lapidot-Leffler & Dolev-Cohen, 2015). Despite this view, others believe that the power imbalance can still exist in the online domain but is represented in a different manner to what would typically be portrayed in the physical world. For example, in traditional bullying, the criterion of imbalance of power can be presented through social status within a peer group or physical strength. In cyberbullying, these factors are minimized or even eliminated due to the anonymity aspect of online communication (Smith, 2015). However, it is the anonymity and public nature of cyberbullying that represents an imbalance of power (i.e., the victim can be unaware of the perpetrators identity) (Smith, 2015; Thomas, Connor, & Scott, 2015).

The definitional feature of power imbalance has been identified as a key characteristic when young people define cyberbullying. It is often perceived to be the more severe defining criteria, suggesting the importance of a power dynamic for both traditional and cyber forms of bullying (Luik & Naruskov, 2018). These variations in how cyberbullying is defined may cause discrepancies in how teachers intervene and manage cyberbullying. Therefore, the perceptions and management of cyberbullying is explored

from prospective and current teachers (see Chapter 5 and 6, addressing RQ2). The literature has suggested a need for a consistent definitional approach on cyberbullying, to support researchers and teachers addressing cyberbullying (Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olson, & Waterhouse, 2012). Together, this suggests a lack of consensus regarding the precise definition of cyberbullying, which creates additional challenges for research and practical applications in the real world due to variations in how cyberbullying is defined and measured. While there are some similarities between cyberbullying and traditional bullying, there are elements of cyberbullying that make it unique compared to traditional forms of bullying. For example, in cyberbullying the perpetrator can conceal their identity and remain anonymous more easily, and the nature of cyberbullying can vary accordingly to the publicity of the incident (i.e., how many people can see the incident varies).

## **2.5 Unique Features of Cyberbullying**

In contrast to researchers who propose cyberbullying is an extension from traditional bullying (e.g., Olweus, 2013), other researchers argue that cyberbullying represents a distinct form of bullying that should be considered separately to its traditional counterpart (e.g., Pieschl, Kuhlmann, & Prosch, 2015). For example, as noted by Dooley et al. (2009), cyberbullying needs to be regarded as its own form of bullying so that the unique features can be fully explored and examined. In addition, as cyberbullying is occurring in a new space and is changing in line with the advancement of digital technology, it needs to be regarded as its own phenomenon (Huang & Chou,

2010). In support of this notion, Pieschl et al. (2015) argued that any of the defining features of traditional bullying may not be represented in the same manner when it comes to cyberbullying, as discussed earlier in this chapter. As such, cyberbullying needs to be defined and regarded as its own form of bullying to examine and clarify how the traditional characteristics extend in the online space, and unique features associated with cyberbullying.

### 2.5.1 Anonymity

One of the unique features associated with cyberbullying is that perpetrators can conceal their identity and 'hide behind the screen' (Mackay, 2012, p.32). This can potentially introduce challenges for teachers when identifying and managing cyberbullying in the school environment, as perpetrators are harder to identify in the online domain. The opportunity for perpetrators to remain anonymous when targeting victims online could give a greater sense of power to the perpetrator, thus meeting the power imbalance criterion, but also means perpetrators feel less accountable for their actions (Cross et al., 2011).

One possible reason why a perpetrator might choose to remain anonymous is due to the perception of not being able to get caught for their actions (Smith, del Barrio, & Tokunaga, 2013; Olweus & Limber, 2018). Victims of cyberbullying may be defenceless as they are blind to who is targeting them, further amplifying the negative impact of cyberbullying (Vandebosch & van Cleemput, 2008). This idea is also suggested in a study from Canada by Mishna, Saini, and Solomon (2009, p.1224) where perpetrators of cyberbullying: 'can be anyone, even someone next door'.

Therefore, perpetrators of cyberbullying can gain a sense of power through the anonymity as they can hide their identity (Davis, Randall, Ambrose, & Orand, 2015; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Slonje et al., 2013). However, while anonymity is easier to achieve with cyberbullying compared to traditional bullying, scholars suggest it should remain as a unique feature rather than a defining attribute (Campbell & Bauman, 2018). In practice, this means that some teachers in the school environment may choose not to intervene in some situations if it is not contextualised as cyberbullying. The current programme of research conducted a review of the literature and systematic review to explore the existing research on prospective and current teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying (see Chapter 4, addressing RQ1). This formed the basis for the empirical studies exploring the perception and management of cyberbullying by teachers (see Chapter 5 and 6, addressing RQ2).

### 2.5.2 Publicity

In addition to the anonymity, cyberbullying is also largely characterised by the increased dissemination and potential audience that witness these acts online. Compared to traditional bullying which would often occur within the school in front of a group of peers, cyberbullying can be witnessed by a potential infinite audience (Heirman & Walrave, 2008). In the context of victimisation, such experiences are regarded to be more severe by young people when more people have witnessed the situation (Slonje & Smith, 2008). In addition, the victim may not know the true size of the audience that has witnessed their victimisation, which may increase feelings of humiliation, anxiety, and reduce levels of self-esteem (Olenik-Shemesh &

Heiman, 2016). For traditional bullying, the audience need to be in the same physical space and environment, whereas for cyberbullying, the audience could be potentially infinite according to different public spaces, hence potentially increasing the negative impact for the victim (Tokunaga, 2010). In addition, this idea of publicity associated with cyberbullying has also been implicated in why young people engage in cyberbullying. For example, research in the USA has suggested that young people will change their behaviour online when in the presence of a larger audience (Rafferty & Vander Ven, 2014). This pressure online and the struggles to maintain power in the online environment impacts on cyberbullying involvement.

Aligned to this notion of publicity, is that as cyberbullying is not restrained to any geographical location or time, perpetrators can target victims at any time, with a potential global audience associated with public spaces in the digital world (Butler, Kift, & Campbell, 2009). This constant availability to target victims 24/7 means victims of cyberbullying are potentially unable to escape (Selkie, Fales, & Moreno, 2016). These unique features associated with cyberbullying suggest the complexity of these behaviours and the need to address how young people respond to cyberbullying, but also how those in the educational community identify and manage this issue.

## **2.6 The Different Forms of Cyberbullying**

In addition to exploring the definitional aspect of cyberbullying, it is also important to consider the different types of cyberbullying behaviours that



young people are involved in. Cyberbullying can take many different forms, and one of the most recognised and used classifications was that proposed by Willard (2007). When examining the classification of different types of cyberbullying, Willard proposed eight different types of behaviour: flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing and trickery, exclusion, cyberstalking, and cyberthreats. The term flaming involves posting insults and negative messages often on social networking sites directed at individuals but also small groups. On the other hand, harassment involves repeated intimidation to a targeted individual over a repeated period. The term denigration involves unfairly spreading comments about an individual with the goal of disrupting their social status. As such, victims of denigration are often unaware they are being targeted initially. Impersonation defines those who portray themselves online as their targeted victim, with the aim of portraying the victim in a negative light. Willard also proposed that outing and trickery are linked behaviours associated with cyberbullying. For example, outing involves the dissemination of personal information beyond the initial intended audience, and trickery involves disclosing sensitive information when they believe they are only for the recipient. In the context of cyberbullying, the term exclusion involves the perpetrator purposefully excluding the victim from online groups or activities. Finally, cyberstalking involves repeated acts on an individual which is more persistent than harassment, and cyberthreats comprise of direct and indirect threats online.

One of the main issues associated with studying the forms of cyberbullying is that as technology advances, the forms of cyberbullying and the way these are perpetrated will continue to change and evolve. For

example, earlier research in this area from England reported telephone calls and emails to be the most prevalent form of cyberbullying (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008). In addition, in a sample of 1,211 young people from the Netherlands aged 11-13 years, abusive comments and rumour spreading were the most common types of cyberbullying, often perpetrated through emails and instant messenger (DeHue, Bolman, & Völlink, 2008). Further to this, a study in England exploring the mediums used within cyberbullying over a five-year period found that the most prevalent forms used include emails, instant messenger, and social network sites (Rivers & Noret, 2010). Recently, findings from 42 countries have shown that engagement in social media use is related to cyberbullying victimisation and perpetration, suggesting accessibility to social media poses a risk for young people in relation to cyberbullying (Craig et al., 2020).

Despite several different types of cyberbullying behaviours that have been identified in this chapter, one recent study in Israel suggests that the most frequent behavioural acts of cyberbullying occur on social networking sites, with increased use of the internet and social networking sites associated with increased cyberbullying victimisation (Aizenkot, 2020). In addition, types of cyberbullying behaviours can manifest as written-verbal behaviours (e.g., during a phone call, in one to one or group text message, or on social media) or as visual behaviours (e.g., such as posting or sharing media without consent, photographs, or videos; Nocentini et al., 2010; Palladino, Nocentini, & Menesini, 2015). This suggests that the application of different digital technologies has provided numerous opportunities for young people to target victims online across a plethora of media (Willard, 2011). As

the online domain is vastly populated and not restricted by time and place (Sabella, Patchin, & Hinduja, 2013), it is important to consider if the perceived severity and management of cyberbullying differs across the forms of cyberbullying.

## **2.7 The Prevalence of Cyberbullying in England**

The variability in bullying conceptualisations and assessment measures, has led to inconsistencies in reported prevalence (Kowalski, Limber, & McCord, 2019; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Volk et al., 2017). This variability in reported prevalence has caused confusion with those in the educational community on the state of cyberbullying in the school environment, leading to inconsistencies on appropriate prevention strategies to tackle this widespread issue. In England, cyberbullying is a growing concern within the educational sector, and in the recent Teaching and Learning International Survey of school leaders, cyberbullying is on the rise in England, and above the average compared to all other countries surveyed (Department for Education, 2019). Therefore, the current programme of research focuses on cyberbullying in England, to understand the fuller context of cyberbullying by focusing on a specific area.

Early research exploring the prevalence of cyberbullying in England provides some context in this regard. For example, Smith et al. (2008) conducted two studies using the same questionnaire to examine the prevalence of cyberbullying in young people aged 11-16-years-old. In study 1, the initial pilot study involving 92 students, 22.2% of the students reported

experiencing cyberbullying, with 6.6% of the students experiencing it often, and 15.6% experiencing cyberbullying once or twice. Extending on this pilot study, study 2 involving 2,533 young people aged 11-16-years-old found that a total of 17.2% (nearly one in five pupils) of the students had experienced cyberbullying, with 5.3% reported experiencing cyberbullying in the last week or month, 5.1% in the last term, and 3.1% in the last year (Smith et al., 2008). These findings are supported by longitudinal data of 2,500 11-13-year-olds in England examining the occurrence of receiving aggressive and threatening texts or emails which found an increase in reported prevalence over a five-year period (Rivers & Noret, 2010). In 2002, 13% of students had reported receiving an aggressive or threatening text or email, rising to 16.4% in 2004, with the overall trend of cyberbullying involvement increasing (Rivers & Noret, 2010). In addition to this, in a sample of 325 students in England, it was reported that 11% had been cyberbullied (Ackers, 2012). Despite prior research suggesting the prevalence of cyberbullying to be gradually growing, research in England using a random sample of 120,115 adolescents aged 15 years, found that traditional bullying is actually more prevalent, with cyberbullying prevalence reported to be less than 1% (Przybylski & Bowes, 2017). However, the literature has identified challenges measuring cyberbullying due to variations in understanding (Olweus & Limber, 2018; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015), and so prevalence reports are prone to be misinterpreted.

These reported trends in the prevalence and gradual increase in cyberbullying involvement also reflect the accessibility to information and communication technologies. As more young people have access to online

mediums and technologies, this is also likely to increase vulnerability to cyberbullying involvement. For example, compared to 2015, English children aged 5-15 years are more prone to go online and own their own digital device to access online applications (Ofcom, 2019). This can increase their vulnerability to online risks, including cyberbullying. As more young children are going online, it is important to explore how teachers manage cyberbullying in the school environment as the risk for children to be involved increases. Despite more young people having access to their own online accounts, research does suggest that children have good awareness of how to stay safe online by changing privacy settings (Livingstone et al., 2011).

While some children may be aware of strategies to stay safe online, one of the UK's leading children's charity, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), found in their 2016 report of 25,000 Childline calls, that children aged 11 and under (25%), adolescents aged 12-15 (9%) and 16-18 (6%) had called for a counselling session due to cyberbullying involvement. The following year in 2017, the NSPCC report had reported a 12% increase in the amount of cyberbullying calls and counselling sessions for young people compared to the previous year. This not only shows the extent of cyberbullying as a continually growing concern, but also shows that cyberbullying is occurring across all ages, and therefore is a problem that needs to be addressed for under 18's in the educational system. More recently in the UK, Ofcom (2019) reported that 93% of 8-11-year-olds have access to the internet for approximately 13 hours a week, and the amount of young people having their own social media profiles is also continually increasing. In addition, the report also identified that access to the

internet, time spent online each week, and prospect of having a social media profile also increased by age (Ofcom, 2019). Again, this suggests that vulnerability to cyberbullying involvement is also potentially increasing as the accessibility to online platforms continue to grow.

While the trend of cyberbullying suggested the prevalence was gradually increasing, other reports in England suggest the issue may not be as prevalent as previously reported (Przybylski & Bowes, 2017). The variability on prevalence rates of cyberbullying are due, in large part, to the inconsistencies in how cyberbullying is defined, and the time parameter used to measure cyberbullying occurrence (Kowalski et al., 2019). In addition, one study reported in the literature found that young people in the UK choose not to report or disclose cyberbullying, attributed to fear of consequences when reporting cyberbullying (Betts & Spenser, 2017). This highlights the complex issues surrounding the prevalence of cyberbullying, and so the current thesis explores how those in the teaching profession manage and respond to cyberbullying (see Chapter 5 and 6). Despite some of the complex issues on prevalence, cyberbullying is present across all ages of young people, particularly reported to be frequent in early to mid-adolescence (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith, Steffgen, & Sittichai, 2013; Tokunaga, 2010). As such, it is important to address cyberbullying across all levels in the education system and consider the potential impact cyberbullying may have on those victimised.

## **2.8 The Impact of Cyberbullying**

When it comes to the impact of cyberbullying, there is a controversial debate in the literature when considering how this may be similar or dissimilar to that of traditional bullying. For example, some researchers argue the unique features associated with cyberbullying amplify the impact and severity than that of traditional bullying (Campbell, Slee, Spears, Butler, & Kift, 2013), whereas other researchers suggest the impact of cyberbullying may be overrated and so may be similar to that of traditional bullying. Considering the impact of cyberbullying, scholars have identified an array of emotional, social, and educational consequences associated with those young people who have been victimised online.

The emotional impact of being cyberbullied has been discussed in the literature (Ortega, Elipe, Mora-Merchán, Calmaestra, & Vega, 2009). For example, studies in the USA show involvement in cyberbullying has been linked to a deterioration in psychosocial adjustment, associated with depressive symptoms (Selkie, Kota, Chan, & Moreno, 2015; Tynes et al., 2010). A meta-analysis across 131 studies found cyberbullying involvement can lead to depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Kowalski et al., 2014). Such findings from this meta-analysis are also consistent across the literature from findings reported in England and the USA (Brewer & Kerlake, 2015; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Some studies in the USA report that while victims of cyberbullying may experience embarrassment and feelings of fear or anxiety (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007), other research in the USA report that in some cases, prolonged exposure to cyberbullying can lead to suicidal thoughts and attempts (Hinduja & Patchin,

2010; 2019). In addition to the emotional impact of cyberbullying, victims can also suffer socially. For example, research in the USA report that victims of cyberbullying have reported increased social anxiety (Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols, & Storch, 2009; Juvonen & Gross, 2008) and lower self-esteem from research reported in England and the USA (Brewer & Kerslake, 2015; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Furthermore, while young people may use digital technology to seek out social support or explore their identity (Leung, 2011), victims of traditional bullying are also reported to use digital technology to target their traditional face to face perpetrators (König, Gollwitzer, & Steffgen, 2010). This suggests that cyberbullying involvement has an impact on increasing the prevalence of deviant and anti-social behaviour (Kowalski et al., 2014).

In addition to the emotional and social impact of cyberbullying, victims also experience an impact on their education. For example, researchers in USA and New Zealand have reported that those involved in cyberbullying as a victim report a deterioration in academic achievement and attainment (Beale & Hall, 2007; Marsh et al., 2010). As such, this academic impact can lead to a deterioration in academic grades, and an increase in rule-breaking behaviour, as reported from a study in the USA (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007). In particular, a study of Finish adolescents found those that are victimised have a reduced confidence in the teachers ability to address the situation (Sourander et al., 2010). A study of English adolescents has shown that cyberbullying involvement can impact on children's school attainment, due to fear of cyberbullying experiences in the school setting (West, 2015), with perpetration experience associated with negative school attitudes as



reported from a study of Polish adolescents (Pyżalski, 2012). These consequences illustrate the variability and impact cyberbullying experiences can have on the victim. Many of these consequences can have a serious impact in the school environment, so it would be beneficial to explore how those in the educational community identify and manage cyberbullying.

## **2.9 Summary**

The universal presence of digital technologies and accessibility to the internet enables children and adolescents to benefit from fast and efficient communication, but also presents numerous online dangers, specifically cyberbullying. There is a clear overlap between traditional bullying and cyberbullying that leads some academics to believe that cyberbullying is an extension of traditional face-to-face bullying (Olweus, 2013). However, the unique characteristics that online communication provides creates a difference between traditional bullying and cyberbullying (Smith, 2015). For example, Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) recognised that traditional criteria of bullying may not be as easily applied in the online domain, and so more attention should explore the unique features associated with cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying can be characterised online by anonymity and publicity. However, while these unique features may offer a better explanation of cyberbullying from a definitional stance, academics also suggest they should remain as unique features rather than specific definitional criteria due to the complexities of cyberbullying behaviour (Campbell & Bauman, 2018). The

prevalence of cyberbullying in England is ambiguous, based on inconsistent reports. However, recent data suggests cyberbullying is on the rise in England (Teaching and Learning International Survey; Department for Education, 2019), and so there is a need to explore how those in the education sector perceive and address the issue. To take this further, the next chapter focuses on cyberbullying in the context of the school environment. Chapter 3 will then discuss the role of teachers in the school environment when addressing cyberbullying.

## CHAPTER 3

### CYBERBULLYING IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

#### 3.1 Chapter Overview

As suggested in Chapter 2, young people have expanding access to digital technologies and online communications, increasing the potential for cyberbullying involvement. However, there is less attention given in the literature to the views of those who ultimately are responsible for managing cyberbullying on a day-to-day basis in the school environment: teachers. Regarding the school environment, a study in England has suggested that young people are more likely to engage in cyberbullying related activities during the transition from primary to secondary schools, as young people establish themselves more online (Tarapdar & Kellett, 2013). In England, it is reported that following the transition from primary school, young people are more likely to have access to a smartphone or digital device and use these to go online to communicate with their peers (Ofcom, 2019). This suggests that as young people are going online more and have increased access to technology, young people are more prone to be involved in cyberbullying. This presents challenges for teachers in the school environment when cyberbullying occurs within the school, or at the very least, the negative impact of cyberbullying spills into the school environment.

Although cyberbullying can occur at any time, one study in the Netherlands suggests that most cyberbullying takes place outside the school environment (Dehue et al., 2008). In some cases, the triggering event is

caused in the school environment, subsequently leading to cyberbullying at home (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009). Young people report that they frequently know the identity of their bully, often from their school or classroom peer (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Slonje & Smith, 2008). For example, Gradinger, Strohmeier, Schiller, Stefanek, and Spiel (2012) in a sample of 655 early adolescents from Austria, found that 62% of cyberbullying victims reported being victimised by others within the same classroom. Together, this shows that although cyberbullying mainly occurs outside the school environment, it is often triggered and related to the context of the school as young people are being targeted by other young people within the school.

However, schools face challenges addressing cyberbullying as they have limited powers tackling the issue outside the school environment (Snakenborg, Van Acker, & Gable, 2011). Despite these challenges, schools are frequently expected to address the negative consequences of cyberbullying that young people experience, spilling into the school environment (Willard, 2011). Some of these negative consequences are discussed in Chapter 2: section 2.8, which include a negative impact on self-efficacy (Heiman, Olenik-Shemesh, & Eden, 2015), deterioration in self-esteem (Brewer & Kerlake, 2015), an increase in challenging behaviour (Wolke et al., 2017), and feelings of suicidal ideation and attempts (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; 2019). In the context of the school, cyberbullying also has a negative impact on academic achievement (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011; Price & Dalglish, 2010), quality of friendships within classrooms (Price & Dalglish, 2010), school safety (Sourander et al., 2010), and perceptions of school and

learning (Betts et al., 2017). To address this, schools are now providing education on cyberbullying to young people to raise their awareness (Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2011). English teachers have a duty of care and responsibility to address cyberbullying (Ofsted, 2019), which suggests a need to further explore how teachers respond to cyberbullying in the school environment. The current chapter addresses what is known about cyberbullying in the school environment, with a focus on how Government legislation and statutory guidance in England has supported teachers in addressing this growing concern.

## **3.2 Government Guidance and Policy on Cyberbullying in England**

In England, successive Governments have made a continued commitment to introduce legislation and statutory guidance to promote the welfare of children and to provide a safe and healthy environment for young people in the school environment. This section will outline the development of legislation and highlight the application in the context of cyberbullying. This will provide a unique insight into how teachers can utilise such legislation and guidance when they manage cyberbullying in the school environment.

### **3.2.1 Government Legislation**

Consecutive Governments in the UK have introduced legislation and statutory guidance to address the welfare of young people. Further attention has now focused on addressing the persistent problem of cyberbullying, intending to promote the identification and management of cyberbullying in the school environment. While some legislation may primarily focus on

welfare and behaviour of young people, the principles and purpose behind such legislation can also be applied in the context of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying can include an array of different types of behaviours, as young people utilise different technologies and mediums to target their victims. Therefore, some instances of cyberbullying could be regarded as criminal offences under a range of different laws, including the Malicious Communications Act (1988) and the Protection from Harassment Act (1997). The Malicious Communications Act (1988) makes it an offence for an individual to send electronic communication that is regarded to be offensive or pose a threat which causes distress or anxiety for the recipient of such an act. In the context of cyberbullying, perpetrators that repeatedly send offensive or indecent communication to a victim via digital technologies, which have caused harm to the victim may be considered an offence under this Act. Also, some cases of cyberbullying may also be addressed as a child protection issue. Cyberbullying may be responded to if teachers feel there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm' (Children's Act, 1989, Part V, Section 47, p138), for example, suicidal ideation and attempts. Therefore, if teachers felt young people were suffering from severe distress, which could lead to severe harm as a result of cyberbullying victimisation, teachers should intervene and report to members of staff responsible for the welfare of young people within the school.

To address growing concerns of anti-social behaviour in the school environment, the Department for Education (DfE) in England started to introduce legislation to address such issues. For example, the Education Act

(2002) under Section 175 puts a duty on all schools to fulfil their roles and functions to promote behavioural policies for safeguarding the welfare of young people. This also stipulates that schools need to protect young people from harm and educate young people on appropriate behaviour in the school environment. Following on from this, Government in England also specifies that all schools need to have an implemented anti-bullying policy to address bullying related issues in the school environment (Education and Inspections Act, 2006). However, the requirement for schools to have an anti-bullying policy dates back to 1999, with the School Standards and Framework Act (1999), under Section 61 requiring schools to have an anti-bullying policy with a view to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils. This indicates the first explicit attempt from the UK Government to address bullying in the school environment.

The Education and Inspections Act (2006) in Section 88 also stipulates that all schools in England need to continuously review behavioural and anti-bullying policies to safeguard the welfare of young people in the school. In the context of cyberbullying, in Section 89, the Education and Inspections Act (2006) provide additional powers to schools and teachers to address anti-social behaviour including bullying related issues, but specifically provide headteachers the power “to such extent as is reasonable” to “regulate the conduct of students when they are off site” (p. 71). This indicates that schools have increased power to regulate the behaviour of young people outside of the school environment. As cyberbullying occurs more often outside the school environment, this

legislation allows schools and teachers to further tackle the issue of cyberbullying.

Extending on this principle of promoting good behaviour in the school environment, the Equality Act (2010) under Section 26 requires all schools in England to address harassment in the school premises. This suggests that members of school staff can use reasonable and appropriate penalties and disciplinary actions for young people that perpetrate forms of harassment to other pupils, which can also include cyberbullying. The Government then introduced the Education Act (2011). In Section 2, the Education Act (2011) permits members of school staff in England to search and if necessary, confiscate an item that is being used to disrupt good behaviour or cause harm to another pupil or themselves. As such, teachers in the school environment have additional power to address cyberbullying by confiscating electronic devices that are being used to target victims with the intent to cause harm to the individual. In addition, teachers can also search for and delete inappropriate material, images and files that may be used with the intention to cyberbully another individual. The Education Act (2011) provides teachers with wider searching powers to tackle cyberbullying by allowing teachers to request students to reveal messages or other content on their digital devices to establish if cyberbullying has occurred. Further, statutory guidance on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children also recognises cyberbullying as a form of emotional abuse (Department for Education, 2018). These policies and guidelines also extend to young people under the age of 18, and so highlights the important role of teachers across all educational levels in England.



### 3.2.2 Guidance for Schools on Cyberbullying

Initially, the Department for Children, School, and Families (DCSF) published guidance for schools in the UK to encourage and provide steps on taking proactive strategies in addressing cyberbullying in the school environment (DCSF, 2007). This guidance detailed five steps for a cyberbullying prevention framework that schools, and teachers could follow:

1. Understanding and talking about cyberbullying
2. Updating existing policies and practices
3. Making reporting of cyberbullying easier
4. Promoting the positive use of technology
5. Evaluating impact of preventive activities

This provided a foundation framework for schools to address and promote the identification and management of cyberbullying in the school environment. In this guidance, teachers are encouraged to promote classroom discussions on cyberbullying to educate young people on the impact of cyberbullying. In terms of reporting of cyberbullying, schools are advised to review reporting procedures in the school community and promote awareness on helping members of staff identify cyberbullying, and solutions on allowing young people to disclose involvement. Further to this, schools are advised to promote the positive uses of digital technology and appropriate e-safety education so young people can receive the benefits digital technologies afford, while appropriately using technologies to reduce risk to cyberbullying involvement. Finally, the guidance suggested that as the

development of digital technologies continue to evolve, schools should review and evaluate their current policies and preventive strategies to ensure they meet with the changes in technologies (DCSF, 2007). Extending on this initial framework, the UK Government have continued to review and revise their guidance for schools on preventing and responding to cyberbullying.

The Department for Education (DfE) have produced guidance for all schools, including academies and free schools in England, which outlines its duties towards preventing and tackling bullying in schools:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying)

[bullying](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying). For example, the DfE have provided guidance for all school staff and pastoral members of the school with appropriate guidance on supporting children and young people that have been affected by cyberbullying (DfE, 2014). These guidelines provide support for school staff to identify the adverse outcomes of cyberbullying, promoting the welfare of young people in the school. The literature presented in Chapter 2 (see section 2.7) highlights the adverse impact of cyberbullying, and so it is crucial teachers understand how to identify cyberbullying. In addition, the guidance published by DfE (2014) also stipulates the importance of understanding individual circumstances and level of support needs for young people when addressing cyberbullying. The attention on addressing individual circumstances for young people suggests teachers should review cyberbullying as a case-by-case basis to acknowledge individual circumstances, and so teachers should employ a range of techniques to address cyberbullying. For example, such advice given to teachers recommended the use of separate conversations

with the bully and victim, additional staff or pastoral support, and parental involvement when addressing cyberbullying (DfE, 2014).

In addition to this, the DfE also published guidance for schools and teachers on preventing and tackling bullying in the school environment (DfE, 2017). The guidance outlined that schools should take a sophisticated approach when addressing cyberbullying using school anti-bullying policies. For example, the guidance recommended all members of school staff should review and discuss important issues that could be integrated in the schools anti-bullying policy, thus continually revising as new contemporary issues arise. In addition, the guidance discussed the effectiveness of utilising class-based discussion and large assemblies to address cyberbullying on a class or school level (DfE, 2017). Such techniques may provide an efficient strategy to educate young people about the negative impact of cyberbullying. Further to this, the guidance also outlined the use of disciplinary procedures and penalties for young people to highlight the severity of cyberbullying, but to also promote a positive school culture. In addition, the guidance stipulated that all schools should provide training, so all teachers feel confident and have the knowledge to identify and manage cyberbullying (DfE, 2017). Therefore, the current thesis will review the literature to explore the confidence and knowledge of teachers when addressing cyberbullying. In addition to this, the current programme of research will also examine prospective and current teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying in England to achieve a unique account on cyberbullying in the school environment.

Despite Government legislation and guidance requiring all schools to have an anti-bullying policy in place, research in England has suggested some schools have been slow to respond to cyberbullying (Smith et al., 2012). In a content analysis of 217 anti-bullying policies from 169 primary schools and 48 secondary schools, cyberbullying is only moderately considered and included in these policies. Even though cyberbullying is widely regarded as a prevalent issue among young people, only 32% of primary and 52% of secondary schools addressed cyberbullying within their anti-bullying policies (Smith et al., 2012). While these figures may seem low, they compare to less than 9% of anti-bullying policies mentioning cyberbullying in 2002 (Smith et al. 2012). However, this also suggests schools need to do more to tackle cyberbullying and follow statutory guidance. To further support teachers addressing cyberbullying in the school environment, the DfE have recently published guidance on teaching online safety to young people (DfE, 2019). For example, the guidance stipulates that teachers need to educate young people on how to evaluate what they see online in terms of risks used for persuasion. In addition, teachers are required to educate young people on appropriate online behaviour and how and when to seek support (DfE, 2019). This highlights the UK Government are taking additional steps to support schools promoting clear reporting mechanism for those that are cyberbullied.

### 3.2.3 Ofsted and E-safety

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills in the UK. Ofsted inspect services providing education and skills for learners under 18 and inspect and regulate services that care for young

people. The primary role of Ofsted is to ensure that organisations providing education, training, and care services to children and young people do so to a high standard according to set criteria. For example, the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook requires schools to provide information and evidence on safeguarding and anti-bullying measures (Ofsted, 2019), where “behaviour and safety’ forms part of their inspection criteria. During these inspections, schools are expected to show the impact of their anti-bullying measures in addressing cyberbullying. This means that if teachers do not accurately identify and address cyberbullying according to the schools anti-bullying policies, this would have a negative impact on the behaviour and safety requirement during an Ofsted inspection (Ofsted, 2019).

In addition, for schools to be rated good by the Ofsted criteria, young people need to be able to articulate what the school’s antibullying policy is and there is a requirement that schools provide data on bullying by 8am on the day of the inspection (Ofsted, 2019). In the context of bullying, the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook stipulates the importance for schools to address bullying where “Leaders, staff and pupils create a positive environment in which bullying is not tolerated. If bullying, aggression, discrimination and derogatory language occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively and are not allowed to spread” (Ofsted, 2019, p56). In addition to mandatory anti-bullying policies, schools in England should also regard the e-safety educational requirements in the National Curriculum, to promote online safety and awareness of online risks and dangers (DfE, 2013). Schools in England employ e-safety education in the curriculum as an intervention strategy for cyberbullying, with research suggesting this could

act as a proactive strategy to address the issue (Mark & Ratliffe, 2011). In England, all schools are required to include e-safety education as part of the National Curriculum since 2008 (Qualifications & Curriculum Development Agency, 2007), so all young people receive some form of e-safety awareness and education. This can take many forms, but schools have a dual responsibility to ensure online procedures keep young people safe, and teachers are able to teach young people about online safety within and outside the school environment.

As mentioned previously, in England, all schools are required by Government law to have clear policies and guidelines in place for teachers to adhere to that addresses bullying related activities (DfE, 2017). Research from the USA suggests that anti-bullying policies are effective at reducing school bullying (Nikolaou, 2017). However, an international systematic review examining the effectiveness of school bullying policies, found that while bullying policies may be effective at reducing bullying, they need to be implemented across the school with a high level of fidelity (Hall, 2017). This shows that for bullying policies to be effective, all teachers need to have the commitment to implement and follow the policy guidelines to act against bullying. However, one study found that not all policies and guidelines are regarded as effective by English children to address cyberbullying (O'Brien & Moules, 2013), particularly when teachers are unaware of the issue within the school and so unable to take action according to the policy (Cassidy et al., 2012). Previously, Woods and Wolke (2003) found in England that while comprehensive school bullying policies reduced direct bullying experience in the playground, even schools with the most detailed school policies on

bullying still exhibited high levels of relational bullying and victimisation. In the context of cyberbullying, some research has reported some effectiveness on school anti-bullying policies with an increasing trend on reported effectiveness and content (Smith et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2012; Purdy & Smith, 2016).

Therefore, it is important to review how teachers regard these policies in respect to managing cyberbullying in the school. Such perceptions may provide alternative suggestions to improve the effectiveness of these policies, and strategies for adults to take more effective action within the school.

### **3.3 The Role of Teachers in Addressing Cyberbullying**

The continued focus and attention from the Government in England on preventing and responding to cyberbullying in the school environment is unambiguous from the legislation and statutory guidance outlined previously. As such, it is also important to explore how teachers address cyberbullying in the school environment. This suggests it is essential to explore the perceptions of teachers regarding how they address cyberbullying, to review how they tackle the issue and the strategies they implement to address cyberbullying.

#### **3.3.1 The Challenges Addressing Cyberbullying**

While teachers in the school environment have an important role in addressing cyberbullying, they also experience challenges when responding to cyberbullying. For example, these can include issues with the reporting of

cyberbullying from young people, the lack of effective intervention in the classroom, and issues surrounding the time and responsibility to manage cyberbullying incidents.

Regarding the reporting of cyberbullying, Holfeld and Grabe (2012) in sample of 665 adolescents in the USA found that young people choose not to disclose cyberbullying involvement to adults. This was attributed to the perception that adults may make things worse, but also felt they had the skills to handle the situation themselves. Further to this, focus group data of 38 10-to-14-year-olds from a study conducted in Canada reported that young people choose not to disclose cyberbullying as they believe adults are 'oblivious' to cyberbullying and would not be able to support them (Mishna et al., 2009). For example, when discussing reasons why young people do not inform adults about their cyberbullying experiences, it was mentioned that "adults don't get how it is nowadays" (Mishna et al., p1225). In the context of the school environment in England, one study found that only 10% of 1500 12-15-year-olds reported cyberbullying to a teacher (Tarapdar & Kellett, 2013). However, this lack of reporting of cyberbullying by young people also presents challenges for teachers in preventing and responding to cyberbullying. If young people are choosing not to disclose cyberbullying involvement, teachers may underestimate the prevalence and severity of cyberbullying in the school environment. In addition, such lack of disclosure may also be misinterpreted as a lack of cooperation from young people, and so teachers' willingness to support or intervene to address cyberbullying could be withdrawn (Cassidy, 2009). To support teachers taking action to tackle cyberbullying, their views need to be considered to understand their



awareness and knowledge of cyberbullying in the school environment. In addition, these views from those in the education system on addressing cyberbullying will also provide a unique account of strategies to promote disclosure intentions within the school environment.

Another challenge some teachers face in preventing and responding to cyberbullying is implementing effective prevention strategies in the school environment. For example, research conducted in England and Canada has identified that young people perceive that teachers do not effectively implement strategies to address cyberbullying, which subsequently reduces the willingness to disclose cyberbullying (Ackers, 2012; Li, 2010). When young people have reported cyberbullying, they suggested that teachers do not take the situation seriously and provide strategies that are unhelpful or not effective (Ackers, 2012; Li, 2010; O'Brien & Moules, 2013). For example, in a study of 11-19-year-olds in England, utilising quantitative data of 473 and focus group data of 17 young people, cyberbullying was recognised as a problematic issue in the school environment. The study also found that young people perceived teachers were unaware of the issue and would turn a blind eye (O'Brien & Moules, 2013).

Looking at how young people perceive anti-bullying policies, the same study found that most young people perceived these policies to be ineffective and that teachers did not act according to specific policies (O'Brien & Moules, 2013). This suggests that teachers in the school environment may lack a degree of knowledge or awareness of how to prevent and respond to cyberbullying. However, the literature suggests some conflicting evidence of teachers' ability to prevent and respond to cyberbullying. On the one hand,

some research has argued teachers play an effective role in implementing intervention strategies to reduce cyberbullying in the school environment (Perren et al., 2012; Williford et al., 2013). On the other hand, other research has reported that when young people perceive teachers as intervening effectively to address bullying in the classroom, the prevalence of cyberbullying involvement increases (Elledge et al., 2013). This suggests that when young people are unable to achieve their personal or social goals through bullying in the classroom, bullying may move to the online domain.

Cyberbullying presents a persistent problem both within and outside the school environment, with teachers often having to address the negative impact experienced by young people. However, one potential challenge faced by teachers in preventing and responding to cyberbullying is the time involved tackling this persistent problem. For example, one report in England has reported that secondary school teachers on average spend at least six hours per week preventing and responding to cyberbullying (Cross, Piggin, Douglas, Vonkaenel-Flatt, & O'Brien, 2012). These teachers reported that the time spent addressing cyberbullying was largely used to educate young people about the negative impact of cyberbullying and investigating reported cases within the school premises. Taken together with the already demanding roles teachers need to fulfil, the time involved addressing cyberbullying may be challenging for some teachers. As such, in order to allow school staff to address these cases more efficiently, it may be that teachers need additional training to accurately identify and manage cyberbullying, while also evaluating the impact it has to help young people overcome the negative consequences.

### 3.3.2 Teachers Knowledge Addressing Cyberbullying

For teachers to effectively prevent and respond to cyberbullying, they need to be equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills to implement such strategies. Li (2008) and Yilmaz (2010) investigated how Canadian and Turkish prospective teachers respectively would respond to cyberbullying. In both studies, some trainee teachers did not feel confident to identify or manage cyberbullying in the school environment, suggesting additional training on this issue needs to be implemented for prospective teachers (Li, 2008; Yilmaz, 2010).

One possible explanation for this may be a discrepancy in the knowledge of effective prevention strategies to address cyberbullying, and the confidence to act and implement such strategies. For example, research has examined the interplay between knowledge and confidence, suggesting that “the gap between what teachers know and what they do relates to their confidence, or self-efficacy, for performing the task successfully” (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010, p269). This suggests it is important to provide additional training for prospective teachers to increase their knowledge regarding cyberbullying, in order to build confidence to identify and manage cyberbullying. In addition to this, Boulton, Hardcastle, Down, Fowles, and Simmonds (2014) study of 222 English prospective teachers found that they would intervene to manage cyberbullying similar to that of traditional bullying, but also indicated a desire for additional training to provide effective intervention within the school. Boulton et al. (2014) reported that prospective teacher’s intervention of cyberbullying was also influenced by the perceived severity of the situation. Prospective teachers’ responses to cyberbullying,

and the extent they require more training are explored further in Study 1 (see Chapter 5, addressing RQ2).

Despite this clear need for teachers to hold a good awareness and knowledge of digital technologies and cyberbullying, some teachers may struggle to keep up to date with the advancement of digital technologies, thus having an impact on how they respond to the issue (Huang & Chou, 2010). In addition, when teachers are responding and intervening to address cyberbullying in the school environment, this also comes with difficulties. For example, some teachers may hesitate to take immediate action to address cyberbullying due to the time and commitment involved to follow recommended procedures (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014). In the UK, some teachers may feel increased pressure and responsibility to follow Government guidelines on responding to cyberbullying, and so may hesitate when deciding to act. As such, the current thesis will provide a unique exploration of teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying, in order to understand how the issue is addressed within the school. These views can then be used to guide recommendations for those in the education system on effectively managing cyberbullying. They will also act to guide how we understand cyberbullying across young people.

### 3.3.3 Recognising Cyberbullying

One explanation to promote teachers' prevention and response to tackle cyberbullying, is making sure teachers are aware of the seriousness cyberbullying presents. While young people recognise the severity of cyberbullying in the school environment (Bryce & Fraser, 2013; Nocentini et

al., 2010), young people perceive teachers do not necessarily respond to the situation seriously (Ackers, 2012; Li, 2010; O'Brien & Moules, 2013). This can be attributed to the complexities of cyberbullying as a definitional concept (see Chapter 2), so teachers are unaware of the serious ramifications cyberbullying involvement can have (Shariff, 2009). On the other hand, some teachers may perceive the impact of cyberbullying to be worse than traditional bullying due to the permeance and potential for a large audience (Monks et al., 2016).

While research is largely limited on teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying, some initial research in this area offers some insight into how they perceive cyberbullying. For example, one study by Yilmaz (2010) found that 78% of Turkish prospective teachers perceived cyberbullying to be a problem in the school environment, but only 48% perceived they could manage the issue and effectively intervene. This suggests a lack of training in the area of cyberbullying for those in teacher training, and so highlights the need to also further explore the perceptions of prospective teachers. Further to this, views of 66 teachers in the USA showed that 25% believed cyberbullying is not a problem in the school environment but allows young people to 'toughen up' (Stauffer, Heath, Coyne, & Ferrin, 2012). This also reflects some Canadian teachers' views on cyberbullying, where they acknowledged a lack of knowledge and awareness on the issue (Cassidy, Brown, & Jackson, 2012). Further to this, a study by Styron et al., (2016) found from a sample of 120 prospective teachers in the USA that while some teachers are aware of cyberbullying and recognise it was a problem within the school, some teachers still reported a lack of

understanding and felt unprepared to address the issue. More recently, a study of 408 prospective Spanish teachers found that a majority of prospective teachers exhibited a high level of concern and recognise that cyberbullying is a problem, but still some felt they lacked the confidence to take action and perceived their training to be insufficient (Yot-Domínguez, Guzmán Franco, & Duarte Hueros, 2019). Taken together, these views suggest that teachers are largely unprepared to address cyberbullying, and do not necessarily perceive cyberbullying to be a problem in the school environment.

It is also important to consider how teachers define cyberbullying, as their perceptions of the issue will influence how they identify cyberbullying within the school. It is also important to note that teachers will interpret cyberbullying in different ways, and so some teachers may place additional importance for different factors when identifying and responding to cyberbullying. Further insight into how teachers perceive the issue across the education system may help to provide a consensus understanding of cyberbullying in the school environment.

### **3.4 Summary**

In summary, since the Education and Inspections Act (2006) which stipulates that all English schools should have an anti-bullying policy in place, the Government has continued to publish legislation in the view to prevent and respond to the persistent problem of cyberbullying in the school environment. This therefore highlights the UK Government response to

cyberbullying as a serious problem, and where particular attention is being placed in the school environment. The Government guidance published by DfE was discussed to review the materials and support available to teachers in their responsibility to address cyberbullying in the school environment. For example, some of the strategies recommended to teachers included parental support, reviewing anti-bullying policies, educating young people on the consequences of cyberbullying, and having school-wide conversations via assemblies to address instances of cyberbullying (DfE, 2017).

As noted in Chapter 2, cyberbullying entails new complexities and characteristics compared to traditional forms of bullying, and this may explain why some teachers may see addressing cyberbullying as an arduous task. Considering this, it is crucial to explore the perceptions of those in the education system on how they regard cyberbullying. It is important to explore these perceptions, as such views will influence the supportiveness of school climate (Brighi, Guarini, Melotti, Galli, & Genta, 2012), and ultimately school attainment. To investigate further the current research into the issues raised in Chapters 2 and 3, the next chapter reports a systematic review on how teachers perceive and address cyberbullying.

## CHAPTER 4

### TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES TOWARDS CYBERBULLYING: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

#### 4.1 Chapter Overview

The widespread development of the cyber world through digital technologies and new online communication apps means that pupils of all ages across the education system can be vulnerable to cyberbullying involvement (Livingstone et al., 2011). Chapter 3 discussed how teachers play a pivotal role in addressing cyberbullying, and so their perceptions should be acknowledged at the forefront of any interventions. The systematic review presented within this chapter examines the existing literature on teachers' perspectives, training needs, and knowledge towards cyberbullying, addressing RQ1 of the thesis 'what does the existing literature report and discuss regarding teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying in the school environment? The findings of this review will be used to frame the development of the focus group questions for prospective (see Chapter 5) and current (see Chapter 6) teachers to explore how they address cyberbullying in the school environment.

As outlined in Chapter 2, the research concerning young peoples' perspectives on cyberbullying have identified that a lot is already known about the issue in that population. In addition, cyberbullying is grounded in a social context (Cowie, 2013), and so it is important to explore the existing literature to examine how teachers address this interpersonal behaviour



among young people. Therefore, it is important to consider the views of teachers in the education system in order to provide a wider understanding of cyberbullying in the context of young people. The current systematic review looks at the perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying from primary, secondary, and college teachers in the education sector.

#### **4.2 The Importance of Teachers Addressing Cyberbullying**

The advancement of technology has allowed schools and teachers to provide positive experiences for children through online materials and engagement in lessons (Byron, 2008; Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). As the internet presents online risks (Soeters & van Schaik, 2006), teachers have a responsibility to supervise children when they use the internet, while promoting awareness of e-safety issues (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Popović-Ćitić, Djurić, & Cvetković, 2011). Research data from Ireland, Norway, and UK has shown that when children do come into contact with online risks, they will adopt positive (i.e., seek help from a peer) or neutral (i.e., ignore the situation) coping strategies (Staksrud & Livingstone, 2009). Differences in reported strategies between victims (i.e., problem-solving strategies) and perpetrators (i.e., emotion-focused strategies) have been found in a study of English children (Völlink, Bolman, Dehue, & Jacobs, 2013) and as such, teachers' management of cyberbullying is vital. These strategies exclude adult help (Staksrud & Livingstone, 2009), perhaps due to the fear of disclosure to adults (i.e., technology confiscated, detention, and belief in adults' ability to address the problem) (Agatston et al., 2007; Li, 2007;

Mishna et al., 2009; Thomas, 2006). Understanding teachers' management of cyberbullying can help develop new strategies to encourage pupils to disclose information and seek help, which in turn, will contribute to the identification and prevention of further cyberbullying incidents.

Teachers have a key role in the successful implementation of anti-bullying interventions (Biggs et al., 2008; Epstein & Kazmierczak, 2006), with the same being extended to anti-cyberbullying initiatives (Stewart & Fritsch, 2011). Yet, teachers' experience and knowledge of bullying can impact on their preventive strategies to address the issue within the school (Kokko & Pörhölä, 2009; Sakellariou et al., 2012). This accentuates the need for understanding teachers' knowledge towards cyberbullying. As mentioned in Chapter 3, a content analysis across 142 schools in one county in England found that schools had approximately 40% of items in their policies that related to anti-bullying content (Smith et al., 2008). In a follow up study six years later, Smith et al., (2012) did an analysis of 217 school anti-bullying policies in England from 169 primary schools and 48 secondary schools. The findings suggested a modest increase of school policy addressing anti-bullying content, with a further increase in anti-bullying content found across 100 primary and post primary schools in Northern Ireland (Purdy & Smith, 2016). Such policies are important in the guidance of appropriate behaviour within the school (Von Marées & Petermann, 2012), and as such, schools need to respond to the growing concern (Englander, 2013). Chapter 3 discussed how teachers in England also have a duty of care and responsibility to address bullying in the school (Ofsted, 2019). Further, as prospective teachers go through a period of intense teaching, assessment,

and learning in preparation to teach as an in-service teacher (Ryan, 2009), their views towards cyberbullying would provide a useful insight into Initial Teacher Training (ITT). The confidence and commitment of teachers can contribute to their awareness and management of bullying/cyberbullying incidences (Boulton, 1999; Oldenburg et al., 2015; Olweus, 2003; Schmitz, Hoffman, & Bickford, 2012), so it is important to acknowledge the preparation of ITT for future in-service teachers.

Teachers play a fundamental role in providing continued education to assist students' academic goals, while providing social and emotional support to young people. They have a responsibility to provide a strong leadership within the education system, to improve coexistence and identify issues in the school environment (Epstein & Kazmierczak, 2006). Therefore, teachers have a key role in providing this ongoing education to encourage appropriate behaviours in the school environment. In terms of prospective teachers, it is important to address ITT as the quality of the training can attenuate or precipitate student academic outcomes, based on teaching quality (Musset, 2010). ITT can provide preparation to address complex issues in the school, consequently having a responsibility to prepare prospective teachers to be more competent when addressing cyberbullying (Musset, 2010). Continued education and training for prospective and current teachers will provide a valuable platform to promote school culture and attitudes, in the hope to reduce cyberbullying situations.

Conceptualisations of bullying can vary, with intervention during bullying incidents predicted by teachers' beliefs. For example, one study in USA found that teachers that had normative views towards bullying were

less likely to intervene compared to those that identified with assertive or avoidant beliefs (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008). Like this, teachers' attitude and beliefs towards cyberbullying can significantly predict disclosure intentions of students. For example, a study from Netherlands found that due to fear of confiscated online privileges and overreaction by teachers, young people perceived they could not seek help from adults (Baas, De Jong, & Drossaert, 2013). To work towards tackling and reducing cyberbullying, policy and intervention developers need to collaborate with teachers, in order to recommend effective anti-cyberbullying interventions (Spiel, Schober, & Strohmeier, 2016). Taken together, all this highlights a need for a systematic review of the literature regarding teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying. This is because there is a lack of consensus in the literature on how teachers perceive and respond to the issue in the school.

One study has suggested there may be a discrepancy in teachers' beliefs and research-based knowledge. In the context of school bullying, findings from a sample of 451 Australian teachers found that there is a substantial consensus of teachers endorsing 'correct' claims made in research (Rigby, 2018). An example of an item deemed to be true was 'bullying occurs when a person or group repeatedly abuses their power over someone'. However, some teachers also endorsed beliefs that were at disagreement with claims made in the research. An example of an item deemed to be false was 'bystanders usually speak out when they see bullying happening'. This suggests there is some discrepancy between teachers' beliefs about bullying and research-based knowledge. The study by Rigby found that differences in overall knowledge of bullying were related

to the sources of information teachers accessed. For example, 38% of teachers from the same survey reported that they primarily used the media and internet as sources of information, rather than sources from university courses or professional reading. This suggests there may be a degree of complacency in that some teachers may overestimate the prevalence of bullying within the school. This also highlights a need for a systematic review which collates teachers' beliefs towards cyberbullying to consider how this translates into research findings. The prevalence of cyberbullying involvement has a large variability (see Chapter 2: section 2.7), and as such, creates difficulty predicting the true extent in the school environment. For example, in a review of prevalence studies ( $n = 159$ ), cyberbullying involvement across victimisation and perpetration ranged from 1.5% to 72% in the last year, and 0.5% and 63.4% in the last six months (Brochado et al., 2017). However, these variations can partly be attributed to methodological issues within the research (Brochado et al., 2017). This provides further justification for a systematic review of teachers' perceptions to explore for inconsistencies in teachers' knowledge and understanding. Prior research has largely applied reviews of the literature to explore the impact of cyberbullying and intervention programs (e.g., Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011; Hong & Espelage, 2012). In this case, a systematic review was preferable compared to a standard literature review because an explicit, objective, and standardised approach was undertaken following a methodological stance (Booth et al., 2016).

## **4.3 Method**

### **4.3.1 Aims of the Study**

This review identifies and examines teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying. Study findings will be reviewed to identify themes. A narrative synthesis (Popay et al., 2006) across the themes provided an overview of teachers' conceptualisation and responses towards cyberbullying. Prior to conducting the systematic review, a protocol was registered with PROSPERO (CRD42017057228), to provide explicit information about the design and methodical stance of the review. This provided transparency in the review process, adhering to a structured and registered protocol. As such, this systematic review followed prescribed guidelines by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (2009). This systematic review addresses emerging knowledge to provide an insight into teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying in the school environment.

### **4.3.2 Search Strategy and Selection**

A review of the literature was conducted to determine appropriate search terms. The following search terms were drawn from the literature and formed the search strategy: ((cyberbullying OR 'cyber bullying' OR 'online bullying' OR 'internet bullying') AND (teachers OR educators OR faculty) AND (perceptions OR attitudes OR beliefs OR conceptualisation OR definitions OR knowledge OR concerns OR response OR prevention OR practices)). The term 'internet harassment' was not used as the aim was to address teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is defined under set criteria, whereas internet harassment, a

form of cyber aggression, does not need to meet these established features of cyberbullying (Fenaughty & Harré, 2013). While cyberbullying can also be considered a cyber aggressive act, a cyber aggressive act like internet harassment does not constitute cyberbullying. The search terms were used in combination and consistently from the following electronic databases: PsychINFO, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect and Wiley. An additional search was conducted on Google Scholar for identification of grey literature, which can sometimes be absent from formal electronic databases. Additional searches were also conducted from the references of included articles. In addition to this, material in book chapters were not included in the review. The search strategy was conducted between February 2017 – June 2017.

#### 4.3.3 Inclusion Criteria

Papers included in the systematic review had to meet the following inclusion criteria: (i) studies that have been published between 2003-2017 (cyberbullying was recognised as a definitional term in 2003; Bauman & Bellmore, 2015); (ii) English language studies; (iii) studies that have been published in peer-reviewed journals; (iv) empirical studies with a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods analysis of primary data; and (v) studies that consider perceptions towards cyberbullying from teachers' perspectives, including prospective (trainee) teachers, teachers of compulsory education (primary/secondary/college), support teachers, school administrators, school counsellors, school management/leadership, and educational psychologists. Following a review of titles and abstracts to assess eligibility for inclusion,

full-text articles were then retrieved to assess further eligibility for final inclusion.

#### 4.3.4 Analysis

Extending on principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and following procedures of thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008) which has been applied to systematic reviews previously (Ohly et al., 2016), the current review applied these methods to generate the identified themes. In each identified article, the findings were organised to provide initial patterns to compare across each study. The coding of the findings was collated and refined into themes to represent common patterns across the included studies (Thomas & Harden, 2008). This provided a platform to synthesize the findings across each theme.

### 4.4 Results

#### 4.4.1 Search Results

Search records across the search terms were recorded in an in-depth spreadsheet. This provided a systematic approach for the identification of records. A total of 1718 records were identified from the initial search strategy, across PsychINFO (582 records), Scopus (262 records), Web of Science (382 records), ERIC (342 records), ScienceDirect (32 records), Wiley (95 records), and Google Scholar (23 records). Once duplicates (1340 records) were removed, 378 records were eligible for screening. After the initial screening of the 378 records, 69 records were identified for full-text screening to assess eligibility against the inclusion criteria. Against the



inclusion criteria, 49 records were excluded. For example, as shown in Figure 4.1, full-text articles were excluded due to the following reasons: not published in English (2 records), not published in a peer-reviewed journal (24 records), not related to cyberbullying perceptions (11 records), and teachers' perspectives missing (12 records). A total of 20 studies met the inclusion criteria for the systematic review. To enhance identification, references and author publications across the 20 included articles were screened for eligibility. Inclusion remained at 20 records. A flow diagram in Figure 4.1 illustrates the selection process from identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion.

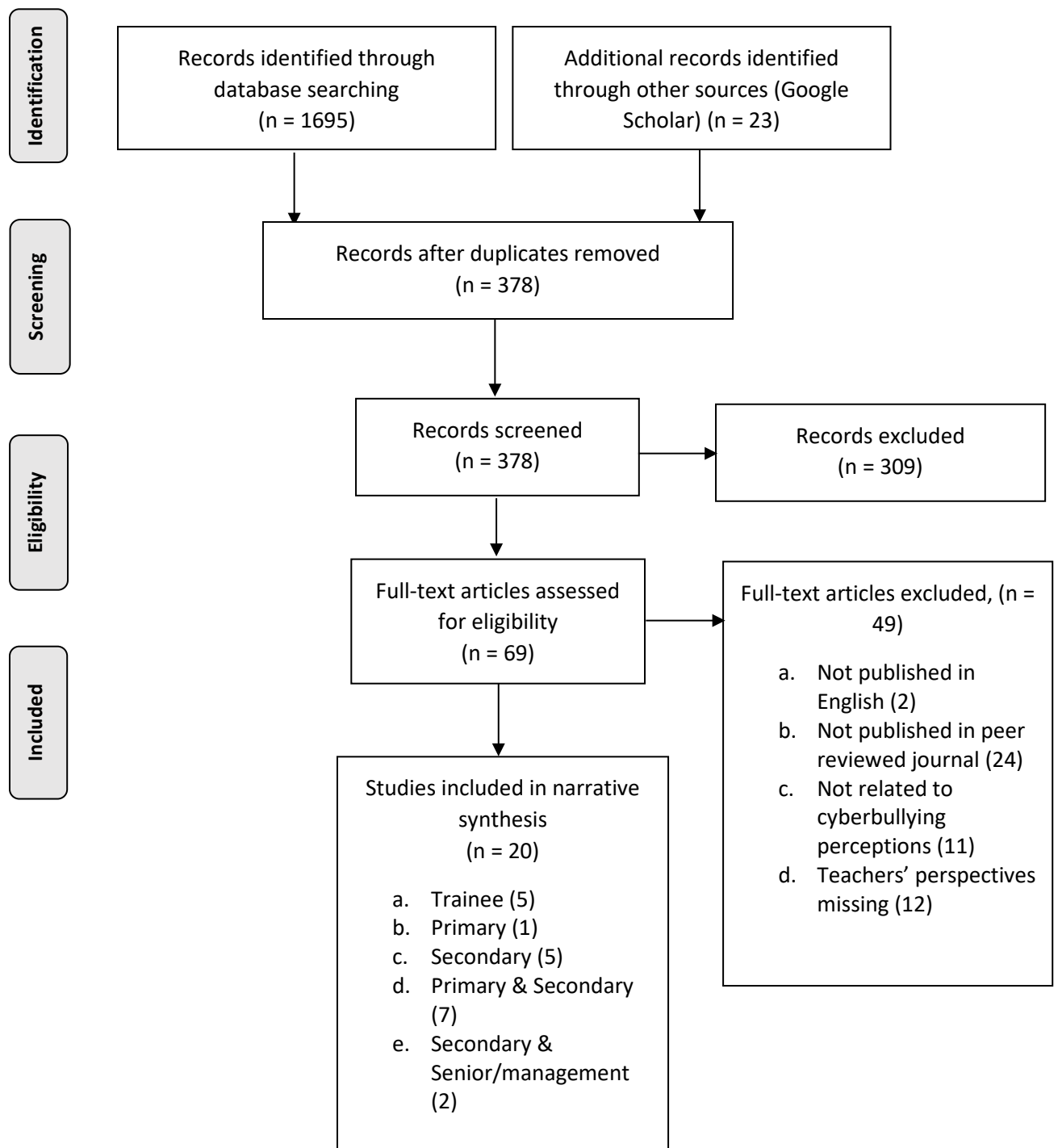


Figure 4.1: A flow diagram of the systematic review selection process.

The studies identified in Table 4.1 were conducted in the UK (n = 3) (Betts & Spenser, 2015; Boulton et al., 2014; Monks et al., 2016), USA (n = 3) (Pelfrey & Weber, 2015; Stauffer et al., 2012; Styron Jr, Bonner, Styron, Bridgeforth, & Martin, 2016) and Canada (n = 3) (Cassidy et al., 2012; Li, 2008; Ryan, Kariuki, & Yilmaz, 2011). The other studies identified

represented Australia (n = 2) (Barnes et al., 2012; Compton, Campbell, & Mergler, 2014), Turkey (n = 2) (Sezer, Yilmaz, & Yilmaz, 2015; Yilmaz, 2010) and Belgium (n = 2) (DeSmet et al., 2015; Vandebosch, Poels, & Deboutte, 2014), with one study each representing Lithuania (Baraldsnes, 2015), Israel (Eden, Heiman, & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013), New Zealand (Green et al., 2016), Taiwan (Republic of China) (Huang & Chou, 2013), and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2015). Thirteen of the twenty studies utilised a survey methodology, with four taking a qualitative approach through focus groups (Betts & Spenser, 2015; Compton et al., 2014; Monks et al., 2016) or interviews (Pelfrey & Weber, 2015). Three studies utilised a mixed methods approach, with a combination of focus groups and surveys (Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2015), interviews and closed questions (Cassidy et al., 2012), or surveys and open questions (Stauffer et al., 2012).

Cross-cultural differences in bullying and cyberbullying are notable, so can have an impact on how the issue is measured, perceived and responded to. For example, cross-cultural differences in cyberbullying involvement have been found across six European countries (Schultze-Krumbholz et al., 2015). In addition, cross-cultural differences have been reported from the EU Kids Online survey, with cyberbullying prevalence estimates between 2-14% across 25 countries (Livingstone et al., 2011). In terms of prospective teachers, different teacher training programs in different countries could explain variability in reported confidence and awareness to identify and manage cyberbullying. For example, different countries will have different challenges, so ITT courses will vary depending on financial factors and

teacher shortage or surplus, meaning some prospective teachers will be fast-tracked into the education system, without adequate preparation and training to address cyberbullying (Musset, 2010). This variability could extend into teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying, so a synthesis across these identified studies will provide a clearer insight due to the international nature of the many studies.

*Table 4.1: The study characteristics and main findings of the included studies*

Study	Sample	Design	Main Findings
Baraldsnes (2015)	1062 teachers (92.7% female). Teachers (34.9% - 41-50 years). Origin: Lithuania	Quantitative; online survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyberbullying occurrence through mediums of mobile phones and internet sources.</li> <li>• Disagreement and inconsistencies across teachers' belief towards cyberbullying mediums.</li> <li>• Strategies to address cyberbullying to focus on self-esteem and positive school culture were highly endorsed by teachers.</li> </ul>
Barnes et al. (2012)	453 primary and secondary teachers (66.3% female) across 106 schools (55 primary). Secondary teachers (52%; 234). Origin: Australia.	Quantitative; paper survey; developed by lead author with modifications of Peer Relations Assessment Survey (Rigby, 1997).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility to address cyberbullying incidents.</li> <li>• Lack of effective intervention strategies in the school.</li> <li>• Further training to manage cyberbullying needed.</li> </ul>
Betts and Spenser (2015)	14 secondary school teachers (two focus groups). Focus group one: eight teachers (six female), aged	Qualitative; focus groups; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital technology has an impact on students online behaviour and school policies.</li> </ul>

	between 22-61 years. Focus group two: six teachers (three female), aged between 38-52 years. Origin: UK.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of cyberbullying disclosure across young people.</li> <li>• Difficulty addressing cyberbullying incidents beyond the school gates.</li> </ul>
Boulton et al. (2014)	222 prospective teachers (68.5% female), with an age range between 18-54 (M=27.1). Origin: UK	Quantitative; paper survey; Original survey (Craig et al., 2000), modified by Yoon and Kerber (2003) and Bauman and Del Rio (2006) – introduction of cyberbullying vignettes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyberbullying response intervention similar to verbal bullying.</li> <li>• Cyberbullying severity and belief to cope predicted intervention.</li> </ul>
Cassidy et al. (2012)	17 secondary school teachers across two secondary schools. Origin: Canada.	Qualitative; interviews (16 semi-structured open questions); quantitative; three closed Likert style questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited cyberbullying awareness within the school.</li> <li>• Cyberbullying recognised to be problematic.</li> <li>• Limited understanding on prevention strategies.</li> </ul>
Compton et al. (2014)	11 teachers (seven male). Aged range: 25-60 across 3-31 years teaching experience. Origin: Australia.	Qualitative; focus groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited knowledge of cyberbullying characteristics.</li> <li>• Perceived motivations for cyberbullying perpetration (anonymity; power/status; fun/boredom).</li> </ul>

DeSmet et al. (2015)	451 educators (66.2% female) across 147 schools. Teachers (272; 60.9%), school counsellors (50; 11.2%), principals (57; 12.8%) and combination roles (68; 15.2%). Origin: Belgium.	Quantitative; online survey; based on Handling Bullying Questionnaire (Bauman, Rigby, Hoppa, 2008).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended strategies endorsed to address cyberbullying (i.e., professional support &amp; pupil discussion).</li> <li>• Four educator clusters identified; referrers (65%), disengaged (14%), concerned (12%), and use of all means (9%).</li> </ul>
Eden et al. (2013)	328 teachers (88.4% female). High (151; 45.3%), middle (67; 20.7%) and elementary (110; 34%) schools. Aged between 22-63 years (M=37.9; SD 9.80). Origin: Israel	Quantitative; online survey; adapted version of School Cyberbullying for preservice teachers (Li, 2008).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further training to enhance awareness and knowledge across teachers.</li> <li>• Provisions to provide preventive and coping strategies for parents are needed.</li> <li>• Urgent attention to address school policies.</li> </ul>
Green et al. (2016)	888 staff members (51% school managers). 68% female educators. Most respondents taught at primary level (49%). Origin: New Zealand.	Quantitative; online survey based and adapted on Cross et al., (2009), Li, (2008), and Rigby (1997).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional bullying is more serious, although cyberbullying can be more problematic across girls.</li> <li>• There is a high level of concern amongst teachers regarding cyberbullying.</li> <li>• Further action needs to be</li> </ul>

			implemented to prevent cyberbullying.
Huang and Chou (2013)	2781 teachers (54.9% male). High (310; 11.1%), middle (976; 35.1%) and elementary schools (1490; 53.6%). Majority of teachers (75%) had between 6-20 years' experience. Origin: Taiwan.	Quantitative; postal survey; adapted version of Huang and Chou (2010) student survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instant messaging was the most commonly used communication tool.</li> <li>Embarrassing pictures/videos considered a prevalent issue.</li> <li>Administrative responsibilities impacted awareness of cyberbullying incidents.</li> <li>Lack of confidence in preventive strategies.</li> </ul>
Li (2008)	Convenience sample. 154 prospective teachers (76.2% female). Origin: Canada.	Quantitative; paper survey developed by lead author (Li, 2008).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High level of concern towards negative consequences on pupils.</li> <li>Low level of confidence to manage incidents.</li> <li>University teacher training did not prepare for cyberbullying.</li> </ul>
Monks et al. (2016)	20 teachers (80.95%: 17 female). Teachers aged between 26-35 years old, with 45% (9) having 5-10 years teaching	Qualitative; focus groups; thematic analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good understanding of cyberbullying forms and mediums.</li> <li>Cyberbullying evolved due to digital literacy, access to</li> </ul>



	experience. Origin: UK		technology and group pressure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervision strategies in school highly endorsed.</li> </ul>
Pelfrey and Weber (2015)	One school staff focus group and four school staff interviews. Origin: USA	Qualitative; focus group; interviews; grounded theory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further training needed for teachers to address preventive strategies.</li> <li>Educating cyberbullying consequences to pupils perceived as effective.</li> <li>Cyberbullying involvement due to limited security/privacy settings.</li> </ul>
Purdy and Mc Guckin (2015)	Qualitative: 14 head teachers and senior teachers across primary and post-primary schools. Quantitative: Head teachers and senior management from primary (34: 43%) and post-primary (45: 57%), across Northern Ireland. Primary (33: 51.6%) and post-primary (31: 48.4%) head teachers and senior management from the Republic of Ireland. The	Qualitative; focus groups; quantitative; postal questionnaire ; based on McGuckin and Lewis, (2008).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidance and support are needed to promote understanding and awareness of cyberbullying.</li> <li>Uncertainty on teacher's legal responsibility to address cyberbullying.</li> <li>Support sought through local schools compared to recommended strategies.</li> </ul>

primary teachers represented 46.9% of the sample. Origin: Republic and Northern Ireland.

Ryan et al. (2011)	241 prospective teachers (60% female). Origin: Canada.	Quantitative; online survey; adapted version of Li's (2006) cyberbullying survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low level of confidence in the identification and management of cyberbullying, although addressed as a serious issue.</li> <li>• Educating pupils on the consequences of cyberbullying endorsed as an effective strategy.</li> <li>• Prospective teachers are unprepared to address cyberbullying.</li> </ul>
Sezer et al. (2015)	184 teachers, with 106 (57.6%) female. Technology teachers (36; 19.5%), classroom teachers (62; 33.7%), guidance teachers (38; 20.6%) and branch teachers (48; 26.2%). Origin: Turkey.	Quantitative; online survey; Sensibility Scale on Cyber Bullying" by Tanrikulu et al., (2013).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyberbullying awareness varied across teachers.</li> <li>• Frequency of internet use impacted awareness of cyberbullying, with higher internet frequency linked with higher cyberbullying awareness.</li> </ul>

Stauffer et al. (2012)	66 teachers (59% male). Average teaching experience; 15.5 years (SD=9.27). Origin: USA.	Quantitative & qualitative; online survey; open responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyberbullying does not lead to negative consequences for the pupil.</li> <li>• Formal prevention strategies are not effective.</li> <li>• Educating the consequences of cyberbullying to pupils was highly endorsed as effective.</li> </ul>
Styron et al. (2016)	120 prospective teachers (90% female), aged between 17-62. Majority of participants (47.5%) were aged between 20-24. Origin: USA.	Quantitative; online survey; modified version of the Cyber Savvy Survey (Willard, 2012).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good awareness and knowledge of cyberbullying types and mediums.</li> <li>• Teachers were aware of the negative impact and consequences of cyberbullying on pupils.</li> <li>• Lack of understanding on appropriate prevention strategies.</li> </ul>
Vandebosch et al. (2014)	309 primary and secondary school teachers. Principals (72.2%), teachers (10%), IT staff (4.9%), and other (12.9%). Origin: Belgium.	Quantitative; online survey; inspired by research (Baker, 2010; Samara & Smith, 2008; Sharples et al, 2009).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educating pupils on the extent of cyberbullying an effective solution.</li> <li>• Although strategies are implemented, the effectiveness and usefulness of these were unknown.</li> <li>• Recognise cyberbullying to be a problem, although</li> </ul>

			uncertainty amongst teachers.
Yilmaz (2010)	163 prospective teachers (88 females; 54%). Origin: Turkey	Quantitative; online survey; adapted version of School Cyberbullying for preservice teachers (Li, 2008).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the negative consequences and impact on the pupil.</li> <li>• Good awareness of cyberbullying and understanding of school commitment to address the issue.</li> <li>• Agreement to implement further cyberbullying training and guidance.</li> </ul>

#### 4.4.2 Identified Themes

Five themes were identified, which include: (a) Cyberbullying characteristics and student involvement, (b) Cyberbullying training and guidance for teachers, (c) School commitment and strategies to manage cyberbullying, (d) The impact and extent of cyberbullying prevalence and consequences, and (e) Teachers' confidence and concern towards cyberbullying. The themes are presented in Table 4.2, illustrating the presence of each theme across the included articles.

*Table 4.2:* A summary table showing the included articles and the themes present, marked X.

	Cyberbullying characteristics and student involvement	Cyberbullying training and guidance for teachers	School commitment and strategies to manage cyberbullying	The impact and extent of cyberbullying prevalence and consequences	Teachers' confidence and concern towards cyberbullying
Baraldsnes (2015)			X	X	
Barnes et al. (2012)	X	X	X		X
Betts and Spenser (2015)	X			X	
Boulton et al. (2014)			X		
Cassidy et al. (2012)			X		X
Compton et al. (2014)	X				
DeSmet et al. (2015)			X		X
Eden et al. (2013)		X			X
Green et al. (2016)		X			X
Huang and Chou (2013)	X		X		
Li (2008)		X		X	X
Monks et al. (2016)	X			X	

Pelfrey and Weber (2015)		X			
Purdy and Mc Guckin (2015)	X			X	
Ryan et al. (2011)	X	X		X	X
Sezer et al. (2015)				X	
Stauffer et al. (2012)		X		X	
Styron et al. (2016)	X	X			
Vandebosch et al. (2014)		X		X	
Yilmaz (2010)	X	X		X	X

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## **4.5 Synthesis and Discussion**

Addressing RQ1 on ‘What does the existing literature report and discuss regarding teachers’ perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying in the school environment?’, the systematic review reported in this chapter identified 20 articles that considered teachers’ perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying in the education system, 5 of which examined prospective teachers. This synthesis and discussion will draw on key issues across the identified themes to provide a better understanding of the perspectives of teachers towards cyberbullying.

### **4.5.1 Cyberbullying Characteristics and Student Involvement**

This theme explores the role of students in cyberbullying and gaining a working definition of cyberbullying is needed. Reflecting on the characteristics of cyberbullying, teachers recognised it was bullying using digital technologies. One study in Australia found that while teachers recognised the criteria of intent, no evidence was found to suggest they were aware of power imbalance, repetition, or unique facets of cyberbullying, such as anonymity and accessibility (Compton et al., 2014). The definitional issues applying these criteria to cyberbullying can help explain the discrepancy in teachers’ views (Smith, 2015). For example, while posting a malicious comment in a public online space could be considered a one-off incident, the repeated exposure to the targeted victim creates further impact as the distribution escalates as the bystanders to the incident grow (Dooley et al., 2009; Kiriakidis & Kavoura, 2010).

Evidence of power imbalance has traditionally been portrayed through social status or physical strength; a characteristic removed in the online environment. Despite this, the possibility to remain anonymous online provide opportunities for bullies to target their victims without the compromise of being identified (Smith, 2015; Thomas et al., 2015). Exploring anonymity, a study in Taiwan found that teachers' (81.7%) perceived that most bullies would conceal their identity online, which creates difficulty in the identification of these behaviours (Huang & Chou, 2013). On the one hand, this holds true as bullies use anonymity as an opportunity to target individuals, actions that would not necessarily be equivalent to their physical world interactions. By concealing one's identity, bullies feel empowered to engage in cyberbullying without any immediate physical world consequences (Mishna, Schwan, Lefebvre, Bhole, & Johnston, 2014). On the other hand, it is likely cyber victims are aware of the identity of their perpetrator, attributed to the close proximity of school environments with conflicting peer group friendships (Li, 2007; Slonje & Smith, 2008), with victims experiencing increased impact when the identity of their bully is known (Bryce & Fraser, 2013). This suggests efforts to reinforce effective disclosure procedures should be at the forefront of intervention initiatives within the education system. In cyberbullying, studies of English children found they choose not to disclose their experiences of cyberbullying even if they have a desire to do so, due to a fear of consequences for reporting such incidents (Betts & Spencer, 2017), and a belief that the strategies provided would not be useful or they lacked confidence in the teachers' ability to take action (Ackers, 2012; Betts & Spencer 2015; O'Brien & Moules, 2013).



Therefore, if teachers are more aware of the reasons why young people choose not to disclose, it would seem reasonable teachers would act in a different manner to encourage intervention. Indeed, if consequences are sanctioned after reporting, they need to be carefully managed to avoid making the situation worse and discouraging further disclosure from other students. One strategy to encourage disclosure intentions is by emphasising the positive outcome for seeking help. For example, a study of English children has reported when older children taught younger peers about the benefits of disclosing bullying victimisation to teachers, the older children and younger peers were both more likely to say that they would seek help from a teacher if they were bullied (Boulton & Boulton, 2017).

While young people are vulnerable to a variety of cyberbullying behaviours (Livingstone et al., 2011), the study conducted in Taiwan also found that teachers identified teasing (80.7%), harassment (70.7%), rumour-circulation (66.3%), and circulating embarrassing pictures or videos (51.9%), as key concerns in the school environment (Huang & Chou, 2013). Although identified by a smaller proportion of teachers, embarrassing photos or videos was perceived to be the most prevalent type of cyberbullying, with rumour-circulation the least prevalent issue among young people. While this may suggest teachers have a good awareness concerning different types of cyberbullying within the school, it is important to note this is not generalisable for all teachers' perspectives. In Australia, one study found that teaching experience has been closely related to cyberbullying identification (Barnes et al., 2012). Therefore, the current programme of research also explores the

responses and management of cyberbullying across prospective (see Chapter 5) and current teachers (see Chapter 6).

Turning now to disclosure intentions, the study in Taiwan found that while more than half of the teachers' (53.3%) perceived students would not disclose their involvement, 60.7% recognised bystanders would disclose cyberbullying to a teacher or adult (Huang & Chou, 2013). Similarly in the UK, one study found that the lack of evidence and confidence in the teachers' ability to manage cyberbullying were the perceived reasons from teachers as to why young people choose not to disclose (Betts & Spenser, 2015). Therefore, strategies to encourage disclosure in the school environment, with a focus on bystanders, should be at the centre of anti-bullying initiatives. However, it could be that teachers are overestimating the positive role of bystanders in the school environment. While positive responses are attributed to help-seeking behaviour, bystanders can also react negatively by supporting the bully or ignoring the incident, precipitating the negative impact of cyberbullying on those involved (Pöyhönen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2012). Though bystanders to cyberbullying may act to respond positively due to the anonymity and increased control in the online environment, the lack of authority figures may encourage less help-seeking behaviour (Patterson, Allan, & Cross, 2016; Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2014). As such, efforts to highlight the positive role of bystanders in the online domain may act to encourage cyberbullying disclosure through increased awareness and understanding of appropriate reporting systems. In addition, future investigations should examine the influences of prosocial bystander

behaviour, to inform recommendations within the school to encourage help-seeking intentions.

A study by Monks et al. (2016) in the UK found that young people have increased access to the online environment, which makes them vulnerable to online risks such as cyberbullying. In addition, a study in Australia found that social status or power in peer groups and the unique facet of anonymity online were key features identified behind perpetration motives (Compton et al., 2014). Anonymity can increase cyberbullying frequency (Barlett, 2015), as bullies are inhibited from any immediate consequences, so strategies to keep young people safe online is recommended. For example, use of a cross-age teaching intervention was found to elicit positive effects to increase children's e-safety knowledge (Boulton et al., 2016).

#### 4.5.2 Cyberbullying Training and Guidance for Teachers

In relation to ITT programs, one study in Canada found that 50-60% of prospective teachers' believed their program did not prepare them to manage cyberbullying in the school environment (Ryan et al., 2011). This reflects previous findings, with 82% (Li, 2008) and 51.5% (Yilmaz, 2010) of prospective teachers in Canada and Turkey respectively expressing a lack of training from their ITT. This suggests these teachers are unprepared to address cyberbullying, which impacts on their ability to manage bullying related issues as an in-service teacher (Oldenburg et al., 2015; Olweus, 2003). In particular, reflecting on the guidance offered, a study in the USA found that ITT programs only offer moderate guidance addressing different

forms of cyberbullying (Styron et al., 2016). In contrast, many prospective teachers highly endorsed the need for specific training on cyberbullying. For example, prospective teachers had a desire to learn more on cyberbullying from their ITT program, with 45% in a study in Canada (Li, 2008), 79.1% in a study in Turkey (Yilmaz, 2010), and 68.1% from a study in USA (Styron et al., 2016) wanting to learn more. While prospective teachers recognise a lack of training and guidance from ITT, they held positive views on the importance of such training. This suggests ITT programs need to review the guidance associated with cyberbullying and collaborate with in-service teachers to continually update and offer relevant training to address cyberbullying in the school environment. ITT courses need to implement cyberbullying specific curriculum to ensure prospective teachers understand the detrimental consequences associated with cyberbullying, and to provide fundamental knowledge to handle the issue in the school environment. For example, one such strategy is to incorporate cyberbullying discussions and conferences for prospective teachers to provide a platform to share experiences and knowledge.

Reflecting on ITT programs, one study in Israel found that in-service teachers agreed or strongly agreed (approx. 65 - 68%) that teacher preparation programs need to do more to address cyberbullying (Eden et al., 2013). This suggests ITT course administrators need to collaborate with current teachers in the education system to gain an insight into current cyberbullying issues and concerns. Addressing training offered to current teachers in the education system, in a sample of 888 from New Zealand, 50% had attended an anti-cyberbullying training program, where senior

managers (66%) had attended more cyberbullying training events compared to only a third of teachers (Green et al., 2017). Those that had received training were more likely to take a greater responsibility to manage cyberbullying, to help young people stay safe. Implications of this suggest schools should provide training and guidance to all members of staff, in the hope to increase the identification and prevention of cyberbullying in the classroom and wider school setting. As teacher attitudes in the classroom can impact on bullying frequency (Saarento, Kärnä, Hodges, & Salmivalli, 2013), additional training provided to teachers may help to change their perspectives on the issue. Considering teachers' desire for training, a study conducted in Northern Ireland found a large majority (91.5%) indicated a need for additional guidance, which is needed across all members of the teaching staff (Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2015). Despite this, training can be time-consuming, difficult to administer, and hinder additional financial costs on the school (Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2015). This suggests a need to further explore prospective teachers views on cyberbullying and how their ITT prepare them to address the issue.

#### 4.5.3 School Commitment and Strategies to Manage Cyberbullying

Related to the teachers need for guidance and training, school commitment to managing cyberbullying is important in providing the right infrastructure for teachers to be able to tackle the issue. In terms of prospective teachers, 75.3% (Li, 2008), 90.2% (Yilmaz, 2010), and 91%/90% of Canadian/Turkish teachers' (Ryan et al., 2011) perceived implementing school policies would be an effective strategy to tackle cyberbullying. Despite this, while others perceive cyber-specific (24.2%) and bullying policies (20%)

could be effective, 40.8% perceived a zero-tolerance policy can help manage cyberbullying related issues, as found by a study in the USA (Stryon et al., 2016). While in line with the Department for Education: “Schools should apply disciplinary measures to pupils who bully in order to show clearly that their behaviour is wrong” (England: DfE, 2017, p.13), it is recommended schools and teachers establish standalone guidelines to manage cyberbullying, to explore its complexity (Dooley et al., 2009). For example, this suggests teachers need to work more closely to create a clear and distinctive policy in the school environment which addresses cyberbullying incidents, while promoting a shared responsibility to address cyberbullying across different ecological levels including the family, peers, school and wider community (Cross et al., 2015).

Prospective teachers from a study in Turkey (91.4%) also endorsed implementing cyberbullying awareness and education into the curriculum (Yilmaz, 2010), further supported by Canadian (59%) and Turkish (91%) teachers (Ryan et al., 2011). On the other hand, addressing cyberbullying on a situation basis was identified to be least effective by teachers in a study in the USA (Stryon et al., 2016), suggesting fundamental guidelines and procedures need to be provided to all teaching personnel. In addition, other prospective teachers from a study in the UK perceived their intervention on cyberbullying would be predicted by the perceived seriousness, empathy for the victim, and confidence to cope, which accounted for 67.2% of the variance for intervention (Boulton et al., 2014). This implies ITT programs need to provide a comprehensive module on cyberbullying, to deliver detailed training to prospective teachers on the management of cyberbullying

within the school. Prior studies have shown how teachers' commitment and skills to respond to bullying are closely related to the successful management of the issue (Boulton, 1999; Oldenburg et al., 2015; Olweus, 2003), and so ITT should work to increase prospective teachers' awareness, to reinforce the belief that all incidences of cyberbullying are serious and should be acted on appropriately.

Parental involvement through discussions concerning cyberbullying issues was also recognised as an effective strategy by 85.3% of Turkish prospective teachers (Yilmaz, 2010), with 90%/85% of Canadian/Turkish prospective teachers' endorsing this strategy (Ryan et al., 2011). Parenting behaviour can impact on bullying involvement, so increased discussions with parents/guardians could mitigate cyberbullying issues in the school and home environment (Axford et al., 2015). For example, a study in Israel found young people were more likely to engage in risky online behaviours due to restrictive parenting styles in the home environment (Sasson & Mesch, 2014). This implies the important role of parents/guardians in the management of cyberbullying in the home environment. A study in Northern Ireland found that teachers recognise a discrepancy in digital literacy across parents (Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2015), and so strategies at the school level should encourage further support for parents/guardians to increase this knowledge. This suggests teachers have a responsibility to not only inform appropriate school response teams regarding cyberbullying, but also ensure parents/guardians are appropriately informed about their child's involvement within the school. By doing so, this will increase the awareness and monitoring of children's behaviour in the home environment. However, while

parental involvement is needed to ensure the appropriate management of cyberbullying within the home, a digital generational divide can result in some adults feeling unprepared to address cyberbullying in the home (Robinson, 2013). Therefore, recommendations to promote a stronger collaborative relationship between the home and school environment would aid the responses and prevention of cyberbullying across different ecological environments.

Similar to prospective teachers, in-service teachers from a study in Taiwan (94.5%) perceived cyberbullying policies would be an effective strategy (Huang & Chou, 2013), although, 25% of teachers from a study in Australia were unsure if their school had a school policy (Barnes et al., 2012). Previously, Smith et al. (2008), identified only 8.5% of schools in one county in England having had addressed cyberbullying in their school policy. However, follow up research six years later found a modest increase with 12% of schools mentioning cyberbullying in their antibullying policies (Smith et al., 2012). In Northern Ireland, an analysis of 100 school anti-bullying policies found that 71% of policies had mentioned cyberbullying (Purdy & Smith, 2016). Overall, this shows an increasing trend regarding schools addressing cyberbullying in their anti-bullying policies. Policies can be effective to encourage appropriate behaviour (Von Marées & Petermann, 2012), so schools should review the guidelines associated with their cyberbullying policies, to avoid disruptive classroom behaviour (Kowalski et al., 2014) and declining academic achievement/attainment associated through cyberbullying (Beale & Hall, 2007; West, 2015). However, while policies are directed at those who bully others, they fail to acknowledge the



educational aspect of using digital technologies in a safe and responsible manner (Cassidy et al., 2012). This suggests additional guidance should be provided to encourage young people to be responsible when using the internet. In-service teachers have also recommended advice for the victim (69.5%) and professional support (37%) from a study in Germany (DeSmet et al., 2015), promoting school culture (70.12%) from a study in Lithuania (Baraldsnes, 2015), cyberbullying education from teachers in the USA (Pelfrey & Weber, 2015), and staff supervision (77%) from a study conducted in Australia (Barnes et al., 2012) as effective preventive strategies to manage cyberbullying. While teachers are inevitably unable to manage all cyberspace interactions to reduce cyberbullying involvement, with a collaborative approach it can be possible to promote a stronger sense of belonging through a positive school culture, in the hope to reduce cyberbullying involvement.

On the other hand, in Germany, other strategies such as disciplining the bullying have been suggested as ineffective (DeSmet et al., 2015). As education can highlight the positive uses of the internet and why people bully online (Cassidy et al., 2012), schools can encourage teachers to provide additional e-safety guidance to young people. Desmet et al. (2015) conducted a study in Germany and identified four teacher clusters: 'referrers', 'disengaged', 'concerned', and 'use of all means'. Teachers identified as 'referrers' were more likely to offer support to the victim or seek professional advice, whereas 'disengaged' teachers would provide limited victim support. In addition, whilst 'concerned' teachers were least likely to ignore an incident, they would more likely offer victim support, while 'use of

all means' teachers would use a combination of strategies to manage the incident (DeSmet et al., 2015). Although there is a lack of consensus concerning appropriate prevention strategies to manage cyberbullying, one such strategy to develop the school commitment to address cyberbullying is by providing platforms and opportunities for teachers to discuss their views and perspectives. By doing so, schools can provide additional information and training according to the needs of teachers.

#### 4.5.4 The Impact and Extent of Cyberbullying Prevalence and Consequences

The perceived impact and prevalence of cyberbullying is an important theme when considering how teachers and schools have approached the problem. Canadian (72%) and Turkish (77.9%) prospective teachers identified cyberbullying as being a problem within the school environment, with 89% and 85.9% respectively perceiving cyberbullying to affect children in the school (Ryan et al., 2011; Yilmaz, 2010). On the other hand, prior research in Canada identified 10.5% of prospective teachers' perceiving the issue to have minimal to no impact on young people. However, they did recognise cyberbullying was a problem in the school environment (31.9%), which they were concerned about (49.7%) (Li, 2008). The anonymous nature of cyberbullying incidents may hinder prospective teachers' perceived perception of cyberbullying. This suggests ITT programs can illustrate unique facets associated with cyberbullying, to demonstrate the impact and extent it can have on young people.

Turning now to in-service teachers, 74.3% of teachers in a study from Northern Ireland (Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2015) were aware of cyberbullying in the school, with 55% of teachers from a study in Germany concerned of the impact on young people (Vandebosch et al., 2014). However, in the USA and Germany respectively, 25% (Stauffer et al., 2012) and 22% (Vandebosch et al., 2014) of teachers perceived cyberbullying was not a problem in the school environment. This suggests that while teachers are perhaps aware of cyberbullying within the school, the extent of which they do not regard as a problem denotes a possible lack of experience and/or judgement on the negative impact of cyberbullying to those involved. In Lithuania, a study found that while some teachers' (40%) perceived cyberbullying did not occur through the internet or mobile phones (Baraldsnes, 2015), others in study from Northern Ireland were concerned about social media or text-based bullying instances (Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2015). Although victims of cyberbullying can be vulnerable to a larger audience, potentially prolonging the negative experience (Smith et al., 2008; Smith, 2015), only 25% of teachers from a study in the UK perceived the impact was higher compared to traditional forms of bullying (Monks et al., 2016). This suggests a degree of uncertainty pertaining to the impact of cyberbullying, a concern that can be overturned through additional training offered through schools.

Betts and Spenser, (2015) in a study in the UK identified that teachers understand the positive uses of technology such as facilitating young people's communication and maintenance of social and romantic relationships. However, teachers perceived that young people did not engage in self-monitoring behaviour or regulation in terms of what was said

online, and this would often lead to negative consequences for the individual. Linking back to school commitment and teacher training, another study in the UK found that increased online supervision and electronic restrictions could promote positive uses of the internet and digital technologies (Monks et al., 2016). A study in England found that long-term exposure to bullying can lead to prolonged and substantial negative consequences across childhood and further into adulthood (Takizawa, Maughan, & Arseneault, 2014). Therefore, it is important for teachers to recognise the growing extent of the issue and aim to reduce bullying involvement and long-term exposure.

#### 4.5.5 Teachers Confidence and Concern Towards Cyberbullying

The confidence of teachers to address and manage cyberbullying can largely predict their ability to manage cyberbullying instances. Within the research, there is considerable variation in how different studies of prospective teachers' confidence in relation to this issue. For example a study in Turkey by Yilmaz (2010) identified 48.5% of prospective teachers' felt moderately confident to manage cyberbullying while in other studies from Canada, 60.1% (Li, 2008) and 30-40% (Ryan et al., 2011) of prospective teachers did not feel confident to manage cyberbullying. This suggests a large discrepancy in trainee teachers' confidence to address cyberbullying in the school environment and potentially an issue to be addressed in ITT. For example, 53.3% of teachers from a study in Canada could not identify cyberbullying, with only 11.1% feeling confident to do so (Li, 2008). Implications of this suggest ITT courses can encourage prospective teachers to design and discuss innovative strategies to manage cyberbullying within

the classroom to help broaden their understanding while developing confidence through engagement and discussions within the course.

In-service teachers recognised that cyberbullying was a problem in the school, with 65-72% of teachers from a study in Israel (Eden et al., 2013) and 59% of teachers from a study in Canada (Cassidy et al., 2012) concerned over the issue. However, in a study in Australia teachers generally felt less skilled to address cyberbullying, with only 8.2% feeling confident and skilled to address the issue, with 19.2% and 31.6% of teachers perceiving a lack of skill and assurance to address cyberbullying (Barnes et al., 2012). In particular, primary teachers (23%) felt less skilled to address cyberbullying compared to secondary teachers (16%) (Barnes et al., 2012). In Israel, teachers of younger pupils had more concern regarding cyberbullying and believed there was an urgent issue to increase awareness and knowledge across the school environment (Eden et al., 2013). This suggests that many prospective and in-service teachers lacked confidence when identifying and managing cyberbullying in the school environment. Therefore, this highlights an important issue that in order to help teachers deal with cyberbullying there perhaps not only needs to be guidelines/policies on what to do but specific training so that teachers are confident in implementing policy. The issue with confidence brings together key elements of all the previous themes identified as teachers not only need to be aware and able to define and conceptualise what cyberbullying is but also need to be trained appropriately in order to be able to act on school-level policies with confidence.

#### 4.5.6 Methodological Issues and Future Directions

As seen in Table 4.1, the quantitative studies identified used a variety of cyberbullying measures and instruments to address teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying. The application of different assessment methods highlights a lack of consensus on this issue, and as such, could influence variability in teachers' knowledge and understanding (Berne et al., 2013). Therefore, the current programme of research will take a sequential mixed method approach to explore how teachers and young people perceive and respond to cyberbullying. This approach will provide a unique qualitative exploration with prospective (see Chapter 5, Study 1) and current (see Chapter 6, Study 2) teachers across different educational levels. The programme of research will then use these findings to explore how young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying (see Chapter 7, Study 3).

Although some recommendations have been proposed in this chapter, it is important to note that teachers' perceptions may have been influenced by context-dependent factors. Indeed, the issue of cross-cultural variations of cyberbullying have been discussed and explored by researchers (e.g., see Smith, Görzig, & Robinson, 2018). However, there are two large scale surveys that shed some light on self-reported rates of cyberbullying across a large number of countries. For example, the EU Kids Online survey across 25 countries with approximately 1,000 young people aged 9 to 16 years from each country found that while victimisation of cyberbullying averaged at 6%, this varied by country (Livingstone et al., 2011). In particular, Italy reported the lowest prevalence of cyberbullying at 2%, while Estonia reported the

highest rates of cyberbullying at 14%. This shows how cyberbullying is manifesting at different rates in different contexts. In addition, the Health Behaviour of School-aged Children survey across 42 countries with approximately 1,500 11, 13, and 15-year olds from each country also reports cross-cultural variations in cyberbullying. For example, an international report from the 2013/2014 survey found that in some countries (e.g., Greece & Armenia), cyberbullying victimisation rates were low at 1-2% for each age category, whereas others (e.g., Russia, Greenland, & Lithuania) report cyberbullying victimisation rates of around 9%, 8%, and 6% at the three age levels (Inchley et al., 2016). Again, this further illustrates the impact of culture on how cyberbullying is manifested in different countries. This cultural variation in prevalence of cyberbullying may therefore provide some explanation for the different views teachers hold towards cyberbullying, as identified in this systematic review. However, factors within and between surveys are known to affect cross-national comparisons, including sampling and linguistic issues, administration procedure, definition used to measure cyberbullying, and the year surveys have been conducted (see Smith, Görzig, & Robinson, 2018). The current school culture, management and administration of education systems in different cultures, and culture norms or values according to the location may also play a role in explaining these cross-cultural variations. Therefore, the teachers' perceptions across this review should be interpreted with caution.

The systematic review identified a selection of studies which examined teachers' perceptions and understanding towards cyberbullying, although differences and methodological issues across the studies may

explain discrepancies interpreting the findings. Methodological issues in cyberbullying research can hinder the application of the findings due to inconsistencies of study reports (Brochado et al., 2017; Patchin & Hinduja, 2015; Volk et al., 2017). As such, it is important to acknowledge some methodological concerns of the studies discussed in the current review, to provide context when interpreting the findings. The identified studies used quantitative ( $n = 13$ ), qualitative ( $n = 4$ ) and mixed method ( $n = 3$ ) approaches. Concerning the quantitative approaches used, the studies relied on anonymous self-report data across paper, postal and online surveys. The qualitative approaches relied predominantly on focus groups or interviews, with mixed method studies using interviews with closed questions, or focus groups with surveys, or surveys with open responses. Each of these approaches has different virtues and limitations which need to be highlighted when interpreting findings on teachers' perceptions and knowledge towards cyberbullying.

While surveys eliminate pressures of time or resources and can be distributed in a way to target a multitude of populations through extensive sampling, they are also associated with low response rates, leading to issues on the representation of the final sample (Coughlan, Cronin, & Ryan, 2009). One solution to overcome this and encourage wider participation is to contact school leaders directly to distribute the survey within the schools. This would also overcome any fraudulent responses by controlling the distribution of the survey (Lefever, Dal, & Matthiasdottir, 2007). If school leaders can offer incentives and incorporate the survey within staff meetings and training sessions, teachers are more likely to participate, especially when



participation does not impact on lesson preparations and other school-related activities. Despite this, it is still possible teachers' perceptions may not accurately represent their actual intentions due to misinterpretations of ambiguous survey items, and as such, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Therefore, Study 1 (see Chapter 5) and 2 (see Chapter 6) as part of this thesis will employ qualitative approaches to gain a more in-depth exploration and insight on teachers' views towards cyberbullying.

In the identified qualitative studies, focus groups were used to examine teachers' perceptions. In comparison to other qualitative approaches (i.e. interviews), focus groups would provide a greater insight on a social issue in the school environment, as teachers are able to reflect and discuss their perceptions to gain a broader understanding of cyberbullying in the school environment (Ritchie et al., 2013). As cyberbullying is a social issue within the school, it is also dealt with by appropriate staff members of the school and so group discussions provide an insight on the procedures and management of cyberbullying. However, an issue prone across both qualitative and quantitative approaches is the risk of self-selection bias, where teachers with stronger attitudes towards cyberbullying are more likely to participate. While this restricts the opportunity to consider attitudes of other teachers, the self-selection bias may also act to stimulate and encourage discussions in focus groups (Ritchie et al., 2013). To optimise on the virtues and limit restrictions, mixed-method approaches have been used to offer a combination of designs to truly capture teachers' perceptions and their correlates with additional measures (Creswell, 2008).

## 4.6 Chapter Summary

In summary, this review identified 20 studies against the inclusion criteria exploring teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying. While digital technologies become more accessible, allowing young people to engage in risky online behaviour such as cyberbullying (Livingstone et al., 2011), teachers face growing challenges managing this issue in the school environment (Smith et al., 2012). While this review offers an important insight and understanding on teachers' views towards cyberbullying, shortcomings of the review should be noted. The rigorous selection and inclusion process mean a selection of studies were removed from the current review. In addition, book chapters were not reviewed. The implications of this means it is possible some relevant studies may not have been included in the systematic review. As such, the review may not encapsulate all the existing literature regarding teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying. While the review offers a specific focus looking at the existing literature on teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying, it does highlight areas for future research. For example, the theme 'cyberbullying training and guidance' identified in this review, indicates the desire for further research to explore the perceptions and experiences of prospective teachers in addressing cyberbullying (see Chapter 5, Study 1). In addition, the review found that there are discrepancies in how cyberbullying is addressed in the school environment, and so this calls for further research to explore in more detail how teachers perceive and respond to cyberbullying (see Chapter 6, Study 2).

This systematic review has addressed RQ1 of the thesis 'What does the existing literature report and discuss regarding teachers' perceptions and

management of cyberbullying in the school environment?'. The review found that teachers recognised cyberbullying was a problem in the school environment (Eden et al., 2013; Monks et al., 2016; Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2015; Ryan et al., 2011; Yilmaz, 2010), although teachers' perspectives on effective prevention strategies to address this were largely inconsistent (Barnes et al., 2012; Cassidy et al., 2012; DeSmet et al., 2015; Huang & Chou, 2013). While teachers did perceive educating pupils on cyberbullying awareness would be effective (Pelfrey & Weber, 2015; Ryan et al., 2011), teachers were not confident in their ability to identify and manage the issue (Barnes et al., 2012; Li, 2008; Yilmaz, 2010). In addition, teachers expressed a desire for additional training on cyberbullying, to increase their awareness and knowledge to manage cyberbullying (Li, 2008; Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2015; Styron et al., 2016; Yilmaz, 2010). Implications of this review suggest ITT programs and schools need to review their training and guidelines on cyberbullying to ensure they offer consistent recommendations on the appropriate management of the issue in the school environment. To further explore this, Chapter 5 (Study 1) will explore how prospective teachers perceive and address cyberbullying based on their ITT.

The current systematic review has provided a synthesis on teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying and with the identified studies and methodological issues discussed, it is important to suggest future research to further enhance our understanding of cyberbullying in the education system. Future research should address the limited qualitative research in this area, particularly to gain a further insight on how prospective teachers regard cyberbullying and their training needs (see Chapter 5, Study

1), and also how current teachers perceive cyberbullying and their management strategies (see Chapter 6, Study 2). Such qualitative research would provide a wider understanding of the problem and issues that need to be further explored in the context of young people (see Chapter 7, Study 3).

## CHAPTER 5

### PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES TOWARDS CYBERBULLYING

#### 5.1 Introduction

The systematic review reported in Chapter 4 identified there is a limited existing literature base concerning how prospective teachers perceive and address cyberbullying. The review in Chapter 4 also suggested that prospective teachers need additional training in addressing cyberbullying, and so their views are important in how training courses prepare prospective teachers to manage cyberbullying in the school environment. Because teachers have a duty of care and responsibility to address cyberbullying in England (Ofsted, 2019), it is important to explore how prospective teachers address the issue. Within this chapter, a study exploring how prospective teachers from England perceive and respond to cyberbullying will be reported. In addition, the chapter will also discuss how prospective teachers perceive their training and guidance offered by their training courses to address cyberbullying in the school. As mentioned in Chapter 4, prospective teachers are those who are currently engaged in teacher training for up to four years depending on course and teaching route taken in England. There are various routes into teaching, but some of these include undergraduate and postgraduate training and charities or programmes offering school-based training where prospective teachers work in schools as unqualified teachers.

To the author's knowledge, Li (2008) was the first to examine prospective teachers' perceptions of cyberbullying in a Canadian sample of 154 prospective teachers, who were pursuing training at both primary and secondary school level. Li found that prospective teachers recognised cyberbullying to be a problem affecting children in the school environment. Although prospective teachers had a high level of concern towards cyberbullying, only 13.1% and 11.1% reported that they could identify and manage cyberbullying incidents respectively (Li, 2008). Research by Yilmaz (2010) in Turkey also reported similar findings with a sample of 163 prospective teachers. In this sample, the prospective teachers were completing a four-year training programme to acquire the necessary skills and qualification to teach at either primary or secondary school level. Yilmaz found that the prospective teachers reported cyberbullying to be a problem (77.9% agreement), which affected children (85.9% agreement), and reported concern regarding the issue (77.3% agreement). Li (2008) and Yilmaz (2010) also found that while only 4% reported they did not receive any training on cyberbullying, the majority still felt unprepared to address cyberbullying in the school. However, prospective teachers held positive attitudes for receiving training on cyberbullying (Li, 2008; Yilmaz, 2010). While Li and Yilmaz provide a useful insight on prospective teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying, these views of teachers reflect the 'beginning' of cyberbullying research in this area, and so how cyberbullying has developed and perceived might have changed. For example, the advances in digital technology and social platforms mean the notion of cyberbullying is continually evolving with each generation, and so there is a

need to constantly consider how cyberbullying is a changing phenomenon (Casas, Ortega-Ruiz, & Monks, 2020). Indeed, if cyberbullying is changing alongside the development of digital technologies, it is also therefore important to acknowledge more recent views from teachers.

Regarding prospective teachers' response to cyberbullying in the school, educating pupils on the consequences associated with involvement was perceived to be effective from a study in Canada (Ryan et al., 2011), although awareness of appropriate responses was still inconsistent. For example, although 120 prospective teachers from the USA were aware of different types of cyberbullying in the school, they were less aware of appropriate intervention strategies to manage these incidents (Styron et al., 2016). In addition, perceived severity of cyberbullying incidents influenced the intentions of prospective teachers to intervene to address the situation in a sample of 222 in the UK (Boulton et al., 2014). In the context of perceived severity, studies in the UK and Canada have found that even when teachers are aware of cyber related victimisation experiences some may feel as if cyber acts of victimisation are less serious than traditional forms (Boulton et al., 2014; Craig, Bell, & Leschied, 2011). As such, the study reported in this chapter will explore how prospective teachers view cyberbullying in terms of perceived severity. Regarding perceived severity, this has been associated with the public nature of cyberbullying with Australian children perceiving public forms of cyberbullying to be more severe due to the greater audience involved (Dredge et al., 2014). Therefore, it is important to explore how prospective teachers perceive such factors, as they may be considered when managing cyberbullying in the school environment.

The limited research concerning prospective teachers' perceptions, awareness and response towards cyberbullying has identified that prospective teachers recognise cyberbullying to be a problem, although teachers reported that their confidence to manage the issue is low. Further, prospective teachers' perceptions of their ITT course have been consistent across eight years, in that their ITT courses do not prepare prospective teachers to manage cyberbullying, although they would like to learn more (Li, 2008; Styron et al., 2016; Yilmaz, 2010). As such, there is value to be had in a further investigation of current prospective teachers to consider their perceptions towards cyberbullying and how ITT courses prepare them to manage the issue. The limited research addressing prospective teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying have so far largely utilised quantitative methodologies in the form of surveys (Boulton et al., 2014; Li, 2008; Ryan et al., 2011; Styron et al., 2016; Yilmaz, 2010). The review reported in Chapter 4 suggested that the voices of prospective teachers need to be explored further regarding the guidance from training courses to address cyberbullying. To the author's knowledge, this is the first known study to utilise a qualitative approach in the form of focus groups and will aim to gain an in-depth exploration of prospective teachers' understanding of cyberbullying and their training on the issue within ITT. As prospective teachers' perceptions may be marginalised to in-service teachers and senior management within the school, the use of focus groups can provide a voice and platform for discussion when considering their perceptions towards cyberbullying (Carey, 2015). In addition, the focus group format was an appropriate method of data collection as it reflects real life discussions and



decision making in the schools when addressing cyberbullying. With cyberbullying regarded as a constantly changing phenomena (Casas, Ortega-Ruiz, & Monks, 2020), the current study seeks to explore how prospective teachers view cyberbullying and how these views compare to those of previous research.

The study aimed to explore prospective teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying incidents and their current training addressing cyberbullying from England. RQ2 of the thesis explores what are prospective and current teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying in the school environment? This chapter will address the prospective teacher aspect of RQ2. To address this research question of the thesis, the following specific questions guided the aim of the current study:

1. To what extent are prospective teachers aware of cyberbullying?
2. To what extent are prospective teachers aware on the impact of cyberbullying?
3. How do prospective teachers respond to cyberbullying, and what are the strategies they use to address the issue?
4. Are ITT courses providing training to prepare prospective teachers to address cyberbullying?

## **5.2 Method**

### **5.2.1 Participants**

The study was approved by the College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Nottingham Trent University (No.

2017/01, see Appendix A). Prospective teachers were recruited from two ITT post-graduate degree courses at one public UK university institution in the Midlands, to participate in two focus group discussions. These took place between February – April 2017. The university is based in an urban area and consists of a large cohort of students from a diverse body of backgrounds and nationalities. As such, the participants recruited in the current study provide a representative sample to other prospective teachers in the UK. In addition, the ITT programmes offered at the university have many partnerships across schools in the Midlands, which illustrates the wide variety and experience offered to trainee teachers recruited in the current study.

Focus group one comprised of four prospective teachers, including two male and two female prospective teachers. Focus group two comprised of five prospective teachers, including three male and two female prospective teachers. The sample size reflects previous qualitative research to examine teachers' perspectives (Phan & Locke, 2015) on a given phenomenon. In both focus groups, all participants had 6 months teaching experience, where they were working to complete their qualification to teach young people aged between 11 and 16 years. This is a prevalent period for cyberbullying involvement (Smith et al., 2013; Tokunaga, 2010), and so the participants' views would provide an important insight on prospective teachers' perceptions and response to the phenomena. Participants were aged between 21-40 years.

Although practice recommends between six and eight participants for focus group discussions, smaller focus groups between four and five

participants have been recommended for several reasons (Ritchie et al., 2013). For example, due to the interest in cyberbullying related issues in the modern world, professionals such as prospective teachers are likely to be highly engaged in the discussions, and therefore a smaller group is advised to allow participants the chance to contribute (Ritchie et al., 2013). In addition, due to the complexity of cyberbullying as a topic area, and the depth required to gain an insight into prospective teachers' perspectives, smaller groups provide an opportunity to explore the issue in further detail (Ritchie et al., 2013).

#### 5.2.2 Procedure

The ITT course administrator/leader was contacted to gain initial consent to recruit prospective teachers completing the course. The time of recruitment aligned with the end of the ITT course, to truly represent prospective teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying *after* they have completed the program. All participants were provided with an information sheet (Appendix B) and consent form (Appendix C) detailing the nature and purpose of the focus group discussion. Participants also received a debrief after participation (Appendix D). Participants gave their written consent prior to taking part. Participants then completed a participant information sheet regarding their demographic information (Appendix E). The focus group format followed a free discussion on cyberbullying with a prompt sheet for the facilitator to provide structured guidance on the conversation, as recommended by Carey, (2015). Prior to conducting the focus group, a focus group prompt sheet was developed (Appendix F).

The development of the prompt sheet was guided by prior research considering prospective teachers' perceptions on cyberbullying, as outlined earlier in this Chapter (Boulton et al., 2014; Li, 2008; Ryan et al., 2011; Styron et al., 2016; Yilmaz, 2010). The findings from the systematic review of existing literature (see Chapter 4) also informed the type of questions asked during the focus group. For example, the systematic review identified that teachers recognised cyberbullying to be a problem but lacked confidence to identify and manage the issue. As such, the focus group prompt sheet included questions on how they perceive the training and guidance offered by their training courses to manage cyberbullying, and how confident they felt to address the issue. The focus groups took place in a familiar but neutral setting on the university campus, to allow participants to feel more comfortable in their surroundings. During the focus groups, participants were encouraged to discuss a series of topic areas as a group. The topic areas included (a) Conceptualisation of cyberbullying, (b) Responding to cyberbullying, (c) Management strategies to address cyberbullying, and (d) Perceived development of cyberbullying in the future. The focus groups were facilitated with a prompt sheet as this is known to provide structure to the free discussion, enabling rich quality data from the discussion (Carey, 2015). Both focus groups lasted approximately one hour and were audio recorded.

### 5.2.3 Data analysis

A reflexive inductive thematic analytical approach was undertaken to analyse the focus group responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Compared to interpretative phenomenological analysis which focuses on participants' lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008), thematic analysis was employed for

the flexible approach to exploring patterns of meaning across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In the context of the current programme of research, cyberbullying is addressed in the school environment via group decisions from teachers managing the issue. Therefore, thematic analysis provided a more suitable analysis to explore how teachers perceive and respond to the issue across different educational levels.

Extending on Mergenthaler and Stinson's (1992) transcription guidance, the current programme of research followed prescribed transcription conventions outlined by McLellan, MacQueen, and Neidig, (2003). For example, audio recording was transcribed verbatim, where portions of inaudible recordings were denoted in the transcription (e.g., [inaudible segment]), and pauses during participants' responses were denoted by three ellipses (e.g., [...]). Nonverbal and background noises were not noted in the transcription. Once transcribed verbatim, familiarisation with the transcripts generated initial ideas and concepts. Features of the transcripts relevant to the research aims were coded and reviewed to generate common codes and patterns across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once codes were reviewed, these were collated into categories for the generation of initial sub-themes and themes that represent the data and collated codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes were reviewed against the extracted extracts and refined. In this analysis, an inductive approach was undertaken to allow the themes to truly represent the data and explore prospective teachers' perspectives on cyberbullying (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The quotes will be presented in the Results and Discussion section, with the associated focus group and participant number indicated.

One line of argument proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is that research needs to be strengthened by its trustworthiness. This approach involves establishing credibility (i.e., confidence in findings), transferability (i.e., how the findings are applicable to other contexts), dependability (i.e., are the findings consistent), and confirmability (i.e., how the findings are shaped by the respondents and not research bias). Such approach would endorse the inter-coder agreement on themes within qualitative research. Even though previous qualitative bullying research (e.g., Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000) has judged the rigour of the study following the criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), recent thematic analysis approaches argue against adopting such criteria (see Braun et al., 2019), in order to value the subjective skills of the researcher. The approach taken in the current study was a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2019), which does not advocate such approaches proposed by Lincoln and Guba. The reflexive thematic analysis undertaken values the subjective skills the researcher brings to the analysis by fully embracing qualitative research. As such, the reflexive thematic analysis approach does not advocate inter-coder reliability, or the involvement of the research team in the analytical process, because coding needs to be organic and open (see Braun & Clarke, 2020). The reflexive thematic analysis conducted offers a robust systematic interpretation of the data to identify a pattern of shared meaning across all the focus groups (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Braun et al., 2019). It is important to note the number of instances each theme was present in each focus group is not presented, as advocated by the Braun and Clarke approach to reflexive thematic analysis. In this approach, themes are not dependant on

quantifiable measures, but rather themes represent meaning across the data in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2014; Braun et al., 2019). In addition, including quantifiable elements in relation to the themes that were identified from the data can cause several problems when interpreting the research. For example, in line with the approach taken by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2019), additional research suggests quantifying the prevalence of themes can lead to inaccuracy in the approach to reflexive thematic analysis, which can impact on the overall conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis due to misinterpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Hannah & Lautsch, 2011; Maxwell, 2010; Sandelowski, 2001).

### **5.3 Results and Discussion**

There were three themes: (a) evolving nature of bullying; (b) involvement in cyberbullying and (c) management of cyberbullying. Table 5.1 provides a summary of the themes and sub-themes.

Table 5.1: Summary of the themes and associated sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes	Example
Theme 1: Evolving nature of bullying	1.A Understanding of bullying	<i>“feeling isolated, feeling like they’ve got no one to talk to because the whole world of social media is on them” (P4, focus group 1)</i>
	1.B Dynamics of a changing online environment	<i>“I think there’s a fine line with what’s acceptable and what’s not, and for a child it might be difficult to distinguish between the two” (P5, focus group 2)</i>
Theme 2: Involvement in cyberbullying	2.A Perpetration	<i>“Some of them think it’s probably just a bit of humor, just a bit of fun” (P4, focus group 1)</i>
	2.B Victimisation	<i>“it’s going to affect attendance, if your feel like you’re being targeted, and erm [...] you might feel alone, isolated” (P2, focus group 1)</i>
Theme 3: Management of cyberbullying	3.A Responsibility	<i>“I think it’s important that schools make teachers aware for the ones who don’t know how to handle cyberbullying” (P1, focus group 2)</i>
	3.B Response	<i>“you’re challenging the behaviour as opposed to the impact on that one particular learner I think” (P2, focus group 1)</i>
	3.C Strategies in tackling bullying	<i>“stop it from beginning in the first place, trying to educate around [...] that digital side, you know, that digital literacy, to get that message out as soon as you can” (P3, focus group 2)</i>
	3.D Training	<i>“we get a lot of, be safe online, don’t talk to strangers [...] in PSHE, but there’s nothing on cyberbullying” (P1, focus group 2)</i>



### 5.3.1 Evolving Nature of Bullying

This theme comprised of two sub-themes: understanding of bullying and dynamics of a changing online environment. Participants discussed definitional characteristics of traditional bullying and how these characteristics extend to cyberbullying as a result of advancement in digital technologies. The participants then discussed the unique characteristics of cyberbullying, namely anonymity and the size of audience. Participants discussed the evolving nature of digital technologies and how this has permitted cyberbullying to become socially acceptable.

#### 5.3.1.1 *Understanding of Bullying*

Participants discussed criteria associated with traditional bullying in its definitional sense. Participants were aware that bullying behaviours were repeated intentional acts, to cause negative experiences to the victim:

P5: *“bullying is repetitive [...] erm, incidences where people are, tormented”*

*(P5, focus group 2)*

P3: *“just negative behavioural incidences aren’t they [...] designed for others detriment” (P3, focus group 2)*

While participants were aware of unique characteristics of bullying, including repetition and intent to inflict harm, they did not discuss power imbalance between the victim and perpetrator. The latter is a recognised

feature of bullying (Olweus, 1993), and is associated with disruptive daily functioning when differential power is reported by young people, as found from a study in USA (Ybarra, Espelage, & Mitchell, 2014), so it is important prospective teachers are made aware of such components in bullying. As noted by Smith (2015), the power imbalance between the perpetrator and victim can be difficult to define in cyberbullying incidences, and as such, the traditional feature of bullying may not extend to its cyber form. This can account for prospective teachers' lack of knowledge regarding the power imbalance element. However, others have argued the unique facet of anonymity associated with cyberbullying causes a discrepancy in power between the victim and perpetrator (Thomas et al., 2015). In terms of repetition, some participants were confident defining the repetitive element of bullying:

*“it’s got to be something like two or three incidences aimed towards the same person” (P1, focus group 2)*

In contrast to this, other participants debated the repetitive notion of bullying as a definitional characteristic:

*“I would argue it can even start with one [...] because where do you draw the line otherwise from when the bullying begins and ends. If somebody’s saying I’ve been subjected to an incident of bullying, you wouldn’t say to that, to that*

*person who would feel like they're bullied immediately [...] well I'd have to wait two or three more times to see how it rests on me" (P3, focus group 2)*

While not meeting the repetitive element of bullying, participants identified that even one episode can be harmful. Implications at the school level mean practitioners should acknowledge and respond to all incidences of bullying, irrespective of frequency. Though prospective teachers recognised the repetitive element of cyberbullying, debate surrounded the number of instances required for intervention. Scholars have recognised the public nature of cyberbullying can challenge the traditional feature of repetition in that a single incident of cyberbullying through a public forum (i.e., wider audience), merits immediate intervention (Slonje et al., 2013; Smith, 2015). Due to these definitional issues extending traditional features of repetition to cyberbullying (Slonje et al., 2013), inconsistencies in reported prevalence have been reported. For example, prevalence reports for cyberbullying involvement are approximately 20% for one-off occurrences and 5% for repeated incidences (Smith, 2015). Therefore, ITT courses and schools need to provide consistency across school staff and prospective teachers on definitional criteria associated with cyberbullying. Participants recognised that cyberbullying occurred through digital technologies where they discussed unique facets that made it distinctive:

*"I think because it is so accessible now and it is so [...] erm you got that shrine of anonymity. [...] they got this monkey on their back they can't get*

*away from because obviously the internet is absolutely everywhere and there is so many different ways that they can be targeted now” (P3, focus group 1)*

As argued by P3 cyberbullying is unique due to aspects of anonymity and accessibility. Prospective teachers perceived that this accessibility means there *“is no rest bite” (P1, focus group 2)* for the victims involved. As a result, victims of cyberbullying are vulnerable both within and outside the school environment as there is *“no escape” (P2, focus group 1)*. Prospective teachers perceived that young people are constantly connected to the cyber world (*“is there a time people switch off from social media, not really” (P2, focus group 1)*). Prospective teachers recognised cyberbullying can be susceptible to a large audience:

*“it’s a wider audience for it and there’s you know, it spreads a lot quicker” (P3, focus group 2)*

There is a potential cyberbullying can escalate and spread in the school environment, so strategies for teachers to respond in way to help attenuate the incident is recommended. The prospective teachers showed a good awareness and understanding of the anonymity and accessibility elements, unique to cyberbullying. They perceived the anonymous nature of online communication (Slonje & Smith, 2008) and accessibility to a variety of mediums to offend in cyberbullying (Devine & Lloyd, 2012), would increase the occurrence and severity of cyberbullying, and as such consequences on

the victim. Therefore, prospective and current teachers should address cyberbullying with further concern due to its unique facets. Participants discussed, and defined cyberbullying centred on the role of publicity:

*“I think public would be one that, is accessible to external people outside the, that group or that school perhaps. Semi-public is when its spreading through different groups within the school and that private side is when its perhaps between two people” (P3, focus group 2)*

In their discussion, participants showed a good awareness differentiating the publicity element of cyberbullying. Such views provide a new perspective from prospective teachers on the role of publicity in cyberbullying, and so provides an original contribution to the limited body of research in this area. These findings also have implications for the current programme of research as it shows the publicity part of cyberbullying is an important definitional element. As prospective teachers regard the public nature of cyberbullying an important factor on how cyberbullying is perceived in the school environment, the current programme of research will explore how young people respond to cyberbullying according to differential roles of publicity (see Chapter 7). It would be beneficial for schools and ITT courses to ensure prospective teachers have this knowledge, as this will help them be aware of different incidences and as such identification. Participants recognised the dynamic nature of publicity and difficulties in categorising

such terms *“anything private could always become public”* (P3, focus group 2).

#### 5.3.1.2 *Dynamics of a Changing Online Environment*

While cyberbullying was first recognised as a definitional term in 2003 by Bill Belsey (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015), the prospective teachers perceived it is still *“quite relatively new”* (P3, focus group 1). Reflecting how cyberbullying will evolve in the future, participants recognised the growth of new social media platforms and the changing face of digital technology, which impacted on their confidence to address the issue:

*“it’s so fluid, its developing all the time, so it makes it difficult, to kind of say, yeah I’ve got that, you know, I’ve got that locked down, I’m happy dealing with any instances of cyberbullying that occur erm, because its dynamic”* (P2, focus group 1)

*“I don’t think I will ever be confident enough, because there’s always going to be err, next level and then next to cyberbullying where there’s apps being created [...] I don’t think I’ll ever feel absolutely 100% confident to be able to tackle it because as I said there’s always going to be a next level”* (P4, focus group 1)

The changing dynamics of the online environment impacts on prospective teachers’ confidence in several ways which has implications for

taking actions to contain incidents while keeping up to date with emerging issues. This new perspective from prospective teachers provides an insight into their confidence to address cyberbullying and suggest ITT courses can do more to prepare prospective teachers. It is important prospective teachers are more aware of the phenomenon and can take actions against it. Such perspectives provide important implications for ITT courses to work towards increasing trainee teachers' confidence and competence to address cyberbullying. Prospective teachers identified the changing dynamic in the online environment was creating a socially acceptable world of cyberbullying behaviour. Participants perceived the anonymity of online actions in certain contexts (e.g., online gaming) denotes to young people that behaviour is acceptable:

*“it breathes in one area and I think [...] that sort of behaviour, in games, anonymous is tolerated, but then does that start breaching an image in their head that it's okay to say that sort of comment to people [...] if they can hide behind that anonymous factor, they're not getting punished for doing it” (P3, focus groups 2)*

The anonymity feature of cyberbullying behaviour means young people find it hard to determine acceptable behaviour online. Therefore, this suggests anonymity is an important factor when young people choose how to respond to cyberbullying, and so is explored later in the thesis (see Chapter 7). The participants perceived that young people find it hard to determine

acceptable behaviour online due to an attachment to the online world, which they refer to as the “*digital version of personality*” (P4, focus group 2). This means it is hard to determine true personality as young people have a separate online identity, becoming attached to their online self:

*“it becomes socially acceptable in a way doesn’t it [...] they can’t just step away from it and disconnect themselves because they’re, it’s just too much a detriment to themselves” (P3, focus group 2)*

Prospective teachers recognised the nature of cyberbullying is evolving and becoming socially acceptable due to difficulties interpreting acceptable behaviour across young people. The implications of this suggest the prevalence of cyberbullying and the numerous mediums available to young people to bully online will escalate. This means younger people will be susceptible to cyberbullying involvement, placing increased pressure on teachers and schools on the identification and management of the issue. As such, it is important to further explore how teachers in the school environment across different educational levels address cyberbullying (see Chapter 6). Prospective teachers perceived the dynamics of bullying were evolving, which affected their confidence to address these incidents in the school environment. Prevalence will likely increase due to a high internet use, but this will be met by teachers who lack the confidence to address the issue which they believe has potential to escalate in ways they cannot control.



### 5.3.2 Involvement in Cyberbullying

The involvement in cyberbullying theme comprised of two sub-themes: perpetration and victimisation. Prospective teachers identified motivations behind cyber perpetration, while addressing young people's understanding and bystander influences. The participants identify several consequences associated to young people that have been a victim of cyberbullying.

#### 5.3.2.1 *Perpetration*

The participants perceived it was the anonymous factor associated with cyberbullying that allows perpetrators to remain hidden, recognising the difficulty in sanctioning punishment for such behaviours:

*“cyberbullying itself is so anonymous almost and there is so many different ways of doing it. I think that people who [...] who do cyberbully almost don't see themselves as bullying in the same sort of way. Bullying is this sort of image of being so hands on and now cyber bullying you can do it behind a computer and it's just the odd word in the wrong group chat or it's just a [...] venting” (P3, focus group 1)*

This raises implications for sanctioning punishment for cyberbullying due to its anonymous nature. It is possible prospective teachers find it difficult to recognise intent from cyberbullying as it is depersonalised. While this can impact on prospective teachers' ability to respond to the incident,

schools should reassure teachers all incidents merit investigation to determine appropriate consequences. This also raises questions on how young people respond to cyberbullying according to the role of anonymity, and this is explored further in Chapter 7. Prospective teachers identified that perpetrators could use the anonymity of cyberbullying to direct unwanted attention:

*“they can shine the light somewhere else. Make themselves feel better, they’re not the talking point, somebody else is and they can control that, that it’s not going to come back on them” (P3, focus group 2)*

This implies vulnerable people receiving unwanted attention target other individuals to increase self-esteem. In the involvement of cyberbullying theme, prospective teachers perceived the anonymity of online actions motivated perpetration intentions. They perceived anonymity provided additional control online, with a disconnect between young peoples ‘real world’ and ‘online’ intentions. For example, from a theoretical perspective, the Online Disinhibition Effect (ODE) (Suler, 2004) argues the online environment reduces self-monitoring behaviour and social norms compared to the ‘real world’ environment. This is reflected in the prospective teachers’ accounts. Similarly, in-service teachers from a study in the UK perceived young people have reduced self-regulation and norms when communicating online (Betts & Spenser, 2015). The ODE can account for these perceptions as through the anonymity and asynchronicity, young people feel hidden from

their online actions, and as a result, perceive they have no immediate consequences (Suler, 2004). Participants discussed how the vulnerability in peer-groups can lead to cyber perpetration:

*“they’re impressionable, they’re young and they want to do that themselves and again when it comes to the popularity race at schools perhaps, they want to establish themselves higher up the food chain” (P3, focus group 2)*

The participants recognised a dominance hierarchy where the bully is seen as the most dominant individual with control and power. This triggers further perpetration as young people try to ascertain power in the group. This supports the evolutionary perspective of bullying (Volk, Camilleri, Dane, & Marini, 2012; Volk et al., 2016). This view from prospective teachers supports the notion that young people engage in cyberbullying for goal-oriented rewards such as dominance and resources (Pellegrini & Long, 2002; Volk, Della Cioppa, Earle, & Farrell, 2015). The prospective teachers also recognised engagement in cyberbullying as part of the ‘popularity race’ within the school. The evolutionary perspective suggest cyberbullies are viewed more popular and powerful by their peers (Dennehy et al., 2020), which can be used to obtain social dominance and adaptive benefits such as resources. Schools should encourage young people to be more reflective concerning the impact cyberbullying has on those targeted. This is a noteworthy recommendation as prospective teachers discussed the lack of knowledge young people have regarding this issue:

*“I think students don’t marry up [...] what they’re doing, the actions, they don’t fully consider the consequences of their actions. Perhaps they’re going to act in this certain way, just because it’s a bit of fun, amuses them, but don’t actually think about them in a long-term view. Whereas we as teachers need to [...] put that into their head to say this will kill somebody if you continue and it’s not acceptable” (P3, focus group 2)*

Prospective teachers recognised perpetration motives revolved around dominance and status within the peer-group. Some participants recognised perpetrators were unaware the impact their actions had on their target. ITT should provide strategies to prospective teachers on how to address the impact of cyberbullying, in the hope to reduce cyberbullying involvement across the school and wider setting. As prospective teachers perceived educating pupils on the consequences associated with cyberbullying would be an effective strategy, ITT courses should provide resources to facilitate this education. Implications here suggest teachers should incorporate cyberbullying education and awareness in their curriculum to highlight negative experiences for those victimised, in the hope to reduce perpetration motives. In addition, implications of these findings suggest a need to explore how current teachers address cyberbullying in the school, and the type of strategies they use to combat cyberbullying (see Chapter 6).

### 5.3.2.2 *Victimisation*

Prospective teachers discussed the role of victimisation and consequences associated with cyberbullying behaviours. Participants identified how cyberbullying impacts those involved:

*“the fact that you can’t escape it [...] means that it’s going to wear on their mind almost all the time, which all of a sudden they’re not going to be as engaged in your lessons because they’re fearing for their safety” (P3, focus group 1)*

Prospective teachers recognised the accessibility to target victims is going to have an incessant reminder to those targeted leading to consequences in the school environment. Concerning victimisation, prospective teachers were aware of the detrimental consequences for victims associated with cyberbullying involvement, including the impact on academic achievement and attainment. This reflects previous findings in the literature (Devine & Lloyd, 2012; Livingstone & Smith, 2014; Marsh et al., 2010). Schools should provide e-safety education, specifically about cyberbullying to provide those that are victimised the capabilities and knowledge to take measures to reduce prolonged exposure. Participants discussed how the role of publicity can impact on those that are victimised:

*“if it’s really public, obviously that can be really horrific for, for an individual to feel like they’re surrounded and up against it because the whole world seems to be watching” (P3, focus group 1)*

While prospective teachers recognised that public forms of cyberbullying can lead to increased consequences to those that are targeted, attributed to a wider audience, they also recognised public incidents can prompt peer support:

*“on a public thing, you get more chance of another child possibly sticking up for them, when its private, that child has no back up, that child has no, nobody who could possibly step in” (P1, focus group 2)*

So, while participants recognise public incidents to be more severe due to the increased consequences for the victim, it is possible victims receive more support compared to an on-going private incident. This suggests that young people may respond differently depending on the role of publicity in cyberbullying. As prospective teachers view the nature of publicity as a key element in cyberbullying, this merits a need to explore how young people respond according to such factors (see Chapter 7). In which case, schools should provide training for teachers, so they understand the role of publicity, and provide adequate support to the victim irrespective of publicity due to different levels of resilience:

*“some students are quiet, they can take it on the chin, but others might not” (P3, focus group 2)*

Prospective teachers perceived a typology behind victimisation, in that victims are targeted due to their 'difference'. Boulton (2013) examined young adults perceived self-blame for their childhood victimisation in the UK and found that previous victims of bullying would self-blame their victimisation (i.e., 'If I was bullied, it would be because I deserved it'). This self-blame could lead to increased detrimental consequences for the victim and prolonged victimisation. However, prospective teachers did note that some victims have a degree of resilience that would act as coping strategies, and as a result, ITT courses should provide strategies to prospective teachers to build resilience at the classroom level. Therefore, schools should provide strategies to allow young people to build their resilience. Schools should encourage those that are victimised to disclose their cyber victimisation. However, participants also recognised that victims of cyberbullying may choose not to seek help:

*"to get help is sort of like a double-edged sword in a way, there's that whole confidence level admitting you need help and there's another side admitting you have done something wrong at the same time" (P3, focus group 2)*

According to prospective teachers, victims of cyberbullying struggle to seek support for their victimisation as they could be to blame for the instigation of the cyberbullying incident. In this case, schools should continue to reassure young people and take a proactive rather than a reactive

approach to managing cyberbullying to allow young people to learn from their mistakes.

### 5.3.3 Management of Cyberbullying

This theme comprised of four sub-themes: responsibility, response, strategies in tackling bullying and training. The participants discussed the responsibility to address cyberbullying across at the school level, individual level and parents. Participants discussed their response to cyberbullying, considering the publicity and severity of cyberbullying. Participants discussed the effectiveness of different strategies including policies, education and discussions. The prospective teachers reflected on the extent their ITT course prepared them to manage cyberbullying as prospective teachers.

#### 5.3.3.1 *Responsibility*

The participants discussed the responsibility to address cyberbullying at the teacher and school level. They perceived staff should be aware and up to date on current cyberbullying related issues:

*“I think definitely there needs to be some consistency amongst all the staff, they all need to be on the same page” (P3, focus group 2)*

As argued by P3 schools should provide additional training for all members of staff to allow any member of staff to manage a cyberbullying incident. The additional training will help staff identify and respond to cyberbullying through appropriate channels. Prospective teachers did



recognise as prospective teachers they have a responsibility to address the issue:

*“we are privy to this information, so we have a responsibility to, to act on it and duty of care” (P2, focus group 1)*

These new perspectives are interesting because they suggest prospective teachers understand their responsibility to educate young people on the appropriate use of digital technologies and to combat cyberbullying. Despite this argument, some participants recognised students should be able to make informed choices:

*“it’s not up to [teachers] to keep an eye on them and it’s not up to the teachers’ ability to erm [...] recognise when something is getting dangerous, it’s up to the students to make those informed intelligent decisions” (P3, focus group 1)*

It could be that young people need to take more responsibility for their actions, allowing them to learn and reflect on their choices. Prospective teachers identified that the responsibility to address cyberbullying is across teachers, pupils and parents. However, they recognised a lack of understanding and awareness on the parents’ behalf, and as a result, schools should provide additional support to provide consistency in

knowledge with staff and parents. The school and staff have a responsibility to educate and manage emotional and social issues in the school, so should be encouraged to have stronger beliefs in the schools' commitment to address the issue.

#### 5.3.3.2 *Response*

When responding to cyberbullying incidents, the participants recognised the importance of urgency in addressing the situation, to avoid opportunities for the perpetrator to continue their behaviour:

*“it needs to be addressed seriously, because if it comes to you as a teacher, if you don’t address that first instance that it happened, you’re now giving the bully, the opportunity to continue doing it, because [the bully] will now see it as a good thing to start bullying others” (P1, focus group 1)*

This illustrates the need for an immediate response regardless of the repetition of the incident, to set an example of inappropriate behaviour in the hope to reduce future perpetration. In terms of publicity some participants would *“give them the same level of seriousness” (P1, focus group 2)*, although the consensus across both focus groups was that participants would have an immediate response to public acts of cyberbullying compared to private:

*“if you know its public you need to stamp it out immediately, if its private, you flag it up. I don’t think you need to stamp out private the same way you can public, because public, public domains, you can get it taken down. If its private you can’t necessarily get it taken down in the same manner” (P3, focus group 2)*

Prospective teachers recognised that all incidents of cyberbullying need to be addressed. However, they also recognised that their management of the issue is influenced by the publicity and severity of each incident. For example, some prospective teachers argued public acts of cyberbullying are more severe than private incidents due to the increased audience, and therefore merit immediate intervention. While previous research has shown adolescents view public acts as more severe (Sticca & Perren, 2013), prospective teachers did recognise that positive bystander support is greater in public incidents compared to private ones. The anonymity and autonomy online allow bystanders to control how they provide positive support (Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2014). However, others have argued the lack of authority figures and regulations online, mean bystanders are more likely to ignore the incident, or even join the bully (Patterson et al., 2016). For example, in public incidents, the participants perceived *“other people might jump on a bandwagon”* (P3, focus group 2), which highlights the severity of public acts of cyberbullying:

*“the public one is [...] always more serious, because it’s a [...] wider audience for it and [...] it spreads a lot quicker. It’s like which is worst, a match or a fire” (P3, focus group 2)*

Prospective teachers did highlight the immediate transition of publicity acts (i.e., from private to public), and therefore ITT courses need to demonstrate all forms of cyberbullying, irrespective of publicity, merits immediate intervention. Further, ITT courses and schools can promote positive bystander awareness through e-safety sessions, to help young people take more responsibility to address the issue. For example, ITT courses should review the curriculum to ensure they provide cyberbullying awareness education to allow prospective teachers to become competent on the issue.

#### **5.3.3.3 Strategies in Tackling Cyberbullying**

Participants discussed the importance of policies in the school environment to manage cyberbullying. The participants recognised a need for all schools to have a cyberbullying specific policy, to highlight appropriate use of online tools and digital technologies:

*“policy in place about cyberbullying, that it is not acceptable, at least in that environment [...], the right policy, and taking action according to the policy will definitely help, in the school environment” (P1, focus group 1)*

Prospective teachers discussed the need to implement cyberbullying specific policies in the school environment, as this would reinforce appropriate behaviour and positive uses of technology. Previous content analyses of school policies have shown an increase in the number of anti-bullying policies that have addressed schools, from 8.5% (Smith et al., 2008), and 12% (Smith et al., 2012) in England, and 71% in Northern Ireland (Purdy & Smith, 2016). As policies are important to provide guidance for acceptable behaviour in the school (Von Marées & Petermann, 2012), it is encouraging ITT courses are promoting these beliefs across prospective teachers. The participants talked about the effectiveness of education as a preventive strategy for cyberbullying. In this strategy, participants perceived educating young people on the positive uses of digital technology would be beneficial. Further, participants recognised the need to create “*a positive safe learning environment*” (P3, focus group 1), by educating young people at an early age on the consequences of cyberbullying involvement, to highlight their awareness and understanding:

*“it’s really important you make sure educations there, so it’s a preventive measure rather than a responsive one” (P3, focus group 1)*

The participants acknowledged the prominence to educate young people on the rules with technology use. Prospective teachers perceived educating pupils on the consequences associated with cyberbullying and appropriate use of technology would be an effective strategy to manage

cyberbullying. As prospective teachers, they can encourage schools to implement e-safety sessions with a focus on technology use and cyberbullying behaviours. Participants recognised the role of parents in tackling bullying, although agreed the responsibility of the school to help educate parents:

*“parents, should be enlightened, like in parents evening, when parents come to school. They should also be told about how they could also help their children from home” (P1, focus group 1)*

While there is debate concerning who is ultimately responsible addressing cyberbullying and protecting young people, prospective teachers argue schools need to take the educating role to help parents better understand cyberbullying, in order to address the issue in the home environment.

#### **5.3.3.4 Training**

Reflecting on completing their ITT course, the participants recognised the ITT course did not prepare them to manage cyberbullying as prospective teachers:

*P1: “I don’t think I have learnt anything about cyberbullying from this course”  
(P1, focus group 2)*

*P5: "I've just done an e-safety module in year seven and it doesn't talk about cyberbullying" (P5, focus group 2)*

So, while some participants had some training on e-safety in their ITT course, none of the participants had any training on cyberbullying. Reflecting on the ITT course, prospective teachers perceived the course had provided no preparation or guidance on how to address cyberbullying. As cyberbullying can occur at any time, it is important teachers are equipped with the appropriate intervention strategies to address the issue (Snakenborg et al., 2011). While prospective teachers do not feel prepared or confident to address cyberbullying, studies in Switzerland and USA suggest that young people perceive this form of bullying to be more severe than its traditional counterpart (Sticca & Perren, 2013; Sobba et al., 2017). Discussing how ITT courses can improve their delivery and implementation of cyberbullying awareness and preparation, the participants recognised that real-life experiences and stories from victims and/or perpetrators would be effective:

*"somebody come in, a teenager come in who's experienced it [...] because that's when you start to engage with them fully, I think there's that disconnect that exists between a lot of theory that's delivered" (P3, focus group 2)*

This suggests ITT courses need to arrange guest lectures from individuals who have prior victimisation experience of cyberbullying, to provide real world context for prospective teachers to engage with, to increase their ability to identify cyberbullying. Participants lacked the confidence to address and manage incidences of cyberbullying. As a result, the participants perceived that experience was key to learning and developing awareness and understanding to manage cyberbullying:

*“I think the greatest tool to, to, learning how to respond to cyberbullying is, is, you know, actually experiencing it” (P2, focus group 1)*

In addition to providing explicit e-safety training, ITT courses need to provide structured experiences to allow prospective teachers to engage with the identification and management of cyberbullying. ITT education should encourage dialogue with prospective teachers about cyberbullying, to emphasise the extent of cyberbullying and appropriate strategies to address the issue.

#### **5.4 Chapter Summary**

The study has addressed RQ2 of the thesis on ‘what are prospective and current teachers’ perceptions of factors that should be considered when managing cyberbullying?’, addressing the aspect of prospective teachers. The findings of the focus group study showed that prospective teachers



perceived the nature of cyberbullying is evolving and becoming socially acceptable for young people. Prospective teachers discussed an awareness of perpetration motives and victim consequences associated with involvement, which impacted on disclosure intentions. The prospective teachers discussed several issues responding to cyberbullying but held some positive suggestions to manage the issue in the school environment. These new perspectives from prospective teachers offer a unique contribution on prospective teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying, which can help guide ITT courses and schools provide the adequate training to increase their ability to act against cyberbullying. The prospective teachers focused on discussing how they perceive and respond to cyberbullying in the school environment in the context of pupils and did not discuss any experience of having experienced cyberbullying themselves as adults. This sample was a self-selecting group and so their views on cyberbullying could differ to other prospective teachers in the same ITT course. The issue on self-selection is discussed later in this thesis (see Chapter 8: section 8.8). However, the focus groups allowed for participants to support and explore their ideas with others that understand and have similar experiences.

To further address RQ2, the next chapter considers the views of in-service teachers towards cyberbullying, as such views would provide an insightful account on their management of cyberbullying on a day-to-day basis.

## CHAPTER 6

### TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES TOWARDS CYBERBULLYING ACROSS EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

#### 6.1 Introduction

Bullying in the school environment is a challenge that teachers are expected to address within their role (Stewart & Fritsch, 2011; Von Marées & Petermann, 2012). In England, there are requirements from the Government to address bullying in schools, with a legal responsibility for schools to respond to bullying both within and outside the school environment (Department for Education, 2017). As teachers are required to respond to incidents of cyberbullying (Department for Education, 2017; Willard, 2007), it is important to consider their views to provide a valuable insight on the management of cyberbullying within schools in England.

The introduction of digital technologies and the availability to communicate online have introduced new dynamics in bullying, placing increased pressure and challenges for schools (Green et al., 2017; Stewart & Fritsch, 2011). Despite prior reviews reporting the effectiveness of anti-bullying interventions in combating cyberbullying in the school (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Gaffney, Farrington, Espelage, & Ttofi, 2019), the extent to which teachers view and manage cyberbullying requires further attention. To further understand teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying, it is important to examine the research that addresses teachers' perceptions towards bullying more generally. For example, a study in Netherlands found that in

classrooms where teachers exhibited reduced control to intervene in bullying there were increased cyberbullying victimisation rates in the classroom (Oldenburg et al., 2015), suggesting the responses of teachers can impact on pupil's overall involvement in bullying. Comparing reports from 236 American teachers on responses to physical, verbal, and relational bullying from vignettes, it was incidents of physical bullying that elicited disciplinary behaviours and immediate intervention compared to verbal and relational acts of bullying (Yoon, Sulkowski, & Bauman, 2016). This implies there are variations in how teachers respond according to the type of bullying. In addition to this, a study of Australian teachers found they were also more likely to provide support for the victim of direct bullying compared to indirect bullying, which was true regardless of teaching experience (Byers, Caltabiano, & Caltabiano, 2011).

From a theoretical perspective, social cognitive theory proposed by Bandura (1986) provides a useful explanation on the influences of thought processes on behavioural actions. For example, one key cognitive component is self-efficacy. This centres on the judgement or belief to succeed in a situation. In the context of bullying, if teachers believe they are capable of intervening and managing a situation they witness, they are more likely to implement their intervention actions. However, the intent and action in the theoretical construct of self-efficacy can also be different. For example, a research study in Japan has shown that by improving self-efficacy, the intention-behaviour gap can be reduced, promoting the belief, and importantly the action to succeed in a situation (Isa, Ueda, Nakamura, Misu, & Ono, 2019). In the context of teachers, research has explored bullying

intervention self-efficacy and teachers' interventions. For example, in the bullying literature, studies of American and German teachers found that those who report higher levels of bullying intervention self-efficacy were more likely to intervene than those who reported lower levels (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013; Fischer & Bilz, 2019). The study by Duong et al. also found that for those teachers with less experience, the bullying intervention self-efficacy was the only predictor when responding to bullying. The notion of bullying intervention self-efficacy has also been reported in the context of cyberbullying (Boulton et al., 2014; Williford & Depaolis, 2016), and so this domain specific self-efficacy is an important factor to consider in regard to anti-cyberbullying strategies. However, as schools are under increasing pressure to manage cyberbullying (Green et al., 2017; Spears et al., 2009), it is important to explore the perspectives of those in the teaching profession regarding the factors that may influence cyberbullying intervention.

As highlighted in the systematic review in Chapter 4, there is a limited scope of existing literature addressing this growing issue, with inconsistent reports on teachers' management towards cyberbullying. For example, while some Canadian teachers feel cyberbullying does not constitute a problem they are responsible for (Li, 2008), other research with Canadian teachers also suggest they are unprepared to address the issue (Cassidy et al., 2012). However, views of teachers from a study in New Zealand suggest that they perceive they have a responsibility to do more to address cyberbullying (Green et al., 2017). Examining teachers' strategies to address cyberbullying, a study of American teachers found that parental inclusion with the school and highlighting consequences of cyberbullying to pupils

were reported as the most helpful strategies in managing cyberbullying (Stauffer et al., 2012). In a sample of 328 teachers from elementary, middle, and high school educational levels in Israel, the majority believed cyberbullying to be a problem in the school environment, with elementary teachers placing greater concern on cyberbullying (Eden et al., 2013). In addition, findings from 2781 teachers from Taiwan across elementary, middle, and high schools, found that 60.7% of teachers believed bystanders of cyberbullying would inform a teacher or adult (Huang & Chou, 2013). However, qualitative research with 14 secondary school teachers in the UK suggested that teachers thought young people did not have the confidence in their teachers' ability to manage cyberbullying, hence reducing disclosure of victimisation to those in the educational community (Betts & Spenser, 2015). Further to this, the results from study 1 reported in Chapter 5 show that prospective teachers perceive teachers have a responsibility to address cyberbullying in the school environment. This suggests it is important to examine teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying across different educational levels (i.e., teachers across primary, secondary, and college schools) in order to identify discrepancies and similarities in teachers' views. Therefore, the study reported in this chapter will explore the views of primary, secondary, and college teachers. Study 1 (see Chapter 5) found that prospective teachers perceived the severity and publicity of cyberbullying as important factors to address when it comes to addressing cyberbullying. For example, Study 1 found that prospective teachers perceived public forms of cyberbullying to be more severe, and so would implement different strategies to address the situation, compared to private forms of cyberbullying. As such,

the severity and publicity of bullying are important to consider in the educational context because they may influence how teachers perceive and respond to cyberbullying. Such factors were also raised and discussed by prospective teachers (see Chapter 5, Study 1).

## **6.2 The Role of Severity**

The extent to which an incident of bullying is regarded as more or less severe has been implicated in the literature as a key factor influencing how bullying is perceived, and hence responded to, for both young people and teachers. For example, initial research from a sample of 92 English 11-16-year-old pupils comparing different types of cyberbullying and the perceived impact on the victim found picture/video types of cyberbullying to be regarded as the most severe compared to text bases cyberbullying (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, & Tippett, 2006). Similarly, in a further study of 533 English 11-16-year-olds, visual acts of cyberbullying (e.g., spreading of pictures/videos) were perceived as more severe than text-based acts (e.g., emails/texts) (Smith et al., 2008). Such views were supported via focus group data from the same study, attributing the wider audience and absence of peer-support online as factors that increased the impact for the victim (Smith et al., 2008). Similar findings were also reported by Slonje and Smith (2008), with Swedish pupils describing a greater psychological impact due to the 'concreteness effect' from seeing the embarrassing photo/video. As young people view these acts of cyberbullying differently according to the level of severity, it is important to consider if teachers' perspectives are

similar or dissimilar, as such views could have an influence on teachers' capacity to intervene. Study 1 (see Chapter 5) found that prospective teachers are more likely to respond and address cyberbullying immediately when in the public domain, and so this suggests the role of publicity is an important factor to further explore amongst in-service teachers.

In the context of teachers' intervention to bullying, research has suggested that the severity of the incident can be associated with teachers' likelihood to intervene. For example, non-physical forms of bullying were deemed less serious compared to physical incidents by a study of English teachers (Maunder, Harrop, & Tattersall, 2010). In terms of cyberbullying, studies of English and Canadian teachers have reported that even when teachers are aware of cyber related victimisation experiences, some may feel as if cyber acts of victimisation are less serious than traditional forms (Boulton et al., 2014; Craig et al., 2011). As researchers argue that there is a close overlap between traditional and cyber forms of bullying (Olweus, 2012; 2013; Quirk & Campbell, 2015), particularly between cyberbullying and verbal/relational forms of bullying (Spears, Slee, Owens, & Johnson, 2009; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009), it is important to understand in more depth teachers' perceptions to cyberbullying in terms of severity. The current study reported in this chapter will explore the notion of severity across primary, secondary, and college teachers.

### 6.3 The Role of Publicity

Research has suggested that cyberbullying may vary according to the publicity, often distinguished across public (i.e., visible to anyone), semi-public (i.e., visible to those in a group), and private (i.e., visible by the bully and victim only) (Dooley et al., 2009; Fawzi, 2009; Machmutow, Perren, Sticca, & Alsaker, 2012). Findings from a study of young people in the USA suggest cyberbullying is more prevalent via public mediums online compared to private communication (Schade, Larwin, & Larwin, 2017). This finding is not trivial considering that more private forms of cyberbullying often go unnoticed or at least fail to be disclosed to teachers. However, the findings may also suggest that bullies have a motive to target victims more publicly for greater humiliation and potential dissemination. Qualitative research with 25 Australian adolescents found that public instances of cyberbullying were perceived to be more humiliating: *'because it was online for everyone to see, it's more embarrassing'* (Dredge et al., 2014, p289). This suggests the context of publicity could explain discrepancies in young people's reported negative outcomes from victimisation, so it is crucial to consider how those in the teaching profession regard publicity, especially in relation to their intervention of cyberbullying. Study 1 (see Chapter 5) found that prospective teachers had a good awareness on the different levels of publicity, and they also held different strategies to address cyberbullying according to the nature of publicity. These findings therefore show that the nature of publicity needs to be explored more explicitly, and so the study reported in this chapter will consider how in-service teachers perceive this factor.



Research addressing the roles of publicity and severity have started to acknowledge the connection and association between these two features. For example, in a sample of 70 adolescents from Italy, Spain, and Germany across 9 focus groups, public incidents were perceived more severe than those where the bully targeted the victim privately (Nocentini et al., 2010). This was attributed to the unlimited audience in public domains, intensifying the negative consequences for the victim. While some research identified no link between publicity and perceived severity (Palladino et al., 2017), the consensus remains that public acts of cyberbullying are more severe due to the wider audience, increased humiliation/embarrassment, and reduced control over the situation (Bauman & Newman, 2013; Menesini, Nocentini, & Calussi, 2011; Nocentini et al., 2010; Wright et al., 2017). This reduced control associated with victims targeted in public domains can lead to increased negative outcomes (Kowalski, Limber, Limber, & Agatston, 2012), including helplessness (Spears et al., 2009). However, it is possible cyberbullying victims being targeted privately can take greater control through more effective coping strategies (e.g., blocking the bully) (Slonje et al., 2013).

Some research has suggested from a sample of Taiwan teachers that they perceive the distribution of embarrassing photos or videos as the most prevalent type of cyberbullying within the school (Huang & Chou, 2013), so teachers have an important role in supporting the victims (DeSmet et al., 2015). Study 1 (see Chapter 5) found that public instances of cyberbullying were suggested to be more severe, attributed to the increased impact on the victim, and so the factor of publicity will be further explored from the

perspective of primary, secondary, and college teachers. As such, Study 2 reported in this chapter will explore teachers' perceptions on the roles of publicity and severity, to gain an insight into their views and current preventive measures based on these features.

#### **6.4 The Role of Bystanders**

The roles of severity and publicity in cyberbullying are also known to influence bystander responses, and so exploring teachers' perceptions on this issue would be valuable as teachers have an important role in the successful implementation of bystander intervention in the school (Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012). Despite the debate on the effectiveness of school-based bullying intervention programs centred on working with peers in traditional bullying (Smith, 2016; Smith, Salmivalli, & Cowie, 2012), the role of bystanders that witness traditional bullying and cyberbullying have an important role in the prevention of bullying as peers, but also for people in authority (Doane, Ehlke, & Kelley, 2020; Menesini, Zambuto, & Palladino, 2018; Polanin et al., 2012).

Bystanders who are present and witness cyberbullying are likely to interpret the incident which could influence their perceptions of the victim and bully based on the content they see (Walther, Van Der Heide, Hamel, & Shulman, 2009). As such, factors such as the publicity and severity of cyberbullying have been found to influence behavioural intentions to support the victim or not. On the one hand, studies of Flemish and English young people show that cyber bystanders are more likely to positively intervene

through victim support or seeking help from an adult when they witness a severe compared to a mild cyberbullying act (Bastiaensens et al., 2014, 2015; Macaulay, Boulton, & Betts, 2019). In addition, bystanders online were more inclined to support victims of cyberbullying when targeted more publicly (Bastiaensens et al., 2014, 2015). On the other hand, studies of Polish and Australian young people have reported that bystanders can also amplify the severity of the incident if they respond negatively by supporting the bully (Barlińska, Szuster, & Winiewski, 2013; Dredge et al., 2014). The finding that bullying severity can influence bystanders' intentions has also been reported in the limited qualitative research in this area (DeSmet et al., 2012; 2014; Forsberg, Thornberg, & Samuelsson, 2014; Thornberg, Landgren, & Wiman, 2018). For example, in a qualitative study of 17 students from Sweden, participants discussed that they were more likely to intervene in bullying when they regarded the situation as serious (Thornberg et al., 2018). Previous qualitative research of Swedish young people has found that cyberbullying is often observed by students as non-serious, and so would intervene less (Forsberg et al., 2014). In addition, qualitative research has also found that when students held strong beliefs in their ability to intervene as a defender, bystanders were more likely to intervene in bullying, suggesting that defender self-efficacy has an important role in bullying intervention (Forsberg et al., 2018; Thornberg et al., 2018).

In a systematic review on factors that influence bystander intervention in cyberbullying, only 4 out of the 19 articles identified explored this through a qualitative approach (Domínguez-Hernández, Bonell, & Martínez-González, 2018). One such study by Desmet et al. (2014) reported an overlap in how

young people respond as a bystander in traditional bullying and cyberbullying, suggesting approaches to promote positive intervention can be implemented for both forms of bullying. Despite this overlap, young people preferred to support victims of cyberbullying in person rather than online (DeSmet et al., 2012; 2014). In addition, research exploring qualitative responses from 961 Australian adolescents found that personal factors such as moral responsibility and empathy engagement with the victim, played an important role in the capacity to positively intervene as a bystander to cyberbullying incidents (Price et al., 2014). While prior research has focused on exploring how young people respond to bullying, the current study considers how those within the teaching profession perceive bystanders to cyberbullying. These views would provide a unique perspective and shed light on whether teachers' views are similar or dissimilar to those of young people.

From a theoretical perspective, bystander intentions can be explained by 'diffusion of responsibility', as proposed in the social psychological research by Latane and Darley (Latane & Darley 1976; see Hogg & Vaughn, 2011). This theoretical notion would argue positive bystander intentions would decrease in the presence of other bystanders. However, prior research in England has found how diffusion of responsibility in cyberbullying can also be explained by perceived severity, with young people offering more support for severe types of bullying (Macaulay et al., 2019). This suggests that perceived severity of cyberbullying may act to influence how bystanders online respond to cyberbullying. The current study offers a unique contribution to the literature by exploring the views of teachers, who

ultimately play an important role in promoting bystander intervention and contributing to the effectiveness of anti-bullying interventions (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Gaffney et al., 2019; Polanin et al., 2012).

## **6.5 Study Exploring Teachers' Perceptions**

The existing research exploring the roles of publicity and severity has so far predominantly addressed young peoples' perspectives; consequently, the perceptions of those in the teaching profession are currently under-researched. As identified from the systematic review (see Chapter 4), teachers are largely unprepared to address cyberbullying, with inconsistencies in confidence and reported management strategies. As such, an insight into their awareness of the roles of publicity and severity may guide future recommendations to develop teachers' confidence and competence on these issues. In particular, the current study provides an insight to see if teachers' views act in a similar or dissimilar way to those of young people and the implications of this for the management of cyberbullying in the school. While cyberbullying is considered to be most prevalent during early-mid adolescence, all young people are vulnerable to cyberbullying involvement, so it is important to explore teachers' perceptions across primary, secondary, and college educational levels in the UK (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010). Further, the age children are going online is getting younger, with majority of children aged 5-15 years in England going online for at least 9 hours or as much as 21 hours a week on average (Ofcom, 2016). In addition, guidelines have been

provided to primary, secondary, and college institutions in England which outlines the responsibility of teachers to address cyberbullying (Department for Education, 2017). Together, this suggests a need to examine teachers' perceptions across all educational levels in England, as they have the capacity and facilities to target large groups of young people via anti-bullying and e-safety measures.

The study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying, specifically addressing the roles of publicity and severity. This is the first known comprehensive study to address teachers' perceptions in this area across different educational levels and offers an original contribution to the literature. RQ2 of the thesis explores what are prospective and current teachers' perceptions of factors that should be considered when managing cyberbullying in the school environment? Study 1 (see Chapter 5) addressed this research question in the context of prospective teachers, so this study is looking at teachers that are currently teaching in England. To address this research question of the thesis, the following specific questions guided the aim of the current study:

1. To what extent are teachers aware of cyberbullying?
2. How do teachers respond to cyberbullying?
3. What strategies do teachers use to address cyberbullying?

## 6.6 Method

### 6.6.1 Participants

The study was approved by the College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Nottingham Trent University (No. 2017/01, see Appendix A). Participants were recruited from 10 schools in England, across primary (5 focus groups, 31 teachers), secondary (2 focus groups, 11 teachers), and college (3 focus groups, 21 teachers) educational levels. A total of 63 teachers (10 males) participated across the 10 focus groups, conducted between May – September 2017. Table 6.1 shows the number of participants for each focus group and the corresponding educational level the teachers were currently teaching. Table 6.2 outlines the participants' age and teaching experience across the educational levels. While the size of the focus groups varies, this aligns with prior recommendations for larger focus group discussions for a breadth of knowledge (Krueger, 2014), and smaller discussions between three and five participants for additional depth and contribution between participants (Ritchie et al., 2013).

*Table 6.1:* Information on the focus groups recruited.

Focus group	Educational level	Participants (males)
1	Primary	5 (0)
2	Primary	7 (1)
3	Primary	9 (0)
4	Primary	3 (1)
5	Primary	7 (0)
6	Secondary	3 (1)
7	Secondary	8 (2)
8	College	8 (0)
9	College	8 (2)
10	College	5 (3)

*Table 6.2: Participants' age and teaching experience across educational levels.*

Age (A) / Experience (E)	Educational teaching level (N = years)		
	Primary	Secondary	College
<i>A</i>			
Under 25	7	1	1
25-30	7	4	1
31-40	6	2	4
41-50	8	3	7
51-60	3	1	7
Over 60	0	0	1
<i>E</i>			
Less than 1	6	1	3
1-2	3	0	1
3-5	8	4	3
6-10	4	3	5
11-15	2	2	3
16-20	3	0	2
More than 20	5	1	4

### 6.6.2 Procedure

A convenience random sample of schools was contacted in the UK, Midlands. The ten schools recruited for the current study were state-funded primary, secondary, and college schools in urban areas. The participating schools taught young people from a wide range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, as described in all the schools' recent Ofsted reports. The Ofsted School Inspection Handbook requires schools to provide information and evidence on safeguarding and anti-bullying measures (Ofsted, 2019). The recent Ofsted reports for the schools reported 'good' to 'excellent' safeguarding and bullying measures described as 'effective' and 'rigorous'.

All participants were provided with an information sheet (Appendix B) and consent form (Appendix C) detailing the nature and purpose of the focus



group discussion. Participants also received a debrief after participation (Appendix D). Participants gave their written consent prior to taking part. Participants then completed a participant information sheet regarding their demographic information (Appendix E). Recruitment aligned with staff development/training days or after the school day to avoid interruptions to teaching requirements. The focus groups explored teachers' perceptions of the roles of publicity and severity in cyberbullying. The focus groups were conducted following a semi-structured interview guide informed by prior literature (Boulton et al., 2014; Craig et al., 2011), and the findings of the systematic review in Chapter 4. The findings from the systematic review of existing literature (see Chapter 4), and those of prospective teachers (Study 1, see Chapter 5) also informed the type of questions asked during the focus group (Appendix G). For example, prompt questions included '*Would you respond differently depending on how severe the cyberbullying act was, and why would you respond that way?*' and '*What circumstances would you be more likely to intervene in an act of cyberbullying?*'. All focus groups were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and lasted approximately one hour (average 50 minutes 52 seconds). As outlined in Chapter 5: section 5.2.3, transcription guidelines were adhered to (McLellan et al., 2003).

### 6.6.3 Data Analysis

An inductive reflexive thematic analysis was conducted to understand and explore the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2019), as discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.2.3. Chapter 5, section 5.2.3 also discussed the nature of reflexive thematic analysis and why other recommended approaches like inter-coder reliability were not followed (see

Braun & Clarke, 2020). As cyberbullying is addressed and managed through group decisions in the school environment, focus groups provided a more accurate reflection of discussions made in the school environment. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 5: section 5.2.3, thematic analysis was employed compared to other qualitative approaches to meet the focus of the programme of research. The reflexive thematic analysis allowed the researcher to analyse the data and reflect on the meaning of the data (Braun et al., 2019). This approach allowed a clearer understanding of meaning and group perspectives on cyberbullying, rather than individual experiences and characteristics (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2019, Krueger, 2014).

Each focus group was transcribed verbatim shortly after being conducted. The transcripts were read and re-read for initial familiarisation of the content. After familiarisation, the content was reviewed and coded according to the research aims (Braun & Clarke, 2006), addressing teachers' perceptions towards publicity and severity in cyberbullying. This process was repeated several times for each transcript to ensure all features and views of participants had been coded appropriately and fully explored. The codes were reviewed and collated for each transcript to generate initial categories. These were then reviewed and collated across the whole data set for the development of initial themes and sub-themes. The themes were assessed and refined to reflect the participants' accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2019).

## 6.7 Results

Three themes were identified from the reflexive thematic analysis: (a) role of severity, (b) differential roles of publicity, and (c) bystander intentions.

Table 6.3 provides a representation of the themes and associated sub-themes.

*Table 6.3: Summary of the themes and associated sub-themes.*

Theme	Sub-theme	Example
Theme 1: Role of severity	1. A Perceptions of severity	<i>“Well, an argument online would be a mild incident of cyberbullying. Whereas a severe incident would be when the bully loses control of what they are saying and the number of people who have seen it” (P7, focus group 3)</i>
	1.B Protocols in management	<i>“Taking action straight away, finding out if someone’s being bullied and having a conversation with that person. It’s our responsibility in education to speak to that person, whether it be a teacher, whether it be a coach, whether it be a support worker” (P6, focus group 8)</i>
Theme 2: Differential roles of publicity	2.A Typology of publicity	<i>“[Cyberbullying] can be done individually from one person to another, or from a group to a single person or from a single person to a few people. I mean it’s also the size of the audience that witnessed the incident” (P3, focus group 8)</i>
	2.B Responding to publicity	<i>“The level of support we put for the victim as well because I was thinking if it was a public thing we might involve [support worker] to put support in for the victim. Whereas if it was a private incident between two people, we probably wouldn’t need that level of support” (P1, focus group 2)</i>

	2.C Victim vulnerability	<i>“However, with peer pressure, you have to be involved in some of these group chats. And if you try and leave the group chat or you try and block the person that’s abusing you, everyone can still see what’s going on and then, of course, your social life suffers because you’re not getting involved which could lead to depression, anxiety and that sort of thing” (P5, focus group 8)</i>
Theme 3: Bystander intentions		<i>“I think in most cases some situations get out of hand a little bit. I don’t think anybody sets out or a lot of them don’t set out intentionally to cause harm, but it’s just fueled by other people joining in. So many people join in and you can see it just escalating up and up and up and up. If you get them right at the bottom you can calm it quite quickly, but when its escalated to much, it’s very difficult because there can be loads and loads and loads of people involved” (P8, focus group 8)</i>

### 6.7.1 Role of Severity

The role of severity theme comprised of two sub-themes: perceptions of severity and protocols in management. Participants discussed a typology of severity according to the type of cyberbullying perpetrated. The discussion extended to principles of repetition and how this changed the dynamics of perceived severity, while recognising the challenges of interpreting severity. The participants then discussed protocols in managing cyberbullying according to the severity of the incident. The importance to respond to all instances of cyberbullying was essential, although how the incident was managed would differ dependant on the severity of the bullying.

#### 6.7.1.1 *Perceptions of Severity*

Teachers across all educational levels discussed a typology of severity in relation to the type of cyberbullying being perpetrated, with text-messages being portrayed as less severe:

*“Well a mild one would be two children maybe in school, and one had just been sending texts to the other, I would say that’s mild” (P2, focus group 6)*

In contrast, all the participants perceived visual acts of cyberbullying (e.g., photos) to be more severe due to the potentially wider audience:

*“A severe one would be an inappropriate picture of a child going around, and a lot of people seeing that, that rings massive alarm bells” (P1, focus group 1)*

Primary, secondary, and college teachers perceived that if the act involved a wider audience this would increase the level of severity, with inappropriate photos being more severe than text-based acts of cyberbullying. These perspectives from teachers were also identified in focus group data from English 11-16-year-old children (Smith et al., 2008). Despite these views from teachers and young people, research has supported the notion that the context of cyberbullying is more important than the objective severity of a situation (Englander, 2019). In line with this view, compared to

secondary and college teachers, most primary teachers recognised differential levels of severity within photos depending on the context:

*“Or pictures, there can be degrees of severity in pictures, like a picture that just wasn’t very flattering or wasn’t very nice or an actual picture that was very inappropriate. So, there is like you say, there is definitely a range, a severity range” (P8, focus group 3)*

This suggests that while acts of cyberbullying involving photos may be more severe, it is the content and material of what is being sent that is more important when judging the severity of such incidents (Englander, 2019). While prior studies of young people in England suggest the anonymity and the wider audience associated with cyberbullying are linked with perceived severity (Smith et al., 2006; 2008), the views of primary teachers suggest contextual information (i.e., the content of the text or photo) regarding cyberbullying is a better indicator of the severity of the incident rather than the type of cyberbullying. In addition, the characteristic of repetition was recognised as an important component of the perceived severity of cyberbullying incidents from most primary and secondary teachers:

*“I think if it’s relentless as well. If it’s happened over and over again, then that would be treated more seriously than if somebody had said one comment, it’s still bad, but if its, more relentless then its more severe” (P7, focus group 4)*

Therefore, the repetition of cyberbullying is perceived to be more severe from primary and secondary teachers compared to single acts of online perpetration. However, although cyberbullying is partly defined using the repetitive characteristic from traditional bullying, this is more ambiguous online. For example, a single act of aggressive behaviour online can be viewed and/or shared multiple times by others (Smith, 2015; 2019). As such, teachers with a responsibility to manage cyberbullying should be informed to recognise different variations of repetition in the context of cyberbullying. While primary and secondary school teachers discussed how the repetition of cyberbullying can influence bullying severity, college teachers perceived that *“every case is severe potentially”* (P5, focus group 9), where the notion of severity should be defined through the victims’ perspective:

*“Yeah, because you have to define the term severity, because that individual who is being bullied, erm that could be really severe by just saying one or two words to somebody who’s had pictures and other things done so yeah”*  
(P6, focus group 8)

This suggests that teachers should regard all incidents as severe and judge appropriate responses according to the perceived severity determined by the victim. For example, while most teachers regard text-based cyberbullying to be less severe than photo incidents, primary teachers suggested it could be the former that is more severe for the victim:

*“Actually, the name-calling could be the straw that breaks the camel’s back, so actually there is no level of severity” (P2, focus group 5)*

#### *6.7.1.2 Protocols in Management of Cyberbullying*

Although some primary, secondary, and college teachers recognised that all incidents of cyberbullying can be severe, their management of the incident would also depend on the severity of the situation. For example, the teachers across all educational levels reported that their response would be different according to the severity of the situation:

*“Depending on the severity of it, if it’s something serious, we would report to the safeguarding team or the senior leaders would deal with it, erm, or if it is something small, it might be a case of talking to the two children or the parents, but again we would still go through the safeguarding team” (P1, focus group 1)*

This suggests the perceived severity of cyberbullying could have an impact on the teachers’ likelihood to intervene and the type of intervention implemented. Similarly, a prior study in USA has also reported that teacher intervention in bullying can be predicted by the perceived severity of the situation (VanZoeren & Weisz, 2018). In addition, secondary and college teachers tailored their intervention according to the type of cyberbullying:



*“If its photographs, its straight away a police matter, if its photographs that’s out there, we send straight away for police. If it’s erm, if it’s text-messaging, erm, then we deal with that differently, we tend to deal with that less if we can” (P7, focus group 7)*

Further, secondary and college teachers were aware of their legal responsibility and the regulations they must follow according to the severity of the incident. These teachers discussed the need to involve external agencies (e.g., the police) for more severe instances of cyberbullying, in their role to have a duty of care as outlined under the Protection of Children Act Section 1 (1978). Differences in reported management strategies according to the type of cyberbullying was also suggested by primary school teachers:

*“There’s a difference, text-messaging, in which we would meet and do a cyberbullying session and have a chat. But then that’s different to a photo being sent over which is sexually explicit and actually needs a criminal investigation as well” (P6, focus group 5)*

The teachers across all educational levels suggested the notion that while all cases of cyberbullying may be severe, distributed photos would need an immediate response through external involvement. In comparison, the teachers suggested that written forms of cyberbullying, discussed as less severe by most of the teachers, would be addressed through school discussions and formative educational sessions on cyberbullying. Despite

some college teachers perceiving the repetition of cyberbullying as not being important in the perceived severity of the situation, other college teachers suggested they would intervene differently:

*“From a teaching point of view, if I found out somebody had just been bullying somebody online and there is only a couple of posts, really horrible but only a couple or one, you might have a very long chat [...] but then if you have that chat and go away and do it again [...] well, you know, it’s now disciplinary” (P3, focus group 9)*

These views from primary, secondary, and college teachers suggest that the repetition of cyberbullying could influence how these acts are responded to and managed.

#### 6.7.2 Differential Roles of Publicity

The differential roles of publicity theme comprised three sub-themes: typology of publicity, responding to publicity, and victim vulnerability. In this theme, the teachers defined categories of publicity and how their response and management would vary according to the level of publicity. The teachers further discussed the perceived impact on victims and victims’ vulnerability according to the publicity of cyberbullying.

### 6.7.2.1 *Typology of Publicity*

Primary, secondary, and college teachers discussed and suggested a conceptualisation of levels of publicity across private, semi-public, and public incidents:

P4: *“Could private be literally sending direct like hurtful messages or abusive messages to one person, so you’re just receiving texts” (focus group 7)*

P3: *“Then semi-private, if there was a group of people in that chat, then public, for me it would be” (focus group 7)*

P1: *“Posting it online for everybody to see, yeah” (focus group 7)*

All the teachers perceived private acts of cyberbullying as occurring between two people through the medium of text-messages. Teachers recognised semi-public acts as extending to a group of people beyond the initial dyad, whereas public incidents involved a wider audience of people being able to witness the act. Primary teachers discussed the differences between semi-public and public according to the audience involved:

*“[Public] has the potential to literally go viral and to go global, but a WhatsApp message between six friends, its semi-public. But, but more*

*containable. Somebody would have to step outside of that and share it elsewhere, to become more public” (P5, focus group 2)*

In the focus groups, primary teachers suggested that semi-public incidents of cyberbullying are more ‘containable’ due to the fixed number of members within a group conversation. In addition, in online groups, young people “*choose the people you put in the group, whereas public anybody can see” (P6, focus group 3)*. Despite these views from primary teachers, most secondary and college teachers recognised the challenges defining such terms, suggesting private acts of cyberbullying could easily transition across the levels of publicity:

*“Private will very quickly become public, through experience, that’s what we get, its private and its nasty so they’ll pass it on and they’ll say you saw what they did or seen what they said, it doesn’t stay private long, if it’s something that’s, that’s nasty, it gets out there” (P6, focus group 7)*

Consequently, the secondary and college teachers in this sample perceive the notion of publicity in cyberbullying to be very ambiguous due to the instant transition from private, semi-public, to public. In addition, when cyberbullying is public, all teachers across educational levels recognised the lack of control over the potential distribution and dissemination of the cyberbullying incident:

*“Share it, and the rate it is shared at is one of the biggest issues, how quickly and how fast it’s shared” (P5, focus group 5)*

#### 6.7.2.2 *Responding to Publicity*

In the focus groups, primary, secondary, and college teachers discussed their management and response as teachers when addressing incidents of cyberbullying across different levels of publicity. While secondary and college teachers suggested all instances of cyberbullying would be addressed straight away regardless of publicity, some primary teachers discussed how their response would be different. For example, some primary teachers suggested they would implement an immediate response for public incidents of cyberbullying:

*P3: “I think if it was a public act of cyberbullying, like, we would have to deal with it more on a class or year group or school basis, so, there would have to be a bigger response” (focus group 4)*

*P1: “Because I think that it affected more people in a way, so it does seem a bit more pressing I guess” (focus group 4)*

Although some primary teachers respond immediately to public acts of cyberbullying due to the wider audience and potential impact for the victim, other primary teachers suggested cyberbullying perpetrated privately is just as important to address:

*“Yeah, I was just thinking like it might be a bit more, deep-seated if it’s just between the two people and you might need to unpick it a bit more than something as obvious as like a group and everybody’s just joined in, jumped on the bandwagon” (P2, focus group 4)*

While secondary and college teachers believed all incidents of cyberbullying should be addressed in the same manner, regardless of publicity, primary teachers discussed the challenges and difficulties when responding to public incidents in particular:

*“You wouldn’t be able to reign it in as quickly. I think if it was like a WhatsApp message we could get it, if it was six children involved, we could deal with six children, we could speak to them about it, but if it’s gone, like further than that you can’t pull it back in” (P1, focus group 2)*

This suggests primary teachers perceive public acts of cyberbullying as more difficult to address, due to the potential scale of dissemination. In the context of publicity, primary, secondary, and college teachers would intervene immediately and report to the safeguarding officer, as required and outlined in legislation and guidance for schools and teachers (see Chapter 3). Specifically, most primary teachers believed their response would not be influenced *‘by the reaction of the victim’* (P7, focus group 3). Instead, primary, secondary, and college teachers perceived perpetrators should receive equal disciplinary measures regardless of publicity. However,

primary teachers suggested the level of support for the victim should be tailored appropriately according to the impact on the victim:

*“We change the things that we do for the victim. Depending on how people have been involved. So, if the victim is, is particularly badly upset by it, it could be that, we might refer, them to our erm, emotional literacy support or teaching assistant who would then talk to them [...] there are, other avenues that we can explore for the victim, but for the perpetrators, the consequences would be the same” (P1, focus group 3)*

#### 6.7.2.3 *Victim Vulnerability*

In the focus groups, all the teachers discussed how publicity may impact the victim according to the negative consequences from victimisation. Initially, reflecting on private incidents of cyberbullying, some college teachers discussed the isolation associated with private victimisation:

*“If its private you are sort of dealing with it on your own so to speak, it’s just you and that anonymous person” (P1, focus group 8)*

The anonymous nature associated with cyberbullying could imply *perceived* or *actual* power for the perpetrator where they can target the victim in a private setting. However, primary and secondary teachers argued that more public acts of cyberbullying would *“feel really demoralising”* (P1, focus

group 4) for the victim due to the wider audience leading to increased negative feelings. Some of the college teachers also shared these views:

*“If someone had made negative comments that were public so other people could see it, I think that would be quite an embarrassing situation to be in and I think it could create a lot more feelings if it’s public than if it was private. If someone had done something negative or hurtful to me privately [...] I’m the only person that can see that, whereas if it was made public there are so many more eyes looking at that” (P4, focus group 10)*

Most primary, secondary, and college teachers perceived the wider audience associated with more public acts of cyberbullying could trigger wider negative consequences for the victim. On the other hand, as suggested by some secondary school teachers, the wider audience in public domains could mean perpetrators target victims in private domains for more prolonged victimisation with *“drip, drip, drip, a feed of negativity” (P1, focus group 6)*. In addition, as discussed by secondary and college teachers, perpetrators may target victims privately if they have the motive to conceal their perpetration from the public domain:

*“Don’t you think the person who’s putting it on there would realise there would be witnesses and save the really bad stuff for private because they know there are witnesses to what they said and put” (P2, focus group 10)*



However, most primary, secondary, and college teachers still suggested the wider audience associated with public incidents could increase the impact for the victim, *“the more public it is, the more severe it is, in terms of consequences for the victim”* (P5, focus group 2). In addition to this, primary, secondary, and college teachers perceived the impact for the victim would be greater when more people in the school environment were aware:

*“If you went to school the next day, you’d know that one person sent you a text-message and you’d be like oh just that person knows. But if you knew it had been on Facebook and shared hundreds of times, you’d come in and think, oh everyone knows about this, what they going to say, you’d be a bit different I think”* (P5, focus group 7)

These views from teachers in the UK across different educational levels suggest that the publicity of cyberbullying is an important factor to explore regarding perceived severity of bullying.

### 6.7.3 Bystander Intentions

Primary, secondary, and college teachers also discussed the role of bystanders, particularly in relation to perceived publicity of cyberbullying. Most of the teachers suggested that perpetrators target victims publicly due to the potential increased audience to encourage others to be negative:

*“Posting something online and encouraging people to be derogatory” (P7, focus group 5). On the other hand, most secondary and college teachers suggested the possibility for positive bystander behaviour when victims are targeted publicly:*

*“But then also when its public because, you’ve got other people who may be sticking up for you, and saying you shouldn’t say that [...] and be more positive towards the victim” (P6, focus group 8)*

This suggests that most secondary and college teachers perceived that when victims are targeted publicly, bystanders can choose to respond in a positive manner by helping the victim. However, some secondary school teachers noted that an absence of such bystander behaviour could amplify the negative outcomes for the victim: *“well it’s like a feeling of isolation, being isolated, nobody wants to help you” (P2, focus group 7)*. Some of the secondary teachers discussed this may be explained due to fear of retaliation or becoming the victim themselves:

*“Some people that wouldn’t necessarily instigate it will go along with it and spread it rather than, they would rather be on that side of it rather than the other side of it happening it to them” (P4, focus group 7)*

This notion raised by secondary school teachers has also been reported in qualitative research with Australian young people as a factor for not intervening (Thomas et al., 2012). While most teachers recognised the propensity for negative or positive bystander intentions when victims are targeted in the public domain, primary teachers suggested the challenge to support victims targeted privately:

*“Although, if its private it’s just between them, those two individuals, then nobody else knows about it. If its public, yes, you’ve got lots of negative from other people but there’s also the option to have support from other people as well. Whereas if it’s just you and them, nobody else might know about it, nobody’s there to help you” (P3, focus group 5)*

This suggests a degree of difficulty by primary school teachers supporting such victims. In the context of disclosure intentions, most teachers across primary, secondary, and college educational levels suggested that when more people are involved as bystanders, teachers perceived some bystanders would disclose the victimisation:

*“If there are more people in the group chat, there’s more likely that one of them will stand up and say this is happening [...] sometimes it’s not the person that’s being bullied that blows the whistle, its usually somebody else” (P6, focus group 10)*

Most teachers discussed the importance of bystanders in the online domain, particularly in respect to disclosure of bullying.

## **6.8 Discussion**

Three themes were identified across the ten focus groups from the reflexive thematic analysis: (a) role of severity, (b) differential roles of publicity, and (c) bystander intentions.

### **6.8.1 Theme 1: Role of Severity**

In the role of severity theme, primary, secondary, and college teachers discussed a typology of severity in relation to cyberbullying. Teachers across all educational levels suggested that text-based incidents of cyberbullying were less severe compared to photo/visual acts of cyberbullying. These views from teachers support prior research specifying how the type of cyberbullying can explain differences in perceived severity (Bauman & Newman, 2013; Menesini et al., 2011; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008). In particular, the views of these teachers reflect those that have previously been reported in qualitative work with young people in England (Smith et al., 2008). Despite these perspectives, it may be that teachers and young people are more prone to witness these acts of cyberbullying as they have been reported to be more prevalent in the online domain (Schade et al., 2017). Although all teachers suggested that a wider audience to cyberbullying may increase the perceived severity of the situation, primary teachers recognised there can be varying levels of severity when acknowledging contextual information. For example, primary teachers

perceived sharing sexually explicit photos, also known as 'sexting' (Lenhart, 2009), to be more severe compared to an embarrassing photo being distributed online. In line with research recommendations on managing cyberbullying, the views of primary teachers suggest the *content*, rather than the *type* of cyberbullying may be more important when teachers judge the severity of bullying (Bauman & Newman, 2013; Englander, 2019).

In the context of bullying severity, primary and secondary teachers suggested the notion of repetition targeting a victim online numerous times was regarded as more severe than single incidents. While some research may suggest the repetition of bullying has an impact on the perceived severity of the situation (Palladino et al., 2017; Slonje et al., 2017), in cyberbullying, repetition is more ambiguous as a single act can be shared numerous times (Thomas et al., 2015; Smith, 2015, 2019). Contrary to primary and secondary teachers' views, college teachers regarded the idea of bullying severity to be a vague term but rather suggested every situation of cyberbullying could potentially be severe, and so teachers should review the incident through a victim's perspective. These views offer an important insight on how current teachers perceive and manage cyberbullying. For example, a systematic review has highlighted how young people can react differently to cyberbullying according to their resilience and personal or contextual factors (Domínguez-Hernández et al., 2018), so teachers should further consider the perspectives of those victimised when responding to the issue.

In the role of severity theme, all the teachers discussed the management of cyberbullying in relation to perceived severity. Across

primary, secondary, and college teachers, all the teachers discussed the use of tailored strategies according to the severity of the situation. For example, teachers discussed how they would adopt discussion-based strategies for those involved in less severe cases of cyberbullying (e.g., suggested by all teachers to be text-based comments), compared to external involvement and safeguarding procedures for more severe cases of cyberbullying (e.g., suggested by all teachers to be embarrassing or explicit photos). This could suggest that perceived severity of cyberbullying may explain discrepancies in teachers reported management strategies, as raised in the systematic review in Chapter 4.

However, teachers and young people sometimes regard cyberbullying instances as less serious than traditional bullying (Boulton et al., 2014; Craig et al., 2011; Sticca & Perren, 2013), so the views teachers in the current study offer a unique insight on how teachers perceive, and respond to cyberbullying. The teachers across the focus groups appraised the use of discussion-based strategies between the victim and bully, which has been reported to be effective in the literature (Baraldsnes, 2015; DeSmet et al., 2015). In addition, as perpetrators of cyberbullying are often unaware of the severity of their actions (Campbell et al., 2013; Perren, Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, Malti, & Hymel, 2012; Slonje et al., 2013), teachers can educate young people on the consequences of cyberbullying, and the impact it can subsequently have on the victim.

## 6.8.2 Theme 2: Differential Roles of Publicity

In the differential roles of publicity theme, primary, secondary, and college teachers discussed the typology of publicity in cyberbullying and suggested a conceptualisation according to three levels. These views from teachers also reflect those reported by prospective teachers in Study 1 (see Chapter 5). In addition, prior research has also reported the notion of three levels of publicity within cyberbullying: private, semi-public, and public (Dooley et al., 2009; Fawzi, 2009; Machmutow et al., 2012). For this typology, all teachers suggested private acts of cyberbullying occurred only between a victim and perpetrator, semi-public acts included a set number of individuals in an online group, and public incidents of cyberbullying were accessible for anyone to witness beyond the victim and bully. These views from teachers across the educational system in the UK support findings reported in quantitative work in this area (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008; Schade et al., 2017), and reflect qualitative views from young people in England (Smith et al., 2008) and prospective teachers as discussed in Study 1 (see Chapter 5).

In the focus groups, primary teachers discussed key differences between semi-public forms of cyberbullying, and public instances. For example, primary teachers perceived semi-public acts of cyberbullying were more containable as they could respond and discuss the situation with everyone in the group. However, secondary and college teachers addressed the difficulty categorising publicity, as anything private could become public due to the possibility that material can be shared outside the initial dyad (Dooley et al., 2009; Kowalski et al., 2012; Sticca & Perren, 2013). As young

people regard cyberbullying to be more serious than traditional bullying, and when it is longer lasting and have no control who sees it (e.g., in public domains; Sticca & Perren, 2013), additional training and guidance should be provided to schools to ensure all teachers are aware on different levels of publicity.

In terms of how teachers suggested they would respond to cyberbullying according to the level of publicity, primary teachers believed they would respond differently, while secondary and college teachers would respond in the same manner. Primary teachers suggested that the wider audience involved in public acts of cyberbullying, means an immediate school-level response is needed to contain the incident and stop it spreading further. In support of such actions, anti-bullying interventions focussing on a communication and positive school culture are reported to be effective (Evans, Fraser, & Cotter, 2014; Thompson & Smith, 2011). However, secondary and college teachers and some primary teachers also raised the difficulty responding to public incidents of cyberbullying. In the context of cyberbullying incidents perpetrated regardless of publicity level, all teachers suggested a need to tailor the support provided to the victim to help overcome their victimisation experiences.

Additionally, in the differential roles of publicity theme, the teachers discussed the notion of victim vulnerability. On the one hand, college teachers perceived in private settings the victim is going to be more isolated, with the bully targeting their victim over a longer period. On the other hand, primary and secondary teachers perceived public incidents of cyberbullying could be more severe to the victim due to the wider audience. Some college



teachers also shared these views. These views from teachers support prior qualitative research from some Australian young people that public instances of cyberbullying are more severe for the victim due to greater feelings of humiliation, embarrassment, and reduced control (Dredge et al., 2014), and support trends reported in quantitative work (Kowalski et al., 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010; Sticca & Perren, 2013; Wright et al., 2017). It is consistent with the view that bullies target victims publicly for greater humiliation (Schade et al., 2017). When cyberbullying is in a public domain, the exposure to the targeted victim is escalated as the size of the audience that can witness their victimisation increases, potentially causing repeated exposure as bystanders further disseminate the incident (Dooley et al., 2009).

### 6.8.3 Theme 3: Bystander Intentions

In the bystander intention theme, the element of publicity was discussed in relation to those that witness an incident of cyberbullying online. Secondary and college teachers perceived incidents of cyberbullying in the public domain would elicit positive support by helping the victim. This is consistent with prior research on positive bystander support in public and severe instances of cyberbullying (Barlińska et al., 2013; Bastiaensens et al., 2014, 2015; DeSmet et al., 2012, 2014; Patterson et al., 2017; Macaulay et al., 2019). Most of the teachers in the current study perceived public instances of cyberbullying to be more severe. In the context of young people, qualitative work from studies with Swedish young people has found that young people are more likely to respond positively as a bystander as bullying severity increases (Forsberg et al., 2014; Thornberg et al., 2018), and in public domains as shown from studies from young people in Belgium

(DeSmet et al., 2012; 2014). The absence of positive bystanders was recognised by the secondary teachers as a potential factor increasing the negative impact for the victim. One such reason suggested by secondary school teachers for the lack of bystander support was attributed to the fear of retaliation where young people fear of becoming the victim themselves. This notion has also been reported in qualitative research with Australian young people as a contributing factor for choosing not to intervene in a positive manner (Thomas et al., 2012).

As noted in the Introduction (see section 6.4), bystanders are known to 'diffuse' responsibility to positively intervene in the presence of other bystanders (Latané & Darley 1976; see Hogg & Vaughn, 2011). Considering the theoretical framework proposed by Latané and Darley (1968; 1976), the more people that witness an emergency and do nothing, the less likely other people would intervene, via diffusion of responsibility. In traditional bullying, the *physical* presence of other bystanders is more clearly portrayed as young people can visibly see if other people in the school playground intervene or not. On the other hand, in cyberbullying, the notion of diffusion of responsibility is more ambiguous due to the absence of physical presence (Machackova, Dedkova, & Mezulanikova, 2015). In the context of cyberbullying, it is the perceived or potential number of *virtual* onlookers that can lead to diffusion of responsibility. In addition, in the online environment it is more difficult for bystanders to accurately evaluate the incident and determine if the victim needs help or not (Domínguez-Hernández et al., 2018; Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2014). The current findings from teachers' views suggest that the perceived severity of cyberbullying may be a better indicator

of whether young people respond as a bystander, than simply the number of onlookers. In the *bystander intention* theme, primary teachers also discussed the difficulty supporting victims of cyberbullying targeted privately and suggested the importance of promoting disclosure to help these young people. In line with this opinion, there is a growing call for the educational community to promote disclosure intentions with young people (Baas et al., 2013; Betts & Spenser, 2015; Englander, 2019).

## **6.9 Summary**

The study has further addressed RQ2 of the thesis on ‘what are prospective and current teachers’ perceptions of factors that should be considered when managing cyberbullying?’, addressing the aspect of current teachers from England. The study demonstrated the complexities of cyberbullying regarding the roles of publicity and severity and how such factors can impact on the management of those in the teaching profession. In terms of RQ2, this suggests that bullying severity and publicity are key factors that should be considered when managing cyberbullying. Teachers perceived visual acts of cyberbullying as more severe, although the content of the act was more important in determining perceived severity. In addition, teachers tailored their response strategies across levels of publicity, using discussion-based solutions for private incidents compared to whole school strategies (e.g., assemblies) for cyberbullying incidents of wider publicity. Such responses were attributed to the wider impact for the victim associated with public acts. However, the teachers discussed how positive bystander

intentions are more probable within public domains. The findings have important implications. They suggest schools need to encourage all young people to disclose cyberbullying involvement, irrespective of publicity, and to ensure those responsible to address the issues are competent and confident to provide appropriate solutions to help those involved. Those in the teaching profession are largely responsible for the successful implementation of intervention and prevention strategies. These findings contribute to the findings from Study 1 (see Chapter 5) by showing that prospective and current teachers recognise the impact of cyberbullying and hold different strategies in addressing cyberbullying in the school environment. In addition, Study 1 and 2 show that prospective and current teachers view publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response as key factors when considering how to manage cyberbullying. Therefore, Study 3 reported in the next chapter will address RQ3 to explore how young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying.

The current study provided a unique insight on the voices of those in the teaching profession across different educational levels in the UK. These views are important to explore as teachers have a key role in addressing cyberbullying across every phase of education (Myers & Cowie, 2019). The findings from Study 1 on prospective teachers and Study 2 on current teachers will be used to inform Study 3, which will address RQ3 of the thesis on 'how do young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying?'

## CHAPTER 7

# HOW YOUNG PEOPLE RESPOND TO CYBERBULLYING BASED ON KEY FACTORS THAT TEACHERS CONSIDERED IN ADDRESSING CYBERBULLYING

### 7.1 Introduction

As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, cyberbullying induces an array of negative feelings including loneliness (Varghese & Pistole, 2017), reduced self-efficacy (Heiman et al., 2015), lower levels of self-esteem (Brewer & Kerslake, 2015), helplessness (Cross, Lester, & Barnes, 2015), challenging behaviour (Wolke et al., 2017), and in some cases can lead to suicidal thoughts and/or attempts (Hinduja & Patchin, 2019). In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the perceptions and responses of teachers towards cyberbullying were examined to gain a unique insight into teachers' perspectives. As there has previously been a greater focus predominantly on the perceptions of cyberbullying from young people, the data collected from teachers as part of this thesis provided a new insight on this contemporary issue. Study 1 (See Chapter 5) and 2 (see Chapter 6) also gave an insight into how those with a responsibility for addressing cyberbullying view the issue. As such, the current chapter builds on Study 1 and 2 by exploring how young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying.

The current study reported in this chapter reports findings from young people in England on how they respond to cyberbullying based on criteria

identified by teachers that may influence intervention, specifically focusing on severity, publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and the extent to which the victim is upset. Therefore, the current chapter will provide a rigorous insight into how young people respond to cyberbullying, according to the criteria that teachers highlighted as important based on the findings from Study 1 (see Chapter 5), and Study 2 (see Chapter 6).

## **7.2 Cyberbullying and Young People**

Bryce and Fraser (2013) conducted a set of 18 focus groups with young people aged 9-19 in the UK exploring young people's perceptions and experiences of cyberbullying. While young people perceive cyberbullying to be a serious problem, they also recognised that cyberbullying is normalised in society and embedded within online social interactions. While one study in USA reported that some young people regard cyberbullying as a serious contemporary issue in society (Sobba et al., 2017), another study found that American young people argue that cyberbullying is an inevitable experience within the online domain (Agatston et al., 2007). A recent report from data gathered in 2019 shows that 9 in 10 5-15-year olds use a device to go online, with 83% of 12-15-year-olds having access to their own smartphone (Ofcom, 2019). Therefore, it is important to understand how young people respond to cyberbullying according to the criteria teachers use to address cyberbullying, in order to inform teachers' education of cyberbullying in the school environment because of the social nature of the issue (Myers & Cowie, 2017). Young people attribute the school environment and teachers'

capacity to address cyberbullying as explanations behind the continued escalation of the issue (Bryce & Fraser, 2013; Blake & Louw, 2010).

Therefore, understanding how young people apply the criteria that teachers think is important in addressing cyberbullying is vital. Some studies in Turkey, England, and the USA suggest that schools which lack a positive school culture and a supportive environment to address cyberbullying are more likely to tolerate the negative behaviour, increasing the prevalence of cyber victimisation (Bayar & Ucanok, 2012; Bryce & Fraser, 2013; Patchin & Hinduja 2010). In addition, studies in the USA and South Africa have also reported that young people are less likely to disclose their victimisation when they perceive teachers to lack the skills and knowledge to effectively address the issue (Bauman, 2010; Blake & Louw, 2010; Juvonen & Gross, 2008). So, understanding how young people respond to teachers' criteria for addressing cyberbullying is a much-needed next step.

Cyberbullying often occurs in group-based situations, and therefore, how young people respond when they witness cyberbullying is important in the process of combating the issue (Bauman, 2013). Bystanders in cyberbullying are those who are present and/or actively witness a victim being bullied online. Due to the anonymous nature and capacity in the online environment, it is possible to have numerous bystanders present at any one time. As teachers have discussed the impact of cyberbullying on young people and the prominence of bystanders in the online domain (see Chapters 4, 5, & 6), it is crucial to understand the situations when young people are likely to intervene in a positive manner. Bystanders of cyberbullying can either respond positively by supporting the victim (e.g.,

comforting the victim, challenging the bully etc.), or negatively by supporting the perpetrator (encouraging the perpetrator, joining in, ignoring the situation etc.). Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman, and Kaukiainen (1996, p.117) suggested that “bystanders were trapped in a social dilemma’, where young people recognise the behaviour they observe as inappropriate, but fear to intervene to support the victim due to the perceived impact on their social status and safety. Extending this principle to cyberbullying, even though the online environment is characterised by increased anonymity and autonomy, studies from Poland and the Republic of Korea still report a lack of positive intervention of bystanders in the online domain (Barlinska et al., 2013; Song & Oh, 2018). Young people may choose not to intervene in a positive way due to a fear of retaliation of becoming the victim (Bauman, 2013), and young people may lack the skills and awareness on how to respond to cyberbullying when they witness it (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2008; Kowalski & Limber, 2007). For example, in a recent study of 1158 adolescents from Malaysia, 61.5% reported they positively intervened to support the victim (Balakrishnan, 2018). However, a large proportion (40%) still reported not intervening due to fear of retaliation. As such, it is important to examine how young people respond to cyberbullying based on key factors considered by teachers when addressing cyberbullying, so teachers can be informed on the best approaches when educating young people how to address cyberbullying.

There is a limited amount of research that has examined the role of bystanders in the online domain (Shultz, Heilman, & Hart, 2014), with a systematic review only identifying 19 articles considering factors that



influence bystander reactions (Domínguez-Hernández et al., 2018).

Research in Taiwan has highlighted the importance of perceived severity of cyberbullying which can influence how young people respond as a bystander based on their perception on the potential or practical harm (Chen & Cheng, 2017). For example, some studies conducted in Belgium have reported that when young people evaluate incidents of cyberbullying as severe, they are more motivated to positively intervene to support the victim (Bastiaensens et al., 2014; Desmet et al., 2012, 2014). Therefore, there is also value to be had in measuring how young people perceive the severity of different cyberbullying scenarios. By doing so, teachers can be informed how young people perceive the severity of different aspects of cyberbullying and in whether young people identify similar characteristics to those that teachers use to address cyberbullying. Such knowledge will allow teachers to direct their education to reinforce the belief that all forms of cyberbullying are serious. The unique characteristics of cyberbullying (see Chapter 2) has an impact in how prospective (Study 1, see Chapter 5) and current (Study 2, see Chapter 6) teachers respond when addressing cyberbullying, and so the study reported in this chapter explores how young people respond to cyberbullying according to the key factors raised by teachers when addressing cyberbullying within the school.

The type of cyberbullying and the extent the victim is upset have been reported in a systematic review as key factors that influence how young people respond to cyberbullying (Domínguez-Hernández et al., 2018). Although there are varying definitions proposed for cyberbullying (see Chapter 2: section 2.3) there is a recognised distinction between text based

(e.g., posting or sharing negative comments), and visual based (e.g., posting or sharing an embarrassing photo/video) cyberbullying behaviours. For example, early research by Smith et al. (2008) in England identified how the type of cyberbullying may impact on perceived severity, whereby visual acts of cyberbullying were perceived more severe than written forms, attributed to the greater impact for the victim. The notion that visual forms of cyberbullying are more severe has been consistently reported in the literature (Menesini et al., 2011; Pieschl, Porsch, Kahl, & Klockenbusch, 2013; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2008). These differences were recognised within the qualitative studies by prospective teachers (see Chapter 5) and in-service teachers (see Chapter 6) and therefore they also add support for the need to consider these separately in terms of severity. The perceived difference in severity for visual acts of cyberbullying has been attributed to the increased impact on the victim, leading to further distress (Pieschl et al., 2013; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2008).

The severity of cyberbullying, and therefore associated intervention is also impacted by the extent the victim is upset (Domínguez-Hernández et al., 2018). As such, the current study discussed in this chapter focused on written verbal and visual behaviours when examining how young people respond to cyberbullying, while also considering if the victim was upset or not. Prior research has experimentally confirmed these two typologies for cyberbullying (Nocentini et al., 2010; Palladino et al., 2015; Palladino et al., 2017), and the need to address how the victim reacts based on their victimisation. In addition, Study 2 (see Chapter 6) found that in-service

teachers do respond to cyberbullying differently based on the type of cyberbullying, and so it is important to explore how young people choose to respond to cyberbullying based on the type of cyberbullying witnessed.

In addition, the ambiguous role of publicity and anonymity also impact on how young people respond to cyberbullying and the perceived severity of the situation. The public nature associated with cyberbullying means that young people online are more likely to witness these incidents (Mishna et al., 2009), so it is important to understand how they respond in order to promote further positive intervention. The publicity of cyberbullying is distinguished between private, semi-public, and public instances (Fawzi, 2009), and this unique characteristic of cyberbullying can be associated with increased negative outcomes for the victim. The additional characteristic of anonymity also mean victims may not know the identity of their perpetrator, and bystanders may not know how to respond if the perpetrator has concealed his/her identity. A study of Swiss young people found that they perceive cyberbullying is more severe than traditional bullying, due to the publicity and anonymity characteristics of cyberbullying (Sticca & Perren, 2013).

Qualitative research of interviews across 25 Australian 15-24-year olds found that public instances of cyberbullying, and those where the perpetrator had concealed their identity were regarded as more severe (Dredge et al., 2014).

Such findings pertaining to publicity are consistent across young people in Italy, Germany, and Spain (Nocentini et al., 2010). These findings were attributed to the increased distress and anxiety when exposed in the public domain (Pieschl et al., 2015; Ševčíková, Šmahel, & Otavová, 2012), and feelings of loneliness and fear when the victim did not know the identity of

the perpetrator (Corby et al., 2016; Dredge et al., 2014; Vandebosch et al., 2014). Together, these findings illustrate the moderating factors of publicity and anonymity on the perceived severity of cyberbullying, but also suggest young people may respond differently to cyberbullying based on such features. In addition, Study 1 (see Chapter 5) and Study 2 (see Chapter 6) found that prospective and previously in-service teachers view public forms of cyberbullying to be more severe, and so would respond differently according to the nature of publicity. The findings from Study 1 and 2 also suggested that teachers perceived that young people choose to engage in cyberbullying because they can remain anonymous. Therefore, Study 1 and 2 show that prospective and previously in-service teachers view unique features of publicity and anonymity within cyberbullying as key factors that they consider in their management of cyberbullying. To explore this further, and to address RQ3 of the thesis, the study reported in this chapter will address how young people respond to cyberbullying based on key factors that teachers consider in addressing cyberbullying.

This study aim was to examine how young people perceive the severity of cyberbullying, and to examine how young people from England respond as a bystander according to different cyberbullying situations, as these were key factors identified by the teachers as something that they used to inform their management situation. This chapter will address RQ3 of the thesis: 'How do young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying?'. To help address RQ3 of the thesis, the following questions/hypotheses were proposed for the current study:

- Do young people perceive the severity of cyberbullying differently when examining the roles of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset? (RQ7.1, with the following hypotheses)
  - Perceived severity will be higher in public scenarios, compared to semi-public or private (RQ7.1.H1) (Dredge et al., 2014; Sticca & Perren, 2013)
  - Perceived severity will be higher when the bully is anonymous, compared to not anonymous (RQ7.1.H2) (Dredge et al., 2014; Sticca & Perren, 2013)
  - Perceived severity will be higher for visual scenarios, compared to written verbal scenarios (RQ7.1.H3) (Pieschl et al., 2013; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2008)
  - Perceived severity will be higher when the victim is upset, compared to when the victim is not upset (RQ7.1.H4) (Domínguez-Hernández et al., 2018)
  
- Are there differences in how young people respond to cyberbullying when examining the roles of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset? (RQ7.2, with the following hypothesis)

- There will be a difference in likelihood of response strategy according to the publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset (RQ7.2.H1)

## 7.3 Method

### 7.3.1 Design

To address the research question RQ7.1 and RQ7.2, a 3 X 2 X 2 X 2 (Publicity [public, semi-public, private] Anonymity [anonymous, not anonymous] Type of cyberbullying [written-verbal, visual], Victim response [upset, not upset]) within subjects design ANOVA was used. The factors of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response were the independent variables. For RQ7.1, the perceived severity score for each scenario acted as the dependent variable. For RQ7.2, each of the six types of response (see section 7.3.3 for more detail) acted as the dependent variable.

### 7.3.2 Participants

A total of 1438 participants were recruited from two secondary schools and one college in England, United Kingdom in the 2018 – 2019 academic year. The data was cleaned, and incomplete responses were removed. The final sample was 990 participants (55.1% female) aged between 11 – 20 years ( $M_{age} = 13.16$ ,  $SD_{age} = 2.14$ ), with a 68.85% response rate. The sample comprised of 403 males (40.7%), 545 females (55.1%), and 42 participants preferred not to report their gender (4.2%). In terms of ethnicity, there were 780 (78.8%) of White participants, 45 (4.5%) of Asian participants, 21 (2.1%)

of Black or African participants, 76 (7.7%) of participants responded to the 'other' category, and 68 (6.9%) of participants preferred not to report their ethnicity.

The sample was recruited from two secondary schools ( $N = 798$ , 80.6%) with young people aged 11 ( $N = 218$ , 22%), 12 ( $N = 272$ , 27.5%), 13 ( $N = 212$ , 21.4%), 14 ( $N = 90$ , 9.1%), and 15 ( $N = 16$ , 1.6%) years of age. The two secondary schools each comprised of approximately 1500 pupils and are rated 'good' to 'outstanding' by recent Ofsted reports with safeguarding measures meeting statutory requirements (Ofsted, 2019). The sample were recruited from urban schools in England, the Midlands. They are typical state-funded schools with around 1500 students from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The college ( $N = 168$ , 17%) was also recruited as part of the final sample, with young people aged 16 ( $N = 60$ , 6.1%), 17 ( $N = 74$ , 7.5%), 18 ( $N = 28$ , 2.8%), 19 ( $N = 13$ , 1.3%), and 20 ( $N = 7$ , .7%). The school/college approximately holds 1500 pupils aged 11 – 20 years, but only the pupils enrolled in the college division of the establishment were recruited.

### 7.3.3 Measures

Like previous research (Menesini et al., 2011; Palladino et al., 2017), the use of hypothetical vignettes was employed to experimentally manipulate the nature of 'publicity', 'anonymity', 'type of incident', and 'victim response'. The aforementioned factors (see Table 7.1) were selected for the current study as such factors are perceived to be important in the perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying from prospective teachers (see Chapter 5) and in-service teachers (see Chapter 6). In addition, questionnaire items

have been developed around the terms of written or visual based cyberbullying (Law et al., 2012). As such, this provides a key rationale to explore how young people perceive, and respond to, cyberbullying scenarios based on these criteria. A total of 24 scenarios (see Appendix L) were created in order to manipulate these factors to occur in every combination. Table 7.1 shows the levels of each factor and the associated phrase used when it was present.

*Table 7.1:* The factor, level and associated phrased used to manipulate each scenario.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Phrase</b>
Publicity	<i>Public</i>	they and everybody else (friends & others) could see this
	<i>Semi-public</i>	they and only their friends could see this
	<i>Private</i>	only they could see this
Anonymity	<i>Anonymous</i>	Someone they do not know
	<i>Not anonymous</i>	Someone they know
Type of incident	<i>Written verbal</i>	insulting text-based comment
	<i>Visual</i>	embarrassing photo/video
Victim response	<i>Upset</i>	This had upset them
	<i>Not upset</i>	This had not upset them

An example of a scenario to depict a public incident, where the bully was anonymous, involving a written-verbal type of cyberbullying, and when the victim was upset, was as follows:

*“A pupil received an insulting **text-based comment** from **someone they do not know** at their school. This happened digitally online. **They and everybody else (friends & others)** could see this. This **had upset them**”*



As there were a number of scenarios presented to young people who may misinterpret how the scenarios differentiate, the phrase used to depict the presence of each factor was highlighted to avoid misinterpretation or confusion. The use of highlighting key text for retention and differentiation is reported in the literature to be effective (Fowler & Barker, 1974; Strobel et al., 2015). After each scenario, participants were asked to complete two items: one pertaining to the perceived severity of the scenario, and the other measuring participants' response to each scenario. These items remained the same for each scenario in order to measure how perceived severity and response actions may vary according to the level of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response. The items read as follows:

*Item 1: Please rate how severe you deem this incident to be.*

*Item 2: If this came to your attention, how likely would you do the following:*

- a) Ignore what was happening*
- b) Encourage the pupil that had sent the insulting comment/embarrassing photo/video*
- c) Seek help from a teacher/parent/guardian or trusted adult*
- d) Seek help from a friend*
- e) Provide emotional support for the pupil that had received the insulting comment/embarrassing photo/video*
- f) Directly intervene and challenge the pupil*

Item 1 was measured on a 5-point response set from (1) *'not very severe'*, (2) *'a little severe'*, (3) *'neither severe or not severe'*, (4) *'fairly severe'* and (5) *'very severe'*. Item 2 was also measured on a 5-point response set for each of the responses from (1) *'extremely likely'*, (2) *'somewhat likely'*, (3) *'neither likely nor unlikely'*, (4) *'somewhat unlikely'* to (5) *'extremely unlikely'*. For Item 2, responses 'b' and 'e', the insulting comment /embarrassing photo/video was modified to match the scenario. For example, if the scenario states *'A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they know at their school'*, statements (b) and (e) was modified to only include embarrassing photo/video. The same was applied if the scenario was based on the insulting comment. The responses listed for Item 2 were developed based on prior research exploring bystander reactions to bullying and/or cyberbullying incidents (Bastiaensens et al., 2014; Macaulay et al., 2019; Patterson et al., 2017; Van Cleemput et al., 2014).

### 7.3.3 Procedure

The study was approved by the College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Nottingham Trent University (2018/49, see Appendix H). Initially, consent was gained from the head teachers and/or principal for the research project (Appendix K). An information sheet detailing the nature and purpose of the research was distributed and sent to parents/guardians (Appendix I). Parents/guardians were asked to indicate if they do not wish their son/daughter to participate in the research by notifying the school/college.

The young people were invited to complete either an online or paper-based survey depending on the school's preference and completed the questionnaire on a class-by-class basis which aligned with the school/colleges anti-bullying curricula. The students were informed about the purpose of the research and were prompted to read an information sheet and check/tick the consent statements before they could access and start the survey. If the school/college opted to use the online questionnaire, this was distributed through Qualtrics. Participants were informed they did not have to take part in the research, could withdraw at any time, and could withdraw their responses later by providing their unique identifiable number. No participants withdrew from the study. Participants had approximately 30-40 minutes to complete the questionnaire, which was followed by a debrief form (Appendix J).

#### 7.3.4 Data Analysis

To explore whether there were any significant differences in perceived severity on cyberbullying scenarios (addressing RQ7.1) according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response, a 3 X 2 X 2 X 2 (Publicity [public, semi-public, private] Anonymity [anonymous, not anonymous] Type of cyberbullying [written-verbal, visual], Victim response [upset, not upset]) within-subjects ANOVA was performed. The factors of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response were the repeated measures. The perceived severity score for each scenario acted as the dependent variable. This analysis will be presented as 'RQ7.1: Do young people perceive the severity of cyberbullying differently when examining the

roles of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset?’

In order to explore any significant differences for each response category (addressing RQ7.2), six separate 3 X 2 X 2 X 2 (Publicity [public, semi-public, private] Anonymity [anonymous, not anonymous] Type of cyberbullying [written-verbal, visual], Victim response [upset, not upset]) within-subjects ANOVA were performed. The factors of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response were the repeated measures. The dependent variable changed according to each ANOVA based on the six responses participants responded to. These responses were re-coded in order to show a higher mean representing a greater likelihood to engage in that behaviour. To explore any significant differences for each of the dependent variables based on the manipulation of the four factors, the ANOVAs are presented as follows:

RQ7.2: Are there differences in how young people respond to cyberbullying when examining the roles of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset?

RQ7.2.1: differences in likelihood to ignore what was happening

RQ7.2.2: differences in likelihood to encourage the bully

RQ7.2.3: differences in likelihood to seek adult help

RQ7.2.4: differences in likelihood to seek help from a friend

RQ7.2.5: differences in likelihood to provide emotional support for the victim

RQ7.2.6: differences in likelihood to intervene and challenge the bully

The final sample ( $N = 990$ ) was screened for missing data. Steps were taken to limit the scope of missing data, by providing the teachers detailed information to administer the survey to the young people. In addition, the survey was user friendly and could be completed during e-safety lessons (Kang, 2013). Initially, a missing data analysis was run and the results of Little's test (Little, 1988) showed the data was not missing completely at random ( $p < .001$ ). While handling methods such as multiple imputation was considered, it's use on ANOVA designs is currently unknown (Grund, Lüdtke, & Robitzsch, 2016). Therefore, due to the large sample and evidence to show a similar accuracy in the  $F$  statistic between imputed and non-imputed data, multiple imputation was not employed (Cheema, 2014; Kang, 2013; Papageorgiou, Grant, Takkenberg, & Mokhles, 2018).

The assumptions of ANOVA were tested (Cardinal & Aitken, 2006). Meeting assumption 1 (i.e., dependent variable measured at the continuous level), each within-subjects ANOVA presented has one dependent variable measured using interval scale data. For assumption 2 (i.e., independent variables have two or more categorical levels), each within-subjects ANOVA has four within-subject's factors where each within-subjects factor has more than two categorical levels. There were no significant outliers as assessed by visual inspection of the data, meeting the requirement for assumption 3 (i.e.,

there should be no significant outliers). However, assumption 4 (i.e., data should be approximately normally distributed) was not met as the data were not normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality ( $p < .001$ ). Visual inspection of the Q-Q plots also yielded inconsistent results. Despite this, the ANOVA's were still conducted because the ANOVA and  $F$  statistic are known to be robust to violations of this assumption (Black, Ard, Smith, & Schibik, 2010; Ferreira, Rocha, & Mequelino, 2012; Lantz, 2013), especially in large samples where alternative solutions such as data transformations offer no additional benefit to reducing type 1 error (Blanca, Alarcón, Arnau, Bono, & Bendayan, 2017; Winer, Brown, & Michels, 1971). To address assumption 5 (i.e., needs to be homogeneity of variances for the independent variables), for each ANOVA, Mauchly's test of sphericity was reviewed to test the assumption that the differences between the levels of independent variables have equal variances. The results are reported as follows:

- If the assumption of sphericity was met, the findings are reported as sphericity assumed.
- If the assumption of sphericity was violated, an adjustment to the degrees of freedom used to calculate the  $p$ -value to report valid results called Epsilon's correction ( $\epsilon$ ) was used. If the assumption of sphericity was violated, the Greenhouse-Geisser correction are reported if the estimated  $\epsilon$  is less than .75, indicating a greater violation of sphericity (Greenhouse & Geisser, 1959; Maxwell, & Delaney, 2004). If the value of  $\epsilon$  is greater than .75, indicating a lower

departure from sphericity, the Huynh-Feldt correction is reported (Abdi, 2010; Huynh & Feldt, 1976).

Due to the number of statistical tests performed and the sensitivity for Type 1 errors, a stricter significance level of  $p < .01$  was implemented throughout the analysis, to provide more confidence when reporting differences (Baguley, 2012; Benjamin & Berger, 2019; Thiese, Ronna, & Ott, 2016). Partial eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) was used to determine effect size following Cohen's (1988) small ( $\eta^2 = .01$ ), medium ( $\eta^2 = .06$ ), and large ( $\eta^2 = .14$ ) effect level recommendations.

## 7.4 Results

7.4.1 RQ7.1: Do young people perceive the severity of cyberbullying differently when examining the roles of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset?

Table 7.2 shows the mean and standard deviation (SD) for perceived severity across scenarios. Table 7.2 indicates that young people perceive cyberbullying to be the most serious when in the public domain, perpetrated anonymously, where the type of cyberbullying is visual based (e.g., embarrassing photos/videos), and the victim is upset. In comparison, young people perceived cyberbullying to be the least serious when it occurs privately, the perpetrator is not anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is visual based, and the victim is not upset. In Table 7.2, the figures highlighted in bold indicate the scenarios with the highest (indicated by ✓), and lowest (indicated by ✓✓) perceived severity.

Table 7.2: The mean and standard deviation (SD) on perceived severity across scenarios

Scenario	Perceived Severity
✓ <b>3 [P, A, V, U]</b>	<b>4.40 (.89)</b>
7 [P, NA, V, U]	4.33 (.91)
1 [P, A, WV, U]	4.32 (.90)
5 [P, NA, WV, U]	4.26 (.95)
11 [SP, A, V, U]	4.10 (.96)
19 [PR, A, V, U]	4.09 (.96)
9 [SP, A, WV, U]	4.07 (.93)
17 [PR, A, WV, U]	4.02 (.99)
15 [SP, NA, V, U]	4.01 (.97)
21 [PR, NA, WV, U]	3.99 (.97)
13 [SP, NA, WV, U]	3.98 (.96)
23 [PR, NA, V, U]	3.95 (1.04)
4 [P, A, V, NU]	3.36 (1.16)
2 [P, A, WV, NU]	3.36 (.1.14)
8 [P, NA, V, NU]	3.32 (1.19)
6 [P, NA, WV, NU]	3.25 (.1.15)
12 [SP, A, V, NU]	3.12 (1.20)
10 [SP, A, WV, NU]	3.04 (1.13)
20 [PR, A, V, NU]	3.01 (1.23)
14 [SP, NA, WV, NU]	3.00 (1.16)
18 [PR, A, WV, NU]	2.99 (1.93)
16 [SP, NA, V, NU]	2.95 (1.20)
22 [PR, NA, WV, NU]	2.88 (1.22)
✓✓ <b>24 [PR, NA, V, NU]</b>	<b>2.81 (1.24)</b>

✓Highest perceived severity ✓✓Lowest perceived severity Note: Note: P (public), SP (semi-public), PR (private), A (anonymous), NA (not anonymous), WV (written-verbal), V (visual), U (upset), NU (not upset).

The main effects for publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response are presented and described below. Table 7.3 contains an



ANOVA summary table all the main effects and associated interactions. The figures highlighted in bold indicate significance.

**Main effect for publicity.** Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated,  $\chi^2(2) = 123.25$ ,  $p < .001$ , with  $\epsilon > .75$  so Huynh-Feldt correction is reported. There was a significant main effect on the level of publicity on severity scores,  $F(1.76, 1465.28) = 294.64$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .262$ , indicating a large effect size. Pairwise comparisons adjusted using the Bonferroni correction showed a significant difference in severity scores between each pair of publicity level, all  $p < .001$ . Severity scores were greater for public ( $M = 3.83$ ) than semi-public ( $M = 3.55$ ) and private ( $M = 3.48$ ) incidents of cyberbullying, with a significant difference between semi-public and private. This indicates that public acts of cyberbullying are rated more severe by young people compared to semi-public and private incidents, and that private incidents were regarded as least severe. As such, a linear main effect of publicity was found, with perceived severity declining significantly from public, through semi-public, to private cases of cyberbullying. This supports the RQ7.1.H1 hypothesis that perceived severity will be higher in public scenarios, compared to semi-public or private.

**Main effect for anonymity.** There was a significant main effect on anonymity on severity scores,  $F(1, 832) = 47.64$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .054$ , indicating a moderate effect size. Post hoc pairwise comparisons indicated that the level of severity was higher when the bully was anonymous ( $M = 3.67$ ), than when the identity of the bully was known to the victim ( $M = 3.58$ ),  $p < .001$ . This denotes that young people are more likely to regard anonymous cases of cyberbullying significantly more severe compared to

those that are not anonymous. This supports the RQ7.1.H2 hypothesis that perceived severity will be higher when the bully is anonymous, compared to not anonymous.

**Main effect for type.** There was no significant main effect on the type of cyberbullying on severity scores,  $F(1, 832) = 5.59, p = .018$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .007$ , indicating a small effect size. This shows the level of severity for written verbal ( $M = 3.61$ ) and visual ( $M = 3.64$ ) types of cyberbullying did not significantly differ. This does not support the RQ7.1.H3 hypothesis that perceived severity will be higher for visual scenarios, compared to written verbal scenarios.

**Main effect for victim response.** There was a significant main effect if the victim was upset on severity scores,  $F(1, 832) = 1874.83, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .693$ , indicating a large effect size. Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the two levels,  $p < .001$ . The contrasts revealed that severity scores were greater when the victim was upset ( $M = 4.14$ ), than if the victim was not upset ( $M = 3.10$ ). This shows that young people are more likely to perceive cyberbullying incidents as severe when the victim is upset, than if the victim was not upset. This supports the RQ7.1.H4 hypothesis that perceived severity will be higher when the victim is upset, compared to when the victim is not upset.

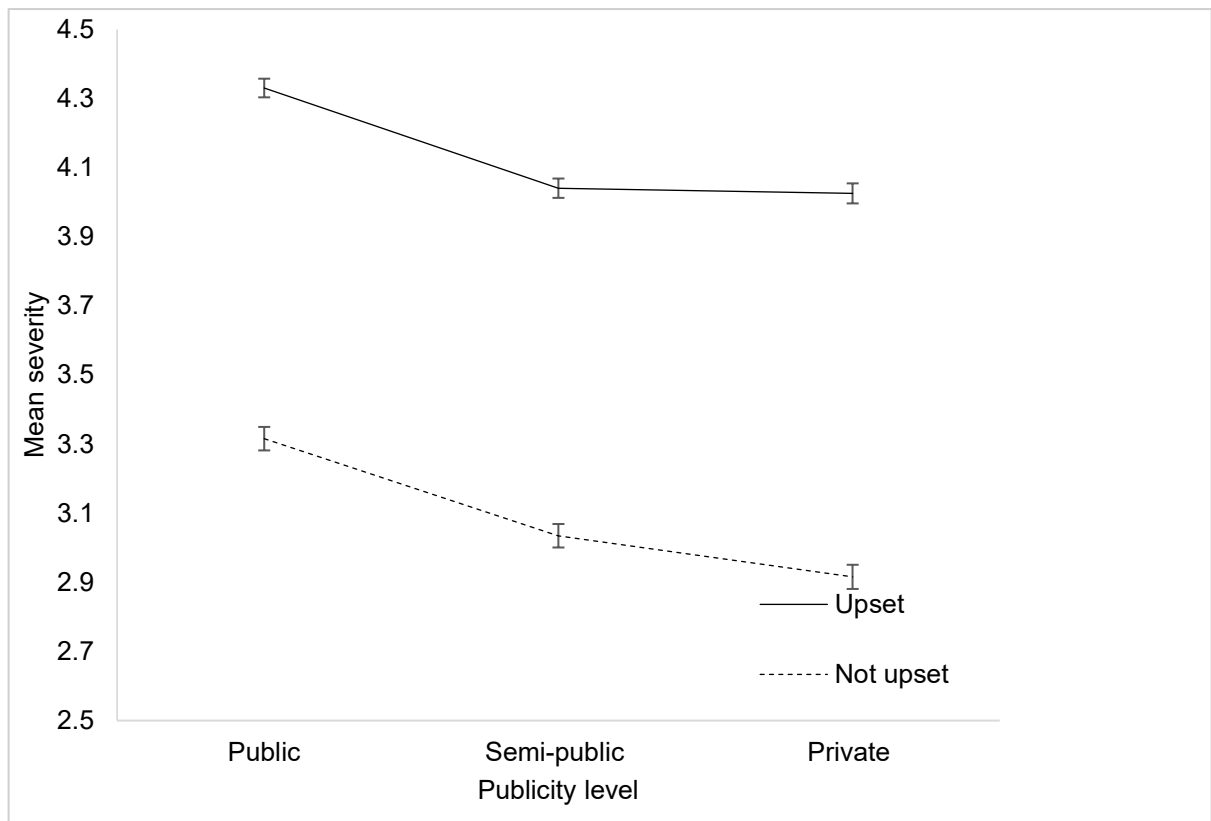
*Table 7.3: ANOVA summary table for differences in perceived severity according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response*

<b>Source</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	<b><math>\eta^2</math></b>
*Publicity	462.92	1.76	262.85	294.64	< .001	.262
Anonymity	40.39	1.00	40.39	47.64	< .001	.054
Type	4.43	1.00	4.43	5.59	.018	.007
Victim response	5404.07	1.00	5404.07	1874.83	< .001	.693
<b>Two-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity	2.38	2.00	1.19	2.59	.075	.003
Publicity X type	2.62	2.00	1.31	2.79	.062	.003
Anonymity X type	1.71	1.00	1.71	3.50	.062	.004
Publicity X victim response	9.17	2.00	4.59	9.26	< .001	.011
Anonymity X victim response	2.25	1.00	2.25	4.63	.032	.006
Type X victim response	.709	1.00	.709	1.45	.228	.002
<b>Three-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type	3.14	2.00	1.57	3.64	.027	.004
Publicity X anonymity X victim response	1.69	2.00	.847	1.89	.151	.002
Publicity X type X victim response	.043	2.00	.022	.044	.956	.000
Anonymity X type X victim response	.003	1.00	.003	.006	.939	.000
<b>Four-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type X victim response	2.77	2.00	1.39	3.23	.040	.004

Note: \*Huynh-Feldt correction reported.

**Two-way interactions.** All the two-way interactions were examined, as listed in Table 7.3. While most of the two-way interactions remained non-significant, a significant interaction was identified between publicity and victim response,  $F(2.00, 1664.00) = 9.26, p < .001, \eta^2 = .011$ , indicating a small effect size. Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been met,  $\chi^2(2) = 3.48, p = .176$

*Publicity and victim response.* The nature of this interaction was probed with pairwise comparisons using the Bonferroni correction between the three levels of publicity and the two levels of victim response. There was a significant difference in perceived severity scores across public (upset:  $M = 4.34$ ; not upset:  $M = 3.33$ ), semi-public (upset:  $M = 4.05$ ; not upset:  $M = 3.04$ ), and private (upset:  $M = 4.03$ ; not upset:  $M = 2.93$ ). For both types of victim response, there was a significant difference between each pair of publicity level, all  $p < .001$ . Figure 7.1 shows the interaction between publicity and victim response on perceived severity. The interaction shows that public incidents of cyberbullying where the victim is upset are perceived more severe than semi-public and private incidents, and all levels of publicity were regarded less severe when the victim was not upset compared to upset.



*Figure 7.1: The interaction between publicity and victim response on perceived severity (with 99% confidence intervals).*

A summary of the main findings for differences in perceived severity can be seen in Table 7.4. Three of the hypotheses were supported to show that perceived severity was higher in public scenarios (RQ7.1.H1), when the bully was anonymous (RQ7.1.H2), and when the victim was upset (RQ7.1.H4). However, the hypothesis that perceived severity would be higher for visual scenarios compared to written verbal sceneries (RQ7.1.H3) was not supported.

Table 7.4: Summary of the main findings for differences in perceived severity

Variable	Outcome	Factor	Sig.	Summary
Severity	Main effects	Publicity	Y	Public cyberbullying most severe, followed by semi-public, and private
		Anonymity	Y	Increase in severity when bully anonymous
		Type	N	No difference
		Victim response	Y	Increase in severity when victim upset
	Interactions	Publicity and Victim response	Y	Increased in severity when public and victim upset

Note: 'Y' denotes significant, 'N' denotes non-significant

7.4.2 RQ7.2: Are there differences in how young people respond to cyberbullying when examining the roles of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset?

Table 7.5 shows the means and standard deviations for likelihood to engage in each type of response when witnessing cyberbullying. The figures highlighted in bold for each response category indicate the highest likelihood (indicated by ✓) and lowest likelihood (indicated by ✓✓) to respond in that manner according to the scenario.

Table 7.5: The mean and standard deviation (SD) type of response towards cyberbullying.

Scenario	Type of response					
	Ignore	Encourage	Adult support	Friend support	Emotional support	Intervene
1 [P, A, WV, U]	✓✓ <b>1.96 (1.25)</b>	1.65 (1.25)	3.85 (1.24)	✓ <b>3.83 (1.15)</b>	✓ <b>4.07 (1.16)</b>	2.48 (1.36)
2 [P, A, WV, NU]	2.42 (1.29)	1.66 (1.22)	3.34 (1.24)	3.46 (1.14)	3.60 (1.20)	2.27 (1.29)
3 [P, A, V, U]	1.97 (1.26)	1.64 (1.25)	✓ <b>3.90 (1.24)</b>	3.80 (1.17)	4.01 (1.21)	2.46 (1.36)
4 [P, A, V, NU]	2.46 (1.30)	1.65 (1.20)	3.44 (1.22)	3.42 (1.14)	3.56 (1.20)	2.27 (1.29)
5 [P, NA, WV, U]	1.97 (1.26)	1.59 (1.19)	3.85 (1.21)	3.82 (1.12)	✓ <b>4.07 (1.15)</b>	✓ <b>2.55 (1.37)</b>
6 [P, NA, WV, NU]	2.49 (1.28)	1.65 (1.22)	3.35 (1.23)	3.40 (1.13)	3.50 (1.22)	2.33 (1.29)
7 [P, NA, V, U]	1.97 (1.27)	1.61 (1.22)	3.85 (1.22)	3.81 (1.14)	4.02 (1.20)	2.52 (1.35)
8 [P, NA, V, NU]	2.43 (1.30)	1.63 (1.20)	3.38 (1.22)	3.39 (1.13)	3.52 (1.21)	2.27 (1.29)
9 [SP, A, WV, U]	2.12 (1.28)	1.62 (1.21)	3.71 (1.22)	3.72 (1.15)	3.97 (1.20)	2.38 (1.32)
10 [SP, A, WV, NU]	2.56 (1.30)	1.65 (1.20)	3.35 (1.23)	3.38 (1.14)	3.49 (1.18)	2.25 (1.27)
11 [SP, A, V, U]	2.07 (1.26)	1.63 (1.21)	3.81 (1.20)	3.74 (1.13)	4.02 (1.14)	2.34 (1.32)
12 [SP, A, V, NU]	2.53 (1.29)	1.63 (1.16)	3.36 (1.25)	3.37 (1.14)	3.54 (1.23)	2.24 (1.26)
13 [SP, NA, WV, U]	2.09 (1.23)	1.61 (1.21)	3.72 (1.21)	3.73 (1.12)	3.96 (1.17)	2.44 (1.34)
14 [SP, NA, WV, NU]	2.57 (1.28)	1.62 (1.19)	3.32 (1.23)	3.37 (1.14)	3.49 (1.23)	2.27 (1.30)
15 [SP, NA, V, U]	2.09 (1.26)	1.63 (1.20)	3.75 (1.23)	3.75 (1.14)	3.96 (1.15)	2.47 (1.32)

16 [SP, NA, V, NU]	2.62 (1.31)	1.65 (1.17)	3.25 (1.23)	3.29 (1.14)	3.45 (1.26)	2.22 (1.28)
17 [PR, A, WV, U]	2.05 (1.23)	✓✓ <b>1.57 (1.18)</b>	3.76 (1.24)	3.75 (1.13)	3.99 (1.16)	2.41 (1.34)
18 [PR, A, WV, NU]	2.58 (1.29)	1.66 (1.20)	3.30 (1.28)	3.35 (1.13)	3.53 (1.20)	2.25 (1.28)
19 [PR, A, V, U]	2.05 (1.22)	✓✓ <b>1.57 (1.17)</b>	3.76 (1.22)	3.72 (1.13)	4.03 (1.13)	2.35 (1.32)
20 [PR, A, V, NU]	2.59 (1.31)	1.63 (1.18)	3.33 (1.26)	3.30 (1.15)	3.49 (1.21)	✓✓ <b>2.21 (1.27)</b>
21 [PR, NA, WV, U]	2.07 (1.25)	1.65 (1.24)	3.70 (1.23)	3.70 (1.13)	3.99 (1.16)	2.44 (1.35)
22 [PR, NA, WV, NU]	2.65 (1.34)	1.63 (1.18)	3.28 (1.25)	3.33 (1.14)	3.46 (1.23)	2.22 (1.28)
23 [PR, NA, V, U]	2.05 (1.23)	1.60 (1.18)	3.75 (1.24)	3.68 (1.14)	3.96 (1.18)	2.42 (1.32)
24 [PR, NA, V, NU]	✓ <b>2.64 (1.35)</b>	✓ <b>1.70 (1.21)</b>	✓✓ <b>3.16 (1.30)</b>	✓✓ <b>3.22 (1.19)</b>	✓✓ <b>3.38 (1.22)</b>	✓✓ <b>2.21 (1.28)</b>

✓ Highest likelihood ✓✓ Lowest likelihood. Note: Note: P (public), SP (semi-public), PR (private), A (anonymous), NA (not anonymous), WV (written verbal), V (visual), U (upset), NU (not upset).



#### 7.4.2.1 RQ7.2.1: Differences in Likelihood to Ignore What Was Happening

Table 7.5 shows that young people are more likely to ignore cyberbullying when they witness an incident that is private, the bully is not anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is visual, and the victim is not upset. In comparison, young people are least likely to ignore cyberbullying when they witness an incident that is public, the bully is anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is written verbal, and the victim is upset. Initially, the main effects for publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response are presented and described below. Table 7.6 contains an ANOVA summary table of all the main effects and associated interactions. The figures highlighted in bold indicate significance.

**Main effect for publicity.** Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated,  $\chi^2(2) = 43.98, p < .001$ , with  $\epsilon > .75$  so Huynh-Feldt correction is reported. There was a significant main effect on the level of publicity on ignore scores,  $F(1.90, 1456.43) = 44.82, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .055$ , indicating a small to moderate effect size. Pairwise comparisons adjusted using the Bonferroni correction showed a significant difference in ignore scores between each pair of publicity level,  $p < .001$ , with the exception between semi-public and private incidents of cyberbullying. This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to ignore what was happening according to the publicity. This indicated that ignore scores were lower for public ( $M = 2.18$ ) than semi-public ( $M = 2.30$ ) and private ( $M = 2.31$ ) incidents of cyberbullying, although ignore scores were similar between semi-public and private cyberbullying.

**Main effect for anonymity.** There was no significant main effect of anonymity on ignore scores,  $F(1, 767) = 1.90, p = .168, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .002$ , indicating no discernible effect size. This does not support the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis as there was no difference in likelihood to ignore what was happening according to the anonymity. This shows likelihood to ignore what has happening was similar when the bully was anonymous ( $M = 2.25$ ), and when the identity of the bully was known ( $M = 2.27$ ).

**Main effect for type.** There was no significant main effect on the type of cyberbullying on ignore scores,  $F(1, 767) = .417, p = .519, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .001$ , indicating no discernible effect size. This does not support the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis as there was no difference in likelihood to ignore what was happening according to the type of cyberbullying. This shows the likelihood to ignore what was happening for written verbal ( $M = 2.26$ ) and visual ( $M = 2.27$ ) types of cyberbullying did not significantly differ,

**Main effect for victim response.** There was a significant main effect on if the victim was upset on ignore scores,  $F(1, 767) = 502.28, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .396$ , indicating a large effect size. Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the two levels,  $p < .001$ . This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to ignore what was happening according to the victim response. The contrasts revealed that ignore scores were greater when the victim was not upset ( $M = 2.52$ ), than if the victim was upset ( $M = 2.00$ ). This shows that young people are more likely to ignore cyberbullying when the victim is not upset, but less likely to ignore the incident if the victim is upset.

Table 7.6: ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to ignore what was happening according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
*Publicity	66.67	1.90	35.11	44.82	< .001	.055
Anonymity	1.34	1.00	1.34	1.90	.168	.002
Type	.314	1.00	.314	.417	.519	.001
Victim response	1263.35	1.00	1263.35	502.28	< .001	.396
<b>Two-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity	1.44	2.00	.721	1.38	.252	.002
Publicity X type	1.97	1.99	.983	1.87	.155	.002
Anonymity X type	.001	1.00	.001	.002	.963	.000
*Publicity X victim response	10.73	1.99	5.40	10.11	< .001	.013
Anonymity X victim response	3.28	1.00	3.28	4.91	.027	.006
Type X victim response	.169	1.00	.169	.287	.592	.000
<b>Three-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type	2.36	2.00	1.18	2.12	.121	.003
Publicity X anonymity X victim response	1.64	2.00	.821	1.40	.248	.002
*Publicity X type X victim response	.680	1.99	.342	.620	.537	.001
Anonymity X type X victim response	.163	1.00	.163	.304	.582	.000
<b>Four-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type X victim response	2.38	2.00	1.19	2.43	.089	.003

Note: \*Huynh-Feldt correction reported

**Two-way interactions.** All the two-way interactions were examined, as listed in Table 7.6. While most of the two-way interactions remained non-significant, a significant interaction was identified between publicity and victim response,  $F(1.99, 1523.99) = 10.11, p < .001, \eta^2 = .013$ , indicating a small effect size. Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated,  $\chi^2(2) = 7.05, p < .05$ , with  $\epsilon > .75$  so Huynh-Feldt correction is reported.

*Publicity and victim response.* The nature of this interaction was probed with pairwise comparisons using the Bonferroni correction between the three levels of publicity and the two levels of victim response. There was a significant difference in ignore scores across public (upset:  $M = 1.94$ ; not upset:  $M = 2.42$ ), semi-public (upset:  $M = 2.05$ ; not upset:  $M = 2.55$ ), and private (upset:  $M = 2.02$ ; not upset:  $M = 2.61$ ). For both types of victim response, there was a significant difference between each pair of publicity level, all  $p < .001$ . Figure 7.2 shows the interaction between publicity and victim response on likelihood to ignore what was happening. The interaction shows that across all levels of publicity, young people are more likely to ignore what was happening when the victim was not upset compared to when the victim was upset.

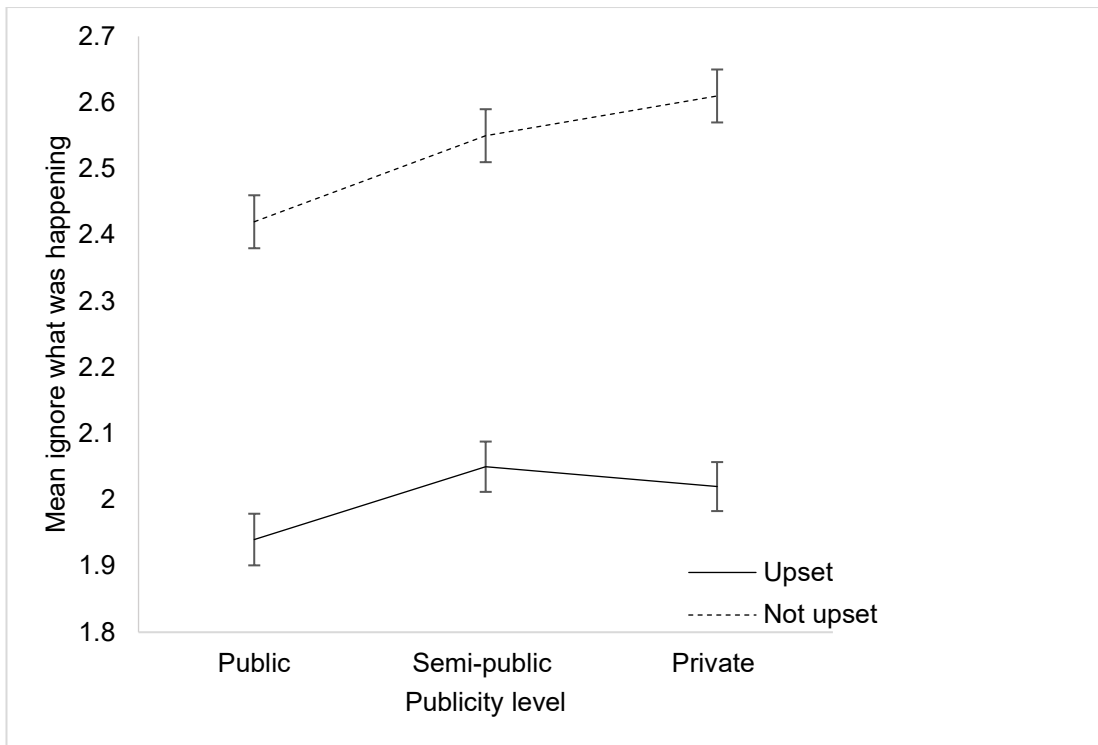


Figure 7.2: The interaction between publicity and victim response on ignore what was happening (with 99% confidence intervals).

7.4.2.2 RQ7.2.2: Differences in Likelihood to Encourage the Bully

Table 7.5 shows that young people are more likely to encourage the bully when they witness a private cyberbullying incident, the bully is not anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is visual, and the victim is not upset by this. In comparison, young people are least likely to encourage the bully when they witness a private incident, the bully is anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is visual or written verbal, and the victim is upset. The main effects for publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response for encouraging the bully are presented and described below. Table 7.7 contains an ANOVA summary table of all the main effects and associated interactions. The figures highlighted in bold indicate significance.

**Main effect for publicity.** Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated,  $\chi^2(2) = 17.42, p < .001$ , with  $\epsilon > .75$ , so the Huynh-Feldt correction is reported. There was no significant main effect on the level of publicity on encourage scores,  $F(1.96, 1434.30) = .193, p = .820$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ , with no significant effect size. This does not support the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis as there was no difference in likelihood to encourage the bully according to the publicity. This shows the likelihood to encourage the bully was not significantly different, with similar scores across public ( $M = 1.58$ ), semi-public ( $M = 1.58$ ), and private ( $M = 1.57$ ) incidents of cyberbullying.

**Main effect for anonymity.** There was no significant main effect on anonymity on encourage scores,  $F(1, 732) = .585, p = .445$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ , with no discernible effect size. This does not support the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis as there was no difference in likelihood to encourage the bully according to the anonymity. This shows likelihood to encourage the bully was similar when the bully was anonymous ( $M = 1.58$ ), and when the identity of the bully was known ( $M = 1.58$ ).

**Main effect for type.** There was no significant main effect of the type of cyberbullying on encourage scores,  $F(1, 732) = .839, p = .360$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ , with no discernible effect size. This does not support the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis as there was no difference in likelihood to encourage the bully according to the type of cyberbullying. This shows the likelihood to encourage the bully for written verbal ( $M = 1.58$ ) and visual ( $M = 1.59$ ) types of cyberbullying did not significantly differ.

**Main effect for victim response.** There was a significant main effect on if the victim was upset on encourage scores,  $F(1, 732) = 10.94, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .015$ , indicating a small effect size. Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the two levels,  $p < .001$ . This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to encourage the bully according to the victim response. The contrasts revealed that encourage scores were greater when the victim was not upset ( $M = 1.60$ ), than if the victim was upset ( $M = 1.56$ ). This suggests young people are more likely to encourage the bully in cyberbullying when the victim is not upset, than if the victim was upset.

**Interactions.** No higher order interactions were found to be significant

*Table 7.7: ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to encourage the bully according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response.*

<b>Source</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	<b><math>\eta^2</math></b>
*Publicity	.173	1.96	.088	.193	.820	.000
Anonymity	.268	1.00	.268	.585	.445	.001
Type	.408	1.00	.408	.839	.360	.001
Victim response	7.27	1.00	7.27	10.94	<b>&lt; .001</b>	.015
<b>Two-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity	3.25	2.00	1.63	3.59	.028	.005
*Publicity X type	.040	1.98	.020	.046	.954	.000
Anonymity X type	.913	1.00	.913	1.97	.161	.003
*Publicity X victim response	2.42	1.97	1.23	2.73	.066	.004
Anonymity X victim response	<.0001	1.00	<.0001	.000	.991	.000
Type X victim response	.310	1.00	.310	.690	.406	.001
<b>Three-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type	1.03	2.00	.513	1.18	.309	.002
Publicity X anonymity X victim response	.606	2.00	.303	.591	.553	.001
Publicity X type X victim response	1.52	2.00	.762	1.31	.271	.002
Anonymity X type X victim response	.231	1.00	.231	.491	.484	.001
<b>Four-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type X victim response	1.87	2.00	.937	1.87	.154	.003

Note: \*Huynh-Feldt correction reported.



#### 7.4.2.3 RQ7.2.3: Differences in Likelihood to Seek Adult Help

Table 7.5 shows that young people are most likely to seek adult help when they witness a public cyberbullying incident, where the bully is anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is visual, and the victim is upset. In comparison, young people are least likely to seek adult help when they witness a private cyberbullying incident, where the bully is not anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is visual, and the victim is not upset. Initially, the main effects for publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response are presented and described below for differences in likelihood to seek adult help. Table 7.8 contains an ANOVA summary table of all the main effects and associated interactions. The figures highlighted in bold indicate significance.

**Main effect for publicity.** Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated,  $\chi^2(2) = 31.34, p < .001$ , with  $\epsilon > .75$ , so the Huynh-Feldt correction is reported. There was a significant main effect on the level of publicity on seek adult help scores,  $F(1.93, 1490.48) = 52.72, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .064$ , indicating a moderate effect size. Pairwise comparisons adjusted using the Bonferroni correction showed a significant difference in seek adult help scores between each pair of publicity level,  $p < .001$ , with the exception between semi-public and private incidents of cyberbullying. This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to see adult help according to the publicity. This indicated that seeking help from an adult to help the victim was higher in public ( $M = 3.70$ ) cyberbullying scenarios, than semi-public ( $M = 3.60$ ), or private incidents ( $M$

= 3.57), but seeking adult help did not significantly differ between semi-public and private incidents.

**Main effect for anonymity.** There was a significant main effect on anonymity on seeking help from an adult for the victim,  $F(1, 773) = 32.86$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .041$ , indicating a small to moderate effect size. Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the two levels, both  $p < .001$ . This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to seek adult help according to the anonymity. This shows likelihood to seek help from an adult to help the victim was greater when the bully was anonymous ( $M = 3.65$ ), compared when the bully was not anonymous ( $M = 3.59$ ). This suggests young people are more likely to seek help from a trusted adult when they witness cyberbullying and the bully is anonymous, than if the bully was known.

**Main effect for type.** There was no significant main effect on the type of cyberbullying on seeking adult help scores,  $F(1, 773) = .865$ ,  $p = .353$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ , with no discernible effect size. This does not support the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis as there was no difference in likelihood to seek adult help according to the type of cyberbullying. This shows the likelihood to seek adult support for the victim was similar for written verbal ( $M = 3.62$ ) and visual ( $M = 3.63$ ) types of cyberbullying.

**Main effect for victim response.** There was a significant main effect of if the victim was upset on seeking help from an adult to support the victim,  $F(1, 773) = 475.36$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .381$ , indicating a large effect size. Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the two

levels,  $p < .001$ . This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to see adult help according to the extent the victim is upset. The contrasts revealed that seeking adult support was greater when the victim was upset ( $M = 3.86$ ), than if the victim was not upset ( $M = 3.39$ ). This suggests young people are more likely to seek help from a trusted adult when they witness a cyberbullying incident and the victim is upset, than if the victim was not upset.

Table 7.8: ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to seek help from an adult for the victim according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
*Publicity	51.97	1.93	26.95	52.72	< .001	.064
Anonymity	17.27	1.00	17.27	32.86	< .001	.041
Type	.523	1.00	.523	.865	.353	.001
Victim response	1040.99	1.00	1040.99	475.36	< .001	.381
<b>Two-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity	.096	2.00	.048	.130	.878	.000
Publicity X type	.181	2.00	.091	.211	.808	.000
Anonymity X type	1.30	1.00	1.30	3.10	.078	.004
Publicity X victim response	3.51	2.00	1.76	4.29	.014	.006
Anonymity X victim response	4.73	1.00	4.73	10.50	< .001	.013
Type X victim response	.942	1.00	.942	2.22	.137	.003
<b>Three-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type	.191	2.00	.095	.247	.781	.000
Publicity X anonymity X victim response	.457	2.00	.229	.564	.568	.001
Publicity X type X victim response	.455	2.00	.227	.574	.562	.001
Anonymity X type X victim response	.316	1.00	.316	.765	.382	.001
<b>Four-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type X victim response	5.29	2.00	2.65	6.77	< .001	.009

Note: \*Huynh-Feldt correction reported.

**Two-way interactions.** All the two-way interactions were examined, as listed in Table 7.8. A significant interaction was identified between anonymity and victim response,  $F(1.00, 773.00) = 10.50, p < .001, \eta^2 = .013$ , indicating a small effect size.

*Anonymity and victim response.* The nature of this interaction was probed with pairwise comparisons between the two levels of anonymity and the two levels of victim response. There was a significant difference in seeking adult help for the victim when the bully was anonymous (upset:  $M = 3.88$ ; not upset:  $M = 3.43$ ), and when the bully was not anonymous (upset:  $M = 3.85$ ; not upset:  $M = 3.34$ ). For both types of victim response, there was a significant difference between both levels of anonymity,  $p < .001$ . Figure 7.3 shows the interaction between anonymity and victim response on likelihood to seek help from an adult for the victim. The interaction shows that young people are more likely to see adult help when the bully is anonymous, and the victim is upset. The anonymity of the bully is more important in determining when young people seek adult help when the victim is not upset.

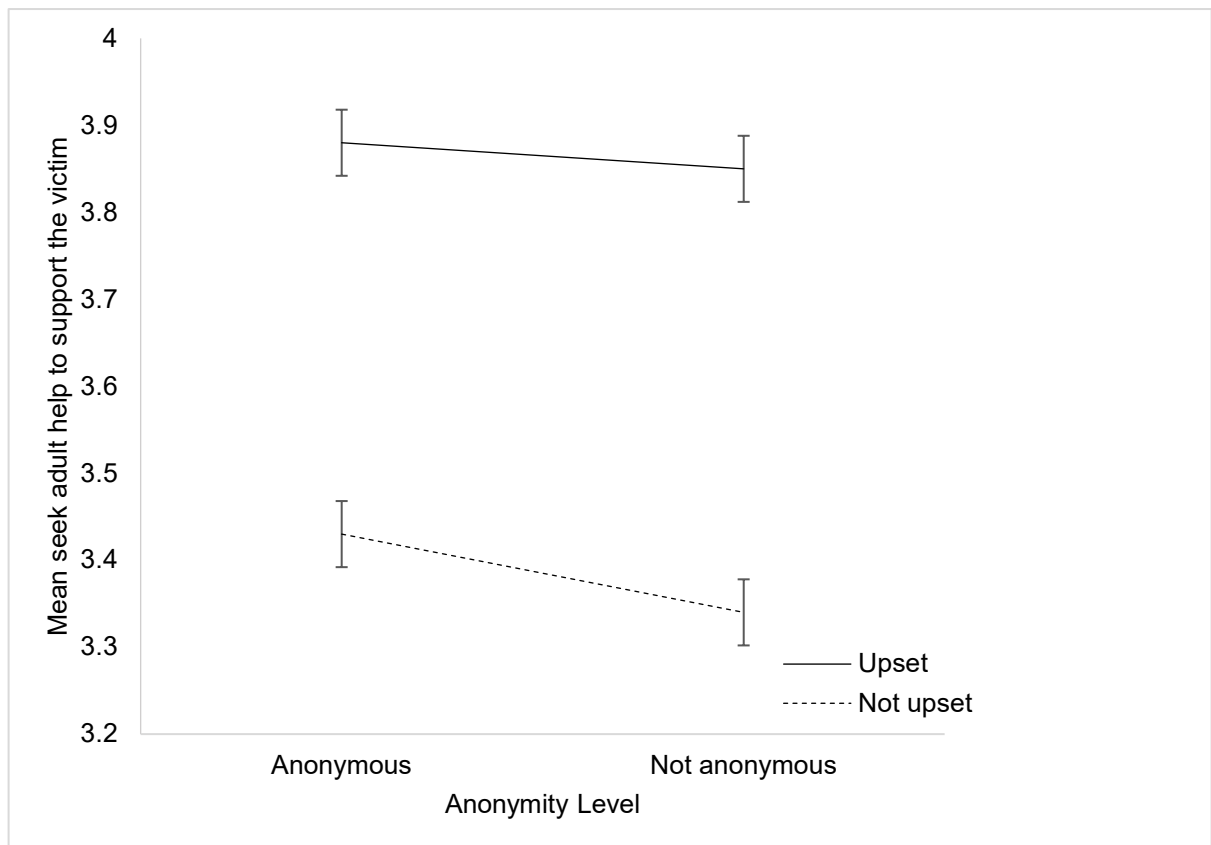


Figure 7.3: The interaction between anonymity and victim response on seeking adult help for the victim (with 99% confidence intervals).

**Four-way interaction.** Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been met for the four-way interaction,  $\chi^2(2) = 1.63, p = .444$ . A significant interaction was identified between publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response,  $F(2.00, 1546.00) = 6.77, p < .001, \eta^2 = .009$ , indicating a modest small effect size. Table 7.9 presents the mean seek help from an adult for the interaction between publicity, anonymity, type, and victim response. Following the sparsity of effect principle which suggests that lower-order effects are more important than higher-order effects, the four-way interaction is not examined further. The sparsity of effect principle indicates for factorial ANOVA designs, the more important effects lie within the main effects and two-way interactions, with recommendations that higher-order effects are not examined unless all

parent effects are also active, with the current data not meeting this criteria (Wu & Hamada, 2000).

*Table 7.9:* The mean seek help from an adult for the interaction between publicity, anonymity, type, and victim response.

	Private				Semi-public				Public			
	Upset		Not upset		Upset		Not upset		Upset		Not upset	
	WV	V	WV	V	WV	V	WV	V	WV	V	WV	V
Anonymous	3.85	3.83	3.34	3.40	3.80	3.87	3.43	3.43	3.92	3.97	3.50	3.50
Not anonymous	3.79	3.84	3.31	3.22	3.81	3.82	3.43	3.31	3.92	3.90	3.41	3.44

*Note:* WV (written-verbal), V (visual)



#### 7.4.2.4 RQ7.2.4: Differences in Likelihood to Seek Help from a Friend

Table 7.5 shows that young people are most likely to seek help from a friend when they witness a public incident of cyberbullying, where the bully is anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is written verbal, and the victim is upset. In comparison, young people are least likely to seek help from a friend when they witness a private cyberbullying incident, where the bully is not anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is visual, and the victim is not upset. Initially, the main effects for publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response are presented and described below for differences in likelihood to seek help from a friend. Table 7.10 contains an ANOVA summary table of all the main effects and associated interactions. The figures highlighted in bold indicate significance.

**Main effect for publicity.** Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated,  $\chi^2(2) = 25.63, p < .001$ , with  $\epsilon > .75$ , so the Huynh-Feldt correction is reported. There was a significant main effect on the level of publicity on seek friend help scores,  $F(1.94, 1504.81) = 34.10, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .042$ , indicating a small to moderate effect size. Pairwise comparisons adjusted using the Bonferroni correction showed a significant difference in seek friend help scores between each pair of publicity level,  $p < .001$ . This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to seek help from a friend according to the publicity. This indicated that seeking help from a friend to help the victim was higher in public ( $M = 3.67$ ) cyberbullying scenarios, than semi-public ( $M = 3.60$ ), or private incidents ( $M = 3.56$ ). This suggests young people are more likely to seek

help from a friend when they witness a public act of cyberbullying, than semi-public, or private incidents of cyberbullying.

**Main effect for anonymity.** There was a significant main effect on anonymity on seeking help from a friend for the victim,  $F(1, 775) = 9.82, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .013$ , indicating a small effect size. Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the two levels,  $p < .005$ . This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to seek help from a friend according to the anonymity. This shows the likelihood to seek help from a friend to help the victim was greater when the bully was anonymous ( $M = 3.63$ ), compared to when the bully was not anonymous ( $M = 3.59$ ). This shows that young people are likely to seek help from a friend to help the victim, if the bully is anonymous compared to not anonymous.

**Main effect for type.** There was a significant main effect on the type of cyberbullying on seeking friend help scores,  $F(1, 775) = 7.81, p < .01$  partial  $\eta^2 = .010$ , indicating a small effect size. This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to seek help from a friend according to the type of cyberbullying. This shows the likelihood to seek friend support for the victim was greater for written verbal ( $M = 3.62$ ) than visual ( $M = 3.59$ ) types of cyberbullying. This suggests that when young people witness cyberbullying, they are more likely to seek help from a friend to help the victim if they witness written-verbal acts of cyberbullying, than visual acts.

**Main effect for victim response.** There was a significant main effect if the victim was upset on seeking help from a friend to support the victim,  $F(1,$

775) = 380.39,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .329$ , indicating a large effect size. Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the two levels,  $p < .001$ . This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to seek help from a friend according to the extent the victim is upset. The contrasts revealed that seeking friend support was greater when the victim was upset ( $M = 3.81$ ), than if the victim was not upset ( $M = 3.41$ ). This shows that if a victim is upset in a cyberbullying, young people who witness the incident are more likely to seek help from a friend to support the victim than if the victim was not upset.

**Interactions.** No higher order interactions were found to be significant.

Table 7.10: ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to seek help from a friend for the victim according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
*Publicity	33.84	1.94	17.43	34.10	< .001	.042
Anonymity	4.98	1.00	4.98	9.82	< .005	.013
Type	3.85	1.00	3.85	7.81	<.01	.010
Victim response	780.93	1.00	780.93	380.39	< .001	.329
<b>Two-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity	1.21	2.00	.607	1.52	.220	.002
Publicity X type	.628	2.00	.314	.773	.462	.001
Anonymity X type	1.05	1.00	1.05	2.45	.118	.003
Publicity X victim response	2.79	2.00	1.39	3.39	.034	.004
Anonymity X victim response	1.78	1.00	1.78	3.91	.048	.005
Type X victim response	1.69	1.00	1.69	3.80	.052	.005
<b>Three-way interactions</b>						
*Publicity X anonymity X type	.471	1.99	.237	.647	.523	.001
Publicity X anonymity X victim response	.809	2.00	.404	1.01	.366	.001
Publicity X type X victim response	.068	2.00	.034	.077	.925	.000
Anonymity X type X victim response	.225	1.00	.225	.544	.461	.001
<b>Four-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type X victim response	.835	2.00	.417	1.07	.344	.001

Note: \*Huynh-Feldt correction reported.

#### 7.4.2.5 RQ7.2.5: Differences in Likelihood to Provide Emotional Support

Table 7.5 shows that young people are most likely to provide emotional support for the victim when they witness a public cyberbullying incident, where the bully is either anonymous or not anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is written verbal, and the victim is upset. In comparison, young people are least likely to offer emotional support for the victim when they witness a private incident of cyberbullying, where the bully is not anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is visual, and the victim is not upset. Initially, the main effects for publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response are presented and described below for differences in likelihood to provide emotional support. Table 7.11 contains an ANOVA summary table of all the main effects and associated interactions. The figures highlighted in bold indicate significance.

**Main effect for publicity.** Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated,  $\chi^2(2) = 23.14, p < .001$ , with  $\epsilon > .75$ , so the Huynh-Feldt correction is reported. There was a significant main effect on the level of publicity on emotional support scores,  $F(1.95, 1479.41) = 16.42, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .021$ , indicating a small effect size. Pairwise comparisons adjusted using the Bonferroni correction showed a significant difference in emotional support scores between each pair of publicity level,  $p < .001$ , except for semi-public and private, non-significant. This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to provide emotional support for the victim according to the publicity. This indicated that providing emotional support for the victim was higher in public ( $M = 3.88$ ) cyberbullying

scenarios, than semi-public ( $M = 3.83$ ), or private incidents ( $M = 3.81$ ), with the latter two prompting similar responses. This suggests that while young people are likely to provide emotional support for the victim similarly for private and semi-public incidents, they significantly offer more emotional support for public acts of cyberbullying.

**Main effect for anonymity.** There was a significant main effect on anonymity on providing emotional support for the victim  $F(1, 760) = 22.52, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .029$ , indicating a small effect size. Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the two levels,  $p < .001$ . This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to provide emotional support for the victim according to the anonymity. This shows the likelihood to provide emotional support for the victim was greater when the bully was anonymous ( $M = 3.86$ ), compared to when the bully was not anonymous ( $M = 3.82$ ). This suggests young people offer higher levels of emotional support for the victim when they witness cyberbullying and the bully has concealed their identity, than if the bully was known.

**Main effect for type.** There was no significant main effect of the type of cyberbullying on emotional support scores,  $F(1, 760) = 1.30, p = .255$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ , with no discernible effect size. This does not support the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis as there was no difference in likelihood to provide emotional support for the victim according to the type of cyberbullying. This shows the likelihood to provide emotional support for the victim for written verbal ( $M = 3.85$ ) and visual ( $M = 3.83$ ) types of cyberbullying did not significantly differ.

**Main effect for victim response.** There was a significant main effect if the victim was upset on providing emotional support for the victim,  $F(1, 760) = 429.05$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .361$ , indicating a large effect size. Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the two levels,  $p < .001$ . This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to provide emotional support for the victim according to the extent the victim is upset. The contrasts revealed that emotional support was greater when the victim was upset ( $M = 4.10$ ), than if the victim was not upset ( $M = 3.58$ ). This suggests that young people are more likely to offer emotional support for the victim when they are upset, than if the victim was not upset.

*Table 7.11: ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to provide emotional support for the victim according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response*

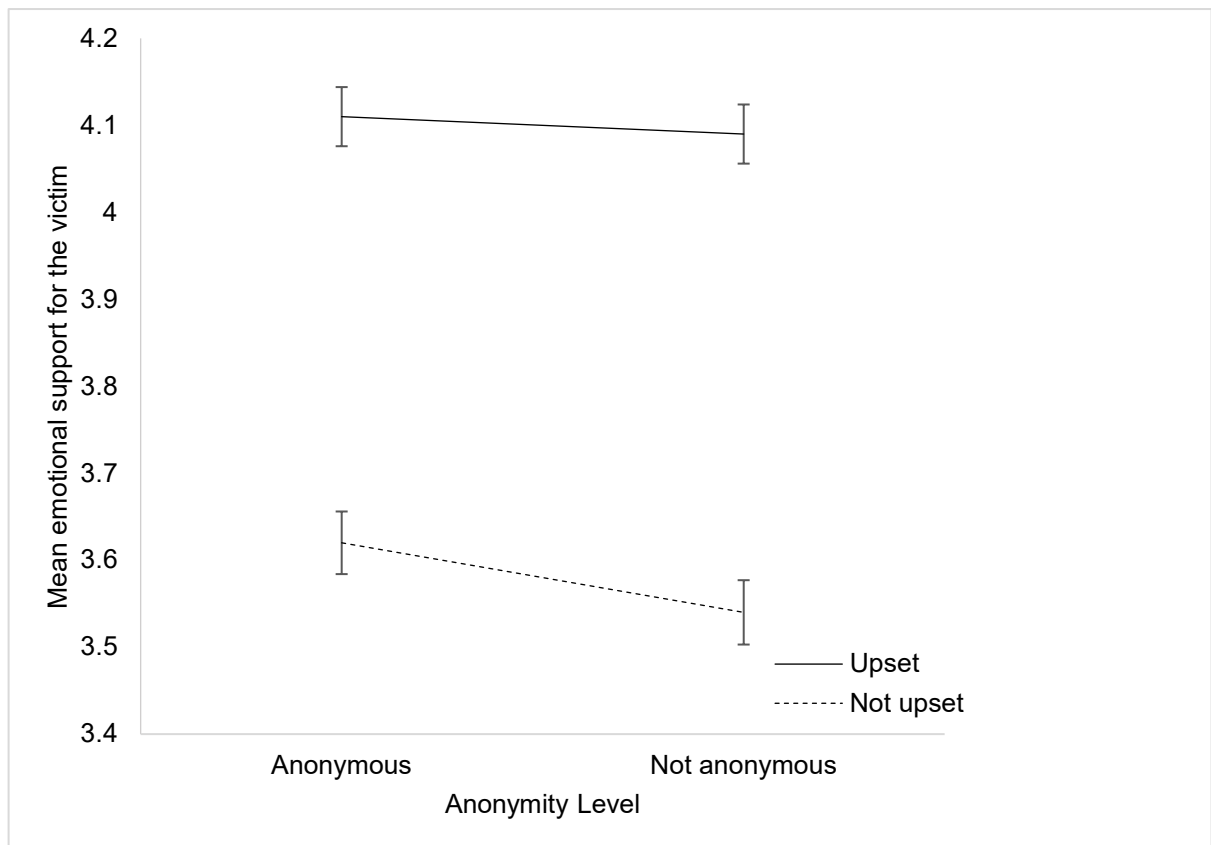
<b>Source</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	<b><math>\eta^2</math></b>
*Publicity	15.92	1.95	8.18	16.42	< .001	.021
Anonymity	10.42	1.00	10.42	22.52	< .001	.029
Type	.604	1.00	.604	1.30	.255	.002
Victim response	1263.18	1.00	1263.18	429.05	< .001	.361
<b>Two-way interactions</b>						
*Publicity X anonymity	.490	1.97	.248	.508	.599	.001
Publicity X type	.631	2.00	.316	.668	.513	.001
Anonymity X type	.941	1.00	.941	2.18	.141	.003
Publicity X victim response	1.62	2.00	.811	1.81	.165	.002
Anonymity X victim response	3.98	1.00	3.98	8.48	< .01	.011
Type X victim response	.466	1.00	.466	.996	.319	.001
<b>Three-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type	.594	2.00	.297	.694	.500	.001
Publicity X anonymity X victim response	.576	2.00	.288	.637	.528	.001
Publicity X type X victim response	1.45	2.00	.725	1.57	.209	.002
Anonymity X type X victim response	.337	1.00	.337	.812	.368	.001
<b>Four-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type X victim response	.810	2.00	.405	.904	.405	.001

Note: \*Huynh-Feldt correction reported.



**Two-way interactions.** All the two-way interactions were examined, as listed in Table 7.11. While most of the two-way interactions remained non-significant, a significant interaction was identified between anonymity and victim response,  $F(1.00, 760.00) = 8.48, p < .01, \eta^2 = .011$ , indicating a small effect size.

*Anonymity and victim response.* The nature of this interaction was probed with pairwise comparisons between the two levels of anonymity and the two levels of victim response. There was a significant difference in providing emotional support to the victim when the bully was anonymous (upset:  $M = 4.11$ ; not upset:  $M = 3.62$ ), and when the bully was not anonymous (upset:  $M = 4.09$ ; not upset:  $M = 3.54$ ). For both types of victim response, there was a significant difference between both levels of anonymity,  $p < .001$ . Figure 7.4 shows the interaction between anonymity and victim response on likelihood to provide emotional support to the victim. The interaction shows that young people are more likely to provide emotional support for the victim when the bully is anonymous, and the victim is upset.



*Figure 7.4:* The interaction between anonymity and victim response on providing emotional support for the victim (with 99% confidence intervals).

**7.4.2.6 RQ7.2.6: Differences in Likelihood to Intervene and Challenge the Bully**

Table 7.5 shows that young people are most likely to intervene and challenge the bully when they witness a public incident of cyberbullying, the bully is not anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is written verbal, and the victim is upset. In comparison, young people are least likely to intervene and challenge the bully when they witness a private incident of cyberbullying, where the bully is either anonymous or not anonymous, the type of cyberbullying is visual, and the victim is not upset. Initially, the main effects for publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response are presented and described below for differences in likelihood to intervene and

challenge the bully. Table 7.12 contains an ANOVA summary table of all the main effects and associated interactions. The figures highlighted in bold indicate significance.

**Main effect for publicity.** Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated,  $\chi^2(2) = 22.92, p < .001$ , with  $\epsilon > .75$ , so the Huynh-Feldt correction is reported. There was a significant main effect on the level of publicity on intervene scores,  $F(1.94, 1266.08) = 20.79, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .031$ , indicating a small effect size. Pairwise comparisons adjusted using the Bonferroni correction showed a significant difference in intervene scores between each pair of publicity level,  $p < .001$ , with the exception between semi-public and private incidents of cyberbullying. This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to intervene and challenge the bully according to the publicity. This indicated that intervene scores were higher for public ( $M = 2.41$ ) than semi-public ( $M = 2.35$ ) and private ( $M = 2.32$ ) incidents of cyberbullying, although intervene scores were similar between semi-public and private cyberbullying. This suggests that young people are likely to respond to intervene similarly between private and semi-public but are significantly more likely to intervene in public incidents of cyberbullying.

**Main effect for anonymity.** There was a significant main effect of anonymity on intervene scores,  $F(1, 653) = 14.97, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .022$ , indicating a small effect size. Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the two levels,  $p < .001$ . This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to intervene and challenge the bully according to the anonymity. This shows likelihood to intervene and challenge

the bully was greater when the bully was not anonymous ( $M = 2.38$ ), compared when the bully was anonymous ( $M = 2.33$ ). This shows that when young people know the bully's identity, they are more likely to intervene in cyberbullying and challenge the bully, than if the bully had concealed their identity.

**Main effect for type.** There was no significant main effect of the type of cyberbullying on intervene scores,  $F(1, 653) = 2.73$ ,  $p = .099$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ , with no discernible effect size. This does not support the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis as there was no difference in likelihood to intervene and challenge the bully according to the type of cyberbullying. This shows the likelihood to intervene and challenge the bully for written verbal ( $M = 2.37$ ) and visual ( $M = 2.35$ ) types of cyberbullying did not significantly differ.

**Main effect for victim response.** There was a significant main effect if the victim was upset on intervene scores,  $F(1, 653) = 108.26$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .142$ , indicating a large effect size. Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference between the two levels,  $p < .001$ . This supports the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis showing a difference in likelihood to intervene and challenge the bully according to the extent the victim was upset. The contrasts revealed that intervene scores were greater when the victim was upset ( $M = 2.45$ ), than if the victim was not upset ( $M = 2.26$ ). This shows that when young people witness cyberbullying, they are more likely to intervene to challenge the bully when the victim is upset, than if the victim was not upset.

*Table 7.12: ANOVA summary table for differences in likelihood to intervene and challenge the bully according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying and victim response*

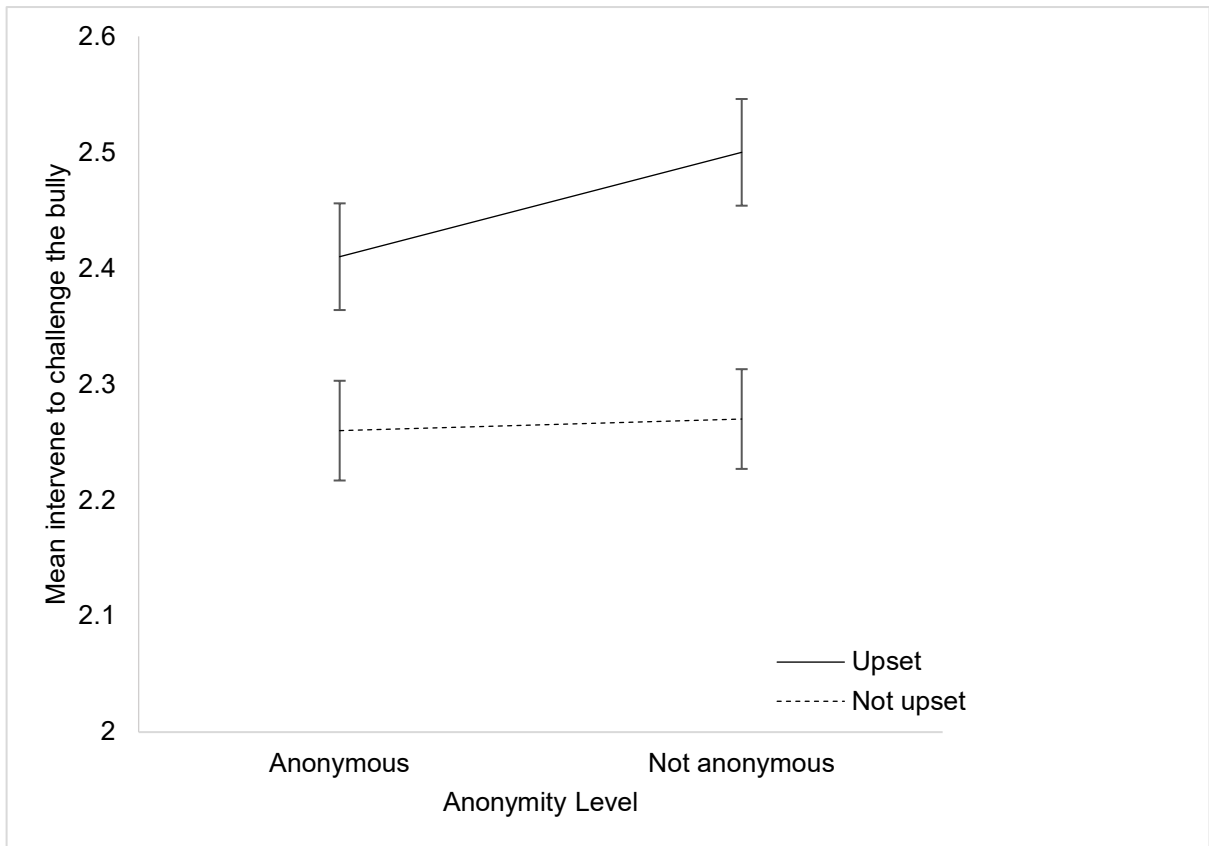
<b>Source</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>	<b><math>\eta^2</math></b>
*Publicity	22.53	1.94	11.62	20.79	< .001	.031
Anonymity	10.33	1.00	10.33	14.97	< .001	.022
Type	1.31	1.00	1.31	2.73	.099	.004
Victim response	140.93	1.00	140.93	108.26	< .001	.142
<b>Two-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity	1.66	2.00	.828	1.79	.167	.003
Publicity X type	.544	2.00	.272	.568	.566	.001
Anonymity X type	.010	1.00	.010	.021	.886	.000
Publicity X victim response	3.67	2.00	1.83	3.89	.021	.006
Anonymity X victim response	5.85	1.00	5.85	11.27	< .001	.017
Type X victim response	.326	1.00	.326	.756	.385	.001
<b>Three-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type	.079	2.00	.040	.085	.917	.000
Publicity X anonymity X victim response	.778	2.00	.389	.775	.461	.001
Publicity X type X victim response	2.56	2.00	1.28	2.82	.060	.004
Anonymity X type X victim response	1.26	1.00	1.26	2.73	.099	.004
<b>Four-way interactions</b>						
Publicity X anonymity X type X victim response	.694	2.00	.347	.778	.459	.001

Note: \*Huynh-Feldt correction reported.

**Two-way interactions.** All the two-way interactions were examined, as listed in Table 7.12. While most of the two-way interactions remained non-significant, a significant interaction was identified between anonymity and

victim response  $F(1.00, 653.00) = 11.27, p < .001, \eta^2 = .017$ , indicating a small effect size.

*Anonymity and victim response.* The nature of this interaction was probed with pairwise comparisons between the two levels of anonymity and the two levels of victim response. There was a significant difference in intervene scores when the bully was anonymous (upset:  $M = 2.41$ ; not upset:  $M = 2.26$ ), and when the bully was not anonymous (upset:  $M = 2.50$ ; not upset:  $M = 2.27$ ). For both types of victim response, there was a significant difference both levels of anonymity,  $p < .001$ . Figure 7.5 shows the interaction between anonymity and victim response on likelihood to intervene and challenge the bully. The interaction shows that young people are more likely to intervene and challenge the bully when the victim is upset, and the bully is not anonymous.



*Figure 7.5:* The interaction between anonymity and victim response on intervene and challenge the bully (with 99% confidence intervals).

Overall, Table 7.13 provides a summary of the key findings for differences in how young people respond to cyberbullying according to the publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response. This shows there are differences in how young people respond to cyberbullying, supporting the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis that likelihood of response strategy is different according to the publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset.

*Table 7.13: Summary of the main findings for differences in how young people respond to cyberbullying.*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Ignore the situation	Main effects	Publicity	Y	Ignore scores similar between semi-public and private. Less likely to ignore public
		Anonymity	N	
		Type	N	
	Interactions	Victim response	Y	Increase in ignore scores when victim not upset
		Publicity and Victim response	Y	Increase in ignore scores across publicity when victim not upset
Encourage the bully	Main effects	Publicity	N	No difference
		Anonymity	N	No difference
		Type	N	No difference
		Victim response	Y	Increase in encourage scores when the victim was not upset
		Publicity	N	No difference
Seek help from an adult	Main effects	Anonymity	Y	Increase in seek adult help when bully anonymous
		Type	N	No difference
		Victim response	Y	Increase in seek adult help when victim upset
		Publicity	Y	Increase in seek adult help for public, no difference between semi-public and private
	Interactions	Anonymity and Victim response	Y	Increase in seek adult help when bully anonymous and victim upset
		4-way interaction of main effects	Y	



Seek help from a friend	Main effects	Publicity	Y	Increase in seek help from a friend for public, followed by semi-public and private
		Anonymity	Y	Increase in seek help from a friend when bully anonymous
		Type	Y	Increase in seek help from a friend for written-verbal cyberbullying than visual
		Victim response	Y	Increase in seek help from a friend when victim upset
Emotional support for victim	Main effects	Publicity	Y	Increase in emotional support for victim when public, similar response between semi-public and private
		Anonymity	Y	Increase in emotional support for victim when bully anonymous
		Type	N	No difference
		Victim response	Y	Increase in emotional support for the victim when victim upset
	Interactions	Anonymity and Victim response	Y	Increase in emotional support for the victim when bully anonymous and victim upset
Intervene to challenge bully	Main effects	Publicity	Y	Increase to intervene and challenge the bully when public, no difference between semi-public and private
		Anonymity	Y	Increase to intervene and challenge the bully when the bully is anonymous.
		Type	N	No difference
		Victim response	Y	Increase to intervene and challenge the bully when the victim is upset
	Interactions			

Anonymity and victim response	Y	Increase to intervene and challenge the bully when the bully was anonymous, and victim upset
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*Note: 'Y' denotes significant, 'N' denotes non-significant*

In summary, Table 7.13 shows that victim response is the most influential factor across all response strategies on how young people respond to cyberbullying, followed by the publicity of the incident, the anonymity of the bully, and to a limited extent, the type of cyberbullying, supporting the RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis that there will be differences in likelihood of response strategy according to publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset.

The factor of victim response was found to be significant across all response strategies, where young people are more likely to ignore the situation and encourage the bully when the victim is not upset, but more likely to seek adult or friend support, provide emotional support for the victim, and intervene to challenge the bully when the victim was upset. This suggests that the victim response of being upset or not upset from cyberbullying plays an important role in how young people choose to respond.

The factor of publicity is the second most influential factor, being significant for all response strategies except likelihood to encourage the bully. Table 7.13 shows that young people are less likely to ignore public incidents of cyberbullying compared to semi-public or private incidents, but are more likely to seek adult or friend support, provide emotional support for the victim, and intervene to challenge the bully for public incidents of

cyberbullying. This suggests that the public nature of cyberbullying has an influential role in how young people choose to respond.

Table 7.13 shows the factor of anonymity to be important across all proactive strategies (e.g., seek adult help, friend help, emotional support, challenge bully), but was not a significant factor for likelihood to ignore the situation and encourage the bully. Young people were more likely to seek adult or friend support, provide emotional support for the victim, and intervene to challenge the bully when the bully was anonymous, compared to not being anonymous. This suggests the role of anonymity is an important factor for proactive strategies when young people choose how to respond.

In terms of type of cyberbullying, this was the least influential factor on response strategies, only significant for seeking help from a friend. Young people were more likely to seek help from a friend when they witnessed a written verbal cyberbullying incident compared to a visual incident. However, the type of cyberbullying was not significant for any other response strategy.

## **7.5 Discussion**

The current study set out to examine how young people from England perceive the severity of cyberbullying, and to what extent do they respond as a bystander based on a series of cyberbullying scenarios. As such, this chapter addressed RQ3 of the thesis: 'How do young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying? To achieve this aim two questions were proposed and experimentally tested. Firstly, the study examined if young people

perceive the severity of cyberbullying differently when examining the roles of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset (RQ7.1). Secondly, the study examined if there were differences in how young respond to cyberbullying when examining the roles of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset (RQ7.2).

To help address RQ3 of the thesis, the study asked the following question: 'do young people perceive the severity of cyberbullying differently when examining the roles of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent victim is upset' (RQ7.1)? In response to RQ7.1, the study found main effects for publicity, anonymity, and victim response, but not type of cyberbullying on the perceived severity of cyberbullying. Young people were more likely to perceive public forms of cyberbullying as more severe, followed by semi-public and private forms, supporting RQ7.1.H1 hypothesis that perceived severity will be higher in public incidents of cyberbullying. Public acts of cyberbullying have the potential to be distributed to a wider audience and increase the negative impact for the victim (Kowalski & Limber 2007; Nocentini et al. 2010). As such, young people may perceive such victimisation via public domains more severely due to the perceived greater impact on the victim. This is consistent with prior literature suggesting young people attribute higher severity for public forms of cyberbullying as more severe (Dredge et al., 2014; Nocentini et al., 2010; Pieschl et al., 2015), compared to semi-public or private forms of cyberbullying. Regarding anonymity, perceived severity of the situation was higher when the bully was anonymous, supporting the RQ7.1.H2 hypothesis that perceived severity will be higher when the bully was anonymous. This supports with the literature

showing how anonymity in bullying can lead to fear, powerlessness and lack of control (Dooley et al. 2009; Nocentini et al. 2010; Slonje & Smith 2008; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). In addition, young people reported higher levels of perceived severity when the victim was identified as being upset, supporting the RQ7.1.H4 hypothesis that perceived severity will be higher when the victim is upset. A prior systematic review has identified how the feelings of the victim can influence the perceived severity of cyberbullying (Domínguez-Hernández et al., 2018). This suggests that publicity, anonymity and victim response play an important role in the perceived severity of cyberbullying. An interaction effect was also found between publicity and victim response whereby perceived severity of cyberbullying increased for those that were public and the victim was also upset. This suggests the interplay between publicity and victim response are particularly important predictors of perceived severity. Implications of this suggest a need to for teachers to focus their attention on educating young people to see all forms of cyberbullying, regardless of publicity as severe, and to implement empathy training so young people recognise signs from the victim.

Perceived severity of cyberbullying can be considered a good indicator of how young people perceive different factors within cyberbullying. As many young people may have experienced, or been indirectly related to a cyberbullying incident, they are likely to be aware on what they consider to be severe in the real world. These findings on perceived severity are consistent with findings across young people in Italy, Germany, and Spain (Nocentini et al., 2010), attributing the increased distress and anxiety when exposed publicly (Pieschl et al., 2015; Ševčíková et al., 2012), and feelings

of isolation and fear when the victim did not know the identity of the perpetrator (Corby et al., 2016; Dredge et al., 2014; Vandebosch et al., 2014). The finding that the type of cyberbullying did not impact on the perceived severity of cyberbullying was unexpected and did not support the RQ7.1.H3 hypothesis that perceived severity would be higher for visual scenarios compared to written verbal. Previous research into this area have consistently reported visual forms of cyberbullying to be more severe than written verbal (Menesini et al., 2011; Pieschl et al., 2013; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2008). This indicates that young people may value specific characteristics of cyberbullying as more important in determining the severity of the situation, than the actual type of cyberbullying perpetrated. In terms of publicity, a prior study of Australian young people found that they perceive the potential wider audience as severe when regarding the impact on the victim (Dredge et al., 2014). This is a positive notion as it suggests young people are equally likely to view visual and written verbal forms of cyberbullying as severe. Therefore, teachers can tailor their education of cyberbullying awareness specifically on the features of publicity, anonymity, and reflecting on how the victim responds. Such tailored education would aim to raise the awareness of the severity of cyberbullying, that regardless of the presence/absence of such features, involvement can lead to an array of negative consequences (Heiman et al., 2015; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010, 2019; Wolke et al., 2017).

To help address RQ3 of the thesis, the study asked the following question: 'are there differences in how young respond to cyberbullying when examining the roles of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and extent

victim is upset' (RQ7.2)? The findings support RQ7.2.H1 hypothesis that there would be differences in likelihood of response strategies, where victim response was found to be the most influential factor, followed by the publicity, anonymity of the bully, and type of cyberbullying. In response to RQ7.2, on addressing likelihood to ignore the incident, main effects were found for publicity and victim response, but not for anonymity and type of cyberbullying. Young people were more likely to ignore what was happening when the cyberbullying was semi-public or private, but significantly less likely to ignore those acts that were public. As young people perceive private and semi-public forms of cyberbullying to be less severe than incidents in the public domain, this suggests young people could choose to ignore these incidents (Barlinska et al., 2013; Bastiaensens et al., 2014; Koehler & Weber, 2018). In addition, young people were more likely to ignore the situation when the victim was described as not being upset. This suggests that the publicity of cyberbullying and how the victim responds are important factors that could influence if young people choose to ignore cyberbullying or not. These two main effects also interacted whereby ignore scores increased across all levels of publicity when the victim was not upset from their victimisation. Young people may lack the relevant skills and knowledge to intervene in a positive manner, as identified in prior research (DeSmet et al., 2012, 2014; Van Cleemput et al., 2014). For example, studies of young people in Belgium highlight that young people may choose to ignore the incident if they perceive the situation to be resolved, or others have already intervened (DeSmet et al., 2012, 2014).

In response to RQ7.2, when examining likelihood to encourage the bully, the study found a main effect for victim response, but not for publicity, anonymity, or type of cyberbullying. As such, young people were more likely to encourage the bully if the victim was not upset, suggesting the importance of this factor when young people decide if to encourage the bully. From a theoretical perspective, due to the minimisation of authority in the online domain, and the notion of asynchronicity as actions have no immediate consequences online, it is possible young people are more likely to encourage the bully and escalate the situation (Bryce & Fraser, 2013; Suler, 2004). The notion of online disinhibition suggests young people separate their actions online to real life interactions. For example, this suggests young people are more likely to encourage the bully online because they have the invisible barrier of anonymity, allowing young people to feel more confident online to do things they would not necessarily do in the physical world (Bryce & Fraser, 2013; Suler, 2004). As a result, young people may inaccurately misjudge how the victim is feeling. On the other hand, this absence of authority figures in the online domain may suggest young people are less likely to actively seek help from an adult and/or provide emotional support to the victim. Therefore, it is important for teachers to encourage discussions in schools and reflections on cyberbullying cases to promote positive discussions and actions on intervention (Kowalski, Giumetti, & Limber, 2017).

In response to RQ7.2, on the likelihood to seek help from an adult, main effects were found for publicity, anonymity, and victim response, but not type of cyberbullying. While there was no difference in seeking adult help to



support the victim between semi-public and private incidents of cyberbullying, there were higher levels of adult help in public acts of cyberbullying. As young people perceive public acts of cyberbullying to be more severe than semi-public or private acts of cyberbullying, this could explain why young people are more likely to seek help from an adult in these cases (Chen & Cheng, 2017). In addition, young people were more likely to seek adult help when the bully was anonymous in the situation. Regarding victim response, seeking adult help to support the victim was higher when young people witnessed the victim was upset. This suggests the publicity, anonymity, and victim response are important factors to consider when young people decide to seek adult help. Despite young people recognising cyberbullying as a serious issue (Bryce & Fraser, 2013), a majority continue to do nothing (Balakrishnan, 2018). In addition, some young people are less likely to seek help from a teacher/adult when they perceived teachers to lack the skills and confidence to address the issue (Bauman, 2010; Blake & Louw, 2010; Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Therefore, to promote further actions of seeking adult help, teachers need to be trained to build their confidence and knowledge to address and manage cyberbullying. For example, prospective teachers recognised a lack of training from their Initial Teacher Training regarding cyberbullying and felt specific training on the issue would build their confidence and ability to manage it within the school (see Chapter 4). Such training would allow young people to feel confident to report cyberbullying involvement to teachers.

Considering RQ7.2 the study found main effects for all factors of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response when young

people were reporting on the likelihood to seek help from a friend to support the victim. In terms of publicity, young people were more likely to seek help from a friend to support the victim for public incidents, followed by semi-public, and private cases of cyberbullying. Regarding anonymity, when the bully was anonymous, young people were more likely to seek help from a friend compared to when the bully was known. In addition, young people were more likely to seek help from a friend when the type of cyberbullying was written verbal, compared to visual cyberbullying. Previous literature suggests visual forms of cyberbullying are more humiliating for the victim (Menesini et al., 2011; Pieschl et al., 2013; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008), and so suggests more needs to be done to promote positive intervention. In terms of the victim response, young people were more likely to seek help from a friend to help the victim when the victim was upset. This suggests all four factors of publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response are important to consider when young people decide when to seek help from a friend. This is a positive finding, because it suggests young people are more likely to seek social support and help from a peer/friend when they witness cyberbullying, across all factors examined in the current study. As seeking social support is an effective strategy to address cyberbullying (Pabian, 2019), young people need to be reminded to report cyberbullying and seek help from friends and trusted adults.

In terms of RQ7.2, when examining any differences on likelihood to provide emotional support for the victim, main effects were found for publicity, anonymity, and victim response. As such, young people were more likely to provide emotional support for the victim when the victim was

targeted via a public domain, with similar emotional support levels between semi-public and public. Considering anonymity, emotional support for the victim increased when the bully was anonymous. Regarding victim response, emotional support increased when the victim was upset, compared to when the victim was not upset. This suggests young people consider the publicity of the incident, extent the bully is anonymous, and if the victim is upset when deciding if to provide emotional support for the victim. In addition, an interaction effect was found between anonymity and victim response, whereby young people reported higher levels of emotional support for the victim when the bully was anonymous, and the victim was upset. This is important because providing emotional support for the victim is an effective strategy young people adopt when they witness cyberbullying online (Bastiaensens et al., 2019; Machackova et al., 2015). When young people provide emotional support, they discuss the cyberbullying incident with the victim, and provide the victim coping strategies (Bastiaensens et al., 2019) to help them overcome the negative consequences (Kowalski et al., 2017). Therefore, teachers can have discussions with young people in the school on the type of emotional support they can give to victims if they witness cyberbullying, particularly the sorts of coping strategies young people should encourage victims to adopt.

In response to RQ7.2, in terms of likelihood to intervene to challenge the bully, main effects were found for publicity, anonymity, and victim response. Young people were more likely to intervene to challenge the bully when the cyberbullying was public, with no significant difference between semi-public and private incidents. In addition, young people were more likely

to challenge the bully when the bully was anonymous. Considering the victim response, young people were more likely to intervene and challenge the bully when the victim was upset. As such, factors of publicity, anonymity, and victim response play a role in how young people decide if to intervene and challenge the bully. In addition, an interaction effect was found between anonymity and victim response, whereby young people were more likely to intervene and challenge the bully when the bully was anonymous, and the victim upset. These findings support prior research suggesting young people would intervene to support victims of cyberbullying (Dillon & Bushman, 2015; Huang & Chou, 2013).

The bystander effect and research on diffusion of responsibility is the most widely used theoretical framework to help explain online behaviour when responding to cyberbullying (Allison & Bussey, 2016). When it comes to cyberbullying, bystanders have the option to positively intervene anonymously, however, despite the physical absence of other bystanders, the perceived virtual onlookers of an incident implies an element of diffusion of responsibility (Barlinksa et al., 2013; Darley & Latane, 1968; DeSmet et al., 2014). In the online environment, factors including asynchronicity, ambiguous nature evaluating cyberbullying incidents, lack of social cues of other bystanders, and the difficulty identifying the number of bystanders present online, suggests a need to consider the work of Latané and Darley (1970) (Machackova et al., 2015). The social psychological work by Latané and Darley (1970) outline the importance of being able to notice the event and interpret the event as something serious that merits intervention. Normally, bystanders would look to others to see how they physically

respond via diffusion of responsibility. However, in the online environment this notion is much more ambiguous as bystanders may be unaware how many virtual 'onlookers' there are. As the severity of the situation has been implicated in reducing the bystander effect (Fischer et al., 2011), it is important for teachers to promote the idea that all forms of cyberbullying, regardless of the aforementioned factors examined in the current study are serious to merit intervention.

As noted in Chapter 6, teachers perceived it is also the responsibility of young people to address cyberbullying, but also the responsibility of teachers to build self-efficacy so if young people are targeted, they have the skills to respond and report the incident in a safe manner. Regarding cyber victimisation that occurs privately, teachers need to ensure all young people have the confidence to seek help and disclose their victimisation, to avoid feelings of helplessness. As a result, it is important victims of cyberbullying are aware of the support available to them in order to encourage disclosure and reduce the negative consequences associated with involvement. If teachers feel unprepared to address cyberbullying, and do not adequately respond to the issue in the school environment, the prevalence of cyberbullying is likely to increase as the behaviour is reinforced and bystanders online feel they do not need to help (Bryce & Fraser, 2013). As prior research identified, schools that endorsed policies and education to young people to combat cyberbullying, were more likely to have confident teachers to address the issue (Li, 2007). If young people perceive their teachers to have the capacity and confidence to address cyberbullying, they

are more likely to seek help from teachers when they witness cyberbullying (Eliot, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2010).

The use of hypothetical vignettes to measure perceived severity of cyberbullying and how young people respond also needs to be acknowledged. For example, how young people respond to cyberbullying in real life may be different (Nickerson, Singleton, Schnurr, & Collen, 2014), suggesting young people need to be supported by schools to increase awareness of support systems. Another limitation of the vignettes used is the wording and representation of the variables that are being measured in the vignettes. This limitation is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 (see section 8.8.2.2). Despite this, the current study still outlines the importance of specific factors that may inhibit bystander intervention in the real world. It is possible some young people reported higher agreement with positive bystander intentions, even though this may not have reflected their true behaviour in real life. One study has shown how young people in the USA are prone to report higher levels of defending behaviour, but actual defending behaviour in real life is a lot lower (Lindstrom Johnson, Waasdorp, Debnam, & Bradshaw, 2013). However, similar to previous research (Schultze-Krumbholz, Zagorscak, Hess, & Scheithauer, 2020), the current study aimed to account for these social desirability effects by reinforcing the idea that there were no right or wrong responses, it was down to the perception of the individual, and all responses were completed anonymously.

A final limitation of the current study is that age and gender were not considered as issues in the current analysis. Age was not considered because most of the sample ( $N = 798$ ) were derived from two secondary

schools, with 702 participants from these secondary schools aged between 11 to 13 years of age. Therefore, as most participants were at the younger end of the age range of participants, age was not considered in the study in order to focus on how young people in general perceive and respond to cyberbullying. Gender was also not considered in the current study. In a systematic review of the literature on factors that moderate bystander intervention, the results on gender are largely contradictory (Domínguez-Hernández et al., 2018). On the one hand, studies in Belgium have reported gender differences in bystander behaviour where females report higher intentions to help the victim compared to males (Bastiaensens et al., 2016; Van Cleemput, Vandebosch, & Pabian, 2014). On the other hand, studies in Poland have found no gender differences in bystander reactions to cyberbullying (Barlińska et al., 2013; 2015; 2018; Szuster et al., 2016). Such contradictory evidence suggests that the role of gender on bystander intervention to cyberbullying needs a thorough investigation that considers different personal and contextual factors. As such, future research could extend the work in this study and explore additional factors that may moderate bystander intentions in the context of gender. In addition, the role of gender was not discussed in the focus groups by prospective (see Chapter 5) and current teachers (see Chapter 6), and so the rationale for the development of the current study derived from exploring how young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying. So, while the current study has not considered key issues of age or gender, the results do provide a unique

insight on how young people perceive and respond to cyberbullying based on the key factors highlighted by prospective and current teachers.

## **7.6 Chapter Summary**

Although young people have reported cyberbullying to be a serious problem and feel confident to address the issue (Bryce & Fraser, 2013), the current study highlights that the victim response is the most influential factor across all response strategies, followed by the publicity of the incident, the anonymity of the bully, and the type of cyberbullying. In summary, young people from England are more likely to perceive cyberbullying to be serious when it occurs on the public domain, perpetrated anonymously, and the victim is noticeably upset by this. The type of cyberbullying made no difference on the perceived severity of cyberbullying. This suggests teachers need to promote the idea that all incidents of cyberbullying across public, semi-public, and private domains are very serious. In addition, educating young people that some victims may suffer in silence, and can experience negative consequences from cyberbullying even if the perpetrator has/has not concealed their identity, may reinforce the message that all incidents of cyberbullying are serious. As such, young people will be more inclined to intervene to support the victim and seek help to address the situation. For example, teachers can implement reflection discussions and role play scenarios to help build empathy, so young people are more likely to see cyberbullying as serious when the victim is upset (Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016).



In addition, the study found young people are more likely to act positively when they witness cyberbullying (i.e., seek help from a friend/adult, emotional support, & intervene to challenge the bully) when it has occurred in the public domain, perpetrated anonymously, and the victim is upset. As such, further work needs to be done to encourage young people to seek help when they are a victim, and highlight that other situations are also serious (e.g., when they are victimized privately). Bystanders are more likely to intervene to support the victim if they actively seek help online (Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016). In addition, the concept of moral engagement could also provide useful recommendations when addressing cyberbullying. As young people are more likely to support the victim if they have high levels of moral standards (Allison & Bussey, 2016), teachers can aim to build empathy and ideas of appropriate social standards online to encourage young people to intervene when they witness cyberbullying. Overall, the findings from the current study can be used to guide teachers' education of cyberbullying awareness in the school environment to help young people recognise that all forms are severe. As school-based prevention efforts are effective at reducing cyberbullying (Wölfer et al., 2014), it is important these findings are highlighted to those in the education system so they can implement new strategies in their prevention efforts to address cyberbullying.

In the context of RQ3 'how do young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying?', young people perceive the victim response is the most influential factor across all response strategies, followed by the publicity of the incident, the anonymity of the bully, and the type of cyberbullying.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

#### **8.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter will provide a discussion of the preceding seven chapters, focusing on the key findings in relation to the research questions. Firstly, the chapter will outline the aim of the thesis and the research questions. Secondly, the chapter will discuss the research questions in the context of the main findings from the current programme of research conducted, and how these extend on findings from previous literature. Thirdly, the chapter will provide an overview and discussion of the key methodological strengths and limitations of the thesis. The chapter will then go on to discuss the implications of the research findings and provide some suggestions for future research. Finally, the chapter will outline the unique contributions made to the literature from the programme of research conducted as part of this thesis.

#### **8.2 Aims of the Thesis**

The programme of research discussed in this thesis has investigated cyberbullying looking at (1) how prospective and current teachers perceive cyberbullying when making judgements about how to manage and respond to it, and (2) how young people perceive cyberbullying according to the key

factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying.

### 8.2.1 Research Questions

The current thesis addressed the following three research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What does the existing literature report and discuss regarding teachers' perceptions and management of cyberbullying in the school environment?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are prospective and current teachers' perceptions of factors that should be considered when managing cyberbullying?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How do young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying?

To address these research questions, the following objectives have been implemented and achieved:

- To review the Government legislation and guidance in England to examine how cyberbullying is addressed in the school environment (see Chapter 3).
- To conduct a systematic literature review to examine the existing literature regarding prospective and current teachers' perceptions and responses when addressing cyberbullying in the school environment (See Chapter 4, addressing RQ1).

- To explore the perceptions of prospective teachers towards cyberbullying based on their Initial Teacher Training (See Chapter 5, addressing RQ2).
- To explore the perceptions of in-service teachers towards cyberbullying and their responses when addressing the issue (See Chapter 6, addressing RQ2).
- To explore how young people perceive and respond towards cyberbullying according to criteria identified by teachers that may inhibit intervention (See Chapter 7, addressing RQ3).

The current thesis has provided an insight into the perceptions and responses of teaching professionals from England towards cyberbullying in the school environment. In addition, the thesis has explored how young people perceive and respond to different cyberbullying situations according to criteria identified by teachers that may inhibit intervention.

### **8.3 What does the existing literature report and discuss regarding teachers' perceptions and management of cyberbullying in the school environment? (RQ1)**

A summary of the main findings for RQ1 on 'what does the existing literature report and discuss regarding teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying in the school environment?' is presented in Figure 8.1.

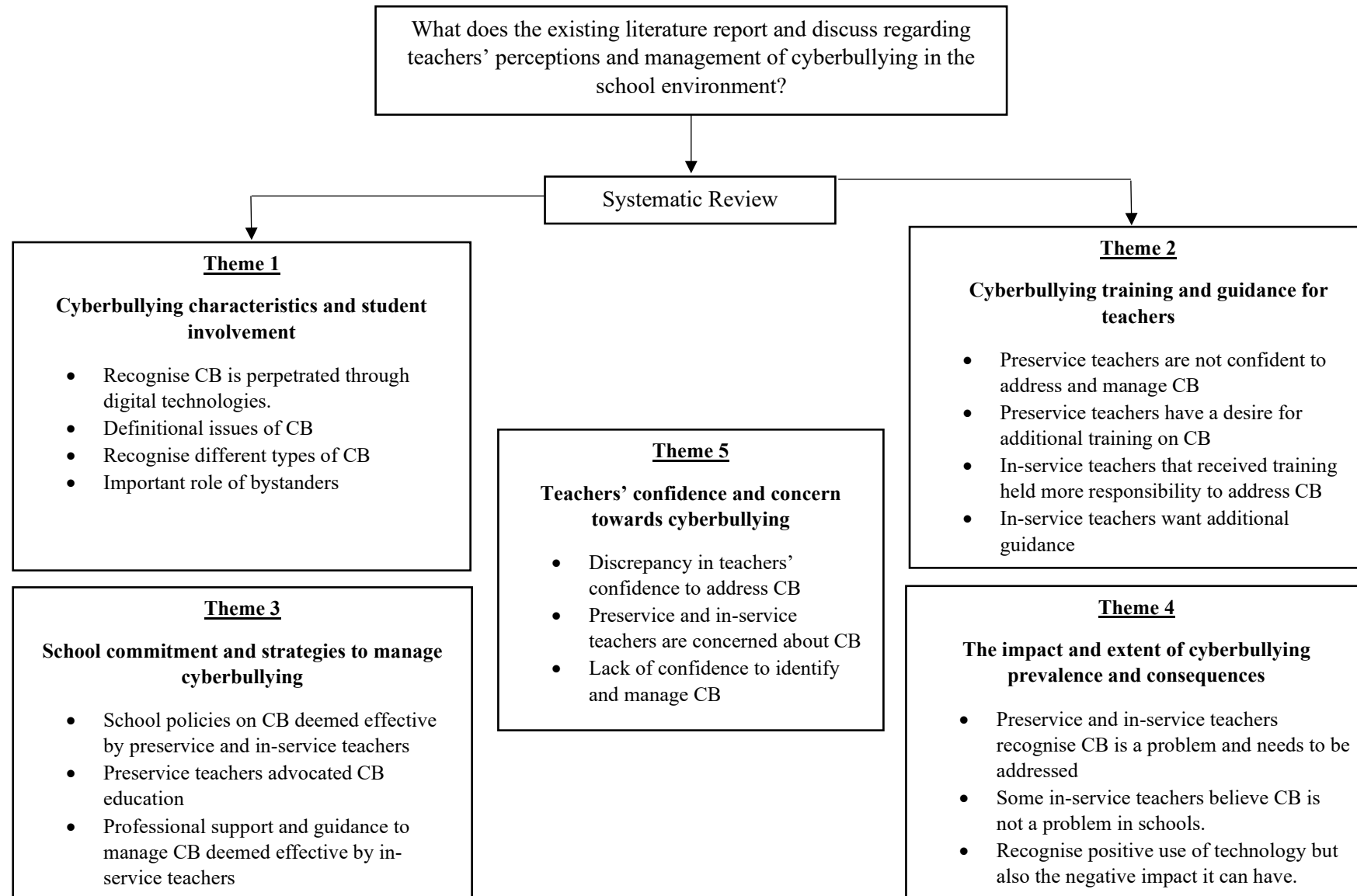


Figure 8.1: Summary of the main findings for research question 1

The systematic review in Chapter 4 identified and examined the existing literature regarding teachers' perceptions and management of cyberbullying in the school environment. This provided an insight into the existing literature on what is currently known and reported about cyberbullying in the school environment, from the perspective of teaching professionals. To the author's knowledge, this was the first systematic review on teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying. The systematic review identified 20 articles concerning teachers' perceptions of, and responses to cyberbullying in the school environment, 5 of which focused on the perspective of prospective teachers. The systematic review identified five themes across the included articles: (a) Cyberbullying characteristics and student involvement, (b) Cyberbullying training and guidance for teachers, (c) School commitment and strategies to manage cyberbullying, (d) The impact and extent of cyberbullying prevalence and consequences, and (e) Teachers' confidence and concern towards cyberbullying.

Firstly, the review identified a theme of *Cyberbullying characteristics and student involvement*, which explored the role of students in cyberbullying and the challenges associated with defining cyberbullying. The findings from the review identified that teachers recognise some of the definitional characteristics of cyberbullying. For example, the review suggested that teachers recognise that cyberbullying is perpetrated via digital technologies, but also requires the notion of intent from the perpetrator to inflict harm on their target. Despite this, the review highlighted that some teachers are not aware of some definitional criteria (e.g., a power imbalance between the victim and perpetrator, and repetition of the incident), which has been used

to define cyberbullying stemming from the definition of traditional bullying (Olweus & Limber, 2018; Smith et al., 2008). Defining features of traditional bullying are widely used in academia and in the school environment to aid in the identification and management of bullying (Arseneault, 2018; Campbell & Bauman, 2018), even though there are definitional issues in the application to cyberbullying (Kofoed & Staksrud, 2018). The findings of the review suggest these traditional criteria of bullying are not interpreted in the same manner to define cyberbullying. In particular, the review identified that teachers place more importance on the unique characteristics of cyberbullying, where they recognised the ease of access for young people to bully online. For example, the review suggested that teachers perceive the anonymous nature of cyberbullying as a facilitator for targeting victims online (Compton et al., 2014; Huang & Chou, 2013). As such, this creates challenges for teachers in the school environment in addressing cyberbullying situations because it is harder to identify.

While there is continued discussion in the literature regarding the role of anonymity in cyberbullying, research suggests that in approximately half the cases of cyberbullying, the victim will most likely know the identity of their perpetrator (Bauman, 2010; Mark & Ratliffe, 2011). This suggests a need for schools and teachers to encourage victims to disclose cyberbullying involvement to identify perpetrators. On the other hand, the unique facet of anonymity in cyberbullying means the traditional criteria of power imbalance is reduced, giving the victim the opportunity to retaliate (Cuadrado-Gordillo & Fernández-Antelo, 2016; Zhou et al., 2013). This means some victims of cyberbullying may be reluctant to disclose involvement, as people can

manipulate their identity online or remain anonymous, so the victim is unaware who is bullying them. Regarding student involvement and disclosure intentions, the review found that existing literature has reported that studies of English and Taiwanese teachers perceive a lack of cyberbullying disclosure from young people (Betts & Spenser, 2015; Huang & Chou, 2013). In relation to the research question, the review found that existing literature has reported that English teachers perceive that cyberbullying is becoming normalised (Monks et al., 2016), and studies of Australian and Taiwanese teachers suggest the unique characteristics of cyberbullying are having an impact on young people (Barnes et al., 2012; Compton et al., 2014; Huang & Chou, 2013). This suggests it is particularly important for researchers, teachers, and young people to work together to devise a definition of cyberbullying that 'works' for all parties.

Secondly, the review identified a theme on *Cyberbullying training and guidance for teachers*, which explored the training and guidance received by prospective and in-service teachers to address cyberbullying in the school environment. The findings suggest that prospective teachers are not confident to address and manage cyberbullying, attributed to a lack of training within their course. For example, existing literature has reported that prospective teachers from studies in Canada and Turkey perceive the training received does not help them prepare to manage cyberbullying in the school environment (Li, 2008; Ryan et al., 2011; Yilmaz, 2010). Despite this view, a study by Styron et al. (2016) reported that prospective teachers in the USA do receive some guidance on the different forms of cyberbullying. However, the existing empirical literature identified from the systematic



review primarily suggests that prospective teachers do not receive adequate training specific to cyberbullying in their degree programmes. This suggests that more attention needs to be placed on prospective teachers in order to build their understanding and awareness of cyberbullying, particularly as many prospective teachers from the review would highly endorse additional training on how to address cyberbullying. Therefore, Study 1 (see Chapter 5) addressed this gap in the literature.

The review also identified that in-service teachers in Israel recognised that teacher training courses need to do more to address cyberbullying and prepare prospective teachers (Eden et al., 2013). In the context of RQ1, this implies that the existing literature largely indicates that teacher training courses need to do more to address cyberbullying, and so the qualitative study in Chapter 5 further explored this in relation to RQ2. In terms of in-service teachers, the review also found that teachers from studies in Australia, New Zealand, and Northern Ireland held a desire for additional training on cyberbullying in the school environment to promote the identification and management of cyberbullying (Barnes et al., 2012; Green et al., 2017; Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2015). For example, the review identified from a study of teachers in New Zealand that if they had received training on cyberbullying management, they were more likely to take a greater responsibility to address cyberbullying (Green et al., 2017). This highlights the need for schools to offer more training and guidance on such issues. As the existing literature reports a lack of training and guidance offered to teachers regarding cyberbullying, the focus group studies presented in Chapter 5 and 6, explored both prospective and in-service teachers'

perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying respectively, to further investigate the concerns held by those in the school environment.

Thirdly, the review identified a theme on *school commitment and strategies to manage cyberbullying*, which explored the need to provide the right infrastructure for teachers to be able to tackle the issue. In terms of prospective teachers, the review found that existing literature advocates the implementation of school policies and guidelines as an effective strategy to manage cyberbullying. However, while findings of the review suggested Canadian and Turkish prospective teachers recognise the effectiveness of cyberbullying policies (Li, 2008; Yilmaz, 2010; Ryan et al., 2011), other prospective teachers from the USA perceived the implementation of a zero-tolerance behavioural policy would be more effective in managing cyberbullying within the school (Stryon et al., 2016). However, such approaches have been deemed ineffective in the 'battle' against bullying as suggested by a study of Belgium teachers (DeSmet et al., 2015). In addition to this, the review found that parental involvement and raising awareness on the consequences of cyberbullying for young people are effective strategies to tackle cyberbullying in school. This suggests schools and school staff have an important role in preventing cyberbullying through a process of building awareness and educating young people.

Despite these suggested intervention approaches to manage cyberbullying, the review also identified from a study conducted in the UK that prospective teachers' willingness to intervene is also predicted by the perceived severity of the situation (Boulton et al., 2014). This suggests that contextual information regarding cyberbullying instances is important when

teachers review how to intervene. Due to the various strategies proposed by prospective teachers identified from the review of existing literature, the focus group study presented in Chapter 5 explored the perceptions of prospective teachers further, particularly regarding their intentions to intervene. Like prospective teachers, in-service teachers from studies conducted in Australia, Taiwan, and the USA also perceived policies on cyberbullying and educating the impact of cyberbullying as effective strategies (Barnes et al., 2012; Huang & Chou, 2013; Pelfrey & Weber, 2015). In addition, the review of existing literature also found from studies of Lithuanian and Belgium teachers that professional support and promoting a positive school climate were also regarded as effective strategies to manage cyberbullying (Baraldsnes, 2015; DeSmet et al., 2015). This shows the review of existing literature identified a variety of suggested intervention strategies, and so the studies presented in Chapters 5 and 6 explored the responses of teachers further to address RQ2.

Fourthly, the review identified a theme concerning *the impact and extent of cyberbullying prevalence and consequences* which explored how schools and teachers have perceived the issue. Existing literature has reported that Canadian and Turkish prospective teachers recognise cyberbullying as a problem in the school environment, which can lead to an array of negative consequences for those involved (Li, 2008; Ryan et al., 2011; Yilmaz, 2010). As discussed in Chapter 2, cyberbullying can lead to an array of negative consequences for those involved, which can also spill into the school environment (Pyżalski, 2012; West, 2015). In relation to this, the findings of the review showed that American and Turkish prospective

teachers were aware of the negative impact and extent of cyberbullying in the school environment (Styron et al., 2016; Yilmaz, 2010), as are in-service teachers reported from studies in Northern Ireland and Germany (Purdy & Mc Guckin, 2015; Vandebosch et al., 2014). Despite some American teachers perceiving cyberbullying as not a problem in the school environment (Stauffer et al., 2012), the review suggests that both prospective and in-service teachers are concerned by the issue in the school. For example, Betts and Spenser (2015) found that English teachers perceived that young people did not engage in self-monitoring behaviour or regulation in terms of what was said online, and this would often lead to negative consequences for the individual. In relation to RQ1, the review of existing literature identified that teachers do recognise cyberbullying to be a problem and are concerned by the extent of the issue within the school. As such, the studies in Chapter 5 and 6 further explored how teachers respond to the issue within the school environment, and to gain a unique perspective on how teachers view the issue considering developments of digital technologies.

Finally, the findings of the review identified a theme across existing literature concerning *teachers' confidence and concern towards cyberbullying*. There is a large discrepancy in prospective teachers' confidence to address cyberbullying. For example, while some Turkish prospective teachers felt moderately confident to address cyberbullying (Yilmaz, 2010), some Canadian prospective teachers did not feel confident to identify or manage cyberbullying in the school environment (Li, 2008; Ryan et al., 2011). Despite some prospective teachers showing a high level of

concern towards cyberbullying and recognising it as a problem in the school environment, their intervention and management of cyberbullying was hindered due to a lack of confidence on this issue. This suggests prospective teachers need to receive additional training to build their confidence and ability to address cyberbullying in the school environment. Like prospective teachers, in-service teachers from studies in Canada, Israel, and New Zealand also viewed cyberbullying as a serious problem in school, and were concerned by this (Cassidy et al., 2012; Eden et al., 2013; Green et al., 2017). The review in Chapter 4 found that in-service teachers perceive they lack the confidence and skills to address and manage cyberbullying effectively. As the review found that existing literature reports a lack of confidence and ability to manage cyberbullying from prospective and current teachers, Chapter 5 and 6 explored in further detail their responses towards cyberbullying.

A summary of the main findings of the systematic review for RQ1 are presented in *Figure 8.1*. The systematic review found that existing literature has reported that teachers recognise cyberbullying to be a problem in the school environment, but there was a large discrepancy on effective prevention strategies that teachers implemented. In addition, the review found that prospective and in-service teachers lack the confidence and ability to intervene and address cyberbullying but expressed a desire for additional training and guidance.

**8.4 What are prospective and current teachers' perceptions of factors that should be considered when managing cyberbullying? (RQ2)**

A summary of the main findings for RQ2 on 'what are prospective and current teachers' perceptions of factors that should be considered when managing cyberbullying?' is presented in Figure 8.2.

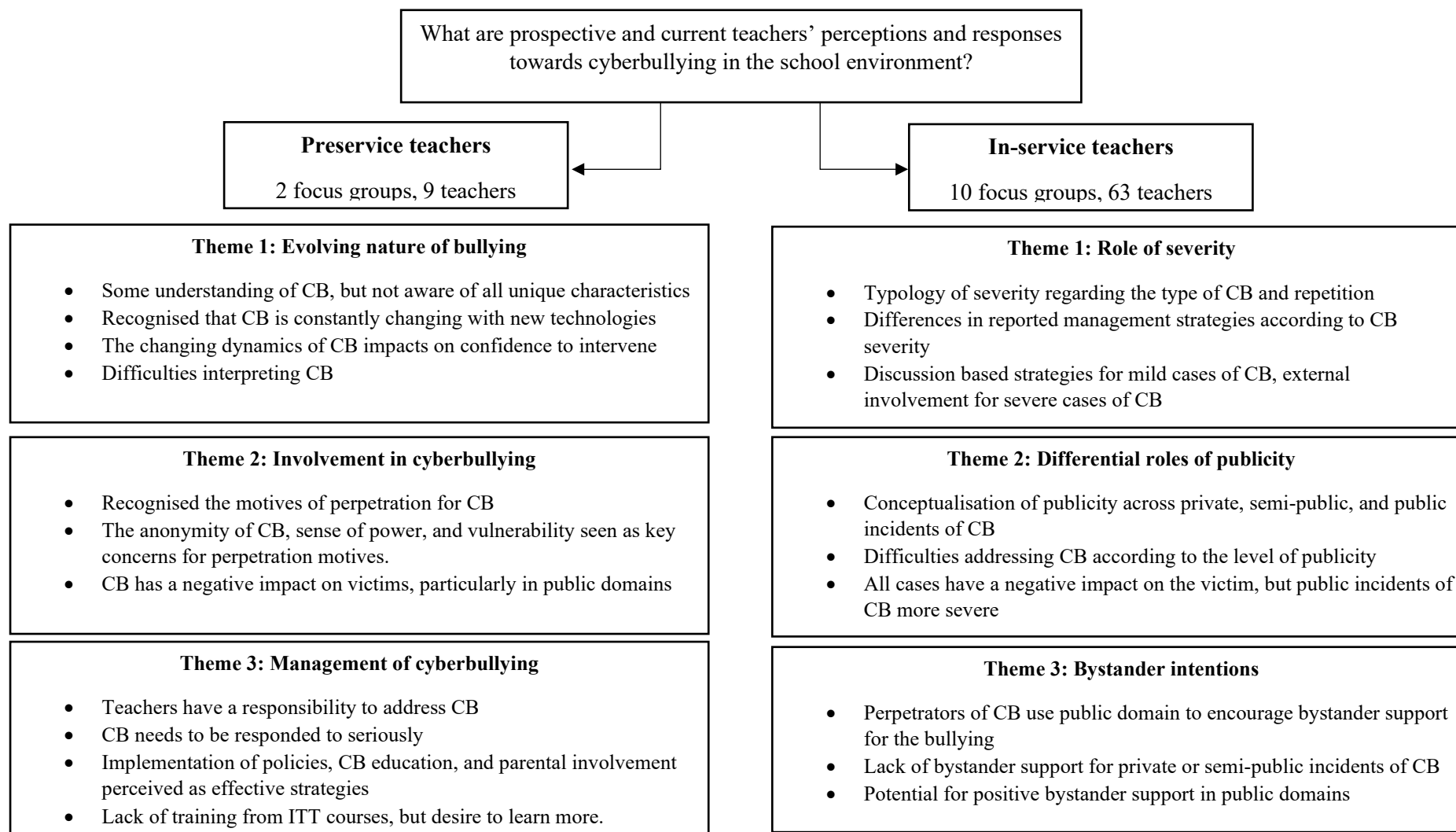


Figure 8.2: Summary of the main findings for research question 2.

Extending on the findings from the systematic review in Chapter 4, the focus group studies presented in Chapter 5 and 6 further explored prospective and current teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying in the school environment. The findings from the studies in Chapter 5 and 6 offer a unique insight and will be discussed in relation to previous literature and theory.

Study 1 (see Chapter 5) was devised due to findings from the systematic review. From the systematic review, it became evident that the perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying varied according to teachers. The findings from the review of existing literature identified that there is a lack of focus on prospective teachers' perceptions on this issue. The limited existing empirical literature has found that Canadian and Turkish prospective teachers recognise cyberbullying to be a problem and are concerned by the issue (Li, 2008; Yilmaz, 2010). Similarly, findings of English, Canadian, and American prospective teachers suggest they are unsure how to effectively intervene to manage cyberbullying (Boulton et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2011; Styron et al., 2016). To address the limited empirical research in this area, and to further gain a unique insight on prospective teachers' perceptions on cyberbullying, Study 1 (see Chapter 5) explored the perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying, and the extent training courses prepare prospective teachers. This thesis contributes to the limited research on prospective teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying from a qualitative approach employing reflexive thematic analysis. The findings from the thematic analysis of prospective teachers identified three themes: (a)



evolving nature of bullying; (b) involvement in cyberbullying and (c) management of cyberbullying.

Findings from Study 1 exploring prospective teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying identified a theme regarding the *evolving nature of bullying*. This theme comprised of two sub-themes: understanding of bullying and dynamics of a changing online environment. Study 1 found that prospective teachers were aware of definitional characteristics associated with traditional bullying, and how these characteristics extend to cyberbullying as a result of advancement in digital technologies. However, while Study 1 found that prospective teachers recognised traditional criteria of repetition and intent to inflict harm as key definitional components for cyberbullying, prospective teachers did not consider the notion of a power imbalance as a definitional feature. Smith (2015) discussed how the criterion of power imbalance is more difficult to define in the context of cyberbullying. Despite the lack of recognition concerning the power imbalance element, the findings from Study 1 suggested that prospective teachers are aware of unique characteristics associated with cyberbullying. For example, prospective teachers perceived the accessibility to digital technologies means that cyberbullying is constantly changing, which subsequently has an impact on their confidence to intervene. In addition to this, prospective teachers recognised the public element of cyberbullying, discussing a typology of publicity. In this typology, prospective teachers recognised cyberbullying could be private, semi-public, or public depending on the audience involved. The public nature of cyberbullying was regarded as an important factor in their discussion of cyberbullying, and so Study 2 reported

in chapter 6 further explored this factor more specially in the context of in-service teachers. Prospective teachers also recognised the unique facet of anonymity, allowing perpetrators to conceal their identity as they target their victims. As previous literature has suggested the role of anonymity can create a real or perceived power imbalance between the victim and perpetrator (Smith et al., 2013; Olweus & Limber, 2018; Thomas et al., 2015), teachers need to be more aware of the damaging impact the role of anonymity can have on the victim. The factor of anonymity was regarded as an important factor, and so was explored in Study 3 reported in Chapter 7 when exploring how young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying.

Study 1 also identified a theme regarding the *involvement in cyberbullying*. This theme comprised of two sub-themes: perpetration and victimisation. Study 1 found that prospective teachers recognised the motivations behind the perpetration of cyberbullying, and why young people engage in this form of bullying. The main findings suggested that prospective teachers perceived the anonymity associated with cyberbullying, the power and dominance in the peer group, and the lack of awareness regarding the consequences of cyberbullying as key factors for why young people engage in cyberbullying. For example, prospective teachers argued that the anonymity in cyberbullying can provide a sense of control and power as young people interact online. From a theoretical perspective, the online environment reduces self-monitoring behaviour and social norms as young people interact online, so when perpetrators conceal their identity, there is a loosening of social restrictions and inhibitions (Suler, 2004). One theoretical

explanation for why young people engage in cyberbullying, and perhaps why cyberbullying is also regarded as more severe by young people, is that of the online disinhibition effect (Barlett, 2015; Bauman & Yoon, 2014; Suler, 2004). This explanation proposes that how individuals behave online is dissociated with how individuals would behave in a face to face setting. It is widely acknowledged that online disinhibition encourages antisocial behaviour (Brown, Jackson & Cassidy, 2006; Ritter, 2014). Put another way, perpetrators of cyberbullying are more likely to send aggressive comments online due to the anonymous nature and perception there are no immediate consequences. In addition, young people online also experience cognitive dissociation regarding their thought processes. As a result, the cognitive processes involved to mediate behavioural and moral engagement in social situations are dissociated in the virtual world (Barlett, 2015; Bauman & Yoon, 2014; Suler, 2004). This online disinhibition means young people are more likely to say things online that they would not normally say in face-to-face interactions. Extending on this principle, prospective teachers recognised that some perpetrators may be unaware of the impact of their actions. This suggests a need for prospective teachers to educate young people on the consequences of cyberbullying. In addition to motivations behind perpetration, prospective teachers recognised the negative consequences of cyberbullying on the victim. For example, the findings of Study 1 showed that prospective teachers perceived the accessibility to communicate online means there is no escape for those that are victimised. In addition, prospective teachers perceived public acts of cyberbullying would be more severe for the victim due to the wider audience involved. Despite this, they

also recognised that public acts of cyberbullying may also prompt bystander support as young people step in to support the victim online.

Finally, Study 1 also identified a theme on *management of cyberbullying* regarding how prospective teachers would respond and address the issue. This theme comprised of four sub-themes: responsibility, response, strategies in tackling bullying and training. The findings from Study 1 suggested that prospective teachers perceived that schools and teachers should take more responsibility to address cyberbullying. In addition to this, prospective teachers also argued that young people should also take more responsibility for their actions and to make informed choices. Therefore, if schools and teachers educate young people on the consequences of cyberbullying, young people can take more responsibility for their actions online.

Further to this, prospective teachers also argued that all cyberbullying incidents need to be responded to seriously, but intervention also depended on the publicity and severity of cyberbullying. For example, prospective teachers argued that cyberbullying situations that occurred in the public domain were deemed more serious, attributed to the increased audience and potential for further dissemination. Existing literature has found that young people regard public acts of cyberbullying to be more severe (Sticca & Perren, 2013), suggesting that teachers may need to respond immediately when addressing cyberbullying in the public domain. In terms of specific management strategies, prospective teachers perceived the implementation of cyberbullying anti-bullying policies and educating young people on the impact of cyberbullying as effective strategies to address the situation in the

school environment. Previous literature has identified that implementing policies in the school can reinforce good behaviour (Von Marées & Petermann, 2012), and so schools should focus on ensuring their anti-bullying policies and guidelines are updated to coincide with the advancement of digital technologies. In terms of prospective teachers training and guidance, Study 1 found that prospective teachers felt that their training course had not prepared them to address cyberbullying. Despite this view, prospective teachers did express a desire for additional training on such matters.

From the systematic review, it became evident that the teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying varied, that teachers perceived cyberbullying to be a problem, and that there was discrepancy in reported management strategies and perceptions towards the issue. As highlighted in the systematic review in Chapter 4, there is a limited scope of literature addressing this growing issue, with inconsistent reports on teachers' management towards cyberbullying. Study 1 reported in Chapter 5 on prospective teachers offered an exploratory account on how prospective teachers perceive and respond to cyberbullying. To explore cyberbullying more specifically, Study 2 reported in Chapter 6 explored how in-service teachers re-perceive and respond to cyberbullying according to severity and publicity. From the thematic analysis exploring in-service teacher's perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying, three themes were identified across the data: (a) role of severity, (b) differential roles of publicity, and (c) bystander intentions. To the author's knowledge, this study offers the

first comprehensive qualitative insight across different educational levels in England.

The theme *role of severity* in cyberbullying comprised of two sub-themes: perceptions of severity and protocols in management. The findings suggested that in-service teachers perceived visual acts of cyberbullying such as photos or videos were deemed more severe compared to text-based incidents. These views from teachers support prior research specifying how the type of cyberbullying can explain differences in perceived severity (Bauman & Newman, 2013; Menesini et al., 2011; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008), and also resonate with the findings from Study 1 on prospective teachers reported in Chapter 5. Despite this, recent literature has also discussed the need to acknowledge the context of the situation when deciding how to address the situation (Englander, 2019). In line with research recommendations on managing cyberbullying, the views of primary teachers suggest the content, rather than the type of cyberbullying may be more important when teachers judge the severity of bullying (Bauman & Newman, 2013; Englander, 2019). In addition to this, primary and secondary teachers perceived that the repetition of cyberbullying had an impact on perceived severity, with situations occurring on several occasions viewed more severe.

The current findings support previous empirical literature that suggest the repetition of cyberbullying can impact on the perceived severity of the situation (Palladino et al., 2017; Slonje et al., 2017). Despite this view, researchers have also discussed how repetition is more ambiguous in cyberbullying as a single act of online aggression can be shared and

disseminated numerous times (Thomas et al., 2015; Smith, 2015, 2019). Contrary to primary and secondary teachers' views, college teachers regarded the idea of bullying severity to be a vague term but rather suggested every situation of cyberbullying could potentially be severe, and so teachers should review the incident through a victim's perspective. In addition, teachers also discussed how they would adopt discussion-based strategies for those involved in less severe cases of cyberbullying (e.g., suggested by all teachers to be text-based comments), compared to external involvement and safeguarding procedures for more severe cases of cyberbullying (e.g., suggested by all teachers to be embarrassing or explicit photos). The in-service teachers across the focus groups appraised the use of discussion-based strategies between the victim and bully, which has been reported to be effective in the literature (Baraldsnes, 2015; DeSmet et al., 2015; Evans et al., 2014; Thompson & Smith, 2011). In addition, as perpetrators of cyberbullying are sometimes unaware of the severity of their actions (Campbell et al., 2013; Perren et al., 2012; Slonje et al., 2013), teachers can educate young people on the consequences of cyberbullying, and the impact it can subsequently have on the victim.

The theme *differential roles of publicity* in cyberbullying comprised of three sub-themes: typology of publicity, responding to publicity, and victim vulnerability. The findings showed that in-service teachers suggested private acts of cyberbullying occurred only between a victim and perpetrator, semi-public acts included a set number of individuals in an online group, and public incidents of cyberbullying were accessible for anyone to witness beyond the victim and bully. These views from teachers across the

educational system in England support findings reported in quantitative work in this area (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008; Schade et al., 2017). In addition, while primary teachers argued that public acts of cyberbullying require immediate intervention, secondary and college teachers perceived there are challenges responding to cyberbullying according to the level of publicity, and so strategies should be tailored to the victim to help overcome their victimisation experiences. In terms of victim vulnerability, teachers recognised that all cases of cyberbullying can have a negative impact on the victim, but public incidents of cyberbullying are more severe due to the wider audience involved. These findings from Study 2 also support the views of prospective teachers reported in Study 1. These views of prospective and current teachers are also similar to those discussed by young people in a study in Australia, where public incidents of cyberbullying (i.e., visible to anyone) are regarded as more severe as the victim experiences humiliation, embarrassment, and feelings of reduced control (Dredge et al., 2014). Such findings also resonate with results from quantitative literature (Kowalski et al., 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010; Sticca & Perren, 2013; Wright et al., 2017).

The theme centred on bystander intentions explored teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying and the role of bystanders in the online environment. Teachers perceived that perpetrators of cyberbullying use public domains to elicit bystander support for the bullying. Secondary and college teachers perceived incidents of cyberbullying in the public domain would elicit positive support by helping the victim. This is consistent with prior research on positive bystander support in public and severe instances of cyberbullying (Barlińska et al., 2013; Bastiaensens et al., 2014, 2015;



DeSmet et al., 2012, 2014; Patterson et al., 2017; Macaulay et al., 2019).

Most of the teachers in the current study perceived public instances of cyberbullying to be more severe. In the context of young people, qualitative work has found that Swedish young people are more likely to respond positively as a bystander as bullying severity increases (Forsberg et al., 2014; Thornberg et al., 2018), and in public domains as found from studies in Belgium and Australia (DeSmet et al., 2012; 2014; Thomas et al., 2012). In the bystander intention theme, primary teachers also discussed the difficulty supporting victims of cyberbullying targeted privately and suggested the importance of promoting disclosure to help these young people. In line with this opinion, there is a growing call for the educational community to promote disclosure intentions with young people (Baas et al., 2013; Betts & Spenser, 2015; Englander, 2019).

A summary of the main findings of the focus group studies for RQ2 are presented in *Figure 8.2*. Prospective teachers perceived the nature of cyberbullying is evolving and becoming socially acceptable for young people. In addition, prospective teachers showed a good awareness of perpetration motives and victim consequences associated with involvement, which impacted on disclosure intentions. The study on in-service teachers found they perceived visual acts of cyberbullying as more severe, although the content of the act was more important in determining perceived severity. In addition, teachers tailored their response strategies across levels of publicity, using discussion-based solutions for private incidents compared to whole school strategies (e.g., assemblies) for cyberbullying incidents of wider publicity. However, the teachers discussed how positive bystander intentions

are more probable within public domains. In summary, prospective and current teachers recognised unique factors associated with cyberbullying, that impacted on how they perceive cyberbullying and their management strategies to address it.

### **8.5 How do young people perceive the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying? (RQ3)**

A summary of the main findings for RQ3 are presented in Figure 8.3.

How do young people perceive and respond to cyberbullying situations according to criteria identified by teachers that may inhibit intervention?

**Young people**  
990 participants (545 females)

- Ignore the situation**
- More likely to ignore if:
    - Public act of CB
    - Victim not upset
  - No difference found for:
    - Anonymity
    - Type of CB
  - Interactions:
    - Publicity and victim response

- Encourage the bully**
- More likely to encourage if:
    - Victim not upset
  - No difference found for:
    - Publicity
    - Anonymity
    - Type of CB
  - Interactions:
    - No interactions

- Seek adult help**
- More likely to seek adult help if:
    - Public act of CB
    - CB is anonymous
    - Victim upset
  - No difference found for:
    - Type of CB
  - Interactions:
    - Anonymity and victim response

- Seek friend help**
- More likely to seek friend help if:
    - Public act of CB
    - CB is anonymous
    - Written-verbal CB
    - Victim upset
  - Interactions:
    - No interactions

- Emotional support for victim**
- More likely to provide emotional support if:
    - Public act of CB
    - CB is anonymous
    - Victim upset
  - No difference found for:
    - Type of CB
  - Interactions:
    - Anonymity and victim response

- Intervene to challenge bully**
- More likely to challenge bully if:
    - Public act of CB
    - CB is anonymous
    - Victim upset
  - No difference found for:
    - Type of CB
  - Interactions:
    - Anonymity and victim response

- Perceived severity of CB**
- Young people were more likely to perceive public forms of cyberbullying as more severe, followed by semi-public and private forms.
  - Anonymous acts of CB more severe
  - CB deemed more severe if victim was upset

Figure 8.3: A summary of the main findings for research question 3.

Informed by the systematic review and the focus group studies exploring prospective and current teachers, Study 3 provided a new perspective exploring how young people from England perceive and respond to cyberbullying situations according to criteria that teachers identified that may inhibit intervention. Like existing literature (Menesini et al., 2011; Palladino et al., 2017), the use of hypothetical vignettes was employed to experimentally manipulate the nature of 'publicity', 'anonymity', 'type of incident', and 'victim response'. The aforementioned factors were selected for the Study 3 as such factors are perceived to be important in the perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying from existing literature identified in the systematic review (see Chapter 4), prospective teachers (see Chapter 5) and in-service teachers (see Chapter 6).

In terms of perceived severity of cyberbullying, main effects were found for publicity, anonymity, and victim response, but not type of cyberbullying. Young people were more likely to perceive public forms of cyberbullying as more severe, followed by semi-public and private forms. Public acts of cyberbullying have the potential to be distributed to a wider audience and increase the negative impact for the victim (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Nocentini et al. 2010). As such, young people may perceive such victimisation via public domains more severely due to the perceived greater impact on the victim. This is consistent with prior literature suggesting young people attribute public forms of cyberbullying as more severe (Dredge et al., 2014; Nocentini et al., 2010; Pieschl et al., 2015), compared to semi-public or private forms of cyberbullying. Regarding anonymity, perceived severity of the situation was higher when the bully was anonymous. This resonates with

the literature showing how anonymity in bullying can lead to fear, powerlessness and lack of control (Dooley et al., 2009; Nocentini et al., 2010; Slonje & Smith 2008; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). In addition, young people reported higher levels of perceived severity when the victim was identified as being upset. A prior systematic review of the literature has identified how the feelings of the victim can influence the perceived severity of cyberbullying (Domínguez-Hernández et al., 2018). This suggests the role of publicity, anonymity and victim response play an important role in the perceived severity of cyberbullying.

Study 3 found that the factors of publicity and victim response did influence the likelihood of young people choosing to ignore the incident. No significant findings were found for anonymity or type of cyberbullying. In terms of publicity, the findings showed that young people are more likely to choose to ignore the situation when the cyberbullying is private or semi-public, compared to those victimised in the public domain. Previous empirical literature suggests young people perceive public forms of cyberbullying to be more severe (Barlinska et al., 2013; Bastiaensens et al., 2014; Koehler & Weber, 2018). Taking this into account, it may be that as young people perceive public acts to be more severe, they are more likely to take positive action. The analysis also found that young people were more likely to choose to ignore the situation when the victim was upset. When exploring the likelihood to encourage the bully, it was only the factor of victim response that influenced how young people intervened. No significant relationships were found for publicity, anonymity, or type of cyberbullying. The findings of

study 3 found that young people were more likely to encourage the bully when the victim was not upset.

In addition, factors of publicity, anonymity, and victim response were found to influence the likelihood of young people seeking adult help when they witnessed cyberbullying. No significant findings were found for type of cyberbullying. In terms of publicity, the findings suggested that young people were more likely to seek adult help when the victim was victimised in the public domain. An explanation for this may be attributed to the idea that young people perceive public forms of cyberbullying as more severe, as suggested by a study in Taiwan, so feel more inclined to help the victim (Chen & Cheng, 2017). In addition, young people were more likely to seek adult help when the bully was anonymous in the situation. Regarding victim response, seeking adult help to support the victim was higher when young people witnessed the victim was upset.

In terms of likelihood to seek help from a friend to support the victim, this was influenced by the factors publicity, anonymity, type of cyberbullying, and victim response. In terms of publicity, young people were more likely to seek help from a friend to support the victim for public incidents, followed by semi-public, and private cases of cyberbullying. Regarding anonymity, when the bully was anonymous, young people were more likely to seek help from a friend compared to when the bully was known. In addition, young people were more likely to seek help from a friend when the type of cyberbullying was written verbal, compared to visual cyberbullying. In terms of the victim response, young people were more likely to seek help from a friend to help the victim when the victim was upset. As seeking peer support is an effective

strategy to address cyberbullying (Pabian, 2019), young people need to be reminded to report cyberbullying and seek help from friends and trusted adults.

When examining any differences on likelihood to provide emotional support for the victim, main effects were found for publicity, anonymity, and victim response. No significant findings were found in the context of type of cyberbullying. As such, young people were more likely to provide emotional support for the victim when the victim was targeted via a public domain, with similar emotional support levels between semi-public and public. Considering anonymity, emotional support for the victim increased when the bully was anonymous. Regarding victim response, emotional support increased when the victim was upset, compared to when the victim was not upset. This suggests young people consider the publicity of the incident, extent the bully is anonymous, and if the victim is upset when deciding if to provide emotional support for the victim. This highlights the need for teachers to promote the idea that young people need to offer emotional support to the victim when they witness cyberbullying. This is important as previous literature has reported positive outcomes when young people offer support for victims (Bastiaensens et al., 2019; Machackova et al., 2015).

In terms of likelihood to intervene to challenge the bully, main effects were found for publicity, anonymity, and victim response. Young people were more likely to intervene to challenge the bully when the cyberbullying was public, with no significant difference between semi-public and private incidents. In addition, young people were more likely to challenge the bully when the bully was anonymous. Considering the victim response, young

people were more likely to intervene and challenge the bully when the victim was upset. As such, factors of publicity, anonymity, and victim response play a role in how young people decide if to intervene and challenge the bully. In addition, an interaction effect was found between anonymity and victim response, whereby young people were more likely to intervene and challenge the bully when the bully was anonymous, and the victim upset. These findings support prior research suggesting young people would intervene to support victims of cyberbullying (Dillon & Bushman, 2015; Huang & Chou, 2013).

In summary, young people from England are more likely to perceive cyberbullying to be serious when it occurs on the public domain, perpetrated anonymously, and the victim is noticeably upset by this. The type of cyberbullying made no difference on the perceived severity of cyberbullying. This suggests teachers need to promote the idea that all incidents of cyberbullying across public, semi-public, and private domains are very serious. Study 1 and 2 found that prospective and current teachers recognise the complex issue surrounding the publicity of cyberbullying and would employ tailored strategies to address different levels of publicity in cyberbullying. For example, Study 2 found that teachers would manage public forms of cyberbullying through a whole school approach (e.g., discussions in assemblies), whereas private forms of cyberbullying would be managed by having conversations with the victim and bully. In addition, Study 3 found that victim response was the most influential factor when young people choose how to respond, followed by the public nature of cyberbullying, the anonymity of the bully, and the type of cyberbullying.



A summary of the main findings for Study 3 to address RQ3 are presented in *Figure 8.3*. The study found young people are more likely to act positively when they witness cyberbullying (i.e., seek help from a friend/adult, emotional support, & intervene to challenge the bully) when it has occurred in the public domain, perpetrated anonymously, and the victim is upset. As such, further work needs to be done to encourage young people to seek help when they are a victim. Bystanders are more likely to intervene to support the victim if they actively seek help online (Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016). Overall, the findings from Study 3 can be used to guide teachers' education of cyberbullying awareness in the school environment to help young people intervene as a bystander. While the literature recognises the potential of this group to change the outcomes of cyberbullying, they need to be empowered and organised via training offered by the school through peer mentoring systems (Cowie, 2014).

## **8.6 Implications of the Findings**

The next section of this chapter will outline the implications of the findings presented throughout this thesis, considering implications for literature and theory. The thesis draws on implications of the findings in three key areas: (1) anti-bullying initiatives, (2) teachers' management of cyberbullying, and (3) bystander intervention. Each of these will now be discussed in turn.

### 8.6.1 Anti-bullying Initiatives

The findings from this thesis have practical implications for the development and delivery of anti-bullying initiatives in school. Firstly, the findings of the systematic review (see Chapter 4) indicate that teachers are largely unprepared to address cyberbullying although recognise cyberbullying as a problem within the school and held a desire to manage the issue. These findings suggest that teachers would be open to implement and deliver anti-bullying initiatives in the school environment. This is important as efforts to educate and raise awareness of cyberbullying among school staff and students would help challenge common perceptions of this form of bullying as being un-harmful and normative. It would also complement school policy on bullying that teachers need to respond to cyberbullying when they witness it. Secondly, the findings from Study 1 show that prospective teachers receive limited training and education to manage cyberbullying in the school environment. Therefore, for prospective teachers to receive additional training on cyberbullying, and feel more prepared to address cyberbullying, ITT courses could implement activities and workshops to promote this knowledge and confidence. For example, prospective teachers could attend workshops on delivering anti-bullying strategies in order for them to feel more prepared when they enter the school environment. Implementing such activities and training on cyberbullying for prospective teachers would subsequently have implications on building their confidence and ability to deliver and lead on anti-bullying initiatives in the school environment.

In addition, the findings from the thesis on current teachers in the school environment show that anti-bullying initiatives need to address the challenges regarding bullying severity and roles of publicity in cyberbullying. As Study 2 found that teachers would address cyberbullying differently according to the level of publicity, anti-bullying initiatives could be tailored to guide teachers to manage cyberbullying across different levels of publicity. This would allow teachers to feel more confident when implementing different strategies to address cyberbullying. Finally, the findings from Study 3 show that young people do respond differently to cyberbullying, with victim response being the most influential factor, followed by publicity, anonymity, and type of cyberbullying. This suggests that involving young people in the development of anti-bullying initiatives would ensure these initiatives also acknowledge the perceptions of young people and solutions to promote bystander intervention. For example, as the extent to which the victim was upset was found to be the most influential factor on likelihood to engage in different response strategies, anti-bullying initiatives could focus more on recognising signs that the victim is upset and needs help. Whole-school approaches to bullying have been widely advocated in the literature (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011), and so the findings of the current thesis suggest the voices of teachers and young people need to be acknowledged in the development of anti-bullying initiatives. For example, the findings from the thesis suggest that young people choose whether to intervene according to the publicity, type of cyberbullying, if the perpetrator is anonymous, and if the victim is upset. Therefore, anti-bullying initiatives need to consider

implementing these factors so that young respond to all situations of cyberbullying.

#### 8.6.2 Teachers' Management of Cyberbullying

The findings from the systematic review of existing literature on teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying, and the findings from the prospective and in-service teachers have important implications for how teachers manage cyberbullying in the school environment. The findings from prospective and current teachers suggest those in the educational community responsible for addressing cyberbullying should take a more cautious approach when interpreting cyberbullying. Study 1 and 2 found that not all teachers are knowledgeable of the unique features associated with cyberbullying (e.g., the role of anonymity and publicity), or how to identify cyberbullying in the school environment. For example, as young people react differently to cyberbullying (Erişti & Akbulut, 2018), and as suggested by most teachers in the current programme of research, the experience and perspective of victims should be acknowledged when managing cyberbullying.

In addition, the views from teachers in the current thesis suggest a need for schools to ensure all teachers respond to cyberbullying immediately, through appropriate reporting mechanisms. Based on the thesis findings, these could include a whole school approach to tackling bullying and having support networks with the staff to promote the management of cyberbullying. Teachers should also review the contextual information when managing different types of cyberbullying behaviours (Englander, 2019). In

addition to this, schools need to implement a variety of disclosure and reporting systems which could encourage young people to disclose their victimisation, even when targeted privately. Based on the thesis findings, schools could promote and educate young people to disclose cyberbullying in a safe and responsible manner.

The views from primary, secondary, and college teachers in Study 2 offer some important practical implications both within and outside the school environment. The findings suggest those in the educational community responsible for addressing cyberbullying should take a more cautious approach when interpreting cyberbullying. For example, as young people react differently to cyberbullying (Erişti & Akbulut, 2018), and as suggested by teachers in Study 1 and 2, the experience and perspective of those victims should be acknowledged when managing cyberbullying. In addition, schools should provide resources and education for young people to encourage disclosure of victimisation. Implementing a variety of disclosure and reporting systems could encourage young people to disclose their victimisation, even when targeted privately. The views from teachers in study 2 suggest a need for strategies to mobilise bystander support in the online environment. An important element to promote positive bystander actions is the expectation of appraisal and social support. Therefore, the educational community, parents, and social media companies need to implement social support and recognition for bystander intervention, as this will increase perceived self-efficacy to intervene to support the victim and confront the perpetrator (DeSmet et al., 2014; Price et al., 2014; Thomas et al., 2012). For example, if primary, secondary, and college teachers recognise and

appraise positive bystander intervention, this will make young people more motivated to act in this manner when they witness cyberbullying online. In addition, parents can have conversations with their children to promote personal responsibility for what young people see online, and useful options they can implement to intervene as a bystander.

When it comes to addressing cyberbullying in the school environment, the sort of strategies teachers implement will be different as children in primary, secondary, or college educational age groups will have different uses of technology. For example, a qualitative study of young children aged 6-7 years across seven countries (e.g., Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy, UK, and Russia) reported that young children are less likely to encounter cyberbullying as they engage in less social interaction online, and primarily use the internet to play games and do homework (Chaudron et al., 2015). In terms of understanding of cyberbullying, a study of children aged 11-12-year-olds in the Netherlands found that children struggle to understand cyberbullying and differentiate it from jokes (Baas et al., 2013). Together, this suggests young people have different uses of technology and also their understanding of bullying differs, so the interventions teachers implement should be considered according to the age group of children involved.

In addition, the latest Ofcom report in 2019 also sheds light on English children's use of technology and supports the idea that teachers across different educational levels should use different interventions specific to the age group of children within the school. For example, the recent Ofcom (2019) report shows that 5% of 5-7-year-olds, 49% of 8-11-year-olds, and

83% of 12-15-year-olds own their own smartphone, showing that children in secondary schools have increased access to digital technology at home compared to children from primary schools. This also suggests that children in key stage 1 of primary school are less likely to have access to digital technology compared to older primary school children in Key Stage 2. Of those that have access to their own smartphone, 27% of 5-7-year-olds, 49% of 8-11-year-olds, and 81% of 12-15-year-olds use their smartphone to go online where they could potentially be exposed to cyberbullying (Ofcom, 2019). Again, these findings show that younger primary children in Key Stage 1 are less likely to be going online, compared to older primary children in Key Stage 2, with an even higher rate of secondary school children going online. This suggests that while primary teachers of Key Stage 1 need to be aware of cyberbullying, it is more important primary teachers of Key Stage 2 are trained and equipped to identify and manage cyberbullying within the school. In addition, secondary and further education teachers need to provide regular e-safety and cyberbullying awareness education for young people to provide different coping strategies and solutions to address cyberbullying if they are exposed to it. As young people within secondary school and colleges have increased access to technology to go online, teachers within these sectors have a responsibility to educate these young people on appropriate online behaviour, and effective strategies to report and respond to cyberbullying.

While young people have different uses of technology, and their understanding of bullying differs, teachers across different educational levels should take an approach to address cyberbullying suitable to the age group

involved and one that is advocated at the school level. The findings from in-service teachers from this thesis suggest a need for strategies to mobilise bystander support in the online environment. Implications of the findings on bystander intervention is discussed next.

### 8.6.3 Bystander Intervention

The findings from this thesis also have implications for promoting bystander intervention to cyberbullying. The social psychological work by Latané and Darley (1970) outlines the importance of being able to notice the event and interpret the event as something serious that merits intervention when deciding whether to intervene. Normally, bystanders would look to others to see how they physically respond via diffusion of responsibility. However, in the online environment this notion is much more ambiguous as bystanders may be unaware how many virtual 'onlookers' there are. As the severity of the situation has been implicated in reducing the bystander effect (Fischer et al., 2011), it is important for teachers to promote the idea that all forms of cyberbullying, regardless of the aforementioned factors examined in the current study are serious to merit intervention.

In the context of prospective and current teachers, the findings from the thesis suggest teachers recognise the challenges for bystander support in the online domain, particularly according to the unique characteristics of cyberbullying, and contextual information including bullying severity. In the context of young people, the thesis found that young people do respond differently to cyberbullying situations according to the publicity, if the perpetrator is anonymous, the type of cyberbullying witnessed, and if the



victim is upset or not. These factors were found to explain differences in likelihood to intervene in a positive or negative manner. As such, these findings have important implications for the development of bystander support and initiatives. An important element to promote positive bystander actions is the expectation of appraisal and social support. Therefore, the educational community, parents, and social media companies need to implement social support and recognition for bystander intervention, as this will increase perceived self-efficacy to intervene to support the victim and confront the perpetrator (DeSmet et al., 2014; Price et al., 2014; Thomas et al., 2012). For example, if primary, secondary, and college teachers recognise and appraise positive bystander intervention, this will make young people more motivated to act in this manner when they witness cyberbullying online.

In addition, educating young people that some victims may suffer in silence, and can experience negative consequences from cyberbullying even if the perpetrator has/has not concealed their identity, may reinforce the message that all incidents of cyberbullying are serious. As such, young people will be more inclined to intervene to support the victim and seek help to address the situation. For example, teachers can implement reflection discussions and role play scenarios to help build empathy, so young people are more likely to see cyberbullying as serious when the victim is upset (Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016). However, it is also important interventions addressing bystander behaviour implement adult support to avoid 'unhelpful' responses from young people (Lambe, Cioppa, Hong, & Craig, 2019). Research suggests that young people are more likely to positively intervene

when they exhibit higher levels of empathy and perceive supportive relationships with their peers and teachers within the school (Barlińska et al., 2013; Machackova & Pfetsch, 2016). This suggests schools and teachers play an important role in promoting the notion of positive intervention and building a positive school climate. In addition, while it is important to support bystanders of cyberbullying, this should be systematically addressed alongside parent, school, and community support to address the issue (Cioppa, O'Neil, & Craig, 2015).

## **8.7 Methodological Strengths and Limitations**

### **8.7.1 Strengths**

The main strength of the current thesis was the mixed method approach to address the research questions and meet the research objectives using different perspectives. Previous literature has documented the challenges researchers face measuring and studying bullying, particularly through quantitative methods (Volk et al., 2017). However, mixed method research has developed substantially and is regarded as a distinct separate methodology (Brannen, 2009). Creswell, Fetters, and Ivankova, (2004) suggested mixed methods is necessary when quantitative or qualitative approaches alone cannot “capture the trends and details of the situation” (p. 7). As cyberbullying is a complex issue, mixed method approaches allow for a comprehensive and in-depth exploration. In addition, an existing review of mixed method research on school bullying identified some shortcomings of quantitative research and discussed the benefit of mixed method approaches

to gaining a comprehensive understanding (Hong & Espelage, 2012a). As cyberbullying is ever changing in a social context, mixed method approaches provide a unique opportunity to fully explore the phenomena (Hong & Espelage, 2012b). The benefits of using mixed method approaches in research have been well documented in the literature. Doyle, Brady, and Byrne (2009) outline eight reasons for why mixed method approaches are more beneficial as a methodological approach:

- Triangulation, meaning different methodologies can be used to explore the phenomena of cyberbullying, so findings are associated with the topic of interest, and not the methodology implemented. In the context of the thesis, qualitative approaches were used in Study 1 and 2 to identify strategies and factors teachers perceived to be important in their management of cyberbullying, with such factors being explored in Study 3 via a quantitative approach.
- Completeness, meaning quantitative and qualitative methods are combined to provide a comprehensive understanding. In the context of the thesis, qualitative and quantitative approaches were combined to explore the thesis aims looking at (1) how prospective and current teachers perceive cyberbullying when making judgements about how to manage and respond to it, and (2) how young people perceive cyberbullying according to the key factors that teachers considered when making judgements about how to manage cyberbullying.

- Offsetting weakness and providing stronger inferences, meaning that the limitations of solely using either qualitative or quantitative methodologies are reduced.
- Answering different research questions, meaning qualitative and quantitative approaches can be used to answer different research questions.
- Explanation of findings, meaning qualitative research can be used to explain the findings of quantitative findings and vice versa. In the context of the thesis, the qualitative findings are further explored and measured by applying a quantitative approach.
- Illustration of data, meaning qualitative approaches can be used to illustrate quantitative findings.
- Hypotheses development and testing, meaning hypotheses are devised from qualitative findings, and then tested using quantitative research. In the context of the thesis, the findings from the qualitative data were used to devise a series of hypothetical cyberbullying vignettes. The responses towards these situations from young people were then measured and tested.
- Instrument development and testing, meaning qualitative work can be used to develop new instruments and explain variations in different outcomes.

Therefore, the mixed method approach implemented in the current thesis offered a comprehensive account exploring cyberbullying using the

qualitative focus groups with teachers to inform and devise the development of hypothetical vignettes to measure how young people respond to cyberbullying. In this approach, the qualitative studies exploring teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying provided a unique and in-depth understanding of how the issue is addressed within the school. Rather than the researcher hypothesising about various issues regarding young people and cyberbullying, these issues were derived from the teachers, which then informed the quantitative approach. As such, the programme of research conducted as part of this thesis supplemented each other by initially utilising a qualitative method to explore teachers' perceptions, which subsequently followed by a quantitative slant to investigate the issues raised from a different perspective of young people.

#### 8.7.2 Limitations

The findings have raised important issues and contributed to the current knowledge base; however, it is important to consider limitations of the current programme of research. The current thesis had three main methodological limitations associated with: (1) sampling, (2) hypothetical vignettes, and (3) nature of survey administration. These will each be discussed in turn.

##### 8.7.2.1 *Sampling Recruitment*

Across the programme of research in this thesis, the participants that took part were self-selecting, meaning they may have been more proactive and interested in cyberbullying. Firstly, the self-selecting nature of participation may cause bias in the focus group discussions (Collier &

Mahoney, 1996). On the one hand, this may mean teachers who are more interested and aware of cyberbullying are probable to volunteer, and more likely to address cyberbullying within the school. On the other hand, it is also possible for teachers who do not hold such knowledge may have volunteered on the basis to acquire more understanding during the discussion. As Study 1 and 2 did not measure personal experience or knowledge of cyberbullying, it is possible such experience could have influenced the opinions of teachers. As such, future research would benefit from exploring how personal experience managing cyberbullying may impact on how primary, secondary, and college teachers respond to different types of cyberbullying. In addition, in Study 2 there was a lower number of teachers from secondary schools, where cyberbullying is known to be most prevalent (Kowalski et al., 2012; 2014; Smith et al., 2008; 2015), so future qualitative work would merit further exploring the views of these teachers. Despite this, the study offers an insight on an under researched area and the study has gauged the views across the educational sector on a complex issue. In the context of how young people perceive and respond to cyberbullying, the schools that participated were self-selecting. Therefore, it could be argued that the schools that participated had a more proactive approach to anti-cyberbullying initiatives, compared to schools that chose not to participate in the research. Despite some concerns with self-selection in the recruitment, as the current research area is under researched, it is useful to have teachers and young people who self-select to participate as they have an interest and see the value in the topic.

### 8.7.2.2 *Hypothetical Vignettes*

In Study 3, a series of hypothetical vignettes were developed to experimentally measure how young people respond to cyberbullying based on criteria identified by teachers that may inhibit intervention. However, responses to vignettes are only proxies for social behaviour. For example, how young people respond to cyberbullying may be different when presented with a hypothetical case of cyberbullying, compared to a real-life incident (Nickerson et al., 2014). One study in the USA has shown how young people are prone to report higher levels of defending behaviour, but actual defending behaviour in real life is a lot lower (Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2013). In addition, while the vignettes provide a good measure of how young people respond to cyberbullying when faced with situations, it is also possible these may not reflect their actual attitudes and behaviours. In addition, it is important to note that a limitation with the vignettes used is the wording of how each of the factors measured are presented within the vignettes. For example, the wording to measure the type of cyberbullying included '*received an insulting text-based comment/ received an embarrassing photo/video*' depending on if the scenario was about a written verbal type of cyberbullying or a visual type of cyberbullying. However, as technology is constantly changing and young people interact online on different social media applications (Aizenkot, 2020), it is possible young people will have different interpretations on the wording used for the vignettes (i.e., because they may be more familiar with different types of cyberbullying). Indeed, some research in the UK and USA has also shown that young people have different perceptions towards cyberbullying (Bryce &

Fraser, 2013; Sobba et al., 2017), and so young people may look at the wording used in the vignettes in different ways. This could therefore impact how young people perceive each vignette, and therefore respond. Despite this limitation, the current thesis made sure the vignettes devised were contextualised according to the factors measured, in order to increase the accuracy of participants' responses (FeldmanHall et al., 2012). In addition, the use of hypothetical vignettes to measure behavioural intentions is still regarded as an appropriate methodology (Bellmore, Ma, You, & Hughes, 2012). This is because young people have shown consistency in their stated intentions (Turiel, 2008) and so vignette methodology is still regarded as an appropriate methodology to employ.

#### 8.7.2.3 *Survey Administration*

The social desirability bias may influence a respondent's answers as they do not want to express socially undesirable behaviours, preferring to present themselves in a favourable light (Nederhof, 1985). The limitation of social desirability associated with self-report measures is a widely regarded concern (Furnham, 1986). There is also a possibility that some young people may over report their intentions to positively intervene, and under-report their intentions not to intervene to be viewed in a positive light. However, measures were taken to reduce this possibility. It was reiterated all responses would remain anonymous and teachers and parents would not see their responses, unless there were serious safeguarding concerns when the teachers at the school would be informed. However, many schools in England will inform young people how to respond to cyberbullying situations, in accordance with their anti-bullying strategies. Therefore, this education



may have influenced the responses of young people when deciding how to respond, particularly regarding informing an adult or friend, even though young people may not actually do this. Therefore, future research should include a social desirability bias questionnaire. The reports of young people are also going to be influenced by their understanding of cyberbullying, and their personal experience of this behaviour. However, similar to previous research (Schultze-Krumbholz, Zagorscak, Hess, & Scheithauer, 2020), the current study aimed to account for these social desirability effects by reinforcing the idea that there were no right or wrong responses, and it was down to the perception of the individual, and all responses were completed anonymously.

In terms of the potential impact of each of the limitations on the findings, the use of hypothetical vignettes may present more of a potential issue than the self-selecting nature of the sample and the survey administration. The reason for this is because young people may choose to respond based on intended behaviour, rather than actual behaviour if the incident was occurring live in front of them. In addition, the limitation of vignettes is more important due to the issue of interpretation of wording and context. As young people may interpret the vignettes in different ways, this may have an impact on how young people respond, and so the findings from Study 3 should be taken with caution. Further, as young people are engaging online via different technologies, and the extent of cyberbullying is constantly changing in line with new mediums (Aizenkot, 2020), the vignettes may provide a good insight on how young people respond to cyberbullying now, but may not encapsulate the issue in a few years.

## **8.8 Future Research**

Following the literature reviewed throughout the thesis and the empirical findings, suggestions for future research are made that will build on the current thesis findings. The findings from this research are meaningful for future researchers in the area of cyberbullying who are aiming to develop effective interventions. Based on the current thesis findings, two suggestions are made for future research in this area: (1) prospective teachers, and (2) primary schools.

### **8.8.1 Prospective Teachers**

The systematic review reported in Chapter 4 identified the limited research regarding prospective teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying. The limited literature base and findings from the current thesis suggest that there is a need for future research to work with prospective teachers on developing their knowledge and management of cyberbullying. As prospective teachers go through a period of intense training and education as preparation to be a qualified teacher, this also provides a great opportunity to ensure prospective teachers receive the appropriate education and knowledge in order to effectively manage cyberbullying. Therefore, the findings of the current thesis suggest future research should endeavour to work more closely with prospective teachers regarding their knowledge on cyberbullying management in the school environment. For example, future research could implement a longitudinal mixed method approach to measure and explore prospective teachers training throughout their course and review

the extent and effectiveness on the content of different cyberbullying resources.

### 8.8.2 Primary Schools

The current thesis explored teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying across different educational levels (see Chapter 6 looking at in-service teachers). Later, the thesis then explored how secondary school students responded to different cyberbullying situations based on criteria that teachers identified that may inhibit intervention. As noted in the literature and discussed in Chapter 2, young people are going online at a young age due to the increasing accessibility of digital technologies (Livingstone et al., 2011; Ofcom, 2019). As such, there is an increasing call for future research to explore how primary school teachers perceive and address cyberbullying. Although young people in early to mid-adolescence tend to be the most involved in cyberbullying (Smith et al., 2013; Tokunaga, 2010), a recent Ofcom (2019) report suggest younger children in England are accessing digital technologies and so could be vulnerable to cyberbullying involvement. As such, it is important future research addresses how cyberbullying is managed across younger children. Such research would provide an insight on when cyberbullying is more apparent within primary schools, and the different strategies primary school teachers use to address cyberbullying according to lower and upper years within primary schools. Extending on this, it would also be beneficial to research cyberbullying from the context of primary school aged children, to examine how cyberbullying is contextualised at an early age.

## 8.9 Original Contributions to Literature

Using a mixed method approach, this thesis has contributed to the literature and advanced knowledge on understanding cyberbullying in the school environment. Specifically, the thesis has provided an original contribution in the following areas of literature:

1. To the author's knowledge, the thesis provided an original systematic review regarding teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying. Prior existing literature has reported that teachers have an important role in responding to bullying in the school environment (Kokko & Pörhölä, 2009; Sakellariou et al., 2012). However, a recent review of the literature identified that cyberbullying is still a consistent problem across the lifespan of education, and concerns have been raised regarding the lack of knowledge amongst teachers and young people on the impact of cyberbullying, and intervention within the school (Myers & Cowie, 2019). As such, in order to share good practice amongst schools and teachers, it is essential to review the existing literature in this area to discuss what has previously been reported on teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying. The original and comprehensive systematic review in Chapter 4 identified 20 studies against the inclusion criteria exploring teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying, highlighting the limited literature in this area. The systematic review provided an original contribution to the literature by identifying and discussing literature internationally to gain an insight on what is currently known about teachers and their perceptions towards

cyberbullying. These findings offer a unique insight into the complexity of cyberbullying in the school environment. Findings of the systematic review in Chapter 4 also highlights discrepancies in teachers' knowledge and understanding of cyberbullying. Together, these findings provide a unique contribution to the literature and educational community.

2. The research presented in Chapter 5 explored prospective teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying based on their initial teacher training course. The systematic review reported in Chapter 4 identified limited existing literature exploring cyberbullying from the perspective of prospective teachers, whereby 5 of the 20 identified articles has previously explored this population. The findings from the study presented in Chapter 5 provide an original contribution to the limited qualitative literature exploring the views of prospective teachers in England. These findings support the limited existing literature showing that prospective teachers regard cyberbullying as a problem, but training courses offer limited cyberbullying training and guidance on identifying and managing cyberbullying in the school environment. Not only do these findings offer an original contribution to the literature, but they also highlight the urgent need to address how initial teacher training courses deliver course content and prepare prospective teachers to manage cyberbullying.
3. The thesis also explored in-service teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying. Again, the systematic review in Chapter 4 also highlighted the lack of empirical literature exploring

how those in the educational community perceive and respond to the issue. However, existing literature recognises that cyberbullying continues to present a problem to young people in the school environment (Betts & Spenser, 2017; Smith, 2019; Wolke et al., 2017). Further to this, in England, schools are required to address cyberbullying (Department for Education, 2017), so the research in Chapter 6 offered a unique account on how teachers perceive and respond to cyberbullying. In particular, and to the author's knowledge, the research in Chapter 6 offers the first comprehensive qualitative account of primary, secondary, and college teachers' perceptions and responses towards cyberbullying. This research has advanced the knowledge in the literature on how teachers perceive the issue, which can be used to implicate recommendations at the school level to promote disclosure of cyberbullying and preventive strategies.

4. The thesis has also contributed to the literature and extended knowledge on how young people perceive and respond to cyberbullying, based on criteria that teachers highlight as important. The research in Chapter 7 explored how young people perceive the severity of cyberbullying situations, and how different factors inhibit intervention as a bystander. Previous literature has identified that young people regard cyberbullying as more serious than traditional bullying in the school environment (Sobba et al., 2017), and young people react differently to cyberbullying based on personal and contextual factors (Domínguez-Hernández et al., 2018). However, unique to the current thesis, a sequential exploratory mixed method

approach was implemented (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), meaning that the qualitative responses from prospective and current teachers were used to identify and measure factors that were suggested to influence how young people respond to cyberbullying. As such, the research in Chapter 7 offers a new and original insight on cyberbullying, and how young people perceive and respond to different situations. These findings offer an important contribution to the literature, but also more crucially to schools and anti-bullying initiatives aiming to mobilise positive bystander intervention to cyberbullying.

## **8.10 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the findings from this thesis highlight that prospective and current teachers perceive that cyberbullying is an escalating issue that presents a challenge in the school environment. In addition, prospective and current teachers held different strategies and solutions when responding to cyberbullying, particularly in the context of perceived bullying severity and unique characteristics associated with cyberbullying. The thesis also found that different factors can influence how young people choose to respond to cyberbullying, with victim response being the most influential factor across all response strategies, followed by the publicity of the incident, anonymity of the bully, and the type of cyberbullying. The thesis found limited existing literature on teachers' perceptions towards cyberbullying (addressing RQ1), with the systematic review identifying inconsistencies in how cyberbullying is

addressed. Study 1 with prospective teachers and Study 2 with in-service teachers from England found the factors of severity, publicity, anonymity, and extent victim is upset are considered when teachers make judgements on how to manage cyberbullying (addressing RQ2). The thesis also found in Study 3 that young people from England do respond to cyberbullying differently based on the key factors teachers consider when making judgements, with victim response being the most influential factor when young people choose how to respond, followed by publicity, anonymity, and type of cyberbullying (addressing RQ3). The rigorous mixed method approach implemented throughout the thesis ensured that all the research questions and research objectives were addressed. Subsequently, the current findings therefore contribute to the limited existing literature and advances the knowledge base on cyberbullying in the school environment.



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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: STUDY 1 AND 2 ETHICAL APPROVAL (FOCUS GROUPS)

Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at 10:20:44 AM British Summer Time

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**Subject:** APPROVED: Request for ethical review 2017/01 Macaulay  
**Date:** Wednesday, 18 January 2017 at 12:32:00 Greenwich Mean Time  
**From:** Cali, Annabel  
**To:** Macaulay, Peter 2016 (PGR)  
**Attachments:** Ethics Application (study 1).doc, Re: Ethics application - email signature .eml, Study 1 - consent form .docx, Study 1 - debrief .docx, Study 1 - Focus group pre-information sheet .docx, Study 1 - Focus group schedule .docx, Study 1 - Focus group schedule - pre-service.docx, Study 1 - information sheet .docx

### Message sent on behalf of the Chair of the College Research Ethics Committee

Dear Peter

Thank you for the recent resubmission of your application (No. 2017/01) to the College Research Ethics Committee (CREC) on 16 January 2017 requesting ethical clearance for the project entitled: *Teachers' approach to cyber bullying: conceptualisations, response and prevention (focus groups)*.

We are pleased to inform you that the CREC was happy to confirm that in its judgement there were no further outstanding ethical concerns that required further discussion or exploration prior to data collection and the reviewers are satisfied that your resubmission now meets with their ethical approval.

The committee would like to wish you well in the completion of your project.

Yours sincerely  
Kay Wheat  
Chair CREC

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## **APPENDIX B: STUDY 1 AND 2 INFORMATION SHEET (FOCUS GROUPS)**

Thank you for showing an interest to participate in this exciting research opportunity. Before you agree to take part and participate in the focus group sessions, it is important for you to understand why the project is being conducted and why we have chosen you to take part. If you have any questions at any point or any of the information is unclear, don't hesitate to ask the researcher or feel free to discuss information with your colleagues. Take the time to decide if you wish to participate.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

New technologies and increased access to the Internet has caused an increase in online bullying through social networking sites, instant messaging and other forms of online communication. This is often referred to as cyberbullying. The nature of this study is to consider teachers' views, perceptions, experiences and definitions of cyberbullying in the classroom. This information would provide a valuable insight into how to prevent cyberbullying and develop intervention strategies for the future.

The purpose of the study is to consider teachers' views and experiences across a variety of educational settings (pre-service, primary, secondary and college teachers') to gain an insight into how cyberbullying varies across educational settings. To suggest and recommend effective prevention strategies, it is important to consider your views as teachers'. The main method for gathering this information will be focus groups with 5 or 6 teachers' in each focus group. We will be conducting two focus groups for each educational setting, so approximately 40-48 teachers will participate in this study.

### **Who is running the study?**

The project is being run and conducted by Peter Macaulay (Nottingham Trent University) as part of his PhD, within the Department of Psychology. This project is being supervised by Dr. Lucy Betts (Nottingham Trent University) and co-supervised by Dr. James Stiller (Nottingham Trent University) and Dr. Blerina Kellezi (Nottingham Trent University).

### **Why have I been chosen to take part?**

Cyberbullying is an important issue that has developed as a result of new technologies and access to the Internet. This has allowed pupils' access to a new platform to target victims through the medium of laptops, mobile phones, websites and social media sites. In order to recommend appropriate and suitable prevention strategies and programs for educational settings, it is important to acknowledge teachers' approach and response towards

cyberbullying in the classroom. You have been chosen to participate in this focus group because your perceptions and approach to cyberbullying will provide a meaningful and important insight into how to manage and control this issue across educational settings.

### **Do I have to take part?**

Your participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary. You have been approached as the Head teacher of your school expressed an interest in the project. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep, and a consent form to sign. During the focus group your participation is entirely voluntary and you still have the right to withdraw at any time. If you decide not participate or withdraw from the project, you will not be asked to give us a reason.

### **What is required of me?**

I would like you to take part in a focus group alongside several of your colleagues, that will last approximately 45-60minutes. This focus group will take place in your school, and a time will be arranged suitable to participating teachers, likely after the school day so not to intervene on teaching and lunch breaks. During the focus group, you will be asked about your personal views and opinions relating to cyberbullying in the school environment. In the focus group, we encourage you to give your personal opinions, and that these views are not necessarily representing those of your place of work/educational institution.

### **What will happen to the information I give in the focus group?**

The focus group will be recorded so the researcher can transcribe the focus group at a later date. The researcher will then analyse the information to feed into our results. All the transcriptions will be anonymized using pseudonyms and will be stored on a secure password protected file. The recording and transcription will only be handled by the research team and will remain confidential throughout the project. It is important to note, that while any quotes used will be anonymised, complete confidentiality can not be guaranteed by the researcher. When using quotes, the researcher will remove street/personal names, places/locations and event descriptions of incidences or school-specific cases. If you would like to withdraw a particular extract or remove your whole response, you can contact the researcher to withdraw this information up to 4 weeks from the focus group session. If you choose to do this, the data you withdraw will not be used in either the PhD thesis or any subsequent write ups/publications. Any information you want to withdraw after 4 weeks from the focus group session, will not be included in any subsequent publications, but will be used as part of the thesis write up.

### **What are the benefits of taking part?**

We hope by participating in the focus group you will find the discussion interesting. We hope you will take satisfaction for your participation, by helping provide an understanding on how to prevent cyberbullying. The findings of this project will be used to provide recommendations to educators and intervention develops for appropriate prevention strategies to manage cyberbullying.

### **Are there any possible disadvantages to taking part?**

The main cost to you will be the duration of the focus group. We hope the benefit of taking part will limit this possible issue. In addition, you may feel uncomfortable during the focus group due to the sensitive nature of cyberbullying. To overcome this, participation is totally voluntary, and you will not be directly probed to provide a response at any point.

### **What will happen to the results?**

The results will be used as part of a PhD project and possible publications to contribute to the understanding of cyberbullying. Important information will be summarized and circulated to educators to be used in educational practice. The responses will be used in presentations/publications as quotes, but any identifiable names or locations will be removed and changed. The findings from this project will also be used to develop and construct a questionnaire for teachers to explore teacher responses to acts of cyberbullying, specifically addressing cyber publicity and cyber severity.

### **Contact information:**

Please feel welcome to contact the researcher at any point regarding the project and/or any queries.

Peter Macaulay

Email: [peter.macaulay2016@my.ntu.ac.uk](mailto:peter.macaulay2016@my.ntu.ac.uk)

Dr. Lucy Betts

Email: [lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk)

Contact: +44 115 84 85558

Division of Psychology

Nottingham Trent University

50 Shakespeare Street

Nottingham

NG1 4FQ

Tel: 0115 848 5558



**APPENDIX C: STUDY 1 AND 2 CONSENT FORM (FOCUS GROUPS)**

Educational Institute: .....

Please read the information below carefully and confirm your consent to participating in this focus group for the project. Please tick the appropriate box(es) and print/sign your name with a date for this form.

1. I have read the information sheet provided by the researcher and I understand the purpose of the project.

Agree:

Disagree:

2. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the project and what is involved. The researcher has made clear that participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw at any point prior, during and after the focus group session.

Agree:

Disagree:

3. I give permission for the focus group to be recorded by the researcher and for the responses to remain confidential and securely stored. Also, I understand that I can withdraw specific aspects of responses if I regret saying something by contacting the researcher.

Agree:

Disagree:

4. I agree to participate in the focus group and for the researcher to use data gained from this session, including subsequent publications.

Agree:

Disagree:

Name of participant: .....

Date: .....

Signature: .....

Name of researcher: .....

Date: .....

Signature: .....

**Contact information:**

Please feel welcome to contact the researcher at any point regarding the project and/or any queries.

Peter Macaulay

Email: [peter.macaulay2016@my.ntu.ac.uk](mailto:peter.macaulay2016@my.ntu.ac.uk)

Dr. Lucy Betts

Email: [lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk)

Contact: +44 115 84 85558

Division of Psychology  
Nottingham Trent University  
50 Shakespeare Street  
Nottingham  
NG1 4FQ  
Tel: 0115 848 5558

## APPENDIX D: STUDY 1 AND 2 DEBRIEF FORM (FOCUS GROUPS)

Thank you for taking part and participating in the focus group session. I hope you found the focus group session an interesting discussion. This research will provide an important insight into teachers' approach towards cyberbullying, specifically addressing and comparing this approach across educational levels. The responses from the focus group today will allow us to understand more about teachers experiences and understanding of cyberbullying.

Please could you make sure that you make a note of your identifiable pseudonym. If you decide at a later date you would like your responses removed from the research, I can identify you using your unique pseudonym. It is important to note that all your responses will remain secure and only can be accessed by the research team. The responses from the focus group will be used as quotes for the analysis and future publications. However, any identifiable information (name & location) will be removed and changed. **If you decide you would like to withdraw your responses, please contact Peter Macaulay (email: [peter.macaulay2016@my.ntu.ac.uk](mailto:peter.macaulay2016@my.ntu.ac.uk))**

There are no foreseen negative consequences of taking part in this research. However, if some of the information was sensitive and upset you, the following organisations will be able to provide helpful support and guidance related to the focus group session:

### Bullying UK

- Email: <http://www.bullying.co.uk/>
- Contact: 0808 800 2222

### NSPCC

- Email: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk>
- Contact: 0808 800 5000

### The Cybersmile Foundation

- Email: <http://www.cybersmile.org/>
- Contact: 0845 688727

### Childnet

- Email: <http://www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals/for-working-with-young-people/hot-topics>
- Contact: 020 7639 6967

**Contact Information:**

Please feel welcome to contact the researcher at any point regarding the project and/or any queries.

Peter Macaulay

Email: [peter.macaulay2016@my.ntu.ac.uk](mailto:peter.macaulay2016@my.ntu.ac.uk)

Dr. Lucy Betts

Email: [lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk)

Contact: +44 115 84 85558

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50 Shakespeare Street  
Nottingham  
NG1 4FQ  
Tel: 0115 848 5558

**APPENDIX E: STUDY 1 AND 2 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION (FOCUS GROUPS)**

Pseudonym: .....

Name of School/College/University: .....

*Please answer the following questions and tick (✓) the box relevant to your circumstances. Thank you.*

1. What educational level are you currently teaching at?

- Pre-service teacher training
- Primary education
- Secondary education
- College education

2. What is your Gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other, please specify: .....

3. How old are you?

- Under 25
- 25 – 30
- 31 – 40
- 41 – 50
- 51 – 60
- Over 60

4. How long have you been working as a teacher?

- Less than a year
- 1 – 2 years
- 3 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11 – 15 years
- 16 – 20 years
- More than 20 years

**Contact Information:**

Please feel welcome to contact the researcher at any point regarding the project and/or any queries.

Peter Macaulay

Email: [peter.macaulay2016@my.ntu.ac.uk](mailto:peter.macaulay2016@my.ntu.ac.uk)

Dr. Lucy Betts

Email: [lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk)

Contact: +44 115 84 85558

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NG1 4FQ  
Tel: 0115 848 5558

## **APPENDIX F: STUDY 1 FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE (PRESERVICE TEACHERS)**

Before we start, could you make sure you have read and understood the information sheet provided and if you would like to participate in the focus group session, please sign and date the consent form provided to you.

Thank you all for showing an interest to participate in this focus group session. Firstly, could we start by stating in turn what pseudo name you would like to be referred to? This will help match your voice to the responses if you decide to withdraw. Shall we start from my left clockwise? Thank you. Unless anyone has any further queries we will start the discussion if that is okay?

1. Please could you tell us how you would define cyberbullying?
  - a. What characteristics would define cyberbullying?
  - b. What methods do pupils' use to perpetrate an act of cyberbullying?
  - c. Do you know of any different types of cyberbullying?
  - d. Do you think cyberbullying is different from traditional bullying? (why do you think this?)
  - e. What sort of consequences can cyberbullying have on pupils? (How do these consequences compare to the consequences from traditional bullying?)
  - f. How often does cyberbullying occur?
  - g. When do you think, it is most likely to happen?
  - h. Why do you think pupils would cyberbully?
  
2. So, now we know how you would perceive and understand cyberbullying, I would now like to ask some questions about how you would respond to different types of cyberbullying.
  - a. What circumstances would you be more likely to respond to an act of cyberbullying?
  - b. Cyberbullying can have different types of cyber publicity. Cyberbullying can be private, semi-public or public. Would you respond differently depending on how public the cyberbullying act was? (for example, the number of pupils that could witness the cyberbullying incident). Why would you respond that way?

- c. Could you give me an example if you can think of one of how you would define a public act of cyberbullying? How would you define a semi-public and private act of cyberbullying?
  - d. Which type of cyber publicity act would you say has more negative consequences? (Why do you think this?)
  - e. Can you have different levels of how severe a cyberbullying act is?
  - f. Would you respond different depending on how severe the cyberbullying act was? (Why would you respond that way?)
  - g. Could you give me an example if you can think of one of a severe act of cyberbullying? (Could you give me an example of a moderate act of cyberbullying?) (Could you give me an example of a mild act of cyberbullying?)
3. Now we know how you perceive and respond to different types of cyber publicity and severity, we would like to know more about how you approach and handle cyberbullying.
- a. If you have had to manage a cyberbullying incident, what methods/approaches do you think would be useful and effective when managing the incident?
  - b. Why do you think these methods/approaches would be effective in managing the cyberbullying incident?
  - c. If you have had to manage a cyberbullying incident, what methods/approaches do you think would not be effective or useful when trying to manage the incident?
  - d. Why do you think these methods/approaches would not been effective in managing the cyberbullying incident?
  - e. What would you regard as the most effective strategy if you had to manage a cyberbullying incident? Why do you think this?
  - f. After your teaching training course, do you think you would feel confident when approaching and managing a cyberbullying incident? Why do you feel this way?
  - g. After your teaching training course, do you feel like you will have the sufficient training and knowledge to effectively manage a cyberbullying incident?
  - h. Do you understand the legal framework and what is required of you as a teacher when managing cyberbullying?



4. Thank you for sharing your experience approaching and handling cyberbullying in the classroom. To finish off the focus group session, we would like to know a few things regarding cyberbullying in the future.
  - a. Could you explain what you think the prevalence and state of cyberbullying will be like in 5 years' time?
  - b. Is there anything schools can do to help manage and approach the issue of cyberbullying in the future?
  - c. What do you think needs to be done to help prevent cyberbullying in the future?
  - d. Can you think of any suggestions that would help prevent cyberbullying in the classroom?
  - e. Why do you believe this would be an effective prevention strategy for schools to use?
  - f. Is there anything else you would like to add that should be focused on in the future when developing prevention strategies to manage cyberbullying?

Prompts to be used as appropriate:

- Does anyone else share that view?
- Would someone else be prepared to share their experience of that?
- Does anyone feel there is more to add about this?
- Is there anything anyone would like to add that has not been mentioned?
- Would anyone like to share a contradictory experience to this?

## **APPENDIX G: STUDY 2 FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE (INSERVICE TEACHERS)**

Before we start, could you make sure you have read and understood the information sheet provided and if you would like to participate in the focus group session, please sign and date the consent form provided to you.

Thank you all for showing an interest to participate in this focus group session. Firstly, could we start by stating in turn what pseudonym you would like to be referred to? This will help match your voice to the responses if you decide to withdraw. Shall we start from my left clockwise? Thank you. Unless anyone has any further queries we will start the discussion if that is okay?

1. Please could you tell us how you would define cyberbullying?
  - i. What characteristics would define cyberbullying?
  - j. What methods do pupils' use to perpetrate an act of cyberbullying?
  - k. Do you know of any different types of cyberbullying?
  - l. Do you think cyberbullying is different from traditional bullying? (why do you think this?)
  - m. What sort of consequences can cyberbullying have on pupils? (How do these consequences compare to the consequences from traditional bullying?)
  - n. How often does cyberbullying occur?
  - o. When do you think, it is most likely to happen?
  - p. Why do you think pupils would cyberbully?
  
2. So, now we know how you would perceive and understand cyberbullying, I would now like to ask some questions about how you would respond to different types of cyberbullying.
  - h. What circumstances would you be more likely to respond to an act of cyberbullying?
  - i. Cyberbullying can have different types of cyber publicity. Cyberbullying can be private, semi-public or public. Would you respond differently depending on how public the cyberbullying act was? (for example, the number of pupils that could witness the cyberbullying incident). Why would you respond that way?
  - j. Could you give me an example if you can think of one of how you would define a public act of cyberbullying? How would you define a semi-public and private act of cyberbullying?

- k. Which type of cyber publicity act would you say has more negative consequences? (Why do you think this?)
  - l. Can you have different levels of how severe a cyberbullying act is?
  - m. Would you respond different depending on how severe the cyberbullying act was? (Why would you respond that way?)
  - n. Could you give me an example if you can think of one of a severe act of cyberbullying? (Could you give me an example of a moderate act of cyberbullying?) (Could you give me an example of a mild act of cyberbullying?)
3. Now we know how you perceive and respond to different types of cyber publicity and severity, we would like to know more about how you approach and handle cyberbullying.
- i. If you have had to manage a cyberbullying incident, what methods/approaches have you found to be useful and effective when managing the incident?
  - j. Why do you think these methods/approaches have been effective in managing the cyberbullying incident?
  - k. If you have had to manage a cyberbullying incident, are there any methods/approaches you have used that have not been effective or useful when trying to manage the incident?
  - l. Why do you think these methods/approaches have not been effective in managing the cyberbullying incident?
  - m. What would you regard as the most effective strategy when managing a cyberbullying incident? Why do you think this?
  - n. Do you feel confident when approaching and managing a cyberbullying incident? Why do you feel this way?
  - o. Do you feel like you have the sufficient training and knowledge to effectively manage a cyberbullying incident?
  - p. Do you understand the legal framework and what is required of you as a teacher when managing cyberbullying?
4. Thank you for sharing your experience approaching and handling cyberbullying in the classroom. To finish off the focus group session, we would like to know a few things regarding cyberbullying in the future.
- g. Could you explain what you think the prevalence and state of cyberbullying will be like in 5 years' time?

- h. Is there anything schools can do to help manage and approach the issue of cyberbullying in the future?
- i. What do you think needs to be done to help prevent cyberbullying in the future?
- j. Can you think of any suggestions that would help prevent cyberbullying in the classroom?
- k. Why do you believe this would be an effective prevention strategy for schools to use?
- l. Is there anything else you would like to add that should be focused on in the future when developing prevention strategies to manage cyberbullying?

Prompts to be used as appropriate:

- Does anyone else share that view?
- Would someone else be prepared to share their experience of that?
- Does anyone feel there is more to add about this?
- Is there anything anyone would like to add that has not been mentioned?
- Would anyone like to share a contradictory experience to this?

## APPENDIX H: STUDY 3 ETHICAL APPROVAL (SURVEY)

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**From:** "Cali, Annabel" <annabel.cali@ntu.ac.uk>  
**Date:** Tuesday, 6 March 2018 at 11:28  
**To:** "Macaulay, Peter 2016 (PGR)" <peter.macaulay2016@my.ntu.ac.uk>  
**Cc:** "Betts, Lucy" <lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk>  
**Subject:** APPROVED: MACAULAY 2018/49: Request for ethical review

### Message sent on behalf of the Chair of the College Research Ethics Committee

Dear Peter

Thank you for the recent submission of your application (No. 2018/49) to the College Research Ethics Committee (CREC) on 19 February 2018 requesting ethical clearance for the project entitled: *Teacher, adolescent and parent perspectives towards cyber bullying (surveys)*.

We are pleased to inform you that the Committee were happy to confirm that in its judgement there were no outstanding ethical concerns that required further discussion or exploration prior to data collection and your application has been approved.

The reviewers have pointed out that there are some grammatical and spelling errors and have advised some careful proof reading, but do not require for your documentation to be resubmitted for review.

The Committee would like to wish you well in the completion of your project.

Sent on behalf of K Wheat  
Chair CREC

## **APPENDIX I: STUDY 3 INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM (SURVEY)**

Thank you for showing an interest to participate in this exciting research opportunity. Before you take part in this research, please could you spend a few minutes reading through this information so that you understand what is being asked of you and the purpose of the research.

The project is part of an ongoing research program being conducted by members of the Department of Psychology at Nottingham Trent University and is being conducted by Peter Macaulay as part of his PhD. This project is being supervised by Dr Lucy Betts, Dr James Stiller and Dr Blerina Kellezi. The purpose of the project is to examine perceptions and responses towards cyber bullying. You will be asked to indicate how you would respond to 24 hypothetical scenarios on cyberbullying. In addition, you will be asked to rate the severity of each scenario. Finally, you will be asked to complete some questions about your cyber bullying involvement.

Once you have read through this information, you will be asked to tick a series of statements and then sign to give your consent to take part in the research. When you have given your consent, you will be given the questionnaire to complete (either online or in paper questionnaire provided). It will take approximately 25 minutes for you to complete. Please just answer each question as you see fit, there are no right or wrong answers. If you do not wish to answer a question, please tick the 'Prefer not to say' option. If you wish to stop participating in the research at any point then please just navigate away from the page. This will mean that your data will be lost and it will not be submitted or recorded anywhere. If you want to withdraw from the study, you have the right to do so freely and without consequence.

All the answers you give will remain confidential at all times. Your answers will only come through to the secure data store once you have pressed 'submit'. The electronic storage of your data will be in a password protected, secure software. Although the questionnaire is confidential, if any responses concern or worry us at any point, we will have to disclose this to the school and inform the head teacher. At no point in this study will you be asked for your name, that way your anonymity can be protected at all times. We will, however, ask you to enter a unique identifier so that if you change your mind after you press the 'submit' button we can identify the data which belongs to you in order to permanently delete it. In order to do this, just email using the contact details below, along with your unique identifier, (you will see these contact details again at the end of the questions) up to four weeks after today and say you want to remove your data from the study. Your data will be removed and permanently deleted. Doing this will not cause a problem if you do so before the date provided. If you wish your data to be removed after four weeks then we will have completed the analysis and started to write up the work. That means that your data will still be included in academic outputs, but we will remove it for any other research dissemination after that. Your data will not be used on its own in isolation; instead your data will be analysed alongside the data of all other respondents and only general

trends and patterns will be reported and your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected at all times.

There are no foreseen negative consequences of taking part in this research. However, some people may find the questions on cyber bullying distressing. Therefore, you may want to access information and support from Cyber smile (<http://www.cybersmile.org/>) who offer support to individuals who experience cyber bullying or digital harassment. If you have any comments or complaints about the way in which this research has been carried out then please contact Peter Macaulay. To contact Peter Macaulay, please use the contact details below (these will be shown to you again at the end of the questionnaire).

Many thanks for taking part in the research,

Peter

**Contact Information:**

Please feel welcome to contact the researcher at any point regarding the project and/or any queries.

Peter Macaulay

Email: [peter.macaulay@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:peter.macaulay@ntu.ac.uk)

Dr. Lucy Betts

Email: [lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk)

Contact: +44 115 84 85558

Department of Psychology

Nottingham Trent University

50 Shakespeare Street

Nottingham

NG1 4FQ

Tel: 0115 848 5558

## **APPENDIX J: STUDY 3 DEBRIEF FORM (SURVEY)**

Thank you for completing the online survey. The research aimed to examine perceptions and experiences of cyber bullying. Please could you make sure that you make a note of your identifiable unique code. If you would like your data to be removed from this research project, please contact Peter Macaulay within four weeks of completing the online survey. It is important to note that all your responses will remain secure and only can be accessed by the research team. If you decide you would like to withdraw your responses, please contact Peter Macaulay (email: [peter.macaulay@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:peter.macaulay@ntu.ac.uk))

There are no foreseen negative consequences of taking part in this research. However, if some of the information was sensitive and upset you, the following organisations will be able to provide helpful support and guidance:

### **Bullying UK**

- Further information: <http://www.bullying.co.uk/>
- Contact: 0808 800 2222

### **NSPCC**

- Further information: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk>
- Contact: 0808 800 5000

### **The Cybersmile Foundation**

- Further information: <http://www.cybersmile.org/>
- Contact: 0845 6887277

### **Childnet**

- Further information: <http://www.childnet.com>
- Contact: 020 7639 6967

### **Contact Information:**

Please feel welcome to contact the researcher at any point regarding the project and/or any queries.



Peter Macaulay

Email: [peter.macaulay@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:peter.macaulay@ntu.ac.uk)

Dr. Lucy Betts

Email: [lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:lucy.betts@ntu.ac.uk)

Contact: +44 115 84 85558

Department of Psychology

Nottingham Trent University

50 Shakespeare Street

Nottingham

NG1 4FQ

Tel: 0115 848 5558

## **APPENDIX K: STUDY 3 EXAMPLE LETTER TO SCHOOLS**

Dear (Head of school/principal),

I am emailing you today to invite you to be involved in an important cyberbullying project, involving the pupils. My name is Peter Macaulay and I am completing my PhD at Nottingham Trent University, researching into cyberbullying.

The project is part of an ongoing research program being conducted by members of the Department of Psychology at Nottingham Trent University. This project is being supervised by Dr Lucy Betts, Dr James Stiller and Dr Blerina Kellezi. The purpose of the project is to examine perceptions and responses towards cyber bullying.

As part of this research I am looking pupils to complete an online survey looking at their perceptions and responses to cyberbullying in the school. This survey will examine how young people respond to cyberbullying incidents and their cyberbullying experiences.

The survey will take approximately 25 minutes to complete. This survey will help contribute to our understanding of cyberbullying in the school environment. If you can be involved, we can summarise and share the findings with you at a later date. I hope you can take time to consider this invitation to be involved in an important project.

I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Yours faithfully,  
Peter Macaulay

## **APPENDIX L: STUDY 3 SCENARIOS**

Scenario 1 [public; anonymous; written verbal; upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and everybody else (friends & others) could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 2 [public; anonymous; written verbal; not upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and everybody else (friends & others) could see this. This had not upset them.

Scenario 3 [public; anonymous; visual; upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and everybody else (friends & others) could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 4 [public; anonymous; visual; not upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and everybody else (friends & others) could see this. This had not upset them.

Scenario 5 [public; not anonymous; written verbal; upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and everybody else (friends & others) could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 6 [public; not anonymous; written verbal; not upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and everybody else (friends & others) could see this. This had not upset them.

Scenario 7 [public; not anonymous; visual; upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and everybody else (friends & others) could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 8 [public; not anonymous; visual; not upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and everybody else (friends & others) could see this. This had not upset them.

Scenario 9 [semi-public; anonymous; written verbal; upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and only their friends could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 10 [semi-public; anonymous; written verbal; not upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and only their friends could see this. This had not upset them.

Scenario 11 [semi-public; anonymous; visual; upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and only their friends could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 12 [semi-public; anonymous; visual; not upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and only their friends could see this. This had not upset them.

Scenario 13 [semi-public; not anonymous; written verbal; upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and only their friends could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 14 [semi-public; not anonymous; written verbal; not upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and only their friends could see this. This had not upset them.

Scenario 15 [semi-public; not anonymous; visual; upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and only their friends could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 16 [semi-public; not anonymous; visual; not upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. They and only their friends could see this. This had not upset them.

Scenario 17 [private; anonymous; written verbal; upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. Only they could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 18 [private; anonymous; written verbal; not upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. Only they could see this. This had not upset them.

Scenario 19 [private; anonymous; visual; upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. Only they could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 20 [private; anonymous; visual; not upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they do not know at their school. This happened digitally online. Only they could see this. This had not upset them.

Scenario 21 [private; not anonymous; written verbal; upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. Only they could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 22 [private; not anonymous; written verbal; not upset]

A pupil received an insulting text-based comment from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. Only they could see this. This had not upset them.

Scenario 23 [private; not anonymous; visual; upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. Only they could see this. This had upset them.

Scenario 24 [private; not anonymous; visual; not upset]

A pupil received an embarrassing photo/video from someone they know at their school. This happened digitally online. Only they could see this. This had not upset them.