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# Cyberbullying Among Adults: A Qualitative Content Analysis of the Legal Responses to a Complex Social Problem

*Short Paper*

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## Abstract

*Cyberbullying is a major issue that is regrettably on the rise. The growth and rapid proliferation of the Internet, social media, and smart mobile devices have widened the audiences, increased anonymity and interactions to further heightened the potential for cyberbullying. While there is a substantial body of literature on cyberbullying there exists two dominant gaps: a lack of studies on adult cyberbullying and novel empirical approaches to understanding cyberbullying. Using information obtained from 75 cyberbullying court cases, this study provides preliminary evidence to better understand cyberbullying amongst adults. Therein, we identify, how cyberbullying occurs in relation to four key entities: the 'offender,' the 'technology,' the 'victim' and the 'guardianship'. We also identify key themes and their relationships that emerged from the court cases that must be further investigated in order to better understand cyberbullying in future work.*

**Keywords:** Cyberbullying, Adults, Offender, Victim, Technology, Guardianship

## Introduction

Cyberbullying is defined as "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and overtime against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (Smith et al. 2008, p. 376). Eleven studies conducted in the United States have shown that the growth of cyberbullying doubled from 18% to 36% between 2007 to 2019 (López-Vizcaíno et al. 2021). The advent and rapid proliferation of digital technologies that create social media platforms and connected societies, and the widespread usage of mobile devices, are exacerbating the impact of cyberbullying (Kaluarachchi et al. 2021). In addition, online users tend to perceive themselves to be free from social norms and assume that their behaviors are no longer bound by society's standards of the physical world (Patton et al. 2013). The anonymity of online communication removes such inhibitions (Patton et al. 2013) and releases individuals from the normative and social constraints of behavior, leading to an increase in aggressive and inappropriate behaviors in cyberspace (Moore et al. 2012). Moreover, stressful life events, such as the break-up of a romantic relationship, workplace stress, or other conflicts, produce negative emotions such as anger, frustration, or sadness that could lead to people engaging in deviant behaviors as

a coping mechanism (Hinduja and Patchin 2007). In such cases, these new technologies and platforms provide new opportunities for people to release frustrations and anger.

Consequently, scholars are pushing for a deeper understanding of cyberbullying as a societal phenomenon in order to develop better laws, regulations, and technological solutions to minimize it. Therein, studies on cyberbullying have focused on its prevalence and predictors (Smith et al. 2008), on the comparison of bullying and cyberbullying (Hinduja and Patchin 2010), on the development of coping mechanisms for cyberbullying (Raskauskas and Huynh 2015), on identifying the characteristics of cyberbullying victims, offenders, and bystanders (Lund and Ross 2017) and on the risk factors for cyberbullying (Kowalski et al. 2019). However, most prior research has been directed to studying cyberbullying amongst adolescents or children, with a paucity of research addressing this issue among the adult population (Jenaro et al. 2018). It is also unclear from the extent of research how cyberbullying could be conceptualized and prevented among the adult population. According to a 2019 UK study by YouGov that surveyed 2,034 people, over a quarter (23%) of British adults have encountered cyberbullying that has had negative real-life consequences (Independent 2019). According to the Pew Research Center (2017), four out of ten adults in the United States have experienced online harassment or abusive behaviors. Among those who have been harassed online, 18% have been subjected to severe online abusive behaviors such as physical threats and/or sexual harassment (Pew Research Center 2017). The proliferation of smartphones, the heavy usage of social media, the Internet, and workplace systems by adults, as well as stressful life situations, all contribute to the likelihood that cyberbullying will be prevalent among adults. The increasing amount of cyberbullying occurring amongst the adult population is deemed almost as severe as that of younger populations (Jenaro et al. 2018). That highlight the necessity for studies especially focusing on adult cyberbullying, even if prior research into adolescent cyberbullying had established a foundation for understanding cyberbullying (Zhang et al. 2021). Considering the absence of detailed theoretical and practical considerations and attributing to the rapid rate at which cyberbullying among adults increases, this research aims to contribute to this vital discussion. As such, the main objective of this study is to investigate *'how cyberbullying occurs among adults?'*

## Theoretical Foundation

Although adolescent cyberbullying is intended to hurt, it is not necessarily done with criminal intent (Zhang et al. 2021). In most adults cyberbullying there exist a criminal intent (Kaluarachchi et al. 2021). Whereby the offender masterfully employs the strategy to bully the victim. Therein the adult offender employs a mix of technologies, switching between strategies to achieve such goals like sexual preferences, gaining revenge after a love relationship ended, occupational stress, or other issues (Hinduja and Patchin 2007; Walters et al. 2016). As such, when investigating adult cyberbullying, it was determined that we should focus on the interactions between (i) the offender, (ii) the technology, (iii) the victim, and (iv) the guardianship. Such characteristics are highlighted in the General Theory of Crime (GTC) and Routine Activity Theory (RAT). These two theories have been commonly employed to investigate adult nonconformity in criminology (Jaeyong and Kruis 2020; Leukfeldt and Yar 2016), criminal psychology (Romero et al. 2003), and sociology (Cohen and Felson 1979). Additionally, similar to our study, Zhang et al. (2021) also combined theoretical lenses of GTC and RAT to better understand deviant behaviors.

The integration of theories to develop a new conceptual model involves important considerations to ensure that the integration is feasible (Okhuysen and Bonardi 2011). To define the link between the theoretical lenses that are combined, Okhuysen and Bonardi (2011) presented two dimensions: 1) the proximity of the theoretical lenses the authors intend to combine; and 2) the compatibility of their underlying assumptions. In this regard, both GTC and RAT share a common conceptual space, where both theories are commonly used simultaneously in the field of criminology to explain how and why individuals engage in criminal or deviant behaviors. Adhering to the commitment to create an understanding using (i) the offender, (ii) the technology, (iii) the victim, and (iv) the guardianship, the GTC focuses on the offender's individual characteristics, tech-enabled opportunities while the RAT explains the remaining two.

### ***Routine Activity Theory (RAT)***

Routine Activity Theory, formulated in 1979 by Cohen and Felson, suggests that criminal behavior is likely to occur when three factors are present: a likely offender, a suitable target, and the lack of a capable guardian (Cohen and Felson 1979). The criminogenic incident arises when the offender and target come together in

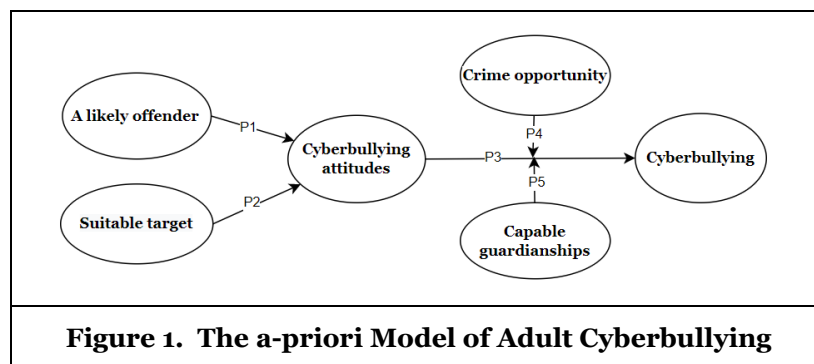
space and time, and in the absence of capable guardianship. This provides a framework for understanding the changes in criminal activity. In many places, bullying is increasingly being considered a crime, particularly since it has several characteristics in common with crime (Starosta 2016), making RAT a viable means of explaining cyberbullying. RAT addresses the presence of a likely offender, a vulnerable target, deviant behavior such as cyberbullying, and the need for a capable guardian to safeguard the victim. Recently, many information systems (IS) researchers have used RAT to examine cyberbullying behaviors (Chan et al. 2019; Leukfeldt and Yar 2016) and have shown that the RAT is a feasible explanation for cyberbullying.

### **General Theory of Crime (GTC)**

Given the similarities between bullying and criminal activities, Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime (1990) also provides an overarching theoretical framework for the development of a cyberbullying model. Moreover, researchers have shown that the GTC applies not only to criminal behaviors but to a variety of other deviant or imprudent behaviors (Bartholomew et al. 2011) such as cyberbullying. According to the GTC, crime is a manifestation of low self-control; those who lack self-control are more inclined to commit crimes or act in deviant ways when presented with the opportunity to do so. Cyberbullying is affected by the combination of low self-control and opportunity in a similar way to crime and impulsive behaviors. In order to understand bullying and cyberbullying behaviors, researchers have specifically looked at the connection between low self-control and the opportunity to commit a crime (Jaeyong and Kruis 2020; Lowry et al. 2019). They have discovered strong associations with cyberbullying.

### **Deriving the a-Priori Research Model from RAT And GTC**

Consistent with the theory, we conceptualize that 'a likely offender' is a 'person who has low self-control,' and the 'suitability of a target' depends on the degree to which the offender observes the vulnerability of the potential victim or property. Therefore, we formally conceptualize that 'a likely offender' with low self-control is most likely to get cyberbullying attitudes to engage in cyberbullying when there is a 'suitable target. Also, the presence of a 'crime opportunity' and the absence of 'capable guardianship/s' would influence the relationship between cyberbullying attitudes and cyberbullying. The proposed propositions in the a-priori model of adult cyberbullying are shown in Figure 1.



## **Research Methodology**

This research will employ multiple literature reviews, an exploratory court case study approach, and confirmatory focus group sessions to iteratively build and answer the research question based on the outcomes. First, a series of literature reviews were conducted to obtain an understanding of the research context and assist with the development of the a-priori model. According to Creswell (2017), theories are used in qualitative research studies in two ways: (1) to develop a theory as an output at the end of the study, or (2) to use a theory as a lens to guide researchers on where to look and what questions to ask (Creswell and Creswell 2017). The second approach has been used for this research study. Then we used the court case analysis methodology to investigate cyberbullying among adults. The court case analysis methodology was used for study-1 because, these court case transcripts have provided detailed information about offenders, victims, the use of technology, technology features, and a wide and comprehensive discussion

among various practitioners involved such as judges, lawyers, psychologists, and police departments. The preliminary findings of the court case analysis (study 1) are reported in this research in progress paper.

**Case Selection:** The court cases were chosen using the purposive sampling method to ensure their appropriateness and purpose, as well as to gain access to valuable and relevant information. Due to the aim and scope of this study, the court case transcripts were extracted from the Legal databases, mainly 'AustLII', 'CanLII', 'WorldLII', 'JUSTIA US Law' 'Caselaw', and 'Casetext' using keywords or related terms of cyberbullying, cyber harassment, and cyberstalking. To ensure the relevancy of the court cases for the analysis only court case transcripts containing key terms or synonyms were retrieved. Each case that appeared in the search result was then skim-read by the researchers to determine the basic content of the cases. All selected cases from the skim reading were examined in detail to identify the use of the word 'cyberbullying' and whether the case is related to adults. This approach increased the ultimate reliability of the research by ensuring no selection bias (McKinney and Abbott 2013). Cases were excluded from the final sample if the cause or circumstances of the cyberbullying were not discussed, the selected case is not related to the adult's context (considered the offender's age; 18 or more), or the word 'cyberbullying' referred to incidental case law unrelated to the circumstances of a cyberbullying among adults. This process yielded a final sample of N = 75 cases where 'cyberbullying' or an associated work appeared, and the incidents of cyberbullying among adults were reported. We examined 75 court case transcripts comprising about over 1500 pages to investigate cyberbullying among adults.

**Data Analysis Methodology:** The court case data were analyzed in iterative phases using the mixed approach (Bandara et al. 2015). As Bandara et al. (2015), suggested, NVivo© was used as a support tool during the coding process. Following the deductive method, statements in the court cases were decomposed, extracting contiguous phrases, without modification. These codes were mapped into the four theoretical paradigms of the GTC and RAT (likely offender, suitable target, crime opportunities, and capable guardianships), based on the attention that each element of the a-priori model received in the court cases. In the second iteration, phrases that did not readily map into the existing constructs were collated into meaningful new constructs using inductive reasoning. The coding of 75 court cases was conducted by two independent researchers and was reviewed by the research team in collaboration sessions to ensure intercoder reliability. The two researchers selected a set of sample codes from each of the 75 court cases and mapped them until the intercoder reliability was more than 75% as stipulated by Krippendorff (2018).

## Court Case Analysis Initial Findings (Study 1)

In this section, we report the preliminary findings of the court case analysis (study 1). First, we justify the factors in the a-priori model based on the literature and then we used inductive reasoning to identify new factors. We then consider the relationship between the key entities of the perpetrator, the victim, the technology, and the guardianships. The following section provides a descriptive analysis of the factors and their relationships in line with the objectives established for this court case study.

### *Likely Offender Characterization*

Past research has shown that the occurrence of deviant behaviors such as cyberbullying is mostly influenced by the offender's characteristics (Chan et al. 2019). We noted that 'likely offender' and 'low self-control' are a combination; hence, in the interests of parsimony, the measures for these were combined into a single measure. Under this component, we mainly looked at the offender's low self-control. However, using inductive reasoning, we were able to identify the offender's other personal characteristics, that also influence their cyberbullying. In the following section, we will go over all the offender characteristics that are related to their cyberbullying behaviors.

**Low self-control:** The low self-control was conceptualized as having six factors: self-centered tendencies impulsivity, risk-seeking behaviors, preference for physical activities, preference for simple tasks, and short temperedness (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). People with low self-control are more likely to participate in criminal or antisocial behaviors, which are risky, because they prioritize their own interests and the desire to maximize pleasure and are unable to control their emotions and conduct in the pursuit of this pleasure (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Lowry et al. 2019). The court case analysis also demonstrated that the offender's low self-control (89%) is a possible and significant multidimensional cyberbullying factor for both genders regardless of age. In total there were 877 coding references for the low self-control theme.

Table 1 shows that the sub constructs of low self-control are substantiated through the court case analysis.

Low self-control	Cases (71)	Cases Coded (95%)	Coding Ref (877)
1: Risk-seeking behaviors	62	83%	409
2: Self-cantered tendencies	53	71%	238
3: Short temperedness	24	32%	65
4: Impulsivity	17	23%	28
5: Preference for simple tasks	3	4%	4
6: Preference for physical activities	3	4%	4
<b>Table 1. Summary of reviewed cases in relation to low self-control</b>			

Furthermore, these individuals who are short-tempered motivated to engage in these deviant behaviors in retaliation. These offenders felt no empathy for the victims and their families. Case #10 shows that *“the making and use of the images displayed singular insensitivity, the callous disregard of the feelings of others, probably a sadistic desire to inflict emotional pain and also revealed a worrying state of mind.”* In summary, low self-control is a stable characteristic acquired in childhood; those with low self-control are risk-takers and are short-tempered, impulsive, reckless, and self-centered, as shown in the literature (Jaeyong and Kruis 2020; Lowry et al. 2019) as well as court cases. All those aspects of low self-control reduce the power or ability of a person to exert control over their emotions, behavior, or actions. The breakdown of this self-control process is the proximate cause of violent and aggressive behavior (Baumeister and Boden 1998).

**Offender’s other characteristics:** Crime or deviant behaviors are more common among the mentally ill or those suffering from alcohol or drug addiction, as well as other mental disorders, such as personality disorders (Chan et al. 2019). Therefore, we inductively derived the offender's other characteristics that may have influenced their cyberbullying behaviors as shown in table 2.

Offender's other characteristics	Cases (36)	Cases coded (48%)	Coding Ref (174)
1: Depression, anxiety, deficits in psychological functioning, or other psychological disorders	22	29%	88
2: Emotional immaturity	17	23%	38
3: Poorly developed social relationships and boundaries	10	13%	23
4: Use of alcohol and drugs	5	7%	11
5: Technical skills of the offender	5	7%	10
6: Low self-esteem	2	3%	4
<b>Table 2. Summary of reviewed cases in relation to offender's other characteristics</b>			

In about 29% of cases, it was discovered that the offenders also had depression and anxiety as well as deficiencies in their psychological functioning. For example, in case #2, the psychologist who assessed the offender's psychological functioning determined that *“the applicant showed signs of a persistent depressive disorder.”* In case #23 the offender *“had a diagnosed of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.”* Furthermore, deficits in psychological functioning or other psychological disorders can also affect an individual's self-control or self-management process, which reduces their ability to control their emotions or behaviors and removes the normal inhibitions that keep most people from engaging in deviant behavior. Emotional immaturity and poorly developed social relationships and boundaries were other significant personal factors mentioned in the court case analysis (13%). Emotionally immature people lack certain emotional and social skills, as well as empathy for others. In case #2 the offender *“appeared to have a poorly developed understanding of social relationships and boundaries.”* As a result, they are having difficulty forming social relationships and comprehending the values of these relationships. This reduces an individual’s moral culpability, which can also be linked to cyberbullying.

### Suitable Target Selection

RAT theory suggests that criminal behaviors are likely to occur when a suitable target is present. The suitability of a target depends on the degree of vulnerability of the potential victim or property (Cohen and Felson 1979). Victim's risky/irresponsible use of ICT and lack of technical knowledge and skills for detecting fraudulent activities in cyberspace have increased their vulnerability as suitable targets, as evidenced by court case analysis. Table 3 shows the factors of suitable target selection.

Suitable target selection	Cases (21)	Cases coded (28%)	Coding Ref (78)
1: Victim's risky/irresponsible use of ICT	21	28%	49
2: Victim's forced compliance	9	12%	29

**Table 3. Summary of reviewed cases in relation to suitable target**

Victim's risky use of ICT/Internet and behaving irresponsibly online (28%) such as communicating or sharing information online with strangers, posting nude, semi-nude, or partying photos on public social networking sites, violating the terms and conditions of social networking sites have increased their vulnerability as a suitable target and substantiated through the court case analysis. Additionally, in recent times, web-based relationships have largely replaced real-life relationships, and sharing naked pictures of themselves has become more common in these web-based relationships (Demetis and Kietzmann 2021). Case #20 is a great example. *"a nude photograph was taken of Jessica from her neck down. Jessica texted the photo to her then-boyfriend, Defendant XX, reasonably expecting that the photograph would be held privately and not shared with others."* However, shortly after the relationship ended, the offender violated the victim's privacy and trust by sending her, nude photos to other students.

The 'victim's forced compliance' to the demands of the offenders also makes them more vulnerable as a target and opens up new opportunities for cyberbullying. Some of these offenders are capable of duping these vulnerable victims into sharing something personal or sexual images and then using them as a weapon for cyberbullying and humiliation. The victims are then forced to accept the offender's demands because they have no other option. Case #2 shows that *"after persistent requests, AB provided a photograph of her naked breasts to Hannah's account. That photograph was then used as a means of blackmailing her."* In case #19, the victim received threatening messages from the offender and was constrained to comply with the offender's request *"feeling that she had no other choice and she sent three photographs of her naked breasts to the respondent"*, placing herself even more at risk.

### Crime Opportunities

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) stated that opportunities to commit crimes are unlimited, but each specific crime requires a unique set of circumstances for the crime to be committed. These sets of conditions serve as an opportunity. Table 4 illustrates the crime opportunities which influence cyberbullying among adults.

Crime opportunities	Cases (75)	Cases Coded (100%)	Coding Ref (952)
1: Use of the Internet, social media, mobile chatting apps, and other tech tools	75	100%	763
2: Perceived anonymity	40	53%	189

**Table 4. Summary of reviewed cases in relation to crime opportunities**

The total number of coding references for the opportunity theme is approximately 952, making it one of the top themes in the analysis. The subtheme of 'use of the internet, social media, and other tech tools' has recorded 763 coding references, making it the most important theme among the other subthemes. It also demonstrates the significance of technology used in cyberbullying. The problem of cyberbullying persists, worsened by technological advancements, the widespread use of social networking sites, and their popularity. The advent of the Internet with 24-hour connectivity and the availability of technologies such as social media platforms, mobile chatting apps, and emails give rise to cyberbullying, which has been reported in every case (100%) as mentioned in previous studies (Kowalski et al. 2019). These new technologies, such as social media, lead to increased someone's sociometric popularity in the online social world, making them easy targets for cyberbullying. Case #13 has shown that *"while social media can be*



used for good, often it is used as a weapon, either by one or both of the parties and or by their respective supporters."

Furthermore, technological capabilities such as anonymity promote the phenomenon of online disinhibition and free people from the normative and social boundaries of their behavior, which increases aggression and inappropriate online behavior. In case #15, the court has shown that *"unlike traditional bullying, which usually takes place by a face-to-face encounter, the defendant used the advantages of the Internet to attack his victims from a safe distance, 24 hours a day, while cloaked in anonymity."* Furthermore, the combination of these technology tools and their capabilities has provided offenders with tech skills to further augment cyberbullying. Technology also enables cyberbullying to occur simultaneously across multiple platforms, increasing the severity and repetitiveness of cyberbullying. Case #8 also notes that *"sexting evolves frequently into a pattern of escalating risk-taking behavior."* Over 90% of cyberbullying behaviors in court cases exhibited a pattern of repetition and escalating seriousness with the help of technology tools and platforms. Also, any information or material posted on the Internet or social media can be accessed globally and is often irretrievable. Therefore, the effects of cyberbullying can last a long time and affect a person in many ways compared to bullying, as supported by the court case findings.

### Capable Guardianships

According to the RAT, guardianships are not limited to government authorities alone but can include *"anybody whose presence or proximity that discourages crime or deviant behaviors"* (Baumeister and Boden 1998, p. 4). RAT also has demonstrated that in the absence of capable guardianships, there is a chance that crime and deviant behaviors can occur (Baumeister and Boden 1998). Lowry et al. (2019) also revealed that crime occurs in situations where it is intellectually and physically easy to perform, and lack of monitoring makes online criminal behaviors easier to carry out. The Internet's iterative and limitless capacity for reproduction, hidden behind anonymity, lack of monitoring, as well as platforms' slow online responses presents unique challenges for guardianships to protect victims; additionally, some cases are minimized or ignored because proof of such harm is unavailable. For instance, case #47 shows that *"it is difficult to hold such offenders accountable because the crime is remotely committed, and the nature of the internet provides predators with a degree of anonymity."* Case #10 also shows that *"the Internet and, specifically, a social networking platform like Facebook readily enables the anonymous dissemination of information to a vast audience. The investigation of offenses is difficult and general deterrence is a major consideration."* However, there are two types of capable guardianships namely online and offline that we can use to reduce or prevent further cyberbullying, particularly in the adult context as shown in table 5.

Capable guardianships	Cases (75)	Cases coded (100%)	Coding Ref (464)
1: Offline (e.g., Law enforcement)	75	100%	401
2: Online mechanisms	27	36%	63

**Table 5. Summary of reviewed cases in relation to capable guardianships**

Most of the country's criminal laws are mostly concerned with meting out appropriate punishments as a way to exact the social consequences of cyberbullying. Adults, on the other hand, frequently prefer punishment over discipline, therefore an appropriate sentence is necessary as a deterrent for cyberbullying. For instance, case #4 shows that *"the degree of participation of the accused in the offense was intense, prolonged and only stopped due to the intervention of the victim's parents and law enforcement."* However, we could also see that in some countries, such as Canada, offline guardianships such as law are under-inclusive. They don't have specific laws to cover most adult cyberbullying behaviors. Case #20 is a great example of a lack of guardianship. In this case, *"officer Payne incorrectly told the victim that there was nothing that could be done because she was an adult."* Even though, the victim reported to law enforcement and the officials at her school, no party offered to assist her; instead, the offenders increased their degree of harassment as a result of the victim's complaints.

On the other hand, there are numerous online guardianships available to protect vulnerable victims from cyberbullying. Some of the most common online mechanisms used by victims to prevent further cyberbullying appeared to be blocking and deleting accounts associated with cyberbullying. Furthermore, the majority of these social media sites have their security and privacy settings to help their users avoid these types of cyber misbehaviors. Our data revealed that just 36% of cases were in favor of 'online



guardianships' which allow users to reduce their exposure as vulnerable victims but are less successful than offline guardianships at stopping cyberbullying once it has commenced. We observed that these offenders tried to use another tech tool or platform to harass victims once more. Case #6 shows that the victim "deleted the respondent from her social network sites, but the respondent was able to contact her through an instant messaging site." Again, in case #75 the victim "blocked him but he created another Vampire Freaks account and "did the same thing", again sending her messages asking to meet up for sex." These online mechanisms appeared to be adequate as temporary remedies for such deviant behaviors, but not effective in preventing cyberbullying. As a result, it is necessary to revisit and rebuild strong online tools and mechanisms to prevent violent online behaviors such as cyberbullying.

## Future Research Direction: Study 2 – Focus Group Study

In the final stage, the focus group approach (study 2) will be used to specifically investigate the operational credibility of online and offline guardianships. The focus group will include (1) cyber lawyers and executive staff from legislative bodies related to e-safety and cyberbullying and (2) representatives from social organizations that deal with cyberbullying victims (E.g., prosecutors, police officers). Since cyberbullying among adults is largely underrepresented, the focus groups will provide a broader range of responses and numerous different perspectives on the research topic (Krueger and Casey 2009). We hope that this method would also allow us to look for explanations and elaborations on issues, as well as to investigate any contradictions or ambiguities that emerged through stages 1-2 of the study.

## Conclusion and Contributions

Cyberbullying was described as a complex phenomenon by the court and other legal practitioners involved in all court cases. To better understand cyberbullying as a phenomenon, it was determined that we should focus on the primary entities and their interactions in cyberbullying. Therein, we observed the salient entities of the 'offender', the 'technology', the 'victim', the 'guardianship', and their interrelationships using the a-priori model based on the literature. Next, the unique characteristics of cyberbullying were sought by means of inductive reasoning.

This research makes a theoretical contribution to the information systems (IS) literature by exploring cyberbullying among adults. The results of the study have implications in multiple ways: (1) they broaden the understanding of cyberbullying as a phenomenon, especially on the real attributes associated with cyberbullying; (2) what are the characteristics of the offender, the victim, as well as technology which facilitates cyberbullying and (3) capable online and offline guardianships, can be used to prevent cyberbullying. Overall, this study is expected to yield valuable information that will allow for the development of more targeted cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs. As with all research work, this study is also subject to limitations. We reviewed court cases mostly related to Australia, Canada, Europe, and the United States. We were unable to locate any court cases pertaining to Asian or African countries.

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