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Is Bullying changing shape?

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the cyber-bullying among teacher candidates in Northern Cyprus. A total of 110 teacher candidates (mean age of 22 years) were recruited from different departments from education faculty of Near East University at the beginning of the 2nd term of 2010-2011 academic year. The teacher candidates filled the questionnaire which was developed for determine cyber-bullying states. At a glance result according to the analysis of the questionnaire, it could be said that bully is changing its form by moving to cyber environments.

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Keywords: teacher candidates; bullying; cyber-bullying

1. Introduction

Bullying, as a serious kind of school violence, has long been recognized as a common aggressive behavior among peers and has negative effects on mental development and learning (Flanagan, Erath, & Bierman, 2008). Also bullying continues to be a significant public health problem among children in schools and other group settings (Swartz, 2009). Manning, Heron and Marshal (1978) described the bullying as it is equated to the concept of harassment, which is a form unprovoked aggresssion often directed repeatedly toward another individual or group of individuals. Accordingly, Roland (1989) states that bullying is longstanding violence, physical or psychological, conducted by an individual or a group directed against an individual who is not able to defend himself in the actual situation. According to Huang and Chou (2010) bullying behavior is now happening in cyberspace and in an even more powerful way than has been the case in conventional contexts, because cyberspace is quicker, more comprehensive, and almost unstoppable and unavoidable.

The use of the new technology such as the Internet and cell phones has increased dramatically in recent years (Li, 2007). Social networking sites such as facebook twitter etc, instant messengers, and mobile technologies' popularity is growing (Uzunboylu & Ozdamli, 2011). So the risk and extent of cyberbullying cannot be underestimated (Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

Cyberbullying, as a serious kind of repeated, intentional, and harmful aggressive behavior, cannot be ignored. In light of the limited studies and inconsistent findings on the matter, this study explores cyberbullying's frequency and other factors (gender, academic achievement, types of technologies used, and anonymity) relevant to both the issue itself and the East Asian context. The interrelationship of different roles (bullies, victims, and bystanders) in cyberbullying is also examined (Huang & Chou, 2010).

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E-mail, texting, chat rooms, mobile phones, mobile phone cameras and web sites can and are being used by young people to bully peers (Campbell, 2005). Cyberbullying also takes various forms and electronic communication tools – from email, listserve, cell phone, to websites (Li, 2006). Also cyberbullies may harass, tease, disrespect, or exclude fellow classmates by sending photos, text messages, e-mail, instant messages (IMs), and video through cell phones, personal digital assistants, and computers (Swartz, 2009).

Additionally, with the increase in availability of new technologies – social networking programs, text messaging, instant messaging -there have been individuals taking advantage of these technologies to harass and bully others (Li, 2007).

Aim

The purpose of this study was to investigate the bullying and cyber-bullying among teacher candidates in Northern Cyprus. A total of 110 teacher candidates were recruited the beginning of the 2nd term of 2010-2011 academic year. In order to reach this purpose, the authors have sought answers to the following questions:

- What are cyber-bullying experiences of teacher candidates?
- What are the characteristics of cyber-bullying?
- Are there relationships between cyber-bullying incidents and the frequency of using internet?
- Are there relationships between traditional bullying and cyber-bullying?

Next, methods and results of the study are reported. Finally, discussion and conclusions are presented and implications for teacher education are discussed

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

This study was applied to a randomly selected sample of 110 teacher candidates (mean age 22 years) at the beginning of the 1st term of 2010-2011 academic year, department of Computer Education and Instructional Technology at Near East University. Teacher candidates characteristics of the sample surveyed include following: %73 male, %27 female.

Table 1 Demographic information and computer use states

	n	Percentage
Gender		
Male	81	73
Female	29	27
Internet availability at home		
ADSL	47	42.7
Wireless	40	36.4
Dial-up	1	.9
3G	22	20.0
Internet use frequency		
Everyday	98	89.1
Several times a week	8	7.3
Once a week (or less)	4	3.6
Purpose of using computer (multiple answers)		
For entertainment	49	44.5
For academic work	53	48.2
For communication	69	62.7
Self-improvement	34	30.9

2.2. Data collection instruments and application

An anonymous survey was used which used before by Li (2006). Survey includes two major areas: teacher candidates' demographic data and their experience related to bullying. Survey consists twenty-six questions. Survey was applied online in laboratory courses.

2.3. Analysis of Data

Collected data was analyzed with SPSS 16. The results obtained in the research analyzing, described, and later interpreted by creating tables using appropriate statistical techniques.

3. Results

3.1. Cyber-bullying experiences of teacher candidates

According to Li (2007), to determine teacher candidates' experiences of cyber-bullying need to look in 3 different perspectives. Teacher candidates' experience of both bullying and cyber-bullying were first calculated because of the belief that teacher candidates' experience of bullying can inform our understanding of their experience of cyber-bullying. The second perspective examined who cyber-bullied others and the scope of anonymity related to cyber-bullying. The third examination investigated how frequent cyber-bullying happened. The following results the investigation from these perspectives.

Table 2 Percentages of teacher candidates' experience of bullying and cyber-bullying

	Yes	No
Bully	22.7	75.5
Bully victim	15.5	81.8
Cyberbully	8.2	78.2
Cyberbully victim	14.5	76.4

* n = 110.

** Total percentages may not add up to 100 due to missing values.

According to Table 2, almost 16% of the teacher candidates were bully victims and 15% of them had been cyber-bullied. Almost one in five teacher candidates had bullied others in the traditional form and almost 15% had bullied others using electronic communication tools such as e-mail, chat tool, facebook etc. In addition. 41.8% of the teacher candidates reported that they knew someone being cyberbullied. When we asked who cyberbully? Analysis indicated that according to the cyber victims, 33.3% were bullied by their friends, and the highest percentage, that is, 66.7%, had no ideas who cyber-bullied them.

When we analysed how often cyberbullying occurs, results indicated that almost 75% of the cyber victims were cyber-bullied up to three times, over 12.5% of them were cyber-bullied four to ten times, and only one teacher candidate was cyber-bullied more than ten times. On the other hand, for those cyber-bullies, 31.3% of them cyber-bullied others less than four times and over 68.8% did four to ten times.

3.2. Characteristics of cyber-bullying

Table 3 shows characteristics of cyberbully and cyberbully victims results of analysis according to the gender and frequency of using computer as following;

Table 3 Characteristics of cyber-bullies and victims

	Gender		Frequency of using internet (%)	
	Female	*Male*	*One day in a week*	*Everyday*
Cyberbully victim	25.0	75.0	6.3	93.8
Cyberbully	11.1	88.9	22.2	77.8

According to Table 3, almost 75% of the cyber victims are males, also over 88% of cyber-bullies are males. Only 11.1% of cyber-bullies are females. One interesting pattern was that while the 93.8% of the cyber victims used internet everyday, 77.8% cyberbully reported that they used internet everyday.

3.3. Relationships between cyber-bullying states and the frequency of using internet

Was there a relationship between cyber-bully states and teacher candidates' frequency of using internet? To answer this question, correlation technique were used. The correlation coefficient between frequency of using internet and reported cyberbully incidents, as well as the one between frequency using internet and cyberbully victims were not statistically significant and there is not any relationships.

3.4. Relationships between traditional bullying and cyber-bullying

To explore the relationships between bully and cyberbully issues, two relationships were examined between each of the following five pairs: bully and cyberbully and bully victim and cyberbully victim. Positive significant correlation coefficients were identified: between bully and cyberbully (s = 0.678, p < 0.001). But there is not any significant correllation between bully victim and cyberbully victim (s = 0.082, p = 0.684). These results show us a person who is bully should be cyber-bullying.

4. Discussion & Conclusion

In this part discussion and suggestions are made as a result of the research. According to the results, the teacher candidates had bullied others in the traditional form more than in cyber form. But the other results show that teacher candidates were bullied ratios in traditional from and cyber form is almost equal. These findings were consistent with past studies that bullying and cyber-bullying is a big problem (Li, 2006; Hoover & Olsen, 2001) . According to the results of the study, it could be said that bully is changing its form by moving to cyber environments.

Other interesting result of the study is that male teacher candidates had cyber-bullied others and they were cyber-bullied by others more than female teacher candidates. Also, almost all of cyber-bullies and cyber victims using internet everyday.

Results showed that there is not any correlation between frequency of using internet and reported cyber-bully incidents and as well as between cyber-bully victim and frequency of using internet. Another finding of this study is that there is a strong correlation between bully and cyber-bully. According to this result, we can say that, bullies in traditional form should cyber-bullies in cyber environment.

Preventive programs should prepare by experts, information can be given about cyber-bullying how to effect of youths life. Experts should give advices to teacher candidates how they protect from cyber-bullies.

As in every study, some limitations are present in this research. One limitation is that, computer education and instructional technology department students were included in the research. In future research, other departments' students should be used as participants. Also, researchers should research with larger groups. And authors should investigate the relationship between internet addiction and cyber-bullying.

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