



Article

What Parents Can Do to Prevent Cyberbullying: Students' and Educators' Perspectives

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Abstract: This article presents findings related to the role parents can play in the prevention of cyberbullying and the promotion of cyber-kindness. The findings are drawn from a study conducted at a private school in Western Canada, involving 177 student survey participants in Grades 8 through 10 (including both day students and boarding students) and interviews with 15 educators employed at the same school. Findings relate to parental supervision of computer usage, students' willingness to inform parents about cyberbullying, and how students and educators view the role of parents in relation to the prevention of cyberbullying and the promotion of cyber-kindness. Education, dialogue, relationship strengthening, computer usage monitoring, and partnerships between schools and parents are emphasized as solutions, which are highly consistent with the existing research literature on this topic. Additionally, the study reveals the particular vulnerability of boarding students to cyberbullying victimization and perpetration.

Keywords: cyberbullying; prevention; cyber-kindness; parents; K-12; private school; boarding students; information and communication technology

1. Introduction

Parents, educators, and students alike have concerns related to the cyberbullying that affects youth in Canada and around the world. Most Canadian teenagers today cannot recall a world without the Internet, nor would they wish to do so. The Internet has brought new opportunities in terms of education, idea exchange, and socializing to levels earlier generations could not have imagined. However, the benefits have also brought with them some problems, cyberbullying among them, to which solutions are sought by all concerned.

For some time, researchers have been examining the nature and extent of cyberbullying behaviors and the impacts such online interactions have in order to develop solutions that are based on a greater awareness and understanding of the issue.

In this article, we examine data from a survey of students at a private school in Western Canada, and interviews with educators from the same school about the issues of cyberbullying and cyber-kindness. In particular, we consider the data that relates to family variables and what parents can and should do to prevent cyberbullying and promote cyber-kindness.

2. Literature Review

Cyberbullying has been the predominant term used by Canadian (and other) researchers to refer to online behaviors that are offensive, derogatory, exclusionary, unwanted, and hurtful (Beran et al. 2015; Cassidy et al. 2013; Deschamps and McNutt 2016; Li 2010; Mishna et al. 2014),

and self-reports have been the primary means through which researchers have been able to learn about this problem (Beran et al. 2015; Cassidy et al. 2009; Li 2010; Mishna et al. 2012). Specific operational definitions of cyberbullying vary and no universal tool for measuring cyberbullying prevalence has been adopted. As a result, prevalence rates vary. For example, several Canadian studies report cyberbullying victimization rates ranging from 14% to 50% of youth surveyed and self-reported cyberbullying perpetration rates ranging from 25% to 36% (Beran et al. 2015; Cassidy et al. 2009; Cénat et al. 2015; Li 2010; Mishna et al. 2010, 2012; Wade and Beran 2011).

Cyberbullying can, nonetheless, be said to impact a considerable number of young people, including those who are targets, perpetrators, both, and/or witnesses or bystanders. Reported impacts on cyberbullying victims include a wide range of mental and physical health effects, school problems, and impacts on relationships (Beran et al. 2012, 2015; Cassidy et al. 2009, 2017; Mishna et al. 2014).

Parents' awareness of their children's involvement in cyberbullying, whether as perpetrator or victim, is relatively low (Cassidy et al. 2012), as is the awareness among school authorities and staff (Cassidy et al. 2012). Parents may have the expectation that schools will deal with cyberbullying, while schools may counter that the problem is within the families' responsibilities if the cyberbullying was conducted outside of school hours on a device in the home.

Regardless of where the responsibilities lie, a range of responses have been consistently supported by research participants in studies on cyberbullying among children and youth: cyberbullying education for all concerned (students, parents, school staff), cyberbullying policies that are clear and well implemented, better reporting mechanisms, more support for victims, improving school climate and culture, and role modeling (Cassidy et al. 2011, 2012, 2012, 2013; Ryan et al. 2011). Zero-tolerance and punishment-based approaches do not appear to hold much promise, despite the apparent popularity of such "tough stance" approaches. Such approaches do little to repair the harm caused by cyberbullying and to prevent further harm. An ethic of care approach that is inclusive and respectful of all involved, values relationships and community building (Noddings 2002, 2005, 2006) offers more long-term promise.

What makes carving out appropriate responses and solutions to the problem of cyberbullying among children and youth more pressing is that the problem does not end at high school graduation (Faucher et al. 2015). Cyberbullying has also been documented as a significant challenge in post-secondary education (Cassidy et al. 2019; Cowie and Myers 2015) as well as in the workplace (Baruch 2005; Coyne et al. 2017; D'cruz and Noronha 2013; Privitera and Campbell 2009). Cyberbullying occurs on platforms that feature prominently in the everyday life of post-secondary students, faculty, and other workers. These (adult) individuals report similar impacts from the cyberbullying as those reported by children and youth: physical and mental health impacts, impacts on relationships, and impacts on performance and motivation. As such, early intervention is imperative.

3. Materials and Methods

In 2011, the first and third authors were approached by the principal of a private school (School A) in Western Canada, to conduct a study of cyberbullying at the school. The name and exact location of the school has been withheld in order to protect the anonymity of all participants. Some relatively serious incidents of cyberbullying had occurred involving members of the school community, which had raised the concerns of school staff as well as parents. The principal was aware of the first and third authors' previous work and asked for a study similar to what they had done in other schools. They were looking for a better understanding of the issue at the local level in order to enact change based on the research results and recommendations informed by those specific results, as would be consistent with participatory research principles (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). While the research drew from past work of the first and third authors, it also incorporated specific local concerns (day versus boarding students, particular issues that had arisen at that school, etc.).

The authors surveyed 177 students at School A and interviewed 15 teachers and other school staff about the issues of cyberbullying and how to promote cyber-kindness. The school received

comprehensive reports of the findings from the student surveys and from the educator interviews. These are available online at <http://www.sfu.ca/education/cels/research/publications---reports.html> or upon request from the corresponding author. A review of the full range of findings is beyond the scope of this paper.

In keeping with the theme of this special issue, the focus of this article is students' and educators' views on what parents can do to prevent cyberbullying and promote cyber-kindness. In this study, cyberbullying was defined as the use of various formats of electronic communication (Facebook, email, text messages, camera phones, blogs, websites, YouTube, chat rooms, etc.) to convey messages that are mean, hurtful, nasty, derogatory, vulgar, untrue, or generally unkind. In contrast to face-to-face bullying, electronic messages can reach a far wider audience, exist in perpetuity, and the perpetrators' identity can more easily remain unknown.

In contrast, cyber-kindness is understood to mean the use of those same modes of communication for the purpose of expressing care, kindness, and thoughtfulness in ways that may bolster self-esteem in the recipient.

The study protocol was submitted to ethics review by the SFU Office of Research Ethics and categorized as "Minimal Risk" (file 2011s0661). Participation in the student survey at School A was completely voluntary and respondents were assured that their responses would remain anonymous. Parental consent and participant consent were secured prior to distribution of the student surveys. Participants in the educator interviews were also assured their anonymity would be protected and all documentation referred to interview participants through pseudonyms. Participation in the interviews was completely voluntary and participant consent was secured prior to each interview.

After parental and participant consent were obtained, the research team distributed paper surveys to student participants during a series of school assemblies scheduled for this purpose. The researchers assured students that their responses were anonymous and remained on site to answer any questions that arose during the completion of the surveys. The surveys contained 177 closed- and open-ended questions asking respondents about their demographic variables (grade level, gender, age, whether they were day students or boarding students, first language and main language spoken at home, race/ethnicity), home and school life, information and communication technology (ICT) access and usage, beliefs and opinions, experiences with cyber-kindness and cyberbullying as victim, witness, and/or perpetrator, and thoughts on solutions to cyberbullying. A total of 177 surveys were completed and analyzed using IBM SPSS (U.S. version 21.0) descriptive statistics for the closed-ended questions and thematic analysis for the open-ended responses.

Educators (administrators, teachers, counsellors, house parents) at the school were invited to participate in semi-structured individual interviews with one of the researchers. In total, 15 educators volunteered to be interviewed. The interviews were held in a private setting at the school. After securing consent from the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed in full. The interviews lasted between 20 and 60 min and covered a range of topics related to the interviewees' own familiarity levels with various forms of on-line exchanges, their degree of concern with and awareness of cyberbullying that happens, the importance of cyberbullying prevention and cyber-kindness, their awareness of school policies and curriculum that specifically address cyberbullying, ideas about how best to address and/or prevent cyberbullying, roles that parents and educators can play in that regard. The researchers conducted a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts using a grounded theory process (Merriam and Tisdell 2016) where the themes were determined on the basis of interaction with the data (Miles and Huberman 1994). Certain themes recurred in most of the interviews, while others (though less prevalent) were emphasized particularly strongly by some of the participants.

4. Findings

4.1. Participants

The student survey participants were in grades 8 to 10 at School A (21% from Grade 8, 43% from Grade 9, and 36% from Grade 10), 60% were female, and 72% were day students while the remainder were boarding students living in the residences at School A. The majority identified English as their first language learned (69%) and the main language currently spoken in their home (72%). Most of the student participants were born in Canada (60%) and identified their racial/ethnic group as Caucasian (50%) or Asian (24%).

The educator interview participants included men and women who had been working at School A for an average of 12 years (between two and 23 years), and in the field of education more broadly for an average of 24 years of experience (between 11 and 38 years). They occupied a variety of roles within School A including teachers, house parents, administrators, counsellors, IT workers, advisors, coaches, and individuals involved in organizing extra-curricular activities.

4.2. Parental Supervision of Computer Use and Cyberbullying

Most students, whether day students or boarding students, had access to at least three computers on a daily basis and more than half of them tended to use computers in a private setting such as their bedroom or a home office, suggesting that parental or guardian supervision of online activities would be unlikely. The predominant time of day during which they went online was between the time school ended and the time they went to bed, however one third of participants indicated that they used their computer in the late evening or at night time, particularly those who were boarding and were communicating with friends and family in a different time zone.

Despite times and places of computer usage that suggest limited adult supervision, when asked whether cyberbullying behaviors tended to start at home or school, the vast majority responded that cyberbullying was more likely to start at school and continue once they got home or to their residence (71%), rather than starting in the home environment and continuing once they got to school (27%).

Boarding students were slightly more likely to report being cyberbullied overall, including being cyberbullied by someone they considered a friend as well as being cyberbullied by a classmate or acquaintance they did not know very well. For instance, as shown in Table 1, 33.1% of day student respondents indicated they had never been cyberbullied by a friend, classmate, or acquaintance, compared to 18.8% of boarding students. Meanwhile, 42.5% of day students and 52.1% of boarding students indicated they had been cyberbullied “often” by one or more of these groups of students. Boarding students were also more likely to report having themselves engaged in cyberbullying another student (47.9% once or twice and 2.1% often, compared to 26.8% and 0.8% respectively for day students) and slightly more likely to report having cyberbullied a teacher or school principal (22.9% of boarding students admitted to doing this once or twice and 2.1% often, compared to 17.3% of day students admitting to doing this once or twice and 2.1% often).

Table 1. Comparison of day and boarding students’ involvement with cyberbullying.

Behavior	Day Students (%)	Boarding Students (%)
Cyberbullied by another student—Never	33.1	18.8
Cyberbullied by another student (or students)—Often	42.5	52.1
Engaged in cyberbullying another student—Once or twice	26.8	47.9
Engaged in cyberbullying another student—Often	0.8	2.1
Engaged in cyberbullying a teacher or principal—Once or twice	17.3	22.9
Engaged in cyberbullying a teacher or principal—Often	2.1	2.1

4.3. Informing Parents about Cyberbullying

Just over half of respondents said that if they were victims of cyberbullying, they would tell their parents or guardians about it. Female students, younger students, boarding students, students who have never been cyberbullied, and students who have never cyberbullied someone else (student or school staff) were more likely to respond in this way than their respective counterparts. On the other hand, boarding students were much more likely than day students to keep cyberbullying victimization to themselves and tell no one at all (31.3% of boarding students responded in this way compared to 15% of day students). The overall rate of students who stated that they would tell their parents if they were victims of cyberbullying (53.7%) was higher than the rate of those who said they would tell a member of the school staff (40.1%), but lower than the rate who said they would tell their friends if they were being cyberbullied (72.9%).

Students were also asked who, if anyone, they would tell if they witnessed someone else being cyberbullied and less than half said they would tell their parents. Again, female students were more likely to respond positively as were younger students, students who had been cyberbullied often and those who had never cyberbullied someone else. As well, boarding students were more likely than day students to keep it to themselves when they witnessed someone else being hurt (16.7% compared to 7.1%). Students overall were less likely to tell their parents (47.5%) than school staff (54.2%) or their friends (67.8%) if they witnessed someone else being cyberbullied.

4.4. What Should Parents Do—Students' Views

Two of the open-ended questions asked student respondents to comment on what parents should do (1) to encourage kind, thoughtful, and caring online interactions (cyber-kindness) and (2) to prevent cyberbullying. The two sets of responses overlapped quite significantly, such that they are presented here as a group. The main themes that emerged from the responses to these two questions included: education approaches, role modeling and building strong relationships, technology monitoring and restrictions, and punishment if needed. These themes are summarized in Table 2 and explored in greater depth through participants' responses below.

Table 2. Summary of key themes.

Education approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach about cyberbullying, cyber-kindness, online privacy, long-term effects of cyber-behaviors • Parents, teachers, and students to educate themselves in order to participate in meaningful dialogue
Role modeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model desirable behavior online and offline, especially kindness
Relationship building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kind and supportive home • Close parent–child relationships • Take an interest in child's life
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor usage • Limit time online • Restrict access if necessary
Punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None specified other than removing access to certain sites or devices

The predominant theme among the responses for how best to prevent cyberbullying and promote cyber-kindness focused on education. Students said parents should teach their children about bullying, cyberbullying, online privacy, and the kinds of long-term effects that may come from posting certain types of messages online. They suggested it was important to remind children often about these things, but not lecturing about the topic: “don’t have a super serious talk, its¹ awkward” (15-year-old female day student). Rather, they favoured an open conversation about cyberbullying, that would educate about the consequences and use personal stories and concrete examples in order to be more relatable.

Explain to them that what they say can never be permanently “deleted” off the internet. This is why my brother deleted his facebook when he decided to go to law school. Future employers or schools can see everything, so you have to think of the long term effects of your posts (15-year-old female day student)

Put it into perspective by talking to their children: Ask them how it would feel if someone randomly posted something nice to brighten their day on their facebook wall, and how they should do it, too. (15-year-old female day student)

learn about it, talk to child every once & a while 1/month MAX or we tune out. (14-year-old female day student)

Remind their kids to be more kind, thoughtful and caring everyday. (15-year-old male boarding student)

Parents should explain to their children that online harassment is not acceptable and they should be kind to one another online and even offline. (16-year-old male day student)

The second theme of responses suggested that, in order to prevent cyberbullying and promote cyber-kindness, parents should model the desirable behaviors they wished to see in their children, whether that be appropriate online interactions or kindness more broadly.

Set the example; be kind to one another and stay friends with your child. If they see you as a friend as well as their parents, they will see that their friend is kind, therefore they may be more kind. (15-year-old female day student)

Be an example of kindness when they themselves are using technology to communicate. (14-year-old female day student)

Be kinder to each other and set a good example, be nice to the child, monitor the child’s internet sometimes. (14-year-old male boarding student)

The theme of role modeling was also closely tied to the idea of building strong relationships between parents and their children. The student respondents stated that parents should talk to their children more generally (not specifically about cyberbullying). They should be aware what is going on with their children. One student expressed the idea that a kind and supportive home based on close parent-child relationships was most conducive to the promotion of cyber-kindness and elimination of cyberbullying:

If there is to be peace between neighbours (e.g., students), there must be peace in the home. If there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace in the heart. To attack the root problem, perhaps parents being kind to their children and try to support them. Don’t nag, don’t pry too much and don’t sugarcoat your words most important, it only annoys. Be calm and make your home a relaxing haven to try and achieve peace in the heart and in the home. (15-year-old female day student)

¹ Note: Students’ comments are reproduced as written by the students.

Another student said cyberbullying could be prevented: “By being caring, loving parents and not forget about their kids” (14-year-old female day student).

Simply talk with their children and find out the reason and care of why they did it. Explain the whole situation and help find a suitable solution. (13-year-old female day student)

Compliment, help with school. (14-year-old female day student)

Ask their kids how their day went etc., don't accept “it's fine” as an answer. If it was bad, be aware of their online standing. Ask caring questions. (13-year-old male day student)

The third theme among the responses emphasized that access to technology is at least part of the problem when it comes to cyberbullying. Many student survey respondents stated that parents should impose restrictions on technology usage, limit time spent online, and monitor what their children are doing online. Some went as far as to say that access to technology should be taken away when a child is found to be engaging in cyberbullying, however, other respondents argued that this approach does not work.

Monitor their child's computer hours (as a child growing up) and useage. (For ex.: My dad only lets us use the family computer in the livingroom) in that case because my dad was around I was very cautious of what I was doing and still am that way even when he isn't monitoring me. (15-year-old female boarding student)

Parents should pay attention to what their children do online, they should also encourage good behavior (14-year-old male day student)

Set consequences. If their children cyberbully, the cellphone is taken away or their FB account deleted. Also, put it in perspective and talk about why they shouldn't do it, because if it were done to them, they wouldn't like it. (15-year-old female day student)

Parents should limit computer time and maybe once in a while check what their child is actually doing online. They should regularly remind them that cyberbullying is bad and can drive kids to hurt or even kill themselves, and that they should never take part in it. (13-year-old female day student)

Limit how much technology they can use. Lots of kids have FB and don't realize what they should or shouldn't be posting. (15-year-old male boarding student)

Let their children to have less time on the internet (14-year-old male boarding student)

Have parents able to access some of the ongoings of social networking of their children. Have computer in the living room where parents could watch over. (15-year-old female day student)

However, it should be noted that other respondents argued that this approach of restricting access to technology tools does not work.

But, the problem is, they will always find some other device unknown by parents; either a friend's or at school. (15-year-old female day student)

They also raised concerns about their privacy and not wanting parents to be intrusive into their online interactions.

The final theme identified among the student survey responses, though far less prevalent than the previous four, was that punishment should be imposed when online misbehavior occurred. The student survey also offered a set of potential solutions for students to rate and punishment was not among the highest rated solutions. However, 29.8% of day students and 16.7% of boarding students identified punishment of students who participate in cyberbullying among their top three choices in the suggested solutions.

4.5. What Should Parents Do—Educators' Views

Not surprisingly, the educators interviewed also favoured educational approaches above all else, education for students, educators, as well as parents. On the topic of parental education, the educators placed a great deal of emphasis on its importance in preventing cyberbullying. Interview participants considered that many parents lack awareness of their children's online behavior, activities, and social media presence, of the on-line risks youth face, and of the school's policy and rules related to appropriate use of information technology. According to those interviewed, parents provide their children with access to technology, but fail to monitor their online presence and behaviors.

The respondents, many of whom are parents themselves, discussed how education and awareness served to increase parents' abilities to engage in meaningful conversations about technology with their children. Since the majority of students surveyed claimed they would tell their parents if they were being cyberbullied, it is imperative that parents be adequately prepared to engage in these conversations in an informed manner. Some participants mentioned that School A had offered workshops for parents, which they felt was a positive contribution to parental education, but, of course, this would only be of benefit to those parents who lived locally.

The building of strong parent-child relationships was also raised by the educators. They placed a great deal of emphasis on parents' availability and presence in their children's lives, noting that parents' roles in raising healthy, confident, and responsible children cannot be understated, and that they should lead by example and model the behaviors they wish to see in their children.

Interview participants also discussed the roles of parents in terms of the idea that schools and parents are partners in the prevention of cyberbullying. Some suggested that the diversity of perspectives (and varying degrees of realism) among parents about the role and place of information technology in their children's lives and on what are appropriate restrictions to impose led to some difficulty for implementing policies and discipline around the issue of cyberbullying. They argued that raising awareness among parents of the nature and extent of cyberbullying would help to promote collaboration between the parents and the school, as well as engaging all stakeholders (including students) in a community conversation about this issue.

The common wisdom at the time of data collection was that children's online behaviors could best be monitored by giving them access to computers only in open areas that parents could easily monitor (Sakellariou et al. 2012; Ybarra and Mitchell 2004). The educators interviewed also raised this perspective. They were concerned over unsupervised computer usage that occurred behind closed doors or late at night when parents were not monitoring the behavior. They felt parents could take on a greater role in setting limits on usage (time and place), monitoring that usage, and modelling the online behaviors for their children to emulate. Since then, the increasing proliferation of smart phones and other portable electronic devices that can easily access the Internet has perhaps made this idea obsolete. If that is the case, then the need for education of both parents and children is further reinforced. Monitoring computer usage may now require more inventiveness than restricting times and places in which computers and other electronic devices can be used. A panoply of applications have been developed to allow parents remote access to their children's devices, restricting times of day when the Internet can be accessed, total time online per day, and/or types of sites to be accessed. Such approaches may be useful for monitoring time spent online and cyber-behaviors, however, they do seem to be premised on a lack of trust. More consistent with the study's findings would be to maintain an open conversation between parents and children where online behaviors are examined and discussed with confidence.

5. Discussion

During the time the researchers spent at School A, school staff mentioned that they were satisfied to see the approach taken in this study. They were pleased that educators' voices were included in order to give context for the student survey findings and that the role of family was being given consideration. There was also an appreciation of the fact that the focus of the study was on how to

promote cyber-kindness, rather than only on the negative conduct, or cyberbullying. One educator being interviewed even mused that it might be better to call this research cyber-kindness research so as to not worry the parents about the possibility of cyberbullying occurring at the school they pay money to for their child to attend.

In following up with the principal of School A after the research reports had been delivered (over six months after the survey had been administered), the third author enquired as to whether any new incidents of cyberbullying had arisen since the survey. The principal reported only one incident related to the use of mimes (involving two boarding students). Emphasis was placed on several positive aspects in that case: a bystander became involved, tried to intervene with the perpetrator (although without success), then told his or her parents who reported it to the school. Such responses were deemed appropriate by the principal who felt that the reaction may have been aided by the participation in the survey and ensuing discussions about cyberbullying.

Although this study cannot properly be termed participatory research, some principles of participatory research can be seen in the initiation of the study as well as in the follow-up with the local community. Research results were used to direct action and decisions for addressing cyberbullying and related problems within the school community.

The school organized a presentation to inform the parents about the study findings, but the meeting was very poorly attended, with only a handful of families showing up. This turnout was contrasted with the previous year's presentation following a serious cyberbullying incident at the school in which families had turned out in very large numbers. Although anecdotal, such a contrast does highlight a tendency for parents to be more reactive than proactive in their approach to the issue of cyberbullying. For both the researchers and the principal, it was a clear indication of the need to develop parental education about cyberbullying, particularly among the generation of parents who are not intimately familiar with technology or with how technology might be used to cyberbully.

The school also organized a discussion with the students and sought suggestions for creating a more positive school environment. Twelve students volunteered to participate in a focus group about positive aspects of their school and what could be improved. Some positive aspects were highlighted, but also what the principal termed a sort of "fear factor"—students behave due to fear of punishment, suspension, expulsion, etc. Disciplinary actions were seen by the principal as fairly limited in terms of their potential to address the issue, although such actions were mentioned by both students and educators in this study as a means of responding to online misbehavior.

Whereas the findings in this study are limited to students and educators from one school, they are highly consistent with findings from a larger earlier study conducted by two of the authors involving students, teachers, and parents from five schools in the same province. For instance, student survey respondents in the larger study (Cassidy et al. 2009) also predominantly felt that cyberbullying starts in the school context and continues in the home setting. The rates of reporting to parents, school personnel, and friends when one is a victim or witness of cyberbullying are nearly identical between the two studies, as are the rates for telling no one at all.

Educators interviewed in the earlier study (Cassidy et al. 2012) were similarly concerned about parents' relative lack of awareness about their children's online behavior and lack of knowledge about ICT in general. The need for parental monitoring of ICT usage was emphasized as well as the need for the school and parents to collaborate with students in identifying solutions to this problem.

The earlier study also included a parent survey (Cassidy et al. 2012), which demonstrated that parents' ideas about the solutions to cyberbullying are consistent with the views of students and educators. Role modelling, open dialogue, and education stood out among parents' views on solutions. Stricter controls over ICT usage were also mentioned, though with less frequency and importance to the overall solution.

6. Conclusions

Therefore, from our analyses, it is apparent that there is a range of perspectives on the role parents can play in the solution to cyberbullying that is fairly consistent between students, educators, and parents. Education and awareness about cyberbullying and cyber-kindness is needed for all concerned parties. Education is the key for accessing a dialogue that is fruitful and positive and serves as a foundation for building strong relationships between students and their parents. Role modelling of appropriate online and offline behaviors is important, as is the monitoring of students' online interactions.

Further, the present study brought added attention to the particular vulnerabilities of boarding students, compared to day students as far as cyberbullying. On the one hand, these students are in some ways a captive audience in terms of ICT usage. They may be staying up late to communicate with their family overseas and ICT may be their principal means of communication. As such, they are particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying victimization at a higher rate than day students. On the other hand, their ICT usage (and behavior more generally) may be less closely monitored than day students', which may be a factor in accounting for their greater involvement in the perpetration of cyberbullying behavior.

Future research should be undertaken to examine the public/private divide more closely, such as with government oversight and the public coffers for public schools, as opposed to those more proximally concerned about this kind of behavior in the private schools, that is, parents and private donors. Such a discrepancy might well affect the type of responses put in place. Similarly, educators in public schools may experience differing pressures compared to educators in private schools. These pressures may also be exerted when dealing with cyberbullying, thus producing a different approach and focus of intervention.

7. Limitations

This study did not purport to be able to produce widely generalizable findings as its purpose was to examine the issue of cyberbullying and the potential for cyber-kindness at the local level for the benefit of one specific school community. Although some principles of participatory research were followed, it should be noted that the local community was not involved in the data collection, interpretation, and analyses phases, which would have been consistent with a true participatory research process (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995). The findings of this study are based on a relatively small non-random sample of students and educators and are, therefore, not generalizable to other schools or locations.

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