

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2023, Vol. 4, No. 6, 1849 – 1857

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.04.06.10>

Research Article

Understanding the Influence of Cyberbullying Among High School Students in Philippine Public Schools in the Post-Pandemic Era

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Article history:

Submission May 2023

Revised June 2023

Accepted June 2023

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ABSTRACT

This research sought to explore the effects of cyberbullying on high school students attending public schools in the Philippines. Given the widespread use of digital communication platforms and social media, cyberbullying has emerged as a significant societal concern. The study aims to determine the perceptions of senior high school students in the concept of bullying in the post pandemic era. The participants in this study consisted of 41 Grade 12 students from a public high school in the Philippines. Simple random sampling technique was used to select students which formed the research population. The study reveals that a significant number of SHS students possess knowledge about cyberbullying and its consequences. Among the coping strategies employed by these students include confiding with friends, emerges as a vital source of support in combating cyberbullying. Moreover, the collaboration between parents, students, and the school, along with the involvement of mental health professionals, enables effective communication and provision of assistance to students affected by cyberbullying. It is crucial for schools, teachers, parents, and students to increase their internet posting awareness and understanding of cyberbullying, while students should prioritize treating others kindly online and reporting cyberbullying. Parents should engage in open conversations and monitor their children's digital activities while teachers and principals must foster a safe environment through education, anti-cyberbullying policies, and victim support.

Keywords: Basic education, Cyberbullying, Post-pandemic era

Introduction

The advancement of technology has evidently brought significant changes in almost every aspect of human life, including communication, entertainment, healthcare, and

education. Through various digital devices and platforms, it is now possible to connect with others in real-time from anywhere in the world. The most popular forms of entertainment nowadays are streaming services, social media, and

How to cite:

Buguina, L. A. & Buguina, E. C. P. (2023). Understanding the Influence of Cyberbullying Among High School Students in Philippine Public Schools in the Post-Pandemic Era. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. 4(6), 1849 – 1857. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.04.06.10

video games. Remote consultations, telemedicine, and digital health records have greatly improved medical care and diagnosis thanks to advances in technology. Furthermore, it has a significant impact on education, transforming the way students learn and teachers teach.

One of the most notable impacts of technology on education is the way it has made information more accessible to students. With the rise of the internet and digital media, students can now access vast amounts of information on any topic, at any time. Technology has also made it possible for students to collaborate and learn from one another in new and innovative ways. Online discussion forums and social media platforms have created new opportunities for students to connect with one another and share ideas. This is especially apparent in the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced schools and educational institutions to shift from traditional face-to-face learning to online distance learning. The new normal in education has been made possible by the rapid advancements in technology. Learning management systems, online classrooms, and video conferencing tools have all contributed to the transformation of education, enabling remote learning and personalized learning experiences.

However, despite the numerous benefits of technology in education, there are some potential drawbacks that must be considered. Students may be more easily distracted and more likely to engage in non-educational activities such as social media or gaming instead of focusing on classwork (Rosen et al., 2011). Students may become dependent on devices and software to complete tasks rather than developing the skills necessary to complete assignments on their own (Kulesza et al., 2010). Furthermore, personal and sensitive information may be stolen or hacked, and students may be subjected to cyberbullying or other online threats (Gündüz et al., 2021).

Cyberbullying

Bullying can occur in a variety of settings, including schools, homes, and communities, and can take many forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, and cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place

through digital technology, such as social media, text messages, and online chat rooms. Common forms of cyberbullying include harassing, threatening, sending or posting humiliating messages or images, spreading rumors or gossip, and excluding or ostracizing others from online groups or activities (Hinduja S. & Patchin J.W., 2009; Kowalski et al., 2007).

People who engage in cyberbullying behavior in society are referred to as "cyber bullies," while those who are subjected to the behavior are referred to as "cyber victims." Cyberbullies, unlike traditional school bullies, do not need to be strong or fast. All they need is a smartphone or computer and the desire to terrorize. Anyone can be a cyberbully, and such people are usually unconcerned about confronting their victims in person. In fact, the anonymity of cyberbullying may cause students who normally would not bully in the tradition-sense to become a cyberbully (Poland, 2010).

Cyberbullying is a growing concern around the world, particularly in countries where students rely on digital technologies for communication and social interaction, as well as among adolescents who are more likely to be targeted (Selkie et al., 2016).

Kowalski et al. (2014) investigated the prevalence of cyberbullying among college-aged students in the United States. It was found that approximately 17% of the participants reported experiencing cyberbullying. Similar study was conducted among middle school students in China. Qing (2007), found that 19.6% of the student-participants reported experiencing cyberbullying. In a secondary school in England, Smith et al. (2008), found that approximately 10% of the student-participants reported experiencing cyberbullying. Similar studies conducted in other countries across Asia have reported similar rates of cyberbullying among students. In South Korea the most common forms of cyberbullying are verbal harassment and the spread of false rumors (Woochun, 2020). In India, research has shown that cyberbullying is particularly prevalent among female students, who are often targeted for their appearance or for speaking out on social issues.

Effects of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has serious negative psychological and psychosocial consequences for victims. Victims of cyberbullying can experience significant negative effects on their mental health and well-being, including increased rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide (Klomek et al., 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Victims may also face academic difficulties, social isolation, and physical health issues.

Gender also plays a role in social media use and cyberbullying problems (Kasahara et al., 2019). In present times, the society slowly introduces the acceptance of the LGBTQ society and gender equality among high school students but not all people have the same open mindset for such a change in the society. Students tend to attack victims of their own gender in order to show their reluctance to accept such change. The simplest way for them to express their opposing ideas about societal changes is to use social media and other digital platforms to express their opinion and to attack their victims. Shaming or bullying will be done through comments and messages that belong to the group. The victim will be easily affected by the number of harmful comments on social media and other platforms, which will have a negative impact on the victim's self-esteem and psychological well-being.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to determine the perceptions of senior high school students in the concept of bullying in the post pandemic era. Specifically, it sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. How do Senior High School Students perceive the idea of cyberbullying?

2. What are the coping mechanisms of Senior High School Students who experienced cyberbullying?
3. What do Senior High School students think do their parents do to help prevent cyberbullying?
4. What do Senior High School students think do their school do to help prevent cyberbullying?

Methods

The study utilized descriptive research design. The respondents of the study were 43 Grade 12 Senior High School students. The respondents are in enrolled in a public national high school in the Philippines for the Academic Year 2021-2022. Survey method was utilized in the study. The research instrument was researcher-made and was validated by experts in the field and pilot tested to determine the level of reliability. Next, the participants' responses for each individual question were added together to find the highest frequency of occurrence (i.e. the number of times that a particular response occurs). These responses to the questions, which are quantified, are then presented in percentage forms. This analysis is presented in tabular form. The researcher uses tables containing a variable and, in some cases, combines two or more variables in a single table. Weighted mean and frequency were used in analyzing the data collected.

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results, discussion, and the insights that the researchers have gathered through the process of conducting a survey questionnaire for the respondents.

1: How do Senior High School Students perceive the idea of cyberbullying?

Table 1. Senior High School Students Response to How do Senior High School Students Perceive the Idea of Cyberbullying.

#	SA	A	D	SD
1	27	15	1	0
2	8	28	6	1
3	40	3	0	0
4	27	16	0	0
5	22	19	11	0

Based on the data presented in Table 1 question 1.1, from among a group of 43 students, the majority, or 63% of them strongly believe that cyberbullying happens when someone uses online techniques to harass other people and chose the response "strongly agree", while 35% of the students chose "agree". The remaining 2% chose "disagree.". No students chose the response "strongly disagree". In question 1.2, 19% of the students strongly believe that cyberbullying is more harmful than traditional bullying and chose the response "strongly agree", while the majority, or 65% chose only "agree". Out of 43 students, 14% chose "disagree" which implies that they believe in the idea that traditional bullying can also lead to physical and mental health issues and the remaining 2% chose "strongly disagree". In question 1.3, majority or 93% of the respondents believes that cyberbullying can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression and chose "strongly agree", while 7% of the students chose "agree". No student contradicts the argument and chose not to answer "disagree and strongly disagree.". In question 1.4, majority or 63% of the students sees cyberbullying as a serious problem in schools and chose "strongly agree", while 37% of them chose "agree". However, no students chose to respond "disagree and strongly disagree."

Lastly, in question 1.5, 51% of the students chose "strongly agree", concluding that the issue in cyberbullying requires the cooperation of all members of the school community to be prevented and be addressed while 44% chose to respond "agree". The remaining 5% of the students showed no concern about this issue and chose "disagree". No students chose to respond "strongly disagree."

The study of Crosslin and Golman (2014) support this result because they asserted that cyberbullying is an increasing phenomenon in our society as technology advances. Cyberbullying is defined as repeated and unwanted harassment using digital technology, although several other definitions are discussed in the literature, including physical violence when using certain technologies such as webcams to online attacks while a clearer definition requires a better consensus, cyberbullying can have long-lasting effects on victims and it can occur. The shift to technological platforms during the pandemic even intensified the exposure of the students to online bullies which also needed serious attention. Further research is needed to understand the situation in the post pandemic era. While, traditional bullying often takes place in schoolyards, it is important to note that cyberbullying can occur 24/7 via text, email, social media, and other online platforms.

2: What are the coping mechanisms of Senior High School Students who experienced cyberbullying?

Table 2. Senior High School Students Response to What are the Coping Mechanism of Senior High School Students Who Experienced Cyberbullying.

#	SA	A	D	SD
6	12	26	5	0
7	6	21	14	2
8	14	21	7	1
9	10	23	8	2
10	8	11	16	8

According to the data presented in Table 2 question 2.6, among a group of 43 students, 28% strongly agreed that talking to a friend after being bullied is helpful. Majority or 60% also believes that talking to a friend is a big help to them and chose "agree". Moreover, 12% of the students do not need a friend to talk to after being cyberbullied and chose to "disagree". In

question 2.7, 14% are happy to seek for a new friend to forget their bad online experience and chose "strongly agree", at the same time, 49% of the students chose "agree". However, 33% of the students only wants to be alone to forget their bad online experience and chose "disagree" and the remaining 5% must be an introvert type of person and chose "strongly

disagree". The researcher found this small group of respondents answer to be alarming since the feeling of hurt is still felt by the person. This feeling of sadness may cause the victim of cyberbullying to think of himself as unworthy of unimportant because of the treatment he received. In question 2.8, 33% of the students chose "strongly agree". On the other hand, 49% chose "agree" due to the fact that the school guidance do not tolerate such issues but still, 33% chose "disagree" and 2% chose "strongly disagree" because of having a hard time to open-up their problems to teachers and other school members. In question 2.9, 23% of the students preferred to confront the one that cyberbully them and decided to chose "strongly agree", same as the majority or 53% of the students that chose "agree". Furthermore, 19% of the students do not want to add up the complications so that they chose "disagree" and the remaining 5% also just wanted to be silent and chose "strongly disagree". Lastly, in question 2.10, 19% of the students chose "strongly agree" and 25% chose "agree" since

cyberbullying uses online platforms to harass, the one that is being bullied can have the authority to block or ignore them. The other 37% that chose "disagree" and 19% that chose "strongly disagree" are the students who cannot ignore or avoid the cyberbullies.

Machackova et al. (2013), expressed that coping strategies are commonly defined as behavioral, emotional, and cognitive responses to stress. Coping helps eliminate or correct problems by neutralizing their negative qualities and helps individuals regulate their emotional reactions. These strategies intend to help them to fight off or reduce any feeling of hurt or unworthiness that might have been caused by the negative feeling of being bullied online. Coping studies have been conducted to classify coping strategies into different categories. While majority of the respondents have a way to deal with the pain of cyberbullying, some of them prefer to keep the hurt and deal with them by themselves. This is something that teachers and parents should look out to prevent any problems.

3: What do Senior High School Students think do their parents do to help prevent cyberbullying?

Table 3. Senior High School Students Response to What do Senior High School Students think do their Parents do to help Prevent Cyberbullying

#	SA	A	D	SD
11	20	14	6	3
12	10	17	12	4
13	9	24	8	2
14	15	19	6	3
15	9	12	19	3

As indicated on the data presented in Table 3 question 3.11, among a group of 43 students, the majority or 46% chose to response "strongly agree" and 33% chose "agree". This is because most of the parents and students have a great communication and end up being open to each other. The other 14% that chose "disagree" and 7% that chose "strongly disagree" are the students that are having a separated parent, no parents, or not really closed to their parents. Next in question 3.12, 23% chose "strongly agree" and the majority or 40% that chose "agree" are the students that have a strong relationship with their parents while

the 33% that chose "disagree" and the 9% that chose "strongly disagree" are the students that wants to have a privacy in their online friends towards their parents. In question 3.13, 21% of the students that chose "strongly agree" as well as the majority or 55% that chose "agree" are having a parent that knows whether their child is okay or not. On the contrary, 19% of the students that chose "disagree" and the 5% that chose "strongly disagree" do not think that their parents are always checking their feelings all the times. In question 3.14, 35% chose "strongly agree", while the majority which is 44% chose "agree". This means that most of the

respondents are open and honest to their parents in communicating to each other. The remaining 14% that chose “disagree” and the 4% that chose “strongly disagree” contradicts the argument. Lastly, in question 3.15, 21% of the students chose “strongly agree” and 28% chose “agree”, this happen always in a PTA meeting where teachers and parents discussed about cyberbullying. However, the majority or 44% that chose “disagree” and 7% that chose “strongly disagree” are the students that do not always see their parents and the teachers talking about cyberbullying.

The study of Elsaesser et al. (2017), showed that parents have a crucial influence even in discouraging adolescents to take risks. Throughout adolescence, young people are more connected with their peers like their

classmates and friends thinking they are their family and it is where they get affirmation and support. This can be observed in the Filipino culture where teenagers develop more closeness among their friends and peers thinking that the later understand them more than their parents belonging to a different generation. Although many prominent parenting styles have been suggested, two important aspects are relied upon. To reflect the quality of education: warmth and control. Two aspects of parenting-also called support and responsiveness-are related wherein young people are comfortable and accepted. Approved parental warmth provided to children are important in the form of care, warmth, and affection are proven to be associated with positive results.

4: What do Senior High School students think do their school do to help prevent cyberbullying?

Table 4. Senior High School Students Response to What do Senior High School students think do their School do to help Prevent Cyberbullying

#	SA	A	D	SD
16	13	25	5	0
17	19	23	1	0
18	7	31	5	0
19	7	21	14	1
20	32	7	2	2

According to the data presented in Table 4 question 4.16, among a group of 43 students, 30% chose “strongly agree”, while the majority or 58% chose “agree. The reason behind this is that the majority of students and their school work together with mental health professionals to offer assistance to students impacted or suffering from cyberbullying. However, 12% chose “disagree”, this is due to the fact that they don't feel that their school is collaborating with mental health professionals to offer assistance. No students chose to response “strongly disagree”. In question 4.17, 44% chose “strongly agree” as well as the majority or 54% that chose “agree” believes that their school should conduct programs which focuses on teaching student empathy and respect to others. While the school is already doing its best to address cyberbullying through various programs, reinforcement of such attempts should still be done

to make sure that the interventions are encompassing and relevant now that we are in the post pandemic era. Meanwhile, 20% chose “disagree” and the reason behind this is that they thought the school didn't offer any programs aimed at teaching student empathy and respect for others. In question 4.18, 16% chose “strongly agree” and the majority or 74% that chose “agree”, think that their school uses professional development days to train staff about cyberbullying. Conversely, 12% of the students chose “disagree” because their school didn't used any professional development to train staff. In question 4.19, 16% chose “strongly agree” and the majority or 49% of the students chose “agree”. The reason behind this is that, their school have a zero-tolerance policy for cyberbullying. This response of the students means that they are aware that the school is se-

rious in addressing problems that may adversely affect their students. Interestingly, the remaining 33% chose “disagree” and 2% chose “strongly disagree”. This is because they perceive and thought that their school does not enforce a zero-tolerance policy for cyberbullying, causing them to feel that the school is still tolerating this type of behavior. Lastly, In question 4.20, the majority or 74% chose “strongly agree” and at the same time, 16% chose “agree”. The reason behind this is that their school is taking cyberbullying seriously. Moreover, 5% chose “disagree” and another 5% chose “strongly agree”. This is because, school did not treat the problem of cyberbullying with the necessary level of seriousness.

Varying perceptions on the idea of cyberbullying and how schools deal with them are evident from the results of the study. However, aspects like strategies which includes monthly program for anti-cyberbullying campaigns and intensified efforts of the school administration, teachers and parents are among the things that may be done to increase awareness on the fight against cyberbullying.

A school-wide approach considers the style and quality of the school's leadership and management practices, the quality and delivery of the curriculum, playground activities, the quality of supervision, and formal, agreed-upon procedures for dealing with bullying incidents. However, clear evidence that a school-wide approach prevents bullying is limited. McGrath (2006) explained that these approaches have reduced bullying to some extent, however only some programs have been proven to be effective in reducing cases of bullying even citing minimal or no improvement. While there is enough evidence that supports the idea that school intervention provide assistance in helping reduce cyberbullying, it should be noted that some researches contradict this statement citing that the whole-school approach should not be considered anymore. Tangen and Campbell (2010) argued that there maybe good outcomes from whole school approach, nonetheless the result can barely be identified as to when and how the interventions will be successful.

Conclusion

1. Senior high school students are becoming increasingly aware of the seriousness of cyberbullying and its potential impact on victims that can lead to emotional distress, social isolation, and even physical harm. They understand that it can take many forms, such as harassment, intimidation, and spreading rumors, and can occur through various online platforms, including social media, texting, and email. Senior high school students also perceive cyberbullying as a violation of their privacy and personal space, as it can happen anywhere and at any time. They may feel that the anonymity provided by online platforms makes it easier for bullies to target victims without fear of consequences. Overall, senior high school students view cyberbullying as a serious issue that requires attention and action from both individuals and society as a whole. They may recognize the importance of promoting digital citizenship and online safety to prevent and address cyberbullying.
2. Getting help from a mental health professional, seeking support from trusted friends and family, and engaging in self-care activities such as exercise, meditation, or hobbies that bring them joy and relaxation are some common coping mechanisms for senior high school students who have experienced cyberbullying. Remember that cyberbullying can have serious and lasting effects on mental health, so it's important to get help and support.
3. Some common strategies that parent use to prevent cyberbullying include monitoring their children's online activities, having open and honest conversations about responsible internet use, and teaching them how to report and block inappropriate behavior online.
4. Schools can help prevent cyberbullying by creating policies that forbid and penalize such actions, educating students on how to behave responsibly and practice good digital citizenship, and offering assistance and resources for those who experience cyberbullying.

Recommendation

1. Promote awareness and education. Schools should prioritize educating students about cyberbullying, its impact on mental health and school performance, and strategies to prevent and combat cyberbullying. This can be achieved through classroom discussions, workshops and other educational programs.
2. Develop effective policies and programs. Schools should develop policies and programs to address cyberbullying.
3. Promote responsible use of social media: Schools can promote responsible use of social media among students by educating them on online safety and etiquette.

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