



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

The Social Science Journal

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/soscij



The cycle of cyberbullying: Some experience required

John Chapin^{a,*}, Grace Coleman^b

^a Pennsylvania State University, USA

^b Crisis Center North, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 25 September 2016

Received in revised form

29 December 2016

Accepted 6 March 2017

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Cyberbullying

Risk-perception

Optimistic bias

Victim blaming

ABSTRACT

Findings from a survey of 1,602 middle school and high school students suggests despite heavy use of social media, adolescents believe they are less likely than peers to be victims of cyberbullying and less likely to bully others. The results suggest a cycle of perceptions and behaviors: victims of cyberbullying bully others. Adolescents who believe they are likely to be bullied acknowledge they are likely to continue bullying others and are also likely to blame victims for “bringing it on themselves.”

© 2017 Western Social Science Association. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2016) define bullying as unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Attacking someone physically or verbally, making threats, and spreading rumors are all forms of bullying. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology (devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets, as well as social media sites and text messages). Rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, mean text messages or emails, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles are some examples of cyberbullying. The U.S. Uniform Crime Report (BJS, 2015) indicates around half of teens have been the victims of cyber bullying, but only 10% tell a parent and few cyber bullying incidents

are reported to law enforcement; one in 10 adolescents or teens have had embarrassing or damaging pictures taken of themselves without their permission, often using cell phone cameras; about one in five teens have posted or sent sexually suggestive or nude pictures of themselves to others; cyberbullying victims are more likely to have low self-esteem and to consider suicide (BJS, 2015).

On the perpetration side, a recent study of parent/child dyads (Barlett & Fennel, 2016) found parents' perceptions of their child's Internet activity does not match the actual amount of time spent online and cyberbullying behaviors. Monitoring does seem to reduce bullying though, as ignorance was positively related to cyberbullying behavior. Parental involvement also seems to play a role on the victim side. A study of 2,000 high school students found strong parental relationships and friends at school were more effective at limiting the harmful effects of cyberbullying than restrictions of Internet use (Davis & Koepke, 2016). A large scale survey of 23,000 Canadian adolescents confirmed that all kinds of resources, including financial ones, predict cyberbullying and can offset the consequences for victims (Napoletano, Elgar, Saul, & Dirks, 2016).

* Corresponding author at: Penn State University, 100 University Drive, Monaca, PA 15061, USA.

E-mail address: jrc11@psu.edu (J. Chapin).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2017.03.004>

0362-3319/© 2017 Western Social Science Association. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the cycle of cyberbullying from victim to perpetrator, using optimistic bias as a theoretical framework.

2. Optimistic bias and violence

Optimistic bias (Weinstein, 1980) is the belief that bad things happen to other people. The concept is grounded in health psychology and most frequently documented within health contexts, like skin cancer (Bryant, Zucca, Brozek, Rock, & Bonevski, 2015), environmental hazards (Flanagan, Marvinney, & Zheng, 2015), and healthy eating habits (Sproesser, Klusmann, Schupp, & Renner, 2015). Crime and violence contexts have been explored more recently. College students believe they are less likely than peers to be sexually assaulted (Untied & Dulaney, 2015). This is a classic example of optimistic bias. Similar results were found regarding dating violence (Chapin, Strimel, & Coleman, 2014), burglary (Joshi & Carter, 2013), even office data security (Bullee, Montoya, Pieters, Junger, & Hartel, 2015). People act on their perceptions, so understanding skewed risk perception is important. This is well documented within the optimistic bias literature: People who believe they are less likely to get skin cancer are more likely to tan without sun screen; people who believe their data is secure at work take less precautions; people who believe they are unlikely to be sexually assaulted also take fewer precautions.

2.1. Optimistic bias and experience

A number of predictors of optimistic bias have been explored over the years, including education (Flanagan et al., 2015; Singh & Jha, 2013) and perceived expertise (Chapin et al., 2014; Zeeb & Zeeb, 2013), but the best established is experience (Greenberg, Dyen, & Elliott, 2013; Raptou, Galanopoulos, Katrakilidis, & Mattas, 2012; Sargeant, Majowicz, Sheth, & Edge, 2010; Trumbo, Lueck, Marlatt, & Peek, 2011; Wolfers, de Zwart, & Kok, 2011). For example, a college student who believes she will not be robbed is more likely to leave her dorm room unlocked. Once she is robbed, the optimistic bias is reduced, and she begins locking her door, even for quick trips to the restroom. The studies above consistently document this pattern in a wide range of contexts, including communicable diseases, smoking, and natural disasters. Greenberg et al. (2013) interviewed over 1,000 people living potential disaster areas. Participants who experienced a natural disaster first-hand, were taking precautions for future disasters. Participants with no experience, exhibited optimistic bias and were taking no precautions.

2.2. Victim blaming

Optimistic bias is the belief that bad things happen to other people. One way to maintain this belief is blaming the victim. People who get cancer smoke more than I do; people who get speeding tickets are worse drivers than I am, etc. (Chapin & Chirico, 2003). Victim blaming is well documented in sexual assault studies (Rich, Utely, Janke, & Moldoveanu, 2010; Taylor, 2009). For instance, male

college students do not attend sexual assault workshops, because they blame women for their own victimization (Rich et al., 2010). Men convicted of domestic violence often blame their victims for putting them the situation (Armenti & Babcock, 2016). The study also concluded that mandated group therapy can be counter-productive, as other group members often reinforce that using violence in relationships is acceptable. Even unconscious women are blamed for their own sexual assaults, whether they are sleeping, intoxicated, or drugged (Heyes, 2016).

Based on the preceding review of the literature, the following hypotheses are posited:

H1. Adolescents believe they are less likely than others to become the victim of cyberbullying.

H2. Adolescents believe they are less likely than others to cyberbully others.

H3. As optimistic bias about victimization is related to optimistic bias about perpetration.

H3. As experience with bullying increases, optimistic bias decreases.

RQ1. What is the relationship between optimistic bias and victim blaming?

RQ2. What is the relationship between optimistic bias and social media?

3. Method

3.1. Procedures and participants

Participants were recruited in the USA through school-based programs about bullying offered by a Pennsylvania women's center during the 2015–2016 school year. Grades seven through 12 from multiple school districts were included. Survey instruments were completed prior to the sessions to avoid skewing the data. Post-tests were collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the presenter/presentation, but were not used for this analysis. Students could attend the presentation while opting out of the study, but none did so. Students could also choose not to answer individual items. The most commonly skipped items dealt with demographics (169 students did not disclose their gender, and 318 students did not disclose their race). The sample (N = 1,602) was 51% female, with an average age of 13 (range = 9 (middle school) to 18 (high school)). These age ranges were selected, because they represent the most common reported cases of bullying (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Consistent with the demographics of the region, 80% of the participants were Caucasian, 9% African-American, 2% Hispanic, 2% Asian and the remaining identified as mixed-race or "other."

3.2. Materials

Optimistic bias was measured with a standard instrument (Weinstein, 1989): "Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology (cell phones, computers, social media sites, text messages, and websites). Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4761892>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4761892>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)