

The Effects of Social Learning and Internet Ethics of College Students Engaging in Cyberbullying Behavior in Taiwan

Hui-Ling Yang, Shih Chien University, Taiwan

Wei-Pang Wu, Kun Shan University, Taiwan

ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying is a major problem among our school-age population. The growing number of studies suggests that cyberbullying can often cause serious academic, emotional, social, and safety issues for its peer victims. The purpose of current study is to examine the nature of respondents' experience of cyberbullying and determine independently the impact of social learning and internet ethics on cyberbullying behavior among college students in Taiwan. The preliminary analysis is of a survey data collected from 359 undergraduate students in south of Taiwan through convenient sampling. The results of this study provide support for the hypotheses and explore the effect of social learning and perception of internet ethics on cyberbullying behavior among college students. Finding suggests that college students with lower level of social learning and with higher level of internet ethics will have less cyberbullying behavior than those with higher social learning and lower internet ethics.

KEYWORDS

Cyberbullying, Internet Ethics, Social Learning

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information technology has led to the high percentage of internet users all over the world and deeply transformed human's culture and values. Recently, an internet usage survey in Asia released by the Internet World Stats (2019), reported that the internet use rate of Taiwan was 92.8% ranked third in Asia, with South Korea ranked first (95.9%) and Japan ranked second (93.5%). almost all adults ages 16-34 (99%) were recent internet users. According to a survey on broadband usage from the Taiwan Network Information (2018), the individuals aged 12 and above who have used internet has reached 82%, and approximately 99% of college students (aged 20-29) are internet users. Meanwhile, 100% of college student users frequently use the social media. The survey reported there is no difference of internet usage on gender. In just a few decades, internet usages have managed to permeate our society and change our lives. The study of Chien (2017) examined 402 college students' cyberbullying behavior and found that college students were most likely to engage in online activities that are perceived as providing enjoyment, such as social networking (86.6%) and playing games (45.5%). Unfortunately, although the majority of reports indicated positive experiences on the internet, there are increasing reports of college students using these technologies to post damaging

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text or images to bully their peers or engage in other aggressive behavior (MacDonald & Roberts, 2010). Mason (2008) mentioned that the increasing access to new technology can increase students being harassed through electronic communication, another words as cyberbullying. Given damaging issues found to be associated with cyberbullying in an age of technology, it has become necessary for both educators and government to understand and consider how the cyberbullying behavior has evolved in the significant number of college students, engage in, witness, or experience cyberbullying through online interactions with others in order to prevent cyberbullying among them.

With regard to cyberbullying, most published researches have mainly centered their investigations on the demographic differences in gender, education level, and the kinds of related internet activities (MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010; Chien, 2017). Some examined the frequency of being bullied (Mason, 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004) and the common media were used for cyberbullying (Li, 2007; Kowalski & Limber, 2007). Applying social learning and internet ethics to cyberbullying behavior is a new line of research and not much has been done. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of social learning and internet ethics on cyberbullying behavior among college students.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

A corresponding definition of cyberbullying is “an individual or a group will fully use information and communication involving electronic technologies to facilitate deliberate and repeated harassment or threat to another individual or group by sending or posting cruel text and/or graphics using technological means” (Mason, 2008; Li, 2007). Cyberbullying statistics around the world reveal alarming facts about virtual harassment, its impact, and the many different forms it can take. The bulk of the literature continues to focus on the teenage school environment. For example, Ybarra and Mitchell’s (2004) research found 7% of adolescents reported they have been cyber bullied, compared to 14% in Australia (Campbell, 2005) and 24.9% in Canada (Chu, 2008). To date, limited but growing articles have examined cyberbullying during college years (Reason & Rankin, 2006; MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010). MacDonald and Roberts-Pittman (2010) indicated that 38% of college students reported knowing someone who had been cyberbullied, 21.9% reported having been cyberbullied, and 8.6% reported cyberbullying someone else. More recently, a survey was released from Cyberbullying Research Center in 2016, which has been collecting data on the subject since 2002. This study surveyed a sample of 5700 middle and high school students between the ages of 12 and 17 in the United States. Approximately 34% of the students reported experiencing cyberbullying in their lifetimes. The same survey conducted by the same organization in 2019, found that school bullying rates increased by 35% from 2016 to 2019.

Researchers have learned that cyberbullying often occurs during school age when an individual is of primary school, with behaviors continuing into higher education (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Prior researchers have demonstrated that people tend to behave with greater hostility, aggressive responses, and nonconforming behaviors through using of and preferences for an array of established and emerging technologies and technology based tools (McKenna, & Bargh, 2000). Another theoretical model that can possibly explain cyberbullying is disinhibited behavioral effects on the computer mediated communication among students (Suler, 2004; Tresca, 1998). Few studies test on cyberbullying perpetration have found the support for those who with low self-control are more likely to engage in cyberbullying perpetration (Chui & Chan, 2013, Li et al. 2015). The work of Li et al. (2015) has also found youth’s perceptions that peers are behaving similarly and they perceived a positive relationship between social learning and cyberbullying perpetration.

Regarding to Social learning theory, one of the important research is Bandura theory (1973) which explains people learn through observing others’ behavior, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors. Social learning theory is relevant to this research in that it helps to explain the human behavior of cyberbullying. When college students are learned from observing other students modeling bullying behavior, they in turn are more likely to imitate that behavior and exhibit bullying traits themselves. It

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