

Chapter 43

Support for Cyberbullying Victims and Actors: A Content Analysis of Facebook Groups Fighting Against Cyberbullying

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the post content and the emotions reflected in 10 open Facebook groups associated with cyberbullying, with the highest number of group members. Automated extraction via Facebook API was used to gather the data. Altogether, 313 Facebook posts were extracted and coded for content analysis. Sentiment analysis and parts of speech (POS) tagging was used to explore the emotions reflected in the content. The study findings revealed that (1) the content of the posts was mainly opinion-based in comparison to expressing personal experiences of cyberbullying. This indicated Facebook groups require stronger moderation due to digression of topics discussed. (2) Only 3% of posts in this study contained advice about cyberbullying. (3) Sentiment analysis of the posts showed that the Facebook groups focused on cyberbullying, reflected more positive sentiments in their posts. This is encouraging to cyberbullying victims to share information on cyberbullying. The findings in this study lay the foundations for more research into support for cyberbullying victims.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6307-9.ch043

INTRODUCTION

Social media use has highlighted the issue of cyberbullying amongst society today, especially amongst young people. Between the years 2016-2017, Ditch the label (2017) surveyed 10,020 young people aged between 12-20 years old about bullying. Seven percent of young people surveyed experienced cyberbullying on a constant basis. Ten percent of young people experienced cyberbullying often.

With the younger generation growing up with the Internet, they are finding new ways to interact with technology. The field of Technoethics “recognizes technology as an intricate part of societal development which fosters change and new ethical considerations to address” (Luppicini, 2008, p. 2). The rise of cyberbullying raises concerns especially amongst parents, school staff and teachers about the ethical use of technology by young people.

Tokunaga (2010) defines cyberbullying as “any behaviour performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others.” The definition mentions two criteria of traditional bullying, stated by Olweus (1993) which include repetition and intentionality. The definition of school bullying by Olweus (1993, p. 9) is that “A student is being bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students.”

Repetition is the repetitive nature of bullying, in that the bully can strike over and over again. The victim is on a heightened sense of worry over when the bully will strike next. Intentionality refers to the deliberate intention of the bully to harm the victim.

One of Olweus’s (1993) criteria for bullying- imbalance of power is not discussed in detail in Tokunaga’s (2010) definition. This highlights the difference between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, which is defined in Tokunaga, (2010) definition. The imbalance of power focuses on the feeling of a loss of power by the victim due to difficulty in defending against bullying/cyberbullying events (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell & Tippett, 2008).

A number of researchers (Langos, 2012; Menesini, Nocentini, & Palladino, 2015; Slonje, Smith & Frisen, 2013; Vaillancourt, McDougall, Hymel, Krygsmen, Miller, Stiver & Davis, 2008) consensually discuss the roles of repetition, intentionality and imbalance of power as criteria for both traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Some researchers (Langos, 2014; Olweus, 1993; Menesini, Nocentini, Palladino, Frisén, Berne, Ortega-Ruiz & Naruskov, 2012; Nocentini, Calmaestra J, Schultze-Krumbholz, Scheithauer, Ortega & Menesini, 2010) also highlight two additional criteria specifically identifying cyberbullying incidents: anonymity and public versus private. Due to cyberbullying taking place online, the cyberbullies’ identity is anonymous and therefore the victim can feel powerless and paranoid when communicating with people around them. If the cyberbullying attack takes place on a platform where the information is public, the attack is in the public domain. This causes stress for the victim because the impact of the attack is so prevalent for people.

There have been debates on whether the two criteria (anonymity and public versus private) are required to define a cyberbullying attack. Previous studies such as (Boyer, 2015; Menesini et al., 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010) have suggested that the two criteria are more linked to the severity of attack rather than the identification of a cyberbullying attack. Cyberbullying exists in various forms, e.g. cyberstalking, harassment, flaming, sexting, impersonation, trickery (Willard, 2007), posting/commenting on embarrassing photos or videos, aggressive messaging, and the development of hostile websites (Law, Shapka, Domene, & Gagné, 2012).

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