

Chapter 24

In–Person Video and Peer–Delivered Approaches to Cyberbullying Prevention

Ashley N. Doane

Chowan University, USA

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the researcher evaluated the short-term efficacy of two theory of reasoned action-based cyberbullying prevention programs in college student samples using different methods of delivery. In Study 1 (N = 335), immediately following a cyberbullying video prevention presentation during class, attitudes and injunctive norms regarding all four types of cyberbullying (i.e., malice, deception, public humiliation, and unwanted contact), intentions to engage in malice, willingness to engage in malice and deception, and empathy toward victims for three forms of cyberbullying, improved. Most differences remained at one-month follow-up. In Study 2 (N = 80), the author evaluated a live skit-based version of the Study 1 prevention program in a voluntary event setting. Attitudes and injunctive norms toward malice, deception, and public humiliation and intentions and willingness to engage in malice decreased, whereas cyberbullying knowledge increased pre- to post-test. Both video-based and peer-led cyberbullying programs may benefit adults. Workplace implications are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Although definitions vary, cyberbullying has been defined as “an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, *using electronic forms of contact*, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself” (Smith et al., 2008, p. 376). Initial cyberbullying studies focused on youth; however, recent research has demonstrated that cyberbullying continues to be a problem into adulthood (e.g., Kowalski, Toth, & Morgan, 2018). Studies of college students have reported prevalence rates for cyberbullying victimization ranging from 9% to 95% (e.g., Crosslin & Crosslin, 2014; Doane, Kelley, Chiang, & Padilla, 2013; Phizacklea & Sargisson, 2018; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Wang, Yogeewaran, Andrews, Hawi, & Sibley, 2019; Zalaquett & Chatters, 2014), and self-reported rates of

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having perpetrated cyberbullying range from 5% to 82% (e.g., Crosslin & Crosslin, 2014; Doane et al., 2013; MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010; Phizacklea & Sargisson, 2018; Varghese & Pistole, 2017; Zalaquett & Chatters, 2014). Although differences between studies in the definitions and measurement of cyberbullying make study comparisons difficult, clearly, cyberbullying is a pervasive problem among adults.

Traditional (i.e., face-to-face) bullying research among adults has largely focused on workplace bullying (e.g., Dal Cason, Casini, & Hellemans, 2020). Only recently have studies begun to address cyberbullying in the workplace context and its consequences (e.g., Muhonen, Jönsson, & Bäckström, 2017). Although more research is needed in this context, initial studies have found that workplace cyberbullying victimization is associated with negative workplace consequences (e.g., turnover, counterproductive work behaviors, lower job satisfaction, stressors in the workplace, and mental well-being) (Keskin, Akgün, Ayar, & Kayman, 2018; Kowalski et al., 2018; Vranjes, Baillien, Vandebosch, Erreygers, & De Witte, 2018). Given the potential seriousness of cyberbullying, prevention programs that are designed to increase awareness of cyberbullying and reduce these behaviors are clearly warranted. Unfortunately, few cyberbullying prevention programs have been developed, and even fewer target adults (for a review, see Doane, Kelley, & Pearson, 2016).

BACKGROUND

Theoretical Explanations for Cyberbullying Perpetration

Cyberbullying prevention programs should be informed by theories. Both Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and a revised version of this theory, Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), have been applied to explain cyberbullying perpetration. For example, Doane, Pearson, and Kelley (2016) applied an expanded version of TRA to the prediction of four types of cyberbullying perpetration: malice (e.g., being mean to someone electronically), deception (e.g., lying about oneself electronically), public humiliation (e.g., posting embarrassing information about someone electronically), and unwanted contact (e.g., trying to get information from someone electronically that they did not want to give). TRA states that intentions to engage in a behavior predict behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Intentions are preceded by attitudes toward a behavior (i.e., the degree to which a person views a behavior as favorable or unfavorable), perceived norms (i.e., injunctive norms, that is, the degree to which a person approves or disapproves of the behavior, and descriptive norms, how much a person perceives that others engage in the behavior). Because previous research demonstrated that empathy was associated with cyberbullying perpetration (e.g., Brewer & Kerslake, 2015; Schultze-Krumbholz & Scheithauer, 2009; Steffgen, König, Pfetsch, & Melzer, 2011), empathy toward victims was included in the expanded TRA model as a distal predictor of each TRA construct (i.e., empathy→attitudes→intentions→behavior; empathy→perceived injunctive norms→intentions→behavior; empathy→perceived descriptive norms→intentions→behavior).

TRA models accounted for a substantial portion of the variance in both intentions and perpetration of each of the four types of cyberbullying behaviors (i.e., malice, deception, public humiliation, and unwanted contact; Doane et al., 2014). Across all four models/forms of cyberbullying, less empathy toward cyberbullying victims predicted more positive cyberbullying attitudes and higher injunctive and descriptive norms. In turn, more favorable attitudes toward cyberbullying predicted higher intentions to cyberbully. As expected, higher intentions predicted perpetration of all four forms of cyberbullying

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