The Analysis of Cyberbullying in Elementary Schools and Teachers’ Instructional Responses

By

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Abstract

Although technology provides numerous benefits to young people, it also has a “dark side”, as it can be used for harm, not only by some adults but also by the young people themselves. Email, texting, chat rooms, mobile phones, mobile phone cameras, web sites and social media sites can and are being used by young people to bully peers. It is now a global problem with many incidents reported worldwide. This growing problem has as yet not received the attention it deserves in our general school curriculums but some teachers are going above and beyond to implement instructional strategies to educate our students on cyberbullying and its consequences. This research paper explores: definitional issues, the instructional strategies that some teachers are using within the parameters of the formal curriculum guidelines, the implications of the cyberbullying curriculum, the potential consequences of cyberbullying, and discussing possible prevention and intervention strategies.

Key Words:

Cyberbullying, instructional, responses, teachers, strategies, bullying, curriculum, school, boards, education, educators, and social media.
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction to the Research Study

Bullying has always been prevalent in Ontario schools but more recently, cyberbullying specifically has become a serious concern. The common perception is that cyberbullying happens after school hours or when students are not at school and have access to the Internet (RCMP, 2015). Yet, a significant number of Canadian students in the 21st century not only have access to Smart phones, tablets, computers, and laptops that can all be connected to the World Wide Web, but they commonly use these devices during the school day. Although these resources can be beneficial and can aid in the learning process, they can also be used as tools for bullying.

Cyberbullying affects victims in different ways than traditional bullying. It can follow a victim everywhere 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from school, to the mall and all the way into the comfort of their home - usually safe from traditional forms of bullying (RCMP, 2014). There are many different characteristics of cyberbullying, which allows it to manifest in different ways such as: spreading to many people very quickly, can be done anonymously, remain posted online for an indefinite period of time, and have a negative effect on school climate even when it originates off school property (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). The growing number of online users creates a platform for cyberbullying. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are just a few examples of social media sites that allow people to post statuses, updates, pictures, and videos about themselves. Another common way that cyberbullying occurs is through webcam chats. Bullies thrive off of this information that is being posted and use it against their bullying victims. I
believe that teachers can have a profound impact on the lives of their students. A school should be a safe learning environment for all students. I believe that if cyberbullying is tainting the environment, teachers and educators can assist in teaching students proper online protocol, which would make our schools will be a safer place.

Cyberbullying may happen on school property if devices are being implemented into classrooms and not being used strictly for education purposes. Anytime our students have access to the Internet, there is always the possibility for cyberbullying. Another part of the problem is that teachers feel that it is not their responsibility to handle cyberbullying if they are not asking students to use the Internet in their class (Hess, 2011). Hess explains, “Another part of the problem is that students are not likely to report cyberbullying to their teachers because of schools’ zero tolerance for bullying policies.

1.1 Research Problem Statement

Cyberbullying is a recurring problem within our schools and I believe that it is very important for students to learn about cyberbullying and what the repercussions could be. A large part of the problem is the reactive versus preventive nature of school responses to the prevalence of cyberbullying. Schools have a zero tolerance when it comes to bullying and according to (Krashinsky, 2014), research proves that students are less likely to report cyberbullying incidents to their teachers because of these policies, “the research found that teachers are far down the list of people that students consider turning to for help when faced with online harassment”. Schools and teachers feel as though they do not need to partake in preventative measures against cyberbullying because they are not asking students to use devices in their classes. When in fact, using devices and education applications within a classroom environment is becoming more
predominant. There are a few teachers who are implementing certain instructional strategies into their formal curriculum to educate their students about cyberbullying and the possible repercussions that come with cyberbullying.

As teachers in the 21st century, I believe that it is our responsibility to educate our students about cyberbullying and the consequences that can occur if students partake in such activities. Unfortunately, there have been many Canadian cyberbullying cases and the number of cases is not on the decline (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). One of these cases that was recently in the media in Canada was the Amanda Todd case. Amanda was severely bullied over something she posted online which led to her eventual death (HeadsUp, "The Amanda Todd Story", 2013). Students’ exposure to the media is another factor when addressing cyberbullying. The media has a large influence on our youth, so if the media is portraying cyberbullying with a negative connotation, our youth may realize how severe the consequences may be (RCMP, 2015). Through my research, I want to learn how teachers are addressing cyberbullying as part of their formal curriculum.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

In view of this problem, the purpose of this study is to learn how teachers are incorporating cyberbullying strategies into their teaching lessons. Throughout my study, I find teachers who are teaching students the consequences of cyberbullying, and how it affects students in the classroom and outside of the classroom. Recent research shows that although cyberbullying takes place during school hours as well as outside them, Canadian students report that they would least likely to report cyberbullying to their
teachers. In part this is because of “zero tolerance” bullying policies in their schools. Another part of the problem is that teachers view cyberbullying as a problem that is outside of their purview of their responsibilities (Education World, "Cyberbullying: What Teachers Can Do", 2015).

Students who are victims of cyberbullying suffer in the classroom because they are afraid to come face-to-face with their bully (Campbell, 2005). Cyberbullying is done behind screens and not face-to-face so once cyberbullying occurs, students are afraid to see their bully in person. Students post pictures and videos without thinking about the fact that it will be available online indefinitely for anyone to view (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). Once they are online anyone can see them and most of the time, even if you delete it, the damage is already done. People can send links of pages, videos, and pictures to anyone with the click of a button, so even if you don’t know a person, they may know you through your pictures, pages, or videos you have posted. This study is important because teachers are using the Internet as a tool for teaching, both in the classroom for research and for homework. In addition, some teachers do have blogs or twitter accounts for their classes. If students are going onto these sites for school, they are most likely using it for personal reasons as well.

1.3 Research Questions

Throughout my research and qualitative study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers who are implementing cyberbullying instructional strategies into their curriculum. The main research question guiding this study is: How is a small sample of elementary school teachers addressing cyberbullying as part of their teaching
practice? In response to these lessons, what outcomes do these teachers observe for students? What challenges do teachers experience as they attempt to address cyberbullying as a component of their formal curriculum?

1.4 Background of the Researcher

Bullying has always been common in schools. When I was in grade school, playground bullying was most prevalent. Students, including myself, were teased and picked on for things such as being too short, or too tall, or being a different culture or race. But now with all the technological advancements that students have access to, there are many reasons that one person can be picked on and bullied. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat all allow for people of all ages to transfer data (including pictures and videos) quickly to anyone who has access to the Internet. Most people, including myself, have used these social media outlet to connect with people all over the world, but we do not always think about the consequences. Once you use this social media outlet to send a picture, video, or share a link, you can never get it back. As stated previously, once something is posted online, it is there indefinitely (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). It will be floating around on the Internet for people to access.

One reason that this topic is so important to me is because I have seen the impact that cyberbullying can have on teens. I work closely with a group of teens every day after school and with the growing Internet age, cyberbullying is becoming more prevalent in each of their lives. Some students do not even realize that they are partaking in cyberbullying as they just see their posts as harmful teasing. What is not evident is that
this “harmful teasing” effects people in different ways and what may seem harmless to you, may change a person’s life (RCMP, 2015).

I have witnessed many students fall victim to cyberbullying, but I have also witnessed students who know the consequences to cyberbullying and know how to avoid becoming a victim. One day I was volunteering in a grade 6 classroom and the teacher began to give a lesson on cyberbullying during her language block. She taught a creative lesson about cyberbullying and incorporated common social media outlets that her students had experience using. She showed the students examples of cyberbullying and discussed the possible outcomes. The students were involved in the discussion and brainstormed the positive and negative attributes to cyberbullying. This is an example of a teacher who believes that cyberbullying should be incorporated into the classroom, as she believes cyberbullying can be detrimental to a students learning process and can diminish progress. Teachers have an impact on the time that students spend online. If they are assigning homework that is research based, their students are going online. These students need to know the dangers that can be on the Internet, including cyberbullying.

1.5 Preview of Whole (Overview)

To respond to my research questions, I will be conducting a qualitative research study using purposeful sampling. I will interview 3 teachers about their instructional strategies for incorporating cyberbullying lessons into their classrooms. Chapter 1 includes the introduction and purpose of the study, the research questions, as well as how I came to be involved in this topic and study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature.
I used to support my own findings. Chapter 3 provides the methodology and procedure used in this study including information about the sample participants and data collection instruments. Chapter 4 identifies the participants in the study and describes the data as it addresses the research question. Chapter 5 includes limitations of the study, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and further reading and study. References and a list of appendixes follow at the end.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This study explores the question, how does cyberbullying affect students in the classroom. Unfortunately, many teachers do not get involved in cyberbullying cases because most of the time, cyberbullying happens on personal time and not school hours. Young people across our country are confronted with a new challenge, one that many parents, educators and policy makers often have great difficulty understanding. Bullying, which was once something youth encountered at school and on the playground, has now made its way into our homes by way of the Internet and electronic devices. Today, in addition to the social, verbal and physical abuse many students are already forced to endure, cyberbullying is yet another form of harassment that continues to victimize students. In this chapter I review the research in the areas of cyberbullying by looking at research focused on manifestations and prevalence of cyberbullying, outcomes and effects of cyberbullying, teacher and school responses to cyberbullying, and effective instructional responses to cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying involves the use of electronic devices such as computers and cell phones to intimidate, embarrass, threaten or harass a person or group (Brazeau & Jaffer, 2012, p.11). Most frightening for many victims are the videos, photos and stories posted in social media that can be almost impossible to remove from the Internet and may potentially be seen by countless viewers around the world. As many youth and adults carry their mobile phones and other information and communication technologies wherever they go, cyberbullying can be difficult to escape. If the evidence of their having
been bullied remains available online, it can continue to haunt a victim well after the cyberbullying has stopped.

The topic of cyberbullying has been researched and reported by many writers, researchers, educators, and governments and has become a phenomenon that can be harmful to our youth. There is an abundance of academic articles, books, and websites published to bring awareness to cyberbullying and to assist victims of cyberbullying. The articles, books, and websites reviewed in this literature review, speak to the strengths of these researchers and depict how the combination of this research sheds light onto cyberbullying. Research on the topic of cyberbullying is becoming more inclusive and prevalent as this social issue becomes more significant.

Research shows that there are many different characteristics of a cyberbully, not one specific characteristic that teachers can target when implementing cyberbullying tactics into their curriculum; “there is no single ‘profile’ for children who bully” (Kowalski, 2008, p. 29). Kowalski (2008) researches the prevalence of cyberbullying in schools and describes cyberbullying as, “a menace that needs to be dealt with in a school setting so children can feel safe using the Internet to learn (p. 13). Kowalski’s research shows that teachers’ attitudes toward cyberbullying has changed over the past few years, “Teachers are now taking cyberbullying more seriously as it is affecting students’ learning inside the classroom…Although not all teachers are implementing cyberbullying strategies into their lessons or their curriculum, there has been a significance increase in the amount of teachers who are implementing these strategies into their curriculum” (p. 70).
2.1 The Concept of Cyberbullying

This section highlights the definition and explains cyberbullying.

2.1.1 Cyberbullying Definitions

Bullying has been an issue within schools for a long time but there is a new threat that needs to be addressed, cyberbullying. Many researchers have come to define cyberbullying in a few different ways, all varying in degree and intensity of the cyberbullying, yet finding common ground when defining cyberbullying in curriculum.

Cyberbullying, also known as electronic bullying, online bullying and online harassment, is a relatively recent occurrence that can be understood only in the context of traditional bullying and the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Although most Canadians are aware of examples of incidents of cyberbullying, in particular due to stories that have been reported in the media, the concept itself is actually hard to define. The Government of Canada (2014) has implemented a new law in addition to an ad campaign to target cyberbullying. The “Stop Hating Online” research study, funded by the Government of Canada, defines cyberbullying as, “cyberbullying is when a child or teen becomes a target of actions by others – using computers, cell phones or other devices (ICTs) – that are intended to intentionally embarrass, humiliate, torment, threaten or harass” (Stop Hating Online, 2014).

The “Stop Hating Online” research study compliments the research of Green-Forde (2013) which describes cyberbullying as a phenomenon that does not have a clear-cut definition, “A universal definition of cyberbullying does not yet exist, which is very important. One definition of cyberbullying is that it is the use of communication and information technology to harm another person. It can occur on any technological device...
and it can include countless behaviours to do such things as spread rumors, hurt or threaten others, or to sexually harass” (Green-Forde, 2013, p. 43).

Comparable to Green-Forde, Willard (2013, p. 103) described cyberbullying as willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text. Shariff, Cross, Smith, and Gouin have a similar definition but gets more specific. Shariff states, “cyberbullying consists of covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the use of electronic mediums such as cell phones, web-logs and web sites, on-line chat rooms” (Shariff, 2008, p. 56). Kowalski (2008) and his colleagues agree with Shariff’s definition and assert that bullying is aggressive behavior or intentional harm by one person or a group, generally carried out repeatedly and over time that involves a power differential. Correspondingly, Li (2012) stated that cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal Web sites, and defamatory online polling Web sites, to support deliberate repeated and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others. As technologies have expanded so has their use by children worldwide.

2.2 Different Types of Cyberbullying

There are many different types of cyberbullying, flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, tricking, exclusion, cyberstalking, and cyberthreats (Willard, 2007, p. 56).

2.2.1 Harassment

According to Nancy Willard (2007), “flaming” is online aggression with the use of vulgar language between two parties (Willard, 2007, p. 56). “Harassment” is
repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages (Willard, 2007, p. 56) (sexual harassment would fall under this category). “Sexual harassment” can be broken down into three categories: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion (Willard, 2007, p. 57).

According to Bauman (2013), gender harassment is defined as sexual messages, offensive nicknames, and pornographic material. Unwanted sexual attention is defined as uninvited behaviors that explicitly communicate sexual desires or intentions toward another individuals (Bauman, 2013). Sexual coercion relates to threats of force that is implied that can be misconstrued by the victim (Bauman, 2013). These definitions are applicable to on-line and real-life interactions.

2.2.2 Degeneration, Impersonation, Outing, and Tricking

Sending of explicit pictures via computers or cell phones is occurring all too often (Willard, 2007, p. 78). “Denigration” is sending or posting cruel gossip or rumors about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships (Willard, 2007, p. 81).

“Impersonation” is breaking into someone’s account, posing as that person, or sending messages to make that person look bad, get that person in trouble or danger, or damage that person’s reputation or friendships (Willard, 2007, p. 82). “Outing”, according to Willard, is sharing someone’s secrets or embarrassing information or images online, while “tricking” is similar, but is when a person is tricked into revealing secrets or embarrassing information, which is then shared (Willard, 2007, p. 86). “Outing” is done while the victim thinks that they are revealing information that will be not be shared and “tricking” is when the victim trusts the bully to keep the information to themselves.
2.2.3 Exclusion

“Exclusion” is intentionally excluding someone from an online group or leaving out of an online conversation (Willard, 2007, p. 88). Hess (2011) stated some cases might involve more than one bully and a single victim. Others could involve a gang of bullies that harass multiple parties. This gang bullying occurs when students respond to online trash polling sites. These web sites, which are growing in number, invite students to identify individuals by unflattering characteristics, such as the most obese person at their school, the boys likely to be gay, and the girls who have slept with the most boys (Hess, 2011). These topics become the most popular and are shared via the Internet and are visible to anyone who can visit the website.

2.2.4 Cyberstalking and Cyber Threats

“Cyberstalking” is repeatedly sending messages that are highly intimidating, engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for their safety, and use of a technology to control another person (Willard, 2007, p. 43). “Cyber threats” are either direct threats or distressing material that raises concerns or provides clues that the person is emotionally upset and may be considering harming someone, harming them, or committing suicide (Willard, 2007, p. 46). Both “cyberstalking” and “cyber threats” are forms of cyber-attacking. Willard further determines that real power is exerted in the virtual world in multiple ways. It is expressed in various electronic mediums through controlling topics available for discussion, posting inflammatory messages, and flaming (Willard, 2007, p. 48). One of these ways that power is exerted is through social media sites such as Twitter.
Recently the goalie of the Toronto Maple Leafs, James Reimer, was the victim of cyberthreats due to a poor performance on the ice during the Toronto Maple Leaf’s National Hockey League games. Because James Reimer does not have a Twitter account, the target for the cyberbullying was his wife April Reimer. This cyberbullying sparked the idea for a campaign called “#TweetSweet” on Twitter. The “#TweetSweet” campaign was started by James Reimer’s wife, April Reimer, who created this campaign in hopes, “to put an end to cyberbullying and to challenge students to spread positive messages through social media (Noseworthy, 2015). April Reimer’s campaign rewards students who tweet positive messages by awarding tickets to Toronto Maple Leafs hockey games. This is just one example of how positive online practice can reverse cyberbullying and keep everyone feeling comfortable online.

2.3 New Tools for Bullies

The range of cyberbullying tactics is wide, and is continually changing as new technology emerges and different social networking sites pop up. Although the development of technology has aided society in many ways, it has also created problems that are challenging and difficult to deal with, especially for young people. Campbell states, “technology provides numerous benefits to young people, but it also has a dark side” (Campbell, 2005, p. 68). Email, texting, chat rooms, mobile phones, mobile phone cameras, and web sites, are resources that are being used by young people to bully peers. It is now a global problem with many incidents occurring all over the world.
2.3.1 Easy Access to Technology

Technology is constantly changing and evolving at a rapid pace. As advances in communication technologies grow, schools are finding it harder and harder to keep up with the current trends (Kowalski, 2008). With this increase in technology, there is a new challenge facing our youth and our schools today and this challenge is known as cyberbullying (Kowalski, 2008). Adolescents are using technological devices to communicate by instant messaging, text messaging, and to set up profiles on websites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Although these technologies can be beneficial, it is important to recognize and examine the potential abuse of these facets of communication.

2.4 Effects of Cyberbullying on Students

Jaffer and Brazeau (2012) write that youth are being cyberbullied in ways that are negatively affecting their physical, social, emotional and cognitive functioning, development and well being (p. 45). Cyberbullying has a wide-ranging effect on adolescents. Unlike traditional bullying, the effects of cyberbullying are hard to escape as cyberbullying can occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week due to technology and constant access to the Internet. Bullying victimization, through any form of bullying, is associated with several health issues, such as mental health and self-esteem issues among Canadian youth (Jaffer and Brazeau, 2012, p. 113). Prevention of bullying is therefore an important goal for health and education professionals.

2.4.1 The Demographics of Cyberbullying
The Government of Canada (2014) conducted a research study titled “Stop Hating Online”, which consisted of over 1200 (out of 3000) girls who reported being cyberbullied. Responses varied from feeling: angry, sad, depressed, violated, suicidal, threatened, and fearful (Government of Canada, 2014). Other responses (55%) dismissed any of affect by the cyberbully (Government of Canada, 2014). Mishna follows the same focus in her research, which demonstrates that although online victimization is easily dismissed for some girls, for others the experience is, in fact, quite painful (Mishna, 2012).

Adolescence is a period of abrupt biological and social change. Specifically, the rapid body changes associated with the onset of adolescence and the changes from the primary to secondary school initiate dramatic changes in a student’s peer group composition and status (Mishna, 2012). Adolescent is a time when physical aggression increases in frequency and intensity. This period also witnesses a series of abrupt changes in the social lives of youngsters (Mishna, 2012).

Cyberbullying is the unfortunate byproduct of the union of adolescent aggression and electronic communication, and its growth is cause for concern (Patchin & Hinduja, 2007, p. 110). The fact remains that social acceptance is crucially important to a youth’s identity and self-esteem (Brazeau & Jaffer, 2012, p. 27). Cyberbullying causes permanent psychological, emotional, and social damage (Patchin & Hinduja, 2007, p. 118).

Willard, a lead researcher on the effects of adolescent cyberbullying, delves into the development of the brain in teens. She states that the frontal cortex of the brain is restructuring and that this part of the brain supports rational and ethical decision-making (Willard, 2007). Further, learning to make good decisions requires paying attention to
actions and consequences. Unfortunately the use of technologies to communicate hinders this process. According to White (2013), the psychological developments in adolescence from ages 10 to 15 are varied. Adolescents are looking for increased autonomy and focused on: finding identity and peer relations, feeling awkward and strange, and struggling with a sense of identity. In this developmental stage, it can be concluded that teens who use technologies as a form of communication can lose sight of what is important to them.

2.5 Prevention

This section outlines how to prevent cyberbullying with specific prevention steps.

2.5.1 Aiding the Most Vulnerable

One of the first steps in any prevention program is to ensure that people are aware of the problem. A difficulty with preventing bullying in schools has been that schools deny any incidence of bullying (Li, 2012, p. 6). According to Li, teachers, parents and students are not always aware of the ramifications of cyberbullying (Li, 2012, p. 151). Li elaborates and explains that professional development for teachers is needed, explaining what cyberbullying is and the real consequences of severe and continuous cyberbullying. Raising the awareness among teachers needs to be continuing, and is especially important when inducting teachers to the school (Li, 2012, p. 65). Although many teachers implement cyberbullying awareness into their curriculum, the research shows that there are still many teachers are not receiving training or development and do not know how to implement these techniques into their curriculum (Shariff, 2008, p. 123).
2.5.2 Ways to Address Cyberbullying: Prevention Techniques

Shariff and Gouin (2007) stated that teachers, school counselors, administrators, and policy makers have no less a responsibility than parents, to adapt to a rapidly evolving technological society, to address emerging challenges, and guide children to become civil minded individuals. According to Shariff and Gouin (2007) these are some strategies to address cyberbullying:

- Adults close communication-support adolescents with reporting harassment.
- Adolescents should not share public information-educated on ramifications.
- Students, parents, educators, and law enforcement should know where to go for on-line abuses. Websites such as the Government of Canada’s anti-cyberbullying research study *Stop Hating Online* (Stop Hating Online, 2014)
- Adults should educate students on fraudulent people in chat rooms. Example a 50 year old man saying he is fourteen.
- Teenagers should never meet someone they have chatted with online.
- People should be aware of how they are feeling and try to avoid delivery messages when angry or frustrated-flaming usually will occur.
- When adolescents tell adults-adults should respond by informing the authorities, contacting website, and phone services of the wrongdoing.
- Victims should keep messages as evidence. Proper authorities can use this as evidence and way of tracking the perpetrator.
- Asking teenagers is the best way to become informed about their thinking, as well as an excellent way to model democratic practices (Willard, 2007, p. 49).
2.6 The Role of a Teacher in Cyberbullying

Shariff (2008) found that 60% of victims were affected by online behaviors at school, at home, or with friends (Shariff, 2008, p. 161). The predictable consequences for students subjected to this shameful treatment (cyberbullying) are depression, hopelessness, and withdrawal (White, 2013, p. 22). White (2013) states that depression is perhaps the most frequently cited correlate to bullying.

Teachers can have a huge impact on a student’s life, and this includes when a student feels unsafe due to cyberbullying. Teachers have the ability to create lesson plans about cyberbullying in order to educate students about the consequences of cyberbullying. Although cyberbullying usually does not occur in the classroom or during school hours, it is something that should be dealt with by educators and teachers (White, 2013, p. 13). If the cyberbullying is occurring among students in a school, teachers can incorporate many different strategies to educate students about the effects of cyberbullying and aid in the prevention of cyberbullying. Some school boards have already implemented anti-bullying awareness weeks or information sessions within their school communities to make students aware of all types of bullying and the effects and consequences of bullying. The problem is, that not all schools are taking the same action when it comes to cyberbullying.

According to Hinduja and Patchin (2007) more school districts are trying to implement cyberbullying legislation. By doing this they are trying to have school districts take a more active role in addressing this issue. Hinduja and Patchin (2007) report school districts are well within their legal rights to intervene in cyberbullying incidents—even if those incidents were initiated off-school grounds—if it can be demonstrated that the
incidents resulted in a substantial disruption of the educational environment. Hinduja and Patchin (2007) have provided elements for anti-bullying policy for teachers and schools, which includes:

- Specific definitions for harassment, intimidation, and bullying (including electronic variants)
- Graduated consequences and remedial actions
- Procedures for reporting
- Procedures for investigating
- Specific language that addresses off-school behavior or speech that hinders the education environment and that students can be disciplined
- Procedures for preventing bullying (workshops, staff training, curriculum enhancements).

Some school districts have already implemented cyberbullying awareness days and have adopted some of the ideas that Hinduja and Patchin have suggested.

2.6.1 Prevention Curriculum

There have been many researchers who have researched cyberbullying and the affects on student learning, teacher development, and curriculum implementation. There is specific research regarding intervention and prevention programs that were designed for teachers that have been proven to aid students in learning about cyberbullying.

Kowalski and Agatston (2008) established a prevention curriculum related to cyberbullying based on a holistic approach of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (1999). The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is designed for students in elementary,
middle, and junior high schools and is designed to help students understand the concept and consequences of cyberbullying, as well as properly resist when it occurs (Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, 1999). Teachers can use the activities outlined in the program and implement them into their daily curriculum, such as role-playing and writing journal entries about cyberbullying incidents.

2.7 Conclusion

Cyberbullying is a way that bullies can emotionally detach from their victims. Cyberbullies do not have to see their victim’s face or interact with them face-to-face, which can create a false sense of power, as the bullies do not need to interact with their victims. Research on the topic of cyberbullying is becoming more inclusive and prevalent as this social issue becomes more significant. Furthermore, many statistics and programs have been used in current research, and there is an abundance of academic articles, books, and websites published to bring awareness and to educate about the topic of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying has become a large problem due to our growing technology-based society, as we have access to the Internet 24/7. The research that I will be conducting will focus on cyberbullying and how it affects our students in the classroom, and the prevention tactics that teachers are implementing into their curriculum to minimize cyberbullying. My research will make a unique contribution to the existing research landscape, as I will cover specific strategies that teachers are using to target cyberbullying beyond the basic training provided by most school boards across Canada.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology. I begin by reviewing the general procedures, approach and data collection instruments before elaborating more specifically on participant sampling and recruiting. This is a qualitative research study that involved a literature review and semi-structured interviews with 2 teachers. In this chapter I review the participant recruitment criteria and procedures, data analysis process, ethical considerations, and I identify a range of methodological limitations and strengths. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a brief summary of key methodological decisions and my rationale for these decisions given the research purpose and questions.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

This research study will be conducted using a qualitative research approach involving a literature review and semi-structured interviews with teachers. There is a great deal of research on the topic of cyberbullying and how it affects students in the classroom. The significance and value of qualitative research comes from using the research as a key instrument, conducting interviews in a natural setting, and using multiple methods for research (Creswell, 2007). I conducted an initial review of the literature and new and relevant literature was reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the study. This was necessary because of the many connections that can be made through the exploration of teachers’ personal experiences with cyberbullying; how their experiences inspired them to incorporate cyberbullying awareness into their curriculums. According to Creswell, this is referred to as “complex reasoning through inductive and
deductive logic” (Creswell, 2007, p. 144). As a result of these interconnections, it will become important to investigate different aspects of how teachers reflect upon their own experiences in order to improve their practice.

The primary means of data collections was through interviews (for interview questions, see Appendix B). These interviews were aimed at gathering information about teachers’ experiences with cyberbullying, how they perceive it has affected students in their classrooms, and what types of approaches they have used to integrate cyberbullying awareness into their curriculum. Teachers were chosen for the insight that they could provide about their cyberbullying experiences in both the past and present. The goal of the interviews was to gain an understanding of tools and strategies that have been shown to be effective for a variety of students regarding the issue of cyberbullying and how it affects bullying behaviour in and outside of schools. Qualitative research is a suitable approach for me given that my research purpose and the questions that I have involve information about teachers’ practices and attitudes. As Creswell (2007) states: “To study [the] problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes” (p. 141). This approach will help me meet my research goals and provide me with effective teaching strategies, which would help me as a novice teacher.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The instrument of data collection in this study is a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B). Semi-structured interviews provide opportunity to hear
participants lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). The semi-structured format allows for the interviewer to design and plan an interview that attends to the research through focused questions while leaving room for participants to elaborate and even direct attention to areas previously unforeseen by the interviewer.

The interviews included five sections. I began the interviews by finding out about the teachers’ background experiences and teacher conceptualizations of cyberbullying. From there I pursued questions regarding the what, the how, and the why of how cyberbullying will affect students in the classroom. My final section looks at the barriers students face while trying to overcome cyberbullying attacks and how teachers can mitigate or diminish the attack. This also includes questions regarding how my interviewees’ are implementing cyberbullying awareness lessons into their curriculum. Questions were developed through my literature review and personal experiences. Potential future directions will also be explored through open-ended interview questions.

The semi-structured interview protocol is being used in order to collect qualitative data by creating space for the participants to talk about their perspectives, experiences, and teaching strategies regarding cyberbullying. The objective is to understand the participant’s point of view rather than make generalizations about cyberbullying or teachers’ pedagogical responses to it. As a primary data gathering method used to collect information from individuals about their own practices, beliefs, and opinions (Harrell, 2009), interviews are an appropriate research method for this small scale qualitative study. The interviews will be used to gather information on past or present behaviours or experiences related to teaching cyberbullying awareness in the curriculum.
3.3 Participants

Here I review the sampling criteria I established for participant recruitment and I review avenues for teacher recruitment. I have also included a section where I will introduce each of the participants with some background information about their teaching experiences.

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

In order to develop my research about how teachers are implementing cyberbullying awareness into their curriculum, it is necessary to find exemplary practitioners who could provide me with information about their own experiences dealing with cyberbullying amongst their students in their classrooms. Participating teachers must have demonstrated leadership in developing a curriculum, which encompasses cyber awareness to students of all ages. Participating teachers would have demonstrated leadership and/or expertise in area of cyberbullying and the implementation of cyberbullying curriculum. This may be in the form of providing professional development for colleagues, completed a graduate degree with this focus, or written curriculum support materials toward that focus.

For this study the following criteria were used to sample research participants:

- Minimum five years teaching experience

Teachers have a minimum of five years teaching experience as this will render it more likely that they are familiar with the Ministry curriculum, have experience teaching it, and feel comfortable interpreting it through the lens of bullying awareness.
- Experience addressing cyberbullying awareness into their own classroom curriculum

Teachers will have had past experiences with cyberbullying amongst their students in their classrooms. These teachers will have responded to these incidences through formal curriculum instruction. They have demonstrated leadership and/or expertise in the area of cyberbullying education (e.g. curriculum development, advising a student club, etc.).

- Who have responded pedagogically to cyberbullying

Teachers who have had experience teaching cyberbullying awareness as a formal curriculum, not just as extra-curricular material. Cyberbullying is a phenomenon that likely did not exist when they were students, which lends an interesting lens into the research, as teachers are learning practitioners.

### 3.3.2 Sampling Procedures/Recruitment

To recruit participants I am relying on convenience sampling as I am immersed in a community with teacher colleagues and mentor teachers. I will rely on my existing contacts and networks to recruit participants and conduct my semi-structured interviews for cyberbullying. Here, Denzin (2005) elaborates on the meaning of convenience sampling:

Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling technique that is based on the judgment of the researcher. The convenience sample will assist in gathering useful data and information that would not have been possible using
probability sampling techniques, which require more formal access to lists of populations (p. 201).

I have decided to use convenience sampling, given the limited parameters of this research study, as it would be unrealistic to use other research samples other than convenience sampling. Although convenience sampling is beneficial to this study, I am aware that convenience sampling is not representative of the entire population of teachers who may be implementing cyberbullying into their curriculum. Purpose sampling is not diametrically opposed to convenience sampling as I have criteria that encompass both purpose and convenience sampling. Concurrently, I am relying on my existing networks of colleagues and friend to locate the teachers for my interviews.

3.3.3 Participant Bio: Joan

Joan has over 25 years of experience working as a teacher. She has worked at three different schools working mainly as classroom teacher for the junior grades, but was also a French teacher for 3 years. She has extensive experience with integrating cyberbullying instructional strategies into her lessons and has always worked in diverse communities. She currently works as a grade 6 classroom teacher in an elementary school.

3.3.4 Participant Bio: Michelle

Michelle has had 8 years of experience working as a classroom teacher. She has worked at two different schools, including one, which was centred on alternative education. She has extensive experience working with behavioral students in low-income
areas. She has widespread instructional strategies for cyberbullying that she implements into different subjects areas of the curriculum. She currently works as a grade 8 classroom teacher.

3.4 Data Analysis

As stated previously, the primary means of data collection was through interviews. These interviews were analyzed, coded and organized using my research questions as an interpretive tool. I recorded the interviews with a digital voice recorder, transcribed them, and then coded the transcripts according to themes arising from the survey of literature on the topic, as well as from the interview questions and the participants’ responses. The significance of data analysis is to speak to the data I collect from my interviews and how it will be relevant to my research questions and existing literature. According to Creswell (2007), during the data analysis process “researchers build detailed descriptions, develop themes or dimensions, and provide an interpretation in light of their own views or views of perspectives in the literature (p. 479)”. I coded my data to look for common themes and divergences in the data as relevant to the research questions. After coding the interviews, I organized the results in order to identify themes, connections to the literature, and relevance to my research questions. As Creswell (2007) elaborates, data analysis involves interpretation and “making sense of the data (p. 486)”. I looked for themes within each category and synthesize themes as well as looking at null data to what participating teachers did not speak to. I then made meaning of the data by reading these themes against the existing research literature in this area.
3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

All participants have been assigned a pseudonym and they will be notified of their right to withdraw their participation from the study at any point in the research process. The participants’ identities will remain confidential and any identifying markers related to their schools or their students will be excluded (Orb, 2001). There are no known risks to participation in this study. Given the research topic of cyberbullying, it is possible that a particular question may trigger an emotional response from a participant thus making them feel vulnerable (e.g. if it triggers memories of their own experience of bullying). I minimized this risk by: providing the interview questions to the participants ahead of time, by reassuring throughout the interview and in the consent letter that they have the right to refrain from answering any question that they do not feel comfortable with, and as well as restating their right to withdraw from participation.

Participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts and clarify and/or retract any statements before I conducted data analysis. All data is stored on a password-protected laptop and will be destroyed after 5 years. Participants were asked to sign a consent letter (Appendix A) giving their consent to be interviewed as well as audio recorded. This consent letter provides an overview of the study, addresses ethical implications and specifies expectations of participation.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

Here I will address limitations and strengths that I can foresee in terms of methodology and in terms of design for this study.
Limitations

Although my sample size was very small, it is appropriate in relation to my goal of learning how teachers are implementing cyberbullying awareness strategies into their curriculum and improving my own practice as a beginning teacher. Given the time constraints involved, I carefully selected seventeen questions that address various aspects of teachers’ pedagogical approach to cyberbullying education. The ethical parameters given to us for this study limit us to what we can learn through our research by interviewing teachers only, thus excluding parents or students. We were also limited to conducting interviews as the research method and could not gather data through other means (e.g. surveys, focus groups, observations).

Strengths

The significance of interviewing teachers is a strength in this type of research as it allows the interviewer to hear from the teacher directly. The teacher puts their experiences into their own words and dives more in-depth than a survey could allow for. It creates space for teachers to speak to what matters most to them about their experience with cyberbullying education and how they are using awareness strategies in their own curriculum to educate their students. The interviews are a way to validate teacher-voice and experience and are an opportunity for them to make meaning from their own lived experiences. This method allows them to reflect on their own practices and to articulate how they conceptualize bullying and cyberbullying.
3.7 Conclusion: Brief Overview and Preview of What is Next

In this chapter, I have provided a summary of key methodological decisions and rationale for these decisions surrounding my purpose and my interview questions. I described the research methodology and determined that this is a core-research study, in which I explain data analysis procedures and ethical considerations pertinent to the study. I began by reviewing the general procedures, approach and data collection instruments before elaborating more specifically on participant sampling and recruiting. I identified a range of methodological limitations, as well as the strengths of the methodology. I stated how I will record the interviews with a digital voice recorder, transcribe them, and then code the transcripts according to themes arising from the survey of literature on the topic, as well as from the interview questions and the participants’ responses. Next, in Chapter 4, I report the research findings.
Chapter 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter I report and discuss the findings from my analysis of the data gathered in two semi-structured interviews, conducted in a face-to-face interview format.

Cyberbullying stems from “cyber threats” which Willard (2007) defines as “either direct threats or distressing material that raises concerns or provides clues that the person is emotionally upset and may be considering harming someone, harming them, or committing suicide” (p. 46). Through my interviews I analyzed information about how my two participants have viewed their students’ reactions to cyber threats or cyberbullying. The main consensus from my two participants was that students who were subject to cyberbullying were often too afraid to attend school and be ridiculed by their classmates for what was said online about them. They feel very vulnerable and exposed by the malicious threats or harassment that they experienced and many do not want to turn to teachers or school administrators for help.

The two participants are referred to by the pseudonyms Joan and Michelle. The goal of the interviews was to gain an understanding of how participants taught students about cyberbullying through their own instructional strategies, and its effects in and outside of school. This qualitative research provides insight into teachers’ tools and strategies to teach cyberbullying awareness. These strategies were implemented in different subjects and engaged students in different ways. I categorized participant responses into four major themes: instructional strategies used by teachers, impact of cyberbullying on student learning, teacher challenges, and benefits of the cyberbullying curriculum. Additional subthemes were identified pertaining to each major theme.
These themes address the practical and instructional strategies that my participants found to be effective and important for integrating cyberbullying awareness into their curriculums. My participant Michelle is in the beginning of her teaching career (within the first ten years of her career) and my second participant Joan is in her 26th year of teaching. Ultimately, this provided a depth to my analysis and captures a certain diversity of experiences.

Both participants used strategies to teach about cyberbullying that they felt engaged their students. They both expressed that these types of lessons could be integrated more frequently into the curriculum than current guidelines suggest. This is incredibly important, as these individuals are educators and the fact that they see the same problematic pattern, of engaging cyberbullying strategies in the curriculum, helps to pinpoint a place to start creating a solution. Finally, there is a brief description of each theme prior to the proactive responses that are needed in response to the challenge of combating cyberbullying.

4.1 Importance of Addressing Cyberbullying

The different ways teachers can incorporate relevant instructional strategies into their subject areas are outlined in this section. Participants addressed several specific instructional strategies that they used to teach cyberbullying awareness in their subject areas. Each of these is considered in turn.

My participants identified strategies that they use to address cyberbullying in their curriculums: adults, including teachers and school administrators, should provide close communication-support to students about cyberbullying. One way to do this is
incorporating teaching strategies into our school curriculum. As one of their instructional strategies Joan and Michelle both shared the opinion that students should be taught not to share personal information online. Joan stated, “I tell my students on a daily basis to keep their information online private. They should not be sharing any personal information online because no one really knows who can view it.” Students should not share public information and should be educated on the ramifications that will arise which is a strategy that is also supported by Shariff and Gouin (2007).

In her interview, Michelle explained another teaching strategy that she finds to be effective when teaching the consequences of cyberbullying to her students. She educates her students about sharing their personal information online by asking them what personal information the share online through social media. This strategy works because social media is highly relatable to students. Michelle states:

I always tell my students that anything you wouldn’t want the whole school to know shouldn’t be online on one of your social media account for everyone to see. One example I always use is their cell phone numbers or addresses, they wouldn’t want the whole school to know where they lived or know how to contact them so they shouldn’t share that with the world online. Most of the time when I ask, my students won’t even share that information out loud to the class. This is how I prove to them that if you think it is a private matter in person, than why do you think it is okay to share online through social media?

Social media sites, such as: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter provide students with an accessible platform to connect with one another on the web however, as Campbell (2005)
explains: “social media is a place where students can connect, for a variety of different reasons, but some of these reasons can be malicious (p. 101). If students are taking part in online postings that target a specific person in an inappropriate or mean way, this is considered cyberbullying. Social media is an easy way by which users (the cyberbullies) can target their cyberbullying victims. By sharing their personal information online through social media, students are making themselves even more vulnerable to cyberbullies as the bullies are able to target their personal lives and not only their online life. Some of these strategies are: making the educational material relatable to student’s lives, using school clubs to inform students, and asking for parental involvement.

4.1.1 Adolescent Vulnerability

The research indicates that adolescents are most vulnerable to cyberbullying, therefore they would benefit the most from a cyberbullying curriculum being implemented in their classroom. Not only are they the ones predominantly active on social media, but also adolescence often involves going through social and physical changes while being vulnerable to one’s peers’ opinions and acceptance or rejection. Joan stated, “Adolescents are looking for increased autonomy and focused on: finding identity and peer relations, feeling awkward and strange, and struggling with a sense of identity”. In this developmental stage, it can be concluded those teens that use technologies as a form of communication can lose sight of what is important to them. According to White (2013), the psychological developments in adolescence from ages 10 to 15 are varied (p. 187). As teachers, this is a way that we can connect to the social change that our students are going through.
The age of adolescents is a large contributing factor to cyberbullying. Adolescence is a period of abrupt biological and social change. Specifically, the rapid body changes associated with the onset of adolescence and the changes from the primary to secondary school initiate dramatic changes in a student’s peer group composition and status. In our interview, Michelle states:

It has been my experience that students often have a difficult time transferring their learning to the real world and to real life situations when they are adolescents. When they are faced with such dilemmas, students are often too afraid to do the right thing because they are afraid of what their peers may think of them. But when they can relate to what is being taught, they benefit from the curriculum.

According to Li (2005) when students, specifically adolescents, learn about the cyberbullying consequences through instructional strategies from their teachers, they are less likely to engage in cyberbullying. It is up to the teachers, principals, school boards, and parents to make our students feel comfortable discussing cyberbullying through instructional approaches and strategies. According to Mishna (2012), the adolescent years is a time when physical aggression increases in frequency and intensity. This period also witnesses a series of abrupt changes in the social lives of youngsters, as they do not know whom to turn to for help or guidance in a bullying situation. Knowing whom to turn to is half the battle when dealing with any bullying case, including cyberbullying.

4.1.2 Impacts of Cyberbullying

According to Joan another strategy that teachers can use to educate their students
about the consequences of cyberbullying is the school administration or school clubs. The
school administrators (e.g. the principals) can provide resources, support, and teacher
training in addition to those offered by each school board. Most school administrators
have already started the “safe-school” campaign by blocking certain websites, such as
social media sites, on school computers to reduce the risk of cyberbullying happening at
school (Jaffer & Brazeau, 2012). Another way that school administrators can get involved
is by starting a school club or committee and assisting the teachers in running these
activities. Joan spoke of her Catholic school’s Social Justice club: “Perhaps the greatest
work I have done is working with students in our Social Justice committee surrounding
the topic of cyberbullying.” Joan integrated cyberbullying awareness techniques and
spread their knowledge throughout the school through daily announcements and posters.

Integrating strategies that can address cyberbullying is critical given the negative
impacts that bullying has on the mental and physical health of Canadian youth (Stop
Hating Online, 2014). Jaffer and Brazeau’s (2012) research provides evidence of the
significance of integrating cyberbullying instructional strategies into our classrooms.
When students share something private online, they need to be aware that anything that is
sent electronically can be shared easily and may not stay private. We need to make it our
goal as teachers and educators to teach our students about the dangerous consequences of
cyberbullying so that we are not putting our youth at risk. We also need to keep in mind
that our students must be receptive to our teaching strategies in order for them to gain
knowledge in the subject area.
This section outlines the participants’ responses that address their views on how cyberbullying affects student learning. Cyberbullying has wide-ranging effects on students. Li (2005) states: “Unlike traditional bullying, the effects of cyberbullying are hard to escape as cyberbullying can occur 24 hours a day, seven days a week due to technology and constant access to the Internet.” As addressed in my Chapter 2, bullying victimization is associated with several health issues, such as mental health and self-esteem issues among Canadian youth. In order for our teachers to educate students on the consequences of cyberbullying, they require training in some form. Joan spoke briefly about how the school boards and administration should ensure that teachers have relevant resources to teach about the dangers of cyberbullying: “Having access to the appropriate resources would support and enhance such a topic and allow teachers to relate the topic of cyberbullying to the student’s everyday lives.” This an important support for teachers who teach about cyberbullying because it would provide teachers with professional development and resources to teach engaging lessons.

Michelle also spoke about this topic, “If all teachers were given the same training we could lessen the impact that cyberbullying has on our students. This is because students would be taught the consequences from a young age.” White (2013) states that depression is perhaps the most frequently cited correlate to bullying. With this being said, prevention of bullying must be a front-runner as an important goal in our schools’ health curriculums for health and education professionals. The predictable consequences for students subjected to this shameful treatment are depression, hopelessness, and
withdrawal. All of these factors associated with cyberbullying affect students’ learning in the classroom.

4.2.1 Social Media and Emphasizing a Lack of Privacy Online to Students

One way that teachers can use the accessibility of social media easily is to create a class project using one of these social media platforms. This helps to educate our students about the dangers of social media. Teachers are using social media to demonstrate how their use of social media can make students vulnerable to have anything that they post viewed by others and reposted and shared by others. Joan was one of the teachers who did this kind of activity with her class using Twitter. They created a class Twitter account and tweeted to another school in Alberta. The students watched, as their tweet was “retweeted” and “favourited” over one hundred times in just 24 hours from students all over the world! Through this experiment, Joan was able to demonstrate to her class that if their online social media accounts are not set to private, people all over the world have the freedom to screen-shot, copy, and mass circulate their post very easily in a short amount of time. This shows how fast news can travel over the Internet, and if this was cyberbullying it could reach all parts of the world in a matter of hours (Shariff & Gouin, 2007). Other forms of technology including: email, texting, chat rooms, mobile phones, mobile phone cameras, and web sites, are resources that are being used by young people to bully peers. It is now a global problem with many incidents occurring yearly.

Teachers can use cross-curricular activities to ingrate cyberbullying awareness into all subject areas. If teachers do not relate cyberbullying to adolescents through innovative strategies it would not be successful because the students would not be
engaged. My participants related to adolescents by engaging their students surrounding the topic of cyberbullying through incorporating a safe space for their students to learn in different subject areas. Michelle and Joan spoke about several subject areas in which they integrated cyberbullying awareness through engaging strategies. These subject areas included: health, science, drama, literacy, and religion. All of these subject areas have transferrable skills to cyberbullying awareness.

Both my participants provided examples of addressing cyberbullying in a variety of subjects. They used various strategies to invited student participation. Michelle integrated cyberbullying strategies into her lessons. One example she gave was a literacy strategy in which she asked her students to write a persuasive piece urging a cyberbully to stop bullying. She allowed her students to take this assignment home as homework and work on it so that they could gather information from their own social media accounts, emails, or text messages for evidence or examples of cyberbullying. They did not have to disclose any details, just justify why they thought it was an example through their persuasive writing. Once the assignment was complete, a few of the written responses were presented at the school’s anti-bullying assembly. This assembly was presented to the whole school to raise awareness and incorporated guest speakers, presentations, and information about cyberbullying and who to turn to for help if necessary. Joan and Michelle both used strategies where there were authentic audiences for their class work; Joan chose performances for the class; Michelle used a school assembly.

4.3 Teacher Challenges Addressing Cyberbullying: Resources Outside Of The Classroom

This section outlines the participants’ responses that address teacher challenges
that are associated with teaching cyberbullying awareness.

4.3.1 Administrative Support: Resources and Professional Development

Although there is in-service training that each school board offers, teachers in our schools face many obstacles and barriers related to the cyberbullying curriculum due to a lack of resources made available to them in the classroom. If teachers have training to teach students about cyberbullying, they would be able to minimize the impact on student learning. According to Joan and Michelle, the lack of training is a challenge that teachers encounter when trying to teach the consequences of cyberbullying. As Michelle stated,

I was one of the lucky few to be selected by my principal to go to an in-service at the board to learn about the negative effects of cyberbullying on our students. There were only three teachers out of our entire school staff that were selected to attend the workshop, which I see as a huge problem. If teachers are not exposed to these resources we will not be able to equally spread the knowledge in each classroom. From that in-service, I developed my cyberbullying curriculum, which I now implement into my instructional strategies.

Joan stated that although she has received basic training a lot of her co-workers were not given the opportunity. This highlights the lack of widely available professional development for teachers to support the effectively educating students about cyberbullying. If only some teachers are receiving the professional development, there will still be a gap in our cyberbullying curriculum where some students will not receive the same education surrounding the topic.
Teachers identified a lack of resources to support addressing cyberbullying. Joan stressed that although there is not an abundance of resources available, as are available for other subjects such as math and literacy, bullying and cyberbullying are important topics to teach our students due to the increasing amount of technology that they are exposed to and Joan states: “I wish we had better access to resources to teach our children the consequences of cyberbullying and the dangers of the ever-growing technology.”

Shariff (2008) explains that although many teachers implement cyberbullying awareness into their curriculum many teachers are still not receiving adequate training or development and do not know how to implement these techniques into their curriculum. Not all teachers will have the luxury of attending an in-service or training as they are needed in their own classrooms. Professional development for teachers and resources to teach cyberbullying awareness is needed to educate our students about the severe consequences of cyberbullying.

Another finding from my interviews was the notion of teachers innovating to create effective means to address cyberbullying. In my interview with Michelle she expressed that even though she was not given enough resources and professional development to properly teach cyberbullying awareness to her students, she is doing the best she can with what she was given. “In the meantime I will continue to do all I can with the resources and past experiences that I have.” This is significant as it shows that there are teachers who choose to educate students on cyberbullying and the consequences of it using whatever resources they see fit. These teachers will not stand by and wait for resources to be developed, by the Ministry of Education or school boards, because the problem will just get worse in the interim.
There are many teachers who are implementing instructional strategies to educate our students on cyberbullying and cyber threats, including my two participants. Even without a wealth of resources my participants were made it a priority to educate students of the consequences of cyberbullying and the effects that it may have on their peers.

4.3.2 School Clubs and Parental/Community Wide Efforts

Our Ontario Curriculum Documents ask us to cover social behaviours, which specifically includes bullying. The main challenge is that teachers are not given resources, such as textbooks and teaching materials that relate to the curriculum and address all of these topics in our changing society. Due to this, teachers find creative strategies to educate students about cyberbullying and an example of this are school clubs and through parental and community support.

Michelle stated that parental support plays an important role in educating our students about cyberbullying. She noted that students who have been raised in a low-income neighbourhood are less likely to receive support at home and therefore are not as well informed of the consequences they may face for cyberbullying. The students who came from a more affluent area were knowledgeable and understood the consequences. The social environment that children are raised in can play a large role in their development and learning. Michelle stressed that this was only one observation she noticed and is not proven to be true across the province. Michelle received great parental support when implementing cyberbullying awareness strategies into her curriculum over the past three years:

For the most part, parents have been very supportive when I decide to
implement my cyberbullying instructional strategies into our literacy program. I always send home a letter urging parents to extend my learning in the classroom and encouraging them to speak to their child about the consequences of cyberbullying. I find that this is beneficial because it keeps the communication avenues open, as well as informing parents about the different warning-signs and symptoms of cyberbullying so they can keep an eye out for it when their children are online.

For instance Michelle, when referring to her work with kids from a low SES, indicated that in her first few years as a teacher, she worked in a school, which was situated in a low-income area, and most of the students did not receive any parental support, as their parents were busy working more than one job. In contrast when referring to her current work experience with students from a higher SES she found the parents and the community to be much more involved. This emphasized the lack of resources available to teachers in the classroom because the students were not receiving any additional support at home. As Kowalski (2008) noted, we know that there is not one specific characteristic that we can pinpoint of a cyberbully and combating cyberbullying is different in each case. “Research shows that there are many different characteristics of a cyberbully, not one specific characteristic that teachers can target when implementing cyberbullying tactics into their curriculum; there is no single ‘profile’ for children who bully” (p. 29). I believe that this makes it increasingly difficult to educate students without a wide-range of teaching resources that can demonstrate these characteristics of a cyberbully and the victim pertinent to the characteristic that cyberbully practices.

While teachers face challenges when implementing and promoting instructional
strategies for cyberbullying, there are many different ways that my participants were able to develop or implement successful cyberbullying curriculum strategies. These strategies are accessible, interesting, relevant, and relatable to the students and some of these strategies include: cross-curricular activities, school clubs, parental support, and administration support for web blocking. According to Joan another instructional strategy that teachers can use to educate their students about the consequences of cyberbullying is the school administration or school clubs.

In my interview with Joan, she expressed that the parent council at her school was very involved with cyberbullying education and would send home a monthly newsletter that always gave information about cyberbullying. This was a tool the school used to educate parents and to warn them to keep an eye on their children at home when they are online. She also stated that many other teachers she knows at different schools across the province of Ontario are implementing this strategy, as it raises parent awareness about cyberbullying.

4.4 Challenges Fostering Cyberbullying Awareness

Joan and Michelle spoke to the benefits of incorporating cyberbullying awareness strategies into their curriculums.

As previously stated, student receptivity is key in any learning for any part of the curriculum. They are automatically interested and become informed when they can feel a connection or relate to any part of the subject being taught. Joan and Michelle both taught cyberbullying using different forms of technology, which captures the interest of most students. When we engage our students in an activity that they enjoy outside of school, as
Joan did in her Twitter lesson, students can draw on their own experiences. When students are excited to learn, they are more likely to share their new knowledge and information with their peers and parents.

4.5 Conclusion

The information this study had gathered has been incredibly informative in illustrating the complexities of integrating cyberbullying instructional approaches into the classroom. This study identifies several key themes that emerged in conversation with my participants Joan and Michelle. These themes were: Instructional strategies used by teachers, impact of cyberbullying on student learning, teacher challenges, and benefits of the possible engaging cyberbullying curriculum.

The information that I obtained from these interviews has been invaluable in providing further insight into the issue of how to integrate cyberbullying instructional strategies into our curriculum. The findings from these interviews are certainly interesting, but not completely surprising. My findings have confirmed my suspicions as well as provided what I hoped to learn throughout the interview process. With the exception of a few topics, there was a general consensus amongst the interviewees when it came to certain foundational issues. These issues included, but were not limited to, the lack of available resources from the school boards; the influence of parents; and social environment. The role of the social environment is very important when considering cyberbullying as this form of bullying usually occurs when our students are engaged in social situations online. Many teachers have incorporated instructional strategies into their curriculums to teach students about cyberbullying and the consequences.

When discussing all four main themes, there were several points of convergence
with each other and the literature presented. There was a general consensus that cyberbullying occurs mostly in the adolescent years of a child’s life and the amount of cyberbullying cases continue to grow with the evolving technology and social media platforms that students have easy access to. In regards to teaching strategies, the participants have similar perspectives on education. They both share a passion to help students succeed in a safe and positive learning environment and this helps us to understand why they strongly believe in the implementation of cyberbullying strategies in their teaching. Next, in Chapter 5, I will describe the implications to the study and how these findings implicate the educational community surrounding the topic of cyberbullying.
Chapter 5: IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Introduction and Overview

This chapter aims to summarize the implications of the research. This research has sought to determine how teachers are implementing and incorporating certain cyberbullying strategies into their curriculums to educate students regarding the topic of cyberbullying. The implications are considered through my perspective both as a researcher and future educator. In addition, some brief recommendations are made regarding the significance of my research for the larger educational community. Finally, I explore some areas of future research that could enhance the awareness that teachers should be implementing cyberbullying into their curriculum and instructional strategies. This chapter uses the findings my research to discuss further implications and recommendations emerging from this work.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

Through the two semi-structured interviews I conducted I was able to collect key findings in the data. Through these semi-structured interviews, four different themes emerged: Importance of Addressing Cyberbullying, How Teachers Addressed Cyberbullying, Teacher Challenges Addressing Cyberbullying, and Benefits of the Cyberbullying Curriculum.

The first theme Importance of Addressing Cyberbullying addresses the importance and the different ways teachers are incorporating relevant and specific instructional strategies into different subject areas to teach cyberbullying awareness. The second theme How Teachers Addressed Cyberbullying speaks to my participants’ responses that address their experiences on how cyberbullying affects student learning.
The third theme *Teacher Challenges Addressing Cyberbullying* outlines the participants’ responses that address teacher challenges that are associated with teaching cyberbullying awareness. The fourth theme *Benefits of the Cyberbullying Curriculum* outlines the participants’ responses that address the benefits of their instructional strategies regarding their own cyberbullying curriculums.

These themes provided practical and instructional strategies that my participants found to be effective and important for integrating cyberbullying awareness into their curriculums. The information that I obtained from these interviews has been invaluable in providing further insight into the issue of how to integrate cyberbullying instructional strategies into our curriculum as teachers. With the exception of a few topics, there was a general consensus amongst the interviewees when it came to certain foundational issues, including, but not limited to, the lack of available resources from the school boards; the influence of parents; and the impact of social environment on students. Teachers can integrate different activities into all subject areas in the curriculum to educate our students about the ramifications surrounding cyberbullying. Teachers should incorporate effective instructional strategies that their students can relate to. This may come in many different forms and can be integrated into many different subject areas within our curriculum. There are many teachers who are implementing instructional strategies to educate our students on cyberbullying and cyber threats. Even without a wealth of resources these teachers are doing everything in their power to educate students of the consequences of cyberbullying and the effects that it may have on their peers.

### 5.2 Discussion
My semi-structured interviews resonated with key research findings reported in my Literature Review (Chapter 2). Cyberbullying has a wide-ranging effect on students. My findings make clear the importance of integrating cyberbullying strategies into our classrooms. This is affirmed through my semi-structured interviews and in the literature that documents the various health issues that result from various forms of bullying in Canada (Jaffer & Brazeau, 2012). We need to make it our goal as teachers and educators to teach our students about the dangerous consequences of cyberbullying so that we are not putting our youth at risk. We also need to keep in mind that our students must be receptive to our teaching strategies in order for them to gain knowledge in the subject area. Li (2005) speaks to this same idea of integrating instructional strategies for cyberbullying into teaching curriculums.

According to Li (2005), teachers, parents and students are not always aware of the ramifications of cyberbullying (p. 151). Li (2005) elaborates that professional development for teachers is needed, explaining what cyberbullying is and the real consequences of severe and continuous cyberbullying. Raising the awareness among teachers needs to be continuing, and is especially important when inducting teachers to the school. Although many teachers implement cyberbullying awareness into their curriculum, the research states, “there are still many teachers who are not receiving training or development and do not know how to implement these techniques into their curriculum” (Shariff, 2008, p. 123).

Through my semi-structured interviews with my two participants, I collected and arrived at research findings similar to those of Jaffer and Brazeau (2012), Li (2005), and Shariff (2008). These findings surrounded the implementation of instructional strategies
for a cyberbullying curriculum that were implemented regardless of the professional
development that was, or was not, offered to teachers through their school boards. In my
interview with Joan she stated that she received basic training but not all her co-workers
had the same experiences with professional development and this is the main reason that
all teachers are not able to implement cyberbullying strategies.

In this case, Joan was one of the teachers who received basic training through her
school board. She was able to implement the strategies she learned through her basic
training into her classroom to teach cyberbullying. Joan expressed that there are a lack of
resources in circulation that would benefit teachers when they are looking for
instructional strategies to educate students on the topic cyberbullying, but the resources
that were available were shared with her during her professional development. This
suggests that even without an abundance of resources, if all teachers were given the same
basic training, they would be able to implement basic cyberbullying strategies gained
from their training into their curriculums to educate our students about the serious
consequences that are affiliated with cyberbullying.

5.3 Implications

The data collected from my research summarizes the effects of a cyberbullying
curriculum and the highlights the importance of addressing cyberbullying in schools, and
some of the strategies used to do this both inside and outside of the classroom. I believe
that every teacher could benefit from my research due to the growing presence and the
evolution of technologies in our classrooms. In the following section I address what the
research does not outline are the possible broad and narrow implications of the study,
which could affect the educational community, as well as myself as a teacher and a researcher.

5.3.1 Broad Implications

In the educational community, I believe that the greatest implication that will need to be tackled surrounding this issue is the increasing amount of technology being used in our classrooms. This relates to the theme I explained in Chapter 4 titled *Teacher Challenges Addressing Cyberbullying: Resources Outside Of The Classroom* in the subtheme: *Administrative Support: Resources and Professional Development*. This theme encompassed the idea that students are engaged in many different forms of technology inside and outside the classroom but teachers are experiencing a lack of professional development for these technologies to develop their familiarity and proficiency with these technologies. If the educational community, which includes the Ministry of Education and the various school boards, continues to motivate and encourage teachers to integrate technologies into our classrooms, I believe they need to provide proper training to these teachers and implement a curriculum for the students surrounding the ramifications of these technologies. If we are asking our students to use these technologies in our classrooms and at home for homework, rules and/or guidelines need to be outlined so students know that they are held accountable when using these technologies for school. I believe that this will increase the awareness of cyberbullying in general and may reduce the amount of cyberbullying if students are educated surrounding the potential consequences from a young age.

5.3.2 Narrow Implications
As a teacher, I feel that one implication of this research is that it may be challenging to get students to comfortable to confide in me regarding their cyberbullying issues. Despite the increased responsibility being taken by schools, youth are reluctant to involve school staff in handling cyberbullying incidents, fearing that the school response will be ineffective or may even exacerbate the problem. I hope to create a safe learning environment for all my students including incorporating cross-curricular activities to teach cyberbullying awareness. I would do this through subjects that are relatable to students. This coincides with a theme I spoke to in Chapter 4 titled How Teachers Addressed Cyberbullying in the subtheme: Social Media and Emphasizing a Lack of Privacy Online to Students This research suggested to me that there are various ways, both inside and outside of the classroom, to enhance cyberbullying awareness and I will seek to support these efforts and apply these instructional strategies in my own classroom.

As a researcher, the implications of this study suggest that there are not many people researching this issue in regards to the effect of cyberbullying in schools although it continues to be a growing concern in our school system. In the future, I hope to see more research conducted surrounding this topic in order to properly develop in-services and professional development that will aid teachers in the implementation of cyberbullying curriculums.

5.4 Recommendations

To prevent cyberbullying, strong linkages must be established across schools, teachers, and parents. Coordinated efforts at home, at school, and online are crucial to
fostering online awareness and discouraging behaviours that could lead to cyberbullying. Based on the data collected in my research from school teachers and in my literature review I recommend the following action steps for establishing and improving collaborations, keeping youth safe from cyberbullying, and promoting online awareness.

The first recommendation I have is to involve an outreach program that educates students using topics that they can relate to, such as social media. Social media sites can play a prominent role in educating adults, both parents and school personnel, about the changing technology of social media, the negatives and positives of using social media, and the steps they can take to protect youth. Stronger linkages between parents and schools, including additional outreach and educational efforts targeting parents, could help to reduce cyberbullying and lessen the burden on schools to investigate and address incidents. Parents are looking to schools for guidance on how to keep their children safe. By engaging in outreach efforts to schools and parents, social media sites can emphasize their commitment to encouraging positive use of social media and preventing cyberbullying. Through innovative e-learning tools and site-sponsored pages geared specifically towards parents and schools, social media sites could keep these audiences updated regularly with the information and tools they need for primary monitoring and prevention. Social media sites should reach out to school and parent groups to market these tools and ensure that these are highly visible and readily available resources. With the support of social media sites, schools could implement parent education initiatives that include concrete monitoring guidelines and up-to-date technology education.

My second recommendation is geared toward the Ministry of Education and the various school boards. The Ministry and school boards should aim to incorporate
cyberbullying awareness strategies throughout the formal curriculum in as many subject areas as possible. Although our curriculum documents allow our teachers to implement cross-curricular lessons, I believe that the ministry and the school boards should provide professional development to all teachers, not just the new teachers, for the implementation of cyberbullying instructional strategies. Both of my participants are experienced teachers and feel comfortable using technology in their classrooms, which allowed them to incorporate these instructional strategies into a variety of subject areas that their students can relate to. Both my participants expressed that this would be a lot easier to do if they were given more formal training or professional development from the school boards. One of my interviewee’s Michelle stated that if teachers are not exposed to the available cyberbullying resources they will not be able to equally spread the knowledge in each classroom.

I believe that if the Ministry of Education provides all teachers the professional development that is currently offered to a few teachers per year, teachers would be able to better cyberbullying awareness. Like my participants, teachers would be exposed to resources that they could use to implement their own instructional strategies into a cyberbullying curriculum to educate our students about the consequences of cyberbullying.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

I am not concerned about implementing effective instructional responses and approaches surrounding cyberbullying into my curriculum after completing this research. I have gained knowledge and strategies through my research that will enable me to
implement an effective cyberbullying awareness program into my future curriculum as a teacher.

Taking the results of my research into consideration I believe that there are areas to further research regarding cyberbullying curriculums. A question that arose in the course of this research prompted the inquiry question: Why are some teachers allowed to forgo a cyberbullying curriculum in their classroom when there are so many teachers who are going above and beyond to implement it into their classrooms? The curriculum states that we must educate our students in cyberbullying awareness, so if that is the case, then why are some teachers not doing so? A suggestion for future educational researchers is to investigate why some teachers appear to disregard this aspect of the curriculum. A possible avenue to undertake and address this issue may be to speak with school administrators or school boards in order to protect the identity of teachers who are not integrating this curriculum.

5.6 Conclusion

The research I conducted during this two-year process has significance for students and teachers. Cyberbullying is emerging as one of the most challenging issues facing teachers, school administrators, and parents as students embrace the Internet and other mobile communication technologies. Believing they are free from attribution, cyberbullies engage in cruel and harmful practices that degrade, embarrass, and hurt fellow students without the fear of facing the consequences for their actions. Cyberbullying has reached a level of seriousness in the schools that demands swift and decisive action. Because the problem occurs in the hidden online world of students and it
reaches beyond the school and into the home, it is imperative that school administrators, teachers, and parents work together to eradicate this twenty-first century form of bullying. By working together to deal with this cruel practice, parents and educators will ensure that all children share a learning environment that is free from harassment and intimidation. School administrators’ failure to confront cyberbullying head on is to turn their collective backs on the most dangerous aspect of modern technology in our schools. It is essential that all teachers are given the opportunity for professional development on how to implement instructional strategies for cyberbullying into their curriculums so we can ensure that all students are educated about the consequences of cyberbullying.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: October 2015

Dear _______________.

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying cyberbullying education for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor and research supervisor who is providing support for the process this year is Rodney Handelsman. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 45 to 60 minute interview that will be audio-recorded and transcribed. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,
Jessica Carmosino
Researcher name:  Jessica Carmosino
Phone number, email: 

Instructor’s Name:  Rodney Handelsman
Phone #:  Email: 

Research Supervisor’s Name:  Rodney Handelsman
Phone #:  Email: 

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by __________________________ (name of researcher) and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I consent to having this interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ______________________________

Name (printed): ______________________________

Date: ______________________________
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview on the subject of cyberbullying. The goal of this interview is to gain an understanding of pedagogy for cyberbullying that has been shown to be effective for a variety of students regarding the issue of cyberbullying and how it affects bullying behaviour in and outside of schools. This interview should take approximately 45-60 minutes. I will be asking you questions about your experiences incorporating cyberbullying lessons into your curriculum and the affects these lessons have on students. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section 1: Background Information
1. a) Can you please state your name for the recording? 
b) Can you tell me what grades and subjects you currently teach? Have you always taught these grades and subjects? What (if any) are your teachable subjects? 
c) How long have you been teaching? How long have you been in your current school? Aside from classroom teacher, are there any other roles that you fulfill in your school (E.g. teacher advisor to a student club, coach, etc.)?

2. Can you describe the community in which your school and/or former school is situated (E.g. diversity, socioeconomic status; student demographics)?

3. As you know, you were asked to participate in this interview because you have experience and interest in cyberbullying education. Can you tell me how you became interested and committed to this issue? What experiences and/or education have you had that informed this interest and your commitment to this issue?

4. In your teaching experience to date, how common would you say cyberbullying is amongst your students?

Section 2: Teacher Conceptualizations of Cyberbullying
5. What does cyberbullying mean to you? How do you define it? (E.g. what does it include and exclude, in your view)?

6. Can you give me some specific examples of how you have seen cyberbullying playing out amongst your students or students in your school? What happened in these incidences?

Section 3: Teacher Strategies (WHAT/HOW?)
7. You are here for this interview because you identified as a teacher committed to teaching cyberbullying awareness as part of your formal curriculum. Can you tell me more about how you do this?
8. Can you give me a specific example of a cyberbullying lesson that you have taught? What were your learning goals? How did you conduct the lesson? Where did you locate this lesson within the formal curriculum?

9. How did your students respond to this lesson? Generally, how do students respond to lesson on this topic? What indicators of learning have you observed from them?

10. What, if any, specific strategies do you use to educate your students on cyberbullying? Where did you learn these strategies?

11. Do you teach cyberbullying awareness through other means, outside of the formal curriculum (E.g. school clubs, on the playground, etc.)?

12. Do you feel that your cyberbullying curriculum influences other areas of the curriculum you teach? If so, how?

Section 4: Beliefs, Challenges, and Supports

13. In your view, how is the school system (broadly speaking) responding to the issue of cyberbullying? What more do you think could be done?

14. What are some of the greatest obstacles/barriers that you see facing this issue and teaching cyberbullying education?

15. What factors and resources support you in your capacity to teach cyberbullying education?

Section 5: Next Steps (WHAT NEXT?)

16. What do you think could be done to encourage more teachers to implement cyberbullying strategies into their curriculum?

17. What recommendations do you have for the school system (Ministry, boards, administrators, other teachers, parents) when it comes to educating students about cyberbullying?

Thank you so much for your time and insights.