**Problem Statement (Activity)**

**Task:**

**Write the problem statement (word count: 50-60) after reading the given literature review.**

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**Prevalence of Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is something that is has become a new social phenomenon in today’s society. It can often times leave students unable to escape their bullies and leave them feeling alone and helpless. Faucher, Jackson, and Cassidy (2014) performed a study on 1925 students across four Canadian universities that found 24.1 percent of students had been the victims of cyberbullying over the last twelve months. These shocking numbers show that nearly one in every four people have been the victims of this phenomenon. This statistic is interesting however because when compared to studies that were done amongst younger age students you see that the numbers are drastically different. Wegge, Vandebosch, and Eggermont (2014) found that among 1,458 13-14 year old students that considerably less students reported being cyberbullied. This is very similar to what Vanderbosch and Van Cleemput (2009) found among 2052 students in the 12-18 ranges which concluded that 11.1 percent of students had been victims of cyberbullying. This research concludes that cyberbullying appears to be more prevelant in students as they get older. Wegge et al. (2014) also noted that 30.8 percent had been victims of traditional bullying.

This raises the question as to why it seems to be less prevalent among younger students. Is it possible that they simply don’t have as much access to the tools of cyberbullying that students at the university level have, or they possibly aren’t as technologically advances as their older peers? It continues to raise questions about the issue of cyberbullying as well as what classifies the perpetrators as well as what are their reasons for harming others.

The types of people who bully. An important factor when analyzing cyberbullying is trying to understand the types of people who are the aggressors. The first thing that needs to be discussed when analyzing this is the simple matter of gender when it comes to who is generally the aggressor. Slonje and Smith (2008) found that when it comes to cyberbullying males are more often than not the aggressors with males being reported as the cyberbully far more often than females. Slonje et al (2008) also found that 36.2 percent of students were unaware of the gender of their aggressors. This is intriguing because for one it is the same percentage as the number of males who bullied, but most importantly because it shows that over 1 in 3 students don’t actually know who is bullying them, which adds to the fear and stigma that is related to cyberbullying and not being able to escape the perpetrators.

The types of people who are victims. Researchers have also conducted various studies on the types of people who are cyberbullied, or what is often referred to as “cybervictomology”. Abeele and Cock (2013) conducted a study, which concluded that the gender of victims varied greatly depending on the form of cyberbullying. Abeele et al. (2013) found that males are more likely to be on the receiving end of direct cyberbullying while females are more likely to be the victims of indirect cyberbullying such as online gossip among peers. These findings appear to remain true to social norms where males are viewed as more confrontational and females are often stereotyped as gossipers.

While not many studies look at the gender of the victims many studies do research things such as the characteristics of the victims. Faucher et al. (2014) found that there were numerous reasons that people felt they were the victims of cyberbullying such as their personal appearance, interpersonal problems, as well as simply having discrepancies about their views. Davis, Randall, Ambrose, and Orand (2015) also conducted a study about victims and their demographics, which looked at the reasons people, were cyberbullied. Some of the results in the Davis et al. (2015) study addressed other reasons for being bullied in which they found that 14 percent of victims had been bullied because of factors such as their sexual orientation.

These are all very important because it fits the profile of the traditional bully that many people envision but it shows that it transfers over into the cyber world as well. This leads on further questions about the relationship between the two and how the cyberbullying is influencing where and how the harassment is continuing.

The relationship between bully and victim. The relationship between aggressor and victim is also something that has been heavily research among professionals. Beran and Li (2007) conducted a study that involved 432 middle school students and concluded that just under half of the students had been victims of cyberbullying as well as traditional bullying. This is true across multiple studies. Wegge et al. (2014) also concluded that people who were bullied in traditional manners had a much higher likelihood to become victims of cyberbullying. Another interesting relationship between bully and victim is that studies have also shown that people who are victims are likely to become aggressors in the online world. Beran et al. (2007) confirms this by stating, “students who are bullied through technology are likely to us technology to bully others”.

Faucher et al. (2014) also found similar results claiming that male and female students decided to bully people online because they were bullied first.

Research has also been done that looks at how the bullies find their victims. Wegge et al. (2014) studied the perpetrators preferences in victims and found that 27 percent were in the same grade, 14.2 percent were in different grades and a staggering 49.6 percent were not schoolmates of the bullies. This evidence somewhat contradicts that of the other studies that state victims are generally bullied at school and at home because it shows that nearly half of the bullies prefer to bully people they don’t go to school with and possibly have do not know at all. This continues to build and add to the idea of cyberbullying in that it allows bullies to create their own personas and images in order to try and intimidate and influence others without actually providing a physical intimidation factor.

**Effects of Cyberbullying**

The first part of this literature review focused on the demographics of the bullies and their victims, but now we will focus on the lasting effects and the trauma it brings to the victims as well as the different forms of cyberbullying. While the platforms used are different the lasting effects that the bullying has on the victims are very similar. Faucher et al. (2014) concluded that one of the main effects that cyberbullies had on university students was that they were unable to accomplish some of their school assignments. While many people think of effects of bullying to be simply depression or low self-esteem this study brought light to a much different more unexpected issue. Beran et al. (2007) also found similar responses from victims of cyberbullying claiming that they often didn’t achieve the same marks in school and had lower concentration. These findings indicate that the lasting impact that a cyberbully has on their victims is often more harmful than what most people can see on the surface.

Pieschl, Porsch, Kahl, and Klocken busch (2013) found that cyber victims generally were less distressed during the second confrontation with a cyberbully. This interesting finding indicates that victims of cyberbullies may actually become desensitized to the aggression over time lessening the effects of the bullying.

Victims coping techniques. When being faced by a bully it is important that victims learn to cope and move on from their experiences in order to prevent them from suffering in their personal and professional life like some of the victims in previous studies. Davis et al. (2014) conducted a study on victim coping techniques where they broke the techniques into two distinct categories, which were behavioral and cognitive strategies. Davis et al. (2014) found that 74 percent of participants preferred behavioral strategies and of those 74 percent, 69 percent of those people found the strategies to be effective. These behavioral strategies included seeking social support, making a creative outlet, or ignoring and blocking the bully. Because of the growing trend of cyberbullying there have been people who have developed different programs to help raise awareness for cyberbullying as well as offer help to the victims. One of these programs is known as Cyberprogram 2.0. Garaigordobil and Martinez-Valderrey (2015) conducted a study testing the effectiveness of this program and found that it was effective in decreasing the amount of traditional as well as cyberbullying, but also and more importantly it raised empathy among classmates towards the victims of these actions. This is a big step in combatting bullying because peers are constantly influencing each other. If the general consensus among the class is that bullying is not funny and not right because they empathize with the victims than it can go a long way in changing the social norm. If the attention is no longer given to the bully by classmates and victims it could potentially cut back on the frequency of this act.

With that being said it raises the question instead of trying to cope, why not just remove yourself from the situation all together and not give the bully what they desire? Arnt field (2005) discussed the risk associated with using social media and concluded that “intrinsic rewards that were not tied directly to winning as much as they were to fantasies of power, celebrity, sexuality, and elevated social status that came with participating, win or lose.”. This conclusion is one that is very accurate and relevant to the way adolescence as well as university level students think in today’s society. The fact of the matter is in order to fit in and be considered “cool” amongst your peers you need to be on social media to understand many of the things that are talked about amongst students. Whether it be trending hashtags, viral videos, or popular memes these are all things that are commonly shared and talked about between peers. While students may run the risk of being bullied on these sites, they also run the risk of being bullied for not knowing the newest updates in our culture, it is truly a viscous cycle.

Forms of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying gives the bully a much larger spectrum to choose from when it comes to how exactly they want to intimidate their victims which may be why it is often easier for them to carry out the act. Of all the different ways to cyberbully Faucher et al. (2014) found the most common platforms for cyberbullying to be social media, text messaging, and email which were used to bully students about half of the time followed up by blogs forums and chat rooms which were 25 percent. This is no surprise that social media is the most common platform for cyberbullying because it can allow for the bully to remain completely anonymous to your average victim. This allows people who may not fit the mold of your average bully to create a fake account and build their own persona in order to bully others. Multiple studies also address a critical factor of using social media or the Internet to bully others, which is that; the photos or hurtful comments, can remain in cyberspace virtually forever. Davis et al. (2014) mentions how they received viewed several responses that talked about “how their traditional bullying experience would have been magnified if they had occurred in todays digital era”. Faucher et al. (2014) also talk about how cyberbullying has a longer “shelf life” than your average bullying. This plays such a huge role because with the aggressive material on the internet it can often be revisited and the pain can constantly be brought back to light for the victims making the experience that much more traumatic.

Social media is very prevalent among cyberbullies but there is also extensive research done on cell phones and the role they play in the act of cyberbullying. Abeele et al. (2013) studied various aspects of mobile phone bullying and found that the most prevalent type was gossiping via text message, followed by gossiping over the phone, and concluded with threatening others over text message. Abeele et al. (2013) also found that girls were more often than not the perpetrators of gossiping while boys made slightly more threats via cell phone. This numbers tend lean towards the stereotype of females being more of gossipers and males generally being more aggressive and physical. This is also interesting because shows that that society’s stereotypes appear to remain true even in a cyberworld.