Cyber-bullying in the Online Classroom: Instructor Perceptions of Aggressive Student Behavior

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Abstract

The advent of online learning has created the medium for cyber-bullying in the virtual classroom and also by e-mail. Bullying is usually expected in the workplace and between students in the classroom. Most recently, however, faculty members have become surprising targets of online bullying. For many, there are no established policies nor is training provided on how to react. The current research defines the problem, reviews the findings of a cyber-bullying survey, and explores recommendations for addressing cyber-bullying through policies, training, and professional development.

Introduction

Bullying in schools is not a new phenomenon. Most people have been involved in bullying as either a recipient, a bully, or as a witness, in the capacity of instructors, administrators, or students. Typically, bullying is first associated with the elementary and junior-high school yard. For some victims, bullying progresses to high school, or to college, and to the workplace. As the number of students enrolled in online courses continues to increase, the avenues for bullying have naturally expanded into the online teaching realm. In the fall of 2011, of the 17.7 million college students, only 16 percent were attending traditional 4-year colleges and living on campus (Allen and Seaman, 2013). Types of cyber-bullying could include cyber-assaults, libel, misappropriation of likeness, defamation, and false light invasion of privacy.

Communication styles of both online and face-to-face students have changed from formal, respectful business-style letters to the informality of text message-type interactions, emoticons, and casual abbreviations such as "LOL" (laugh out loud) with the added expectation of immediate response. These trends have contributed to an isolated, albeit high-speed, communication method of learning and have contributed to an increase in cyber-bullying. Students now have the capability to spread their personal dislikes, disgust, complaints, and gossip, whether warranted or not (and, whether factual or not) to any number of recipients at lightning speed. One author notes student expectation of a grade based on completion of assignment versus the quality of the product. In his observations, failure is not an expectation or an acceptable option for online students and often results in cyber-retaliation. This often escalates to false accusations, name-calling, non-factual high-speed rumors, and unabashed cyber-speed expressions of contempt. Personal attacks and slander are common and are directed to peers, other instructors, and college administrators.

Based on today's college communications, social media, and personal e-mails, hundreds, even thousands of recipients can be reached in a short period of time. As noted by a number of researchers (Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J., 2011), e-mails, text-messaging, chat rooms, cellular phones, camera phones, websites, blogs, etc., contribute to the spread of derogatory and ostracizing comments about fellow students, teachers, and other individuals. This correspondence cannot be retracted easily and can be broadcast to a wider audience.

Focus of Research

The current research intended to address four questions and issues:

1. What is the extent of online faculty cyber-bullying by students at a Midwestern university?
2. Are online instructors aware of the policies and procedures that are in place to handle issues of cyber-bullying at the institution? How have online faculty addressed the issue of cyber-bullying?
3. Was this effective?
4. Based on the results, what preventive measures, policies, and training are needed to reduce and discourage cyber bullying in online education settings?

Methods

For the current research, cyber-bullying was defined for respondents as the use of electronic devices such as computers, iPads, cell phones, or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt, intimidate, or embarrass another person, to include such behavior as:

- Flaming: Online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language.
- Harassment and stalking: Repeatedly sending cruel, vicious, and/or threatening messages. A single message can constitute cyber-bullying depending on the circumstances. Often times when this occurs instructors are unprepared to react and where to seek support.
- Mobbing: A group of students cyber-bully a particular instructor.

The research focused on a little-examined area of the online faculty experience of being a victim of cyber-bullying. Few studies have focused on this phenomenon. In the fall semester of 2013, a sample of 550 online instructors were contacted resulting in a total of 202 online faculty members (103 males and 99 females) responses (37% response rate) to a 49 question survey instrument. The survey link was distributed via university e-mail. Respondents were informed that the survey was voluntary and that their responses were confidential. Respondents included full-time and adjunct online instructors at a Midwestern university that had actively taught an online course in the last two academic years. Most respondents were from the Colleges of Liberal Arts & Sciences, the School of Business, the School of Education and the School for Public Affairs. Instructor observations of college students in classroom settings, a baseline survey of students, conversations with instructors at other U.S. colleges, and a thorough literature review suggests student classroom uses of digital devices for non-class purposes causes learning distractions, to include online bullying. This launched a research agenda focused on studying student classroom uses of digital devices for non-class purposes, and the effects that such behavior may have on classroom learning. The survey addressed the frequency and intensity of non-class related digital distractions in the extent of online faculty cyber-bullying by students, online faculty awareness of the policies and processes in place to handle issues of cyber-bullying at the institution, how online faculty addressed the issue of cyber-bullying, the effectiveness of how the issues of cyber-bullying is addressed; and, what preventive measures, policies, and training were needed to reduce and discourage future cyber bullying in online education settings.

Institutional Review Board approval was obtained before the survey's administration. The survey included a cover page statement informing respondents that the survey's completion and submission constituted their consent to participate in the survey. The survey team did not ask respondents to state their name, but researcher identified colleges and schools via the college database associated with survey responses. In addition to the authors, Henry C. Roehrich, PhD contributed to the survey research.

Measures

Using CampusLabs.com as a data collection tool, qualitative data results were compared statistically and by respondent gender, and discipline. The analysis also looked at the frequency of responses. The survey contained demographic questions to determine gender, age, ethnicity, educational level, discipline taught, years and number of courses taught, and number of years teaching online.

General demographic questions were asked in the first section of the survey; the results follow. Fifty-one percent of respondents were male; one-third of those responding possessed a terminal degree. Seventy percent of the respondents were 46 years of age or over, and 45 percent had taught online for at least 11 years. The preliminary analysis of the respondents indicated that 50 percent had personally experienced student cyber-bullying. Of these, 14 percent reported "once", 29 percent - "2 to 5 times", and 8 percent, six or more times. Additionally, 23 percent of the respondents were aware of other faculty members that had been bullied online. This small percentage may be attributed to the relative isolation of online instructors, a circumstance that does not afford the opportunity to discuss experiences with peer groups. The impact of isolation on geographically separated faculty has been documented in several studies. (Dolan, 2011; Fouche, 2006; Ng, 2006)

Findings by past research (Minor, Smith & Brashen, 2013; Smith, 2007) support the findings that 17 – 30 percent of faculty respondents have received email or instant messaging that "threatened, insulted, or harassed." Many perceived "threats" were targeted at going to the chair or administration over grades or other assignment- and course-related matters. As requesting administrative review of grading is a normal process in academia, further studies may be needed to explore why this was considered bullying and whether study respondents were given adequate time by students to respond to questions about grading before threats to go to the department chair or administration began.

Findings

The research explored cyber-bullying through the examination of online instructors' perceptions about cyber-bullying and perceived support. The analysis of a survey data collected from 202 online instructors addressed a number of perceptions and issues. The following section highlights the emergent themes and findings. Questions asked include: (1) What is the extent of online faculty cyber-bullying by students? (2) How have online faculty addressed the issue of cyber-bullying? (3) Are online instructors aware of the policies and processes in place to handle issues of cyber-bullying at the institution? (4) Based on the results, what preventive measures, policies, and training are needed to reduce and discourage cyber bullying in online education settings?

The first main finding concerns the extent of cyber-bullying of online instructors by students. Forty-six percent of the respondents reported some type of student complaints; 15 percent involved attacks on their personal qualifications; 31 percent include student use of university e-mails to personally attack the instructor; thirty-three percent of the respondents reported being bullied more than once, and 21 percent did not feel that their problem had been handled effectively by their superiors or administration.

Did respondents consider cyber-bullying a problem in higher education? From the responses, only 39 percent of respondents did not feel that cyber-bullying was a problem. While 38 percent felt that cyber-bullying of online faculty was a "slight" problem", 22 percent felt that it was a moderate to large problem.

The major reasons those bullied attributed to student cyber-bullying were grade-related (48%) and assignment-related (32/8%) with some being age-related, outside work-related, gender-related or family-related. Some examples of the faculty comments related to student cyber-bullying are as follows:

- A couple of students disagreed with grading of the discussions. They complained to me and tried to get their grades improved. They sent emails to all other students in the class trying to get them to pressure me to ease grading and ignore the grading rubric
- A student questioned my requirement to cite his sources and threatened to go to the top; he did (went to the president's office)
- A student threatened to "talk to the Dean" if I did not take his assignment
- A student was not happy about his plagiarized paper receiving a zero. He threatened via email to take the situation over my head.
- A student was unhappy with my plans for the final exam and he tried to rally his classmates via the eCollege
- Flamed online in a blog and "Rate your Professor" website

Secondly, what was the response to the research question of "how have online faculty addressed the issue of cyber-bullying?" Of those reporting being bullied, 55 percent stated they addressed the issue themselves. Twenty three percent contacted the academic director, and 45 percent contacted either their chair or program coordinator. The possibility of a communication gap may contribute to the "non-reporting of cyber-bullying" or other course issues. For those who reported that they had been cyber-bullied, the procedure is to contact the academic director and program coordinator. As revealed in Table One below, those bullied were most likely to maintain frequent contact via e-mail with online staff members, the

program coordinator, and other online adjunct instructors. Contact with other key members of the online community was somewhat infrequent with 75 to 85 percent reporting either annual contact or "never" contacting via e-mail. Certainly, not all communication needs to be based on crises situations or problems; however, the data indicated that limited e-mail communication between online instructors and key individuals in the institutional academic process contributed to the problem.

Table One

Communication with University Personnel via E-mail by Percentage of Frequency of Contact

Position / Frequency of Contacts (%)	Never	Annually	Once or Twice Per Term	Monthly	Weekly
Program Coordinator	37	22	30	5	6
Academic Director	60	19	15	4	1
Department Chair	57	18	15	5	5
Assigned Mentor	68	16	11	0	4
Department Faculty Member	67	9	13	6	5
Online Staff Member	28	14	24	21	8
Other Online Adjunct	55	13	17	7	8

Table Two, below, depicts the frequency of telephone contacts between online instructors that have reported cyber-bullying and key institutional members. Other than reported telephone contact with other online adjuncts, little telephone contact was reported between online instructors and the program coordinator, academic director, department chair, assigned mentor, or other department faculty members.

Table Two

Communication with University Personnel via Telephone by Percentage of Frequency of Contact

Position / Frequency of Contacts (%)	Never	Annually	Once or Twice Per Term	Monthly	Weekly
Program Coordinator	79	4	10	3	3
Academic Director	83	8	7	1	1
Department Chair	82	6	8	1	3
Assigned Mentor	96	2	1	0	1
Department Faculty Member	86	4	3	3	4
Online Staff Member	84	6	6	3	1
Other Online Adjunct	63	15	11	6	1

The third issue addressed whether online instructors were aware of the policies and procedures that are in place to handle issues of the cyber-bullying at the institution. While there was a formal university process of going through the Dean of Student Life or Academic Director starting with a concern form, only 30 percent of respondents affirmed that they were aware of the university having a process in place to handle cyber-bullying as shown in Figure One below.

Figure One

Awareness That Institution Had a Process in Place to Handle Cyber-Bullying

Figure1
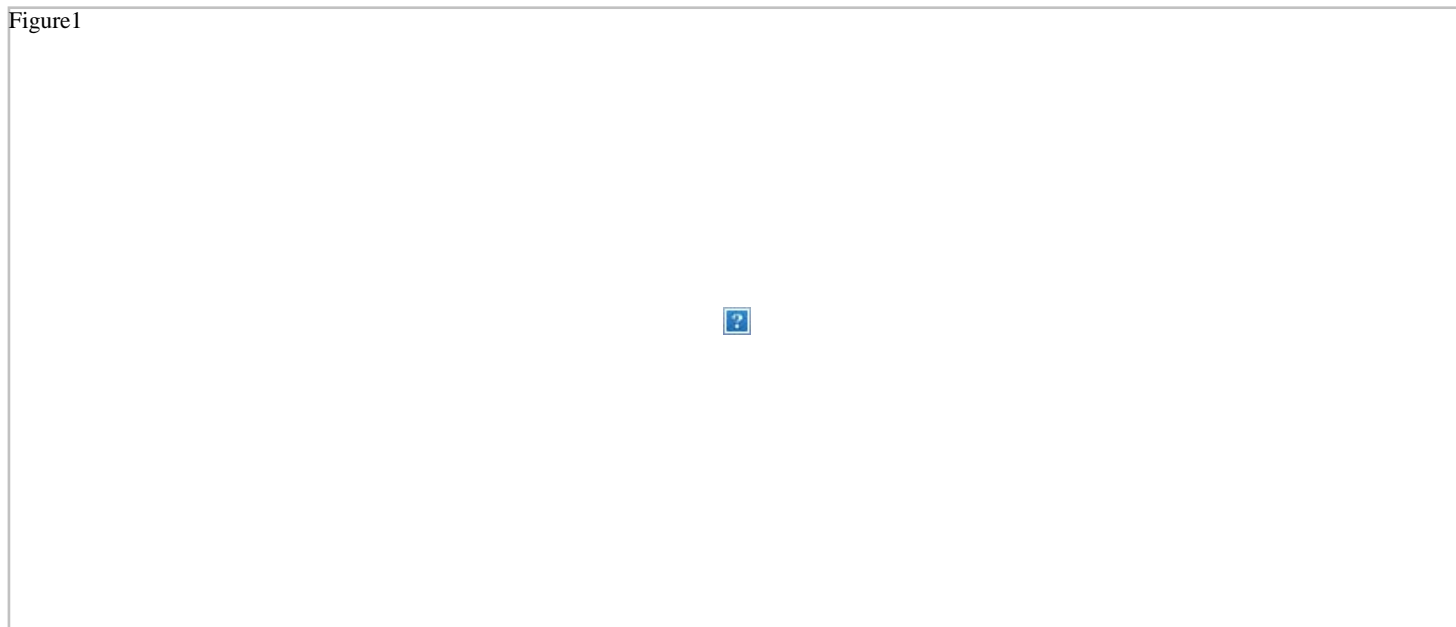
Strikingly, two-thirds of all respondents stated that they either did not know-about or did not feel that the university had resources available to help instructors properly handle a cyber-bullying situation. Seventy-one percent of all respondents stated that they were not aware that their institution had such a process in place. Respondents did not appear to know how to identify cyber-bullying or the process to follow when it occurred. A similar concern from the survey was that only 32 percent of respondents felt there were resources available to properly handle a cyber-bullying situation. That is, two-thirds of respondents either reported that they did not feel the institution had the resources to handle a cyber-bullying situation, or they "didn't know" if they had the resources to do so as exhibited in Figure Two below.

Figure Two

Felt That Institution Had Resources to Handle Cyber-Bullying
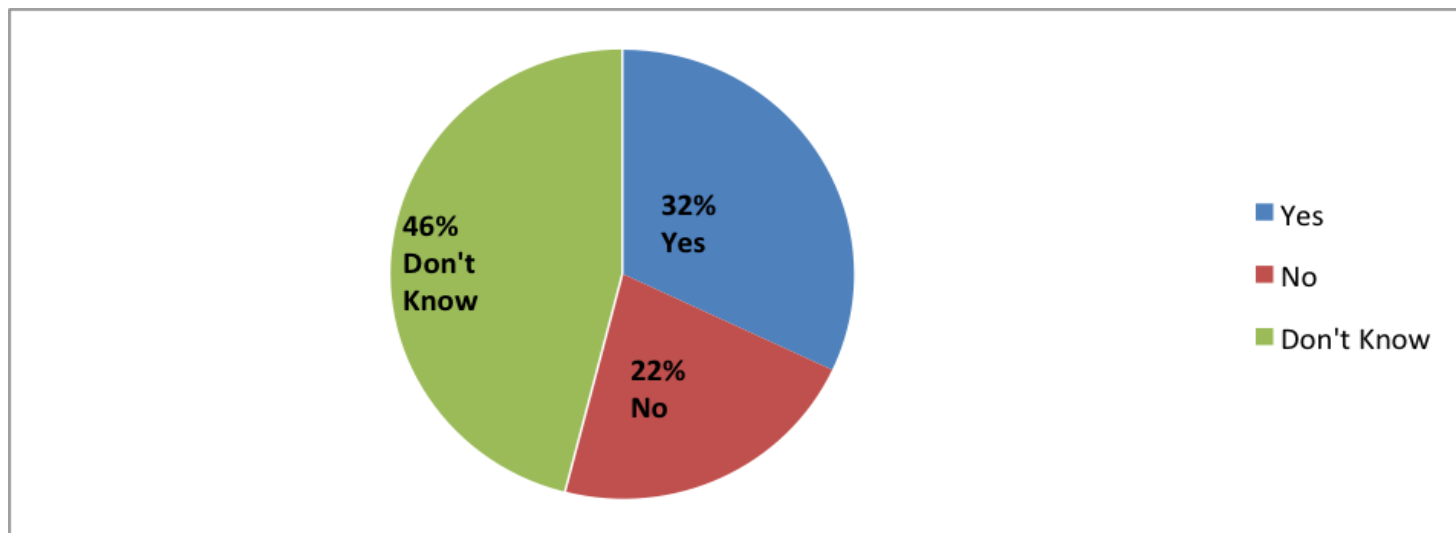

Did respondents who were aware of the institutional policy on cyber-bullying utilize it? Only 10 percent of respondents reported doing so although 51 percent reported some type of cyber-bullying. Twenty-one percent of respondents simply ignored the bullying and took no action. How was the cyber-bullying handled? As only 31 percent reported an awareness of resources available, most of the issues were handled by the instructor (31%), followed by the program coordinator (17%), the academic director (12%) and department chair (9%). Respondent comments were mixed on the success of addressing student bullying in their online courses. The majority of respondents identified a need for university commitment in training and professional development for instructors and university-wide education to students addressing cyber-bullying prevention and consequences.

Unfortunately, the study results found that respondents were reluctant to report bullying by students or faculty. As mentioned, adjunct faculty members are often working in isolation, which might affect their response to bullying as well as other course situations. Teaching online as an adjunct is competitive, and reporting course problems may be perceived by adjuncts as detrimental to being assigned to teach future classes. When asked, 36 percent did not feel reporting bullying would be held against them, 20 percent said "yes"; and 44 reported that they were not sure. Thus, two-thirds of reporting faculty were unsure or fearful about possible repercussions about reporting bullying and may be inclined not do so to avoid penalties as shown in Figure Three below.

Figure Three

Felt that Reporting Bullying Will Be Held Against Them
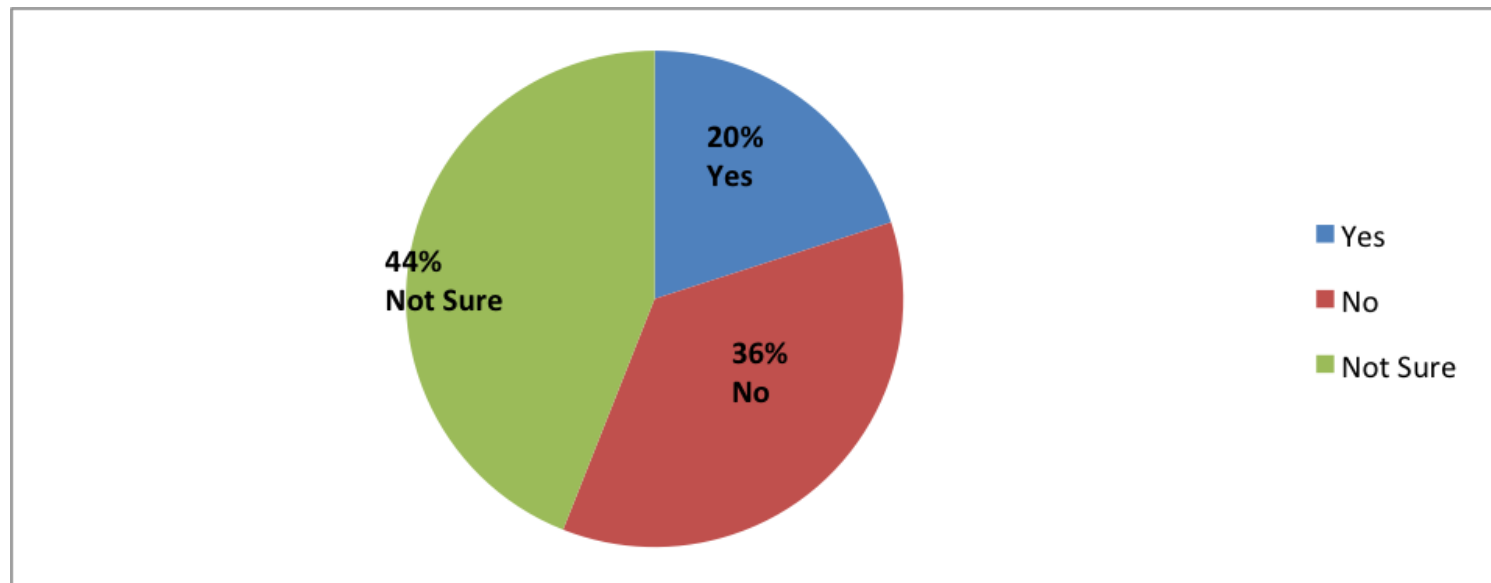
Fourth, what was the response to the research question "based on the results, what preventive measures, policies, and training are needed to reduce and discourage cyber bullying in online education settings?" Only six percent of respondents indicated they had received adequate training to manage cyber-bullying; nine percent indicated some training as shown in Figure Four below. This leaves 85 percent that had received no training to address or report cyber-bullying. Similarly, 85 percent of all respondents expressed a need for professional development training related to cyber-bullying in the university's online training.

Figure Four

Received Specific Training in Responding to or Reporting Cyber-Bullying
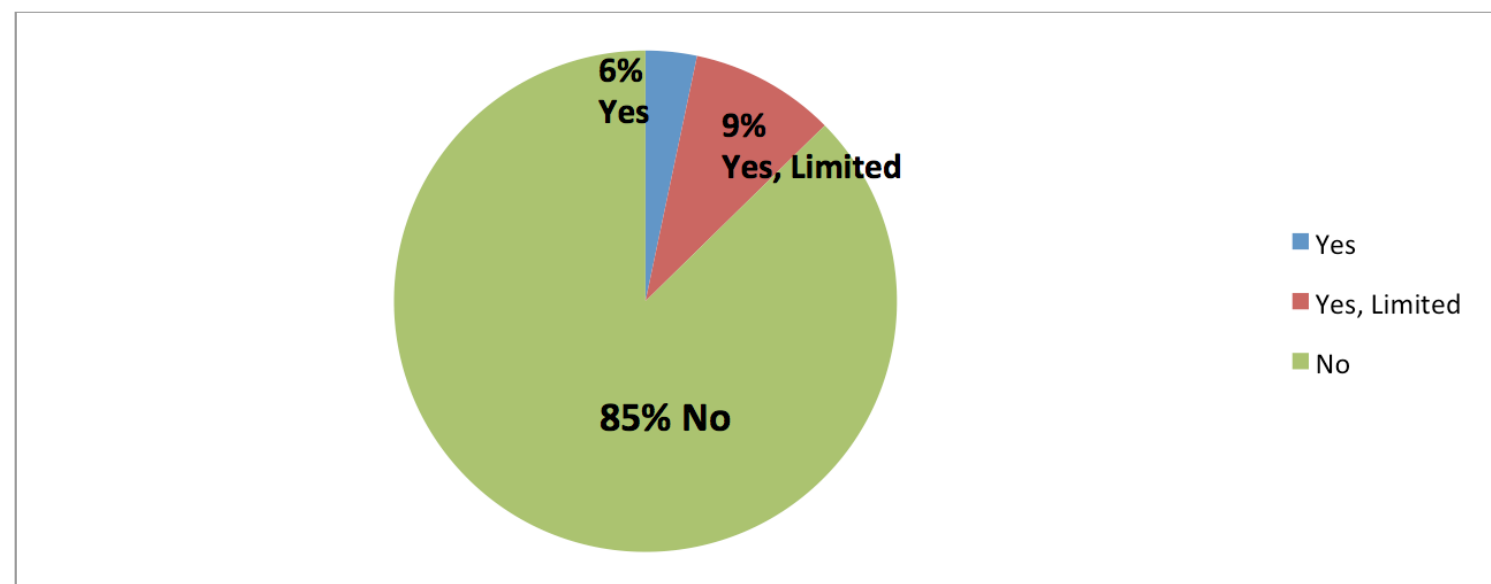
Training and education for recognizing, addressing, and reporting cyber-bullying are key activities to ensure that cyber-bullying is properly handled and that online instructors are fully protected. From the survey results, online instructors were neither aware of their responsibilities nor were equipped to deal with situations of cyber-bullying from their students.

Faculty respondents were aware of their shortfalls. Many were aware, as recipients and targets of student bullying, and from national attention on this phenomenon, that a number of students utilize bullying in the classroom for many reasons. Six of ten respondents perceived a need for professional development for training related to bullying. One-fourth of respondents were not sure if they needed professional development in this area. Instructors were provided in-depth training in facilitation, pedagogy, and the learning management system, but cyber-bullying and the process of reporting is neither addressed in initial training nor provided in separate professional development training as captured in Figure Five.

Figure Five

Perceived a Need for Professional Development Training Related to Bullying

Recommendations

In light of the survey results, what is the answer to the research question: "what preventive measures, policies, and training are needed to reduce and discourage cyber bullying in online education settings?" The role of the administration will first be examined and then take away points will be proffered. There is an implication that creating policies and resources that educate both students and faculty on the institutional definition of cyber-bullying is needed. Additionally, online instructors must be trained on how to identify cyber-bullying, how to react appropriately and professionally to being the victim of cyber-bullying, who to go to when cyber-bullying is experienced, and the consequences to students and faculty who are found to be cyber-bullying others is imperative. Please note that the authors of this paper did not intend to provide legal advice or to create an attorney client relationship in writing this paper or in making the following recommendations.

Cyber-bullying can create many challenges for online instructors. Bullying can be student against student, a group of students against one student (mobbing) or it can be directed upwards, toward the instructor, in upwards bullying. Upwards bullying has been explored in managerial settings by Branch, et al (2007); the physical and psychological impact of mobbing in an employment setting has been studied by Leyman and Gustafsson. (1996) Upwards bullying can be one student against an instructor or a group of students against the instructor (upwards mobbing).

Bullying of an instructor can involve challenges to teaching skills, credentials, a lack of experience of new instructors, and also spring from challenges to the subject matter, the textbook choice, and exam questions. Sometimes, bullying occurs early in the term over a small point value assignment and escalates. Disputes over grading are often the genesis of the bullying. Clear rubrics and adherence to those rubrics in grading may be one way for faculty to proactively avoid these disputes. A university policy requiring rubrics for all assignments and training on drafting rubrics for faculty, especially new or adjunct instructors could be beneficial.

Responsibilities of the Administration

What are the responsibilities of administration? The university first needs to create a response plan to address reports of cyber-bullying of faculty. Periodic consultation with an attorney may be necessary to determine the legal responsibilities of the university to students and faculty involved in such incidents. Promptly responding to all complaints is priority number one. Victims and investigators of cyber-bullying should keep documentation of all correspondence. It is essential to keep this information; that is, nothing can be deleted or erased anything unless absolutely necessary. A copy must be made prior to deleting bullying material such as postings in the discussion forum. Printing out the copy and also making a digital copy would be a best practice. Additionally, providing training to instructors and creating an anti- bullying policy would also be very helpful for the prevention of the problem. These two recommendations will be discussed later in depth. Policies may need to be updated periodically as the law is dynamic in nature.

Students who bully instructors could continue the bullying pattern with administration. The authors have observed this. Administrators should consult with legal or peers/mentors to determine an action plan if needed. Training to recognize bullying behavior and a plan to wait a day or two to respond to avoid making emotional decisions in response to the bullying would be ideal for administrators and faculty alike. If students call administrators directly, a script such as "I will look into this and respond within 48 hours" is preferable to making a decision on the spot. Impromptu decisions made without the instructor's perspective are likely to be problematic.

Cyber-bullying of an instructor by a student can be a very complex situation. Students who are engaging in cyber-bullying behavior may have underlying complaints that are legitimate. For example, student complaints about an instructor's strict grading on a small assignment early in the term are a common underlying complaint observed by the authors. Additionally, cyber-bullies sometimes complain of being cyber-bullied. A thorough review is required. Establishing a timeline approach based on date and time and reviewing all correspondence is recommended.

When reviewing a cyber-bullying case, collaboration between faculty members is essential. An expert on online issues is needed to evaluate the bullying complaint, but a subject matter expert may also be needed to review grading complaints and other issues. Unfortunately, many institutions are just beginning to offer online courses and have little experience in handling outside problems associated with this format. Finally, students who are bullies frequently escalate complaints to the administration and could contact the dean or president directly. Threatening legal action can sometimes occur even in an initial complaint. This escalating behavior adds a layer of complexity and stress as additional explanations to and interaction with the administration may be required.

Designating an investigator to receive initial complaints regarding student cyber-bullying of faculty could be an option. The authors' institution has a faculty position that is dedicated to handling online academic issues—the online academic director. This position has been in place for over ten years. Both students and faculty who are bullied would report this to the director by submitting an incident report form. Complaints are initially received by this individual; more serious complaints would go to the academic chairs or the Dean. She contacts course developers if subject matter knowledge is required in determining legitimacy of student complaints. Sometimes, complaints can be quickly resolved, but others can take a long time.

How should policies be revised to include cyber-bullying? After consultation with legal counsel, the administration may need to change the current policies, either by adding to or changing coverage to include electronically generated abuse, threats, and stalking. Current policies may be found sufficient if training is added. What are other institutions doing? As part of the current research, the student handbooks and codes of conduct for 15

colleges and universities (a mix of private and public, for profit and not-for profit) were reviewed as described in Table Three. The specific focus was on specific types of behavior that constituted student misconduct. These policies typically addressed harassment, intimidation, and disruption to the learning environment but did not specifically address cyber-bullying or electronic harassment (or limited activities or behavior related to electronic devices).

Table Three

Comparison of Institutions by Student Conduct Code Restrictions

Institution	Public/ Private	Majority Online Students	Technology Use Policy	Technology Harassment Policy	Fully Online Degree Program
Albany State University (GA)	Public	No	Yes	Yes	B/M
GA Regents University	Public	No	Yes	Yes	B/M
Excelsior College (NY)	Private	Yes	Yes	No	B/M
Georgia Perimeter College	Public	No	Yes	No	AA /B
Armstrong Atlantic University (GA)	Public	No	No	N/A	B
Georgia Southern University	Public	No	Yes	Yes	B/M
Georgia State University	Public	No	No	N/A	B/M
Troy University (AL)	Public	Yes	No	N/A	B/M
Valdosta State University (GA)	Public	No	Yes	Yes	B/M
Park University (MO)	Private	Yes	Yes	Yes	B/M
Kaplan University	Private – for Profit	Yes	No	N/A	B/M/D
Columbia College	Private	Yes	No	N/A	B/M
Middle Georgia State College	Public	No	No	N/A	A/B
Columbus State University	Public	No	Yes	No	B/M
Kennesaw State University (GA)	Public	No	Yes	Yes	B/M/D

These codes varied to the extent in which they define inappropriate behavior and the degree in which those found in violation of these codes will be punished. While the terms 'disrupt', 'disruptive', and 'harassment' appeared numerous times in many of the institution's codes of conduct, 'bullying' only appeared in three of the selected institutions' handbooks. 'Stalking' is generally included in the institutions' sexual harassment policies, although Valdosta State University actually using the term "cyber-stalking" to define one of the prohibited practices, implying that the transmission of virtual unwanted advances or other forms of harassment warrant similar punishments as those made in person. Kennesaw State University employed the term "cyber-bullying" to differentiate between traditional bullying, harassment, and intimidation and bullying done with electronic device, but did not designate an alternative punishment, either more or less severe; however, the use of this modern term implies an awareness of both the practice and protocol of online harassment by the institution's administration. Excelsior, a private institution with over 35,000 online students, included an electronic policy with a number of restrictions for participating online and a number of graduated restrictions and repercussions if allegations are confirmed. The associated penalties for committing any of the outlined infractions differed very little from the penalties associated with violations that are not covered in the electronic use policy.

Often, a disconnect existed between what is explicitly forbidden and how perpetrators will be punished upon being found in violation of the non-permissible action. Some of the student conduct policies included prohibited activities, but provided little in terms of repercussions. Other codes of

conduct provided little specifics in prohibited activity, but were detailed when describing punishments and often provided multiple classifications and varying levels of severity for particular actions. Without including details about appropriate and inappropriate conduct, as well as specific detailing of repercussions, when perpetrators are found in violation, institutions may find their policies to be lacking when reviewing cases of alleged cyber-bullying.

In addition to the relatively vague policies dictating impermissible virtual behavior, often the institutional codes of conduct did little to differentiate between inappropriate conduct for students and faculty/staff. Codes were generally written in an all-encompassing manner, only referring specifically to faculty members when the subject matter involves student disruptive behavior in the classroom, (in none of the codes was student bullying of faculty members included in this particular area). Ultimately, the non-specific nature of the included institutional codes of conduct revealed that the institutions were lacking in both their policies specifically related to student conduct towards faculty members as well as overall institutional conduct in the virtual realm.

Colleges and universities generally were using their existing codes of conduct to address these cases but not specifically covering or discouraging that behavior directly related to cyber-bullying. Some policies seemed to define harassment and disruption narrowly (physical harassment or disruption of the classroom), and this may not apply to all levels and types of cyber-bullying. Universities should be cautious when restricting communications due to free speech and academic freedom concerns. Again, consultation with an attorney that is well-versed on these issues is recommended when drafting and updating these policies. Inclusion of faculty representation is also recommended so faculty concerns can be addressed. These policies are needed because, although most states are in the process of enacting legislation to protect school-age children from cyber-bullying, these laws may not protect college-age adults in any way. (Hinduja & Patchen, 2012; Sacco, et al, 2012)

Take-Away Points

In formal and informal discussions and lectures, universities should "try to make sure the students understand that number one, it is against the law; number two, it's against school policy" to engage in bullying activity (Breitenhaus, 2010). Repetitive education and enforcement will ensure that students understand that the administration is clearly behind anti-bullying/anti-cyber-bullying programs. There are real penalties for cyber-bullying. The consequences must be clarified for students. The fear and threat of suspension, expulsion, criminal prosecution, and/or civil lawsuits should normally deter the majority of students from such behavior. A myriad of ways for colleges and universities to help prevent incidents of cyber-bullying exist. Suggestions will be enumerated as follows.

First, as noted earlier, policies and resources should be created and routinely shared with faculty and students. Policies could include the institutional definition of cyber-bullying, how to identify cyber-bullying, instructions for faculty on how to react appropriately and professionally to being the victim of cyber-bullying, who in the administration to go to when cyber-bullying is experienced, and the consequences to students and faculty who are found to be cyber-bullying. The possibility for faculty to cyber-bully students exists although the authors have never experienced this, and the administration should include that in training to protect all parties.

In particular, the administrators could enact a policy of instructing and warning students of improper online behavior while participating in an online course. Make it mandatory that students read it, understand it, and agree to comply with it. Possible features could include graduated consequences and remedial actions, procedures for reporting, and procedures for investigating. Specific language to the *Tinker* standard (*Tinker*, 393 U.S. 503) regarding circumstances when a student's speech or behavior results in a substantial disruption of the learning environment could be appropriate but needs to be based on legal counsel.

While current instructors have not received such training in their initial online training, this can be added to future initial training for newly hired online instructors. Additionally, professional development classes can be developed and provided for current online instructors for recognizing, addressing, and reporting cyber-bullying. At the authors' school, the University Catalog (Student Conduct Code) addresses a number of behaviors that are not permitted, but does not mention anything related to electronic devices or communication. This could be added to clarify the rules to students.

Second, administrators should add cyber-bullying training to new faculty orientation or training for online faculty so that faculty will be aware of what to look for, how to address it, and how to report it. Emphasize and assure the instructors that this will have no negative repercussions on them; in fact, they are encouraged to report all cyber-bullying. It is assumed that all online instructors are proficient in the facilitation of their course using the university learning management system; but, a proficiency in other methods used by students in cyber-bullying such as text-messaging, instant messaging, chat rooms, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, for example, are not assumed and may actually hinder some instructors in the recognition of potential problems. Third, if the institution has a resource internet repository for instructors, place detailed information on addressing and reporting bullying.

Fourth, the administration could create a professional development course, webinar, or informative e-mail that discusses cyber-bullying resources and will be provided to all instructors. For example, at the authors' institution, all instructors are required to take a six week training course prior to teaching online; however, 550 instructors have already completed this training and would not benefit by adding a bullying portion to this course retroactively. The university needs additional training or resources on cyber-bullying that are available to all instructors.

Fifth, administrators could require definitions of cyber-bullying and descriptions of the consequences for doing so in the syllabi for all classes as a method of early deterrence. No student would want to face probation, expulsion, or criminal charges that will be detrimental to their entire career plan.

Sixth, require that students and instructors keep all documentation of cyber-bullying events.In the grade school setting, without proper documentation, the extent of the problem is largely unknown to various levels of stakeholders including school board, parents, community members, and campus-based personnel (DOE Report, 2011). The same can be said of higher learning. Reviewing the challenges experienced by secondary schools in dealing with cyber-bullying and solutions found could be useful in application to higher learning.

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