

Article Critique 4

Theoretical Perspective (about 3 pages)

Critique the author's conceptual framework.

Li introduces the study by using Willard's (2004) definition of cyberbullying. Studies regarding gender differences in traditional bullying are highlighted in order to establish characteristics of which to compare each gender's experience with cyberbullying. Li makes the argument that because research concerning the effects of cyberbullying is still young, the next step after establishing that it is a prevalent issue is to better understand how it exists differently among different student populations, in this case, gender.

There is adequate evidence regarding gendered differences in traditional bullying to establish a set of expectations of which to compare the effects of cyberbullying. The study's theoretical framework does a weak job of explaining the study's purpose which is to investigate gender differences in cyberbullying among junior high students. The Nelson (2003) report which supports the existence of such differences is not discussed in adequate depth to enhance the study's theoretical framework but does strengthen the argument that there may be differences among genders worth investigating. Only 1 article is used to support the notion that cyberbullying is an increasingly significant problem (Beran & Li, in press), constructing a weak foundation on which to build the study's research questions.

Comment on the need for this study and its importance.

The author argues the importance of researching gender differences in cyberbullying first by discussing the potential dangers of its occurrence. Then, the necessity for an increase in school and teacher awareness of cyberbullying is discussed as a driving force for this type of research as it is implied that this study will contribute to improving the understanding of how to teach students how to safely use technology.

There is an excessively large inferential jump when connecting understanding gender differences to developing safer behavior in cyberspaces in that there is no explanation as to how understanding how cyberbullying operates on each gender will have implications towards the outcome of interest. There is a compelling argument that better understanding cyberbullying may influence the development of intervention and prevention initiatives, but research has yet to suggest the need to investigate gender's role in this relationship. This framework does a poor job of explaining how understanding gender differences will yield safer technological behavior.

How effectively does the author tie the study to relevant theory and prior research?

The author draws upon work supporting the idea that gender differences do play an important role in traditional bullying. The author argues that anonymity increases user disinhibition influencing the engagement of hostile and aggressive acts. Work by Pellegrini and Bartini (2000) is cited to highlight the abrupt social changes that occur during adolescence.

Previous work regarding gender differences in traditional forms of bullying act as an appropriate comparative set of expectations. Relevant theory also defends the study's justification to use junior high students. There is a compelling notion based on works cited by Beran and Li that cyberbullying is a prevalent and growing issue, but this work does not specifically address how examining gender differences holds implications towards mitigating its negative effects.

Evaluate the clarity and appropriateness of the research questions or hypotheses.

The author presents 3 formal research questions: Do male and female students have different experiences in relation to cyberbullying?; Are there gender differences in student beliefs about adults' prevention of cyberbullying?; When cyberbullying occurs, do male and female students behave differently in terms of informing adults?

The most strongly supported question is the first, drawing inquiry from previous work on traditional bullying. There is close to no work mentioned in the study's framework to warrant the investigation of the remaining 2 questions. In general, there is a lack of appropriateness in the research questions as they offer no direct nor strong inferential line of reasoning as to how their results will hold implications towards the outcomes of interest- developing safer behaviors in cyberspace and increasing teacher awareness of cyberbullying.

Research Design and Analysis (about 4 pages)

Critique the appropriateness and adequacy of the study's design in relation to the research questions or hypotheses.

The author relied on a 26 question survey consisting of questions concerning demographics, computer usage, and personal bullying/cyberbullying experience and performance, administered to randomly selected students from 3 middle schools.

Random sampling among the 3 possible schools strengthened the study's internal validity, Survey methodology was an appropriate approach to gathering insight into differences in frequencies between genders regarding bullying and cyberbullying, but questionnaires fail to comprehensively address the first research question, as they report only by whom, in which spaces, and how frequently cyberbullying occurs. This is also a poor choice in design to measure the other second research question as questions on a survey represent self-reports of behavior, not necessarily beliefs regarding adults' preventative roles.

Critique the adequacy of the study's sampling methods (e.g., choice of participants) and their implications for generalizability.

A sample of 264 junior high students randomly selected from 3 Canadian schools participated. The sample was dominantly white (75.4%) with gender nearly balanced. Academic performance for 90% of the sample was average or better.

Overall, sampling in this study afforded the investigation of the research questions with some significant constraints. Random sampling strengthened the external validity of the sample to the

population which consisted of middle schools in a Canadian city. Balancing gender was also an appropriate sampling method given the research questions. Sampling methods also limit the external validity of the study; the schools of which the students were selected were not selected randomly, and equal representation from each school is not stated, constraining the generalizability in terms of the population of which the sample was drawn and beyond.

Critique the adequacy of the study's procedures and materials (e.g., interventions, interview protocols, data collection procedures).

Data regarding frequency of experience and performance of bullying and cyberbullying, frequency of types of adults of which cyberbullying was reported, and computer usage was collected via questionnaire.

Given the quantitative design of the study, a survey was a wise choice for data collection, given that questions operationalize the variables of interest. Certain aspects of the procedure weakened the methodological framework as a questionnaire affords surface level speculations, making it difficult to fully address the research questions. It is not mentioned where, when, and through what medium (paper or online) participant questionnaires are administered nor was it discussed whether participation was incentivized.

Critique the appropriateness and quality (e.g., reliability, validity) of the measures used.

The study focuses mostly on gender for its independent measure. All values for dependent measures were determined via questionnaire and included: bullying experience and performance frequencies and types and belief of adults' intervention behaviors.

Regarding experience with cyberbullying, self-report answers were an appropriate measure to investigate frequency differences between genders. Self-reporting was not a reliable method to measure cyberbullying performance, as students' self-perceptions of how closely their behaviors reflect bullying may exist variably, causing an inconsistent metric. Answers to questions on the questionnaire were not well constructed and did not provide for an analytical structure of which to examine the other 2 research questions; yes or no questions are not valid in representing student opinions regarding beliefs of adult prevention nor representing behaviors of telling adults as these measures should not be measured on a strict binary. Further, measures of student reporting behavior would hold more validity if derived from adult responses.

Critique the adequacy of the study's data analyses. For example: Have important statistical assumptions been met? Are the analyses appropriate for the study's design? Are the analyses appropriate for the data collected?

The author conducted chi square tests to examine the following questions: Do male and female adolescents experience differently in relation to cyberbullying?; How often did cyberbullying occur?; What were student beliefs about adults' prevention of cyberbullying in schools?

Chi square tests were appropriate as the study was interested in differences between categorical independent measures. This process adequately addressed differences between genders in experience and performance of cyberbullying. Data analyses of the second question was unnecessary as the study's focus and research questions were interested in gender differences, which may include frequencies, yes, but not overall cyberbullying occurrence. Regarding the third question, chi square tests were appropriate in analyzing differences between genders on this topic. Data analyses for this study was not comprehensive in that it did not address the research question regarding genders' behaviors in reporting cyberbullying.

Interpretation and Implications of Results (about 3 pages)

Critique the author's discussion of the methodological and/or conceptual limitations of the results.

The author discusses how generalizability is limited due to sampling strictly from an urban population. The age range of this study is discussed as a limitation to generalizability with the author suggesting future studies consider additional age groups. While these acknowledgments are important, the author only discusses generalizability in terms of regional limitations, failing to mention that the study was also constrained by socioeconomic status and academic performance (most were average to above average performers). Further there was no acknowledgment of methodological limitations beyond sampling such as the study's reliance solely on quantitative data gathered via questionnaire. In addition, there were conceptual limitations to the results not mentioned, as there was not adequate data to support some of the inferences made between student responses and conclusions drawn.

How consistent and comprehensive are the author's conclusions with the reported results?

From the results, the author concludes that cyberbullying is increasing in schools and that boys were more likely to engage in cyberbullying than girls. It was also concluded that girls report cyberbullying differently than boys.

The author appropriately concludes that this study supports the notion that girls and boys within the population of which the sample was taken may perform cyberbullying differently. The conclusion that cyberbullying is on the rise is not adequately supported and is contradicted by the authors mention that this topic is new, with little empirical evidence (how can one claim an increase with no comparison?). The study also inappropriately concludes that an increase in student reporting of cyberbullying to adults will make it easier to fight cyberbullying. This is drawn out of large inference, unsupported by the study's framework. Lastly, the author makes a contradictory conclusion, stating that the study reinforced the notion made by previous work that women prefer bullying electronically when the results of this study suggest the opposite.

How well did the author relate the results to the study's theoretical base?

The author relates results regarding the frequencies that boys and girls experience and perform cyberbullying to previous work regarding traditional bullying. The author also uses data from the study's measures that intended to examine student beliefs regarding adult preventative efforts as

well as student reporting data to discuss implications regarding the state of relationships between students and teachers.

The author refers to previous work suggesting that cyberbullying is a significant issue in schools when presenting results regarding its prevalence as reported in this study. Much of theoretical background is not revisited when discussing the results as many works unmentioned in the framework are cited as guidance for the discussion. The discussion addressed components of the research questions but did not adequately connect to the framework nor discuss the question regarding cyberbullying performance and experience in terms of gender differences.

In your view, what is the significance of the study, and what are its primary implications for theory, future research, and practice?

This article contributes to the body of research pertaining to safety in cyberspaces, particularly, cyberbullying differences among genders with implications towards raising adult awareness of how frequently and in what manner it is occurring and developing strategies to teach students safe online practices. This study reinforced the notion of previous research that cyberbullying is becoming a prevalent issue in schools and its results spark the discussion as to whether or not traditional bullying and cyberbullying share similar gender differences. Future research should employ qualitative methodologies in order to better understand the processes of cyberbullying in addition to its recognition and frequency. It should also gather data from adults' perspectives to point a more complete understanding of how aware and involved adults are in preventing cyberbullying.