Tyrant In the Cloud

Social Dominance and Cyberbullying in American Higher Education

Leah P. Hollis, EdD. Morgan State University

22nd Annual International Conference on Education May 18-21 2020 Athens Greece

About the Speaker

- Dr. Leah P. Hollis

- Associate Professor

- Morgan State University

- Baltimore, Maryland

- Research area: Workplace bullying in higher education

Abstract

This study applied social dominance theory in an examination of whether women, people of color, and the LGBQ community reported more incidents of cyber bullying. A chi-square analysis confirmed a statistical significance, at the $P \leq .01$ level, that both people of color and members of the LGBQ community are more likely to be targets of cyber bullying in higher education

Abstract

A few studies have considered cyberbullying between college students, yet a recent search in ProQuest and EBSCOHost reveal less than five articles of adult cyber bullying in higher education.

Hence, adult cyber bullying continues to be an understudied problem in higher education. The sample of higher education professionals and faculty members were collected (N = 578) in late 2017/early 2018, in which 45% of respondents reported they were targets of cyber bullying in higher education

Background

Cyber bullying is "sending or posting harmful or cruel or [false] images using the Internet or other digital devices to harm a victim."

Background

 "Cyber bullying is largely viewed as inappropriate, unwanted social exchange behaviors initiated by a perpetrator via online or wireless communication technology and devices." He further warned that such misuse disrupts an organization and can lead to poor morale and organizational liability (Piotroswki, 2012).

The Pew Research Center stated 73% of Internet users have witnessed someone being harassed, and 40% have directly experienced cyber harassment (Pew Research Center, 2014).
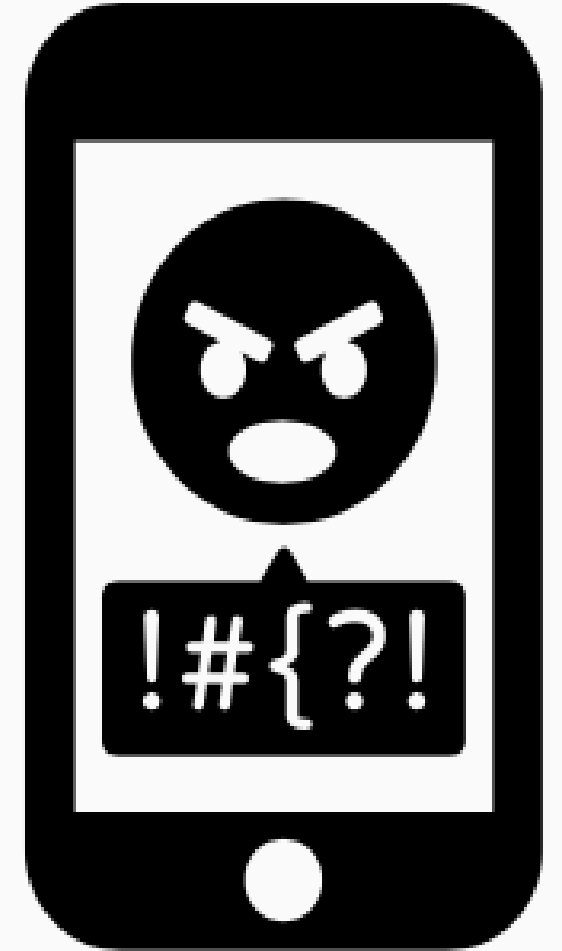
Other statistics include, "60% of Internet users said they had witnessed someone being called offensive names; 53% had seen efforts to purposefully embarrass someone; and 25% witnessed someone being harassed for a sustained period of time" (Pew Research Center, 2014).
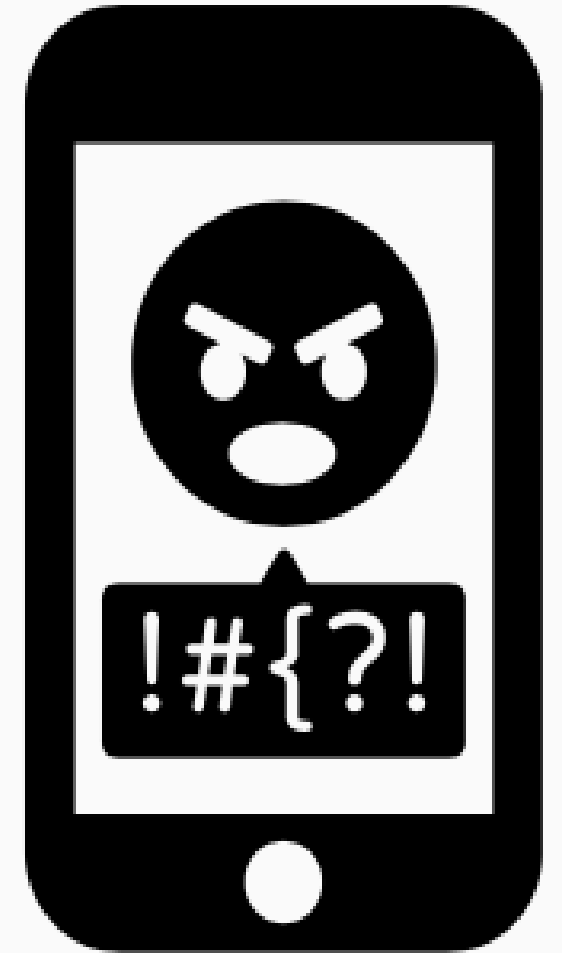
The Department of Justice records revealed that 70% of those stalked online were women. More than 80% of cyber stalking defendants are male. Similarly, a study of 1,606 revenge porn cases showed that 90% of those whose photos were shared were women, targeted by men.

Further, a program created by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) reported that "In a 2012 survey, 89 % of local domestic violence programs reported that victims were experiencing intimidation and threats by abusers via technology, including through cell phones, texts, and email" (Chemaly, 2014).

Types of Cyberbullying

_____

Harassment: Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages.

Denigration: Posting derogatory information about someone, and/or digitally altered photos.

 Flaming: Fighting online, often using vulgar language.

Impersonation: Hacking another's email or social media to post embarrassing material.

Outing and Trickery: Sharing another's secrets or tricking someone into revealing embarrassing information.

Cyber Stalking: Repeated threats or online activity that makes a person afraid for his/her safety.

(Staude-Müller, Hansen & Voss, 2012)

Previous studies

Vance (2014) examined workplace cyber bullying in his sample that included students (n = 225) and faculty (n = 56) who faced cyber harassment resulting from the proliferation of online classes. Vance's findings concluded that 12% of students and 39% of faculty experienced cyber harassment because of their participation in an online course.

Previous studies

According to Allen and Seaman (2014), higher education is experiencing a 6.1% annual growth rate in online education with over 7.1 million students taking online classes and "over 20 percent of all higher education institutions claim[ing] that online education is critical for their long-term strategy" (Allen & Seaman, 2014, p. 9). Reminiscent of Vance's findings (2014), those who increasingly engage in online modalities are increasingly exposed to cyber harassment.

Social Dominance

Sidanius and Pratto (1999) wrote that despite the struggles of civil rights movements and other resistance to bolster the human condition for all members of society, that a viciousness and ugliness remains a constant underpinning in society.

Social Dominance

More recent commentary has further stated, "intergroup discrimination, oppression, and violence continue to thrive within every modern social system" (Sidanius, et al, 2017, p. 149). Further, economic structures support the division of the "haves and the have-nots," differentiating between those who have power, access, and resources and those who do not. Those who have the power, typically strive to maintain such power, even while demoralizing.

Social Dominance

Sidanius, Pratto, and Mitchell (1994) stated such structures are evident in discriminatory practices, such as the "unequal allocation of monentary reward" (p. 1). Such desires to dominate another through economics, access, or opportunity is what Pratto et al (1994, p. 742) considered social dominance orientation, "or the extent to which one desires that one's in-group dominate and be superior to out-groups."

The Problem

Cyberbullying as an understudied problem appears to disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. Therefore, the study will examine how cyber bullying affects women, people of color, and the LGBQ community.

Hypotheses

Generally, I hypothesize that each of the groups, women, people of color, and LGBQ communities will face a statistically significant difference in reporting cyberbullying in higher education.

Research Method

The Study

RQ1: What is the frequency of workplace cyber bullying in higher education?

To address the first research question, **263 of 578 (45%)** reported being affected by cyber bullying as defined in the instrument; **441 of 533 (79%)** responding to that question said the higher education organization did nothing to curb cyber bullying in the workplace.

The Study

RQ2: Which personnel, in regard to race, are more likely to report workplace cyber bullying?

H_2: People of color in higher education are more likely to report workplace cyberbullying.

Table 3

Chi-square analysis of cyber bullied and not cyber bullied personnel
BY RACE; n = 578

		1	2	Total
P of Color	Count	86	66	152
	Expected count	69.2	82.8	152
White	Count	177	249	426
	Expected count	193.8	232.2	426
Total	Count	263	315	578
	Expected count	263	315	578

This difference is statistically significant (χ^2 (1, n = 578) = 10.205, P = 0.0014). Therefore, H_1, *"People of color in higher education are likely to report cyber bullying,"* is accepted.

The Study

RQ3: Which personnel, in regard to gender, are more likely to report workplace cyber bullying?

> **H$_3$:** Women in higher education are more likely to report workplace cyberbullying.

Table 5

Chi-square analysis of cyber bullied and not cyber bullied personnel
BY GENDER; n = 578

		1	2	Total
MEN	Count	70	90	160
	Expected count	72.8	87.2	160
WOMEN	Count	193	225	418
	Expected count	190.2	227.8	418
Total	Count	263	315	578
	Expected count	263	315	578

Therefore, H$_3$, *"Women in higher education are more likely to report workplace cyber bullying,"* is rejected (χ^2 (1, n = 578) = 0.274, P = 0.601).

The Study

RQ4: Which personnel, in regard to sexual orientation, are more likely to report workplace cyber bullying?

H_4: The LGBQ community in higher education is more likely to report workplace cyber bullying.

Table 6

Chi-square analysis of cyber bullied and not cyber bullied personnel

BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION; n = 578

		1	2	Total
LGBQ	Count	29	16	45
	Expected count	20.6	24.4	45
Straight	Count	236	297	533
	Expected count	244.4	288.6	533
Total	Count	265	313	578
	Expected count	265	313	578

This difference is statistically significant (χ^2 (1, n = 578) = .6.798, P = 0.0091). Therefore, H_4, *"The LGBQ community in higher education is more likely to report workplace cyber bullying,"* is accepted.

Discussion

The findings on cyber bullying show that social domination continues through the Internet: this emergent form of bullying allows more powerful individuals to assert their tyranny simultaneously in front of an entire department with a click of a button.

Discussion

The aforementioned examples show that the targets of cyber bullying find relief from online aggression by unplugging or disengaging (Hollis, 2018a). However, if this cyber abuse occurs through the institutional technology, targets can seldom exercise the right to unplug the account.

Discussion

While this study did not support the hypothesis that gender is a compelling factor in cyber bullying, which is surprising given that the behaviors in the general popular culture typically target women, this study does confirm that other underrepresented populations experience disproportionate level of cyber bullying.
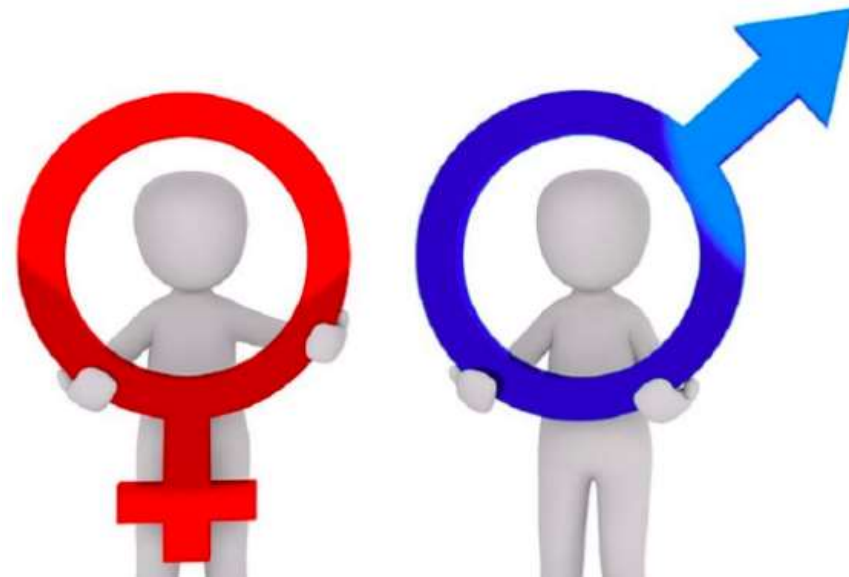
Recommendations

1. **Acceptable use policies**
2. **Ethics hotline**
3. **Ombudsperson to mediate**
4. **Analysis of turnover with exit interviews**

Questions?

Dr. Leah P. Hollis
Associate Professor
Morgan State University
Leah.hollis@morgan.edu

References

- Allen, I., & Seaman, J. (2014). Grade change: Tracking online education in the United States. Babson Survey Research Group and Quahog Research Group, LLC. Retrieved from http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/survey_report/2013-survey-online-learning-report/

- Chemaly, S. (2014). There's no comparing male and female harassment online. *Time Magazine.* Retrieved from http://time.com/3305466/male-female-harassment-online/

- Hollis. L. P. (2018a). The Ironic Interplay of Free Speech and Silencing: Does Workplace Bullying Compromise Free Speech in Higher Education? *Journal of Academic Freedom (AAUP)*. 9, pp 1-15.

- Pew Research Center. (2014). Online harassment. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/10/23/12113/

References

- Pew Research Center (2016). Candidates differ in their use of social media to connect with the public. Retrieved from http://www.journalism.org/2016/07/18/

- Piotrowski, C. (2012). From workplace bullying to cyberbullying: The enigma of harassment in modern organizations. *Organizational Development Journal, 30(*4), 44-53.

- Sidanius, J., Pratto, F., & Mitchell, M. (1994). In-group identification, social dominance orientation, and differential intergroup social allocation. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 134*(2), 151-167

- Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F. (1999). *Social dominance: An intergroup theory of social hierarchy and oppression*. Cambridge University Press.

References

- Sidanius, J., Cotterill, S., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Kteily, N., & Carvacho, H. (2017). Social dominance theory: Explorations in the psychology of oppression. In C. G. Sibley & F. K. Barlow (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of the psychology of prejudice*(p. 149–187). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316161579.008

- Staude-Müller, F., Hansen, B., & Voss, M. (2012). How stressful is online victimization? Effects of victim's personality and properties of the incident. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 9*(2), 260-274.

- Vance, J. (2014). Cyberharassment and online learning in American higher education. In L. P. Hollis & E. A., Turner (Eds.), *Bully beyond the tower: A collection of peer reviewed essays in workplace bullying*. Wilmington, DE: Patricia Berkly LLC.