

Cyberbullying in the workplace from the perspective of online university faculty

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dimension of cyberbullying in a workplace setting by looking at the perspective of online faculty in a for-profit online university with regard to the experience of cyberbullying from students. This study also adds to the literature by examining cyberbullying in a workplace as well as in higher education, with a focus on faculty demographics to include gender, age, and years of online teaching experience. The issue of how management can utilize this information to appropriately address cyberbullying in this type of workplace setting is discussed based on the data gathered.

Keywords: cyberbullying, online bullying, higher education, online faculty, students

INTRODUCTION

Stories of bullying in school surface on a regular basis but most research studies have centered around bullying in the K-12 grades. Research on bullying in higher education has been less prevalent and even fewer studies examine online education. The purpose of this research was to assess the current state of cyberbullying in an online for-profit university setting. The researchers sought to understand the depth and breadth of this issue as it specifically affects online faculty and their experiences with being on the receiving end of cyberbullying from students.

In an educational setting, whether more traditional or online, the focus is on what is best for the student. Unfortunately, in the online world, students can easily engage in the cyberbullying of their instructors and this can disrupt what is best for students, as well as their instructors. This frequently occurs when students encounter frustrations with their academic work whether it is comprehension, the feedback received, or the grade earned. It is important to create a balance of continuing to provide what is best for the student while supporting a healthy online work environment for faculty.

Additionally, this research provides a short overview of the current methods of remediation of cyberbullying and its effects within this online for-profit university setting. Recommendations are made for educating administrators, faculty, and students in how to effectively address and reduce this issue in a positive and supportive manner. Finally, suggestions for future research are provided.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Cyberbullying

Harassment and bullying behaviors have been associated with an imbalance of power and repetition of the behavior. In an electronic, Internet-driven, smart phone, and social media society, the behaviors traditionally associated with bullying have taken on new meaning and the name “cyberbullying” was created and defined. In a 2008 study by Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, they defined cyberbullying as, “An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself” (p. 376). Examples of such behavior include posting threatening messages on social media, fraudulently obtaining another’s account information and using the account to send harmful messages, sending threatening messages via text or email, posting unflattering (possibly altered) pictures of someone, and spreading false rumors or reports online. Many definitions have been created but for the purpose of this study, the definition of cyberbullying used is from the National Crime Prevention Council (2010), which is “the use of the Internet, cell phones, or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person” (para 2).

Cyberbullying Research

Reports of bullying in schools, teen suicide, and the increase in school violence, including shootings, brought the plight to the forefront as national media outlets regularly covered tragedies that seemed to bring people together through sorrow, outrage, and disbelief. With the proliferation of the Internet and hand-held electronic devices, cyberbullying was identified, defined, and became the subject of research.

The initial preponderance of cyberbullying research focused on adolescents. There have been studies conducted regarding cyberbullying among junior and senior high students in the US (Agatson, Kowalski, & Limber, 2007; Allen, 2012; Aoyama, Barnard-Brak, & Talbert, 2011; Ybarra, 2004), Canada (Beran & Li, 2005; Beran & Li, 2007; Law, Cheng, & Liu, 2012; Li, 2010), Europe (Brighi, Guarini, Mellotti, Galli, & Genta, 2012; Calvete, Estévez, Villardón, & Padilla, 2010; Ortega, Elipe, Mora-Merchán, Calmaestra, & Vega, 2009; Wachs, Wolf, & Pan, 2012), and China (Cheng, Chen, Liu, & Chen, 2011; Lam, Cheng, & Liu, 2013), to name a few.

Research and media coverage created focus for school administrators and awareness campaigns, then prevention programs were implemented. Although not eradicated, the 2015 bullying report from the Department of Education did indicate a decrease in occurrences. The report cited the School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey that used data from 2013. The overall bullying rate was down 6.3% from 2011 and 10.2% from 2007. Cyberbullying fell 2.1% from 2011-2013. Bullying among 12-18 year olds remains at 21.5% and additional focus should continue (Bidwell, 2015).

Workplace Bullies

It does not seem that people can escape bullies after graduation from high school. In a US study by VitalSmarts, 96% of over 2,000 employees surveyed indicated that they have experienced bullying at work (Biro, 2014). These bullies can affect numerous employees because 89% indicated that they have bullied for over five years and 80% admitted to bullying numerous people. The majority of the bullying activity included sabotaging work or reputations and general threats and intimidation (Shavin, 2014).

Bullying, including cyberbullying, can have a negative effect on the targets or victims. Common psychological issues include stress, loneliness, anxiety, depression, and sleeplessness (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014). The sabotage of work product and the resulting psychological issues may negatively affect productivity in the workplace as well as employee development. The combined effect may also reduce employee engagement (Hall & Lewis, 2014).

The Workplace Bullying Institute's annual survey discovered that 69% of bullies are male who target females 57% of the time. Unfortunately, female bullies also target females at a higher rate, 68%. The lack of progress may be related to 56% of the bullies being a higher rank than their targets. The employer reaction is minimal and 61% of the time the bullying stops only when the target loses their job by quitting, being forced out, getting fired, or being transferred (Namie, 2014). Ultimately, even with legislation and workplace training programs and policies aimed towards this, workplace harassment and incidents of bullying are rarely reported to management. Many times, employees simply look to ignore the issue rather than shine a light on it (Biro, 2014).

Cyberbullying in Higher Education

Like the workplace, it appears that many high school bullies continue their practices in college. One study cited that forty to fifty percent of high school bullies continue the behavior in their college years (Walker, Sockman, & Koehn, 2011).

Regarding cyberbullying in higher education, Finn (2004) noted that a 2002 survey that was conducted showed that “10 to 15% of 339 students at the University of New Hampshire reported experiencing repeated e-mail or Instant Messenger messages that “threatened, insulted, or harassed” and more than half of the students received unwanted pornography” (p. 32). And another study that Finn (2004) discussed showed that “Fifty-four percent of all respondents indicated knowing someone who had been cyberbullied (Table 1). One hundred percent of male respondents knew someone who was cyberbullied” (p. 34).

As the online world of higher education has continued to grow, incidents of cyberbullying continue to be an ongoing issue. Reigle (2007) noted that online bullying can affect not only students bullying other students, but also students bullying faculty. Reigle (2007) stated “these students use the academic forum to intimidate or harass those online colleagues and instructors with differing opinions, beliefs, values, or cultures via the online classroom, often in highly provocative ways” (p. 1). A survey administered by Reigle to randomly selected instructors at higher education institutions showed that nearly 45% reported frequent or relatively frequent experiences with online bullying involving their students. These incidents could be in discussion areas or cyber cafes for students. And these were identified as being designed to humiliate and/or incite a negative reaction. Additionally, it was also reported that the subject higher education institution did not, at that time, have policy manuals that defined the term “online bullying” or the actions that such bullying would elicit from the institution.

Lewis (2004) discussed the feelings of shame that being bullied at work can bring on for university and college faculty members. In a case study, Lewis (2004) stated “Feelings of powerlessness, humiliation, inferiority and withdrawal have all been illustrated. For some, there is a palpable sense of resigned behavioural compliance that has emerged within a scenario of hopelessness or pointlessness. In many ways, the views of participants who are forced to see themselves as bullied victims has been the most difficult of issues for them to acknowledge” (p. 295).

It is important to remember that faculty experiences and behavior help to shape the overall organizational culture of an institution of higher education. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the faculty experience is one that is free of the online bullying experience. Keashly and Newman (2010) discussed this concept and focused on the issue of online bullying as it relates to job satisfaction, productivity and performance, as well as faculty turnover rates. They noted, “In sum, the studies reviewed here suggest that workplace aggression, bullying, and mobbing are part of the academic landscape, and their impact not only can be damaging to the targets and bystanders, but also may adversely affect the learning environment and the institution itself. Importantly, we are not suggesting that bullying is unique to higher education; rather, we are suggesting that the academy represents a somewhat unique context in which bullying may thrive” (p. 54).

The consequences of faculty dealing with continued online bullying is a challenge for higher education institutions. While it is not only a legal issue, it does impact the health and welfare of the faculty members, which in turn, does affect the overall organizational culture of the institution. McKay, Arnold, and Thomas (2008) noted that “Academics are not immune to

bullying behaviours. Students, colleagues and administrators may all partake in, or be subject to, bullying” (p. 77). McKay, Arnold, and Thomas (2008) also examined the issue of what was termed “subordinate-style bullying, expressed through student bullying of faculty” (p. 81). They noted that further research into this issue was needed. Savage (1999) stated that the incidents where college students attempt to harass or intimidate their instructors has been increasing.

Williams (2005) conducted a survey involving higher education faculty, instructors, and librarians. In that survey, 62% of respondents indicated that they had experienced workplace bullying at that institution of higher education. And 27% indicated that they had experienced bullying from students. Williams (2005) noted that “experiences with bullying behaviours changed the respondent’s productivity at work. It changed the quantity of work the respondents completed (31% of HBB) and the quality of the work completed (24% of HBB)” (p. 87). The respondents that indicated bullying from students noted that the institution’s policies and procedures did not always protect faculty in such situations. And that the system in place would weigh more heavily in favor of accommodating students rather than supporting faculty and instructors. Williams (2005) noted that “systemic bullying, hazing and abuse generally are identified with poor, weak or toxic organizational cultures. Cultures that are toxic have stated ethical values that are espoused but not employed, and other non-ethical values which are operational, dominant, but unstated. Such cultures thrive when good people are silent, silenced, or pushed out; when bad apples are vocal, retained, promoted, and empowered; and when the neutral majority remain silent in order to survive. Those who are most successful in such a toxic culture are those who have adapted to it, or adopted it as their own” (p. 92).

Therefore, it is important for higher education institutions to be aware of the pervasive impact to long-term organizational culture and institutional goals that an issue such as cyberbullying can produce. As such, further investigation into this issue and recommendations for improvement are necessary to provide guidance towards healthy workplaces in institutions of higher education.

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

Many studies have been conducted on cyberbullying in K-12 grades. Minimal studies have been conducted in higher education. This study will contribute to the research on the existence of cyberbullying in the online world of higher education by expanding on the work done by Minor, Smith, & Brashen (2013). Four research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the experiences that college facilitators in online for-profit settings have with cyberbullying from students?
2. If they have experienced cyberbullying from students, how have they handled the situation?
3. If an instructor does not do anything about the problem, why?
4. How should cyberbullying in online settings be addressed?

Survey

A qualitative study was sent to 700 full-time and adjunct faculty in an accredited for-profit online university. Survey Monkey was used as the tool to develop and deliver the questionnaire. (See Appendix A for the survey.) Faculty participation was optional. Respondents' answers were anonymous and kept confidential. A total of fifteen questions were addressed. The survey sought data on the respondents through five demographic questions. The remaining ten questions addressed cyberbullying. Both the Likert scale and multiple choice answers were used. Respondents were given a chance to explain their answers by writing examples and explanations in an open-ended format.

RESULTS

The survey was sent to 700 full time and adjunct faculty in the School of Business, Health Sciences, and Nursing. 162 surveys were returned giving a 23% rate of return. Five demographic questions focused on gender, age, and length of time teaching. The respondent population consisted of 67% female and 33% male. With regard to full-time and adjunct status, 31% of the respondents were full time and 69% were adjunct faculty. With regard to years of online teaching experience, 52% have been teaching online for 6-10 years, 20% have over 11-15 years' experience, and 28% less than 5 years. Most the faculty, 58%, were born during the 1946 to 1962 timeframe. 39% were born during 1965 and later. Only 3% were in the 1925 to 1945 timeframe.

Within these demographics, 57% of the female instructors reported being cyberbullied before, while 43% did not. Of the male instructors, 47% reported being cyberbullied, while 53% did not. Therefore, the survey showed that female instructors did report more often than male instructors that they had experienced cyberbullying in the online classroom environment in this higher education setting.

Regarding years of online teaching experience, those with 0-5 years reported cyberbullying at a rate of 27%. Those with 6-10 years reported having experienced cyberbullying at 55%. Those with 11-15 years reported cyberbullying at a rate of 61%. Those instructors with 16-20 years of online teaching experience reported a rate of 50% of cyberbullying. And those with 21+ years reported a rate of 100%; although, this demographic was statistically insignificant due to its small size. It is interesting to note that those with fewer years of online teaching experience (0-5 years) reported a lower rate of experienced cyberbullying in the online classroom environment in this higher education setting. This may be due to more recent training that allows them to de-escalate such situations sooner. It's also important to note that these newer instructors with 0-5 years of experience are not necessarily younger instructors. The following age demographics will break this down further. It would be interesting to review this point in more detail in a future study.

Regarding age demographics in this study, those who were born between 1925-1945 reported experiencing cyberbullying in the online classroom at a rate of 40%. Those born between 1946-1964 reported this at a rate of 55%. Those born between 1965-1981 reported cyberbullying at a rate of 40%. And finally, those born 1982 and after reported at a rate of 60%. One might expect to find that the younger instructors may be more accustomed to experiencing cyberbullying in general as they would have been exposed to it online as they were younger. However, the youngest instructors (in the category of those born 1982 and after) had the highest

reported rate of cyberbullying in this online classroom setting. Perhaps this may be a function of age and experience in dealing with this issue from the instructor's level. This could also be another interesting point to explore in further research.

With regard to faculty teaching status, full-time versus adjunct faculty, the survey showed that 60% of the full-time faculty reported being cyberbullied in the online classroom. Adjunct faculty reported this at a rate of 40%. It may be that full-time faculty in this institution teach more classes and on a more regular schedule. Therefore, they may be exposed to the possibility of cyberbullying more often in this online classroom experience in higher education. Although this would be another area that may be of interest for further study.

The remainder of the survey questions focused on experiences with cyberbullying and event specifics. The first question used the National Crime Prevention Council (2010) definition of cyberbullying which is "the use of the Internet, cell phones, or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person" (para. 2). Participants were asked if they had ever been cyberbullied by a student: 50% responded yes, 49% no and 1% was unsure. Of the respondents who responded yes, 69% were female and 31% were male; 59% were adjunct faculty while 41% were full-time; finally, 28% had been teaching 0-5 years, 52% 6-10 years, and 20% 11-15 years.

The respondents that replied in the affirmative to cyberbullying were asked to describe an experience and explain how the situation was handled. Seventy-three cyberbullying experiences were shared. Many of the bullying examples centered on grades. Some of the examples shared were:

I sent my concerns to the chair the two times that I was a real issue. For one student, it was toward the very end of the course when it started so I had not other contact with the student. I am not sure if it was documented in any way. In one of the incidents, the student was upset at her feedback in reference to APA format. I know they contacted the student and reviewed the study conduct policy with her. She then would be a little subtler about how she made rude comments on the discussion board. In seminar, she told students that I had "turned in her" before we got started. She also told the other students that I was "out to get her" and to be careful.

Threatened me if I did not give her the grade she felt she deserved- accused me of withholding grades (never happened) I took it to my chair and it went all the way to the Dean - the student was ultimately dismissed.

Students often employ very aggressive verbiage online or by phone with adjunct faculty. Most of the time I am able to work through the issue with the student directly. However, there have been instances where I have felt stalked in the online format by students.

I had a student threaten to call the dean and the president (he did not know it is not president but provost) if I did not adjust his grade and gave him credit for homework he had copied from the instructor manual.

A student who was caught plagiarizing called me and left messages for me 9 times in 4 hours. Each message was nastier and nastier about my daring to accuse her of plagiarizing and such things I don't want to repeat here.

Students often send disrespectful emails related to grading or how they believe they have been unfairly treated by me or others. It is common to threaten escalation or say rude things in emails of this nature.

A student recorded in a discussion thread how much she hated me and how she could not learn from me and each week afterwards her comments about me were more direct and brutal even though we had never dialogued... another student phoned incessantly and would swear at me for not being available 24/7. I confronted both students and the issues stopped when they left my classes.

Other examples focused on dissatisfaction with the class or instructor. A few of the example statements were:

Student tried to turn class against me by posting in my office discussion. Said that I would not return emails when I returned every email within 24 hrs. Said I was being an a** because I would not let her run the class. Asked every student in class to write a complaint letter against me in an open chat room and in discussion boards.

Student was aggressive and obnoxious regarding my profession. He told me he hated "lawyers" and that we were all "useless."

Student posted disparaging comments in an online discussion forum questioning my ability to teach, my fairness, my ethical behavior. I forwarded the comments to my chair who took the issue to the Dean of Students. The student was removed from the institution for violation of the university code of conduct.

Student continually posting harassing messages in the classroom and via email. Student was responded to via email and then as the issue escalated, the issue was brought to the attention of my supervisor and a code of conduct violation was brought up.

Received emails which were abrupt and some were hard to understand. I was told she didn't like the course then she clarified that the course was ok but she didn't like me. She stated I didn't give her the answers she wanted to hear.

When asked who addressed the bullying situation, 36% of the faculty respondents said they handled it themselves, 16% referred the situation to their Chair to handle, 2% said no one handled the situation, and 46% said N/A. The next question asked if they felt the person who addressed the situation handled it effectively? The following was noted: 64% of the respondents said yes, 16% replied no, and 20% said somewhat. The respondents were given an opportunity to

comment on their answers. Fifty seven of the respondents made comments. Some of the comments were:

Essentially it was "the student is sorry and we would like to give her another Chance." I agreed to this.

It has become such an issue with students being so aggressive and down right mean to faculty that I will be taking myself out of the profession within the next year.

The chair supported the faculty and together they determined procedures, outcomes from behaviors and ways to remedy the relationship.

Academic integrity standards are upheld by the Provost Office.

The student was held accountable for the disparaging comments and was appropriately dismissed.

When asked how many times in their online teaching career they had been cyberbullied by a student, 38% replied 1 to 5 times, 9% said 6 to 10 times, and 5% responded more than 10 times. The next question asked if they thought student cyberbullying of instructors is a concern. The respondents noted the following: 35% said yes, 16% replied very much so, 32 % somewhat, 8% no, and 9% unsure.

The next question had a range of answers. Faculty were asked if they felt there are resources available to help them properly handle a cyberbullying situation. The respondents replied as follows: 42% said yes, 19% no and 39% didn't know. Those that responded yes were asked to explain what resources were available. The comments ranged as follows:

EAP, human resources

Supervisor and up the chain.

I feel that there are resources available. I would ask the faculty chair or course lead for assistance.

Report to Dean and Compliance and Legal department.

I'm not sure everyone feels comfortable bringing it forward so they just "let it slide" and try to handle on their own.

Advisor

When asked what resources are needed to be in place to handle cyberbullying, 88 responses were given. Suggestions ranged from:

Tips with steps to follow when an issue occurs.

Boilerplate to compose an email to the student to warn them about behavior that is not in line with the student conduct policy.

A place to debrief/call to get real time feedback from an objective person to see if the behavior is indeed out of bounds.

Professional development in this area.

Students receiving training on appropriate student conduct in this area.

The last question asked faculty if they had ever been cyberbullied but took no action. The respondents noted the following: 24% said yes and 76% replied no. Those that replied yes were asked why no action was taken. A few of the common replies were:

Some supervisors seem reticent to address those types of behaviors and just ask you to keep working with the student.

Not sure how to handle the situation.

There's a need for more training for faculty to show the support that's available to them in such situations.

A sense that support may not be available.

ANALYSIS

There have been several studies conducted on cyberbullying online. The authors of this study wanted to make sure that faculty understood the definition of cyberbullying, therefore a presentation was conducted during a faculty meeting in which cyberbullying was defined and explained to make sure everyone had a common definition of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can take on many forms from threats in the discussions to actual accusations to the dean. Many of the threats towards faculty revolve around issues related to grades. It seems that the longer the issue goes unresolved the uglier that it can get, for example a faculty stated: "A student who was caught plagiarizing called me and left messages for me 9 times in 4 hours. Each message was nastier and nastier about my daring to accuse her of plagiarizing." This study indicated that 50% of the respondents have been cyberbullied.

Many faculty members still do not recognize cyberbullying, may be too embarrassed to admit that they were cyberbullied, or may not want to be labeled as a non-friendly instructor; thus, they do not report it. Faculty often do not see the student's action as cyberbullying; therefore, they do not see an issue, such as: when a student calls you 5 times in one hour, when a student expects a response in 10 minutes, when a student expects to get an "A" for plagiarized work, when a student sends you a virus in their homework to take control of your computer, use of abusive language, verbally intimidating calls, threat of public defamation, student continually

posting harassing messages in the classroom, threats of suing the instructor and the university and students use of social media to show their discontent.

Faculty members who were cyberbullied but took no action felt that they would not be supported by administration, that supervisors were unwilling to address the issues, were not sure how to handle the situation, fear of ramifications and a sense that support may not be available. What can administration do to provide better resources for faculty and to support faculty in a cyberbullying situation? Cyberbullying in an online classroom can create a difficult position for both student and faculty. It can grow from a small misunderstanding to an out-of-control situation. It is crucial that universities develop, communicate, and support standard procedures and training for handling instances of cyberbullying.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has found that cyberbullying, from the perspective of the instructor, is an ongoing issue at the subject online university. Given that this issue can have serious repercussions for both students and instructors as well as for the learning process, a series of recommendations from this research team are presented for further consideration.

First, the online university in this study does strongly address and support the need for a respectful and supportive environment for all. However, from the instructor perspective, the issue of cyberbullying is not always addressed in a continuous and detailed manner. Therefore, the researchers recommend strengthening the supportive structure in this regard.

Education involving what specifically constitutes cyberbullying can be helpful. It was noted in the research findings that not everyone who reported forms of cyberbullying were completely sure of what to call it. Having a more formal awareness and definition of cyberbullying can be a solid foundation to build upon.

Next there can be training developed to help not only identify the cyberbullying, but also to do so early on before it becomes a larger issue. This training should also outline a more formal line of reporting of such issues to better streamline the process of a resolution of the issue. The team's research findings saw a patchwork of possible ways that faculty dealt with cyberbullying. By establishing a more formal process of steps that are clearly communicated to faculty, this can increase the effectiveness of dealing with such issues early on.

This can also lead into the development of a more formal policy for the Faculty Handbook. This can include helping to identify potential cyberbullying areas, faculty's next steps, and then administrator's next steps. Additionally, adding information to the Student Handbook to better clarify what constitutes cyberbullying on the part of students can be useful as well. There may be a dimension to this that students may not fully recognize that how they are handling some situations can be deemed to be cyberbullying. Providing recognition of this and suggested alternatives to handling frustrating or challenging situations within their classes can also be useful. Therefore, student training on this issue may be useful.

The online university in this study already has a Student Code of Conduct system in place. Using that program to more fully encompass identified and verified cyberbullying from the faculty perspective would be useful. Utilizing the processes already in place and strengthening the focus specifically on cyberbullying (from student towards faculty) can help bring awareness and remediation structure to an important issue that can negatively affect student learning. By bringing this issue into better alignment, students will have a more solid

footing to complete their studies. And their faculty will continue to help strengthen a supportive and respectful learning environment for all.

CONCLUSION

This study provided additional insight to the cyberbullying research and specifically contributed to the knowledge base of cyberbullying in online education from the faculty perspective. The results of this study suggest that the cyberbullying of online faculty by students exists: 50% of the survey respondents indicated that, based on the definition provided, they had been cyberbullied by a student. This further supports the study by Minor, et. al. (2013) that found 33.8% stated they had been cyberbullied. Taking the prior study further, this research identified that 67% of those who experienced cyberbullying were female, 69% were adjunct faculty, and 52% had been teaching 6-10 years. However, it is unclear if gender, work status, and experience influence the occurrence of cyberbullying or merely the identification and reporting of it.

There was not a clear theme on how the cyberbullying situations were handled. Of those respondents who experienced cyberbullying, 36% stated that they handle the situation themselves, 16% escalated it through their department, and 2% were not addressed at all. Of those addressing cyberbullying, 63% felt that it was handled effectively. It appears that encouraging more faculty to address the issue could lead to positive results. However, having a solid supporting structure for faculty to address this is important. Ideally, the goal is to reduce or eradicate the occurrence of cyberbullying in higher education.

Additional questions to be addressed in future research include:

- Are instructors with greater online teaching experience more or less likely to identify and address cyberbullying?
- Would conducting this research study at other online universities produce similar results?
- Does job security (adjunct versus full-time) play a role in a faculty member's willingness to address cyberbullying?
- Is gender a factor for who is a victim of cyberbullying?
- Is gender an influencing factor for reporting incidents of cyberbullying?
- Is age a factor for who is a victim of cyberbullying?
- Is age an influencing factor for reporting incidents of cyberbullying?
- With a reporting and data capturing system in place, could predictive measures for students who are more likely to attempt cyberbullying of their instructors be identified?
- If recommendations are implemented, would repeating the study result in different outcomes?

While bullying in grades K-12 is a well-established concern that receives a great deal of media and research attention, cyberbullying in higher education, by comparison, is a relatively new phenomenon and one that warrants additional study and attention. The online classroom is the work environment for online faculty and it is unacceptable for cyberbullying to turn it into a hostile work environment. Faculty want to see their students succeed in the classroom and in life. The eradication of cyberbullying will create a better environment for faculty and students to collaborate in a professional manner to achieve academic goals.

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