



Effectiveness of CBSP – A thematic analysis

Ms. Surabhi Negi,

JRF at the Department of Education,
University of Mumbai.

Dr. Sunita Magre

Associate Professor & Head
Department of Education,
University of Mumbai.

Abstract

Sensitization programs are by far the most effective and non-confrontationist approach of reforming the society. They are used to establish some standard or desired behaviour. In efforts to prevent cyber bullying developing awareness is necessary. This study documented the experiences of participants who had participated in the Cyber bullying Sensitization Program (CBSP) to understand the factors that might have led towards the effectiveness of the program. Data was gathered through focus groups, which involved sessions with adolescent students between 14 to 15 years old. The transcripts from the focus group were coded thematically. Results showed that the participants considered the CBSP effective. Factors like practicability; content, affective aspects of the program that led to its effectiveness were discussed

Keywords

Cyber bullying, focused group, qualitative methods

Introduction

Technology has transformed the lives. In today's world growing up for a child is very different from her/his parents, children and young people are able to use and understand technology and can communicate with greater ease and sophistication (Agatston et al, 2007; DCSF, 2007a; 2007b; ABA, 2008). The mobile phone has even been referred to as 'a child's most treasured possession' (National Children's Home (NCH), 2005, p2). Teenagers not only use technology to communicate, but also as a way of developing their identity (DCSF, 2007a). Many social networking sites offer the user to create their own profile, where they get the opportunity to display their personal details and interests, facilities to upload photos and videos and to update their profiles instantaneously. There are many social advantages to using technology as a convenient and quick way of communicating, but there are growing concerns that the same

technology is being used negatively (DCSF, 2007a; ABA, 2008; Mishna et al, 2009). Historian Howard Segal suggests that all technological developments are mixed blessings, presenting us with tremendous benefits, as well as unexpected burdens (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009). The popularity of these new adolescent communication tools has created some new challenges as well as some negative behaviour among adolescents, one of which is bullying in this cyber space.

The term '**Cyber bullying**', was first coined by Canadian educator Bill Belsey. He defines it as 'the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others' (Butler et al, 2008). Cyber bullying entails a systematic abuse of power, through information and communication technology. A cyber bully is someone who uses technology to harass, embarrass, intimidate, or stalk a victim. One instance of cyber bullying is enough to generate an immediate snowball effect that can be unstoppable because it is controlled through technology (Slonje et. al. 2013). All types of communications technologies can be used to cyber bully. Rather technologies which can be used to cyber bully continue to be improved and developed. Smith et al. (2008) distinguished seven forms of cyber bullying: mobile phone calls, text messages, picture/video clips, email, instant messaging, chat-rooms and websites. Of these, phone calls, texts and instant messages were the most commonly reported.

Online bullying can impact youth in a harmful manner. According to a new study published by The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), one in every four Indian teenager has been a victim of cyber bullying (The Times of India, 2014). Bangalore-based psychiatrist, Aruna Sikdar in her interview with The Times of India (2014) has mentioned that cyber bullying is one of the main reasons behind the increasing rate of teen suicide in India. She was quoted saying, online bullying not only undermines the child's confidence but also affects his or her psyche. Almost 30% of adolescents reported they were victims of online bullying, meaning they were ignored, disrespected, called names, threatened, picked on, made fun of, or had rumours spread about them to others (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

Regrettably, there is not a single solution that will protect all adolescents from cyber bullying, but there are steps that can be taken to reduce its frequency and impact (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). It is recommended that schools take a proactive, educational approach towards dealing with cyber bullying. Literature proposes that targeted interventions and educational

programs are a key towards reducing the impact and incidence of cyber bullying (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009; Mitchell, 2010; Smith & Brain, 2000; Smith et al., 2008; von Solms & de Lange, 2011). Keeping this as reference point, a Cyber Bullying Sensitization Program (CBSP) was developed by the researcher. This study had utilized one of the most popular mixed methods designs in educational research: **sequential explanatory mixed methods design**, consisting of two distinct phases (Creswell, 2002, 2007; Creswell & Clark., 2011). In the first phase comprised the implementation of the CBSP and the quantified data was collected. In the second qualitative phase, phenomenological approach was used to collect data through focused group discussions and elicitation materials to help explain significant predictors of effectiveness of the CBSP. The rationale for this approach was that the quantitative data and results provide a general picture of the research problem, i.e., how effective is the CBSP, while the qualitative data and its analysis will refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in more depth. For this research article, the author has tried to focus on the second qualitative phase of the study. Conducted a thematic analysis of focus group discussions, following research questions were explored.

Research Questions

- Will the Cyber Bullying Sensitization Program (CBSP) develop sensitization among secondary school students towards cyber bullying?
- How the secondary school students perceived the cyber bullying sensitization programme (CBSP)?
- Will the knowledge of the safety measures against cyber bullying learned through CBSP help students?

Method

The present study adopts the **phenomenological approach** to explore deep into the experiences of the student who participated in the CBSP and to ascertain its effectiveness. It is a recommended methodology when the study goals are to understand the meanings of human experiences (Creswell, 1998). The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence. In the present study, the researcher has examined the subjective experience of each person for meaning and

understanding, and not quantified it into statistical data. The researcher wanted to keep the voices of individuals who have lived the experience or in other words participated in the CBSP, alive. Their views were significant in understanding the phenomena.

Participants

The participants were in the age group 14-16 years of age, studying in grade IX in a private school in Delhi affiliated to CBSE (English Medium). Their selection for the qualitative phase was dependent on the results from the experimental phase of the study. To get a holistic perspective on the program, researcher selected equal participants from the groups scoring high, average and low scores on the post test in the experimental group. A total of 18 students were selected for the group discussions and were divided into three groups of six participants each, the idea was to purposefully select informants, who will best answer the research questions and who are 'information rich' persons (Patton, 1990).

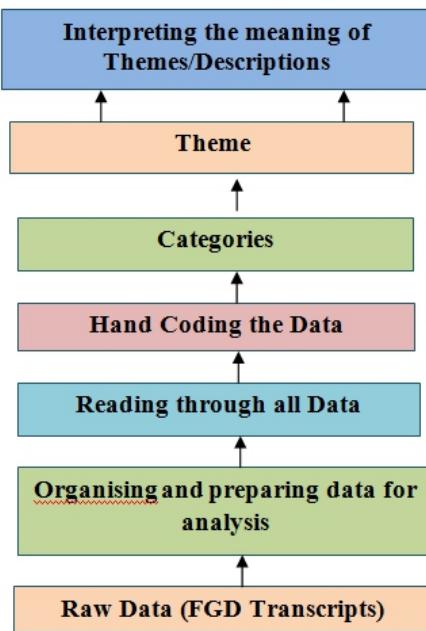
Procedure

After gaining permission from school authorities, parents and participants, the sessions were arranged within the school premises. The purpose of the conducting the discussion was explained to the participants. They were made comfortable and were assured that they do not have to discuss or contribute to any question that they feel uncomfortable about. Although given the opportunity to withdraw at this stage, no-one did. The key points of the discussion were planned ahead while identifying the main objective(s) of the meeting, developing key questions, developing an agenda, and planning how to record the session. Notes were recorded along with video recording for each session. Each group discussion took around 45-50 minutes. Discussion structured around the key themes using the probe questions prepared by the moderator.

Data Analysis

The analysis and interpretation of focus group data requires a great deal of judgment and care. The main purpose was to gain an in-depth exploration about the cyber bullying sensitization program from the perspective of learners. Because the transcripts of the focus group discussion were so dense and rich, the researcher had to winnow the data, which is a process of focusing on the important part of the data and disregarding the other parts of it. This process was done to aggregate the data into smaller number of themes. The data was then organised, sort and hand coded. A general approach was followed for this study, were to analyze the data for significant phrases, developing meanings through codes and categories and clustering them into themes, and presenting an exhaustive description of the phenomenon.

FIGURE 4.11
A streamlined model for qualitative inquiry used in the present study



Results

Participants discussed components of CBSP that they believed to be promising, our focus in this article is on their perspective what factors led towards the effectiveness of the Cyber Bullying sensitization Program, their perspective and responses about the potential impact of this initiatives.

Developing sensitization (Category 1)

Understanding the Concept: success of a program is ensured when the participants understand the concept and are able to decipher it when required. All 18 participants were able to define the underlying concept of cyber bullying. When asked to define the term, following responses were recorded:

- R1: *bullying through electronics and internet*
- R7: *posting rumours, threats, sexual comments and negative remarks about anyone*
- R12: *offensive use of electronic communication to bully*
- R16: *using someone's personal information or pictures without their permission*

Behavioural Transformations: if a program has been effective then it will have a positive effect on the behaviour of the participants. After attending the CBSP, participants were asked, how they would operate in the cyber space, following were the responses:

- R4: will never share my password with anyone
- R5: will not log into anyone's else account
- R16: won't make a group online against any friend from now
- R18: earlier I would have bullied but now I will try to solve problems offline

Empathy: sensitivity breeds on empathy. Empathy is an ability to demonstrate an understanding of feelings and emotions of others. After the intervention, the participants were asked, how would they respond towards a victim of cyber bullying to which majority showed an empathetic and caring response. Some of the responses were:

- R1: will help the victim in all ways
- R8: now I will feel really bad for the victim, this can depress them
- R11: if possible I might report the incident on victim's behalf

Awareness: to sensitize is to make someone aware. Awareness leads to conscious and informed decision making. Keeping this as principle, the CBSP was framed for the adolescents participating in the study and they also felt and shared the following responses:

- R2: taught us how to handle cyber bullying
- R6: there are online ethics needed to be followed
- R7: its a growing problem and need to be stopped
- R14: created awareness

Impact of the Program (Category 2)

Factors such as content, pedagogy, relevance, use of resources, attributes of the resource person and participation from the audience affect the program efficacy. Questions based on these factors were asked during the focused group discussion.

Practicability: majority of the participants found the program relevant and useful. Eight of them responded with CBSP being useful, hands-on and helpful. They commented:

- R1: information provided was so useful
- R3: helpful especially for teenagers
- R11: provided needed solutions for everyday life problems
- R17: efficient way to learn

Perspective Building: CBSP helped in the construction of a view point among the participants. Ten of them confirmed in affirmation, that the program helped them learn about the problems and solutions related with cyber bullying.

- R6: an eye opener
- R10: alerted everyone who attended
- R13: unfolded new concept
- R16: changed our mindset (**online fun mei kahee baatein buri bhi lag sakti hain**)

Knowledge Enhancement: the program added to the knowledge pool of the participants and it was acknowledged by fourteen of the participants, who asserted by quoting:

- R4: we gathered a lot of information
- R6: full of knowledge
- R12: cyber bullying is an important topic and discussions increased our knowledge

Positive Engagement: is an interpersonal style evident through attentiveness, warmth, cooperation, and clear communication among the participants, resource person and the program. CBSP was enjoyed and clearly liked by all the participants, as they stated the following statements during the discussion.

- R4: very much interactive
- R13: activities were captivating
- R16: usually long programs are boring but this one was interesting

Planning and Presentation: Fifteen participants found CBSP well planned and executed in an efficient manner. These are important ingredients to keep the interest of participants alive. The participants of CBSP were found quoting following words when asked about the implementation.

- R7: videos were amazing
- R9: it was systematic
- R18: activities were well planned for teenagers

Safety Measures (Category 3)

Precautions: after the intervention, participants (n=12) agreed that henceforth they will be extremely careful and take precautions while they go online. Some measures that they would like to adopt were:

- R2: will not chat with strangers
- R3: keep a special password that cannot be hacked
- R14: I will not share my check-in information immediately
- R18: play more outdoor games so less time online

Proactive Measures: when asked how would they respond to bullying aiming them, the majority of participants seemed confident and assured that they will be able to handle the incident in reformative manner. They said:

- R5: save the evidence immediately
- R7: tell to parents
- R13: after this workshop...I will be an upstander

Lesson Learnt: it is important to understand what the participant had gained through the CBSP.

Everyone was willing to share the message they had imbibed. Few responses were:

- R2: stay alert...stay away from bullying
- R8: never join bullies for fun..it can backfire
- R9: I have a phone but from today I will keep this information in mind while using it
- R12: I help friends in need

Discussion

The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a program depends on several factors. In the present study, transcribed data was repeatedly studied for the codes to emerge, from which the categories were generated around the research questions which further led towards the main theme, the effectiveness of CBSP (Figure.1). The first research question was will the CBSP develop sensitization among secondary school students towards cyber bullying? The participants in the discussion corroborated that after the intervention, they had understood the meaning and issues related with cyber bullying. They feel aware, awaken and have altered their cyber behaviour in a positive direction. Participants confirmed a feeling of empathy towards the victims. These observations were in congruence with the studies conducted by Rey, Casas & Ortega (2016), Williford & Depaolis (2016), Cross et al. (2016), Herrera, Kupczynski & Mundy (2015), and Tanrikulu et al. 2013 to create awareness and sensitivity towards cyber bullying among adolescents. After attending these programs, reduction in online bullying incidents and towards Internet dependency was recorded in the participants. Such programs help in refurbishment of empathy and sensitivity among bully/victims and bystanders.

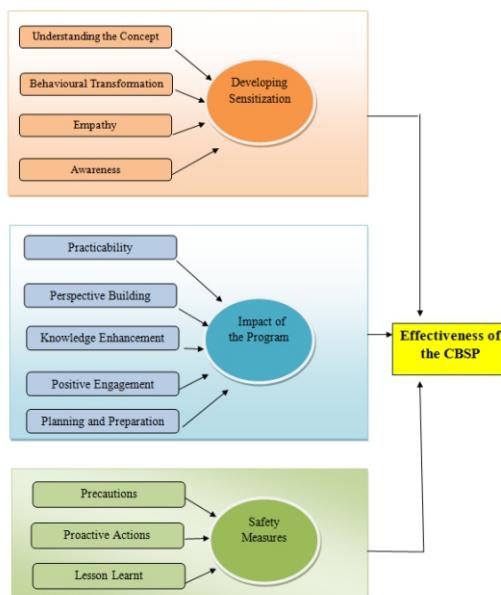
The second question revolved around perception of the participants towards CBSP. The category developed to identify with this research question was the impact of CBSP on the participants. Several aspects of the program emerged through the discussions. Participants favoured the content, relevance and delivery of the program. Most of them confirmed that CBSP had added to their knowledge and has helped them in developing a fresh perspective on this topic.

The third research question demanded an explanation on whether the knowledge of the safety measures against cyber bullying learned through CBSP would prepare them for future challenges? For an extended impact, it was important that CBSP should be able to equip participants with strategies and precautionary measures for cyber safety. During the focused group discussion, majority of the participants shared the measures they are going to adopt and how the program has transformed their cyber behaviour. From staying alert to reporting and sharing the incident with a guardian were the responses recorded. It is important that young people, even though they are well versed in the use of technology are educated in the safe use of the equipment they are using (Agatston et al, 2007; DCSF, 2007a; 2007b; ABA, 2008; Mishna et al, 2009; Tokunaga, 2010). They need to know how to keep themselves safe from harm and avoid becoming a victim of cyber bullying.

Conclusion

From the perspective of the participants, the Cyber Bullying Sensitization Program (CBSP) was effective to institute sensitivity and positive cyber behaviour among them. This study found new and insightful information that can be used as framework for planning of future interventions. The findings of this study can also help the planners and curriculum developers to provide space for such programs in the curriculum as they foster sensitivity and awareness.

Figure 1. Disembarking the Theme (Effectiveness of CBSP)



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