Bystander Perceived Severity on Traditional versus Cyber Bullying

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Abstract : Bullying has been an increasingly prevalent problem among society for decades. Approximately one out of every four students report being bullied at least once during the school year. Additionally, these instances of bullying are often witnessed but not reported by the bystanders, which could be dependent on the type of bullying situation. Thus, the present study aims to investigate any possible perceptual differences which may exist between traditional bullying (i.e., face to face) and cyberbullying from the bystander's point of view. Undergraduate students were given a bullying scenario to read from either the traditional condition or the cyber condition. They were then asked to rate how severe they perceived this behavior on a Likert based scale. Participants were also asked if they would intervene (yes or no) and what their individual response would be to the witnessed behavior (report/ignore/confront/other). Results indicated that, while there was no significant difference in perceived severity between the two bullying conditions, there was a significant difference in whether or not participants would intervene between the two types of scenarios. A significant effect was also found between the scenarios for response type. Together, these findings suggest that even though individuals may not be aware of how severe they perceive certain bullying behaviors, the responses they exhibit might suggest otherwise.

Keywords : bullying, bystander, cyber, severity, traditional
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