LETTER

The Severity of Cyberbullying Affects Bystander Intervention Among College Students: The Roles of Feelings of Responsibility and Empathy [Letter]

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Dear editor

We have read the paper by Liangjiecheng Huang et al on The severity of cyberbullying affects bystander intervention among college students.[1] This research is very interesting because cyberbullying has become a serious concern among internet users around the world. However, information related to the behavior of individuals who witness cyberbullying and their responses is still relatively small.[2] The side effects of cyberbullying will have a negative impact on students in all aspects of their lives, especially aspects of mental health such as depression, social anxiety, suicide, low self-esteem and other mental health problems, behavior that can affect their lives in the future.[3]

The study conducted by Liangjiecheng Huang et al aims to explore the effects of incidents of cyberbullying and the intention of observers to intervene on social media among college students. From this objective the researcher found that the severity of cyberbullying incidents positively influenced bystanders' intentions to intervene.[1] However, it should be noted that the awareness of bystanders who witness cyberbullying is also influenced by subjective norms and self-efficacy because some observers will make past experience a victimization cyberbullying.[2] At the same time, bystanders may take risks with interventions that include: aggravating the situation, for example, by drawing negative attention to the bully, causing disturbance and further endangering the safety of the bullied, becoming the target of acute bullying, and being targeted long-term.[4]

The study conducted by Liangjiecheng Huang et al presented incidents of cyberbullying with various levels of severity through scenarios including news reports and comments from fictitious weibo where participants were expected to fill out questionnaires and measure variables of interest.[1] It is sufficiently effective to assess the severity of the incident including the intention of the bystander to intervene in taking action. However, it should be noted that parental mediation can also affect the actions and reactions of both victims, bystanders and perpetrators of cyberbullying, because parents here play a direct role as educators and supervisors who can not only protect teenagers on social media but also as guides in using social media effectively.[5] The parental mediation strategy is aimed at overcoming the risk of passive exposure to unwanted content where parents are required to supervise social media interactions and have the opportunity to browse their children's social media profile accounts.[5]

In conclusion, we agree that the severity of cyberbullying incidents affects bystanders' intentions to intervene, to be responsible, and to intervene.[1] Based on this, we recommend active involvement of parents with their children to discuss and explain media content and guide them on the proper use of social media, because critical discussions between parents and children have been shown to encourage critical thinking and increase adolescent digital literacy which can reduce the adverse effects of social media and the risk of victimization from cyberbullying perpetrators.[5] In addition, collaboration in environmental involvement in the intervention process is the key to optimizing effective goals in preventing and raising awareness and reducing the negative impact of cyberbullying on students.[3]

Disclosure

The author reports no conflict of interest in this communication.

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