

https://dspace.org/

Cyberbullying: youth's perceptions in a Johannesburg school context

Moross, Karen

2017

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/24817

Moross, Karen (2017) Cyberbullying: youth's perceptions in a Johannesburg school context, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <https://hdl.handle.net/10539/24817>

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

CYBERBULLYING: YOUTH'S PERCEPTIONS IN A JOHANNESBURG SCHOOL CONTEXT

Karen Moross

9503519W

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Psychology.

Johannesburg, 2017

ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying is a new form of bullying that has emerged as a by-product of interactive communication technologies, of which adolescents are the most prolific users. A meaningful number of adolescents are involved in cyberbullying and the impact can have a significant effect on the wellbeing of adolescents. The prevalence and the level of severity of this phenomenon is a matter of concern for society in general. Technology is pervasive and has become an integral part of the lives of adolescents; it can also leave individuals more vulnerable to harassment and violent behaviour penetration/victimisations.

This study used Q methodology as an alternative approach to explore how South African adolescents' perceived the nature of cyberbullying and its severity by providing insights into their subjective understanding of the phenomenon. A sample of 46 adolescents (aged 14 to 17 years of age) ranked two sets of statements (Q sort 1 and Q sort 2) that described cyberbullying behaviours and hypothetical cyberbullying events respectively. Participants sorted the statements according to personal significance within a fixed matrix. Their responses were analysed using the freeware statistical program PQ Method (Schmolck, 2014).

A five-factor solution was identified and described for Q sort 1. The diversity of views emerging has implications for cyberbullying research, policy, and intervention and suggests different approaches for addressing this issue. Three distinct accounts of the severity of cyberbullying events emerged from the Q sort 2 analysis. These perspectives are discussed in relation to existing literature and the potential role of adults is considered. Participants also completed an open-ended questionnaire to inform their reactions to cyberbullying events by probing coping mechanisms. The distinct representations add to the understanding of this complex phenomenon.

Key words: adolescents, cyberbullying, perceptions, interactive communication technologies, subjectivity, Q-methodology.