

The Prevalence of Cyber bullying in Gauteng private schools among Grade 7 to 9 learners

Abstract

This study investigated the prevalence of cyber bullying among Grade 7, 8 and 9 learners in private schools within the Gauteng area. The research design was quantitative, exploratory and contextual. Data collection was done through a self-developed structured questionnaire survey. Data analysis was done through descriptive statistics. The sample for this research was 60 learners from 2 schools in Grade 7, 8 and 9. Results showed that girls were twice as likely to be victims as well as perpetrators of cyber bullying as compared to boys. The anonymity of cyber bullying was shown not to be relevant as the perpetrators of cyber bullying were known to 85% of the victims and all the victims were known to the perpetrators. The results show that 62% of the victims reported being cyberbullied at home and 100% of the perpetrators of cyber bullying did so from their homes. It is a concern that 40% of learners were not aware of any programmes at their school to prevent cyber bullying. Most parents in this study spoke to their children about cyber bullying, internet danger and online safety. However, they still did not have enough systems in place to protect their children from these very real dangers. The educational implications of this study needs to be seen from the perspective of each learner having the right to a safe environment that is conducive to learning. Cyber bullying interferes with this right. Therefor schools need to become proactive at establishing classroom interventions as well as individual interventions when cases of cyber bullying come to light. This type of intervention can however only be effective if there is parental involvement. The results of this study should be seen as an exploratory pilot study and should be replicated as it is with a larger sample.

Key Words: Cyber world; cyber bullying; perpetrator; victim; anonymity; flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, exclusion and cyber stalking