

**The anti-cyberbullying programs in Finnish lower
secondary schools: Teacher perspectives**

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ABSTRACT

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The development of technology, methods of communication and the entertainment industry has contributed to an increased amount of time students are spending online. This has also been followed by the emergence of cyberbullying, which has entered schools and has become a serious issue that challenges students, parents and educators alike. Nowadays, schools have to incorporate anti-cyberbullying strategies to ensure a safe learning environment.

This study examined the implementation of anti-cyberbullying programs in Finnish lower secondary schools and their potential improvements through the perspectives of educators. Two research questions were in the focus of this study: “How do educators assess the implementation of the current anti-cyberbullying program in their schools” and “How would educators improve the efficiency of the anti-cyberbullying program in their schools?”.

The views of the educators were studied through a qualitative approach by using semi-structured interviews. Seven educators from seven different Finnish lower secondary schools shared their experiences with the cyberbullying cases they had encountered.

The findings indicated there are several areas within the programs that still have room for improvement, mostly in the area of educating the indirect participants of cyberbullying, i.e., the teachers and parents. Furthermore, the results showed that more attention should be paid to bystanders of bullying.

It can be concluded that certain changes need to be made to more efficiently prevent cyberbullying. The facilitation of proper education for teachers, clear school policies about anti-bullying measures and better support for educators to create safer school environments are the first steps to be taken to more efficiently oppose cyberbullying.

Key words: cyberbullying, anti-cyberbullying programs, lower secondary education, teachers, parents, bystanders, school environment.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Bullying among schoolchildren is a phenomenon that has been addressed in education throughout its existence. During the past several decades, bullying has been visible in classrooms, school hallways and playgrounds, and it has begun to appear online, therefore creating a new type of bullying called “cyberbullying”. One of the most difficult challenges presented to all who wish to prevent, mitigate or help with the prevention of cyberbullying is to make a distinction between traditional bullying¹ and online bullying - cyberbullying. More precisely, the problem occurs because the definition of cyberbullying cannot be followed with up to date explanations, limited theories, rules of engagement, inconsistent procedures of assessing cyberbullying, guidelines for prevention and help. There are several factors that make cyberbullying more complex and more challenging than traditional bullying such as: anonymity, accessibility, time, frequency and the consequences that follow. In the world of cyberbullying, there are always at least two participants; the aggressor being the cyberbully or cyberbullies, and the recipient or recipients of abuse, the cybervictim or cybervictims.

It has not yet been concluded in research is cyberbullying only a subtype of traditional bullying or should both types be categorized separately. Generally, cyberbullying has been defined as a: “willful and repeated harm inflicted through computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015a, p. 11). According to Hinduja & Patchin (2017), it includes threatening, embarrassing, demeaning or any alternative way of harassing others.

¹Traditional bullying - the definition of bullying which is most common in use was created by dr. Daniel Olweus and states that bullying is made out of “three components: 1) aggressive behaviors that are 2) repeated and 3) involve a power imbalance favoring the perpetrator. According to this definition, an individual is a victim of bullying when he or she is exposed repeatedly over time to negative actions by one or more individuals and is unable to defend him or herself, excluding cases where two children of similar physical and psychological strength are fighting” (Olweus, 1993; 1994 as cited in Gladden et al., 2014, p. 4)

Cyberbullying in schools is a dangerous phenomenon, which is promptly increasing while its prevention is becoming more and more challenging. The lack of awareness of its presence is what makes this problem extremely dangerous because it prevents both students and schools from recognizing it and preventing it at the right time. Cyberbullying is not limited in time and scope, as cyberbullies can be anonymous and numerous, thus students who are victims of the cyberbullying sometimes are not even aware that they have been exposed to cyberbullying at all. According to Patchin and Hinduja (2015), repetition, harm, intentions and power differentials are widely acknowledged factors and characteristics that separate bullying (traditional or cyber) from other types of violent behaviors. Therefore, to successfully address this problem, both students and school administrators must know the basics of online safety, be acquainted with bullying prevention programs and familiarize themselves with steps needed to be taken when cyberbullying occurs. Students generally believe that adults are not able to help them in those kinds of situations so they often hesitate to report a problem (Simão et al., 2017). One of the reasons why they will not confide in a trusted adult is the belief that it would only unnecessarily prolong and worsen the situation.

Protecting victims and preventing the problem from reemerging are, as with every problem, two of the most important steps to take. When dealing with cyberbullying, prevention is the best form of protection but because of its specific features, a lot of things have to be taken into account. The responsibility of protecting the students belongs to several shareholders such as: the community, school administrators, parents and students themselves. The most challenging part of protecting them lays in the fact that it is harder to manage because of the pervasiveness of online media in everyday lives. When it comes to delivering information to students about the seriousness of the problem, there is not necessarily a clear understanding about who should address the potential dangers of cyberbullying and how. Therefore, a clear understanding of what kinds of responsibilities belong to teachers and parents is needed, and this is a part of the challenge in the prevention work for preventing

cyberbullying. Thus, school policies must include flexible, up to date and detailed plans and programs about cyberbullying prevention and ways to handle it. The success and the efficiency of the program depends on the knowledge that is shared, the carefully planned lessons and the tailored approach to the students in order to create a safe space for everyone to be in, to share and to enjoy.

As stated, educating students about the threats they might face while online, and teaching them what actions to take and whom to address the problem to lays upon the collaborations between teachers and parents. The purpose of that collaboration is to protect students at their most vulnerable age and to educate them to protect themselves and build resilience against cyberbullying. It can help the students to avoid being cyberbullied in the first place and to gain the ability and knowledge on how to protect themselves against any kind of bullying. It is necessary for all relevant stakeholders to develop and gain competencies for digital citizenship, which will get them closer to achieving the goal of knowing how to communicate online in a civilized manner, which has already been recognized as a citizenship skill in a present society.

2 WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying and traditional bullying have some noticeable similarities but also some clear distinctions between definitions. This presents a certain challenge to all stakeholders who are dealing with the problem of cyberbullying because sometimes it overlaps with traditional bullying. In some cases, both can be resolved using the same strategies, but in other cases cyberbullying poses as a different type of threat.

In order to get a more precise picture of what cyberbullying is, several definitions are compared in the following Table 1. made by authors and organizations during their studies.

| Author | The definition of cyberbullying |
|--|--|
| Smith et al. (2008) | "An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or an individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself." (p. 376) |
| Hinduja & Patchin (2009) | "Willful and repeated harm inflicted [onto a victim] through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices." (p. 5) |
| Wang et al. (2009) | "A form of aggression that occurs through personal computers (e.g., e-mail and instant messaging) or cell phones (e.g., text messaging)." (p.369) |
| Tokunaga (2010) | "Any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others." (p. 278). |
| Peter and Petermann (2018) | "Using information and communication technologies (ICT) to repeatedly and intentionally harm, harass, hurt and/or embarrass a target." (p. 359). |
| United States Department of Health and Human Services (2020) | "Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior." |

TABLE 1. The definitions of cyberbullying in different studies

As Olweus (1999) has stated, factors such as willingness to harm, disproportion of power and the recurrence of hurtful behavior are typical for traditional bullying but are not a necessity when it comes to cyberbullying.

An agreement about a universal definition for cyberbullying has still not been reached because of different understandings what kind of behavior is considered cyberbullying. As it can be seen in Table 1, some authors are putting more emphasis on the description of the act itself (whether it is willful, aggressive or intentional), some are focused on its frequency (repetition of the act) while others are postulating the definition through the information and communication technologies through which cyberbullying may happen (computers, phones). This insinuates that the definition of cyberbullying needs to be extensive and comprehensively described in all of the ways cyberbullying can happen; to whom and to which the behaviors are seen as cyberbullying.

2.1. Comparing cyberbullying and traditional bullying

A clear distinction between traditional and cyber bullying has not been made yet. Confusion arises because cyberbullying matches several of the same criteria as traditional means of bullying such as power inequality, repetition and intentionality (Olweus, 2013). That is why some authors consider it only as a subtype of traditional bullying while others, such as Slonje et al. (2013) considered it as new phenomenon with different features.

2.1.1. Differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying

The focus of the research made by Salmivalli et al. (2013) was a comparison between traditional bullying and cyberbullying. They examined whether cyberbullying is targeting the same or different victims with different motivational bases and consequences than in traditional bullying. Their findings showed that cyber victims are chosen on a different basis than the victims of traditional bullying. For example, not being well accepted socially and having a high level of depression are some of strongest predictors of

belonging to traditional victim groups, but they are have no significance whatsoever when it comes to being targeted by cyberbullies.

In addition, one of the most noticeable differences is the place where bullying occurs because the online perpetrator can target and intimidate their victim outside the school context (i.e. at their homes), meaning that there is no safe place to avoid being antagonized. Some authors (e.g. Salmivalli et al., 2013) disagree with it and claim that cyberbullying is less dangerous because it lacks physical confrontation and the victim can stop it by simply turning off all devices that are being used for communication.

The study by Arnarsson et al. (2020) offered evidences that traditional and cyber bullying are two different types of bullying because no great similarities can be found between them. On one hand, cyberbullying bullies are often “protected” by anonymity, which also allows them less liability; their actions are more public and can be carried out at any point (Arnarsson et al., 2020). On the other hand, traditional bullies cannot take actions while staying anonymous, cannot hurt their victims while they are at their homes and do not have a broad audience like in online communities.

2.1.2. Similarities between cyberbullying and traditional bullying

Although traditional and cyber bullying may have some differences, there are also certain similarities. The common reasons for both types of bullying are usually: social status, relationships with parents and victim provocation.

Other most reported reasons, given by Wilton & Campbell (2011) were: to get their own way, to get attention and badgering someone because he or she was different in any kind of way. The study by Salmivalli et al. (2013) also showed that if parents noticed that their child or someone else has been cyberbullied, they should also check whether they have been victims of traditional bullying as well because unfortunately, that is often the case.

Because of the complexity of the problem, it might be explained that the phenomenon of cyberbullying does not necessarily mean that bullying has moved from contact space to cyberspace. As stated before, cyberbullying in

some situations can be viewed as an extension of or as an addition to traditional bullying so they are not mutually exclusive but rather are followed one by another.

2.2. Features of cyberbullying

Some of the other features of cyberbullying are anonymity, potential to reach a very broad audience, lesser amount of accountability and responsibility and the fact that it can be done 24 hours a day (Arnarsson et al., 2020), however the two most prominent features which differentiate cyberbullying from innocent jokes are repetition and intention. According to student accounts from a study by Baas et al. (2013), one-time occurrences can be considered as innocent pranks, as they are tolerable and are not really a form of cyberbullying. Other important features that make cyberbullying differing from innocent pranks are the harmful intentions by the bully.

One of the issues when trying to define intention is that intention is a very subjective notion and it might have different meaning to both the bully and the victim. The bullies might not see that their “pranks” are having potentially harmful intentions and they do not think they are enforcing cyberbullying while victims might be experiencing the exact opposite (Baas et al., 2013). The victims also established that sometimes it is harder and more complicated for those directly involved in cyberbullying to assess the situation and to detect it as cyberbullying than “outsiders” – bystanders, parents, teachers, etc.

3 REASONS BEHIND CYBERBULLYING

One of the arguments why students engage in cyberbullying is that it can be related to the disinhibition effect, which is described as a decline in attitude, and it is followed by paying less attention to self-image and presenting yourself to others. It is common for individuals who decide not to comply the public rules of appropriate communication and behavior (Joinson, 1998, Wilton& Campbell, 2011). Cyberbullying can provide perpetrator anonymity which can support further disinhibition and feeling of power because the perpetrator can stay hidden, does not have to show his/her face and avoids being exposed and punished. Although, according to Salmivalli et al. (2013), looking at it from a social dominance perspective, bullies might not choose anonymity because if they keep their identity hidden, they will not get the recognition from their peers for their actions. Therefore, in order to maintain their “status as bullies” among them, they will try to attack and humiliate their victims publically.

3.1. Targeting victims

Findings from various studies indicate that 95% of teenagers in the United States of America are in possession of a device (smart phone, tablet, computer, laptop etc.) that has access to the internet and 45% of teenagers unveiled to be “online on a near-constant basis” (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Recent research (Kowalski et al., 2019) shows that different age groups are engaging differently in the situations where cyberbullying might occur – for instance, elementary school children spend most of their time online playing online games with the possibility to chat or have a conversation with other players while older children – teenagers and adolescents, spend their time on social media platforms.

Cyberbullies might have different strategies and ways for attacking their victims. Regardless whether they know their victim personally or not, they might target them with their identity hidden or anonymously, with their identity being fake (or using aliases) or in some cases just being straightforward and having their identity being plain and visible. More commonly the individual who decides to engage in cyberbullying chooses to do it anonymously or by using an alias in order to make their victim feel even more helpless and powerless (Ansary, 2020). The “visibility” of the attack might also be a factor – the bully might decide to do it privately, e.g. through direct message or email or publicly so others can witness it.

The motives for cyberbullying can be categorized in three groups. The first is an internally felt drive to harm, threaten or hurt someone online. Bullies can decide to engage in cyberbullying because they are trying to fit in – be accepted, because of boredom, for their own pleasure or as compensation for being bullied or cyberbullied themselves. The second motive for cyberbullying is often negative experiences with the victim; most frequently mentioning jealousy or disputes. The third motive (Baas et al., 2013.) is associated with the characteristics of the victim which includes their appearance (i.e. skin color, clothes, skin conditions, accessories such as glasses, piercings etc.), social aspects (first name, family name, number of friends etc.) and personality (quiet, self – conscious, intelligent, etc.). Motives can also be cultural and ethnological differences. In some cases (Kowalski et al., 2019), targets are members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer, intersex (LGBTQI) community, individuals with impairments and those individuals with weight problems. Data collected by Ansary (2020) has showed that LGBTQI members have reported being victims of cyberbullying almost twice as much (27.1%) compared to their heterosexual correlates (13.3%).

Bullies are tactically targeting their victims to gain more advantage for their own self-image and prestige while at the same time avoiding being criticized and judged by their schoolmates (Salmivalli et al., 2013, Veenstra et al., 2010). They are more likely to target schoolmates/peers who are not

amongst the most likeable or popular ones thus avoiding the risk of losing affiliation to others and they are likely to choose cyberbullying instead of traditional bullying in order to keep anonymity and to avoid face-to-face contact.

As for the specific reasons why cyberbullying occurs in the first place, some of them are similar or even the same as in the cases of traditional bullying (age and gender differences, poor social skills, lack of emotional competencies). Social variables can also have a role of being risk factors, especially if they are of poor quality: school environment, relations between teaching personnel and between teachers and students. Potential risk factors might also be living in conflictive or violent neighborhoods, insecure school climates, teacher competences, relationships between teachers or relationships between teachers and students (Martínez et al., 2019). Reported risk factors were also teacher education, school coherence and its resources (Debnam et al., 2014; Eliot et al., 2010; Martínez et al., 2019; Waasdorp et al., 2011). In the end, one of the most crucial factors is the presence and impact of a child's family as the primary role model and example of social behaviors and relationships.

3.2. The role of the parents

Parents have a crucial role in all cyberbullying situations not only because they are guardians of their children and have an essential role in their lives but also because of the specificity of cyberbullying which often “follows cyberbullying victims home”. In order for them to “keep up” with their children, they also need to gain knowledge about the safe use of technology. Altogether, it includes

information on prevention (e.g., teaching children digital citizenship, not sharing usernames or passwords, not providing personal information in profiles etc.) and intervention when cyberbullying happens (e.g., block users who post harmful messages, not responding to threatening messages and to notify an adult immediately etc.). (Ansary, 2020, p. 5)

Therefore, positive parenting (i.e. the parental supervision of technology, empathy, understanding, the provision of care and safety, etc.) is considered to be a protective factor when it comes to cyberbullying prevention (Kowalski et al., 2019). For instance, in a study by Anderson (2016), 48% of parents in the USA reported that they check their children's phone calls and text messages.

If an unwanted situation happens, Beale & Hall (2007) suggest that parents stay calm, make sure their child is safe and then take the necessary steps without having an improper reaction, which might cause more stress or harm. Keeping evidence about cyberbullying is the first step, followed by notifying the school administrators about what happened as a way of raising awareness and creating the possibility to prevent it from happening again is the second course of action. In collaboration with the school, parents might decide to contact the bully's parents and through mediation processes stop the cyberbullying and resolve the situation. In severe situations, such as life threats, blackmailing or sexual exploitation (Beale & Hall, 2007), the police and child protective services should be notified as well.

3.3. Styles of parenting as risk factors or protective factors for cyberbullying

It cannot be determined whether cyberbullying can be fully avoided if one strictly follows certain rules and guidelines on how to stay safe while being online, but risk and protective factors can help to enhance or reduce the odds of becoming a cybervictim.

According to recent research by Ansary (2020), "individual-level risk factors for becoming a target of cyberbullying include: low self-esteem, self-control, social intelligence, low empathy, high levels of anxiety, aggression, moral disengagement, and being a victim of traditional bullying victimization" (p.4)

On the contrary, some factors can protect an individual from being a target of cyberbullying and at the same time empower them to defend themselves if cyberbullying occurs - for instance, having higher levels of self-

esteem, self-control, empathy and social intelligence can have significant meaning in those situations. (Kowalski et al., 2019, cited in Ansary, 2020). Parents and family can also have an impact on both the risk and protective factors, sometimes even directly be them.

Although there are no, and probably never will be, absolute, precise evidences which parenting style is the best, it seems that as for probability for a child to be bullied, parenting styles can be either a protective or a risk factor. Between different styles of parenting, research has showed that indulgent parenting is the most “protective one”, while authoritarian parenting is the least “protective one” (Martínez et al., 2019). Using warmth practices and reasoning (characteristic of indulgent parenting) showed to be “a protective factor irrespective of the adolescents' predisposition to aggression” (Martínez et al., 2019, p. 88), compared to using strictness, physical and verbal intimidation (characteristic of authoritarian parenting) which acts as a risk factor in the same matter.

As the above research shows, there is a connection between parents raising their children, children's behavior (inclination to aggression in this case) and traditional and cyberbullying. Children and youth who tend to be more aggressive are more likely to become bullies than those with lower inclinations to aggression and the same has been showed in the opposite situation (Barker et al., 2008; Cerezo et al., 2015; Duong et al., 2009; Garaigordobil & Aliri, 2012; Martínez et al., 2019). It has been suggested that children who have authoritarian and neglectful parents and who have inadequate levels of communication inside the family tend to become bullies more often than children who are coming from intact families and with authoritative and indulgent parents (Wilton & Campbell, 2011).

4 CONSEQUENCES OF CYBERBULLYING

4.1. Not reporting cyberbullying to trusted adults

It is not uncommon that children do not want tell their parents or any other trusted adult about their problems or situations that happened as it might result in them being punished or suffer from further consequences. Whether the problem is small like mischievous behavior or more serious issues like cyberbullying, children often decide not to tell anyone about it. Cyberbullying victims stated that they feel ashamed, more precisely of two different feelings related to shame are the most common reasons for not wanting to report cyberbullying to a trusted adult. The first one was assimilated with being ashamed of being disliked and humiliated by their schoolmates, which affects their self-esteem, self – consciousness and self-image, as well as the image others are having of them. Secondly, they also feel somewhat responsible for being bullied because it was their decision to go online and to “take a risk” of something like that happening, so the second feeling of feeling shame is assimilated with their own fault.

Being reluctant to report cyberbullying to anyone, especially to their parents, is justified by children by the fear of possible consequences. The possibility to contact the teacher, the bully and/or their parents, the fear of the whole situation becoming public and known to other schoolmates, as well as the risk of losing technology and internet privileges (Beale & Hall, 2007) are the most common factors why children do not want to speak about it.

To prevent this from happening, parents should nurture an environment of open communication with their children – teaching them to share their feelings, talk about their fears (Paolini, 2018) and show them that the goal of restrictions is to protect them and not to punish them. Parents can also, in cooperation with their children, come up with rules about internet use – i.e., at what point of the day is it okay to go online, how long should you be online as

well as what to do if a harmful message is received and which personal information is safe to share and when (Keith & Martin, 2005 as cited in Beale & Hall, 2007). Teaching them the reason why it is important to report these kind of things and that their actions could prevent this happening to someone else is also a healthy way to grow empathy and a feeling of being mindful to others.

4.2. Consequences on health

Cyberbullying victims may, similarly as the victims of the traditional bullying, experience “headaches, depression, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and academic difficulties, among others” (Ansary, 2020, p.1). The study carried by Fahy et al. (2016) has showed a correlation between cyberbullying and higher social anguish and lower overall wellbeing at yearly checkpoints.

Cyberbullying might have a different impact on every victim. The most common effect mentioned by all victims was fear, more precisely the fear of possible escalation to physical violence (Dennehy et al., 2020), which resulted in skipping school or being afraid of going to school. Another very common symptom was losing trust in everyone as a result of the anonymity of the bully - especially in friends and schoolmates because of the possibility that anyone can be the anonymous bully (Baas et al., 2013). Paolini (2018) states it is not uncommon for cyberbullying victims to start using or abusing substances to ease the emotional pain and cope with the situation.

Also, bullying students often might result in the suffering of long term consequences. Bullying has been correlated with poor health, poorer academic achievements, poor self-esteem, loneliness, depression, psychological distress and other consequential grievances, which also results in negative perceptions of school (Markkanen et al., 2019). The research carried out by Zych et al. (2015) disclosed that cyberbullying could predict worse outcomes than traditional ones when it comes to symptoms such as depression, suicidal tendencies, anxiety, low self-esteem and physical health. Also a study by Fahy et. al (2016)

showed that cyberbullying victims are more likely to experience: “depressive symptoms, social anxiety symptoms, and below average well-being at follow-up” (p. 505) than their peers who weren't involved in cyberbullying. Therefore, cyberbullying can cause serious consequences on children's wellbeing, both psychological and physical, thus health-care providers should be included in planning and developing anti- bullying programs.

5 PREVENTION PROGRAMS

5.1. Anti-bullying laws in Finnish schools

In order to make school environments safer, the Finnish Basic Education Act (Perusopetuslaki) has changed and amended its legislation in the beginning of the past decade to include the following: “The education provider shall draw up a plan, in connection with curriculum design, for safeguarding pupils against violence, bullying and harassment, execute the plan, and supervise adherence to it and its implementation.” (Laitinen et al., 2020, p.14). That indicated that the schools would develop anti-bullying plans on a municipal level (Salmivalli et al., 2011) and therefore be responsible for its implementation.

The Finnish National Board of Education has decided to rule in its constitutional syllabus as well as in its formal education separate orders the instructions the writing of this school-specific teaching agenda. In the agenda against bullying, the relationships between students and other students, as well as students and adults at the school must be considered. According to Laitinen et al. (2020) the official syllabus plan must describe:

- The interference of bullying, violence and harassment.
- How the aforementioned are dealt with on a community, group, and individual level.
- The providing of individual support, needed care, as well as other actions and follow-ups for both the antagonist as well as the victim.
- Collaboration with guardians.
- Collaboration with any necessary officials.
- How the agenda will be presented and taught to staff, students, guardians and co-operative entities.
- How the agenda will be updated, followed and evaluated. (p.14)

Those who are providing education must also put the agenda into effect and monitor that it is fulfilled and followed because that is crucial to ensure a continuous safe environment for learning. The safety measures of a school should be long-term and orderly written, and its progress should be measured and monitored by the provider of education regularly (Laitinen et al., 2020).

5.2. The focus of prevention programs

One of the ways to raise awareness of this problem and the seriousness of its consequences for the perpetrators is through anti-cyberbullying programs and policies authorized by law. Hinduja & Patchin, (2015b, as cited in Ansary, 2020) created a framework of several propositions which would make every anti-cyberbullying program more efficient: (1) precise definition of bullying with a mention of its technological counterpart - cyberbullying, (2) severe consequences depending on the recurrence, (3) precise step-by-step policies for reporting, (4) precise step-by-step policies on investigating, (5) including and defining behavior outside the school area that will be recognized as cyberbullying and (6) precise step-by-step policies for preventing cyberbullying. By implementing this framework (or its variation) in schools, responsibility would be appointed to school personnel for investigating the problem of cyberbullying more in depth, which would raise the general performance of the program, increase its efficiency and improve the school climate.

Creating an effective prevention program to successfully fight cyberbullying from occurring requires several criteria to be met. Ansary (2020) lists three of the most important ones: 1) a theoretical background which is used as a base for all guidelines and strategies, 2) list of protective and risk factors to pay attention to and which could positively or negatively affect the strategies and 3) possible program outcomes and their influence on the individual, their home and school. When developing a program, creators also need to have in

mind two of the most common mistakes that happen and which impact the program results: 1) making cyberbullying prevention programs as slightly modified and/or expended variations of the traditional bullying program, and, 2) offering separate suggestions and solutions on how to protect yourself/your children/your students from cyberbullying at home or at school instead of creating a comprehensive plan suitable for all areas of life.

One of the most common ways the schools are trying to oppose cyberbullying is investing more in the prevention of it rather than in intervention. The most common way of putting an emphasis on prevention is via making restrictions regarding the use of technology (private cell phones) during the classes and denying students of visiting social media during school hours. These policies have been showed to be effective because they are both limiting the students' time spent on social media and reducing cyberbullying opportunities during school hours but as stated, they are protecting students only when they are in school.

When dealing with the prevention of bullying of any type, educators and creators of school-based programs should focus on reducing victimization in general and try to stop and reduce both traditional and cyberbullying with one policy (Salmivalli et al., 2011). Their research showed that a well-designed and research-based program can have a great impact on students through reducing cyberbullying behavior. Therefore, developing a specific program for different forms of bullying might not be necessary- for example, Chaux et al. (2016) and Williford et al. (2013), showed that an anti-cyberbullying program can be successful in preventing traditional bullying and the other way around.

Resilience is considered the best way to protect the children and youth from being harmed during traditional bullying or cyberbullying even when they are outside school premises. Therefore, school programs should include strategies which would "be useful to prepare students for life by intentionally teaching and cultivating certain socio-emotional skills within caring contexts, and providing them meaningful opportunities to face hardship and successfully overcome it" (Hinduja & Patchin, 2017, p. 59). Additional help can be received

from social media firms and businesses through their rules, restrictions and limitations of what users can post and share on their platforms (i.e. posts about buying or selling medications, alcohol, tobacco and firearms between private individuals being forbidden), the social media companies are already using sophisticated systems to prevent cyberbullying from happening and different strategies to intervene when it happens: “reporting, blocking, filtering software, as well as human and automated detection systems” (Ansary, 2020, p.6). Those systems need to be updated frequently because they are usually automatic and might not necessarily make distinctions between cyberbullying, irony and context-specific aggression as for instance technical support personnel could do (Milošević, 2016).

5.3. The “KiVaKoulu®” cyberbullying program

“KiVaKoulu®” is an anti-bullying program originated from the University of Turku, Finland which examines bullying being a group process and has its focus on participants’ characters (Salmivalli et al., 1996) The programs’ goals are to prevent bullying and victimization and successfully mediate cases that already have arisen (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016).

The “KiVaKoulu®” anti-bullying program is one of the programs, which has goals to increase empathy, the individual’s self-image and anti-bullying behaviors of bystanders by implementing two types of activities - universal actions and actions targeted at specific incidents. Universal actions refer mostly to theoretical part such as classroom-based lessons for raising awareness, increasing empathy and promoting methods of aiding the victim. As opposed to that, the focus of indicated actions lays in particular cases of cyberbullying and providing professional adult mediation and support of schoolmates for the victim of cyberbullying (Williford et al., 2013). The whole bystander culture is in the focus of the program because there are several factors that have great impact when bullying or cyberbullying occur. For instance, in traditional bullying, merely their presence can stop it from happening but in the case of

cyberbullying, where bullies can retain their anonymity, the goal might be to humiliate the victim in front of as many as possible peers.

The program is comprehensive, systematic and it is based on monitoring bystanders' attitudes after witnessing a bullying situation with the intention to alter their behaviors and character (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016). Most bystanders with their "reserved" behavior actually boost up and reinforce the bully, but the goal of this program is to redirect that kind of behavior to assist the victim instead. With raising the number of "defenders" of the victim instead of supporters of the bully, the bullies might lose the motivation to engage in bullying again. The general idea is to create a school environment with an absolute "zero tolerance policy" for any type of bullying where both students and school personnel are internally motivated to prevent it.

Except the specifically targeted actions for those students who were at some point either victims or bullies, the prevention part of the program has also universal actions, which are meant for all students (Salmivalli et al., 2010). They are consisted of multiple student lessons taught by classroom teachers with aims "to raise awareness of the role bystanders' play in the bullying process, to increase empathy toward the victim, and to provide students with safe strategies to support and defend their victimized peers" (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016, p. 1012). The universal actions the "KiVaKoulu®" program implements are discussion, class tasks, debates, role-play activities, video materials about bullying and computer games, all of which have the same goals – gaining knowledge, adopting new rules of behavior and using learned skills in real life situations. Every action (whether universal or indicated) is taken by school personnel which have obtained the license from the "KiVaKoulu®" program – those trainings included two whole days of interactions with "KiVaKoulu®" supervisors who also conduct several additional trainings after the school has obtained the license (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016).

The "KiVaKoulu®" program also recognizes the importance of including the parents in the program, therefore it created a handbook which includes information about bullying and cyberbullying, the ways "KiVaKoulu®"

operates and the goals that are expected to be met and advices on how to recognize signs if their child has been involved in cyberbullying, either being a cyberbully or a cybervictim.

Every school has three personnel members that are appointed to ensure that the “KiVaKoulu®” program has been implemented and that it is ongoing. Their task is to follow certain steps when cyberbullying occurs and engage in discussions with all participants of a cyberbullying situation. First, immediately after the definite sign of cyberbullying, they hold a meeting with the victim, and then with the bully, which can turn into a group discussion in case there was more than one bully involved. At the same time, the classroom teacher has been informed about the situation and their task is to ensure that some pro-social or in the best case, all classmates show support toward the victim. The next step in the procedure is to organize recurring meetings with all parties who were involved in the cyberbullying case, the victim and the bully, several weeks after the incident. These meeting are held separately so that any predicted changes in behaviors could be observed.

The impacts and results of the “KiVaKoulu®” program have already been discussed in several studies, in both controlled trials and nationwide use in Finland (Kärnä et al., 2013; Kärnä, et al., 2011a; Kärnä et al., 2011b). The findings showed that the “KiVaKoulu®” anti-bullying program successfully lowered both bullying and victimization - students who are attending schools that have implemented the “KiVaKoulu®” program have between 1.3 and 1.5 less odds of being bullied and victimized. The positive outcomes were also seen in the behavior of bystanders - their empathy, self-efficacy and willingness to help victims of cyberbullying have been enhanced as well as their performance in academia, their motivation for schoolwork and their general opinion about school (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016; Salmivalli et al., 2012), as well as improved peer-group quality of relationships (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016; Williford et al., 2013).

There are several reasons why the “KiVaKoulu®” anti-bullying program has been getting positive outcomes and reaching its goals. Firstly, it is based on

professional, detailed and comprehensive collection of materials, which helps students, their parents and school personnel in understanding the ways “KiVaKoulu®” operates, what is the focus of the program and its aims. Second, as already mentioned, “KiVaKoulu®” is putting a strong focus on the role of the bystanders by reinforcing their empathy, self-efficacy and encouraging them to provide help and support for their victimized colleagues. Thirdly, “KiVaKoulu®” is trying to keep up with the progress of technology and the most effective ways of learning, therefore it includes online lessons, virtual learning environments and video games as a source of knowledge.

5.4. Transferability of anti-cyberbullying programs

Intervention programs might not always be transferable and suitable in an international context – Nocentini & Menesini (2016) and Sundell et al. (2014) stated that the differences might occur because of cultural adaptation, different contextual influences, poor treatment adherence or alternative methodology approaches.

When repeating evaluation studies of evidence-based interventions (EBIs), in order to expect the same or similar results as in the original study, creators have to overcome several challenges and according to Nocentini & Menesini (2016), be aware of: “balancing fidelity with adaptation, tailoring intervention to meet the cultural needs of the new context and participants, garnering and sustaining support for the intervention, and adjusting organizational structures to accommodate the specific requirements of the program” (p. 1012)

When wanting to implement an existing anti-cyberbullying program in another country, another culture and another school system, several facts need to be appointed. One of the issues is awareness of the information technology (IT) support in schools, ergo, the number of computers per student that needs to be met in order for the program to be fully incorporated. Although online components of the program (online questionnaires and video games) are relevant, they are not the source of the knowledge but just mere tools to practice

gained skills and therefore they can be replaced. Another factor is the difference between basic and additional training throughout the school year among the teachers. For example, Italian teachers, who are not required to hold a Master's degree in order to teach like Finnish teachers need to, did not always have the same level of motivation for extra training (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016).

Those additional trainings included several days of pre-implementation sessions, several sessions that were used to monitor the progress and couple of meetings, which were used to discuss specific situations and problematic cases in schools. In addition, in several schools, those additional trainings were rewarded financially in order to make up for additional time teachers had to use to complete the program which not every school or country can afford.

The progress of the "KiVaKoulu®" program in another country revealed that the program is successful in decreasing the number of bullying cases and that focusing on the changes of behavior of bystanders has an impact on cyberbullying prevention. Results showed that the "KiVaKoulu®" program in the sixth grade (lower secondary education), has decreased the number of bullying cases and victimization (reduction of 42 % in bullying and 13% in victimization), and in the fourth grade (primary school) the "KiVaKoulu®" program had the same effect (51 % less cases of bullying and victimization) with the addition of raised positive attitudes towards victims and empathy for them (Nocentini & Menesini, 2016).

Therefore, it can be concluded that an intervention program can be transferred to another country or culture but with several modifications and in accordance to existing country specific or school specific anti-cyberbullying policies. In those situations, the collaboration between original policy makers and the policy makers in the "new country" would be preferable in order to preserve the main goals and the vision of the original program. In that way, certain compatibilities could be reached, which could potentially become universal and transferable to other countries as well.

5.5. The role of the school counselor

The school counselors have one of the most important roles in school when it comes to dealing with any problem that endangers students, as they need to step up, take initiative, notify and collaborate with all key stakeholders. In this particular problem, they need to focus on educating the parents, and then provide education especially about the importance of monitoring their children's social media and technology usage (Paolini, 2018). They cannot assume that cyberbullying is not happening in their schools even if there is no clear evidence of it. Part of their job is to do everything in their power to protect their students, which includes carefully planned policies for preventing (and handling) both "traditional" bullying and cyber bullying. Through focus groups, counseling sessions and surveys with students, parents and teachers need to raise awareness and seriousness about the problem of bullying as well as the consequences of breaching school policy regarding harassment, bullying, and destructive behavior towards other students (Beale & Hall, 2007).

By consulting cyberbullying literature and other relevant stakeholders, school counselors should implement prevention-intervention strategies in school policies but also try to implement education about cyberbullying into the school's curriculum. Beale & Hall (2007) suggest that school counselors should encourage classroom teachers to, whenever it is possible, carry out their lessons with stress on appropriate internet use and also make sure that school anti-bullying policy is updated regularly.

The job of counselors is to always document incidents, have printed (or safely stored) evidences such as messages, posts and pictures, to be able to share them with school administrators and parents to keep all relevant stakeholders aware of the occurrences of cyberbullying (Paolini, 2018). It is imminent for them to work with both cyber victims and their parents to address all the issues that bullying has caused and questioned such as: power, control, confidence, but also coping mechanisms: goal setting, building social skills, empathy and assertiveness (Paolini, 2018).

School counselors should also try to reach “indirect” stakeholders such as local police authorities, counseling agencies and other schools in the district to create a safe and comfortable environment in which students can openly speak about reporting and dealing with cyberbullying. All of the mentioned stakeholders can help with providing consistent cyberbullying prevention information, developing and implementing anti-cyberbullying policies meant for keeping school environments safe (Beale & Hall, 2007).

5.6. School strategies against cyberbullying

One of the crucial roles in preventing cyberbullying belongs to schools and its administrators in intervention, investigation and reporting when it happens. Both prevention and intervention have an important role in every anti-cyber bullying program. Intervention actions take place when cyberbullying incidences occur and they are meant to support the cyber victims and provide counseling to cyber bullies while prevention actions aim to prevent cyberbullying incidents from happening (Tanrikulu, 2017). To prevent any kind of harmful and unwanted behavior, which includes bullying in any kind of form, creating a positive and safe school environment is an essential step. Ortega Ruiz et al. (2012) made the following set of recommendations for the schools: creating a safe school atmosphere, raising the teaching personnel’s, non-teaching personnel’s and the awareness of students about cyberbullying problems and appropriate online behavior, collaborating with other parties (parents, organizations, the community) and developing anti-cyberbullying policies. Some of those strategies are universal and are applicable for both types of bullying – both cyber and traditional, but the prominence for the “cyber part” has to be specifically emphasized and be very well distinct in the schools programs for anti-bullying. Schools also need to make sure that their administrators, personal and educators are educated to recognize, properly react and report cyberbullying following the given guidelines from the school policies.

One of the ways to ensure the most effective reach to students is through peer leader students who could go into classes and speak about the dangers of cyberbullying, its effects and the problems it causes. Also, it is important to address the feeling of empathy and work with students on its development which can also be done through small group counseling (Paolini, 2018). Additionally, small group counseling with victims of bullying can help them to increase their self-worth, help them do deal with being bullied more efficiently and being able to separate the person (their bully) from the problem (bullying) (Paolini, 2018).

Parental education on cyberbullying as well as their training on how to handle certain situations should be one of the components of every schools anti-cyberbullying policy (Zych et al., 2015). Counselors should also facilitate and lead workshops for parents to educate them about the dangers followed by cyberbullying. Other ideas for workshops could include developing skills such as “self-esteem, social skills building, decision making, conflict resolution, empathy and compassion, resilience, assertiveness, and stress management” (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008 as cited in Paolini 2018, p. 4). Working and participating in a group discussion is good for mutual support, inspiring communication and self-discovery as well as switching focus from cyberbullying and its consequences to personal goals and self-development.

Some of the prevention methods can include working with students on enhancing empathy, developing relationships and communication with their parents (Ang & Goh, 2010), as well as raising the general awareness of cyberbullying (Cassidy et al., 2012). For parents, monitoring children’s social media and technology usage should also be discussed, as well as the ways to limit children’s access to technology and consider joining or visiting the same social media sites to be able to monitor their posts.

As for examples of intervention strategies, some of them are: asking a trusted adult for help after being cyberbullied (Machackova et al., 2013), working together on coping strategies, learning how to block perpetrators, and finding ways to file a report to the police or social media companies (Riebel et

al., 2009). Other ways counselors can help both victims and bullies is through behavioral therapy, counseling sessions and reality therapy (Sabella, 2012). These can help bullies to self-reflect and to take the accountability for their behaviors as well as make them realize the consequences those behaviors have caused, while at the same time help the victims to feel empowered, back in control and to face their fears.

Although cyberbullying still needs to be studied more in order to be dealt with more effectively, some efforts have already been showed to be very successful. For instance, teaching students about, but also showing them “accountability, empathy, communication, assertiveness, setting goals that are strengths based, fostering optimism and the importance of having a positive mindset”(Paolini, 2018, p.6), has shown to help students in decreasing behaviors related to cyberbullying. In addition, working closely with students, either through small group counseling or peer leadership, to build their self-worth, compassion, empathy, social skills and emotion regulation, was shown to be effective when it comes to creating constructive behaviors. Engaging in an open dialogue with both students and their parents (of the victims and bullies) is crucial to gather all necessary information, but also a great way to find the source of the problem, become confident with reporting problems and unwanted behaviors and working together on a solution (Paolini, 2018). When cyberbullying occurs, the bully (or bullies) and the victim (or victims) are not the only stakeholders in the process because others can help with preventing or successfully intervening in the situation.

For instance, bystanders who are present when cyberbullying is happening might provide support to the victims and encourage them to speak to trusted adult and seek for help. Developing a positive relationship between all students, including empathy and care for others can be very important in stopping the cyberbullying when it occurs but also in preventing it from happening in the first place. Whether they are witnessing it in real life or in the cyber space, bystanders can take various amounts of actions to help the victim. Sometimes, the information about the cyberbullying will emerge too late to

responsible adults for them to prevent it, but during the intervention, school administrators, parents and other relevant stakeholders might rely on bystanders to step in and provide help.

Teachers who are working directly with students every day could be in possession of some valuable information that could help in getting better insight of the situation and its resolutions. Parents should observe warning signs associated with cyberbullying and by openly communicating with their children, be aware that have they been involved in cyberbullying – whether as bullies, victims or bystanders.

5.7. Preferable results &outcomes

It was confirmed by Nocentini & Menesini (2016), Kärnä et al. (2013) and Smith (2010) that without an adequate anti-bullying program, the number of victimization and bullying cases will increase. They have also stated that the program has more effect on primary education students than on lower secondary education students, which was explained by increased difficulties to instigate anti-bullying rules in the classrooms, as students get older. To reduce any type of bullying, it is necessary to implement clear rules against it in every anti-bullying intervention program, which will result in “reducing the positive consequences of bullying and increasing their negative behavioral outcomes” (Olweus, 1991, as cited in Stevens et al., 2000, p.198)

Preferable outcomes from any school-based anti-bullying intervention is that students involved in any kind of bullying situations (whether they are bullies, victims or both) benefit from it. Stevens et al. (2000.) have also been exploring the Flemish anti-bullying program, which consists of three different modules.

The focus of the first module is on the school personnel and their interventions inside the school environment. Their responsibility is to create and implement anti-bullying policy with clear definitions, rules and procedures

for any kind of bullying behavior. Developing the policy should include all school personnel including teachers, non-teaching personnel as well as parents.

The aims of the second module are the activities for the peer group, which include raising awareness about the problems of bullying, mutually creating class rules about polite behavior and consequences for breaking those rules. The goal of peer group activities is also to learn problem-solving strategies that could be applicable in bullying situations, learning how to provide the best support for bullying victims and how to “switch” from the role of bystander to a role of a mediator (Stevens et al. 2000).

The third module is strictly concentrated on bullies and victims, ergo students directly involved in bullying behavior. The main goals are to make the bully aware of violations of the behavioral rules and rebuilding the relationship with the victim, as well as intensive and emotional support for the harmed student. This procedure can also be beneficial for the whole class because it encourages students to understand other people’s feelings, teaches them about strategies for dealing with bullying behavior and enhances their social skills.

Even though Stevens et al. (2000) explored this program more than 20 years ago and its focus was on traditional bullying, some parallels and lessons can be applicable on the cyberbullying problem in the present. A differentiating program with three modules in which every module has its own focus will help in sharing responsibilities and dividing tasks. Each module can have its own supervisor whose task will be to the complete goals of the assigned modules but also coordinate and cooperate with other supervisors.

The first module, except teachers, non-teaching personnel and parents could also include “outside” partners such as police, child protective service, experts on cyber protection and other organizations, which aim is ensure the safety of children. The second module could focus on bystander policies and healthy group dynamics both in the classroom and in school in order to increase general positive atmosphere and develop empathy and respect among the students. In the third module, the basics of conflict resolution could be

taught as well, as how to successfully mediate when either traditional bullying or cyberbullying happens.

To improve the efficiency of anti-cyberbullying programs, it helps if program implementers (i.e., teachers, school counselors) understand the theory behind the program. If they clearly understand the reasons for unwanted behavior and how the program is meant to prevent and/or intervene when those behaviors occur, they can more efficiently implement it (Cross et al., 2016). Prevention programs, if carefully planned and executed can have probably the biggest influence on the relationship between students, between teachers and students and the school atmosphere in general. National prevention programs with basic guidelines for every school would be beneficial for schools to determine starting and ending points of the program. Schools often have different financial situations and school personnel may be diverse in different schools, therefore each school should further develop its own prevention program to reach their realistic goals but also do as much as possible they can to ensure a safe environment for the students.

6 RESEARCH CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

In the age of the exceedingly fast development of technology, information exchange, education, hobbies, entertainment and other aspects of human life are unavoidably moving to online spaces. That is visible in all generations, especially the youngest ones that are surrounded with ICT devices from an early age as a source of learning and amusement. Statistics has shown that children nowadays start owning electronic devices with an access to the internet at an earlier age, e.g. 18% of students in 2015., from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries said they had access to the internet before they were six years old and in 2017., 42% of children in United States of America between the age of 0 and 8 owned a tablet (Hooft Graafland, 2018). Being exposed to the online world, often without supervision, can be potentially dangerous for the children and the youngest students might not be aware of the “unwritten rules of online behavior”.

Bullying between students has always been a problem but with the development of technology and the emergence of cyberbullying, the problem has increased because of its specific features: it can be anonymous, it can happen anywhere and it can happen at any time. Schools are mandatory to have anti-bullying strategies to ensure they are places of zero tolerance for violence, but the problem occurs with cyberbullying, as it is harder to detect, track and prevent.

In Finland, this is regulated in the Basic Education Act (1998) which ensures a right to a safe learning environment for everyone:

1. A pupil participating in education shall be entitled to a safe learning environment.
2. The education provider shall draw up a plan, in connection with curriculum design, for safeguarding pupils against violence, bullying and

harassment, execute the plan and supervise adherence to it and its implementation. The National Board of Education shall issue regulations in the core curriculum concerning the formulation of the plan. (Amendment 477/2003)

3. The education provider shall adopt school rules or issue other regulations to be applied in the school with a view to promoting internal order in the school, unhindered learning and the safety and satisfaction of the school community. (p. 13)

The anti-cyberbullying programs might be a part of the anti-bullying programs schools have, or its addition, but as this research will show, their position and role is not particularly strong, for example. They do not specify the parties who should take care of the implementation of the program and in some cases, schools need to pay for them in order to get the licensed program.

6.1. Research questions

Despite the fact that quite many studies have been conducted about “KiVaKoulu®” program (i.e. Salmivalli et al., 2013, Williford et al., 2013) and it being one quite prominent program used in the Finnish schools, the secondary school teachers' experiences about cyberbullying and addressing cyberbullying through various programs has not been studied in extent. As cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon, anti-cyberbullying programs may be embedded as a part of the anti-bullying programs schools have to a various extent. Therefore, this study investigates the experiences of educators on anti-cyberbullying programs and seeks to find out how satisfied Finnish secondary school educators are with the anti-cyberbullying programs in their own schools. Their point of view might offer some new perspectives on seeing the problem and present evidences why it is of crucial importance to include them in policy process making.

Additionally, the study aims to find ways to improve the schools' programs against cyber-bullying. Using educators' experiences as a source of information, the areas that need the most improvements could be identified and the implementation of the program could become more efficient. Therefore, the following two research questions are explored in this study:

1. How do educators assess the implementation of the current anti-cyberbullying program in their schools?
2. How would educators improve the efficiency of the anti-cyberbullying program in their schools?

7 METHODOLOGY

7.1. Interviews as a data collection method

The method of interviews allows participants to “speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings” (Berg, 2007, p.96), and according to Knox & Burkard (2009, p. 569), “the strength of the interviewer-participant relationship is perhaps the single most important aspect of a qualitative research project”. Kvale (1996) claims that even though interviewing is not a reciprocal conversation between the researcher and the participant, because the former is taking a lead and is guiding the interview, the latter possess more experience and knowledge about the topic, which actually makes that position crucial in the interview process.

A semi-structured interview, which has been used in this research, allowed more flexibility than structured interviews and more certain “rules and frames” to follow than in a non-structured interview. This of a great importance when it comes to a topic, which has not been studied to a large extent in a new context because it enables modification and deepening of discussion around topics that are unexpected.

With the help of a basic checklist (Berg, 2007), all relevant topics and subtopics were covered but participants were also given the opportunity to express their emotions freely and provide more in-depth information. Because of this particular reason and because there was only a limited amount of research on anti-cyberbullying programs, the qualitative and semi structured approaches were chosen for this research.

Dörnyei (2007), when describing what constitutes a high quality qualitative interview, emphasized phrases that contained: (a) a natural flow, and (b) abundance in detail. To accomplish that, a comfortable and non-

pressured atmosphere was created where participants felt relaxed and got a feeling that they are both listened to and heard.

In order to achieve that, some prerequisites had been made: detailed research notifications and privacy notices were sent in which participants would find all relevant information about the research. Participants were also informed about the ways the data was going to be used and they received consent notices where their rights as participants were thoroughly described. To enhance the level of validity and reliability in interviews, the following guidelines provided by Alshenqeeti (2014) were followed: the researcher avoided presenting leading questions that might suggest the right answers, which the researcher was expecting to receive, the researcher made notes during interviews and gave interviewees a chance to elaborate their answers whenever they felt like it. Also, pilot interviews were conducted before the official research began in order to “test” the questions and to explore what different kinds of characteristics participants could have (current job, amount of experience, overall knowledge about the topic).

Two pilot interviews as well as one official interview were done via phone while the rest of the interviews took place on the Zoom² platform to ensure the researchers and participants safety due to the global pandemic of Covid-19. The benefit of online and phone interviews is the minimization of the requirement to travel and any travelling expenses (Knox & Burkard, 2009), as well easier scheduling. On the other hand, while conducting an in-person interview, participants and the interviewer are able to work through potential misunderstandings (complex questions, clarification of questions) and observe each other non-verbal and paraverbal communications, which can enhance the quality of the data and give more inputs (Knox & Burkard, 2009). However, this was not possible in this research due to the demands of paying attention to safety regulations set by various authorities to control the spreading of the pandemic.

²“Zoom is a cloud-based video conferencing service you [the user] can use to virtually meet with others - either by video or audio-only or both, all while conducting live chats - and it lets you [the user] record those sessions to view later.” (Tillman, 2021a)

7.2. The data collection procedure

Since the researcher is a student at the University of Jyväskylä, the initial idea was to limit his research to the nine comprehensive schools in the Jyväskylä region and to interview one teacher from each school, which would give him good insight about the current situation in every school and enable him to draw comparisons and explore differences between them and their programs.

The first step was to contact the City of Jyväskylä's Education Division to apply for the research permit (Tutkimuslupahakemus) which would allow him to contact schools as an official researcher. Unfortunately, at the same time he was applying for the permit, the global outbreak of the virus Covid-19 happened, which resulted in suspension of all research that would take place in schools or with school personnel. This delayed the start of the research by almost six months. The permit was then finally obtained in October 2020.

After that, the researcher was able to contact nine of the above-mentioned schools and contact principals, school counselors and secretaries from each school via email in which he introduced himself, explained what is the topic of the thesis, its goals and with whom he would like to talk about it more. Emails also contained the research notification, privacy notice, research consent and the research permit to make sure that any potential participants have all the necessary information about the research. They were asked to forward the email with the attachments to the teacher or teachers in their schools who had/have experiences with cyberbullying.

While waiting for their replies, the researcher was able to conduct two pilot interviews with one comprehensive teacher from Espoo and one elementary school teacher from Helsinki in order to see if some of the questions need more clarification, if some of them are irrelevant for the topic and if more options for questions should be explored. Pilot interviews were successful and helpful and interviewees made recommendations to modify some of the questions. Furthermore, information about what kind of characteristics should other participants have in order to enhance the quality of my research were received (i.e. suitable teachers are those with at least couple of years of

experience in teaching and teachers who studied at the university after 2005 so their curriculum of studies had included cyberbullying part).

At that point (November 2020), no reply from any school was received so the researcher decided to call each school secretary to check whether any of school staff had even received the email with the invitation to the research. Calls were made in November and December of 2020 and three of the schools replied that their teachers are too involved with other projects to participate in the research and one school provided the contact for potential teachers but after contacting them, those teachers were not feeling they are eligible for the research. Four of the schools confirmed that they received the email and forwarded the email to the potential teachers, but the researcher never received any email from them and the last school and its personnel never answered to any of the emails or calls made to them between October 2020 and January 2021.

The researcher decided to expand the outreach to other parts of Finland, so they contacted the Finnish National Agency for Education, which suggested contacting other municipalities/cities such as Helsinki, Vantaa and Lahti, from which replies were never received. He also joined various Facebook³ groups for Finnish teachers, such as: "Suomenopinto-ohjaajat ry", "Opinto -ohjaus kaikille kiinnostuneille" and "Suomen opettajien ja kasvattajien foorumi #SOKF", and Facebook groups for Finnish art teachers "Kuvista" and "Kuvataideopettajat KUVIS". Additionally, he contacted organizations like HAO ry -the organization for middle school teacher students and Condus ry, which is an organization for entire educational faculties' students. In all of the mentioned groups and organizational public forums' they posted the research plan and invited all the interested parties to contact him if they were willing to be

³"Facebook is a social networking website where users can post comments, share photographs, and post links to news or other interesting content on the web, chat live, and watch short-form video. Shared content can be made publicly accessible, or it can be shared only among a select group of friends or family, or with a single person." (Nations, 2020)

interviewed. As a result, two out of six participants were found through Facebook groups while others were found through the researcher's personal networks and connections.

7.3. Participants

To conduct this study, the aim was to find participants who have experience on the researched topic of cyberbullying. Participants who were found through Facebook groups approached the researcher because they wanted to share their experience with cyberbullying and those found through researcher's personal networks and connections confirmed during the first inquiry that they also have experience with cyberbullying and are willing to share it.

In this study report, interviewees were referred to as participants - P1, P2... and P7 in order to stay anonymous and have their identity protected. During the transcription of their interviews, the researcher has not corrected their English, and if additional words were added to provide a context, they were written in square parentheses.

Out of seven participants, six of them (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6 and P7) are currently employed in Finnish lower secondary schools while Participant 4 was laid off from work in the spring of 2020. Also, out of seven participants, five of them (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 and P7) are by the profession classroom teachers while Participant 1 is a school counselor and Participant 5 is a special education teacher. Participants were not asked about their age, only about their work experience in schools as teachers or school counselors. Participant 1 has the least amount of experience (one and a half year), Participants 2 and 3 have been employed for four years, Participant 4 had five year experience while Participants 5, 6 and 7 have the most work experience as teachers (17, 24 and 22 years). Participants of this study were in ration six women and one man, and all of the seven participants are or were working in schools in the Southern part of Finland.

7.4. Epistemology and ontology

In this section, the epistemological and ontological starting points of the study are reflected upon. First, some epistemological and ontological starting points will be presented and described and afterwards the chosen epistemological and ontological perspectives will be defined and justified.

In the background of every research there are mixed beliefs in what truly exists, how and what do we know about it, what is our place in reality, how do we affect it and how does it affect us (Enns - Kananen, 2020). Those questions could be described as “assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and the ways of knowing that reality (epistemology)” (Scheurich & Young, 1997, p. 6). Both ontology and epistemology have an effect on researchers – they guide them in choosing the methods and later how the chosen methods help in explaining their interpretation of the world and knowledge about it (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

The topic of this thesis is “The anti-cyberbullying programs in Finnish lower secondary schools: Teacher perspectives” and when aiming to see the bigger picture, trying to be objective as much as possible and trying to determine which ontological perspective will be followed, relativist ontology is chosen. From a relativist ontological perspective it is assumed that the interpretation of reality is strongly affected with the human mind and experiences and therefore is constructed within each individual’s experience – there cannot be only one reality but as many realities as there are people. For instance, bounded relativism assumes that the existence of one reality is possible but within every (for instance - cultural) group, a different reality is present (Moon & Blackman, 2014). With the topic of cyberbullying, the researcher believes each person has different ideas, thoughts and experiences what cyberbullying is, how and when it occurs and how to prevent it. We all see and feel differently, we might have different points of views and agree or disagree on different topics - the proof is that even the definition of cyberbullying is still under conjecture because various researchers have different ideas what cyberbullying should be considered as. Therefore, during

this study, the researcher tried to gather different perspectives from educators and tried to see the world through “their lenses” and examine the similarities and differences in their answers.

The epistemological starting point of research, on the contrary, is concerned with how people create knowledge and what is possible to know. It also raises questions such as how knowledge can be created, found and acquired – is it something that needs to be discovered or already exists and is waiting to be identified (Moon & Blackman, 2014). The aim epistemology follows is that every individual thinks differently and therefore “feels that reality” in their own way, which is based on their social experiences and cultural backgrounds. Objectivist epistemology, for instance, follows the principle that reality exists separately from the individual mind while constructionist epistemology denies the belief that the ultimate “truth” can be identified because it can only exist as a product of the human mind (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

Subjectivist epistemology, which claims that knowledge is in fact the product of how people understand and see reality (Moon & Blackman, 2014) is chosen to be followed in this research rather than positivist epistemology, which claims that knowledge lies in observable facts (Raadschelders, 2011) because what is “observable and predictable through a positivist epistemology cannot always explain the human actions taking place” (Terman, 2011, p. 240).

On this matter, the researcher believes the knowledge about cyberbullying was created as a product of how people first saw it and understood it and with the time passing by, they are gaining more knowledge because reality and the situations are changing. In this research, the goal is to see what kind of knowledge participants had when they first started working at the school, how did that knowledge grow – what did they do, who helped them and how would they assess the current situation – is the knowledge about cyberbullying sufficient and how should society expand it.

7.5. Ethical considerations

Every research should consider facing ethical issues at almost every part of the process. Probably the main ethical responsibility would be to make a clear, but a respectful distinction between generalizations and privacy of the participants. The protection of participants through making sure that they do not experience any kind of harm is imperative (Orb et al., 2001) and other potential problems that might occur when conducting a qualitative study are the researcher/participant relationships, the way the researcher understands and interprets collected data (his level of subjectivity or objectivity) and the design of the research itself (Orb et al., 2001).

Following basic ethical principles can enhance the ethical responsibility in qualitative research but it cannot guarantee that ethical dilemmas will not occur and it does not mean that the researcher has become ethically responsible (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). That is why the researcher has to be fully aware of any ethical problems that might arise and be prepared to prevent them or intervene in the right way. In this research, ethical problems were avoided by using aliases for participants and by not asking specific details about cyberbullying cases (i.e. names of cyberbullying victims and perpetrators).

7.5.1. Respecting the interviewees and their rights

A potential dilemma which lays in the researcher's wish to collect as much knowledge about the topic as possible, while simultaneously respecting rights of the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). The research conducted as part of this thesis could trigger uncomfortable experiences teachers had when dealing with the cyberbullying, but the researcher took all necessary steps beforehand, was cautious and able to "read the room" when asking more sensitive questions.

One way to prevent putting a participant in an uncomfortable position that was implemented was giving a research notification, having a signed informed consent form and making sure participants know that their information is going to stay private and confidential. Participants were aware

of their rights: they had a right to have relevant information about the research and its process, their participation was always and strictly voluntarily and they could withdraw from it at any point (Orb et al., 2001).

7.5.2. Sensitive cases

The sensitivity of the data could also predict potential ethical issues therefore the researcher needs to prepare for several possible outcomes and determine if potential harm that collected data might cause could be the reasons to dismiss it. For instance, causing the recollection of participant's previous painful experience or causing any kind of unsettled feelings may be the reason to stop the research (with that particular participant) or the researcher might decide that the potential data might be too valuable to dismiss and after a pause, continue research with the participant (Orb et al., 2001). Even though the probability for this happening during this research was high because of the sensitivity of the topic, there were no unsettling situations during any of the interviews.

7.5.3. Data management

All of the above-mentioned documents, which contained a full list of participant's rights and how the data they give will be used and stored, were given to them during the first exchange of contact information. After collecting and analyzing the data and using it in the thesis, all the files including transcriptions of video recordings, video files and emails containing the personal information were permanently deleted in order to maintain participants' confidentiality and secure their identity.

8 FINDINGS

8.1. Teachers' reflections on their personal and professional competencies to deal with cyberbullying

8.1.1. Understanding cyberbullying

The complexity of cyberbullying demands that teachers have comprehensive knowledge about it. They need to understand different types of cyberbullying, different ways of communicating online, various mental consequences and marks that cyberbullying can leave on its victims and other information, which can be used to prevent or successfully intervene in stopping cyberbullying from occurring. Teachers can obtain that kind of knowledge during their careers through various types of formal (university studies, licensed courses), non-formal (not licensed trainings or seminars) and informal learning (learning on your own).

In order to find out how and where the participants had learned about cyberbullying, the interview began with questions about their learning experiences about cyberbullying. When participants were asked if they had learned about it during their university studies, their answers showed their studies had focused somewhat on traditional bullying as a topic: "There were maybe one or two lectures that dealt with bullying in general." (P3) but cyberbullying was not explored or studied. Participants stated they could not "recall or remember any course" (P5) about cyberbullying and that the topic of it was "not part of any of the curriculums" (P7). This topic will be further discussed in Chapter 9.1 ("Increased demand for the knowledge about cyberbullying") but the adamant responses of participants hint their discontent with the lack of cyberbullying and bullying topics during their university studies.

Participant 7 (P7) states there are not many courses offered for the teachers that would have been free of charge and could have been completed during

their working hours: “We have had a few but not a lot and I don’t remember seeing any courses happening that would be offered to the teacher that would be free”. If there were courses and trainings about bullying and cyberbullying designed to fit in the schedules of the teachers free of charge, it would instigate teachers to get more involved. A flexible agenda would enable teachers’ participation when they are often overwhelmed with tasks at need. If professional development trainings or training courses are organized only during teachers’ working hours, teachers should be able to request for a substitute during the period of training, which might not be always possible.

Some participants (P3, P5) had obtained an understanding about cyberbullying through non-formal ways. They had attended mandatory professional development trainings and seminars where the central topic was cyberbullying organized by their schools and cities.

8.1.2. Experiences with cyberbullying cases

Adequate knowledge about cyberbullying is a necessity in order to help in its prevention successfully, to help the victims of it, and to intervene on time. With their current knowledge about it, only Participant 1 (P1) answered that she felt eligible to deal with both cyberbullying and bullying victims, perpetrators and their parents alone because of her former experience in volunteer work helping children and youth via online chatting.

Nevertheless, the rest of participants were aware that “there are multiple tasks related to teaching that they are not trained to do and that learning by doing it” (P4), can be applied in this situation. They felt that they would find other school personnel who might help them: “I’ve seen, learnt few things from the job but I always go directly for somebody to help me” (P3), “I think I would deal with it myself, unless it gets like really serious and then there are certain, school counselors, kuraattori [school social worker] and there are certain “KiVaKoulu®” teachers who do mediation programs” (P6).

Despite the participants of this study not finding themselves professionally too trained or having had beneficial experiences about

addressing cyberbullying, they showed a positive attitude and willingness to learn and try their best in order to handle issues the best possible way. At present, their primary way of learning takes place during their work when they have to deal with aftermaths of cyberbullying and get experience through that. Participants are also aware that learning and getting experience is a process that they cannot do alone, so being able to rely on their colleagues is a very valuable asset regardless of the problem they are facing.

8.2. Cyberbullying in schools

As stated in Chapter 5 ("Prevention programs"), schools are demanded to have anti-bullying guidelines by law, which gives teachers the framework for professional conduct on which they can rely on. In this chapter, it will be explored how familiar teachers are with those guidelines, who in their school is responsible for ensuring those guidelines have been followed, and how often the anti-cyberbullying team of the school meets.

Moreover, teacher encounters with cyberbullying and their way of handling it will be presented, as well as their use of intervention and prevention actions. Finally, participant views on bystander policies in their schools and knowledge about different ways of protecting students and ensuring their safety will be analyzed and discussed.

8.2.1. Anti-cyberbullying guidelines in schools

Introduction to a new job for the new entrants and novice teachers is usually followed by a plethora of information provided by new colleagues or superiors. Participants, however, did not receive any information about cyberbullying in general and how to deal with cyberbullying cases when they first came to work at their current job position (P1, P2, P5), not until they had encountered their first case (P3).

Even though the national level guidelines exist – "Kiusaamisen vastainen työ kouluissa ja oppilaitoksissa/Anti-bullying work in schools and in

educational institutions” (Laitinen et al., 2020), several participants were aware that their respective schools have their own policies about cyberbullying: “This is my schools’, all schools must write their own. Mainly, the special [education] teachers I think write it” (P2), “I have checked our school’s plan, which is this one page plan; there is nothing about cyberbullying because it’s a basic step of what to do if there is a bullying. Cyberbullying is not specifically named there.”(P1). The other participants admitted that they are not aware of the existence or origin of their official school guidelines about bullying and cyberbullying.

School guidelines are important in giving the teachers an understanding about the commonly accepted approaches. Furthermore, they give the basic line for whether the school has an emphasis on intervention or prevention. When asked what do they think is the focus of those guidelines in prevention or rather on intervention actions, participants offered different answers: “I would say prevention for sure, because we have a lot of youth counselors and school counselors, they go through classrooms and talk about it” (P3), “Prevention I would say. Because we do prevention every day.” (P1), “I think the focus is on interventions, although we want to think it’s on prevention, but it’s maybe easier do the intervention” (P2).

8.2.2. Anti-cyberbullying teams in schools

In the context of discussions about the responsibility of the school personnel for the safety of students, during the interview it came up that some schools are using the “KiVaKoulu®” program. That means some of their teachers had been licensed to implement the “KiVaKoulu®” program measures while other schools depended on their own programs. With or without having a “KiVaKoulu®” program, every school has a team consisted of school staff members, which have the task to ensure the well-being of the students. According to the National Board of Education (Chapter 5 – “Prevention programs”), the members of those teams are usually the same in every school: principal, vice principal, school nurse, psychologist, school social worker,

student counselors and sometimes special education teachers - everybody who works on the well-being of the school and the students in general which was confirmed by several participants (P1, P3, P4, P5).

For the team to be more successful in its work, it is helpful if members of the team are also in good terms with the students so they can also pose as a trusted adult. This is relevant because if for some reasons, students do not want to talk to teachers, there should be a way to, anonymously or not, talk with someone else and seek help there. In the following example, Participant 7 (P7) described the importance of that:

“School counselor, she is linked to for example my class team so the kids can send her directly message that I don’t see, the parents don’t see and then she can guide. So there is always somebody that you can talk to [anonymously].”

According to the participants, teachers can usually temporarily or permanently join the team if they are worried about a student - it is possible for teachers to participate in the team if they want (P1, P2, P5). This shows to be a great opportunity for any teacher to do more to protect the students, be active in the preventive work and be innovative by sharing their ideas about safety of the students with others.

However, the frequency of their meetings varied from school to school. Depending on the situation, the meetings could take place weekly (P2, P5) or monthly (P3). The need for meetings may depend on the size of the school and the city, as well as be a result of the cultural environment of the school.

8.2.3. What teachers do when cyberbullying occurs

During the interview participants also reflected on how often they had personally been responsible for resolving cases of cyberbullying during their careers. Depending on a case or on a current situation, participants had spent different amounts of time dealing with the problem of cyberbullying. That includes, for instance, holding meetings with students and their parents, collaborating with their colleagues and other professionals, and planning a resolving strategy. Therefore, time may vary depending on the month -

sometimes it “can be many hours, sometimes none” (P5), and if the cyberbullying case occurs, “then it might be a lot in that month” (P3). The total frequency of participants’ time spent on mediating and solving cyberbullying cases can be summed with the quote from one of the participants (P7):

“I don’t necessarily have to spend more than perhaps 15 minutes a week with some classes, and with others a bit more but it’s not constant. You might have to use several hours over a period of month or two depending on how severe it is.”

This implies that there were not many active cyberbullying cases happening in schools, which is good for the school atmosphere in general and means that current strategies and policies are showing reliable results.

As participants had spent only a little time with cases of cyberbullying, it leaves the question could school curriculums be altered to allow teachers in general and other school staff to spend more time in a month on creating safe environments for the students. This could include more focus on prevention programs and actions for unwanted behavior including cyberbullying and developing other strategies to raise student awareness about potential dangers and how to stay safe.

Raising awareness should not be directed only towards students, but also to the colleague teachers who might not be trained or experienced enough to correctly and in a timely fashion identify the signs of cyberbullying, and therefore be able to take the necessary actions to protect students and to ensure their safety. They should be aware of how serious and severe cyberbullying can be but also that recognizing early signs of it might help in its prevention (P7):

“I think it’s something teachers should be made aware of, that we look for certain signs. It’s our job to know this.”

This could be relevant because it seems that teachers have the power to intervene with cyberbullying and stop it. It is on them to decide which steps will be taken and who they need to include in the resolving process– “school psychologist, nurse, parents or social services” (P7). Also, as seen in the

following example, bullying and cyberbullying may have been taking place for some time until teachers become aware of it

“The mother called me and told something things were happening, that they were unpleasant. I asked my principal for help, and then we called for a meeting with the students who were involved. And then when I told them we are going to meet tomorrow, then they started sending all kinds of threatening messages to the person who have told about the bullying.” (P3)

In many cases, cyberbullying starts as teasing or making jokes and then turns into sending threatening messages as in the following example of a class situation, where cyberbullying escalated from an initially rather harmless seeming discussion:

“So I am in the WhatsApp⁴ group with one class ...we had some kind of incidents, they start quite harmlessly, someone says jokingly something, something a bit stupid and then someone else thinks it’s insulting and then they start sending mean messages back and forth.” (P2)

Furthermore, as the digital environment allows the utilization of multiple medias, cyberbullying can involve sharing harmful pictures. What makes this even more complex and serious are the facts that: 1) cyberbullying cases can exist longer than school administrators are aware of it and 2) because of the technology, cyberbullying cases can spread and grow rapidly as presented in the following two cases:

“I just heard them talking about some picture that was going around of one of my students and then I asked “What picture? Show me”. A student from another school that was spreading this inflammatory picture of one of my students.” (P3)

⁴⁴WhatsApp is one of the most popular text and voice messaging apps. It’s free to use, and you can send messages, make voice calls, and host video chats on both desktop and mobile devices. Part of what makes this app appealing is that it works on various phone and computer operating systems, helping with messaging. It can also take advantage of Wi-Fi and cellular data to make one-on-one or group calls.” (Dove & Beaton, 2021)

"There was this case when one boy from my class, he was in the shower and they took a photo, from behind, like, so then the students were sending the photo to this group on WhatsApp." (P5)

Resolving a cyberbullying case can require different approaches. Sometimes it can be resolved immediately by "pointing out and explaining the bully that his/hers behavior is unacceptable and it can take only a couple of hours" (P3). Sometimes the whole class, including the bystanders and in some cases their parents, needs to be included in the procedure. Mutual discussion is needed to solve the case and achieve an understanding that this kind of behavior is unacceptable which is also claimed by Participant 5 (P5):

"I discussed with students, like, one by one, they told me there is a photo that is spreading on, on WhatsApp, and then I talked to, I went to vice principal and we took the students one by one and talked with them also. And the vice president [principal] called their parents also. And then we talked with the boy who's photo was it and he was, kind of, cool with it, he said "okay", they, they talked, with each other also, they promised not to do it anymore and to leave it there and yeah. And, the vice president [principal] called the boy's parents to discuss with them also."

To point out the seriousness of the problem, one of the solutions can be organizing a series of meetings with the victim, the bully, their parents and other school personnel, which can prolong the length of the case but also resolve the situation. "Holding onto harmful messages and keeping them as a concrete proof of cyberbullying" (P3) is a good way to demonstrate proof of cyberbullying to all stakeholders and may speed up the resolving process.

After a cyberbullying incident it is important for teachers to check the wellbeing and safety of the student or students and ensure that the situation is under control, ergo, that check-ups on cases are performed. Participants confirmed this is a standard procedure and stressed it is of crucial matter to do so. "Asking "Is everything fine?" and "How do you feel about it?", "Do you want to talk to somebody?" (P3), "I always encourage students to come to talk to me if it continues. It's an important thing to do check-ups." (P5)

By caring about the wellbeing of students and their safety, teachers can show them that they can rely on them, which might result in a more trustful student-teacher relationship. It might not be realistic to expect teachers to bond with every single student, but the higher the number of positive relationships are, the higher are the chances of a positive class atmosphere:

“Because it’s something that I think all the teachers at some point with each of the classes has to deal with. There is always some even if you don’t look for it there will be some kid that would come and tell you “Hey, what about this?” and then the more you start finding it, the more you actually start seeing it and then you see it everywhere.” (P7)

Sometimes, a resolved cyberbullying case can be used as an example and be turned into a constructive learning experience like in the following example:

“A student from my class had created Instagram⁵ account and they posted memes [of] another kid in our class and a teacher from our school. The memes were offensive towards the people who were in it but it was also racist and misogynist. After that we created the Instagram account for the class so we could kind of make memes in positive sense and practice humor in social media.” (P4)

Not only students, but also teachers can utilize this experience for the future generations of students by showing them how to learn from their own mistakes, and how teachers could do effective prevention.

8.2.4. Ensuring student safety

Schools need to work on maintaining and improving school environments to make it as safe as possible for students. As stated in Finnish Basic Education Act (Laitinen et al., 2020), all schools need to create and carry out their own plans and programs in order to protect their students against any bullying and violence. They are also required to monitor their implementation and by doing that, ensure the safety of all students.

⁵“Instagram is like a simplified version of Facebook, with an emphasis on mobile use and visual sharing. Like other social networks, you [the user] interact with other users on Instagram by following them, being followed by them, commenting, liking, tagging, and private messaging.”(Moreau, 2021)

The additional way schools are following the success of the programs is by tracking the well-being of the student through yearly questionnaires, which give information about student safety, and areas where they feel less comfortable. Also by observing their behaviors and monitoring changes, schools are simultaneously protecting them and working towards a safer and healthier school environment. Participants described their schools approaches for conducting the demanded follow-up in the interviews, like in the following examples:

“We make those surveys once a year with the Google form where we ask about the issues, it is very well organized. And because it is the every year the same questions than we can compare from year to year how it is.” (P1)

“We do [it] every September, they fill out this form where there are questions, like do they have friends, how they feel about life in general.” (P2)

As seen in the examples above, schools are using well-being surveys to examine the general satisfaction and happiness of students in school. They compare it with the results from the previous year in order to detect school areas that could be improved or individuals and groups that might need more attention and help in accommodating to the school climate:

“Students evaluate their own wellbeing at least once a school year and based on the form they have a conversation with the teacher and parents. Students in need of special support evaluate their well-being and have the conversation twice a year.” (P4)

Some schools also had the practice of analyzing student questionnaires in-depth by arranging meetings with the students and discussing their answers. That might be a great opportunity to immediately get feedback and make potential resolutions even before the current school year ends. Students can “evaluate their class atmosphere and group-spirit” (P5) and “discuss how they feel in school and what are their goals for the remaining of the school year” (P7). During those meetings, school administrators can discover new insights about cyberbullying in school since “well-being questionnaires might not examine this topic in particular” (P5, P6).

The answers of the participants suggested the possibility to add a section dedicated to cyberbullying in the next edition of surveys. The students, for instance, might not be aware that repetitive teasing is considered as a way of bullying and therefore might not inform the responsible school staff about it before it escalates. By proper education beforehand and by carefully designing questions about cybervictimization and the role of bystanders, school administrators might make a significant improvement in cyberbullying prevention.

8.3. Improvements of anti-cyberbullying programs

According to the participants of this study, the anti-cyberbullying programs in schools showed to be the “lines of defense” and they offered tools and strategies to prevent cyberbullying or intervene when it occurs. Participants believe the programs could be more developed and provide more details. One of their suggestions for improvement of the program was “to have the topic of cyberbullying embedded in more subjects” (P4) which would expand the program outreach and make sure all teachers understand the concept of cyberbullying.

Other suggestions for the further development of the programs were “nominating and defining responsible teachers to deal with cyberbullying” (P6) and “teacher training” (P1) which would prepare them to be more efficient in preventing cyberbullying and be prepared to respond quickly and effectively.

Reforms are frequently needed in education because of rapid changes in human environment and development of the knowledge, but they are very slow to implement. In the case of the cyberbullying problem, it is hard to determine who should instigate changes. Some authors (Paolini, 2018, Beale & Hall, 2007) consider school counselors to be the right people for this as they work closely with other school administrators, teachers and students. In contrast, some participants of this study believed it should be “principals who should embrace their role as leaders, advocate for innovation and be responsible” for motivating and engaging more school personnel in prevention

and intervention action (P2, P3). Due to the principals' role as leaders of the school, they should motivate teachers and provide them support in resolving any kind of issue they are experiencing. Also, principals need to make sure a two-way communication is established and is ongoing to make sure everyone is aware of the potential problems and are ready to participate in its resolving.

To instigate those changes, collaboration between schools and affiliated interested parties must be properly planned and executed. School administrators know what the "heart of the problem" is and what measures could contribute to a solution. While the government can fund developmental programs, teachers' further education and give regulations to make those measures official and set guidelines to apply them nationally. Participant 6 (P6) believes that is the only way for the implementation of measures to be successfully implemented and show effective results:

"I think they should come from both ways. I think, teachers need to be very active in this because they can immediately response to the things on the ground but in the same time, I think the government and school officers especially do need to make requirements of teachers to check these things, that they are aware of it."

Those measures need to be updated yearly and be ready to be implemented almost immediately. Also, some participants believe they should be obligatory so teachers could stay well informed of what could become a potential threat to the students:

"Make it almost mandatory cause we need to do certain amount of studying every year to keep up our profession and it's not just that "Okay, you did it once and it's valid for 10 years", it's not. Everything, all the number of apps and what can they [students] do with them, it needs to be updated like, if not every year then every other year." (P7)

Teachers who are dealing with the problem of cyberbullying are realizing that this kind of problem cannot be resolved through only one set of changes. The initiative to tackle this problem needs to come from multiple directions – parents, schools, and the government, but in order to be efficient, the solution needs to be well coordinated and every perspective needs to be taken into consideration.

8.3.1. Cyberbullying solutions for teachers

Being constantly in the classroom allows teachers to know from first-hand experience how to resolve any conflict or problem fast and efficiently. One of the common answers on what could be done to prevent cyberbullying, participants suggested working on enhancing trust between the teacher and the students and establishing a good communication:

“I think it is really important for teacher to keep this, this mode of communication going. I also make it very clear to the children if it’s about bullying or problems at home that they can kind of contact me whenever they want to.” (P6)

Students might choose confiding in teachers rather to their own parents, because they feel it might be easier to communicate with them since parents might not listen to their problems objectively and don’t see them as equal as teachers might. Also, as fears of being scolded or losing privileges is not present when talking to someone else than your parents, students tend to be more open and honest with the teacher.

“Some of the children had better relationship with the teacher and coming through what they were doing and who they were dating[with teacher] rather than telling the parents, because in the parents view they were still little kids.” (P7)

Both of those excerpts (P6, P7) are in line with the conclusions made by Machackova et al., (2013) who believes teachers need to nurture a culture in which students are encouraged to ask for help from adults when they need it and to communicate their problems. Working on to develop coping and problem resolving strategies can help students with their personal relationships but also strengthen the teacher - student relationship as well.

Teachers should always “make a first step” when establishing an atmosphere where trust and confidentiality are respected. As seen in the excerpts above (P6, P7), students need to be reminded that it is okay to tell the teacher their issues or problems and that they can be open about them. Sometimes such an incentive will not be necessary because students might

“recognize by themselves that teachers are there for them and they can trust them.” (P3)

It is important that everyone in the class is included in ongoing communication and not just individuals, because only when all the students act as a whole and become an item of unity, the goal of trusted and positive atmospheres can be reached, which can benefit the whole class:

“That makes everything so much easier when there is a good bond between teachers and students, when that discussion is allowed in class, when there is a bond and trust among the students and teachers, I guess it’s so much more easier to tackle that kind of difficult issues.” (P4)

With mutual trust and communication, an atmosphere where cyberbullying is not a taboo topic and where group dynamic is used as a support and prevention system, can be created:

“I believe [it] is very important to be proactive and create an atmosphere in class where bullying is obviously not allowed but also becomes something that’s just not done. I think the way to do that is often not to necessary focus on the bullying but more focusing on the relationship between children, create the atmosphere that is inclusive where bullying is something that comes up easily.” (P6)

The cited excerpts (P4, P6) give examples about how building the positive relationships between students can be an important step in preventing bullying and cyberbullying from happening and at the same time develop empathy and respect towards others. This finding is tightly connected with the conclusions of the study carried out by Hinduja & Patchin (2017), who claim school programs need to include strategies based on cooperative and caring skills and overcoming challenges. It is generally expected that teachers have an effect on how students in their classes are behaving and that teachers are responsible for maintaining a positive class atmosphere. As stated below, maintaining healthy group dynamic is the key not just in preventing issues but also in developing empathy and respect towards others:

"I think it is not about the relationship between children, it is really about the group. It is really about the group that understands they are in [it] together but also that all the differences are accepted and talked about and group dynamic is super important to prevent bullying." (P6)

The impact technology has on the ways of living is increasing rapidly and more and more areas of life are affected by it. That includes education but also the free time of students and their social life, which can have consequences on their mental health and academic performance. Teacher roles are constantly changing so in order for teachers to be sure the wellbeing of their students is unaffected, they need to be aware of what is happening outside school hours and how do students use technology. Some teachers might join the same social media their students are using or at least "learn what kind of social media is it and what is so popular about it" (P3). The issue can arise if teachers are not aware how most of their students are spending their free time and how are they communicating online with their peers. One of the participants believes this is one of the key setbacks – teachers not being familiar enough with the technology behind the problem:

"It's very hard to help with this because many of the apps that young people use, many of the teachers have never heard of them or never use. The basic problem that we have, is, that some teachers have never heard of Snapchat⁶ so how they can deal with bullying in Snapchat if they have no idea what Snapchat is." (P2)

Benefits of knowing with what the students are occupied with in their free time are several: teacher or any other responsible adult can be aware of potential dangers that might occur, they might find out how to use it for educational purposes, and how to make it a safe environment. On the other hand, that might affect teachers working and free hours as well, because participants agree that when it comes to cyberbullying, there is a "grey area" in the situations when cyberbullying happens after official school time. Teachers might "not [be]

⁶"Snapchat is a mobile app for Android and iOS devices. It's headed by co-founder Evan Spiegel. One of the core concepts of the app is that any picture or video or message you send - by default - is made available to the receiver for only a short time before it becomes inaccessible. This temporary, or ephemeral, nature of the app was originally designed to encourage a more natural flow of interaction." (Tillman, 2021b)

sure how much is the schools and teachers responsibility to handle this" (P2), and feel "it's not a part of teacher's job to resolve these issues that have happened outside the school" (P4).

There is only so much teachers can legally do so prompt reactions and actions after cyberbullying happen are the best they can do to prevent its further escalation and to protect other students:

"We can only deal with the situations that happen during the school hours, if it happens outside the school hours then we can't, we need to inform the parents but it's pretty much what we can do and then if it's a crime, obviously make a police report." (P7)

Technically, even though that is not a mandatory part of their jobs, participants admitted they would feel responsible to react and undertake actions to intervene. They acknowledged they would react immediately after "they would hear about it." (P3), then "intervene and talk with them [students]" (P5), especially if it would be "directed to students in their class by students from their class." (P6)

8.3.2. The changing role of the teacher because of cyberbullying

As mentioned before, the teacher's role in the 21st century has to be flexible and evolve continually. Therefore, even though it is not mandatory, it is expected from teachers to be more tech-savvy and understand how technology works, what is social media used for and how students communicate to be able to recognize potential threats and prevent them on time.

The participants brought up examples and their views about how teachers in general could become more technologically inclined, and they shared some personal experiences admitting "it's something I can do, I can be on social media and just hope that everyone are safe there and try to keep an eye on my students." (P2) or that they will "try to download it, try it out or at least try to get some knowledge of how it works." (P6).

Teachers or any other responsible adult should never be discouraged if they do not understand technology, how it works or what is so amusing about

it but they should be knowledgeable about its potential dangers. Some believe they should always do whatever is in their power to provide help and support for the students, even if they are only being the “middle person” between students and experts:

“I think if you care about the pupils at all, then you came like “Wait a minute, I better pay attention here, I don’t need to know everything about technology I just need to know if something happens, what do I do, how do I help and then how can I teach the kids before? And if I don’t then how do I get somebody who does?” Have a guest speaker or come and talk, you can have an online visitor come and talk, if you feel uncomfortable talking about it or you don’t know, then get someone else.” (P7)

It is important for the teachers to try and keep up with their students. They might not understand how technology works or what is making it so entertaining for the students but they need to be aware how it has become a new “playground”. Even though teachers might not themselves know everything about the cyber world and cyberbullying, participants admit it is impossible to be responsible for the students without knowing at least what is popular among them. They believe teachers should “if they don’t know the platforms or the issues, try to find out about what it is or ask for help and be aware of cultures the students are involved in, what are they doing, what is this and what is that and what does that word mean” (P3). One possible way to approach cyberbullying is through explaining the concept of traditional bullying first, and then draw parallels between two types of bullying:

“You can leave someone out of the group, that’s bullying and that also can happen in cyber surrounding. And you can call someone names, you can tell lies or secrets about someone that also happens in social media and all of this can take place in social media but then there is the fact that it can be so invisible when it happens in social media.” (P4)

Participant 6 (P6) believes that the only way or “real” learning about rights and wrongs on the internet is through experience and witnessing it yourself but also believes the parents and educators of the future will be better prepared and equipped with knowledge and experience of it than they are today:

“You teach those behaviors, or in order for children to learn them, they need to experience that, you know that fiction of like making mistake they have to try it out, and see what the limits are. And I think teachers and adults will also go more online with their children and help them with that.”

8.4. Dealing with a cyberbullying problem as a community

8.4.1. Working with others to prevent cyberbullying

Dealing with cyberbullying usually requires more than one teacher/responsible adult to handle it, therefore working and collaborating with others regarding cyberbullying preventions or interventions is very much needed. Complexity of cyberbullying is making it impossible to undertake any actions against it alone. Participants are suggesting extending multiple collaborations because they believe more could be done in preventing and successfully intervening in cyberbullying cases. One of the participants of this study expressed their concerns about whether or not the current approach sufficient:

“We do talk about it with other teachers when we have our meeting and I do talk about it a lot if I am worried about one of my students, if I suspect they might be bullied or cyberbullied but with other schools I don’t think we do not collaborate. And with parents, I would message the parents if I would think something is up.” (P2)

The approach might change if some of the changes become mandatory. If schools become required to apply them, principals will have to incorporate cyberbullying topics, trainings and courses in the curriculum and maybe look for outside possibilities for collaboration or partnership. Participant 7 (P7) believes that “there are a whole lot of organizations and people who might be able to lend a hand and even if it costs something”, because it is necessary “to make sure that the school is up to date on this kinds of things.”

Teachers claim that when dealing with cyberbullying cases, collaboration between concerned parties is always needed because it makes the resolving process easier which usually includes “parents, psychologist and school curator [social worker]” (P4). Exchanging information with others, letting them know

about the new things students are into, potential dangers and how do they spend their free time make a difference between prevention and intervention attempts. That is the reason why participants believe as many as possible stakeholders should be included in problem solving: “counselor, principal, vice principal” (P5), “whoever is organizing different hobbies for the kids, the coaches, the course teachers, all of us need to help keep the kids safe. It’s not it’s the school’s job or it’s just the parents. It’s not that simple.” (P7).

Collaboration with parents is, according to the teachers, the most important one because parents need to be aware of any potential issues going around and help in preventing them from escalation. Participants also believe that parents, similarly to students, sometimes need an incentive to become aware what is happening with their children and how much do they know. Some “have meetings every year with parents and make sure that they know I[the educator] am aware of the different platforms that they [the students] use.” (P6). An occasional reminder from the educators to the parents in the form of “Have you noticed this and this?” or “We were a little bit worried about that and that.” (P7), as well as “You might want to check your child’s phone or you might want to talk to your child about what’s going on.”(P6). This can result in parents putting more focus on what and how their children are spending time online and educate them about safe internet use.

In addition to collaboration with parents, collaboration should be arranged with authorities as well, such as child protection services or police to inform students about the seriousness of problem and the consequences that can follow. By doing that, the students can learn about police points of view, “what they see is happening, what are their worries” (P7) and by doing that they can also build “a positive image of police force.” (P7)

Some of the participants believe that students should not be excluded from the process of creating policies, strategies or rules because except for their personal experience and knowledge, they can also educate other students. That way, Participant 7 (P7) believes, the impact and in general, the outreach could be expanded and be more beneficial:

“I would ask the children, they have so many great ideas, especially kids who have gone through certain things, what kind of advice would have help when they were lower grades and then present it. I would not exclude the kids from this, I think they are in the key position to help.”

This statement supports the whole-school approach, which acts as centerpiece in motivating students to learn new skills and behaviors suggested by Cross et al. (2016) and learn how to think critically when facing a problem.

A lot can be done from the government point of view as well. Except for raising awareness about cyberbullying on a national level and making laws and legislations, which would make cyberbullying prevention more efficient, the government has the power to ensure schools are well “equipped” with professionals and trained personnel. Participants believe that more psychologists, social workers and counselors in schools would make a significant difference. An example of that would be increasing the number of “youth counselors[who] are much closer to kids than teachers are” (P3). They would take some of the pressure from the teachers and allow a more individual approach towards students and problems they might be dealing with, including cyberbullying.

8.4.2. Social media responsibility

One of the stakeholders that can be taken as partially responsible for cyberbullying, but at the same time is one that could do a lot in preventing it, are social media platforms. With remarkable ways of sharing contents with others and ways of communicating online, there comes a risk of turning them into something harmful. Participants believe social media platforms “have a big responsibility also regarding that (...) and are something that platforms needs to address themselves.” (P2). It is believed that they could do more in protecting their youngest users but also aware how their services can be used in a negative way.

It could be expected from social media platforms to, along with their technology, also develop a system which would detect harmful language and

behavior faster and forbid it. Participants advocate blocking and banning any kind of harmful and hateful language online and believe social media platforms should be stricter with it and set the rules of acceptable behavior:

“I think it depends on what sort of actions the platforms that teenagers are using, if they ban certain words for example or give bans if you use this and that kind of language. And then you don’t get to use the site for a week or a month. So if they start just, sort of giving ban, it’s the only thing that will eventually help.” (P3)

“If there would be a possibility that they [social media platforms] recognize that someone shared a meme that is offensive and they would delete it or they would delete an account.”(P4)

8.4.3. Schools educating parents about cyberbullying

Every participant mentioned that they are usually in close contact with parents of the student when a cyberbullying case occurs, exchanging information and trying to resolve the case together. Unfortunately, it seems that parents, if they want to obtain knowledge about cyberbullying, they have to do so themselves. Schools could help parents with their education about cyberbullying by organizing more workshops and seminars to educate them about online behavior and cyberbullying in general. Participants admit their schools have “not been organizing anything like this” (P2) or that they “had one lecture years ago” (P5) but nothing more than that.

Therefore, more frequent workshops are needed as well is the need to show parents how valuable and needed they are. One way to ensure those workshops are productive, applicable and efficient is by making them relatable and using real life experiences. They can be open for both parents and their children and show them from firsthand experience what cyberbullying looks like, what it can become and what are the consequences of it. They can promote “positive side of what kind of apps kids are using now but also what are the problems areas that you have to keep an eye on and then talk about the age limit” (P7). Workshops can also be organized by app developers for the whole school, including parents. In one case, “they brought along some social media

influencers that were popular among the teenagers.”(P4) This way cyberbullying was explained by student idols that become their educators and also role examples.

School administrators should encourage parents to be more aware of how their children are spending time on the internet. Through the above-mentioned types of workshops organized, parents can learn how to become more engaged – by monitoring sites their children visit, by having more open talks with them and by promoting safe behaviors while being online (Young, Tully & Ramirez, 2016). Schools and parents have a great base to become partners in exchanging knowledge about safe internet use, monitoring technology use and cyberbullying prevention in general.

Parents or guardians can undertake actions that can be extremely productive against cyberbullying especially with setting a set of rules on how to behave online but also as role models and being an example themselves. They need to self-reflect more and be aware “how do they treat other people and what kind of message do they send to their children” (P3)”

8.4.4. Educating children about cyberbullying

The development of technology enables its users to access the internet faster and easier than ever before and even though it has remarkable benefits, in the same time has a potential for danger, especially for the most vulnerable age groups – children. For instance, in the United Kingdom, increasing the number of children already possess or have an ability to use the electronic device with a connection to the internet even before starting school – when looking at 3 and 4 year olds, 1% have their own smartphone, 19% have their own tablet while also 1% already have a social media profile. Out of children aged between 5 and 7, 5% own a smartphone, 42% own a tablet and 4% have their profile on social media (Ofcom, 2019). Being online and spending hours on the internet does not always mean that they fully understand how the internet works, how it affects them and what potential dangers might occur. Educating students about what is considered to be safe and what could be risky behavior online might be a

huge step in preventing cyberbullying from happening and it might take place while teaching about information skills in general:

“We also talked about safety but also that you don’t believe what you read, you will be critical, and when you use sources, you don’t plagiarize, when you use sources, you make sure that it’s from reliable source.(...) what kind of information is safe to give out, not giving information that you are on holiday or when you’re going or when your house, where your address is and if somebody is asking private things that you can always close the link, you have to tell somebody, preferably your parents, but teachers as well.” (P7)

Participants state, “that the younger the student [is], the more the parents should know about what’s going on in school, if there is a problem.”(P2). Because of that, they feel that already first grade students should be aware of what to do and what not do while online, even basic “safety things, as soon as they start using the online equipment.”(P7). Whether that is that explained to them by their parents or they learn about it in the school, it will become very relevant for their education and life.

One participant believed that the dangers of the internet topic, including cyberbullying should be discussed with the child even before they start school. Once children are introduced to this technology, they should also get to know its benefits and flaws and be aware of them since the very first beginnings and according to Participant 3 (P3), age should not be a factor:

“I think as soon as they started to exist on the internet. I think, as soon as they know how to read and write and are online. If not first grade, then even before maybe, in the daycare system even.”

Except educating students about cyberbullying and online behavior in general, it is still important to encourage students to explore the internet and learn how to use it. Participant 7 (P7) believed students need a chance to decide how they will behave in certain situations, learn how “not to be the bully themselves (...) and how to tell if somebody is being [bully] to you.”

For instance, in the following case, students from one school have created a private WhatsApp group only for their class and with the teacher’s supervision and guidance, created a set of rules how to behave while talking

with others and what are the consequences if the rules are not followed. This way, students are getting more responsibility and experience but they are also showing that they can be trusted.

“My kids [students] have WhatsApp group but it only has kids from this class but I don’t have access to it because they did it to on their own. So I told them “Now you guys come up with a rule or rules for that WhatsApp group” and then we all agreed with this rules and we signed it. And then if you misbehave, what happens.” (P7)

Participants have agreed that the anti-cyberbullying program is itself not enough and that the problem should be addressed in a broader area than just through school programs. According to them, cyberbullying as a topic and anti-cyberbullying behaviors should be a part of other school subjects. As with every topic, cyberbullying should also be gradually explained to the students – certain topics should be taught in certain grades, but also not only in one particular subject. Participants agree that cyberbullying should be discussed with the students in several different subjects such as “gym lessons, social studies, Finnish language” (P2) as well as “in terveystieto [health education] and opinto-ohjaus [guidance and counseling]” (P4) because its affects and consequences can be seen in different areas of school life.

8.4.5. Bystander policies

Amongst other things, a similarity in both traditional bullying and cyberbullying is the presence of bystanders. Even though they are by definition only observers, though not taking any actions, they are helping the bully more than the victim. Participants believe the bystander role should be discussed more with students because they are often not aware of the fact that they are also part of cyberbullying and could be held as responsible as the bullies themselves:

“Students from my class, but also like from different classes that were friends with the one who created the Instagram account, had liked, liked the [inappropriate] pictures, or commented them (...) and I took all of those students in and I discussed topic with them. It was more difficult for them to realize they were the part of cyberbullying because they had

liked the picture. It was more difficult for those kinds to understand they were involved in the bullying.” (P4)

Putting more focus on the bystander role might be one of the most effective ways to stop or even prevent cyberbullying from happening. Therefore, policies that would include a description of bystander roles and expected steps bystanders should take if witnessing any form of bullying are needed, as are descriptions of consequences if these steps are not being followed.

“I don’t think we really talk about that. We talk about active, you know, about people who bully. We didn’t discuss bystander. But I actually think it is a good idea, that teachers should discuss this with their classes that, you know, everyone can do something and everyone has responsibility to help others.” (P2)

The findings showed that there is no official policy, strategy or program that would include bystander roles and behaviors, but Finnish comprehensive schools have systems that might help in preventing bullying in other ways:

“There are a group of, often little bit older students who are a lot involved in group activities, and stuff like that so most students in our school know the “tukioppilaita” and that’s actually a very good form of tackling bullying in general.” (P4)

They could be described as “an extended hand” of youth counselors because they talk more often with other students and are more aware of any potential or ongoing harmful situations. Their main purpose is to provide support for other students but they can also help them if they are facing any difficulties in school or at home - “it’s something like a “buddy system” (...) so every child has older buddy that they could rely on if you need them. And bullying can be a part of that.” (P6)

8.5. Cyberbullying at present and in the future

8.5.1. The Covid-19 effect on cyberbullying

The global pandemic of Covid-19, which started in the spring of 2020, affected all areas of human life including education. A significant number of schools

around the world decided for longer or shorter periods of time to organize “online schooling” instead of typical “face to face” schooling (Dennon, 2021). Therefore, students were, and in some places they still are, attending school via their mobile phones, tablets or computers. Because almost of all of their school life, but also social life, “moved online”, students are spending majority of their time on the internet which may result in the increase of cyberbullying cases.

Participants believe that being at home all the time and having their normal activities being reduced or canceled will have an effect of students “because they are forced to spend time indoors so they will play games and do social media so it will lead to that” (P2). It will also affect how much time they are spending online and how they are coping with the current situation. All of that may lead to the increase of cyberbullying cases and participants believe that it is going to be the case.

The lack of social interaction, going outside and spending time with their friends will take a toll on the students and they might struggle to cope with the present situation. One of the participants shared concerns about student’s well being and what kind of effect this will leave on their mentality:

“Sort of smaller arguments can get out of hand when it’s only done by text when you don’t hear or somebody’s tone of voice or something so I do think because in general mental well being is not the best especially when it’s been going on and it’s still going on.” (P3)

Dealing with the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic will be a great challenge for the teachers because the true consequences might not be seen immediately. Having in mind that teachers have never dealt with any similar situation and they could also be affected by it, a lot of joint work will need to be done to restore well being.

“I believe that the consequences of Corona will have long time effects on the mental well-being of all children and adults. If cyberbullying has increased during corona, it will take a long time to neutralize the effects and change behavior.” (P4)

8.5.2. The effects of cyberbullying in the future

Technology and ways of communication keep improving and developing yearly. This makes people's life easier but also brings certain risks of children starting using information and communications technology (ICT) devices earlier and earlier and exposing themselves to the dangers of the internet. The problem of cyberbullying might become bigger and more serious with time, but also teachers are expected to be more educated and prepared to deal with it.

When asked what could be the answer to the problem of cyberbullying, participants offered various solutions. One of them believes that the "right to use the internet" should be deserved through education before one joins the online world:

"I would like to establish, like a national wide, how you have a driving license, you would have a computer license, or like a driving license for cell phone or online behavior we would have for 1st or 2nd graders, young students. Someone should create this and educate them (...) this is the only way to make the situation better. I don't think the cyberbullying will become worse than it is now because now the students have the access to everything. It won't become worse but we can make it better with educating more, that's how I see it in the future." (P1)

With the increase of cyberbullying cases, the only positive thing followed by it is the increase of awareness. More cyberbullying will mean putting more attention to it, and more focus on it will consequently mean a better understanding of it. Participants "don't think we will ever get rid of bullying unfortunately, but it will probably be something that is understood more widely." (P2) and that exact better understanding will be the key for better analysis and for finding a way to prevent it from happening in the first place.

A lot of hope is also put into the new generations of teachers. Because of smaller age gap and the fact they will be more technological inclined, they might better understand the way technology works and how it can be used the best way possible while minimizing risks of unwanted behaviors. They also might be more educated and trained to teach students about the online world and deal with cyberbullying more effectively:

“I do think if classes, or if teaching becomes more online and if teachers, also younger generation of teachers grow up with this (...) this apps, with this social media, they will also be better at regulating it and being aware of what happens there.” (P6)

“I believe that teachers, students and parents will become more aware of the endless possibilities of cyberbullying and in the future have more tools in recognizing forms of cyberbullying” (P4)

These responses are in accordance with the set of recommendations made by Ortega et al. (2012) who state that raising the awareness of cyberbullying problems and learning more about it should not be specifically targeted on one or two groups, but rather on all involved stakeholders. That includes students, school administrators, parents, healthcare providers and the community in general. They are all responsible for promoting rules and the ways to properly communicate online. It is hoped that the knowledge about the online world and communication will increase in the future as well as overall awareness of the implicated problems. Currently, it is affecting the whole world – in every corner of the world where the internet is accessible, meaning there should be education about it and its safe usage. No matter where the initiative comes from, it should be applicable globally because it affects everyone:

“Well I don’t think it’s getting smaller. I mean, if we do not nothing about it it’s going to get bigger but if we teach already good manners and help them[students] see and lead by example how we show, how we behave (...) then we can keep it under control but because it’s the whole world. I think it’s a global thing that people have to deal with, one country can’t solve things, so it has to be a global kind of thing that we start teaching better manners.” (P7)

The common opinion amongst participants is that the general responsibility also lays on the adults and their behavior online. They pose to the children as role models both in “real life” but also in the online world. Their comments, actions and shared pictures online might try to be copied by the children and the adults should be aware of it. Setting a good example and being respectful to others is the best way to ensure children will act responsibly. By showing them

how to follow rules of online behavior, adults can leave a huge impact on children and educate them to be more accountable and mature.

9 DISCUSSION

The goal of this chapter is to make a viable and visible connection between the findings of the research discussed in the previous chapter and the relevant literature on the topic of cyberbullying. It is hoped that the findings and concluding remarks of this research with the combination of existing literature will give additional and more in-depth insights about educators' perspectives and thoughts about current anti-cyberbullying programs. In this section the findings of the study are reconsidered from the perspective of utilizing them for improving anti-cyberbullying programs

The purpose of this study was to explore how satisfied Finnish lower secondary school educators are with the anti-cyberbullying programs in their schools. Since cyberbullying is such an extensive problem and its consequences can be of serious matter, this study has specifically focused on lower secondary schools and its educators. Reasons for that are multiple: firstly, lower secondary students are at the age when they are beginning to use the internet more frequently and are old enough to be educated about the potential dangers they could face and be taught how to avoid them or react when they happen. Also, the study by Vlaanderen et al. (2020) has shown that researches among this particular age group are lacking. Second, considering that the specific goal of this research was to explore potential improvements of the anti-cyberbullying programs, the perspectives of educators have been taken because of their position as one of the primary users of the program.

In the following, findings of this study will be examined and looked more in detail in the relation to the research questions. The results showed that participants were not particularly satisfied with the incorporation of anti-cyberbullying programs in schools and that anti-cyberbullying behaviors were not promoted enough in school classes. They also shared their views on how to increase the efficiency of the cyberbullying programs and based on their experiences with cyberbullying, they will recommend various set of changes

and additions to the current programs, which could lead to decreased frequencies of cyberbullying cases.

One of the possible reasons why the findings and conclusions of this research could not be applicable everywhere might be the already discussed different structures of school personnel and privatized anti-bullying or anti-cyberbullying programs school can pay for and implement themselves. Nevertheless, policy and program makers might use the opinions of teachers and suggestions as a base for further studies, which could lead to new editions or upgrades of existing programs. Findings of this study could also be applicable for schools as well, since they are required by law to develop and implement a teaching agenda to protect their students from any harm.

In the following, findings of this study will be discussed in matter of themes and subthemes, which were created as results of teachers' answers and suggestions of how to more efficiently oppose cyberbullying.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Methods to more efficiently oppose cyberbullying | Increased demand for knowledge about cyberbullying | Improving teacher studies at the University |
| | | Increasing number of courses and programs about anti- cyberbullying education |
| | Improving guidelines for anti-cyberbullying program | Specifically naming school personnel responsible for cyberbullying |
| | | Collaborating with others |
| | | Improving well-being questionnaires |
| | Enhancing cyberbullying prevention | Educating students and parents |
| | | Improving student-teacher relationship and school atmosphere |

TABLE 2. Methods to oppose cyberbullying

As it can be seen on Table 2, there are three main topics, which should be in the center of attention when dealing with the problem of cyberbullying. Those are: (1) expanding the teachers' knowledge about cyberbullying, (2) providing more details and strategies in school cyberbullying guidelines and (3) working on cyberbullying prevention by indirectly involving all relevant stakeholders and relationships between them.

9.1. The increased demand for knowledge about cyberbullying

To effectively raise awareness about the dangers of cyberbullying, it is necessary to educate future teachers, ergo, pre-service teachers (PST) to provide them adequate knowledge about this issue. It is imperative to prepare them to identify signs of cyberbullying on time, give them insights on how to properly react in those situations, what are the potential mental and academic consequences students may experience (Redmond et al., 2018) and how to prevent the situation from escalating further. That is important because in one case of this study, a student was hurt to the point they have "stopped doing their hobbies and their self-esteem and self-worth were devastated which resulted in recommended therapy" (P7). Also, cyberbullying can trigger a chain of other hurtful actions, which according to Participant 3 (P3) experiences include "sending and exchanging more threatening messages and calling for a physical violence". These examples are merely a demonstration of what cyberbullying can cause and why is it of such a great importance for teachers to be properly educated and prepare to take appropriate actions after recognizing the first signs of cyberbullying.

Providing PSTs with explicit knowledge and real life experiences and beliefs during their studies might help them in a real school situation to respond faster and more efficiently. Without it, PSTs, once when they become teachers, might have difficulties with recognizing any signs of unwanted behavior (including cyberbullying) and managing the situation. This is supported by Mishna et al. (2005, as cited in Ryan & Kariuki, 2011) who found that "that the majority of the teachers stated that they did not know how to deal

with indirect bullying” (p.3). Australia's National Safe School Framework and its studies (Education Services Australia, 2013) have shown that because of the limited knowledge about cyberbullying and inexperience in dealing with cyberbullying, teachers are not likely to report incidents or ask for their colleague's help. This is also acknowledged by participants in this study who claim that probably one of the most needed additions to the university curriculums is the topic of cyberbullying, because there is a “lot of stuff that the university doesn't seem to educate” (P7). They believe that university studies are ideal places to “learn more about it because then it would have been easier today to deal with those situations” (P2) when they happen in school.

It is necessary to educate them about this problem, which is constantly evolving and affecting more and more students, which is something participants have noticed as well: “Every year something is different, technology changes, the people, the kids, the skill set and how you deal with certain things, online connection between the school and the parent.” (P7). This would be a step forward in ensuring that teachers are prepared to act quickly and effectively when cyberbullying happens. Participants believe that would save time and give them a firm base to protect their students better and also educate them as well.

Being directly involved in preventing and intervening in cyberbullying is not the only task future in-service teachers should be ready to engage in. Educators are responsible for ensuring that all students are in a supportive and secure classroom atmosphere. That can be primarily done by creating or helping to create a curriculum with specific target actions for the students. Those actions would encourage students to nurture a positive bystander culture of informing responsible adults of cyberbullying incidents (Redmond et al., 2018) and supporting their peers who were or are victims of those acts.

The influence of educators should not stop there – except on children, it should be broadened and attempted to make an impact on parents, other educators and school personnel and lawmakers. As Compton et al., (2014) stated: “until all groups have a shared understanding of the behavior,

interventions are unlikely to adequately address the issue and foster change” (p. 398). Because of their everyday experience with all aforementioned stakeholders and their respective knowledge about the topic and the following issues, educators are in the perfect position to start and maintain a joint collaboration. This is in the line with the findings already discussed in subchapter 8.3 (“Improvements of anti-cyberbullying programs”). Even though input from all relevant stakeholders is needed in order to make effective changes, educators are the ones with the best approach, best outreach and the best possibility to implement those changes.

Yilmaz (2010) have also argued that it is necessary for PSTs to gain better education about cyberbullying and learn about tools and skills how to address and handle it better. Therefore, teacher education programs should develop to ensure better learning opportunities for the students (Redmond et al., 2018) in order to demonstrate the true seriousness of cyberbullying.

One of the examples that could be followed and restructured to become applicable globally is the Australian program (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012). In Australia, all teacher education programs require students to demonstrate seven standards in teaching and the following two sub-standards are specifically related to cyberbullying:

Standard 4.4: Describe strategies that support students' wellbeing and safety working within school and/or system, curriculum and legislative requirements

Standard 4.5: Demonstrate an understanding of the relevant issues and the strategies available to support the safe, responsible and ethical use of ICT in learning and teaching. (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012)

As seen, the aim of Standard 4.4. is to ensure student safety while in school by specifically naming and describing the course of actions, which will be undertaken to protect them from any harm. Standard 4.5 requires and makes sure that teachers possess a certain knowledge about safe internet use and are qualified to transfer it to the students. Both of those standards are helping educators to more successfully address and prevent cyberbullying from happening. One of the findings of this study showed that some participants are already incorporating knowledge about the ethical use of ICT in their classes through discussions with the students about their experiences and what is considered as proper behavior online:

“I do a lots of work in you Google Classroom and children have to read each other’s work and again, how do you respond to somebody, how do comment to somebody in an online meeting, is (...) a part of this.” (P6)

That was considered to be a very useful and “learning by doing it” way of teaching about online rules of behavior because it immediately shows students when and how to apply this knowledge.

It can also help for educators to know who might be potential targets of cyberbullying and which of the students showed more tendencies to be bullies. As Baas et al. (2013) stated, reasons for some victims being targeted specifically are several - their appearance, disabilities, personality traits and other. This is in agreement with the findings of this study because some of the participants noticed victims weren’t chosen randomly – in one case, a teacher witnessed a student being bullied because of “her disability of selective mutism” (P3), and in other case, a student was victim of cyberbullying “because of his physique” (P7). Therefore, additional knowledge of prevention work that would include learning skills of recognizing early signs of cyberbullying in order to detect it on time might be of great use.

Many researchers (e.g. Murphy, 2014; Ryan & Kariuki, 2011) agree that the cyberbullying problem needs to be discussed in teacher education as well, as well as its management and prevention strategies. It is a necessity for cyberbullying to be a mandatory part of curriculum and that it is properly

addressed in the program. For example, Redmond et al. (2018) suggest that cyberbullying could take place during an ICT course where it would explore digital citizenship and netiquette in depth or as a part of a classroom management course where supportive and positive bystander behaviors would be taught. That would expand the role of teachers and increase the number of their tasks but also make them more adaptable in the school environment and give them skills to resolve problematic situations easier. Faculties of education should also, along new additions in the curriculum, ensure fitting in-service teachers/teachers educators (Redmond et al., 2018). That would mean that teacher educators who already have certain experiences with cyberbullying cases and their prevention could share their real-life knowledge and skills with their PSTs.

As it can be seen in the following example, some of the participants advocate expanding ICT courses with the knowledge of cyberbullying, bystander roles and proper online behavior for the students, which would enable them better preparation for possible situations in the future:

“We talked about (...) my education [university studies], we didn’t really learn anything about this so it would have been really nice to actually learn more (...). That would have been a very good place where I could learn more about it and then it would have been easier today to deal with this situations.” (P2)

This finding showed that this would also increase the quality of teaching because PSTs would get more insights about strategies of identifying cyberbullying and how to respond to it more effectively. Redmond et al. (2018) suggested that faculties could also organize additional trainings, courses or workshops for both PSTs and in-service teachers, which could be used as a way to exchange experiences but also updated knowledge and new trends about cyberbullying issues.

This relationship should work both ways. Educational trainings could also be organized by either school counselors or principals for PSTs and in-service teachers to gain more knowledge, tools and skills on how to appropriately respond to cyberbullying. In-service teachers showed to be often inaccurately

responding to cyberbullying (DeSmet et al., 2015). Therefore, additional learning is needed. Those trainings would help both PSTs and in-service teachers with choosing the right approach towards cyberbullying, increasing self-efficacy and gaining knowledge about different outcome possibilities. That would also increase the chances of ensuring that the best possible way of handling the situation is being taken depending on the situation.

By doing so, the upcoming generations of teachers could be better prepared to address this problem than the previous ones, more successful in reducing the number of incidents but also in promoting safer school environment for everyone.

9.2. Improving guidelines for anti-cyberbullying program

Cyberbullying guidelines need to be clearly written and should also state the importance of being up to date with technology changes. They should also require teachers and other school personnel to attend professional development trainings (Vandebosch et al., 2014). The necessity for updated guidelines is also for the non-existence of responsible school personnel who would be able to take initiative and disciplinary strategies and measures against cyberbullies in school. According to the study made by DeSmet et al. (2015), a majority of school personnel were uncertain of their authority and the actions they should take when cyberbullying occurs, therefore are not eligible to handle it appropriately. Specifically naming the school personnel responsible for handling cyberbullying (and bullying) issues and establishing hierarchy for it would contribute to easier and faster intervention. One of the findings of this study showed that some participants (P2, P3, P7) believe schools need an authoritative figure that would have a task of ensuring a safe school environment and providing help to school personnel and students with bullying and cyberbullying affairs.

As mentioned by multiple participants, one of essential problems educators face is the situation when cyberbullying occurs outside school premises or after school hours. Even though school personnel cannot be legally

held responsible for the events that happen after school, school guidelines should include strategies to prepare educators how to proceed in those situations. That would help them in planning future preventive actions and specifically name their responsibility range (DeSmet et al., 2015) and is in close relation with the first research question – even though anti-cyberbullying program is active, there are still some ambiguities which are preventing the program from reaching its full potential.

Participants also suggested more collaborative work between schools and other parties who might have knowledge and influence to prevent cyberbullying. One of those might most certainly be cyber experts and makers of evidence-based intervention policies (Vandebosch et al., 2014). The reason why this kind of collaboration is needed and why the government should also be a part of it is the necessity for mutual agreements, when is the best and most appropriate time to start implementing prevention and intervention policies in schools. Some, such as Participant 7 (P7) believes the government should induce schools to apply them as early as possible:

“Minister of Education could have firmer say and encourage schools already from first grade onwards, at least first grade onward, to encourage this kind of thing and make it responsibility of the principal and that schools have to deal with this.” (P7)

Because of their expertise and experiences, cyber experts and makers of evidence-based intervention policies can guarantee a certain level of effectiveness for their prevention and intervention strategies. That way schools would have more professional guidance for the further development of their programs, while parents and other potential parties could be more encouraged and inclined to participate in the implementation of the program.

Collaboration with health care providers is also one aspect that schools should consider more often and include them in planning and developing anti-cyberbullying strategies. Health care providers might offer online sources or services to help students who were cyberbullied without their parents or other trusted adults knowing or being included. To provide the best kind of interventions, which should be evidence-based, and not commercial (Espelage

& Hong, 2017), is why that kind of collaboration with schools is very much needed to make sure the same steps will be taken.

Health care providers also can conduct well-being questionnaires on their own or in collaboration with schools. By carefully planning and designing questionnaires, students being exposed to cyberbullying or having difficulties of its consequences might be discovered. Espelage & Hong (2017, p. 378) recommend that questions should aim to explore “whether youth are bullying others or are being bullied by others, how long it has been happening, where it is happening (e.g., school, online, in sport), and how these experiences have affected the youth’s mental, physical, and social health.”

9.3. Enhancing cyberbullying prevention

School administrators might limit mobile phone usage in schools by requesting from students to keep their devices in school lockers, putting them in a joint box monitored by the teacher during the class time or issue a rule that “students are not allowed to use their phones” (P2) on school premises. Despite these kinds of rules, they might not be directly designed to prevent cyberbullying, but rather just decrease the usage of mobile phones. Young et al. (2016) have concluded that those rules have also lowered the number of cyberbullying cases in schools. Also, as one way to awaken students about the seriousness of the problem and how they can help in preventing cyberbullying, teachers should explain them the capabilities of bystanders. Vlaanderen et al. (2020) suggest sharing peer experiences about important values and the meaning of intervention. Students hearing real cyberbullying experiences from someone their age and what happened to them might leave a positive impact and increase their empathy. Also, in the study made by the same authors, cyberbullying victims confirmed that their situation could have been resolved faster if they have had help from their school mates, if they would have intervened and provided them help to stop the cyberbullying.

Parents have been the topic of many academic discussions as one of, if not the most important factor in reducing both cyberbullying and bullying

(Espelage & Hong, 2017). It is crucial for schools to establish a productive collaboration with student's parents because both parties are responsible for monitoring children's behavior on the internet, pages and sites. For instance, workshops organized for parent education is one way to accomplish that – during these workshops parents can learn how “they can help, what kind of supervisions should they undertake, how well are they aware of what their kids are using and other.” (P7).

They have the responsibility to guide what children are allowed to visit online and how much actual time they are allowed for spending online. Collaborating with parents is equally important as educating them because they can bring their perspective of how their children are spending their free time and how do they behave when online. Possibilities of that partnership should be further explored and find its place in schools anti-cyberbullying programs.

Increasing the knowledge about cyberbullying through various courses and programs is not meant only for the school personnel and parents but for the students as well. Except for educating them about the technical knowledge (how to block a cyberbully, how to report cyberbullying), safety measures (having private accounts, not sharing personal details, connecting only with people they know) (Espelage & Hong, 2017) and rules of online communication (appropriate online behavior) (Vandebosch et al., 2014), specifically targeted lessons could be intended towards potential bullies, victims and bystanders.

As Wilton & Campbell (2011) stated and Participant 6 (P6) confirmed (“I said the whole cyberbullying is about the anonymity, the easiness of it”), the aspect of anonymity can give cyberbullies more advantage and intensify their motives to further carry out their intents. Therefore, one of the steps in the prevention of cyberbullying is demystifying the idea about absolute anonymity. For instance, explaining to students how even though online anonymity can be attained and used for cyberbullying, police and cyber experts have tools and meanings to surpass it and discover the identity of perpetrator. That kind of lesson might discourage any potential cyberbullies from ever taking any action. In addition to that, students could be taught how to minimize their chances of

becoming cybervictims themselves by increasing the level of protection on their devices and the courses of action if they are being bullied – saving evidences, blocking cyberbullies, telling trusted adult. Every student also might find themselves being a bystander. Therefore, educating them, that instead of enabling the cyberbully (i.e. by “liking” their offensive posts on social media platforms) (Vandebosch et al., 2014), they should provide support to the victim by reporting offensive language and behavior to the social media provider and/or adults.

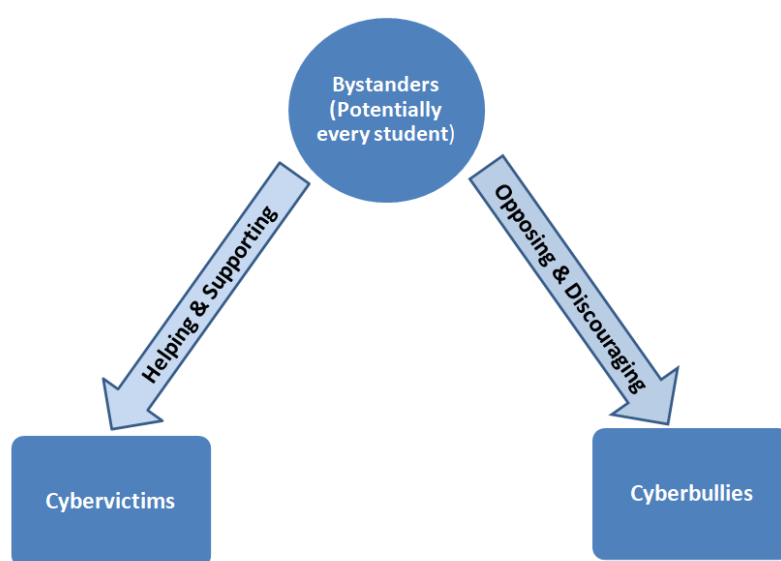


FIGURE1. The roles of bystanders

Figure 1 represents the roles of bystanders which should be more emphasized and developed in schools. This is in agreement with several statements made by the participants who believe that: “Everyone has the responsibility to tell and report any type of bullying.”(P3). To report bullying is important because if nobody takes action when bullying happens and no one reacts, bystanders are, “actually giving permission to bully or cyberbully to continue with their agenda.”(P7)

Focusing more on the roles of the bystanders is one of the potential answers on the second research question –increasing the efficiency of the anti-cyberbullying program. Except for paying more attention to the indirect participants of cyberbullying, other most significant recommendations

considered better education about the topic (for students, parents and teachers) and more collaboration with relevant stakeholders (parents, health care providers, government). The mutual conclusion made by all participants was that the problem could not be resolved by individuals – collaborations inside and outside the schools is the only way to successfully deal with the problem and minimize its occurrence. Several previous studies (Cross et al., 2016, Eden et al., 2013; Li, 2008) have come to conclusion that by putting more focus on the whole schools approach against cyberbullying and especially by constantly raising awareness of it, school administrators can reduce the levels of unwanted behaviors in schools and increase the safety of students.

10 THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were certain limitations of this study which, if taken into consideration in future research, might give more in-depth information about this topic and explore it even further. The first limitation is related to the number of participants – the sample of this study was smaller than expected and even though participants were from different regions of Finland, the sample was not large enough to be considered as a general representative for the whole country. Future research could specifically target several schools from each region to accomplish that and get more comprehensive results.

Second limitations concerns the language of study – because most of the participants were native Finnish speakers and the researcher does not have a proficiency in Finnish, the study was carried out only with participants who spoke English. That resulted in considerable loss of potential participants, which could be avoided in the future by conducting complete study in Finnish.

The third limitation relates to the types of anti-cyberbullying programs the schools of the participants are implementing. Several schools were implementing their own anti-cyberbullying programs while others were part of the “KiVaKoulu®” program. For those reasons, findings might not be applicable in all Finnish schools since schools with the “KiVaKoulu®” programs need to follow existing lists of strategies and actions, which may not be flexible to changes. In the future, a whole study could focus on schools, which have their own programs and later be compared to those, which are using programs developed by “KiVaKoulu®”. Considering the complexity and the seriousness of the problem, these limitations should be taken into consideration in order to find effective solutions faster and start developing and implementations of new editions to the anti-cyberbullying programs.

11 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Many authors agree that cyberbullying is very modern and constantly expanding phenomenon that needs to be more analyzed (Arnarsson et al., 2019). As an example, if a malicious message or picture is posted online with the ability to be shared and other users have seen it repeatedly, the question stands whether this act should be treated as a single or as a repeated act of cyberbullying (Arnarsson et al., 2019). Therefore, coming up with a single interpretation of what exactly is cyberbullying (which is still being discussed amongst academic circles) would help all relevant stakeholders in dealing with the problem of cyberbullying because it would help with categorizing which cases fall under which domain. It will also be important to put more emphasis on bystanders and classroom characteristics because they both shown to have a great impact on prevention actions. Moreover, a detailed review of programs and trainings, which are preparing teachers to recognize signs of bullying and cyberbullying both during and after school hours are needed as well, is their further developments.

Conducting more research on the topic of parenting styles and whether they are sheltering their children or endangering their safety when it comes to problems of bullying and cyberbullying could be beneficial. They could serve as a predictor, but also as a prevention of the bullying behavior (Martinez et al., 2019). It would also be valuable to conduct research of explicit anti-bullying policies that have defined specific consequences for cyberbullying (Williford et al., 2013) and try to adapt them universally.

More studies, which would focus on, for instance, the comparison between age and socio-economical differences and their relationship, should be conducted to get more valid and up-to-date numbers and statistics about cyberbullying. Also, socio-economical differences could be compared to gender

and another study could examine is there a connection between victim selection and victim character. In addition, it would be beneficial to explore why victims believe they were chosen by their bullies either in the context of traditional or cyber bullying (Wilton & Campbell, 2011). Nocentini & Menesini (2016) believe that insights and recommendations made by students and teachers should be included in the upcoming research and be used in the creation of new measures. Instead of focusing on short-term effects, they also suggest effects should be observed through a longer period of time and whether they could be permanently implemented.

Another topic that is of important significance and needs more evidence-based research is the topic of students with disabilities. The study by Kowalski et al. (2016) is one of few, which covered that topic - more specifically college students with disabilities. They have analyzed the frequency and consequences of cyberbullying amongst college students and they are calling for more research to investigate the connection between disability status, mental health and cyberbullying.

To develop an effective anti-cyberbullying program, researchers need to provide data backed up with evidences that prove its efficiency to all relevant parties, which may directly or indirectly be impacted by it (e.g., students' parents, school personnel, policy-makers). To do that, longitudinal researches, follow-up tests and decreased numbers of cyberbullying incidents are the best guidance and assurance of the effectiveness of the program. The benefit of evidence-based programs is that they are specifically targeted, they are saving money, time and energy of all stakeholders. To boost efficiency even more, they need to be easy-to-implement, free for all users and provide step by-step handbooks with guidelines explaining the implementation procedure. Even though online guidelines can provide effective solutions to prevent or intervene with cyberbullying, they are usually created for the individual approach, therefore schools are central places for influencing students and providing them information and education about anti-cyberbullying measures.

According to the findings of this study, there are several differences between schools and their approaches towards cyberbullying. Most noticeable ones are: the structure of their anti-cyberbullying teams, the understanding of school official guidelines about bullying and cyberbullying and types, and numbers of questionnaires about ensuring students safety. Schools which are not part of the “KiVaKoulu®” program have to appoint their own anti-bullying team and might choose various teachers to be part of that team. Also depending on the school and the existence of the anti-cyberbullying guidelines, teachers might have different knowledge about strategies on how to handle cyberbullying situations in school. Some schools were also, apart from the mandatory national questionnaires, creating their own versions of questionnaires to more thoroughly investigate the general atmosphere in the school. These three examples could be, for instance, included when creating new anti-cyberbullying laws and policies: detailed structures of anti-cyberbullying teams in schools and its selection, minimal required knowledge about cyberbullying from every teacher and mandatory sections or specific question about cyberbullying in the school questionnaire about well-being.

The goal for schools is to create, as soon as possible, specific and efficient intervention and prevention strategies. Even though priority should be given to the protection of the most vulnerable groups, the ultimate goal is creating a free from harm environment for every single student. Espelage & Hong (2017) have explored the current status of cyberbullying programs in several countries and their focus since cyberbullying has become a global problem. Countries might use different strategies and approaches, but the authors have stated that all programs alongside prevention should put focus on “promoting empathy, perspective taking, communication skills, problem solving [and] friendship skills” (p. 378). That way, cyberbullying could be confronted both directly and indirectly all the while improving student-teacher and student-student relationships, the general atmosphere would be positively increased and school environments would become a safer place.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Research guide

Section: Reflections on personal and professional competence

1. What is your official degree title?
2. How long have you been employed in school?
3. How did your studies at the university prepare you for dealing with potential cyberbullying cases at your future job position?
4. When you first came to your job did someone and who explain, how to deal with cyberbullying?
5. If you have attended some kind of professional development training or seminar has cyberbullying ever been a topic on those trainings or seminars?
6. Would you say that you are personally trained to deal with bullies, victims and their parents?

Section: School's anti cyberbullying program

1. What kind of guidelines is your school using to deal with cyberbullying?
2. Do you know are those guidelines written on national level or every school has its own personnel that write it?
3. If cyberbullying doesn't happen during the school is it still schools or teachers responsibility to react?
4. Should students trust or be more encouraged to tell teachers their problems?
5. Should teachers pay more attention on technology development?
6. Is there a team at your school which deals with bullying and cyberbullying problems?

Section: Cyberbullying cases

1. Have you ever witnessed cyberbullying or dealt with cyberbullying case?
2. How long does it take to “resolve” the case?
3. At what age do you think cyberbullying should be explained to students?
4. Do you and how do you collaborate with parents/other professionals/other schools regarding cyberbullying problem?
5. Are there any kinds of workshops organized in your school to educate parents about cyberbullying danger?
6. Does your school have policy included on bystander's behavior?

Section: General reflection

1. Which stakeholder should do more regarding the cyberbullying problem?
2. Is the anti-cyberbullying program enough itself?
3. Are the anti-cyberbullying behaviors parts of other school subjects?
4. How does your school track the development of students' well-being?
5. Do you think that the current Covid 19 situation is or going to have an effect on increase number of cyberbullying cases?
6. What do you think what will happen with cyberbullying in the future?
In which direction will the problem go?

Appendix 2. Consent for scientific research

I have been asked to take part in the study “The anti-cyberbullying programs in Finnish lower secondary schools: Teacher perspectives”

I have read the research notification and obtained sufficient information about the study and the processing of my personal data. The content of the study has also been described to me verbally, and I have received sufficient responses to all my questions about the study. Responses were given by Hrvoje Gazdek. I have had a sufficient amount of time to consider my participation in the study.

I understand that participating in this study is voluntary. I have the right, at any time during the study and without giving any reasons, to cancel my participation in the study. Cancelling my participation will not result in any negative consequences for me.

In addition, I can, at any time, withdraw my consent to the study without any negative consequences for me.

Even though the interview will be held online, I will not participate in any examinations if I have flu or a fever or if I am recovering from an illness or am otherwise in a weak condition.

By signing this consent form, I accept that my data will be used in the study described in the research notification.

☐ Yes

I give my consent to be contacted with regard to any further research.

☐ Yes

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I will participate in the study, that I am a voluntary research subject and give my consent to the aforementioned.

Consent received

_____ *Signature of the recipient*

_____ *Name in print*

The original signed consent form will remain in the archives of the person in charge of the study, and a copy of it will be given to the research subject. This consent form will be retained securely for as long as the data is in identifiable format. If the data is anonymized or erased, this consent form no longer needs to be archived.

Appendix 3. Privacy notice

A description of the processing of personal data for scientific research purposes (privacy notice; Articles 13, 14 and 30 of Regulation (EU) 2016/679)

Personal data processed in the study: “The anti-cyberbullying programs in Finnish lower secondary schools: Teacher perspectives”

The purpose of this study is to find out how satisfied comprehensive school teachers are with the anti-cyberbullying programs in their own schools in Finland. The data of the study is collected through (semi-structured) thematic interviews. The study aims to get answers to questions like, how do teachers perceive the efficiency of the current anti-cyberbullying program in their schools and what are their recommendations for its improvements. In the data analysis, the responses of the participants will be compared to identify common ideas or thoughts that come out consistently as well as to find differences between participants’ experiences about various anti-cyberbullying programs. Through investigating multiple perspectives and the different experiences behind them, it will be explored whether the focus of anti-cyberbullying programs is on prevention or intervention. In addition, teachers’ work and experiences about individual cyberbullying cases will be examined in depth. The aim is to interview six to ten Finnish comprehensive school educators who have an experience with cyberbullying cases in their own schools. The interviews will take place online and they will take approximately one hour. After the conducting of the interviews, the interviews will be transcribed verbatim, analyzed and used in a Master’s thesis (University of Jyväskylä, Department of Education, Hrvoje Gazdek).

The following personal data will be collected from you: name, email address, telephone number, interview responses, interview recordings and interview notes.

This privacy notice has been send to the participants via email before the research has been conducted.

1. Legal grounds for the processing of personal data for research/archiving purposes

Consent given by the research subject (Article 6.1(a), GDPR).

Express consent given by the research subject (Article 9.2(a), GDPR).

Transferring personal data outside the EU/EEA

During this study, your personal data will not be transferred outside the EU/EEA.

Protection of personal data

In this study, the processing of personal data is based on a proper research plan, and a responsible person has been appointed for the study. Your personal data will only be used and disclosed for the purposes of conducting scientific research), and it is otherwise ensured that no data about you is disclosed to unauthorized parties.

Prevention of identifiability

Data will be anonymized when it is generated (all identifiers will be fully removed so that no persons can be identified from the data, and no new data can be merged with the data)

Direct identification data will be removed as a protective measure when generating the data (pseudonymized data, in which case persons can be later identified on the basis of a code or similar data, and new data can be merged with the data)

Personal data used in the study will be protected by means of

Username and password.

An advance ethical assessment of the study has been conducted.

The processing of personal data after the study

The research register will be erased one month after the study report, i.e. MA thesis by Hrvoje Gazdek has been published.

The research register will be anonymized, i.e. all identifiers will be fully removed so that no persons can be identified from the data, and no new data can be merged with the data.

Controller(s) and researchers

The controller is the party which, alone or with another party, defines the goals and means of the processing of personal data, as well as the organization(s) and person(s), and is responsible for the lawfulness of processing.

The controller for this study is: Hrvoje Gazdek.

Researcher (the study will be conducted in the researcher's name in their own time/at their own expense).

Researcher:

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Rights of research subjects

Withdrawal of consent (Article 7, GDPR)

You have the right to withdraw your consent if the processing of personal data is based on consent. Withdrawing consent does not have any impact on the lawfulness of processing based on consent carried out before the withdrawal.

Right to access data (Article 15, GDPR)

You have the right to obtain information about whether your personal data is processed, and which personal data is processed. If required, you can request a copy of the personal data processed.

Right to have data rectified (Article 16, GDPR)

If there are any inaccuracies or errors in the processing of your personal data, you have the right to request your personal data to be rectified or supplemented.

Right to have data erased (Article 17, GDPR)

You have the right to request your personal data to be erased in certain situations. However, the right to have data erased does not exist if the erasure prevents the purpose of processing from being fulfilled for scientific research purposes or makes it much more difficult.

Right to the restriction of processing (Article 18, GDPR)

You have the right to restrict the processing of your personal data in certain situations, such as if you deny the accuracy of your personal data.

Derogation from the rights of data subjects

Derogation from the aforementioned rights is possible in certain individual situations on the basis of the GDPR and the Finnish data protection act, insofar as the rights prevent scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes being fulfilled or make it much more difficult. The need for derogation must always be assessed separately in each situation.

Profiling and automated decision making

In this study, your personal data will not be used in automated decision making. In this study, the purpose of the processing of personal data is not to assess your personal characteristics, i.e. profiling. Instead, your personal data and characteristics will be assessed from the perspective of broader scientific research.

Executing the rights of data subjects

If you have any questions about the rights of data subjects, please contact the university's data protection officer. All requests related to the execution of rights must be sent to the registry office of the University of Jyväskylä. Registry office and archive, P.O. Box 35 (C), 40014 University of Jyväskylä, tel.: +358 (0)40 805 3472, email: kirjaamo@jyu.fi. Visiting address: Seminaarinkatu 15, Building C (Main Building, 1st floor), Room C 140.

Any data breaches or suspicions of data breaches must be reported to the University of Jyväskylä.

<https://www.jyu.fi/en/university/privacy-notice/report-data-security-breach>

You have the right to file a complaint with the supervisory authority of your permanent place of residence or employment if you consider that the processing of personal data is in breach of the GDPR. In Finland, the supervisory authority is the Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman.

Contact for Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman:

<https://tietosuoja.fi/en/home>