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參賽作品名稱：Attacks under the Shadow – A Study of High School Students' Experiences and Understanding of Cyberbullying

關 鍵 詞：cyberbullying, experiences and understanding of cyberbullying, prevention of cyberbullying

Abstract

Recently, cyberbullying, a combination of aggressive behaviors and the technology, has become a serious problem in the society and at school. In light of understanding the high school students' perceptions about cyberbullying, the present study explored the high school students' status quo of using the Internet and the activities which are relevant to the Internet, the high school students' cyberbullying experiences and understanding through various aspects, and the possible cyberbullying prevention to apply in today's school environment. This study adopted Huang and Chou's (2010) questionnaire and revised some questions in order to fit in the status quo. 104 high school students who came from five different departments participated in this study. The quantitative analysis of the questionnaire was carried out through descriptive statistics in order to indicate the students' background information, experience and understanding of cyberbullying, and the prevention of cyberbullying. Results of this study reported that the students were the Internet overusers, and the role of the students in cyberbullying was bystander. Though the identity of the bully was frequently unknown, the students still had ability to infer who they are by means of some clues that appeared around them, and most of the students thought the textual attacks were the most frequent bullying method of all, regardless of traditional or up-to-date bullying methods. In other words, the cyberbullying methods appearing on the Internet can be classified into insult, denigration and slander. Finally, in terms of the students, they believed that enforcing the concept and knowledge of cyberbullying and legislating against cyberbullying would be the best prevention. To conclude, this study may be of importance in finding out the experience and understanding of cyberbullying in high school students in Chia-yi City, as well as in providing the students, parents and teachers with a better understanding of how to prevent cyberbullying from occurring around us.

Keywords: cyberbullying, experiences and understanding of cyberbullying, prevention of cyberbullying

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I. Introduction

I.1 Background of the Study

With the rapid development of technology, our lives have become fairly different from before lives, especially the invention of the Internet and communication devices. Technology is so attractive and intriguing that it has played an important and crucial part in the modern world. Therefore, nowadays the children and teenagers live in the environment which is almost occupied with the state-of-the-art technology. Especially, with the advent of Web 2.0, the Internet has been quicker and brought forth several convenient devices and systems for people, such as, the smartphone, the social media and Instant messengers (IMs). Our lives enter into a new era.

Because of these technologies, the youth live for the innovative video game or app that they can play or use to chat with their friends no matter where or when they are. They enjoy socially connecting with their family or classmates through social media and other software (e.g., such as, Line, MSN, and Facebook) without any boundaries or limitation of time. From the positive angle, children and teenagers can expand their circle of friends and gain the newest information as easily as possible. From the negative angle, nevertheless, the virtual world and information and communication technology have some risks for the children and teenagers because of the features of anonymity and untraceability (李安軒, 2013). Although the sophisticated technology has such aforementioned effects, there is a growing phenomenon that has a negative impact on it. Moreover, the parents and teachers have gradually been concerned with the negative impact on youth's lives.

Up to date, bullying has been a serious problem in school, and the government has paid much attention to it. In 2011, Ministry of Education (MOE) promulgated "Maintenance of School Security Guideline" and revised it in 2012 to ask all of the schools in Taiwan to implement the prevention of bullying in school (MOE, 2012). In addition, many scholars and people have gradually discussed this issue (cf., Huang & Chou, 2010; 柯書林, 2015; Olweus, 1993; 徐敏容&周倩, 2013; 黃天佑&黃士珍, 2010; 劉念肯, 2013; 劉世閔&陳素貞, 2010; 吳明隆&簡妙如, 2009; 陳乙先, 2012).

In general, bullying is viewed as repeatedly aggressive and negative behavior with strong intention to attack the victim who does not have adequate ability to defend themselves (Olweus, 1993); moreover, the bully and the victim have imbalance of power (Olweus, 1993) or called systematic abuse of power (Slonje, Smith & Frisen, 2013). That is, the bullies harm the victim and make the victims unhappy, uncomfortable, and sad. Sometimes the victims are even killed by a variety of aggressive behaviors (Olweus, 1993; 劉世閔&陳素貞, 2010). Based on the above description, bullying can basically be

divided into four features: intentional, harmful, repeated, and imbalanced in a power relationship and systematic abuse of power (Huang & Chou, 2010; Slonje, Smith & Frisen, 2013). So far, the government and schools have focused heavily on the traditional bullying (i.e., face-to-face contact and physical damage).

On the other hand, cyberbullying is a different story. Through sophisticated technology as the medium, bullying has become almost more swiftly, more indirect, more comprehensive, more unstoppable and more unavoidable. Cyberbullying is one of traditional bullying (徐敏容&周倩, 2013), and it is also the extension of traditional bullying (Notar, Padgett & Roden, 2013). Cyberbullying is similar to traditional bullying, while there are some differences between them. Huang and Chou (2010) indicated that the tools and mediums used in cyberbullying are through Internet applications, smartphones, social media, or other IMs. Therefore, the cruel words and rumors can be spread more quickly (Huang & Chou, 2010).吳明隆 and 簡妙如 (2009) also suggested that cyberbullying happened in virtual world instead of real world, and it has no limitation of time. 24 hours a day, the bully can harm his or her victims. Apart from the aforementioned features, cyberbullying has a major and unique feature – anonymity (Huang & Chou, 2010; 劉世閔&陳素貞, 2010). Since the user using the Internet or cyberspace seldom give others their real name and personal information, the bullies can hide on the Internet without implicating themselves. The victim can be hurt psychologically and emotionally, and the identity of the bully would not be found (劉世閔&陳素貞, 2010). 郭戎晉(2009) suggested that it is hard to charge the bullies and legislate the relative laws regarding prevention of cyberbullying, because people has freedom of speech and, more important, there is lack of direct legislative standards.

Owing to these features, today cyberbullying has resulted in terrible, appalling tragedies. On April 2015, Cindy Yang, a model and entertainer in Taiwan, was committed suicide because a series of attacking messages posted on fan page on Facebook called "Kao Bei Bloggers" (Taipei Times, 2015). The sad new has caught many people's attention, and the society has begun rethinking the severity of cyberbullying. It is just the tip of the iceberg. On the Internet, there are more victims suffering from the attack of cyberbullying. For these reasons, we want to investigate the relative issue, to know the high school students' experiences regarding cyberbullying from different angles, and to find the high school students opinions about the prevention of cyberbullying.

I.2. Purposes of the Study

This study is primarily concerned with the influence on cyberbullying in the high school. The aim of this study is therefore threefold. First of all, the major purpose of this study is to investigate the high school students' status quo of using the Internet and the

relative activities which are relevant to the Internet. A secondary purpose of this study is to uncover the high school students' cyberbullying experiences and understanding through various aspects. Finally, the last purpose of this study attempted to find out the possible prevention of cyberbullying to apply in today's educational environment. In the study, particularly, the students studying in Chia-yi City were drawn much attention. The reliable questionnaire was used, and plenty of relevant data would be organized and analyzed to gain the results.

I.3. Research Questions
In considering the preceding research purposes, the primary research questions to be addressed in this study are as follows:
(1) How do the high school students in Chia-yi use the Internet at present?
(2) What are the high school students' experiences and understanding about cyberbullying in their real lives?
(3) What are the prevention of cyberbullying that the high school students think of as helpful ones?

II. Method

II.1. Participants
There were 104 participants in the study. They were high school students in Chia-yi City. Participants' ages ranged from 16 to 18. The participants comprised 31 (29.8%) males and 73 (70.2%) females. As for grade level, 34 (32.7%) reported theirs as 1st grade, 62 (59.6%) reported theirs as 2nd grade, and only 8 (7.7%) reported theirs as 3rd grade. The participants were very diverse with 30 (28.8%) senior high school students (SH), 44 (42.3%) students from the department of Applied Foreign Language (AFL), 6 (5.8%) students studying in the department of Data Process (DT), 14 (13.5%) students in the department of Tourism Industry (TI), and 20 (9.6%) students in the department of Food and Beverage Management (FBM).

II.2. Instruments
II.2.1. Cyberbullying Questionnaire
A survey was created to determine the experiences of high school students with cyberbullying, perceptions of cyberbullying and the possible prevention of cyberbullying. This questionnaire was adapted from Huang and Chou's (2010) survey. The original questions were revised substantially for both content and language-use in this study to fit the current high school students' context, situations and experiences. For example, a

question asked the frequency of using computer. However, at present, the portable online devices were very convenient and pervasive, and thus the computer is not the only device which can connects to the Internet. Hence, the word "computer" was replaced with "Internet" in a bid to meet our purposes of the study.

This study's anonymous survey consisted of two major parts: one on personal information and the other on cyberbullying experiences and prevention. The first part asked some questions about gender, the department, grade level, the devices of surfing the Internet, most frequent the Internet-use location, Internet-use frequency, purposes of using the Internet, and most frequent the Internet-use software and websites. The second part of the questions includes 19 questions in total. In addition to the cyberbullying experiences from Huang and Chou's (2010) questionnaire, the present questionnaire of this study included other categories: the most frequent categories of cyberbullying, the identity of the cyberbullying situation, and the useful prevention of cyberbullying.

II.3. Procedure and Data Analysis

In this study, three phases were executed. First, we collected the related data and information from the Internet and the library, such as books, news, magazines, and even journal articles. Next, after studying the related articles and data, we began designing our own cyberbullying questionnaire. The questionnaire of the current study was mainly based on Huang and Chou's (2010) questionnaire and was added other key points of the relevant studies (e.g., 吳明隆 & 簡妙如, 2009). After finishing the design of the questionnaire, some school teachers who had the experiences about the design of the questionnaire were invited to proofread the questionnaire and gave some advices. It was mainly because we wanted to make sure whether the questions of the questionnaires were appropriate for our participants. After countless revision, the questionnaires were sent to the participants. Finally, we collected the questionnaires and analyzed them by Excel to get the results and findings.

III. Findings
III.1. Demographics of Participants

The first section of the cyberbullying questionnaire is personal information. This section presents the results of the devices of surfing the Internet, most frequent the Internet-use location, Internet-use frequency, purposes of using the Internet, and most frequent the Internet-use software and websites.

As Table 1 show, a majority of students got online by smartphone (57.7%), PC (23.1%) was the secondary most used devices, and some less common used devices were the laptop (10.3%) and the tablet (9%). Most of the students used the Internet and got

online at home (73.1%), and some less common places were school (16.9%), Internet café (8%), friend's home (5.4%) and other place (4%). As for the frequency of using the Internet, over half reported they used the Internet every day (70.2%), and the minority of students used the Internet a few time a week (once a week, 2.9%; twice a week, 8.7%; three times a week, 13.5%; other, 2.9%). What's more, our participants reports a variety of purposes for using the Internet, the two most common purpose of using the Internet were that for entertainment (39.9%) and for communication (39.9%). Less than 20% of students used the Internet for their academic work or assignments. Finally, the most frequently used tool for online activities was Instant messengers (42.3%), and the second most frequently used tool and websites was the chat room (18.3%) and e-mail (12.5%).

According to the survey, many of the high school students used the Internet for fun, and thus the Internet was their important learning recourse. The data confirmed the aforementioned literature. That is, the students have spent much time surfing the Internet. Furthermore, the habit of using the Internet has been different from before. A majority of the students accessed the Internet by portable devices (e.g., smartphones) rather than traditional devices (e.g., PCs and laptops). Therefore, it is not surprised that the frequency of using the Internet has gradually increased and the primary purpose of using the Internet tended to entertain and get in touch with others. As a result, it can be inferred that the high school students are the Internet overusers who depend heavily on the Internet to communicate with others day and night.

Table 1. *Demographics of participants*

	N.	Percentage
The devices of surfing the Internet		
PC	36	23.1%
Laptop	16	10.3%
Tablet	14	9.0%
Smartphone	90	57.7%
Most frequent the Internet-use location		
Home	95	73.1%
School	22	16.9%
Friend's home	7	5.4%
Internet café	1	.8%
Other	5	4%
Internet-use frequency		
Every day	73	70.2

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Table 1 *continued*

Once a week	3	2.9
Twice a week	9	8.7
Three times a week	14	13.5
Other	3	2.9
Purposes of using the Internet		
For entertainment	87	39.9%
For communication	87	39.9%
For academic work	43	19.7%
Other	1	.5%
Most frequent the Internet-use software and websites		
Instant messengers	88	42.3%
Chat room	38	18.3%
Web forum	9	4.3%
BBS	1	0.5%
E-mail	26	12.5%
Other	46	22.1%

III.2. High School Students' Experiences, Understanding and Prevention of Cyberbullying

In this section, the results showed the high school students' experiences and understanding regarding cyberbullying. Therefore, the current section is grouped into two parts: (a) the understanding of cyberbullying and (b) cyberbullying experiences.

III.2.1. Understanding of Cyberbullying

As shown in Table 2, 84.3% of the students reported that they had witnessed, paid attention to, or been aware of bullying activities happening online. 7.8% of the students had bullied others on the Internet, and 7.8% of the students had been hurt online. It meant that a majority of the students had known or had awareness of cyberbullying.

Table 2. *Identity of cyberbullying*

	N.	Percentage
Bully	9	7.8%
Victim	9	7.8%
Bystander	97	84.3%
total	115	100.0%

As shown in Table 3, most of the students (55.8%) did not know whether the bully's identity, while they could guess or infer who the bully was through the clues. 22.1% of the students did not know the identity of the bully, and 20.2% of the students could recognize the identity of the bullies.

Table 3. *Recognition of the bully's identity*

	N.	Percentage
Definitely know	21	20.2%
Not know, but the identity can be inferred	58	55.8%
Definitely not know	23	22.1%
total	102	98.0%

As shown in Table 4, the top 3 kinds of victims of cyberbullying were strangers (27.9%), unidentified man (24%) and classmates (26.4%). The results illustrates that most of the victims were not in their circle. They were often outsiders. Interestingly, however, the category of classmates was the third position in this table. It meant that their friends and classmates surrounding them were harmed or got hurt on the Internet when meeting cyberbullying. Additionally, comparing with Table 3, the students could guess who the bully was partly because the event often occurred around them and the victims were their classmates or friends. The bully did not show their identity and hid behind the screen, and yet they still had ability to recognize them through the observation of the classmates' daily lives.

Table 4. *The victims of cyberbullying*

Victims	N.	Percentage
Siblings	4	3.1%
Relatives	1	.8%
Classmates	34	26.4%
Net friends	20	15.5%
Strangers	36	27.9%
Unidentified man	31	24.0%
other	3	2.3%
total	129	100%

Table 5 provides the list of 12 cyberbullying methods that happened at school frequently. In Table 4, the top 5 most frequent cyberbullying methods were flaming (12.7%), insulting (12.6%), denigration (11.4%), spreading rumors (!%) and exclusion (10.6%). The result obviously shows that textual attacks (e.g., insulting, rumors, scandals and criticism), or called text wars, were one of the most primary cyberbullying methods. Conversely, as to the students, privacy violence, harassment and picture attacks were not regarded as the most harmful cyberbullying methods. It is possibly because the communication technology is more convenient and prevalent. The students might use words to bully others more quickly and easier than the pictures or hacking others' webs. On the other hand, the students may lack of the ability to make the indecent pictures or hack the website or social network. It is the most convenient method to harm others by unfriendly, hurtful and cruel words.

Table 5. *Most frequent cyberbullying methods at school*

	N.	Percentage
Flaming	77	12.7%
Harassment	64	10.6%
denigration	69	11.4%
Insulting	76	12.6%
Sending personal information	36	6%
Threat	58	9.6%
Deceiving others' personal information	25	4.1%
Sending indecent photo	29	4.8%
Exclusion	64	10.6%
Spreading rumor	66	11%
Cyber-stalking	14	2.3%
Hacking	26	4.3%
total	604	100.0%

All in all, the high school students were almost the bystanders when meeting or appearing the bullying event. Although the identity of the bully was frequently unknown, the students can still infer who they were by means of some clues that appeared around

them. It is because the victims may be their classmates or friends. The bully may be their close or mutual friends or classmates. Furthermore, most of the students thought the textual attacks were the most frequent bullying method of all.

III.2.2. Experiences of Cyberbullying

As shown in Table 6, the students' experiences about cyberbullying were presented. Even though a majority of the students reported that they did not directly experience, hear, meet, or learn the cyberbullying in person, the result can still show that the students were aware of some cyberbullying occurring on the Internet. Taking close a look at Table 6, 26% of students responded that they were aware that their classmates got hurt emotionally through instant messengers. 36.5% of them were attacked by the fake e-mail or instant messengers. 43.3% of them responded that they were aware of indecent words from the e-mail or instant messengers. 27.9% of the students got hurt or harmed on websites. Besides, the attacking methods were similar. 36.5% of the students discovered that their classmates were insulted or made fun through the Internet (36.5%), and 30.8% of the students were defamed online. Obviously, the victims encountered denigration, insulting or flaming on the Internet or social media. The result is similar to the previous results. In addition to these, some of them (27.9%) were attacked or bullied by means of the other methods (i.e., cell-phone text messages), regardless of the old-school methods or the newest software and applications.

In conclusion, although the high school students were seldom aware of the cyberbullying directly or indirectly, there were some results to support the aforementioned results shown in the previous section. Most of the bullies used textual attacks to insult, denigrate and slander the victims by traditional ways (e.g., cell-phone text message) or state-of-the-art ways (e.g., instant messengers and websites). It clearly illustrated that the most frequent bullying methods which the high school bully would choose on the Internet went beyond physical attacks. The emotional and psychological attacks have got an important position step by step.

Table 6. *Experiences of cyberbullying*

	Yes/No	N.	Percentage
Have you ever been aware of classmates being hurt emotionally through instant messengers (e.g., Skype, Yahoo Messenger, or MSN Messenger)?	No	77	74.0%
	Yes	27	26.0%
Have you ever been aware of classmates being made fun of or humiliated online?	No	66	63.5%
	Yes	38	36.5%
Have you ever been aware of classmates being slandered or defamed online?	No	72	69.2%
	Yes	32	30.8%
Have you ever been aware of other malicious Internet – based behaviors or others' fake e-mail/IM accounts?	No	66	63.5%
	Yes	38	36.5%
Have you ever been aware of others to attack by malicious Internet –based behaviors or others' fake e-mail/IM accounts?	No	59	56.7%
	Yes	45	43.3%
Have you ever been aware of classmates being hurt emotionally on websites (e.g. web forums)?	No	75	72.1%
	Yes	29	27.9%
Have you ever been aware of classmates being hurt emotionally in chat rooms?	No	80	76.9%
	Yes	24	23.1%
Have you ever been aware of classmates being hurt emotionally through e-mails?	No	90	86.5%
	Yes	14	13.5%
Have you ever been aware of classmates being hurt emotionally through cell-phone text messages?	No	75	72.1%
	Yes	29	27.9%
Have you ever been aware of classmates being harassed, hurt emotionally, or threatened online?	No	93	89.4%
	Yes	11	10.6%

III.2.3. Prevention of Cyberbullying

Table 7 listed the percentage of high school students' prevention of cyberbullying. With regard to prevention of cyberbullying for the high school students, the distribution of each of prevention is fairly even. However, taking a closer look, these methods of prevention are little different. 18.4% of the students thought of enforcing the concept of rule of law as the best. 16.5% of the students believed that making the relative law and rules can stop cyberbullying. Teaching the correct use of the Internet (15.3%) and ethics of Interethics of Internet (14.5%) can be useful methods to help students understand the

regulations of using the Internet. Moreover, cooperation was also the best method, regardless of working with Internet service providers (11.2%), cooperating between teachers and parents (12%), or establishing the relationship between parents and teachers (11.4%).

In summary, based on the aforementioned results, although each of prevention methods are not significantly different, by the survey we can still infer that the law is the best method to prevent the students from getting hurt or harming others. Presumably, most of the students believed the public power should step up to make the relative rules to stop cyberbullying. Additionally, careful instructions of the Internet use and ethics of Interethics of Internet can bring the students the relevant knowledge to assist them in protecting themselves under the cyberbullying attacks. Cultivating the relationship and cooperation with the Internet service providers and between teachers and parents, we can provide the students with a friendly environment.

Table 7. *Prevention of cyberbullying*

Methods of Prevention	N.	Percentage
Teaching ethics of Interethics of Internet	71	14.5%
Enforcing students' concept of rule of law	90	18.4%
Cooperating with the Internet service providers	55	11.2%
Making the relative law and rules	81	16.5%
Establishing cooperation between teachers and parents	59	12%
Teaching the correct use of the Internet	75	15.3%
Establishing relationship between teachers and parents	56	11.4%
Other	3	0.6%
Total	490	100%

IV. Discussion and Conclusion

Cyberbullying, a combination of aggressive behaviors and the technology, is a serious problem in the society and at school. The present study had three purposes: The first purpose was to investigate the high school students' status quo of using the Internet and the relative online activities. The second purpose was to survey and realize the high school students' cyberbullying experiences and understanding. The third purpose was to find out the potential cyberbullying prevention that the high school students view as the ideal and effective solutions.

Research questions 1 asked the frequency and the present situation of using the Internet. In accordance with the results, the students often used mobile devices to surf the

Internet, and they used the Internet at home. Their main purpose is for entertainment and communication with others every day. The most frequent tool they used was instant messengers. As a result, we can find out that each of the students is the online and technical overuser. They access the Internet anywhere and anytime, and thus they can receive much news and information easily and quickly. That is to say, their lives are bounded with the Internet, and the communication method is totally changed. Instant messengers will replace the traditional communication method (e.g., face-to-face contact). Furthermore, this kind of communication method will not be limited by time. Therefore, they depend heavily on the Internet due to the maintenance of their friend circle and peers' relationship or connection with peers and friends. It may be the main cause of cyberbullying.

Research questions 2 asked two sub-questions: one is the high school students' experience of cyberbullying, and the other is about their understanding of it. As for the first sub-question, a majority of the students' roles in the cyberbullying event play the part as the bystanders, who witness bullying but are not the bullies or do not take part in bullying attacks. The identity of the bully is hard to recognize, and yet the students can still infer who they are by means of some clues around them. From the survey of the victims' identity, most of them were classmates or friends. For this reason, the students can guess or presume the bully as their close or mutual friends or classmates. Besides, the textual attacks, in the students' opinion, appeared most frequently when knowing, hearing or witnessing bullying. The second sub-question is about experiences of bullying. Based on the students' response, they rarely met the bullying situation in person. However, the results revealed that the textual attacks were used more frequently than other methods, regardless of traditional or up-to-date bullying methods. In other words, the cyberbullying methods appearing on the Internet can be classified into insult, denigration and slander.

Eventually, research question 3 was to attempt to discovery the potential prevention of cyberbullying through the high school students' opinions and viewpoints. The results showed that the law or the rule is the crucial element to stop bullying. The students believed that legislating against cyberbullying and enforcing the concept and knowledge of cyberbullying would be the best prevention. The other prevention would be the cooperation with the technical service providers, parents, and teachers.

On basis of the previous results of the survey, it is not hard to find out that cyberbullying actually exists and takes place around us day and night, particularly at school. The overuse of the technology contributes to the transformation of traditional bullying, extending the real-world attacks to the virtual attack. The extent to bullying is from physical harm to psychological one, from limitation of time to 24 hours. To some extent, cyberbullying is more serious than traditional bullying; that is because the

physical injuries can be cured and heal, and it is frequently possible for the would-be victim to run away (Huang & Chou, 2010). Nevertheless, stalked by somebody on the Internet, even the strongest mind can break and there is no place to hide (Huang & Chou, 2010). For these reasons, the discussion will open on a warning note: cyberbullying appears high and low, and hence it would cause the victim not only to get hurt but also to be killed. We should not just attempt to punish the bully and take care of the victim. On the contrary, we have to know cyberbullying and uncover the helpful and acceptable methods to stop the extension of cyberbullying and do our best to give the would-be victim a hand to stay away the attacks. The government, therefore, should pay heed to this issue and legislate against cyberbullying as quickly as possible.

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