Chapter 7

Cyberbullying Prevention: Some Preventing Tips

Gilberto Marzano
Rezekne University of Applied Sciences (Rezekne Augstskola), Latvia

ABSTRACT

The Internet is a really wide, intriguing world, difficult to penetrate in depth, rich with dissimulations, full of useful and also evil things, that are continuously changing. Cyberbullying represents an actual risk, especially for the online generation which is often unable to distinguish between virtual and real-reality. The first step for cyberbullying prevention is the knowledge acquisition of what cyberbullying is and how it occurs within a specific context. This is not an easy task, since cyberbullying is a complex and quite new phenomenon, so much that researchers’ opinion is often divided on its definition and there isn’t agreement on the extent of its diffusion. This article presents and comments some cyberbullying preventing tips, inspired by the “top ten tips” that Hinduja and Patchin suggested to educators engaged in cyberbullying prevention.

INTRODUCTION

Many children, adolescents and youth have had exposure to educational programs aimed at preventing various kinds of violence perpetration and victimization. The most famous program was the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, developed and evaluated over a period of almost 20 years (Olweus 1993, 1999). It is built on four key principles:

- warmth, positive interest, and involvement from adults;
- firm limits on unacceptable behavior;
- consistent application of non-punitive, nonphysical sanctions for unacceptable behavior or violations of rules;
- adults who act as authorities and positive role models.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8556-7.ch007
Overall, several researchers agree that Olweus’s program can reduce violence and aggression (Limber, 2013). However, in spite of the large violence prevention mobilization and indications of effectiveness, there are reasons to think that program dissemination has stalled (Finkelhor, Vanderminden, Turner, Shattuck, & Hamby, 2014).

But what about cyberbullying?

Some years ago, Hinduja and Patchin (2009) indicated the top ten tips for educators aimed to prevent cyberbullying. These tips can be grouped in three main classes:

- Contextualized knowledge acquisition (tip: Formally assess);
- Educational activities (tips: Teach students that all forms of bullying are unacceptable; Specify clear rules regarding the use of the Internet and electronic devices; Use peer mentoring; Cultivate a positive school climate; Educate your community);
- Technical support (tips: Consult with your school attorney before incidents occur; Create a comprehensive formal contract; Implement blocking/filtering software; Designate a “Cyberbullying Expert”).

The educational activities class includes five of the ten cyberbullying preventing tips, this way showing the importance that education occupies in promoting appropriate solution strategies.

In the following paragraphs the Hinduja and Patching’s tips are analyzed and commented; though before dealing with cyberbullying prevention, we cannot leave aside the issue of what is cyberbullying.

**WHAT CYBERBULLYING IS**

Currently there is debate about what constitutes cyberbullying and how this phenomenon is similar or different to traditional forms of bullying (Thomas, Connor, & Scott, 2014; Menesini et al., 2012).

Beran and Li (2005) used for cyberbullying the expression “old wine in new bottles”.

The hypothesis of contiguity between bullying and cyberbullying seems to be confirmed by some researches’ data (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Beran & Li, 2008; Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008; Del Rey, Elipe, & Ortega-Ruiz, 2012). These researches show that there is an overlap of 44% between victims of “on line aggression” in cyberspace and real life victims. In particular, Beran and Li, as well as Kowalski and Limber, found an overlap of about 60% between being a victim in real life and being a cyber-victim – although, if 60% of cyber-victims are also bullied in real life, that leaves an amount of 40% who are not victimized in real life. Data from a German study (Riebel, Jaeger, & Fischer, 2009) confirms that more than 80% of cyberbullies bully their fellow students in real life as well; although in most cases it seems that cyberbullying is a further strategy in the repertoire of a typical bully. There are also some recent studies that indicate a significant overlap between traditional bullying and cyberbullying (Perren, Dooley, Shaw, & Cross, 2010; Sourander et al., 2010).
