
**Theoretical Perspective**

*Critique the author’s conceptual framework.*

Li created an effective conceptual framework for her study by referencing current understanding on traditional bullying and then following with information on how technology has created a new platform for bullying. She argued the importance of understanding this newer phenomenon so that school leaders can take action (p. 2). She further discussed how gender had been found to be related to traditional bullying and indicated that little research existed to better understand how gender issues might be connected to cyberbullying. Li made a strong case for the importance of determining the role gender plays in cyberbullying as an avenue to determine appropriate actions for schools attempting to combat this issue.

Comments: A lot of summary here, but the only critique I see is “effective” and “strong case”. What makes it effective? How is this better than some other conceptualization?

*Comment on the need for this study and its importance.*

Li began her introduction with the statement, “school violence is a serious social problem” (p. 1). Using the backdrop of a call to action for school leaders, Li positioned her research as a way to provide information that will potentially help administrators prevent future violence in relation to cyberbullying. Li’s study addressed cyberbullying with several unique characteristics including gender, student age, and urban location. As cyberbullying had not been discussed within these parameters in the body of research, Li’s study aimed to provide important new data for schools to consider when making policy.

Comments: Good! I think you’re saying this is a “Gap” in the research that this study can fill. Ginny – this answer is almost all summary, and hardly any critique.

*How effectively does the author tie the study to relevant theory and prior research?*

Li cited research on the topic of bullying in general (Hoover & Olson, 2001; NCES, 1995; Dedman, 2001) to provide a general setting for a closer look at a specific type of bullying (p. 2). She then provided synopses of several news stories about school issues regarding cyberbullying and cited several surveys that have addressed the topic previously, including two studies specific to Canada. (p. 3-4). Li effectively referenced the leading studies that existed prior to 2005, including her own previous work, and sought specific questions that either had not been examined in previous studies, or that she could support or contradict with her findings. With this attention to the existing research body, Li was able to effectively connect her research and further the discussion on cyberbullying.
Evaluate the clarity and appropriateness of the research questions or hypotheses. The key research question addressed in Li’s study was “do male and female students have different experiences in relation to cyberbullying?” (p. 5-6). She raised two additional questions focusing on gender differences in perception of school climates including beliefs about adults’ prevention, and behavior in terms of informing adults (p. 6). Given the lack of pre-existing information on these specific issues surrounding cyberbullying and the importance of the issue for school leaders, Li’s questions were appropriate and timely. That said, Li did not state a clear hypothesis about whether she believed gender would affect cyberbullying issues. She referenced multiple studies but indicated, “it is unclear whether gender plays a role” (p. 5). One can assume Li’s hypothesis was that gender is connected to students’ experiences with cyberbullying based on the questions in her study, but she neglected to indicate that clearly, or expand on why that hypothesis may be important to better understanding these issues.

Comment: Good!

Research Design and Analysis

Critique the appropriateness and adequacy of the study’s design in relation to the research questions or hypotheses. Li utilized a causal comparative design with a quantitative survey to compare results between males and females in relation to cyberbullying issues. One key concern with the use of the survey as the data collection tool was that the questions about cyberbullying assumed that students understood what cyberbullying was. The survey format did not provide much guidance for students and therefore results could have been skewed based on individual perceptions of what cyberbullying entailed. That said, a quantitative survey did allow Li to compare responses from males and females on a variety of issues and therefore effectively explore her main questions.

Comments: Very good!
That’s the first research question, what about questions 2 and 3?
True, but this is a measurement issue (a later question).
How does the data help her more effectively explore her questions – be specific.

Critique the adequacy of the study’s sampling methods (e.g., choice of participants) and their implications for generalizability. Li indicated that her sample of 264 students in grades 7-9 was “randomly selected from three middle schools in a large city in Canada” (p. 6). The sample included a mixture of genders but was skewed toward White, above average and average students. Li neglected to provide additional information about how the three schools were chosen as sampling pools or how the students were randomly sampled (e.g., from a school’s enrollment database, from grade level groupings, etc.). She also failed to provide information on her response rate, or if any surveys were excluded due to incomplete data. Without a clearer understanding of how the random sample was generated, it is difficult to determine the impact on generalizability. Additionally, Li indicated that although the focus on junior high students is integrally linked to her research
question, it is also a limitation in terms of the ability to generalize findings to other age groups (p. 11).

Comment: So, what’s your best guess as to who this study generalizes to?

**Critique the adequacy of the study’s procedures and materials** *(e.g., interventions, interview protocols, data collection procedures).*

Li utilized an “anonymous survey adapted from previous research” to address demographic data and cyberbullying experience (p. 6). The survey, which was created by Li during previous research, was provided in the study’s appendix but only listed 21 questions while Li’s summary indicated, “a total of 26 questions…were analysed to answer the research questions of this study” (p. 6). It is not clear where the additional five questions were pulled from or if the survey in the appendix was different than the one used. Li did not provide details on how the survey was initially created or how it was administered to students *(e.g., if they were provided with context from teachers, if the survey was in paper or on-line format, where and when it was taken, etc.)*. These details would have provided more context on how the data was collected and therefore would have aided in the ability to reproduce the study.

Comment: That’s s good careful reading of the study!

**Critique the appropriateness and quality** *(e.g., reliability, validity) of the measures used.*

Li did not provide detail regarding the measures used in her study, nor did she critique the validity or reliability of her approach. In terms of face validity, Li’s measures were adequate. She wanted to learn gender differences and asked students to list their sex and answer identical questions. However, one might question the appropriateness of a survey as a measure to determine incidents of cyberbullying, a newer phenomenon that students could define in a number of ways. For instance, her question “I have been cyber-bullied (e.g., via email, chat room, cell phone)” (p. 14) did not define what an incident of bullying was and therefore was left up to interpretation by the students. In fact, Li’s results showed that little more than half of students were “aware of cyberbullying” issues (p. 7). As well, without a clearer understanding of how the survey was administered and scored, it is difficult to address how appropriate her measures were in addressing the central questions.

Comment: True! How might this be problematic? Do you think girls and boys interpret this differently?

**Critique the adequacy of the study’s data analyses. For example: Have important statistical assumptions been met? Are the analyses appropriate for the study’s design? Are the analyses appropriate for the data collected?**

Li utilized SPSS software to perform chi-square tests with an alpha level of 0.05 “to examine possible gender differences” (p. 7). Chi-square testing was appropriate to determine if there was a significant relationship between gender and cyberbullying issues by assuming the null hypothesis that no relationship existed. As the study was designed to determine these links, the analysis was appropriate to provide data on which issues were related to gender and which did not show a statistically significant connection.
Comment: Good! But that’s RQ1 – what about RQ2 and RQ3?

**Interpretation and Implications of Results**

_Critique the author’s discussion of the methodological and/or conceptual limitations of the results._

Li highlighted two limitations of her study, that the sample came from an urban environment and that the age group was specifically junior high students (p. 11). Both of these limitations related to issues with the generalizability of the sample, however, additional limitations existed within the study. For instance, Li cited research that indicated “males with atypical gender-related behaviours were at a much greater risk for peer assault than other young men” (p. 5). This avenue was certainly related to her study on the gender connections with cyberbullying, however Li’s survey only allowed students to select “male” or “female” in the demographics section and did not take into account the social constructs of gender. In addition, Li did not effectively define cyberbullying within her questionnaire, which left room for student interpretation (e.g., a student sending another an email which could have been interpreted as mean compared with a student creating a fake image of another and sending it to classmates). Had Li provided specific examples for students to respond to (e.g., has anyone posted a cruel text or image about you on a social networking site?), her survey may have yielded more accurate results.

Comment: Good point! (You could have brought this up on the “Materials” section. Or on Measures.

_How consistent and comprehensive are the author’s conclusions with the reported results?_ Li’s conclusions were directly tied to the central research questions. She found no significant gender differences except in the specific areas that “males were more likely to bully and cyberbully” (p. 7) and that “females were more likely to inform adults than males” (p. 8). These conclusions were appropriate given the statistical results of her survey, holding to a p value of 0.05. As well, the broader conclusions that Li cited in her discussion section followed with the data she collected and were effectively shared in reference to other studies.

Comment: You can also point out areas where the author might have over-reached. For example, she says that “cyberbullying is becoming an increasingly critical problem for schools and the whole society” – that does not follow from a study using a sample from 3 classrooms.

_How well did the author relate the results to the study’s theoretical base?_ Li referenced previous research that her results supported or contradicted during her discussion section. She addressed broader ramifications of her results than just those related to her central questions on gender issues. For instance, Li referenced that her results showed “about half of the students reported that they had been bullied during school” (p. 8). Although this result was not central to her study, it raised a concern in that it provided a higher percentage than what had been found in previous studies such as Hoover and Olson’s study in 2001. In regards to her questions on gender issues in cyberbullying, Li referenced previous studies on gender issues in
traditional bullying to provide a general context for her findings. Overall, Li effectively related her results to data collected in previous studies and was therefore, able to contribute to the larger theoretical discussion on cyberbullying.

Comment: I wish you could be more specific here. Especially since you've identified that this author's study fills a "gap", how do the findings relate to previous studies? (ie, to f2f findings, to previous gender differences, etc.).

In your view, what is the significance of the study, and what are its primary implications for theory, future research, and practice?
Li stated four implications of the study including a focus on cyberbullying as opposed to traditional bullying, attention to the junior high school age group, the differences between male and female issues with cyberbullying, and the concern about children being bystanders (p. 10-11). These issues certainly provide a platform for further discussion on cyberbullying as a general topic and highlight specific areas upon which future research could focus. Throughout the study, Li commented on the need for school administrators to understand the issue so they could take appropriate action. This is perhaps the greatest implication for practice, as providing school leaders with relevant research helps to guide effective actions, and, in cases such as cyberbullying, prevent possible tragedy. This area also poses questions for future theory and research from an administrator’s view, and specifically studying how school officials are recognizing and taking action to prevent cyberbullying in their schools.

Comment: Also, another way to think about the significance of a study is to connect it back to the limitations you’ve identified - that may greatly limit the significance of the study. For example, maybe the study lacks significance they didn’t provide a definition of cyberbullying to participants? That seemed to matter a lot to you in the rest of your review.

The first line of scores are yours and should correspond to the numbers above. The bottom line of scores are the class averages for the respective question and, at the end, the total score. Note that you’re above average on some questions and a bit below on others. For next time, a good strategy is to focus especially on those questions where you were lower.