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Emotional Intelligence and the Perceived Emotional Effects of Cyberbullying in the Workplace

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Abstract

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MA, Amridge University, 2009

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Cyberbullying is a growing problem that has had a negative impact on the health and well-being of employees, which ultimately affects the success and productivity of organizations. In their four branch model of emotional intelligence, Mayer et al. stated that having the ability to perceive emotions, facilitate thought, understand emotions, and manage emotions was important in being able to regulate oneself and overcome adversities. This was the theoretical framework used for the study. The purpose of the current study was to determine what type of emotional effect priming emotional intelligence would have in the presence of perceived cyberbullying in the workplace and determine if emotional intelligence being primed led to an increase in the perceived active response but not in the perceived depression and annoyance response. A self-report survey method was used to collect data utilizing the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test and the Cyber Victimization Emotional Impact scales in addition to a priming essay. The estimated sample size was 53 participants who were workers over the age of 18 years old that had been impacted by cyberbullying. Data were analyzed using a one-tailed, independent samples *t* test. Although the results were not significant, it is still an important area of study as there are few studies that address emotional intelligence and how it may buffer the perceived effects of cyberbullying in the workplace. Research may reveal that encouraging the development of emotional intelligence might help buffer the effects of cyberbullying, and workers may benefit from fewer stress-related health issues; consequently, companies would potentially have greater productivity leading to positive social change.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to all of those that have supported me in this journey. It was a long and difficult road. I would not have gotten through it without my friends and family who encouraged me and helped me through life challenges that seemed to interfere with my progress. It is because of the support that I was able to finish.

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University team mean the world to me, and I am successful because of the combined efforts that everyone has put into me and for not only believing in me but helping me to believe in myself.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

Bullying is no longer just a face-to-face confrontation but is now extended into the world of technology, which is referred to as cyberbullying. Available research has mostly focused on bullying and cyberbullying with youth and adolescents in the school-based setting; fewer studies have looked at cyberbullying in the workplace. People respond to bullying and cyberbullying differently, depending on many aspects, including personality; experience; support; and more recently, emotional intelligence (Piotrowski, 2012; Schlaerth et al., 2013).

Having greater emotional intelligence is being able to manage one's emotions and respond positively in the face of adversity (Mayer et al., 2000). Emotional intelligence has been linked to well-being, work performance, work satisfaction, physical and psychological health, and social support (Cherniss, 2010). Studies have also shown that priming emotional intelligence may influence a person's emotional response to environmental stimuli (Brackett et al., 2011).

Since technology advances at a rapid pace, it is challenging for researchers to study the impact on cyberbullying. There did not appear to be any extant studies that looked at whether priming emotional intelligence may have an influence on the perceived effects of cyberbullying in the workplace, so I conducted the current study to address this gap in the literature. This study is important for understanding the influence of cyberbullying and how emotional intelligence can impact a person's response to the perceived cyberbullying. Priming emotional intelligence may lead to greater confidence

in a person's response to environmental situations, and this could create positive social change by increasing communication between employees and possibly increasing work efficiency and result in better employee health.

I begin this chapter by identifying the problem statement and explaining why this study was necessary. The purpose of the study and research questions are then provided. The chapter also includes a discussion of the theoretical framework and nature of the study to provide information on how the study was formulated. Key terms are identified for the reader to better understand the concepts of the study. Finally, I describe the limitations, delimitations, and the significance of the study.

Problem Statement

With a rapid growth in technology and an increasing number of people connected to cyberspace, more people can interact with one another from any location at any time (Chishom & Day, 2013). Not only do people stay connected with one another through social media, more people are taking their work home with them through email, texting, or communication through some sort of social media website that they are able to not only connect to through their computers but also through smart phone and other handheld devices. This opens doors to an increased number of opportunities for a person to be exposed to cyberbullying incidents, whether they are at home or at work (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015).

A person's emotional intelligence may have an influence on how people are able to manage negative life events (Armstrong et al., 2011). Studies have shown that there is a connection between emotional intelligence and social relationships, psychological well-

being, performance, and productivity at work (Cherniss, 2010). A meta-analysis revealed that people with higher emotional intelligence were more confidence in themselves in being able to handle an aversive situation and were able to implement strategies early on to manage and regulate their emotions (Pena-Sarrionandia et al., 2015).

Priming emotional intelligence may increase the likelihood of a person being able to manage and regulate their emotions as well as increase a person's confidence in being able to implement strategies in a cyberbullying situation. This may lead to the lessening of the perceived effects of cyberbullying. There did not appear to be any extant priming studies on emotional intelligence in the workplace as it relates to cyberbullying; therefore, I conducted the current study to fill this gap in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to look at whether priming thoughts about emotional intelligence influence the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying. The three types of emotional impact (i.e., the dependent variables) observed were active, depression, and annoyance. Active referred to an active and lively response that may be animated and energetic, determined, daring, and satisfied (Elipe et. al., 2015). Depression referred to being worried, ashamed, and distressed, while annoyance referred to being upset, angry, and irritable. Emotional intelligence priming was the independent variable.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: If thoughts about emotional intelligence are primed, will it increase the perceived active response of cyberbullying in the workplace?

$H_0$1: Priming emotional intelligence will have no effect on the perceived active response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

$H_1$1: Priming emotional intelligence will increase the perceived active response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

RQ2: If thoughts about emotional intelligence are primed, will it decrease the perceived depression response of cyberbullying in the workplace?

$H_0$2: Priming emotional intelligence will have no effect on the perceived depression response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

$H_1$2: Priming emotional intelligence will decrease the perceived depression response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

RQ3: If thoughts about emotional intelligence are primed, will it decrease the perceived annoyance response of cyberbullying in the workplace?

$H_0$3: Priming emotional intelligence will have no effect on the perceived annoyance response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

$H_1$3: Priming emotional intelligence will decrease the perceived annoyance response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the current study was based on Mayer et al.'s (2000) four branch model of emotional intelligence, the ability emotional intelligence model. The four branches of emotion include perception, understanding, facilitation, and management. Being able to perceive and understand one's own and other peoples' emotions are necessary to respond to an emotionally stimulated situation (Mayer et al.,

2000). Understanding emotions and utilizing situational cues can assist the individual in preparing a response utilizing the appropriate emotions (Mayer et al., 2000). A person's past experiences (both negative and positive) as well as the type of support system available has a large influence on the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying as well as the type of response (Mayer et al., 2000).

If a person perceives that they are being cyberbullied, those with higher emotional intelligence may be more likely to identify the situation and use cues in the environment to determine an appropriate response. A person with higher emotional intelligence may decide to stand up for themselves by saying something, then move on without being consumed by thinking about it too much. A person with lower emotional intelligence may have some difficulty perceiving or understanding the cues to help formulate an appropriate response.

According to Mayer et al. (2008), people who scored higher in emotional intelligence were more likely to adjust to their social circumstances. Ashkanasy and Daus (2005) showed evidence that people with greater emotional intelligence had a greater ability to manage workplace conflict. Having higher emotional intelligence, a person may be more likely to adjust and disengage as needed to resolve any conflicts (Mayer et al., 2016). Thus, a person may be more likely to come up with effective solutions and adjust their situations. A more detailed explanation of the theoretical framework is provided in the review of the literature section.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I gathered information on the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying and emotional intelligence. It was a randomized experiment where participants were assigned to either a control condition without priming emotional intelligence or a priming condition where thoughts about emotional intelligence were primed. The survey platform used in the current study randomly assigned each participant to either the control group or the experimental group. Conducting a randomized experiment allowed me to make causal conclusions about the effects of emotional intelligence priming. I used self-report questionnaires to collect data on levels of emotional intelligence and the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying. It is possible that the surveys may have brought up uncomfortable feelings for the participants, so resources were given to participants in the event they needed further help.

Participants completed the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT; Schutte et.al., 1998) as a manipulation check to determine if the priming effect influenced perceived emotional intelligence. This scale reflected three areas of emotion: appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion, and utilization of emotion. The SSEIT showed evidence of predictive and discriminant validity and also had good internal consistency and good test-retest reliability (Schutte et.al., 1998). Internal consistency had a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.87, and the test-retest reliability score was 0.78.

To measure the perceived effects of cyberbullying in the workplace, I used the Cyber-Victimization Emotional Impact Scale (CVEI; Elipe et al., 2017). This scale

measures three types of emotional responses: active, depression, and annoyance. Adapted from the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS), the CVEI specifically measures the emotional impact of cyberbullying. Using the Rho coefficient, outcomes were 0.89 for the total scale, 0.92 for depressed, 0.89 for active, and 0.81 for annoyed, and the Average Variance Extracted was 0.49 for depressed, 0.56 for active, and 0.64 for annoyed (Elipe et al., 2017).

To recruit participants for the study, I posted announcements in the Walden University Participant Pool, the Social Psychology Network, Find Participants, and Psychology Research on the Net. Due to the inability to connect with The Social Psychology Network and Find Participants, these websites were not used for participant recruitment. An application and follow-up email were sent to The Social Psychology Network, but due to not having the consent form prior to the eligibility questions, they were unable to approve the request to add the current study to their postings. After I sent a follow-up email with a copy of the consent form and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, no response was given. An application and email follow-up were also sent to Find Participants and an email response was supposed to have been sent out, but no email was provided to me. After another attempt and requested support, no response was given.

LinkedIn Research Group is a site that allows for the recruitment of participants for a variety of studies and thus was added to list of websites for enlistment. The group is a survey exchange group for students and currently has 2,851 members from different locations. Three group pages on Facebook were available for requesting participation in studies. The Dissertation Survey Exchange currently has 12,320 members, The Research

Participation Group has 32,883 members, and the Survey Exchange/Survey Group/Survey Participants - Dissertation, Thesis group has 6,741 members. I was granted permission to recruit participants from these three groups.

My posting on each these sites had the recruitment statement as well as a link to the study for an individual to use if they wished to participate. The criteria for participation included being at least 18 years of age, have been at their place of employment for at least a year, and have perceived to have experienced negative cyber event. I collected demographic information, including age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, and number of children because these were thought to be influential factors. Data were analyzed using a two-tailed *t* test.

Definitions and Key Terms

Ability emotional intelligence: Perceiving one's own and others' emotions and gaining an understanding to facilitate and manage emotions (Mayer et al., 2000).

Active response: Responding with a positive effect, such as being lively, active, and determined (Elipe et al., 2017).

Annoyance response: Responding with a negative effect, such as being angry and irritated (Elipe et al., 2017).

Cyberbullying: Harassing another person with the intent of causing harm to another person through repetition of incidents through means of technology (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015).

Depression response: Responding with a negative effect, such as withdrawing, feeling guilty, and shame (Elipe et al., 2017).

Social media: Websites and applications by which people can communicate (Chisholm & Day, 2013).

Well-being: Different aspects of positive functioning (Carmeli et al., 2009).

Assumptions

I assumed that participants would answer all the survey questions honestly. This assumption was necessary for the results to have greater meaning. Because data were collected through an online survey, more participants with different backgrounds were able to be reached from different regions. Therefore, I also assumed that the number of participants would have been large enough to generalize to the greater population. The survey program randomly assigned participants to groups; thus, another assumption was that the randomization procedure was effective.

Scope and Delimitations

Successful organizations have employees that are healthy and efficient in their jobs (Bibi et al., 2013). Looking at specific areas that may have an influence is important in maintaining the health and success of both the employee and organization. The scope of this study was to focus on whether priming emotional intelligence would have an influence on the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying in the workplace because there did not appear to be any studies on this topic. The participants in this study were adults that had worked at their place of employment for at least a year and had been exposed to perceived negative events at their workplace via cyber and phone connections. Participants were recruited online through the Walden University Participant Pool, The Inquisitive Mind, the Social Psychology Network, Psych Forums, Find Participants, and

Psychology Research on the Net. Because they were recruited online, I had a better opportunity to select participants from different regions and backgrounds.

Limitations

Because self-report measures were used in this study, it is possible that participants may not have been truthful in their responses about their perceived experience with cyberbullying in the workplace. Demand characteristics may have been a problem where participants may have responded to the research questions leaning toward the perceived expectations of the hypotheses or me as the researcher. Another limitation would be in the participant's perceptions of their cyberbullying experience: One person may have experienced an event and defined it as a cyberbullying experience when another individual may not have defined it as such. Each participant had different personality types, experiences, and amount of exposure to being cyberbullied. Priming effects may also have been influenced by the participant's mood state or subjective understanding.

Significance

There did not appear to be any extant studies on priming thoughts about emotional intelligence as it relates to the perceived effects of cyberbullying in the workplace. Therefore, this study may uniquely demonstrate that priming emotional intelligence can influence the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying and show the importance of creating an environment and providing training for employees to build upon their emotional intelligence. Doing so may decrease cyberbullying incidents in the workplace and increase the number of healthy employees and organizations.

Few studies have looked at cyberbullying in the workplace; however, because of increased use of technology, cyberbullying is becoming more prevalent (Piotrowski, 2012). Since emotional intelligence is linked to greater performance and productivity as well as fewer workplace incivilities (Bibi et al. 2013), the findings of the current study provided insight into how workers might be able to effectively manage the perceived effects of cyberbullying. According to a meta-analysis by Pena-Sarrionandia et al. (2015), thinking about a situation in advance could help a person adapt to a situation before it actually occurred. They also found that people who scored higher in emotional intelligence were more likely to implement strategies early on in the situation and had more confidence in their ability to manage their emotions. The priming effect on emotional intelligence may activate a planning strategy to help a person manage the perceived effects of cyberbullying in the workplace.

Summary

The purpose of the current quantitative study was to determine whether priming emotional intelligence had an influence on the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying in the workplace. Cyberbullying has shown to have a negative effect on people in the workplace (Cherniss, 2010). Studies have shown that emotional intelligence has an influence on how a person may respond to an emotional event (Mayer et al., 2000) The current study filled a gap in the literature regarding the effect of priming on emotional intelligence in the workplace as it relates to cyberbullying.

Chapter 2 will include a literature review on cyberbullying and emotional intelligence. I will explain the historical background and theoretical foundations of

emotional intelligence, the priming of emotional intelligence, and cyberbullying as each relates to the workplace. Chapter 3 will include information on the research design and the rationale for the current study. In Chapter 3, I will also discuss the methodology, including the population, how participants were recruited, and how data were collected and analyzed. A description of the instruments used and how the data was interpreted will also be provided as well as any ethical issues considered. In Chapter 4, I will present the data collection and analysis processes and results, while in Chapter 5 I will provide the interpretation of the findings as well as any limitations to the current study and my recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Technology continues to change at a rapid pace, providing greater opportunities for people to interact with one another through electronic means from any location (Chisholm & Day, 2013). These interactions can be positive or aversive. Some social media applications allow a person to post anonymous statements that can potentially be hurtful to another person. Studies on bullying have been conducted extensively. New technological availabilities open doors to cyberbullying and increased concerns for the well-being of persons feeling victimized (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015).

Studies have shown a connection between emotional intelligence, social relationships, psychological well-being, performance and productivity (Cherniss, 2010). Higher emotional intelligence has also been linked to having more confidence in the ability to handle a given situation and as well as having a greater likelihood of implementing strategies in the beginning stages of the given situation (Pena-Sarrionandia et al., 2015). The purpose of this study was to determine whether priming thoughts about emotional intelligence influenced the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying.

Research Strategy

To locate literature for this review, I searched several databases accessible through the Walden University Library, including Academic Search Complete and PsycINFO. Google Scholar was also used. Key search terms and phrases included the following: *cyberbullying, emotional intelligence, workplace incivility, cyberbullying in the workplace, emotional intelligence in the workplace, perceived emotional intelligence, priming and emotional intelligence, priming emotional intelligence, priming studies,*

priming studies on emotional intelligence, cyberbullying in the workplace and emotional intelligence, cyberbullying instruments, emotional intelligence instruments, MSCEI, and *CBEI*. The search began with publication dates for all years available using the search terms. I then narrowed the searches to more recent research published from 2012 to date. Finally, only sources with 2015 and 2016 publication dates were searched for. Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and dissertations were used as sources in this study.

Chapter 2 Roadmap

The current chapter begins with a discussion of the theoretical foundations of emotional intelligence, providing information on some of the main models of emotional intelligence and the common ground between them. I then describe Mayer et al.'s four branch model and the principles guiding it. The third subsection contains an exploration of priming emotional intelligence. In the second section, I discuss cyberbullying, its various forms, as well as coping mechanisms as well as differentiate traditional bullying versus cyberbullying. The third section includes an explanation of well-being in the workplace as it relates to emotional intelligence and cyberbullying. I close the chapter with concluding remarks.

Theoretical Foundations

Models of Emotional Intelligence

Although emotional intelligence has been studied for quite some time, there are variations in how the term has been defined by different researchers. Controversy and criticisms have arisen due to the lack of agreement in what should be considered emotional intelligence (Cherniss, 2010). Because there was no concise agreed upon

definition, Kewalramani et al. (2015) conducted a comparative analysis looking for the underlying tie that connects the different models used to study emotional intelligence (i.e., Bar-On's model of emotional intelligence, Goleman's model of emotional intelligence, and Mayer et al.'s four branch model of emotional intelligence) and discovered four common dimensions: understanding oneself, understanding others, managing oneself, and managing others as it relates to emotions. Although each model appears to study a different aspect of emotional intelligence, they essentially focus on the same ideas.

Bar-On's (2006) model of emotional intelligence is focused on how people are able to adjust to their social and emotional circumstances based on certain traits and skills. An individual has to have an ability to be aware of and understand themselves and how they are able to express themselves as well as how to relate to others (Cherniss, 2010). A person would also be able to manage their emotions and adapt to change (Cherniss, 2010). Bar-On described emotional intelligence with five areas of focus and 15 subsections: (a) the intrapersonal area incorporates the subcategories of self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization, and independence; (b) interpersonal skills involve the social realm and include the subcategories of empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal relationships; (c) adaptability includes the subcategories of flexibility, reality testing, and problem solving; (d) stress management includes the subcategories of stress tolerance and impulse control; and (e) general mood includes the subcategories of optimism and happiness.

Goleman's (1998) model of emotional intelligence is based on the competencies of being self-aware, having the ability to motivate oneself to act, regulating moods, being able to empathize with others, and manage relationships. These five areas of competencies are learned, and one builds upon another in a hierarchy. Personal competencies of being self-aware, being motivated, and the ability to self-regulate are learned first before being adept in the social competencies of empathy and social skills (Kewalramani et al., 2015). High emotional intelligence then indicates that a person has high potential for competency (Kewalramani et al., 2015).

Mayor et al.'s Four Branch Model

The current study follows the foundation set by the Mayer et al.'s four branch model of emotional intelligence, also known as ability emotional intelligence. Mayer et al. (1997) identified four branches of emotional intelligence: perceiving emotions, facilitating thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. Based on this four branch model, they defined emotional intelligence the following way:

> Emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10).

The model has evolved due to an accumulation of research over the last 25 years and is guided by the following seven principles of emotional intelligence

that provide an understanding of how a person may solve their problems as it relates to their emotions (Mayer et al., 2016, pp. 290-293):

Principle 1: Emotional intelligence is a mental ability where a person must engage in some type of abstract reasoning to make decisions.

Principle 2: It should be measured as an ability.

Principle 3: Intelligence in problem solving and intelligence in behavior are not necessarily interrelated as people may have high intellect but may not have the ability to utilize it.

Principle 4: Measuring emotional intelligence requires that the test content reflect a person's skill set to problem solve prior to measuring mental abilities.

Principle 5: The validity of the test must be specific and not general in emotional problem-solving abilities.

Principle 6: Emotional intelligence is part of a subcategory of general intelligences of which different mental abilities relate.

Principle 7: Part of being in the grouping of broad intelligences is the use of information to form reasons that are significant to manage what matters most to them.

In Branch 1, perceiving emotion, it is important to first be able to identify and discriminate the emotion that has been triggered from the environmental triggers such as facial expressions, verbal and nonverbal cues, and social surroundings (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 2004). A person at this stage would be able to use these cues to express themselves appropriately (Mayer et al., 2016). For example, if a person were

talking to their coworker and recognized their facial and vocal expressions as being angry, a person with high emotional intelligence would be able to recognize it as anger.

Branch 2, facilitating thought using emotion, involves a person being able to facilitate their thoughts where emotions can act as a cue in how they would respond (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) and being able to activate their own emotions and communicate them appropriately (Kewalramani et al., 2015). In essence, a person is able to think about a response pattern to accommodate the situation (Izard, 2001). Using the same previous example, the person not only recognizes the emotion as being angry, the person would also be able to think about a way to communicate with the coworker in an appropriate way. In addition, they would also become aware of their own feelings as they arise in the situation.

The third branch, understanding emotion, is being able to analyze and reason about their feelings as well as the possible outcomes (Mayer et al., 2004). Persons are able to understand, recognize, and discriminate between different emotions and moods and are also able to appraise a situation and determine the antecedents, consequences, and meanings (Mayer et al., 2016). In the example, at this stage, the person might be able to appraise the conversation and gain an understanding of why the coworker might be angry and what other emotions are involved.

The final branch, managing emotions, involves being able to manage the feelings and emotions that are triggered by an event; based on how a person feels, they can regulate their emotions based on the desired outcome (Mayer et al., 2004), promoting understanding and growth (Kewalramani et al., 2015). Persons have the ability to

evaluate different strategies, engage in appropriate emotions, and disengage when needed (Mayer et al., 2016). In the coworker example, at this stage the person would be able to control their own feelings and implement a strategy to help their coworker. They are able to adjust the situation based on each other's responses.

Ability emotional intelligence is based on the ideas that emotions are important, that people are different in how they respond, and that these differences play a role in how a person may adapt to any particular situation (Cherniss, 2010). Being able to perceive and understand emotions helps a person facilitate a thought process to regulate their own emotion (Mayor et al., 2000).

Emotional Intelligence Priming

Ability emotional intelligence facilitates the thinking process to determine what might be important in a situation (Brackett et al., 2011). Higher emotional intelligence was associated with greater and faster reasoning abilities during social exchanges, mentally thinking through a problem with all its implications (Reis et al., 2007). Higher scores on ability emotional intelligence are also related to positive prosocial functioning (Lopes et al., 2004), sensitivity to relationships (Brackett et al., 2011), and greater abilities to manage conflict in the workplace (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005).

Priming emotional intelligence can be influential in a person's emotional response to stressors. Wing et al. (2006) looked at how writing about something positive, coupled with priming statements about regulating emotion, can have an effect on a person's level of emotional intelligence as well as a person's view of life satisfaction. In their study, the priming group was given a priming statement about emotion regulation that was paired

with a positive writing assignment, the second group did not receive the prime but only a positive writing assignment, and the control group was given only a prompt to write about their plans for the day. When positive writing was primed with statements involving emotion regulation, subjects had higher emotional intelligence scores and reported greater life satisfaction as compared to the control group. Positive writing without a priming cue did not show significant changes as compared to the control group. Thus, priming may bring about an awareness of abilities in emotional intelligence (Wing et al., 2006).

Schutte and Malouff (2012) conducted two studies on priming emotional intelligence, focusing on different aspects of a person's self-schema as it related to ability emotional intelligence utilizing Mayer et al.'s (1990) ability emotional intelligence model. Self-schemas are different cognitive representations, made up of experiences and beliefs, that helps a person make sense of the world around them (Schutte & Malouff, 2012). In Study 1, there was a priming group and a control group. The priming group was prompted to write about their experiences related to aspects of emotional intelligence abilities (i.e., perception, understanding, and managing their own emotions as well as the emotions of others). The control group wrote about their activities from the day before. In Study 2, there were four groups: three priming groups and a control group. Participants in the three priming groups were given primes related to emotional competency self-schema, motivation self-schema, or general emotional competency. The control group wrote about their daily activities. Schutte and Malouff found that priming emotional intelligence activates cognitive schemas related to emotional understanding and

awareness. Activation of these schemas is also related to the regulation of emotions and the promotion of a planning strategy.

According to a meta-analysis by Pena-Sarrionandia et al. (2015), thinking about a situation in advance can help a person adapt to a situation before it actually occurs. They also found that people scoring higher in emotional intelligence were more likely to implement strategies early on in the situation. Thus, priming emotional intelligence may help activate an understanding and awareness of the cyberbullying situation for the employee. According to the Mayer et al. (1990) ability emotional intelligence model, the employee with higher emotional intelligence will be able to identify and perceive emotions more accurately for themselves and for others. This perception would also help the employee facilitate their thought process so that they can express their emotions appropriately. Having knowledge and understanding of their emotions, employees may be able to activate a plan or use a coping mechanism to manage their emotions and respond to the cyberbullying. Being able to respond appropriately, the perceived effects of cyberbullying may be lessened. Having greater confidence in their abilities to deal with conflict will allow employees to work efficiently and create social networks that are healthy and may influence a healthier work environment.

Cyberbullying

Traditional Bullying Versus Cyberbullying

Traditional or face-to-face bullying has been around for a long time. Bullying is about power imbalance between those that bully and those that are being bullied (Chisholm & Day, 2013). Other defining characteristics defining traditional bullying

include the bully's intent and the repetition of bullying incidents (Grigg, 2010). The person that has been bullied can be identified as such and the effects of being victimized could be seen in the victim (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015). These characteristics can also be defined in cyberbullying except that cyberbullying occurs in the form of cyber experiences (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015).

Technology provides many advantages in business efficiency and production, but with that, doors have opened for cyberbullying to be more prevalent in the workplace (Borstorff et al., 2007; Piotrowski, 2012;). Harassment in the workplace can cause physical and psychological harm to an employee (Piotrowski, 2012). Cyberbullying in the workplace consists of social exchanges where the bully engages in inappropriate and unwanted behaviors toward another through different types of cyber communication formats such as email, texting, or social media and persists frequently over time (Piotrowski, 2012). Harassment can occur at all levels of an organization, from a coworker to coworker, worker to manager, or manager to worker. Most research have studied cyberbullying with adolescents and more recently cyberbullying in college students (Cowie et al., 2013; Guimetti et al., 2012) and in the workplace (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Matthew, 2011). Following the changes in cyberbullying can be difficult because of technology advancement and an increase in available social media platforms (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015).

Cyberbullying provides an anonymous platform for bullies to operate, which makes it more difficult to identify the bully. Chisholm and Day (2013) stated that it also provides a platform for more people to 'stand by' and watch it happen and even join in

with the bully. This reinforces the harassment of a victim. Cyberbullying can also occur from anywhere to anyone living anyplace in the world if there is access to technology. There can be a greater level of psychological distress than with traditional bullying (Chisholm & Day, 2013).

Forms of Cyberbullying

Because technology continues to advance rapidly, there are an increasing number of platforms by which cyberbullying can occur. Many social applications, networking, texting, email, online gaming, and even video conferencing are all mediums that are used to bully another person (Chisholm & Day, 2013). Often, a person may assume virtual identities that allow them to act one way online in ways they may not act in person (Aboujaoude, 2011; Zizek, 2004). Aftab (2015) identified three categories of cyberbullying: "direct attacks, cyberbullying by proxy attacks, and public posts/broadcasting humiliating images and/or information" (p. 37).

Direct attacks to a victim include sending or posting threatening messages or pictures, harassment, humiliation, provoking responses, and tricking people online (Chisholm & Day, 2013). Cyberbullying by proxy involves the manipulation of a third party to engage in bullying so that the original person is not identified or even assuming the victim's identity online to cause problems for the victim (Aftab, 2015). Public posts and broadcasting may include the posting of images or information with the intent to cause distress (Aftab, 2015).

Perceived Effects of Cyberbullying

Bullying that occurs within the workplace may affect a person's overall performance, job satisfaction and mental strain (Farley et al., 2015), physical and mental health (Synman, 2015), as well as affect the resources that might be available to help cope with the bullying, including interpersonal and external resources (Tuckey & Neall, 2014). Ultimately, it affects not only the individual, but the organization as a whole. Although there are more studies on bullying in the workplace, cyberbullying may be more detrimental to a worker due to its nature of potential increase in frequency and the extension of reaching outside the workplace, leaving the worker unable to recover or psychologically detach from the incident (Coyne et al., 2016). Because there is a blur between the boundaries of work and home, victims may feel there is no escape from the cyberbullying, creating a greater feeling of anxiety, intimidation and anger (Heatherington & Coyne, 2014).

Elipe, et al. (2015) looked at the relationship of cyber victimization and emotional impact as moderated by perceived emotional intelligence. The study consisted of 636 graduate students ages 18-61. They used the Trait-Meta Mood Scale to measure perceived emotional intelligence, the European Cyberbullying Intervention Project Questionnaire to measure cyberbullying, and the Cyberbullying Emotional Impact Scale (CBEI) to measure the emotional impact of cyberbullying.

The CVEI was an adaptation of the positive and negative affect scale (PANAS), which measures mood or emotion (Watson et al., 1988). The CVEI is a self-report measures three types of emotional impact reflecting the participants' perceptions of the

effects of cyberbullying. Active responses have a positive affect related to being lively, active, and determined. Depression responses have a negative affect related to withdrawal, guilt, and shame. Annoyance responses have a negative affect related to anger and irritation. Elipe et al. (2017) found that greater perceived emotional intelligence had a positive association with active responses and a negative association with both depression and annoyance responses.

Coping with Cyberbullying

There are different ways people might cope with cyberbullying. Using the transactional model of stress and coping model (Lazarus & Foldman, 1987), coping begins with the appraisal of a situation that leads to three types of coping: problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant-focused. Primary appraisal is determining whether there is a threat and secondary appraisal consists of determining if the situation can be changed, which includes assessing what support is available to aid in the change (Lazarus & Foldman, 1987).

Raskauskas and Huynh (2015) discussed the three types of coping in relation to cyberbullying. Problem-focused coping refers to taking action during a stressful situation in order to prevent it from happening in the future. This may include saying something to the individual or changing social media information to prevent online contact. Social support can be utilized to help a person manage the negative effects. With emotion-focused coping strategies, a person may either internalize their emotions and keep it to themselves or externalize their emotions and take it out on other people or objects.

Avoidant-focused strategies involve distancing the self from the situation such as blocking messages or not thinking about it.

Well-being in the Workplace

Well-being can be representative of different aspects of positive functioning (Carmeli et al., 2009). Those that have shown higher levels of emotional intelligence have higher scores in well-being than those scoring lower in emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). They have a greater ability to not only manage their emotions in the face of emotional events, but also the ability to regulate their emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Higher scores in emotional intelligence is also associated with reports of higher life satisfaction, self-esteem, and self-acceptance (Carmeli et al., 2009). A study found an association with those scoring high in emotional intelligence as having higher positive mood as well as higher levels of self-esteem (Schutte et al., 2002). Lower scores in emotional intelligence were associated with depression and lower subjective well-being (Fernandez-Berrocal & Extremera, 2016).

Employees that scored higher in emotional intelligence had more positive well-being and functioned better in their employment (Brackett et al., 2011). Higher emotional intelligence has also been linked to positive social relationships (Lopes et al. , 2004) and fewer negative lifestyle choices (Mayer et al., 2004). Overall, employees with higher scores in emotional intelligence have better social interactions, are better able to manage stressful situations, and are more satisfied with their jobs (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005). They are less likely to feel burnout and receive more positive affirmations from peers and employees (Lopes et al., 2006).

Employees that are better able to manage their emotions and adjust to emotional situations are more likely to have better employee relationships with their coworkers and employers and they are more likely to be adjust to workplace stressors (Day & Caroll, 2004; Greenidge et al., 2014; Gross, 2002; Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008; Wong & Law, 2002). Employees with higher emotional intelligence are associated with better outcomes in their workplace (Joseph & Newman, 2010; O'Boyle et al., 2011; Schlaerth et al., 2013) Outcomes include employees showing greater satisfaction with their work, more engagement in their work, feel as though they are supported in their endeavors, report fewer mental health issues, and positive social interactions (Schutte & Loi, 2014). Even though there are associations and evidence linking emotional intelligence and well-being in the workplace, causal conclusions cannot be made from these findings.

Summary

Technology is advancing at a rapid pace and more organizations are utilizing technological advances to communicate with employees and those outside of the organization. Not only do people communicate via email, text messaging, and video conferencing, but they also communicate through social media and other platforms that allow for anonymity if desired. This opens the opportunity for cyberbullying to exist not only at work, but also extends outside of work causing an employee to exhibit signs of physical and psychological health declines as well as increased fear and isolation (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015). Research in the area of cyberbullying tend to focus on adolescents. Workplace cyberbullying is still a relatively new area of study as most are

focused on traditional bullying. Further research in workplace cyberbullying contributes to the evidence of how an employee may deal with a cyberbullying situation.

Emotional intelligence has been studied extensively and showed associations with work performance, productivity, general well-being, psychological and physiological health (Cherniss, 2010). It is also linked to adaptive coping strategies (Pena-Sarrionandia et al., 2015). A number of emotional intelligence studies in the workplace utilize trait or mixed emotional intelligence models. Most studies on emotional intelligence are also correlational studies, which do not allow one to make causal conclusions. Few studies utilize the ability model of emotional intelligence to look at the influence it may have on emotion management in the workplace.

Mayer et al.'s (2016) four branch model of emotional intelligence explains a process by which people make sense of the emotional information they receive: being able to perceive emotions, facilitate thoughts, understanding and managing emotions within themselves as well as in others. Emotional intelligence measures are still evolving as the defined constructs tend to overlap with other intelligence constructs such as social and personal intelligences (Mayer et al., 2016). Research utilizing the revised Ability Model may further help understand how a person may solve their problems as it relates to their emotions.

Although research shows that emotional intelligence can be primed (Schutte & Malouff, 2012), studies have yet to look at the effects that priming emotional intelligence may have on a person perceiving themselves to being cyberbullied at work. Priming emotional intelligence may activate certain schemas, influencing a person's emotional

response to any particular situation such as the perception of being cyberbullied. If one can prime schemas that activate emotional intelligence abilities, it is reasonable that it may create a coping mechanism that helps a person manage their emotions in their perception of a cyberbullying event.

There did not appear to be any studies on priming emotional intelligence and its influence on the perceived effects of cyberbullying in the workplace, which the current study examines. Chapter 3 provides information on the methodology of the current study. Information includes the research design, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and statistical analyses.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine whether priming thoughts about emotional intelligence influenced the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying. In this chapter, I describe the research design and rationale, the methodology, and threats to validity. The methodology section includes information on the target population, sampling procedures, recruitment, data collection, and instrumentation.

Research Design and Rationale

To reach an appropriate sample size and a greater representation of the general population, I used the online survey format to make it convenient for more participants to have access. The online format also allowed for participants to complete the survey when it was convenient for them instead of having to rearrange their schedule to meet at a planned time. Use of an online survey also provided a more diverse amount of data as well as provided an opportunity to have a greater number of participants. Participants may have been more likely to participate in an online survey because they were able to complete it in the privacy of their choosing and their anonymity is greater than in a face-to-face design. Even though it may have limited the population to those who had access to a computer because the nature of the study was to look at the emotional effects of cyberbullying, it was appropriate to utilize an online method of collecting data.

I employed the quantitative, randomized experiment design in this study in order to make causal conclusions. There was a control group as well as an experimental group to determine the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. I had the participants complete an online survey with the purpose of testing the hypotheses.

The dependent variables were the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying, which were measured by the CVEI Scale (see Elipe et al., 2017). The independent variable was priming emotional intelligence, which was manipulated by an essay assignment. The manipulation check was the SSEIT (see Schutte et.al., 1998). Participants were given enough time to complete the surveys in one sitting.

Methodology

Population

The target population was a sampling of adults who were 18 years or older, had worked for at least a year at their current place of employment, and had experienced a negative cyber event in the workplace from their own perspective.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

I used a convenience sampling procedure to capture data from participants. Participants were recruited from multiple internet sites and were provided with a link to the surveys. In order to determine if they met the inclusion criteria, I asked participants a series of questions.

I used a power analysis to determine the appropriate sample size. The Cohen's *d* medium effect size of .50 was selected due to the uncertainty about the expected effect size for the current study. With an alpha of .05, a power of .80, and an effect size of .50, the estimated sample size was 128. Sample size calculation was determined by using an a priori sample size calculator from the Free Statistics Calculators, Version 4.0.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

To recruit participants for this study, I posted an announcement for it through the Walden University Participant Pool, the Social Psychology Network, Find Participants, and Psychology Research on the Net. Due to my inability to connect with The Social Psychology Network and Find Participants, these websites were not used for participant recruitment. An application and follow-up email were sent to The Social Psychology Network, but due to not having the consent form showing before the eligibility questions in my survey, they were unable to approve the request to the posting. After I sent a follow-up email with a copy of the consent form and IRB approval, no response was given. An application and follow-up email were also sent to Find Participants. An email response was supposed to have been sent out, but no email was provided. After I made another attempt and requested support, no response was given.

LinkedIn Research Group is a site that allows for the recruitment of participants for a variety of studies. I added to them to the list of websites used for recruitment. The group is a survey exchange group for students and had 2,851 members from different locations at the time of this study. Three group pages on Facebook were available for requesting participation in studies: the Dissertation Survey Exchange had 12,320 members, the Research Participation Group had 32,883 members, and the Survey Exchange/Survey Group/Survey Participants - Dissertation, Thesis group had 6,741 members. I was granted permission to recruit participants from these three groups. These sites posted the recruitment statement as well as a link to the study. The recruitment statement included an explanation of the nature of the study.

I used Survey Monkey as the company to host the surveys. A screening page was included first addressing participant qualifications. It listed the following questions: “Are you 18 years or older?” “Are you currently employed?” “Have you been at your current place of employment for at least 1 year?” and “Have you been negatively impacted through cyber media in the workplace at least once (i.e. texting, social media, email, and instant messaging)?” The participants that answered “yes” to all the questions were included in the study and randomly placed in either the control group or the experimental group through the randomization feature offered in Survey Monkey. The control group received an essay unrelated to emotional intelligence, and the experimental group was provided with an essay related to priming emotional intelligence. Individuals that did not meet the qualifications received the following statement: “Thank you for your interest. Based on your answers, you do not meet the criteria for the current study.”

Once prospective participants completed the qualifications page, they were given the informed consent for participation. Once they consented, they were asked to complete a demographic survey to collect information, including their age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, and number of children, because these can be influential factors (see Appendix A). Participants were then provided with an essay writing task. In the next section, participants completed the CVEI Scale and then the SSEIT. Once they completed these items, they arrived on a conclusion page with information, referrals, and a thank you message.

The informed consent form included an introductory statement; background information; a description of the procedures and voluntary nature of the study; a

statement explaining that they would not be compensated for participating in the study, the risks and benefits of taking part in the study, and privacy information; my contact information; and the demographic questions.

I analyzed the collected data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 software. Participants completing the survey received a debriefing statement (see Appendix B) with a thank you for their participation as well as a list of resources for help if participants needed support. No further follow-up procedures were required.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Participants were randomly assigned to read a statement either related to emotional intelligence (i.e., the priming condition) or a general statement not related to emotional intelligence (i.e., control condition) and asked to write an essay. I used the essay to determine if priming emotional intelligence influences the participant's perceptions of being cyberbullied in the workplace. Emotional intelligence requires the ability to "accurately perceived, appraise and express emotions, to access and generate feelings when they facilitate a thought, the ability to understand emotions, and the ability to regulate emotions" (Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 10). This contributes to a person's ability to solve their problems (Mayer et al., 2016, pp. 290-293).

The emotional intelligence priming statement was "Thinking about a negative incident with another person, in 200 words, write about what happened, how you felt, and how you were able to manage your emotions." I anticipated that identifying an incident will bring up certain emotions. Having higher emotional intelligence would increase a

person's confidence in obtaining a desired resolution without distress (Mayer et al., 2004). The general statement in the control condition was "Thinking about a negative incident with another person, in 200 words, write about what happened and how you felt." I anticipated that this statement would bring up emotions but that the participants would not need to access skills requiring the use of emotional intelligence to write the essay. I used a manipulation check to determine if the priming effect influenced the perceived emotional intelligence.

Participants completed the SSEIT (see Schutte et.al., 1998) as a manipulation check. The SSEIT is a self-report measure with 33 items that is based on the Mayer et al.'s (1990) Mayer-Salovey-Caruso emotional intelligence test. This scale reflects three areas of emotion: appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion, and utilization of emotion. The SSEIT showed evidence of predictive and discriminant validity, and the measure also has good internal consistency and good test-retest reliability (Schutte et.al., 1998). Internal consistency had a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.87, and the test-retest reliability score was 0.78.

Adapted from the PANAS, the CVEI Scale (see Elipe et al., 2017) specifically focuses on the emotional impact of cyberbullying. The CVEI Scale includes a list of emotions and asks to what extent the participant would feel those emotions if they were a victim of cyberbullying. The scale uses a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 with 1 = *not at all* and 5 = *a lot*. Some examples of emotions listed are "tense/nervous," "lonely," "ready/clear-headed," and "depressed/sad." This scale measures three types of emotional responses: depressed (nine items), active (six items), and annoyed (three items). Elipe et

al. (2017) determined there was good validity, reliability, and internal consistency for the instrument. The instrument validation study included 1,016 secondary education students from Spain. Using the Rho coefficient, outcomes were 0.89 for the total scale, 0.92 for depressed, 0.89 for active, and 0.81 for annoyed. The Average Variance Extracted was 0.49 for depressed, 0.56 for active, and 0.64 for annoyed. The scale also showed good construct validity with correlations from moderate to high where the factors are related to their corresponding emotions. Depression was correlated with the following emotions: tense, guilty, scared, lonely, ashamed, defenseless, depressed, fed up, and worried. Active was correlated with animated, energetic, satisfied, ready, determined, and active. Annoyed was correlated with annoyed, irritable, choleric. I obtained permission to use the SSEIT and the CVEI from the copyright owners (see Appendix C).

Data Analysis Plan

I used SPSS Version 25 for data analysis. Data cleaning and screening were used to identify any missing data and outliers. I conducted tests of normality and homogeneity of variance to look at the distribution of data. The data were analyzed using a two-tailed *t* test. Descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) were used to measure the outcomes, and Cohen's *d* was used to measure effect size. The following questions and hypotheses were tested:

RQ1: If thoughts about emotional intelligence are primed, will it increase the perceived active response of cyberbullying in the workplace?

$H_0$1: Priming emotional intelligence will have no effect on the perceived active response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

$H_1$1: Priming emotional intelligence will increase the perceived active response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

RQ2: If thoughts about emotional intelligence are primed, will it decrease the perceived depression response of cyberbullying in the workplace?

$H_0$2: Priming emotional intelligence will have no effect on the perceived depression response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

$H_1$2: Priming emotional intelligence will decrease the perceived depression response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

RQ3: If thoughts about emotional intelligence are primed, will it decrease the perceived annoyance response of cyberbullying in the workplace?

$H_0$3: Priming emotional intelligence will have no effect on the perceived annoyance response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

$H_1$3: Priming emotional intelligence will decrease the perceived annoyance response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

Threats to Validity

External validity refers to the generalizability to the larger population (Taylor & Asmundson, 2008). Because participants were able to complete the surveys online and were recruited from multiple internet sites, a greater number of participants from different backgrounds and areas were more likely to be included. A possible threat to validity was that the CVEI Scale (see Elipe et al., 2017) was validated using the Spanish versions of the test for participants in Spain and the English version was used in the current study. Although the English version has not been used in a study, it has good face

validity because it appears to measure what it was intended to measure: the person's perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying. Since I assumed that the participants were able to read and understand English, the translation of the words from Spanish to English appears to translate directly without having to decipher extra meaning behind language differences.

Internal validity refers to the findings being a result of the actual treatment and not due to other extraneous variables (Taylor & Asmundson, 2008). There could be confounding with the two condition groups in the priming manipulation. I carefully considered the wording of the statements and any information given to the participants. Both statements for the control group and the priming group had the same content with the exception that the priming group was asked to identify skills they have used in managing their emotions. The random assignment of being in one of the two groups minimized the differences between the two groups. I expected both groups to be equal with respect to different ages, backgrounds, cultures, regions, gender, or any other differences.

There was a possibility of testing reactivity if participants selected a response that they thought would be favorable to the research. To reduce this, I told participants that their responses would be anonymous as stated in the instructions. Because the survey was completed in one sitting and online, participants were not able to make any adjustments once they had completed the surveys. Some participants may have been exposed to cyberbullying more than others. Before beginning the surveys, they were instructed on the average amount of time to expect to complete the surveys in from beginning to end.

Ethical Procedures

Participants were given instructions prior to being given the essay and completing the surveys. They also provided their informed consent, which included receiving an explanation of the study and expectations concerning it. I submitted documents and procedures related to the study to the Walden University IRB for approval prior to collecting data from participants (IRB Approval Number: 08-22-19-0289642). Participants were able to discontinue at any time by not completing any portion of the study and were not penalized for it as was indicated on the consent form. Once the surveys were completed, they were thanked for their participation and provided resources for help if they had been affected in any way by the questioning.

I collected the data anonymously and entered it into a computer software program (i.e., SPSS Version 25). Data were coded and kept confidential.

Summary

In this study, I determined whether priming thoughts about emotional intelligence influenced the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying. In this chapter, I presented the research design and provided information on how the participants were chosen and protected. The results of the study are presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

In this study, I examined whether priming thoughts about emotional intelligence had an effect on the self-perceived emotional response of cyberbullying in the workplace. Studies have shown that there is a connection between emotional intelligence and how people respond to adverse events, which could, in turn, have an effect on performance and productivity in the workplace (Armstrong et al., 2011; Cherniss, 2010; Pena-Sarrionandia et al., 2015). Priming emotional intelligence may increase a person's ability to manage the perceived effects of cyberbullying in the workplace. In Chapter 4, I describe the results of this study, including the data collection and analysis processes.

Data Collection

Data collection began in August 2019 and continued until November 2021. I recruited participants were recruited from multiple internet sites which included posting with a link to the questionnaire in Survey Monkey. An announcement was made through the Walden University Participant Pool and Psychology Research on the Net to recruit participants for the study. Due to the inability to connect with The Social Psychology Network and Find Participants despite multiple attempts being made, these sites were not used. I also sought out and utilized other online recruitment sites, including the LinkedIn Research Group, The Dissertation Survey Exchange, the Research Participation Group, and the Survey Exchange/Survey Group/Survey Participants- Dissertation, Thesis Group. All these groups were provided with the research link using Facebook and LinkedIn social media sites. I posted in these groups after being granted permission by their administrators.

Few participants were recruited from these sites. To recruit more, I utilized another recruitment site, Research and Me. Weekly conference calls allowed the company to fine tune and develop advertisements on Facebook to target different populations to increase participant interest in the study. One advertisement was used per target population, and they were intentionally broad to prevent excluding any population. Target populations included advertisements for men, women, young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults.

To be included in the study, participants had to be at least 18 years of age, employed in their current setting for at least a year, and had experienced a negative cyberbullying incident. Once they were able to click on the provided link and it was established that they met the inclusion criteria, they were provided with a consent form. Upon consenting, participants were taken to the study and answered some demographic questions before being randomly assigned to the control or experimental group. The control group received a general essay prompt (i.e., "Thinking about a negative incident with another person, in 200 words, write about what happened and how you felt."). The experimental group received the priming essay prompt (i.e., "Thinking about a negative incident with another person, in 200 words, write about what happened, how you felt, and how you were able to manage your emotions.").

Once they responded to the provided essay, participants completed two questionnaires: the SSEIT (see Schutte et.al., 1998) and the CVEI Scale (see Elipe et al., 2017). Both instruments were discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

I conducted a power analysis to determine the appropriate sample size by using an a priori sample size calculator from the Free Statistics Calculators, Version 4.0. The Cohen's *d* medium effect size of .50 was selected due to the uncertainty about the expected effect size for the current study. With an alpha of .05, a power of .80, and an effect size of .50, the estimated sample size was 128. Of 123 participants that viewed the questionnaire link online, only 70 consented to participate; however, not everyone completed the entire questionnaire. A final sample size of 53 participants took part in the study. Due to the low rate of responses from August 2019 to November 2021, new internet recruitment sites continued to be added in an attempt to increase the number of responses.

Data Analysis

Due to the time constraints allowable for the dissertation to be completed, I received approval from the program director to utilize the 53 participants who consented to the study, with the intent to revise the data analysis plan. I used SPSS Version 27 to conduct the data analysis process. The data were transferred from Survey Monkey to SPSS, where the data were managed. The SSEIT Question Numbers 5, 28, and 33 were reverse coded while all other higher scores on the Likert scale indicated higher characteristics of emotional intelligence.

I screened the data to look for errors. Of the 70 participants that consented to participate, there were 14 missing cases leaving only 56 valid cases. It appeared that the 14 participants completed a portion of the questionnaire but stopped before completing the whole thing. Three of the 56 participants did not respond to the priming essay

question; therefore, the final data analysis included 53 participants (i.e., 26 in the control group and 27 in the experimental group). Screening did not produce any other errors.

I assessed the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying, which included the depressed response variable, the annoyed response variable, and the active response variable. The independent variable was the emotional intelligence priming essay. The two questionnaires presented scores for emotional intelligence and the emotional effect of cyberbullying.

I tested model assumptions and conducted the Shapiro-Wilk test to test for normality. The results indicated that the depressed variable had a normal distribution (p = 0.176) while the annoyed (p = 0.022) and active (p = 0.025) variables did not. I conducted Levene's test for equality of variances and determined that equality of variances can be assumed for the depressed (F = 2.867, p = .097) and active (F = .497, p = .484) variables but not for the annoyed (F = 7.070, p = .010) variable. Independent samples t tests were conducted to determine significance as reported further in the chapter.

I used Cronbach's alpha to determine the reliability of the instruments for the current sample due to the fewer number of participants and data. The recommended coefficient should be at least α = .70. The cyberbullying questionnaire had moderate reliability (α = .740) and the emotional intelligence questionnaire had satisfactory reliability (α = .953). For this particular sample, reliability was not an issue.

Descriptive characteristics that were observed included gender, marital status, ethnicity, age, and number of children. Frequencies for the descriptive characteristics are

noted as follows. The study consisted of 19 males (27.1%), 49 females (70.0%), and 1 transgender male (1.4%). Eighteen participants were ages 18–24 (25.7%), 15 participants were ages 25–34 (21.4%), 15 participants were ages 35–44 (21.4%), 13 participants were ages 45–54 (18.6%), and eight participants were over 55 years old (11.4%). Participants consisted of 43 White/European Americans (61.4%), 11 Black/African Americans (15.7%), six Asians (8.6%), six Hispanic/Latinos (8.6%), two American Indian/Native Americans (2.9%), and one Pacific Islander (1.4%). Of the participants, 33 were single/never married (47.1%), 21 were married or in a domestic partnership (30%), 11 were divorced (15.7%), two were widowed (2.9%), and one was separated (1.4%). Forty participants had no children (57.1%), 24 had one or two children (34.3%), four had three or four children (5.7%), and one had five or more children (1.4%).

Descriptive statistics for each variable are as follows. There were 26 participants in the control group and 27 in the experimental group. For the depression response variable, the control group had a $M = 3.35$ ($SD = .71$) and experimental group had a $M = 3.15$ ($SD = 1.09$). For the annoyed response variable, the control group had a $M = 3.60$ ($SD = .69$) and the experimental group had a $M = 3.32$ ($SD = 1.13$). For the active response variable, the control group had a $M = 2.76$ ($SD = 1.04$), and the experimental group had a $M = 2.94$ ($SD = 1.22$).

I originally planned to conduct a two-tailed *t* test as stated in Chapter 3; however, I examined whether there would be a positive or negative change in the participants' responses, and therefore, the appropriate analysis was a one-tailed, independent-samples *t* test. I conducted independent-samples *t* tests, including the Cohen's *d* for effect size with

an alpha of .05. Due to SPSS Version 27 not having the ability to conduct a one-tailed test, the IBM (2021) online support for SPSS recommended that the significance level of a two-tailed test be divided in half to determine significance. The following research questions and hypotheses were assessed:

RQ1: If thoughts about emotional intelligence are primed, will it increase the perceived active response of cyberbullying in the workplace?

$H_0$1: Priming emotional intelligence will have no effect on the perceived active response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

$H_1$1: Priming emotional intelligence will increase the perceived active response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

For equal variances assumed, the active response variable was not statistically significant, $t(51)= -.577$, $p = .2825$. Conducting the Cohen's *d* test, the effect size of the variable was small ($d = -.159$).

RQ2: If thoughts about emotional intelligence are primed, will it decrease the perceived depression response of cyberbullying in the workplace?

$H_0$2: Priming emotional intelligence will have no effect on the perceived depression response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

$H_1$2: Priming emotional intelligence will decrease the perceived depression response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

For equal variances not assumed, the annoyed response variable was not statistically significant, $t(51) = .815$, $p = .2095$. Conducting the Cohen's *d* test, the effect size of the variable was small ($d = .224$).

RQ3: If thoughts about emotional intelligence are primed, will it decrease the perceived annoyance response of cyberbullying in the workplace?

$H_0$3: Priming emotional intelligence will have no effect on the perceived annoyance response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

$H_1$3: Priming emotional intelligence will decrease the perceived annoyance response of cyberbullying in the workplace.

For equal variances assumed, the depressed response variable was not statistically significant, $t(51)=1.091$, $p = .1385$. Conducting the Cohen's *d* test, the effect size of the variable was small ($d = .300$).

Summary

In this study, I examined whether priming thoughts about emotional intelligence had an effect on the perceived emotional response of cyberbullying in the workplace. The three types of emotional responses were active, depressed, and annoyance. The data analyzed did not show that priming thoughts of emotional intelligence had a significant effect for the participants. There were unexpected events related to the COVID-19 pandemic beginning March 2020, that potentially had an effect on the results of the study. The sample size was also smaller than the statistical recommendation of 128 participants; therefore, the results were not as robust as they could have been. I changed the data analysis procedure from a two-tailed *t* test to a one-tailed *t* test to reflect the directional nature of the hypotheses. In the next chapter, I will discuss in detail the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future studies, and implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

As early research has shown, the increased use of technology increases the likelihood of cyberbullying to occur in the workplace (Borstorff et al., 2007), and those that have felt harassed in the workplace can suffer the effects of physical and psychological harm (Piotrowski, 2012). When an employee has higher emotional intelligence, they are more likely to have better mental health (Kaur, 2019; Shutte et al., 2007). By helping employees develop emotional intelligence, organizations are helping relieve the emotional damage that can be caused by cyberbullying (Iftikhar et al., 2021). This would not only benefit the employee but also the organization because emotional intelligence is linked to performance and productivity (Bibi et al., 2013).

There is little research available on priming emotional intelligence as it relates to cyberbullying in the workplace. The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine how priming emotional intelligence may have an effect on a person's perceived emotional response to cyberbullying in the workplace. The emotional responses to cyberbullying are an active response, depression response, or annoyance response. If thoughts about emotional intelligence were primed, I expected that there would be an increase in the perceived active response and a decrease in the perceived depression and annoyance responses. However, the results of this study did not show significance. With time and some fundamental changes, the data may provide more robust information.

Interpretation of the Findings

The results of this study did not meet significance. In consideration of previous research, continuing to research this topic will be valuable to employees and

organizations alike. The current participants were mostly females (70%), White/European Americans (61.4%), between the ages of 18 and 24 years old (25.7%), single/never married (47.1%), and had no children (57.1%). The results cannot be generalized to the general population, but they are reflective of the current participants.

The perceived emotional responses from the control and experimental groups were not statistically significant. For the active response, the experimental group had higher test scores than the control group. This may suggest that priming emotional intelligence increased the active response of individuals, so in the face of cyberbullying, they might be more likely to have a positive response. For both, the depression and annoyance responses, the experimental group had lower test scores than the control group. This may suggest that priming emotional intelligence decreased the depression and annoyance response of individuals because they may be more likely to understand and regulate their emotions instead of withdrawing, feel guilty, or having shame (i.e., the depression response) and may have fewer instances of anger and irritation (i.e., the annoyance response). This finding aligns with those of earlier research (i.e., Elipe et al., 2017; Izard, 2001).

According to previous literature, priming emotional intelligence would be beneficial for the employee to have a successful work environment and for the organization to also be successful (Cherniss, 2010). Employees that were able to understand and regulate their emotions were more likely to have a positive well-being, greater self-esteem, and did better in the workplace (Bracke et al., 2011; Fernandez-

Berrocal & Exremera, 2016). The findings from the current study, although not significant, would encourage further exploration by addressing the following limitations.

Limitations of Study

The current study had several limitations that may have contributed to the findings. One of the limitations may have been the smaller sample size, resulting in the findings only being reflective of the participants. With the use of a self-report measure, there is always a possibility that participants are not truthful or may want to answer the questions based on their perceived expectations of what the researcher is studying. Another limitation of the study is that one participant's identification of cyberbulling may be different from another's. Every person has a different level of exposure to cyberbullying in the workplace, so the emotions cyberbullying invokes are not generated equally across the board.

During the data collection process, the world was experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, the world shut down, and people in their workplaces from every job sector were either no longer able to work or had to work from home (Fana et al., 2020). Many people lost their jobs because companies had to permanently close their doors or could no longer afford to pay their employees. Children were also affected and were required to attend school virtually, which gave families extra responsibilities at home, having to manage their work schedules and family life. As people were quarantined to their home, many no longer working, daily life for people around the world had changed and people had to adapt to a new way of living. Not only did people have to adopt a new normal, many families had to adjust to taking care of those that were

sick as well as with the deaths of family members, friends, and people around the world who died from the COVID-19 virus. This pandemic caused a major change in the world, especially in the workplace. This may have affected the number of people who were qualified for the study because one of the requirements was to be currently employed. Even through the second year of the pandemic, employment may have been inconsistent for some because people were required to quarantine at home and many businesses may have closed down. Priorities may have also shifted during the pandemic because the focus of people was to care for themselves and their families, so this may have been another possible reason that fewer people looked to participate in the study. The findings can only be applied to the participants and are not representative of the general population due to these limitations.

Recommendations

Due to the limitations of the study, I have some recommendations for future studies. The number of participants ($N = 53$) was less than the calculated necessary sample size of 128. A greater number of participants would provide more robust data that may be revealing. It would also be helpful to look at differences in gender and age because different characteristics may affect the data output. Survey exchange sites did not work well for the recruitment of participants. Advertisements appeared to work better, but due to environmental circumstances and time limitations, the advertisements were not able to run long enough for me to recruit more participants with them.

There are different models of emotional intelligence based on ability or traits (Kewalramani et al., 2015). The theoretical framework for this study was the ability-

based model (see Mayer et al., 1997). Historical literature has indicated that there is not a clear consensus on whether the ability-based model or the trait-based model is more accurate in defining emotional intelligence (Cherniss, 2010). Because of this, it would be interesting to utilize a trait-based model with the current study to examine if priming emotional intelligence makes a difference between the two types of models. It may also be interesting to conduct a qualitative study on this topic to gain a more personal perspective and understanding from the participants because not everyone has the same types of cyberbullying experiences.

Implications

It seems plausible that if priming emotional intelligence changes how a person responds to being cyberbullied in the workplace, then it would be beneficial for organizations to provide training opportunities that help build a person's ability to regulate their emotions in the face of adversity. Thus, it would be prudent to continue to study aspects of emotional intelligence and how they can be beneficial to employees in the workforce.

It is also plausible that building emotional intelligence would not only help manage cyberbullying in the workplace but would also help manage other stressors across different situations and circumstances. Previous research supports the idea that people who have higher emotional intelligence are more likely to adapt to changes in their lives (Cherniss, 2010) and have more positive interactions with others (Brackett et al., 2011; Lopes et al., 2004).

Continuing to encourage emotional intelligence and providing trainings on the subject may deter cyberbullying in the workplace and make for a more positive working environment, which, in turn, would positively affect the productivity level of employees, benefiting the organization (see Carmeli et al., 2009). In the workplace, employees with good mental health are more likely to be productive and efficient, healthy, and have more positive relationships (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Kaur, 2019). Workplaces will have better outcomes when employees are more engaged in their work, more satisfied, and feel supported (Schutte & Loi, 2014).

Conclusion

Cyberbullying is a growing concern in the workplace, especially as more people are required to utilize technology in their communication with one another (Piotrowski, 2012). It can cause psychological harm (Chisholm & Day, 2013) that can affect employees' physical health and job performance, leaving some unable to recover (Coyne et al., 2016). Everyone copes with cyberbullying differently. Studies in emotional intelligence show that higher levels of emotional intelligence result in individuals being able to manage their emotions and overcome a negative incident such as cyberbullying (Mayer et al., 2004). Priming emotional intelligence can help activate an emotional response to the negative event (Wing et al., 2006).

In the current study, I examined primed emotional intelligence to determine if it had an effect on a person's perceived response to cyberbullying. Although the results were not statistically significant, possibly due to the low number participants and study limitations, the literature reviewed showed the effects of emotional intelligence on a

person's well-being in the workplace and ability to overcome a cyberbullying incident. Organizations that are able to build and support emotional intelligence in their employees are more likely to have healthier and more efficient employees and greater productivity.

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Appendix A: Demographic Information

Please respond to the following questions:

1. To which gender identity do you most identify?
    - Male
    - Female
    - Transgender Male
    - Transgender Female
    - Gender Variant/Non-Conforming
    - Prefer Not to Answer
2. What is your age?
    - 18-24 years old
    - 25-34 years old
    - 35-44 years old
    - 45-54 years old
    - 55 years and over
    - Prefer not to answer
3. To which ethnic group do you most identify?
    - American Indian/Native American
    - Asian
    - Black/African American
    - Hispanic/Latino
    - White/Caucasian

- Pacific Islander
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

4. What is your marital status?
    - Single (never married)
    - Married, or in a domestic partnership
    - Widowed
    - Divorced
    - Separated
    - Prefer not to answer
5. How many children do you have?
    - None
    - 1-2
    - 3-4
    - 5 or more
    - Prefer not to answer

Appendix B: Debriefing Statement

Thank you for your participation in my study! Your participation was greatly appreciated.

The purpose of the current study is to see if priming emotional intelligence would have an influence on the perceived emotional effects of cyberbullying in the workplace. Once the results are available, you may view a summary of the finding on the following website link: https://ei-cyberbullying-workplace.squarespace.com.

In the event that some questions may have triggered distress or other emotional reaction, you might find it useful to speak with a clinician. Should you need support, or feel you are in crisis, you may contact the National Crisis Center Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text: “ANSWER” to 839863. Standard messaging and data rates may apply.

Appendix C: Approval to Use Instruments

Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test

Nicola Schutte <XXXXXXXX>

Thank you for your message.

You are welcome to use the scale. Please find attached the manuscript version of a published chapter that contains the scale and background information, including regarding scoring, reliability and validity.

Kind regards, Nicola Schutte

Cyber Victimization Emotional Impact Scale

Paz Elipe Muñoz <XXXXXXXX>

Dear Madonna,

Thank you for your interest in our research.

You are right. The CVEIS is an updated and validated version of the previous scale.

Attached you can find all the information regarding the scale and the reference articles to use it.

I hope it will be useful to you.

Feel free to use it, just mention the authorship but please, if you do it, let us know your research results in order to improve it.