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Contrapower Harassment and Stress Experienced by Online Psychology Instructors

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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Sarah Dawn Hull

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Contrapower Harassment and Stress Experienced by Online Psychology Instructors

by

Sarah Dawn Hull

MS, Walden University, 2009

BS, Coastal Carolina University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

August 2025

Abstract

Previous researchers have found that face to face bullying by students directed towards postsecondary education faculty may result in negative mental and emotional impacts. The virtual environment provides a unique opportunity for student-to-faculty bullying behaviors, known as cyberbullying, to occur. Researchers have not yet studied how psychology faculty in particular experience stress when cyberbullied by students. The purpose of this qualitative study, rooted in phenomenological design, was to improve the understanding of how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress. Contrapower harassment theory was used to ground these research questions and design. The research questions examined the experiences of psychology faculty cyberbullied by students and how these same faculty members experienced stress. Purposeful snowball sampling technique was used to obtain 11 participants who answered questions via online survey regarding their experiences being cyberbullied by students. Responses were coded using the modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method of qualitative analysis. For many participants who experienced being cyberbullied, the emotional reactions included stress. The stress experienced led to detrimental effects and responses that participants engaged in to avoid the stressful situation of being cyberbullied by a student. The results from this study may lead to social change by way of university administration enacting programs and policies to thwart and respond to cyberbullying behaviors. Additionally, results from this study could be presented in order to influence the creation of laws and sanctions regarding cyberbullying behavior.

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Dedication

The journey of academic inquiry is like training to run a marathon. A little bit at a time, slow and steady, with the urge (that can never be satiated) to just keep going.

To my dad, Terry, for always inspiring and pushing me to just keep going.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In a changing world where technology plays an ever-increasing role, over the past 10 years many universities have transitioned to offering services online to provide more students better access to learning (Hallstrom, 2022). Online learning provides the platform for students and faculty to connect in a virtual classroom environment, offering the ability to access and share information and replicating ways in which this is done in the traditional brick-and-mortar classroom (Chan et al., 2020). In addition to offering the opportunity for instructors and students to interact online for education purposes, the online modalities also offer opportunities for interactions outside of classwork related activities to take place. One of these prevalent interactions is bullying. Bullying is defined as unwanted or aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (Health Resources and Services Administration, 2024). Bullying is one of the above-mentioned activities that is occurring online, mimicking the ways in which it occurs in the traditional brick-and-mortar classroom (Llego, 2016).

One unique interaction regarding bullying behaviors that occurs in both brick-and-mortar and online classrooms is the phenomenon of academic contrapower harassment (ACPH; Blizard, 2016; García-González, 2020; Hango, 2021). There has been a small amount of research dedicated to the notion of ACPH occurring in the brick-and-mortar classroom, with very limited research conducted to date around the topic of contrapower harassment in the online classroom. Considering the shift in environment, while examining an already present topic of interest, qualifies this research as needed,

examining a familiar topic in a new environment. This subject may require additional examination for better understanding of the occurrence (see Creswell, 2007).

Of the little research there is to date on ACPH, recent research has concentrated on ACPH in the brick-and-mortar classroom and has centered around the nursing profession. This research shows detrimental effects related to the bullying of nurses, including anxiety and depression (see Cassum, 2018; Christensen et al., 2021; Edmonson & Zelonka, 2019; Meires, 2018; Sieble & Fehr, 2018). Additionally, many of the studies cited long-term career effects, such as leaving the profession because of bullying by students. Reasoning for bullying by students centers around a sense of entitlement, consumerism, and perceived competition for jobs once outside of the nursing education program (Meires, 2018).

Of the literature presented regarding ACPH occurring in the brick- and mortar classroom, it is apparent that faculty on the receiving end of the harassment are experiencing negative emotional and physical effects of the bullying, including feelings of distress (Christensen et al., 2021; Lampman, 2012; Lampman et al., 2016), emotional exhaustion and burnout symptoms (Blizard, 2016; García-González, 2020), and stress-related illness (Lampman et al., 2016).

Regarding research on ACPH occurring in the online classroom, evidence of negative effects on faculty have rarely been examined. Researchers have examined reasons for ACPH, which include entitlement (Christensen et al., 2021; Leech, 2017; May & Tenzek, 2018; Penconek, 2020), grade-seeking behavior (Blizard, 2016; Meires, 2018), and social or professional comparison (Benbenishty et al., 2018). Additionally,

research regarding online ACPH has covered faculty requests or recommendations to administration regarding how to respond to ACPH (May & Tenzek, 2018; Meires, 2018).

Researchers have concluded that emotional effects of online ACPH for faculty may include stress related symptoms (Cassidy et al., 2017; Daumiller et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2018), anxiety and depression (Cassidy et al., 2017; Hall et al., 2018; Veena & Pushpalath, 2016), and burnout (Daumiller et al., 2021; Gonzalez, 2020).

The field of university teaching would benefit from additional research on ACPH, particularly experiences of faculty members. In addition to examining how online faculty are being cyberbullied by students, this research should also examine faculty members' emotional stress responses. It is important that educators understand the dynamics of cyberbullying of faculty by students to understand how to mitigate such behaviors, to understand the circumstances and reactions surrounding ACPH, in effort to inform future decision making and programming regarding ACPH. Currently, it is known that cyberbullying of faculty by students exists (Cassidy et al., 2017; Daumiller et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2018; Veena & Pushpalath, 2016). It is also known that faculty may experience negative emotional outcomes of anxiety and depression because of the harassment (Veena & Pushpalath, 2016). The emotional effects of ACPH have been studied in detail in the population of nursing faculty has been studied in detail (Cassum, 2017; Christensen et al., 2021; Meires, 2018; Seible & Fehr, 2018). However, faculty in fields outside of nursing who have experienced online ACPH and how they experience the specific emotion of stress have not yet been examined. This investigation of student to faculty cyberbullying takes researchers one step closer to understanding the

phenomenon of student to faculty cyberbullying, with the goal of developing evidence-based interventions to lessen the negative emotional effects on faculty of cyberbullying.

This chapter includes the background of the problem, the problem statement, an outline of the phenomenon of contrapower harassment of psychology faculty members by students, the conceptual framework, and the research questions. Also included are a summary of the methodology and a rationale for the methodology and data analysis. In addition, definitions of key terms, assumptions of the research, and scope and delimitations of the research are discussed. The potential limitations of the study are also addressed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the significance of the topic and the significance of this study.

Background

Prior to online modalities being introduced to facilitate activities of teaching and learning in the university, correspondence courses were the option for students who were not physically on campus. Correspondence courses involved sending videocassette tapes (VHS) and textbooks through the postal service. Students would then prove their knowledge by sending back written essays or through the submission of at-home tests through the postal service to their instructor (Hoofman & Secord, 2021). Since the invention of the internet for communicating and information sharing in novel ways, university courses began using the web to host courses. Correspondence courses began to develop in availability, sophistication, and scope, using technologies associated with the internet (Chan et al., 2020). In this format, information could be delivered in either synchronous or asynchronous modalities via the world-wide-web, where students could

either join their online peers in a virtual classroom during a specified time together (synchronous communication), or access information posted to the classroom anytime, when convenient for the student (asynchronous communication; Chan et al., 2020).

With the new online format of university teaching and learning being widely used in recent years and the present day, other components of university life have changed. One social component of education that spans both brick-and-mortar and online environments is bullying and harassment (Snyder- Yuly et al., 2022). The shift from the brick-and-mortar classroom to more online teaching and learning has resulted in bullying and harassment occurring in these virtual modalities as well (Álvarez-García et al., 2015; Watts et al., 2017). With increased cyberbullying behaviors also come consequences. Research shows that students who are cyberbullied by their peers often suffer negative emotional outcomes (Chan et al., 2020). There has been plentiful research conducted on student-to-student cyberbullying, with negative emotional implications being a prominent and common thread throughout the literature on collegiate student-to-student cyberbullying (Tolentino, 2016).

In addition to student-to-student cyberbullying, another type of harassment is also happening online at universities: the cyberbullying of faculty by students. This type of directional, upward bullying is termed contrapower harassment (Benson, 1984). Contrapower harassment is a specific type of upward directional harassment, where the component of real or perceived power (such as the power that a faculty member holds over a student) is present from the victim to the harasser (Benson, 1984). When contrapower harassment is occurring in academia, it is termed ACPH (Benson, 1984).

The review of studies indicates that bullying of faculty by students via cyber modalities, or ACPH, is increasing (Cassidy et al., 2017; Hollis, 2019; Keashly, 2021).

Contrapower harassment occurring in face-to-face modalities has been documented in academia for several decades (Benson, 1984; Crocker, 1983; Grauerholz, 1989; Lampman et al., 2009; Matchen & DeSouza, 2003). Research from 1984 to 2009 on the topic of contrapower harassment in academia covered the topics of sexual harassment and harassment, which was gender disparaging in nature (Lampman, 2012; Lampman et al. 2009). This includes attempting to gain attention from the faculty member in hopes of sexual advancements being accepted, or to harass the faculty by using gender stereotyping or gender disparaging remarks (Boring, 2017; Clancy et al., 2017; Schultz, 2001; Taylor et al., 2017). Since 1989, the focus of research regarding contrapower harassment has been on the topics of sexual harassment or gender disparaging harassment. In 2009, Lampman cited additional reasons how ACPH may occur, including drawing negative attention to and slandering the faculty member. Lampman (2009) shed a light on the notion that ACPH was occurring for reasons that were other than sexual or gendered in nature, which was historically considered the reason behind such harassment.

Other reasons students harass faculty began being investigated as well. These additional reasons include student sense of entitlement, efforts to gain grade or policy changes, and based on the faculty member's professional status, perhaps to compete for similar professional positions once in the workforce (Álvarez- García et al., 2015; Christensen et al., 2021; Leech, 2017; May & Tenzek, 2018; Penconek, 2020).

In the limited research conducted on online ACPH, several researchers have found that faculty who have been cyberbullied by students also experience negative emotional outcomes, including depression and anxiety symptoms (Cassidy et al., 2017; Daumiller et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2018). The emotional outcomes have preceded detrimental outcomes such as loss of job, decreased job performance, and decreased job satisfaction (Veena & Pushpalath, 2016).

In addition to contributing to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of online contrapower harassment directed towards faculty, I intended to explore outcomes of such interactions, leading to the research question of how do faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress?

Recent research on ACPH primarily focuses on nursing faculty and harassing interactions that fall outside of the scope of sexual harassment. In recent research, topics relating to ACPH in the nursing profession center around the themes of harassing for purposes of the student's own career- development opportunities and to gain extensions and/ or amendments on coursework requirements (Leech, 2017; Meires, 2018). Nursing students are harassing faculty online by spreading rumors and attempting to discredit them in open forums (Meires, 2018). Additional ways in which nursing students harass faculty are by arguing specifics of grading and arguing course policies, almost as a battle of the wills and exerting what they believe to be entitlement as a consumer (Perione & Matika- Tyndale, 2017). In a study on nursing faculty who reported being cyberbullied by students, Seible & Fehr (2018) found that faculty exhibited emotional negative symptoms, such as emotional exhaustion. Several additional recent studies on nursing

faculty also report faculty experiencing feelings of emotional exhaustion resulting from online ACPH, with one respondent even reporting feeling “crushed” by the emotional toll the student bully had inflicted upon them (Seible & Fehr, 2018).

Although many general emotional symptoms (such as depression, anxiety, and burnout symptoms) have been identified as resulting from ACPH experienced by instructors online (Cassidy et al., 2017; Daumiller et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2018; Veena & Pushpalath, 2016), the specific component of stress related to cyberbullying has not been extensively studied among the university faculty population.

However, the negative impacts of stress in adults in the workplace have been reported extensively and can be used as a starting point to understand how stress may impact adults in the workplace of academia as well. Topics such as employee burnout, employee stress, and instances of employees displaying irrational and aggressive behavior when under stress at work have been covered in the news in recent years (Duggan, 2017; Snyder- Yuly et al., 2022). Consequences of stress and burnout have included extreme fatigue (Nuebling et al., 2013), loss of focus or productivity regarding work, and individuals feeling the need to leave their profession (May and Tenzek, 2018). Additionally, many who experience workplace stress and burnout suffer psychological consequences such as the onset of panic attacks (Cassidy et al., 2017), and family and relationship issues (Bester et al., 2017).

It is known across many professions that workplace stress can lead to negative outcomes (Bester et al., 2017; Duggan 2017, 2017; May & Tenzek, 2018; Nuebling et al., 2013; Snyder- Yuly et al., 2022). It is known that faculty who experience workplace

stress also suffer negative outcomes (Cassidy et al., 2017; Daumiller et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2018). It is also known that many faculty are now teaching virtual modalities. It is also known that faculty teaching in virtual modalities experience ACPH from students (Hollis, 2019; Keashly, 2021; May & Tenzek, 2018; Snyder- Yuly et al., 2022). It is not known how psychology faculty experience stress related to ACPH occurring via these virtual modalities. This study is needed because it is important to explore if stress experienced from ACPH and workplace stress may lead to the same stress reaction outcomes in university psychology faculty.

Problem Statement

Although researchers have investigated issues relating to ACPH in general, and more in depth with the subset of nursing faculty being harassed, little research has been conducted regarding faculty from other academic disciplines experiencing ACPH. The research focus for this study was psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students and who are experiencing stress. A consensus among researchers in recent years is that the phenomenon of faculty being cyberbullied by students has increased and is becoming problematic (Hollis, 2019; Keashly, 2021).

Recent studies on the topic of ACPH describe that students harass faculty for reasons including dissatisfaction with grades, unmet expectations of course procedures and grading policies, and entitlement regarding policies and due date extensions (Christensen et al., 2021; Leech, 2017; Perione et al., 2017). Additional research on ACPH examines the negative emotional responses that may occur for faculty because of harassment. Several studies have found that a majority of faculty who experience ACPH

have had negative emotional experiences such as emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and depression symptoms (Christensen et al., 2021; Lampman, 2016). Negative emotional responses could possibly result in negative consequences for the faculty, such as stress related illnesses (Lampman et al., 2016) or symptoms of burnout (Blizard, 2016).

A thorough review of studies that have been conducted over the past five years indicates that ACPH experienced by faculty is increasing (Cassidy et al., 2017; Hollis, 2019; Keashly, 2021). Most of the research on ACPH has been conducted on a combined faculty sample, meaning various disciplines have been studied together, as a way to view the phenomenon of ACPH, or on the specific subset of nursing faculty (Meires, 2018; Sieble and Fehr, 2018).

The gap in the research literature is that, to date, there has been no research on the subset of psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students and how they experience stress. It is important to study how the subset of psychology faculty experience online ACPH because many students are introduced to psychology faculty through psychology classes that they are required to take as part of a general college curriculum. Additionally, psychology as an undergraduate academic discipline has remained one of the most popular choices among undergraduate college students for years (American Psychological Association [APA], 2008). Psychology faculty are also often recruited to teach introductory courses, where new students are introduced to various aspects of college, spanning from topics in academics to social topics that may be relevant to the cohort of students. It is likely that psychology faculty interact with a large majority of the student population within the first few terms (Gurung et al., 2016). Additionally, with

more colleges and universities transitioning to online teaching and learning modalities, it is more likely that undergraduate students will be exposed to psychology courses via online modalities.

An additional reason psychology faculty have been defined as the subset to examine is that it may be assumed that there are several parallels between students who enter a psychology curriculum, and students who enter a nursing program. As the nursing profession has been studied extensively regarding ACPH. Both programs are in the helping profession arena. Both psychology and nursing students are concerned with the mind/ body connection and helping an individual determine the cause of symptoms and help alleviate symptoms being experienced (Gross, 2019). With the high incidence of ACPH being studied in the nursing education population, a logical parallel would be to examine similar disciplines, such as psychology.

This research was needed to expand knowledge of how psychology faculty are being cyberbullied by students and experience related stress so that we may provide education and programming for university faculty to minimize negative potential stress effects experienced.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress.

Research Questions

My aim of this study was to explore how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress. Two research questions were created to explore the lived

experience of the participants in the study. These two research questions were used to develop the interview questions.

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of online psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students?

RQ2: How are these same faculty members experiencing stress related to the cyberbullying?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation used to frame the experiences of faculty was Benson's (1984) contrapower harassment theory. According to Benson's theory, contrapower harassment occurs when individuals in positions of authority are harassed by those over whom they hold perceived power, in an attempt to gain some form of control in the situation. In the context of the university, viewed through the lens of Benson's contrapower harassment theory, faculty would be the target of bullying by students. Hypothesized assumptions of this theory include (a) that those who do not hold the power are attempting to gain power, (b) or that those who do not hold power are attempting to enact a change. An additional assumption is (c) that the bullying act will lead to a shift in power or to the desired change.

Contrapower harassment theory relates to the research question of how faculty are cyberbullied by students, given that the faculty are in a position of power of the students to determine grading criteria, class policies, class assignment criteria and so on (Christensen et al., 2021; Leech, 2017). With the assumption that students are bullying faculty to get something within the faculty's control, the notion that students cyberbully

faculty in order to manipulate how grades are distributed, policies are enforced, assignments are distributed, and so on, is plausible.

In alignment with the hypothesized assumption of the theory, assumptions of this study included that (a) students are attempting to gain power over faculty, (b) or that students are attempting to create a policy change in the classroom. Additionally, an assumption of contrapower harassment theory that applies to this study is (c) that the act of students (online) bullying (psychology) faculty will lead to a shift in power, or to the desired change. More details on contrapower harassment theory, including additional application of the theory in previous research, is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

This study was a qualitative study that is phenomenological in nature. This research design was chosen as I intended to explore the phenomenon of faculty being cyberbullied by students. As we do not yet know how faculty who are victims of contrapower harassment experience stress, taking a general survey of all elements to describe the phenomenon in detail is an appropriate method (Creswell, 2007).

Not enough information is currently known regarding the phenomenon to ask data driven questions that may come with a quantitative design. The qualitative design was appropriate as it allowed for the development of a deep understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The rationale for choosing the phenomenological design was that the research questions were intended to explore the lived experiences of online psychology faculty who have reported being cyberbullied by students, as well as to explore their co-occurring stress.

Data was collected through the use of online surveys completed by eleven online psychology faculty members who reported being cyberbullied by students and experienced stress. The principal (and only) researcher in this study was me. I created the surveys, advertised for recruitment of the surveys, administered surveys, collected results, and analyzed results. Faculty participants were recruited through a purposeful sampling technique, where I used participant pools sourced through online social networking forums. The surveys were completed in an online format, by participants who identified as being psychology faculty members in the United States. NVivo software was used to provide initial key words, themes, and codes of the data. I then used the modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method to further classify and organize coded data (Moustakas, 1994). All these methodologies are consistent with recommendations to analyze data that is phenomenological in nature (Creswell, 2007).

Definitions

Academic contrapower harassment (ACPH): ACPH occurs in an academic setting when someone with less institutional power, such as a student, harasses someone with more institutional power, such as a professor (Burke et al., 2020).

Bullying: Unwanted or aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (Health Resources and Services Administration, 2024).

Bottom-up Bullying: Bullying behaviors occurring from those in a position of less power to a person in a position of greater power (Patrick et al., 2019).

Top- down bullying: Bullying behaviors by an individual with stated or perceived power towards an individual who is in a position of less power (Karthikeyan, 2021).

Contrapower harassment: Harassment (bullying) of an individual who holds real or perceived power by an individual over whom they hold the real or perceived power (Benson, 1984)

Cyberbullying: The use of electronic devices to bully another through harassment, threats, intimidation, impersonating another, or spreading rumors about others (Piotrowski, 2016).

Stress: The feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional pressure. Stress may have mental and/ or physical consequences (Ganster & Rosen, 2013).

Assumptions

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress. Inherent to qualitative research design is a set of assumptions for qualitative research, which were present in this study design. Axiological, ontological, and methodological qualitative assumptions were considered in this research design.

Axiological assumptions are the researcher's values and views on the topic that are present and known in the study (Creswell, 2007). In this study design, I assumed that the study data interpretation may be influenced by the values of the researcher and biased as such. In order to account for such bias, I noted my own assumptions and biases in

margin notes while coding, ensuring to take my own feelings into account and recognize that my feelings could not be present with interpretation of the data.

Ontological assumptions are regarding what is being examined, in the most philosophical sense (Creswell, 2007). Ontological assumptions applied to this research included that the reality and experiences reported by participants are subjective and multiple views and subjective experiences were reported (Creswell, 2007). The structure of everyone's reality and how they interpret the experiences they shared in this research has been determined by past experiences and the subjective nature of interpreting and making sense of those experiences. One's own constructs of the idea of cyberbullying and stress supported their own subjective reality when they reported experiences in this study.

Methodological assumptions are those assumptions that the researcher makes regarding methods used in the research process. In this research, the methods used included phenomenological inquiry to collect data, and the modified Stevick- Colaizzi-Keen method of data analysis. Assumptions of the methods used were that the data analysis process is inductive and that there are simultaneous shaping factors at play in how data is analyzed. Participants' definitions of what cyberbullying and stress is, and their accounts of instances of cyberbullying and stress shaped themes and codes which appeared during the data analysis process.

Additional assumptions of the research and data collection process included that volunteers would come forward and agree to participate in the study. This was ensured through using recruitment methods where a small incentive only was provided.

Compensation of \$50.00 was provided to participants whose surveys were selected for inclusion. \$50.00 is a comparable amount on how much a faculty member may be paid for 15-20 minutes of consulting work. The compensation was not unreasonable and deemed by the institutional review board (IRB) to not unduly influence participant inclusion. A second assumption is that participants would provide honest accounts of their experiences with being cyberbullied by students. By providing measures to protect participant anonymity such as using an anonymous survey program. Additionally, it was assumed that participants would feel “safe” to share in the open- ended, nontimed survey format. Another assumption was that the same participants would provide honest accounts regarding stress they have experienced during the period in which they also experienced cyberbullying by students. The same procedures used to ensure anonymity were put in place to adhere to the assumption of honest account reporting. The final assumption considered was that participants and the overall field of higher education will benefit from this study. Sharing results with academic and administrative community help prove this assumption to be true. The assumptions were important to consider when framing the discussion as this qualitative phenomenological study explored how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress.

Scope and Delimitations

The aim of this study was to explore how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress. The research questions were examined in order to contribute to the understanding of the interactions that may lead to the stress and the ability to recognize and respond to such scenarios. Delimitations of the study included

restricting participation criteria to college and university online psychology faculty, who have been cyberbullied by a student, and who have experienced stress in relation to the cyberbullying.

Theories related to stress due to a pandemic may be present but were not investigated in this research. For example, the theory of technological determinism, where technology use can influence human thought (MacDonald et al., 2022), may influence findings. To account for this, I included instructors who taught prior to the start of coronavirus and excluded instructors who started teaching online only in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The study was open to volunteer participants who are faculty members at U.S. colleges and universities, who teach in the psychology department, who have taught prior to the coronavirus pandemic (year 2021), and who have taught at least one full course via modalities that include at least 60% of the work occurring virtually or through electronic correspondence. Virtual and electronic correspondence may include synchronous videoconferencing modalities and synchronous chat rooms, asynchronous chat rooms and discussion boards, or asynchronous blog posting forums and asynchronous email communications. Also included in the scope of the virtual modality experience is the use of asynchronous email communication, both through private email accounts and university email accounts, as well as the learning management system in which the course is hosted.

Transferability was intended to occur to psychology faculty at U.S. institutions not studied. Additionally, transferability of results may pertain, generally, to additional

social and health science faculty not classified as psychology faculty, who also experience cyberbullying by students. This is assumed as the criteria and skill set of psychology faculty in relation to the other disciplines mentioned above may be similar (Gross, 2001).

The boundary of being cyberbullied by a student(s) includes the acts of using electronic devices to bully a faculty member through harassment, threats, intimidation, impersonating another, or spreading rumors about others (Piotrowski, 2016). The boundary of experiencing stress includes the feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental or emotional pressure. Stress may have mental and/ or physical consequences (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). When assessing both possible cyberbullying behaviors that students exhibit and how faculty are interpreting possible cyberbullying behaviors from students, it is important to note that stress experienced may be in response not to cyberbullying by students, but to environmental or social factors instead. In particular, the coronavirus pandemic may affect how online correspondence occurs. The pandemic forced many colleges and universities to shift to online and virtual modalities. In many cases, faculty and students did not have any preparation time or decision-making ability regarding the format and delivery methods for their courses. Given the potential learning curves associated with using novel online technologies to host courses, it is reasonable to expect that some stress may be experienced by all parties (Slagle et al., 2021).

Limitations

A potential barrier to collecting primary data included recruiting participants to participate in the survey research. I recruited volunteer participants using social networking. My first recruiting point was online networking sites hosted on Facebook that are specifically for psychology faculty. A possible design weakness involved not being able to recruit the desired 10 participants. In order to be allowed to post in several of the Facebook groups, I had to obtain site agreements. I obtained the site agreements through direct contact with the site administrators for each specific group.

Potential limitations related to transferability include my selection of participants being sourced from online modalities of recruitment. As my target sample size of 10 was met using only the recruitment techniques of a Facebook site for psychology faculty, I possibly excluded faculty who do not engage in communication via social networking forums. To address this potential barrier, I used mixed modalities of recruiting. In addition to recruiting participants via the social media sites, I engaged in snowball sampling by asking participants to share the online survey weblink with others who may meet participation criteria. I received two of the 11 responses using the method of snowball sampling. Additional possible limitations of transferability could occur with a small sample size of 11. To account for this, I attempted to source a diverse sample, which is more likely to be representative of a large population (of online psychology faculty) by recruiting in several different online social networking sites, including use of Facebook sites dedicated to faculty, as well as online public sites (such as neighborhood sites), and professional chat sites. By doing this, I ensured participants were not grouped

through affiliation with the social media site that they were recruited from. Use of multiple recruitment points enabled me to vary my data pool.

Dependability was achieved through the use of audit trails. After responses were initially coded and interpreted, a double-check method was used to categorize specific coded words, phrases, or sentences; ensuring that the codes were placed in the correct categories during the initial data analysis. This process served as an objective confirmation method for coded data after interpretation (see Creswell, 2007).

Potential biases that could influence outcomes include my personal experience with being cyberbullied by a student. To separate my own experiences from the storyline of the participants, I did not disclose any of my personal experience with participants and did not interact with the participants. I also kept notes in the page margins during data analysis, in order to recognize and note my own potential biases during coding and interpretation. Additionally, I coded and interpreted data following a theme matrix, allowing opportunity for an interpretation of results that was as objective as possible (Saldana, 2015).

Significance

The results of this study may lead to a greater understanding of how faculty are being bullied by students online, and how that is translating into stress that is experienced by online psychology faculty. The results may also provide information to inform the enactment or modification of institution- based solutions that can effectively decrease student to instructor cyberbullying within higher education. Possible application is based on the micro (individual counseling), mezzo (group counseling) and macro levels

(community wide programming efforts) of theories of social work (Engle & Shutt, 2016). At the microlevel, specific interventions for one-on-one counseling for faculty who experience stress related to cyberbullying may be informed through this study. On a mezzo-level, results from studies on faculty being cyberbullied could potentially lead to small group facilitation that include faculty who are being cyberbullied by students. The purpose of the groups would be therapeutic in nature, with intervention topics stemming from research findings. At the macrolevel, guidelines and procedures for administration and teachers to put in place in response to virtual harassment of faculty by students, may be implemented.

Specifically, this study may contribute to the limited body of knowledge we currently have on how faculty experience cyberbullying and associated stress. The intention is that the results from this study will be used to inform future research regarding faculty being cyberbullied by students. Additionally, this study may also provide information to enact or modify institution- based solutions that can effectively decrease student to instructor cyberbullying within the higher education community.

Summary

Technological innovation, changing student needs, and environmental factors have led to a shift for many colleges and universities to host classes online. How education looks remains consistent across platforms. Student interactions still take place (via discussion boards), an instructor can meet with students for face-to-face lectures or conferences (utilizing videoconferencing software), and students can view a presented lecture in real time (via presentation functions). Also, just like the brick-and-mortar

classroom, with the online classroom comes the topic of bullying. The topic of students bullying other students has been widely discussed in recent years (Llego, 2016; Tolentino, 2016); bullying also occurs in the online classroom.

There has been extensive research on how students cyberbully one another, as well as research indicating that cyberbullied students experience negative emotional consequences as a result (Kowalski et al., 2014). There has also been extensive research on how adults who face harassment by peers at work experience negative emotional consequences (Bester et al., 2017, Cassidy et al., 2017; Duggan, 2017; May & Tenzek, 2018; Nuebling et al., 2013; Snyder- Yuly et al., 2022). However, there is a lack of information on how online college faculty experience cyberbullying and online harassment by students and the negative emotional consequences associated with such experiences.

The limited research on faculty being bullied by students indicates that faculty report suffering negative emotional consequences, such as depression, and negative job consequences, such as lack of focus at work and avoidance of students (Hango, 2021; Veena & Pushpalath, 2016). Previous research in this field is also limited primarily to nursing faculty and how they experience negative emotional effects after experiencing cyberbullying by students (Christensen et al., 2021; Meires, 2018; Seible & Fehr, 2018;). To date, no research was found on how online psychology instructors who experience contrapower harassment via online modalities by students, also experience stress. Using a phenomenological framework, the purpose of this qualitative research was to gain an understanding of how online psychology faculty experience being cyberbullied by

students. Additionally, my aim was to understand how those faculty experience stress as a result of such cyberbullying.

Limitations of the study included possible confounds such as participants experiencing stress that is caused by factors other than being cyberbullied by students. Potential biases on the researcher's part may include my own personal experience with cyberbullying behaviors and attributing my own feelings to participant narratives. To limit potential impact from personal bias on my part, I used open-ended questions in the survey forms and double checked all coded data. Anonymity of all participants aided in eliminating any potential bias on my part as well.

This study is important because it adds to the body of knowledge on how faculty are being cyberbullied by students and discuss factors related to the stress faculty experience because of the bullying. This investigation will help us understand the phenomenon of psychology faculty members who are cyberbullied by students and who are experiencing stress, with the goal of developing evidence-based interventions regarding cyberbullying.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to increase the understanding of how undergraduate psychology instructors who are harassed online by students respond to the harassment and experience stress. The specific research questions addressed through this study were (a) What are the lived experiences of online psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students? and (b) How are these same faculty members experiencing stress related to the cyberbullying?

I conducted the literature review to determine the status of research of the societal problem of contrapower harassment experienced by undergraduate psychology instructors and the related stress they experienced. A review of the literature yielded the following background information, commonalities, and themes relating to the research questions, which are discussed in detail throughout this chapter.

Academic contrapower harassment is a type of harassment that has been recognized as occurring in colleges and universities since 1984 (Benson, 1984). Traditionally recognized as being sexual in nature (Benson, 1984; Grauerholtz, 1989; Matchen & DeSouza, 2000), the variable of gender as a harassing point (i.e., harassed because of being a woman) became more prevalent in higher education (Matchen & DeSouza, 2000). In 2009, Lampman et al. published research citing additional factors, other than sexual or gender issues, that led to contrapower harassment in higher education. These additional variables included acts of student incivility, giving negative attention to the course instructor, and public slander of the instructor (Lampman et al., 2009).

With the introduction of new technologies and the world-wide-web came the opportunity to host college classes online in virtual format. With this new modality for communication came new opportunities for ACPH to occur. The academic landscape has changed, and activities for teaching, learning, and communication between student and instructors has changed (Chan et al., 2020). Several studies have addressed reasons students may bully faculty in an online setting, including entitlement, ease of access to harass, expectations of grades and policies, and rallying for a grade or policy change (Blizard, 2016; Cassidy et al., 2017; De Gagne et al., 2016). Of the limited research on ACPH, recent literature seems to focus on the nursing occupation being at the forefront of ACPH (Cassum, 2017; Christensen et al., 2021; De Gagne et al., 2016; Meires, 2018; Seible & Fehr, 2018). This research suggests that harassment of nursing faculty leads to negative emotional consequences such as emotional exhaustion (Seible & Fehr, 2018) and symptoms of burnout (Blizard, 2016). One main reason cited in the literature regarding nursing faculty and ACPH is the perceived lack of response from administration to the online harassment by students (Hango, 2021).

It is known that adults in the workplace experience stress (Duggan, 2017). Several recent studies review negative emotional reactions and consequences experienced by those who experience stress from workplace interactions. Consequences of stress experienced by adults can include exhibiting burnout symptoms and irrational behavior (Duggan, 2017), exhibiting aggressive behavior (Snyder- Yuly et al., 2022), experiencing extreme fatigue (Nuebling et al., 2013), experiencing the onset symptoms of a panic attack (Cassidy et al., 2017), experiencing loss of productivity at work (May & Tenzek,

2018), and experiencing family and social problems outside of work, attributed to what is happening at work (Bester et al., 2017)

It is also known that in recent years college faculty have reported experiencing ACPH and emotional reactions from the harassment such as burnout symptoms (Blizard, 2016) and emotional exhaustion (Seible & Fehr, 2018). However, few studies have investigated online ACPH of faculty. Of the literature that can be found, themes related to faculty feeling stress and burnout symptoms, as well as voicing the need for support from school administration regarding the online ACPH (Cassidy et al., 2017; Hango 2021), are present.

Literature Search Strategy

For the literature search, I used EBSCO Host and the following electronic databases available through the Walden University Library: PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Socindex, ERIC, Education Source Premier and Academic Search Complete. I also used Google Scholar to search for articles relating to my topic and constructs. Frequently, the option to search all databases was used to find supporting literature. Additionally, I hand-searched the reference list of retrieved articles and selected articles to review that were referenced in the pieces. This study cites 98 sources, including 91 full text articles and four books, and three websites used. The sources date from 1983 to 2024, which I determined to be relevant resources for this review.

The most significant terms used to conduct this search included the following:

- *contrapower harassment*
- *faculty cyberbullying*

- *online harassment*
- *psychology faculty*

The literature review revealed that the term contrapower harassment included the terms *classroom incivility* and *upward bullying*. The three terms listed above, paired with renditions, produced the following phrases:

- *contrapower harassment in higher education*
- *online contrapower harassment*
- *incivilities in higher education*
- *faculty upward bullying*
- *psychology faculty harassment*

Theoretical Foundation

The theory that grounded this study was contrapower harassment theory.

Contrapower harassment theory (Benson, 1984) describes how individuals in positions of authority are harassed by those over whom they hold perceived power, in an attempt to gain power or control in the situation. The following research questions build upon the construct of contrapower harassment by adding the component of emotions experienced when contrapower harassment of faculty occurs. Specifically:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of online psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students?

RQ2: How are these same faculty members experiencing stress related to the cyberbullying?

Assumptions of contrapower harassment theory that apply to the research question include that the student is eager to gain control or power in a scenario, such as power over grading decisions (Anonymous, 2020; Benson, 1984; Crocker, 1983). Assumptions also include that by the student harassing the faculty member, a change in behavior of the faculty member (such as policy change) will occur (De Gagne et al., 2016; Leech, 2017; Riskin et al., 2019). Additionally, it is assumed that the harassing behavior is unwelcome by the faculty member (Cassidy et al., 2017; Christensen et al., 2021; Dereshiwsky, 2020; Meriläinen et al., 2016; May & Tenzek, 2018).

Prior to 1983, the concept of harassment in higher education was designated one way only, from someone in a position of formal power over an individual with little or no equivalent power, such as faculty to student harassment (Benson, 1984; Crocker, 1983). Historically, the reported harassment has been sexual in nature, with a person of greater power harassing a person of less power (Benson, 1984; Crocker, 1983; Grauerholtz, 1989). Crocker, a researcher on harassment in universities, wrote an essay calling for a broadening of the term harassment in universities, but espoused the traditional idea that harassment occurs from the top down and is sexual in nature. However, Benson (1984) pointed out that a different type of sexual harassment was also occurring on university campuses. This time, sexual harassment from the bottom up, or from male students to female professors, was occurring. Benson termed this type of harassment *contrapower harassment*.

Research that followed continued to examine contrapower harassment in academia, again with most studies conducted on contrapower harassment of a sexual

nature. Grauerholtz (1989), found that over half (53%) of the professors participating in his study on contrapower harassment had experienced sexual harassment from students. Matchen and DeSouza (2000) followed with a similar study, this time surveying students regarding engaging in harassing behaviors towards instructors. The researchers found that 32% of students had admitted to harassing faculty. A follow up study by the same authors (2003) indicated that many of the harassing behaviors from students to faculty were either sexual or gender disparaging in nature. In summary, several researchers have found incidents of students sexually harassing faculty (Grauerholtz, 1989; Matchen & DeSouza, 2000). Still lacking, however, was research on contrapower harassment that was non-sexual in nature in academia.

Until 2009, literature involving contrapower harassment on campuses was limited to sexual harassment of faculty by students. In a 2009 study by Lampman et al., the authors described contrapower harassment as harassing behaviors outside of sexual harassment. These behaviors included acts of incivility, negative attention, and sexual attention. In the study, 99% of female faculty and 96% of male faculty had experienced some sort of student incivility, aside from sexual harassment. In this study, both male and female faculty reported negative emotional consequences resulting from the harassment by students.

Additional studies have examined contrapower harassment in the university classroom; many notably occur within the nursing profession. In Mires' (2018) research on nursing students and cyberbullying, the author describes how nursing students question a faculty member's credentials, spread rumors about faculty members, and

discredit faculty members. These are all forms of incivility that represent bullying behaviors from students to faculty. Questioning a faculty member's authority in class or engaging in small instances of classroom incivility may be a precursor to bullying. In a similar study, Seible and Fehr's (2018) study on nursing students who bully faculty describes how faculty can be crushed by student bullying, meaning they are pushed emotionally to the point of exhaustion and hopelessness (Seible & Fehr, 2018).

Contrapower harassment theory has been studied in academia in a general sense. However, to date, aside from exploring how nursing faculty experience ACPH, little discipline specific information can be found regarding how faculty from other specific disciplines experience ACPH. The rationale for selecting ACPH to frame the research question of how online psychology instructors who are harassed by students experience stress was that ACPH examines the phenomenon of the students harassing faculty. Past studies regarding faculty being harassed by students have also been framed by this same theory (Lampman et al., 2009; Meires, 2018; Seible & Fehr, 2018). Specifically, several additional studies have examined online harassment, framed by ACPH (Burke et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2020; May & Tenzek, 2018).

To date, no information can be found regarding how psychology instructors in the online classroom experience contrapower harassment and associated stress. It is important we understand how faculty from each discipline as a whole experience contrapower harassment online. If faculty within the discipline understand how students are interacting, possibly regarding subject specific content online, it may be possible to help tailor presentation of concepts and structure of course policies. There is a fair

amount of research on contrapower harassment in the nursing profession (Mires, 2018). Many studies focus on how students' negative perception of the profession as a whole come into play when they made the decision to harass faculty (Cassum, 2017; Christensen et al., 2021).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Themes identified in the literature that I discuss in this chapter include an overview of harassment in higher education; including how harassment occurs, student to student harassment, student to faculty harassment and harassment via virtual modalities. Additionally, a specific review from the literature of when ACPH has been applied in research, including harassment in the forms of sexual harassment, gender harassment, and harassment occurring via incivility and negative attention. Research regarding reasoning as to why students harass both on ground and online were also be reviewed; including entitlement or feeling allowed (Christensen et al., 2021; Leech, 2017; May & Tenzek, 2018; Penconek, 2020), seeking achievement (Blizard, 2016; Meires, 2018), expectations of procedural factors and grading processes (De Gagne, 2016), and for reasons of social comparison (Benbenishty et al., 2018). The following is a discussion reviewing recent research on the effects harassment and harassment via virtual modalities have on faculty, including symptoms of burnout (Blizard, 2016) and emotional and physical symptoms of stress (Cassidy et al., 2017).

Of the limited research there is on ACPH and its negative emotional effects, the nursing profession has been studied in detail, seemingly more than the other professions. A review of research regarding ACPH among nursing faculty is also included in the

following literature review. A review of workplace bullying and stress effects on adults is included to provide insight on how faculty may experience and handle stress. To finalize this literature review, a summary of how faculty respond to ACPH and how they believe the ACPH should be addressed through administration's efforts is also included.

Harassment in Higher Education

When teaching and learning is occurring online, the following tasks may take place by using online and virtual technologies: (a) video conferencing where multiple students can participate at once, (b) completion of discussion question responses in areas where students can post in response to one another, (c) remote access of learning objects, and (d) completion of quizzes and assignments where instant feedback is provided (Basilaia et al., 2020). The typical medium within which these tasks take place is known as a course management system (CMS), brand names of which include Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle, and Microsoft Teams (UNESCO, 2020). Additionally, students may use electronic channels such as Zoom videoconferencing software to chat face to face in real time (Slagle et al., 2021). Non-web-based technologies such as cellular phone texting and asynchronous (not real time) communication channels such as e-mail may also be used (Basilaia et al., 2020). For purposes of this literature review, any electronic modalities discussed can be classified as belonging to one of the four categories listed above, synchronous videoconferencing capabilities, asynchronous discussion board hosting, remote on- demand access to learning objects, and completion of assignments and quizzes with ability to receive feedback. Given the numerous technologies available to

facilitate online teaching and learning, workplace cyberbullying and online harassment have become escalating problems around the world (Snyder- Yuly et al., 2022).

Types of Contrapower Harassment

In addition to the historical context of sexual harassment from student to faculty member that occurs as a form of ACPH, gender harassment has also been a prevalent way in which students harass faculty, as found in the review of the literature. Gender harassment is a type of harassment where disparaging remarks regarding one's gender, including stereotypical and negative assumptions regarding gender, are displayed, or the gender of the individual is pointed out via remarks or communication via public or private channels (Boring, 2017; Clancy et al., 2017, Schultz, 2001; Taylor et al., 2017). Another way in which students may virtually harass faculty is through being uncivil, by not following processes or class rules (Lampman et al., 2009). Additionally, publicly questioning the faculty member in a manner that challenges the faculty member is another way ACPH occurs. An additional discussion follows of ways students harass.

Why Students Harass

It may not be feasible to address what it is about online modalities that makes cyberbullying possible, as that endeavor would entail a shift in multiple technologies and platforms (Chan et al., 2020). However, it is warranted to further investigate the reasons students cyberbully faculty, and what faculty and administration can do to respond to ACPH instances occurring online, as this is an issue we may be able to address by changing reactions to the cyberbullying and circumstances that perpetuate the cyberbullying.

The main reasons for ACPH identified in the literature review include entitlement and ease of access, expectations of the course procedures, and achievement-motivations (Christensen et al., 2021; Leech, 2017; May & Tenzek, 2018). A student who feels entitled believes they should receive special conditions, leniency on coursework deadlines, and grading curves because of the position they hold. In May and Tenzek's (2018) exploration on contrapower harassment in higher education, faculty reported that student athletes feel they should be privy to such special considerations. Additionally, students may feel entitled to special treatment because they are consumers of services. Christensen et al., (2021) and May and Tenzek reported that faculty stated that many students attest that since they pay for their classes, the classes should be delivered and assessed with the end result being a passing grade. The idea of students feeling entitled because of their position as a consumer was threaded throughout the literature (Leech, 2017; Penconek, 2020; May & Tenzek, 2018; Singleton- Jackson et al., 2010). In a literature review regarding faculty who are cyberbullied by students, Álvarez-García et al. (2015) summarized how ease of access to technologies and platforms allowed for students to cyberbully more easily. For example, a student can typically access their online courses from apps on their cellphone, where they are then able to easily access communication mediums within the course, or associated with the course, which the cyberbullying occurs through these channels.

An additional theme in the research regarding why students harass professors is related to academic achievement. Meires (2018) found that students often bully professors for personal gain (such as grade changes or grading curves). In Blizard's

(2016) study examining contrapower harassment in a Canadian university, which this study focuses on online faculty and online harassment, the findings revealed that a majority of student to faculty cyberbullying was regarding student dissatisfaction with grading processes or the grades awarded. Lampman et al. (2016) found similar results noting that faculty state the main reason for student harassment of faculty was grade dissatisfaction.

Other studies suggest that students engage in online incivility toward instructors in an attempt to change classroom policies or practices (Llego, 2016). May and Tenzek's (2018) narratives taken from the viewpoint of a bullied faculty member substantiate these themes. They also provide accounts of how students bullied faculty members through public social media channels by questioning their credentials or ability to effectively teach the course. Additionally, May and Tenzek discussed how faculty reported being harassed over classroom policies that students contest, such as attendance policies. In De Gagne et al.'s (2016) systematic review of literature regarding contrapower harassment of healthcare faculty, occurrences such as late assignment feedback and time of posting of feedback resulted in harassment by students. More recent contrapower research discussed students pressuring professors through harassing emails to change grades (Riskin et al., 2019).

Faculty Specific Emotional Reactions to ACPH (not Virtual)

Faculty responses (physical, emotional, and procedural) to ACPH were discussed in the reviewed literature. Studies examining ACPH in traditional modalities (not designated virtual) have a common theme of faculty experiencing symptoms of burnout,

emotional exhaustion, and stress as a result of being the victims of contrapower harassment. Another very common theme in the literature on ACPH is ACPH happening in the nursing professions.

Christensen et al.'s 2021 analysis of nursing faculty's experiences with harassment by undergraduate nursing students showed that faculty reported feeling angry, upset and distressed after displays of contrapower harassment from students. Additionally, a large part of the discussion centered around the nursing faculty's expectations from higher administration regarding the harassment, which will be discussed later in this section.

An interesting circumstance that should be noted is that in studies on ACPH from the years 2019 to 2021, the Coronavirus pandemic had been a driving force for universities and colleges to either shut down or operate fully online. In two of the reviewed studies on ACPH that were conducted during that time, the authors noted that the faculty were teaching online when the studies were conducted; however the research questions were not written to specify if they referenced on-ground or online teaching modalities (Hango, 2021; Leech, 2017). The results from both studies, and others during the same timeframe, if not otherwise specified, may be interpreted as regarding faculty experiences with virtual harassment as well.

In Hango's (2021) study intended to examine harassment in the university, teachers, teaching assistants, and post-doctoral fellows were surveyed regarding harassment (not noted online or on ground). Seventy percent of respondents indicated that the harassment occurred in the form of subordinate to authority figure (contra-power

harassment). Of the faculty who indicated they were harassed by students, faculty noted that one of the main reactions was that overall, they felt uncomfortable being at work. In Leech's 2017 study of male nurse educators of nursing students, the authors also made a point to note that the results could not be attributed to on-ground or online harassment specifically, as data was collected during the pandemic and questions did not indicate if the environments were on-ground or online. Respondents in this study who experience ACPH reported feeling anxious, having a lack of confidence regarding teaching abilities, and blaming themselves for the harassment by students.

Faculty specific emotional reactions to Virtual ACPH

Burnout, anxiety symptoms, stress. Of the literature presented regarding university faculty and virtual ACPH, the themes of burnout, stress, and anxiety were noted repeatedly. In Blizard's 2016 study of virtual ACPH, faculty reported feeling symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as a loss of confidence in their role as a faculty member and expert, resulting from harassment by students. Cassidy et al. (2016) found similar results, with instructors across Canadian universities who experienced online harassment by students. These faculty also reported feeling stress, nervousness, and anxiety when cyberbullying by students occurs. Additionally, faculty members considered quitting their job or leaving the profession as a whole as a result of cyberbullying. Faculty in Cassidy et al.'s (2017) follow-up study regarding online student reviews of faculty reported symptoms such as stress, nervousness, and anxiety because they are concerned that negative end-of course reviews could possibly lead to job loss.

Changing of content or procedures in response to the Virtual ACPH. An additional theme regarding faculty reactions to the virtual ACPH was the changing of content or procedures to accommodate the harassing student(s), i.e., to avoid being harassed. A 2018 qualitative study conducted by May and Tenzek was conducted with the purpose of exploring university professor's experiences with ACPH. The authors reported faculty experience harassment by students in both on-ground and online modalities. Faculty also report that after being harassed by students online regarding course policies or procedures, they felt they need to change course content online. Faculty report doing this, not to present instructional material in a better way, but to avoid harassment by students. In Frisby et al.'s 2015 qualitative study regarding students' instructional dissent and their relationships with faculty members, faculty who teach online report a lack in confidence regarding their own self efficacy in teaching practices, and changing processes and expectations to meet student demands, as the faculty member is questioning their initial content and procedural online decisions.

Response by Faculty and Administration to Virtual ACPH

One pervasive theme occurring in the literature regarding virtual ACPH is the perceived absent or inadequate lack of response from college administration regarding virtual harassment. In Blizard's (2016) mixed- methods study examining Canadian university faculty members' experiences of cyberbullying by students, faculty reported that many times it seems as if the administration is not aware of the amount of cyberbullying occurring. Faculty in the study reported that administration response may be inadequate and they are therefore afraid to report cyberbullying, noting that they are

afraid that after the administration reacts to the cyberbullying report, the faculty member may experience further victimization. Cassidy et al. (2017) surveyed students, faculty, staff, and administration in higher education across Canadian universities regarding cyberbullying instances occurring at the universities. Faculty being cyberbullied by students reported that they felt the workplace had become toxic after they notified the administration of the cyberbullying but no action was taken, or not taken as seriously as faculty believe to be warranted.

In Christensen et al.'s 2021 examination of nursing faculty and ACPH, nursing faculty who reported being harassed by students online were administered a self-report survey indicating that is that they felt unsupported by the administrated at the university. Several respondents indicated it is easier to let the student get away with the "bad behavior" than report it to administration.

Snyder-Yuly et al. (2022) used the concept of "homogenic civility" to describe how the online harassment gets worse when there is no response. In the authors' descriptive study where faculty members at different levels in their careers described the perpetuation of bullying behaviors by students, faculty reported that harassment seemed to increase when not responded to. Faculty in the study reported that many times, they had few options to respond to the bullying, because of inadequate response from the administration.

Even when assistance from the administration was implemented, such as no contact orders to students, instructors found emotional relief from consequences of harassment only when their separation from the institution occurred (Matchen &

DeSouza, 2000). In an anonymous narrative (2020), a faculty member at a Canadian university discussed her experiences being cyberbullied by a university student. She reported that the cyberbullying became worse after the school authorities became involved.

These accounts are important to my research because it provides justification and a lived account of the problem of student to faculty cyberbullying.

How Faculty Can Respond, What is Asked of Administration

Several recent studies have also addressed how faculty and administration members may be able to address or discourage contrapower harassment from occurring online.

One tactic to possibly prevent student incivility from occurring would be to recognize students who are anxious about or unprepared for the rigors of being a student and achieving academic success, and to adequately prep them for such hurdles (Meires, 2018). An additional suggestion offered by May and Tenzek (2018) is to manage student expectations in the online environment, as some may harass when class procedures and processes such as grading requirements are not consistent with what the student expects to be true of the course.

The above addressed findings are important as they illustrate that emotional effects of the harassment are currently problematic for faculty, and research reports that faculty believe that current solutions to address the problem do not seem to be working.

Examination of Workplace Stress and Academic Workplace Stress

To aid in the examination of the research questions, investigating the notion of how adults in the general workplace experience stress when harassed by others is appropriate. Following that is also be a discussion on workplace stress experienced in academic settings.

Consequences of stress experienced by adults in the workplace can include burnout symptoms and irrational behavior (Duggan, 2017), exhibiting aggressive behavior (Snyder- Yuly et al., 2022), experiencing extreme fatigue (Nuebling et al., 2013), experiencing the onset symptoms of a panic attack (Cassidy et al., 2017), experiencing loss of productivity at work (May & Tenzek, 2018), and experiencing family and social problems outside of work, attributed to what is happening at work (Bester et al., 2017). Adults in the academic workplace do report that stress can lead to negative effects such as aggressive behavior (Snyder- Yuly et al., 2022), a desire to leave the profession (May & Tenzek, 2018), and increased problems at home (Bester et al., 2017).

It is clear that faculty at universities may experience workplace stress. It is also evident that workplace stress may result from harassing behaviors by students. Regarding online harassment (online ACPH) a discussion of why students may decide to harass faculty is warranted to help us understand the dynamics of online ACPH.

Why Students Harass Faculty

Sexual Harassment

As Lampman et al. (2009) noted, research regarding contrapower harassment of faculty includes many reports of sexual harassment. Lampman et al. introduced the idea of non-sexual contrapower harassment when surveying faculty who reported other types of harassing behaviors occurring. In this study, 96% of faculty reported at least one act of student incivility. Of those respondents, 26% reported the incivility or hostility from a student as being sexual in nature.

In response to Crocker's description of how sexual harassment was prevalent on college campuses, Benson (1984) added that another type of harassment also occurred, this time by students towards faculty. Benson noted that harassment of faculty by students was also occurring on college campuses. Benson referred to this type of harassment as "contrapower harassment."

Contrapower harassment in an educational setting is "student incivility, bullying, and sexual attention aimed at faculty" (Lampman et al., 2009, p. 331). The authors studied the incidence rate of, as well as the impacts resulting from, contrapower harassment. In their study of male and female US higher education faculty members, the authors conducted an exploratory study of contrapower harassment. They found that tenure track faculty and female faculty seemed to be at the greatest risk of being bullied by students, indicating gender was a factor in harassment. Additionally, respondents reported experiencing a severe disruption to their work and home lives because of the harassment, including feelings of stress and burnout. Additionally, recent studies indicate

that faculty who are bullied may be at greater risk for short- and long-term health problems resulting from the bullying (Cassidy et al., 2017). Thus, bullying of faculty is not only an occupational concern, but a health concern as well.

Sexual harassment of professors by students is still prevalent. In Lampman et al.'s (2009) study of higher education faculty, 25% of respondents reported being the victim of sexual harassment and bullying behaviors from students. King (2019) provided a narrative that contained a lived account of contrapower harassment of faculty, as well as an account of the prevalence of sexual harassment towards faculty. King, a university professor, described how a student's unwanted sexual comments via online modalities eventually caused her to leave her position and resulted in a long-lasting feeling of depression. Although many faculty report contrapower harassment as being sexual in nature, researchers warn not to attribute too much to sexual harassment, as sexuality and sexual harassment claims may be confused with gender harassment (Schultz, 2001). This means we should not assume all types of harassment are sexual and that we should not stop the exploration of contrapower harassment at sexual harassment.

Gender Harassment

In a recent study on gender harassment in higher education, Schultz (2001) describes the gender opprobrium, where inclusion in a particular group (the female gender in this case) leads an individual to feelings of disgrace. An example of this is that students make negative comments about a faculty member's appearance. Faculty report that hearing comments such as this leaves them wondering, *am I valued only for my appearance, not what I have to offer as a faculty member?* Additionally, Schultz (2001)

and others (Mitchell & Martin, 2018) have reported that faculty believe that students tend to evaluate female faculty more negatively than their male counterparts. Recent research has examined the experiences of contrapower harassment towards female sport management faculty members. In this exploratory study of women working in the male-dominated field of sports management in higher education, the authors found that women felt students harassed, criticized, and treated them uncivilly but did not do the same to male faculty (Taylor et al., 2017). Similar research has found that female faculty in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) programs in higher education believe they are harassed more by students than their male colleagues. Female faculty reported that students tend to evaluate them more negatively than their male counterparts based on gender stereotypes (Boring, 2017; Clancy et al., 2017; Dengate et al., 2019). Gender stereotyping of female faculty is prevalent according to the literature on ACPH.

Several recent studies have identified reasons students may bully faculty, aside from sexual or gender-based harassment. The reasons can be classified into three categories discussed in this review, described by May and Tenzek (2018): achievement, entitlement, and expectations.

Achievement

In Blizard's (2016) study examining contrapower harassment in a Canadian university, the findings revealed that a majority of student to faculty cyberbullying was regarding student dissatisfaction with grading processes or the grades awarded. Lampman et al. (2016) found similar results noting that faculty state the main reason for student

harassment of faculty was grade dissatisfaction. Meires (2018) also found that students often bully professors for personal gain (such as grade changes or grading curves).

Entitlement

One reason reported in the literature that students may harass faculty was student entitlement. A student who feels entitled believes they should receive special conditions, leniency on coursework deadlines, and grading curves because of the position they hold. In May and Tenzek's (2018) exploration on contrapower harassment in higher education, faculty reported that student athletes feel they should be privy to special considerations. Additionally, students may feel entitled to special treatment because they are consumers of services. Christensen et al., (2021) and May and Tenzek (2018) report that faculty stated that many students attest that since they pay for their classes, the classes should be delivered and assessed with the result being a passing grade. The idea of students feeling entitled because of their position as a consumer was threaded throughout the literature (Leech, 2017; Penconek, 2020; May & Tenzek, 2018; Singleton- Jackson et al., 2010).

Expectations of Procedural Factors

Other studies suggest that students engage in online incivility towards instructors in an attempt to change classroom policies or practices (Llego, 2016). May and Tenzek's (2018) narratives taken from the viewpoint of a bullied faculty member substantiates these themes. They also provide accounts of how students bullied faculty members through public social media channels by questioning their credentials or ability to effectively teach the course.

May and Tenzek (2018) discussed how faculty reported being harassed over classroom policies that students contest, such as attendance policies. In De Gagne et al.'s (2016) systematic review of literature regarding contrapower bullying of healthcare faculty, occurrences such as late assignment feedback and late posting of grades resulted in harassment by students. More recent contrapower research discussed students pressuring professors through harassing emails to change grades (Riskin et al., 2019).

Faculty Emotional Responses to Contrapower Harassment

Faculty Respond Emotionally

Recent studies reveal that faculty who are harassed experience negative emotional and physical consequences. In Lampman et al.'s (2016) study addressing contrapower harassment targeted towards female faculty members, more than half of respondents noted that they suffered negative consequences, such as stress-related illness, resulting from the harassment from students (Lampman et al., 2016). Khan et al.'s (2018) study of higher education faculty in the brick-and-mortar environment also found a relationship between job stress and faculty emotional exhaustion.

Blizard (2016) studied the construct of stress and burnout among university faculty, adding the component of online teaching. Blizard (2016) studied online faculty who experienced stress and emotional exhaustion. A key point in this research was that the modality used was what led to the faculty feeling emotionally exhausted. Faculty reported that using online modalities to communicate with students and facilitate instruction often leads to them feeling this way. Similar results were found by García-González et al. (2020), in their study examining online higher education faculty who

experience burnout. In this study, the variable of gender was examined in relation to faculty feeling burnout when teaching online. The study results indicated that for the female faculty respondents, emotional exhaustion is a risk factor for burnout for those teaching online. Respondents noted burnout symptoms occurred during communications with students, many times because faculty members were combatting students who were bullying them online. The concept of faculty being exhausted by interactions with unruly students is also supported by the results of Cassidy et al.'s (2017) study that indicates online interactions with students who harass may cause stress for online faculty. Several other recent studies have also shed light on how online faculty may be feeling stress or burnout in their teaching profession (Daumiller et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2018).

How Faculty Should Respond, Administrative Support

Several recent studies have also addressed how faculty and administration members may be able to address or discourage contrapower harassment from occurring online. One tactic to possibly prevent student incivility from occurring would be to recognize students who are anxious about or unprepared for the rigors of being a student and achieving academic success, and to adequately prep them for such hurdles (Meires, 2018). An additional tactic offered by May and Tenzek (2018) is to manage student expectations, as some may harass when class procedures and processes such as grading requirements are not consistent with what the student expects to be true of the course.

An overarching theme from the research is that faculty feel there is a lack of institutional support in situations where contrapower harassment is occurring (Matchen & DeSouza, 2000; May & Tenzek, 2018). Even when assistance from administration is put

in place, such as no contact orders to students, instructors find emotional relief from consequences of harassment only when their separation from the institution occurred (Matchen & DeSouza, 2000).

In an anonymous narrative (2020), a faculty member at a Canadian university discussed her experiences being cyberbullied by a university student. She reported that the cyberbullying became worse after the school authorities became involved. This account is important to my research because it provides justification and a lived account of the problem of student to faculty cyberbullying. Other recent studies that examine contrapower harassment in academia center around the topic of sexual harassment (King, 2019; Schultz, 2018). Additional research indicates that when faculty are cyberbullied by students, the bullying seemed to increase or become more pervasive when the administration got involved (Matchen & DeSouza, 2000; May & Tenzek, 2018). These findings are important as they illustrate that effects from the harassment are currently problematic for faculty, and current solutions to address the problem do not seem to be working.

Summary and Conclusion

From 1984 until approximately 2009, the assumption regarding contrapower harassment was that the harassment was sexual in nature. In 2009, other forms of harassment from student to faculty members, besides harassment that was sexual in nature, became apparent (Lampman et al., 2009). These other types of harassment included acts of incivility in the online environment and negative attention towards faculty in the online environment (Lampman et al., 2009). Reasons for ACPH include

students being dissatisfied with grades and seeking achievement (Blizard, 2016; Christensen et al., 2021; Leech, 2017; Meires, 2018), having unmet expectations (Leech, 2017; May & Tenzek, 2018; Singleton- Jackson et al., 2010), arguing course procedures and policies (Christensen et al. 2021; De Gagne et al., 2016; Llego, 2016; May & Tenzek 2018; Riskin et al. 2019) and because of an imbalance of power as measured by social status (Benbenishty et al., 2018).

There is a limited amount of recent research surrounding the topic of faculty being bullied by students online. There appears to be a large concentration of literature on faculty within the nursing profession being victims of ACPH (Cassum, 2017; Christensen et al., 2021; Meires, 2018; Seible & Fehr, 2018).

There is little in the literature regarding emotional reactions to ACPH by faculty members. Of the limited research found, negative effects for faculty who are cyberbullied by students includes symptoms of burnout (Daumiller et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2018), anxiety, nervousness, and stress (Blizard, 2016; Cassidy et al., 2017).

An examination of how adults in a general workplace setting (non- academic) experience stress may help us frame an understanding of how faculty experience stress in their workplace setting.

When experiencing workplace stress, adults in the academic workplace do report that stress can lead to negative effects such as displaying aggressive behavior at work (Owen & Patton, 2020), a desire to leave the institution or their profession (May & Tenzek, 2018) and problems at home (Bester et al., 2017).

Researchers have provided accounts to help us gain an understanding of how online contrapower harassment occurs. Additionally, in the academic nursing profession, emotional reactions in faculty who have experienced contrapower harassment, including burnout symptoms and symptoms of stress, have been studied.

It is known that stress in the academic workplace can lead to detrimental physical, emotional, and personal problems. It is unclear in many of the recent studies of the emotional outcomes of ACPH if the studies were regarding on ground, online, or a combination of both, harassment. Additionally, what we do not yet know is how faculty outside of the health professions, specifically psychology faculty, experience stress related to cyberbullying by students. This study was designed to address both of those questions.

It is important to understand cyberbullying of faculty by students so we can better understand how psychology faculty currently interact with students online, including teaching their courses, and how psychology faculty experience stress resulting from being cyberbullied by students. This study helps us to understand facets of how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress. Specifically examined was how psychology instructors experience stress, and what cyberbullying behaviors are included. Information from this study may help us understand factors to consult on when deciding the best teaching and class management activities which may assist in responding to and/ or eliminating cyberbullying behaviors by students.

Chapter 3 provides a rationale for, and description of the research design used in this study. Briefly, this description includes identification of the faculty target population

selected for this study, a description of methods used to collect data, an overview of data interpretation methods and a review of constructs addressed in the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress. This chapter includes a description of the study design, the rationale of the research, procedures for recruitment, and procedures for data analysis. Additionally, I provide information on the qualitative method and design, as well as information regarding how questions used during the interview helped the researcher understand the lived experiences of participants. In this qualitative phenomenological study, I collected information concerning the prevalence of contrapower harassment experienced by online psychology faculty. This exploration included interview questions based on Lampman's (2012) contrapower harassment survey, which was created to examine the prevalence of disrespectful or hostile student behaviors.

Research Design and Rationale

In this phenomenological design, information was collected to contribute to our understanding of how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress. Creswell (2007) recommended using qualitative research when not much is known about the topic being examined. Not much is known regarding contrapower harassment of online psychology instructors. Additionally, the phenomenological design involves understanding a phenomenon through the individual's interpretation of the meaning of the event (Creswell, 2007). In this study, instructors' interpretations of contrapower harassment, in the form of cyberbullying, by students were explored. Additionally, the construct of stress that instructors who are cyberbullied by students experience was

explored. I used open-ended survey questions that were derived from examining past, similar studies. Additionally, questions were developed, in part, from Lampman's (2012) contrapower harassment survey. The survey administration protocol consisted of providing participants with an online survey, which included five open-ended questions. The focus of the questions was on capturing the participants' experiences in accordance with phenomenological inquiry (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The rationale for this qualitative phenomenological research design was to attempt to understand and interpret how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress. The goal of qualitative research was to gain knowledge to begin to formulate an understanding of lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Phenomenological research methods are used when the population being studied is associated with a rare or new concept and has not been studied enough to yet to understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The experiences of faculty being bullied by students online is a relatively novel concept, in part because the online learning environment is rather new (Llego, 2016; Tolentino, 2016). Additionally, since the coronavirus made its appearance in the United States in 2020, many college faculty members have been forced to transition to primarily online modalities. Using these online modalities to facilitate instruction activities is a novel experience for many faculty members (Sailer et al., 2021). The results of this study could lead to insight regarding how faculty are being bullied by students online. The results also provide information to inform the enactment or modification of institution- based solutions that can effectively decrease student-to-instructor cyberbullying within the higher education community.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were developed to attempt to understand and interpret how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress. Two initial research questions were developed to help explore the lived experiences of participants.

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of online psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students?

RQ2: How are these same faculty members experiencing stress related to the cyberbullying?

Role of the Researcher

For this study, I was in the role of the data collector, collecting and analyzing all data obtained through online open-ended surveys. Participants were prompted to engage in a free flow of information sharing after each question prompt was provided via the online survey form. I had no prior relationship with study participants. There were no conflicts of interest with study participants. The study participants were initially recruited and selected using social media sites and teaching specific online forums. A snowball sampling technique was also used to recruit additional participants. Snowball sampling is a purposeful sampling technique in which participants recommend other participants, who may meet study inclusion criteria, to be included in the research (Creswell, 2007).

To reduce the potential impact from personal bias on my part in the question formation, I included open-ended questions in the online survey. Data analysis occurred through coding and analyzing survey data using NVivo analysis software and using the

modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method. Additionally, analytic memos were used and analyzed after data collection in order to recognize and address any potential issues of bias or assumptions of meaning that may have been created from my personal viewpoint as the researcher.

Methodology

Participation Selection Logic

The population for this study included online psychology faculty. This includes both full time and adjunct faculty who teach at least one 3+ credit psychology course per year at a college or university. The study was limited to psychology faculty who had been teaching online prior to 2021. The study consisted of 11 participants. The sample size was selected so there was enough data to include different viewpoints and experiences, but small enough to allow for thematic analysis (Saldana, 2015).

The sampling strategy included the use of purposeful random sampling, which is a deliberate way of selecting the sample based on specific criteria (see Creswell, 2007). Additionally, a snowball sampling method was used, where additional participants were solicited by current study participants by sharing the online survey link (see Creswell, 2007). These methods were selected to ensure that I was able to find participants who self-reported having experiences related to the selection criteria, so that participants who do not meet the criteria are eliminated.

Study participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) teach college psychology online, (b) have experienced student to faculty cyberbullying, and (c) report

experiencing stress related to the cyberbullying. The recruitment invitation that was posted on social media is included in Appendix A of this paper.

Instrumentation

The purpose of qualitative inquiry was to learn as much information about the topic as possible in order to gain an understanding of the topic (Saldana, 2015). The survey questions and information gathered from the responses were the crux of the method (Creswell, 2007). Instruments used for data collection in this research included participant responses to open-ended survey questions. The questions created from the scales used for this research are included in Appendix B. The survey questions were developed by the researcher and informed by Lampman et al.'s (2009) scales on student incivility and student bullying, which Lampman et al. defined as contrapower harassment. Items representing each theme from Lampman et al.'s survey were included in the question development for the survey questions used in this study. Questions were open-ended in nature and not leading. Content validity of the scales has been established with the creation of the scales. Lampman et al. (2009) described the development of the scales, including a pilot study to validate items of the scales. The research questions derived from Lampman et al.'s surveys were sufficient to address the research question of how online psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress, as Lampman et al.'s research in the field is pioneering, and many other scholars use the instrumentation to measure the same constructs in similar studies (Cooley, 2013).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The population consisted of undergraduate faculty members who teach psychology in an online format. The study was not limited to any geographical region, as recruitment was done through social media sites that individuals across the United States have access to via technology.

In qualitative research, it is important that the sample size is not too large so that analyzing the data does not become cumbersome. However, it is also important that the sample size is not too small, because then it is more likely to miss important viewpoints, thus lacking saturation of data. The sample size selected for this study was 10 participants. The number chosen for the sample size was informed by reviewing the methods of previous, related research. Additionally, for phenomenological research, a sample size of 10 is recommended (see Creswell, 2007). Once the research concluded, a total of 11 responses were used in data analysis, as 11 participants met the inclusion criteria with complete responses to the online survey questions.

I initially recruited participants through purposeful random sampling procedures. I initially recruited by posting on social media, specifically Facebook sites dedicated to teaching and research and sites for psychology teaching faculty. Snowball sampling, with recommendations for additional participants from current study participants, was also used (Creswell, 2007).

The recruitment post detailed the purpose of the study, estimated time to complete the online survey process, compensation information, and a hyperlink to a confidential online form where the participant learned more about the study. Additionally, participants

completed an online consent form, which explained how participation in the study was voluntary and that they had the ability to exit study participation anytime without penalty. Survey response time lasted on average 25 minutes.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of qualitative research and interviewing is to collect as much individual information regarding a topic as possible, fusing the accounts together to create a shared understanding of the experience of the phenomenon (see Creswell, 2007). The phenomenological theory was used as the research methodology for this qualitative study. The goal was to create a picture of online psychology faculty who have experienced the phenomenon of contrapower harassment, in the form of cyberbullying by students, and experienced stress as part of the overall experience. This was completed through participants completing an online survey with open-ended questions regarding cyberbullying and stress. The survey questions were created to help understand the research topic of how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress.

Data from the survey question responses were coded using NVivo software, and I continued coding using the modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method to further classify and organize coded data (see Moustakas, 1994). As part of the modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method, analytic memos were recorded and analyzed during data analysis as well. Discrepant, yet complete, cases were considered as part of the study, as each participant's experiences to be shared hold value. Codes of concurrent and recurring

themes were addressed mainly; however, a discussion did revolve around discrepant cases.

Coding of Survey Data and Analytic Models

The data collected during the surveys were presented in eight questions. The initial questions were created to gain an understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

The data collected was categorized and coded using the raw data from the survey responses. Initial categories were created using the NVivo software program. The program identified codes found in the transcriptions and provides a matrix of codes. The NVivo program provided frequent use of word statistics, identified additional topics, and overall themes.

I then analyzed and interpreted the codes and themes identified by the NVivo program by employing the modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method to further classify and organize coded data (Moustakas, 1994). This method of separating and classifying the data is completed in five steps: (1) the researcher divulges their own experiences with the topic in hopes to air any of their own experiences and separate them from the data analysis moving forward, (2) a list of significant statements is created using NVivo software, (3) significant statements were grouped into large units of cohesive statements, (4) a description of what happened and how the experience described happened for each participant is detailed, and (5) a full description of the experience using researcher notes (analytic memos) is created as well. This helped to gain an understanding of the

participants' experiences, which incorporates verbal statements, research notes, and contextual factors as well (Creswell, 2007).

As part of the modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method, analytic memos were recorded and analyzed. An analytic memo is a note written by the researcher while coding that reflects upon coding processes and choices (see Saldana, 2015). By using analytic memos and providing my thought processes behind the interpretation of codes, I continued to create meaning for the codes and to gain a deeper understanding of my role in the interpretation of the data and code choices.

By utilizing analytic memos to deconstruct coding decisions, I addressed the concept of potential bias on the part of the researcher. The key questions and concepts to consider when reviewing the analytic memos include: (a) the researcher's personal relation to and experience with the research topic, (b) a reflection of the code categories and the operational definitions created for the code categories, (c) a reflections of propositions and assumptions in the themes and codes emerging, and (d) reflect upon connections between the categories of codes (see Saldana, 2015).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

According to Creswell (2007), the credibility of data refers to the accuracy with which data was collected and analyzed. Tactics used to increase the likelihood of credibility occurring included data saturation (Naeem et al., 2023). Saturation occurs when no additional information can be extracted (Naeem et al., 2023). Naeem et al. (2023) recommend using an inductive thematic analysis after data have been coded to

ensure saturation. I examined run lengths to do so. In this method, I determined how many themes were included in each response. I compared the number of themes found with the time it takes to complete each survey online, coming up with an average number per survey that was expected. For any responses that did not have several themes consistent with others, I again read and coded the response and ensuring all themes and key points had been addressed.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of the research can be applied to other, similar situations (Creswell, 2007). Also termed external validity, it refers to the thickness of data. Ensuring the thickness of data means that the descriptions of participant characteristics are vivid and detailed enough so that readers can gain an accurate picture of the characteristics of the study population, so they can make an informed decision about whether the study results would apply to other individuals in settings outside of the research. In this research, variation in participant selection can help ensure transferability. Through using recruiting processes that reach all demographic areas, participants hold varying characteristics from one another. This helped to ensure that participants were not too similar in characteristics, and thus more able to generalize results to others.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the concept that the results are consistent over time. The researcher followed and documented detailed processes during all aspects of the research. This was done so that others can replicate the findings (Creswell, 2007).

Additionally, documenting findings is an important part of establishing dependability, so others can replicate the study processes. In this study, an audit trail was created so that another researcher could replicate the study. An audit trail is a thorough collection of all documents and processes related to the research (Creswell, 2007). This collection can be found in Figure 1, Appendix A, and Appendix B.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which findings are representative of the participants and not the opinions of the researcher. To help ensure confirmability, I practiced reflexivity, gaining an understanding of my own role in the research and my own opinions on the topic. The modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method was used to address reflexivity. With this method, the researcher takes purposeful time to write down and detail all their own experiences, preconceived notions, and possible biases related to the research topic. By doing this, the researcher is able to identify any possible researcher biases and be aware of the intersectionality between those possible biases and data interpretations.

Reliability

Additionally, intracoder reliability between my own coding of themes and NVivo codes provided was considered as the data was coded. Ensuring consistency of the coding was completed to help achieve confirmability (Creswell, 2007). For this research, I used NVivo coding software to gain an initial understanding of themes and keywords in the data. However, before using the software to help decipher themes and keywords, I read over all responses several times to gain a sense of the tone of each response as a whole.

After I used NVivo to code, I then again read over the complete survey responses, codes, themes, and margin notes. I cross-referenced results with the initial notes I made regarding tone, meaning, and consideration of my own possible biases, ensuring alignment of concepts.

Ethical Procedures

I obtained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board prior to research commencing, approval number 02-27-24-0037213. Additionally, I used processes to ensure anonymity in recruiting and in survey administration to protect the confidentiality of participants. The recruitment processes included include detail for participant anonymity. Participant anonymity was ensured by including IP addresses instead of names for participant responses. Additionally, consent forms were completed electronically before survey administration and consent forms did not disclose participant identity.

The informed consent process included detailed written forms that the participants may retain. Forms included details on the nature and purpose of the study, details on what study results will be used for and how study results will be made accessible to the public and to the participant.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of this throughout the research process. The consent form detailed how participants can withdraw their participation from the study at any time via email communication with the researcher, without consequence. Additionally, participants could close the online survey window at any time and abort the attempt without consequence. Participants were asked

to digitally sign the informed consent forms by checking a box and were offered a chance to retain a copy.

To maintain the confidentiality and privacy of all forms and data, data was stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office. Data was not stored online. The researcher's computer does not leave the home, and is password protected. The researcher will store data for a period of five years. Afterwards, all data will be professionally destroyed.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore in what ways psychology undergraduate faculty members are cyberbullied by students, as well as to explore the associated stress experienced by the faculty members. The participants of the study consisted of 10 undergraduate psychology faculty members in both public and private institutions across the United States.

Data collection included individual online open-ended survey responses to attempt to capture lived accounts of the participants' experiences with being cyberbullied by students and experienced stressors. Thematic analysis of the transcripts facilitated the discovery of commonalities and themes pertaining to the research topic. Through this process, I was able to obtain an understanding of the experiences and stress that psychology faculty report when cyberbullied by students.

To ensure credibility, saturation of concepts was achieved through the open-ended survey question format. Transferability was achieved through utilizing a thick description

of data. Dependability was achieved through the use of audit trails. Confirmability was achieved through ensuring reflexivity and considering coder reliability.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how online psychology instructors experience being cyberbullied by their students, as well as examine the faculty members' stress reactions to being cyberbullied by students. Through the process of this study, I gained a comprehensive understanding of how psychology instructors are being cyberbullied by students. Eleven online psychology instructors provided detailed responses to a survey I created regarding online cyberbullying by students. The purpose of the survey was to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of online psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students?

RQ2: How are these same faculty members experiencing stress related to the cyberbullying?

In this chapter, I review how participants were collected and the requirements of participation. I then discuss my data collection and data analysis processes, including information on how I ensured validity and reliability. The chapter concludes with results presented, which include specific quotes that I obtained from instructors during the study.

Participant Recruitment and Requirements for Participation

I recruited participants through social media (Facebook) sites dedicated to psychology teachers or adjunct technical college, college, or university instructors and faculty. Initially, I recruited participants with the intention of being interviewed online using zoom, however when zero participants were sourced in that fashion over a 5-week span, I changed the research plan in order to attempt to gain participants. The new

research plan included me recruiting participants in the same way, but instead of asking for a videoconferencing call, I asked participants to complete an online survey form where they responded to the open-ended interview questions, which addressed the research questions. After I presented the new format to answer the questions of the survey form, I recruited eleven participants within a 2-week timeframe. I gave participants who were selected a \$50.00 compensation for their time, which was paid via an electronic Visa gift card. In order to meet selection criteria for the study, participant requirements included that the participants: (a) teach psychology online since the year 2021 and before, (b) currently are teaching at least one (3+ credit) section of psychology online, (c) teach at a technical college, college, or university in the United States.

Data Collection

The online survey, which included an online informed consent form, was made available to participants for a 2-week period using the SurveyMonkey online survey program. Over the 2-week timeframe that recruitment for taking the survey was open, I received 21 responses to the online survey. As I received each survey response, I checked for completeness and thick descriptions of the response. I did this with each individual response to ensure that the participant completed all questions, that their responses were able to be understood, and that their responses included rich detail and description. Those responses that were not sufficiently detailed were not selected. The responses that were not selected to be included in the study lacked detail, were very brief with vague descriptions, or were responses that simply repeated the question prompt. After filtering through 21 responses, I selected 11 that I felt were sufficient in answering the questions

and describing the participants' experiences. Participant responses were checked for completeness and unique (non-repeated) IP addresses. After the desired number of complete survey responses was reached, the survey was closed. Participants who filled out the survey and who were not selected were emailed with a thank you and the reasoning for non-inclusion. The reasoning included the text "Thank you for participating in the online survey regarding contrapower harassment. Those surveys with complete information were selected for inclusion. The responses you provided did not meet the inclusion criteria. Thank you again for your interest in this topic."

Data Analysis

I used both the NVivo qualitative data analysis software program and the process of hand coding data using the modified Stevick- Colazzi- Keen method to analyze the data. I first used the NVivo software program to begin the thematic analysis of the data. Thematic analysis in the NVivo program is a process I employed where the entire data set is scanned using the program capabilities, and key words and groupings of words that are found repeatedly are coded as key words or phrases within the results portion of the NVivo program. Using this process, the NVivo program also provides counts of instances and supporting context that the words were found within the participant's answers (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, synonyms of the key words, along with similar phrases to those identified as "key words and groupings" by the NVivo program, were presented as results output. The NVivo program used an artificial intelligence process to identify these key elements in the participant responses.

After using the NVivo program as the first step in the data coding process, I used the hand coding procedure of the modified Stevick- Colazzi- Keen method of qualitative data analysis. Using this process, I was able to identify additional codes and repeat codes, as well as elaborate on the codes provided by the NVivo program analysis. Using both analysis methods, I identified a comprehensive list of themes and subthemes that derived from participant responses in the study. I was then able to identify which were the main themes, which were subthemes, and which themes connected concepts. These themes, subthemes, and connections were used to describe the data interpretation and can be found in the results section in table form.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To address issues of credibility, my initial plan outlined in Chapter 3 included member checking the interview transcripts that were recorded after a Zoom call with participants. Since the format of the data collection was changed to an open-ended survey form for my final study, member checking of the responses was not necessary. Since the participants typed their own responses directly in the survey form, I assume their responses were accurate.

To ensure saturation of the data in responses, I employed several procedures to ensure responses that were selected for the analysis were full of detail and complete enough to analyze the data. It was necessary for responses selected to contain several sentences or points regarding the prompt topic, and that the responses were not simply a restatement of the question. It was also essential that the responses were relevant to the

question prompts being asked. Responses that were simply a restatement of the questions or that did not include sufficient detail were not included in the data analysis. Of the responses collected from 21 submissions, I selected 11 participant responses to be used in the study. These were responses that were rich in detail and provided extensive descriptions in response to the prompts.

Transferability

I included thick descriptions of the participants to address transferability and to ensure that the results from the data analysis in this study apply to similar settings and respondents. I designated the study inclusion criteria as the following:

- Participants must have taught online psychology at a college or university since 2021.
- Participants must currently teach at least one (3+) credit section of psychology.
- Participants must teach at a US technical college, college, or university.

One main criterion for participation that I required was that the participant is an online psychology instructor at a college or university in the United States. Individuals in the field of psychology who may not be online psychology instructors may possess similar characteristics to the online psychology faculty that were included in my study. This indicates possible transferability of results to other situations. Results from my study may also apply to those in similar professions who hold the same characteristics as faculty in my study, including having an advanced degree in psychology, selecting teaching psychology as a career, and teaching online college courses. Results may also

apply to other related professions, including online counselors and therapists, online faculty in other social sciences academic disciplines, or those working in online spaces that are within the professions of psychology or human services.

Although the participants shared the inclusion criteria similarities, there were also assumed differences, as participants were recruited across a variety of geographic locations and in different types of institutions with varied student bases. Acknowledging these assumed differences is important in regard to the ability of the results of data to transfer to other scenarios.

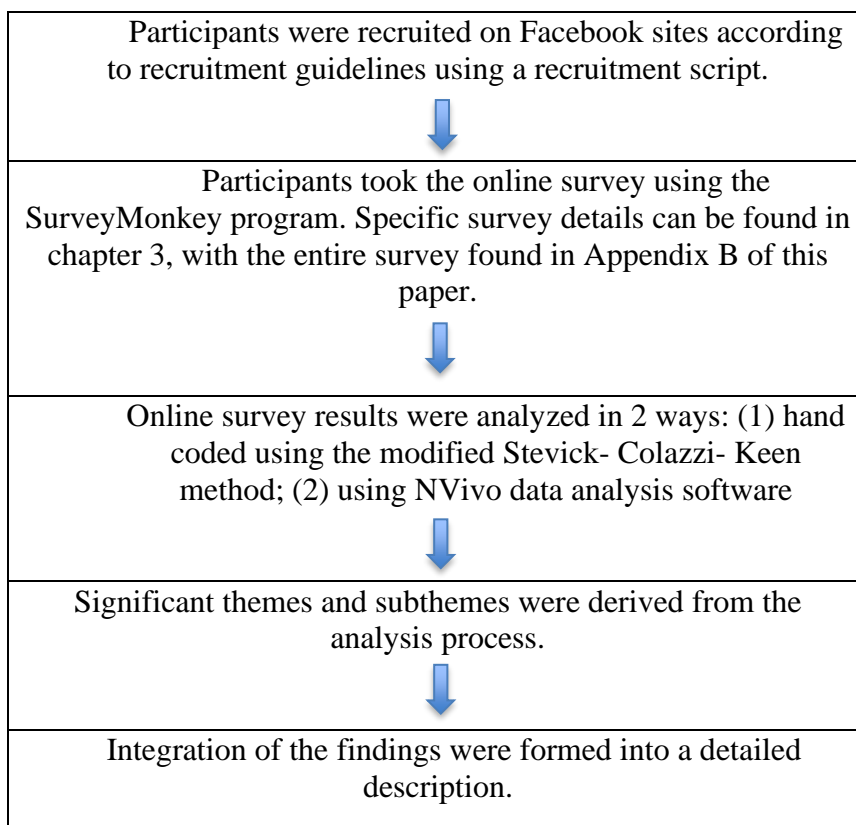
Dependability

Dependability refers to the idea that findings are consistent and could be repeated (Lincoln & Lampman then Guba, 1985). To ensure dependability, I hand recorded all processes used in this study step-by-step. I began these detailed notes with the recruitment ad script and concluded with specific descriptions on how I administered the survey and analyzed the results. Each step that I completed as part of the research process is listed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. In addition, I have presented a summary of all steps in succession below for quick reference.

By including these specific processes in Figure 1, other researchers should be able to replicate the processes I used in this study.

Figure 1

Research Steps



Confirmability and Reliability

I achieved confirmability and reliability through understanding my own stance on the topic of online contrapower harassment of psychology faculty. Confirmability refers to ensuring that the findings are shaped from the views of my study participants, and not shaped by my own views (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to do this, I had to understand my own stance on the topic of online contrapower harassment fully so that I would not blend my own feelings about the topic with what the participants disclosed. I

was able to reflect on my own stance by using the modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method, described by Moustakas (1994). Using this method, I used a system called bracketing, where I wrote notes about my own experiences with online contrapower harassment in the margins of the results output. I wrote about personal experiences I had that related to what the participant had described. I also made notes of feelings that I had while reading participant responses in each area. By debriefing on my own experiences and comparing them to participant responses, I was able to recognize, acknowledge, and ensure that my own experiences were not influencing my perception of what participants were describing.

An additional way in which I was able to achieve confirmability was through shifting from my initial plan of conducting participant interviews to engaging in a plan where I had participants record their own answers via an online survey form. I provided an open-ended survey where I listed the questions created to address the research questions. The survey questions were the same questions approved for the initial interview portion of this study and were derived from Lampman et al.'s (2009) contrapower harassment survey. By switching to a format where participants were not interacting with me during data collection through interviews, I was able to ensure interactions with me were not influencing participant responses or answers.

The final way that I attempted to increase confirmability was by utilizing the method of triangulation in my data analysis processes. Using triangulation means using multiple data analysis methods to examine a single set of data (Creswell, 2007). By using two methods to analyze the same data set, I was able to examine data through two

different lenses and methods of independent analysis. Through comparing results yielded by the two forms of analysis, I was able to recognize overlaps and congruencies in the data set. The two methods I used to code data included use of the NVivo software program, as well as my hand coding of data using the modified Stevick- Colassi Keen method. This confirmed that the findings produced by each method were deep and rich in detail.

Results

I have presented the research questions below. Following each question, I have provided a chart which displays the codes and corresponding participant responses. In addition, I have provided a description of each code and examples in a written summary format under each code.

RQ1: What Are the Lived Experiences of Online Psychology Faculty who are Cyberbullied by Students?

Table 1*Repeated Instances of Communication*

Repeated instances of communication	Repeated instances of communication outside of class	“there was a period where I received a barrage of negative comments and messages from a group of students on an online platform. They were criticizing my teaching methods, questioning my competence, and spreading rumors about me.”
		“a student sent a series of messages via electronic means using disrespectful language and tone”,
		“barrage of hostile comments.”
	Repeated instances of communication during class	“the student repeatedly interrupted me by posting disrespectful comments in the chat. He continued to disrupt the class and challenge my authority.”
		“students unmute themselves and do not stop [making rude remarks] when asked to stop.”
		“snickering and making comments in the chat function about my appearance and sexuality.”

Six respondents spoke on the idea that students will use repeated measures, or persistent communication in various electronic formats, to gain the attention of the instructor. Study participants described how this happens both during online class time and using measures outside of class and class time.

Repeated Instances of Communications Outside of Class

Three respondents noted specifically how they have received multiple messages or communications from students in a disparaging tone outside of class time. One faculty member described the harassment as a “barrage”, specifically noting, “There was a period where I received a barrage of negative comments and messages from a group of students on an online platform. They were criticizing my teaching methods, questioning my

competence, and spreading rumors about me.” Other respondents listed similar sentiments as far as students using multiple communications as a form of harassment. Another respondent noted that “a student sent a series of messages via electronic means using disrespectful language and tone.”

Interrupt Instructor Repeatedly During Instructional Periods

Three respondents provided accounts of students interrupting them during synchronous online class time, which was considered harassment. One respondent summarized an instance where students would constantly interrupt during an online class, “snickering and making comments about my appearance and sexuality.” Another respondent described that the constant interruptions were disruptive to other students, writing, “the student repeatedly interrupted me by posting disrespectful comments in the chat. He continued to disrupt the class and challenge my authority.” Another respondent continued to describe the online in-class interruptions they experienced, noting that “students unmute themselves and do not stop making rude remarks when asked to stop.”

Table 2
Students Citing Personal Reasons

Nonrelated (to class) reasons cited or shared by students	Students recounting life events as the reasoning why cannot get work completed on time or why grading requirements should be changed for them	<p>“I received probably 50 emails over several days from a student, listing all her problems in her life that keep them from completing work. (Homelessness, no internet, no money, works all the time, etc...).”</p> <hr/> <p>“One particular scenario involved a student who was struggling academically due to personal challenges at home. Thy began sending me emails, pleading for a grade change as they believed it was their only hope for scholarship and maintaining their education.”</p> <hr/> <p>“students sent me emails trying to guilt me into changing their grade.”</p> <hr/> <p>“I spent way too much time to better answer their questions that were tangibly related to the course content and clearly about their own personal issues.”</p>
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Students Citing Nonrelated or Personal Events as a Reason for Needing Procedural or Grading Concessions

Five respondents described how students would repeatedly cite negative personal life events as their reason for not meeting academic or class standards. This same tactic was used in an attempt at grade or process changes. One respondent recounted how students “hound” them by providing personal information and asking for sympathy, paired with flexibility in grading. One respondent provided an account of how they would give an unwarranted grade of “A” to the student, rather than dealing with the student, which was exhausting. The respondent wrote, “giving a higher grade was easier than the back and forth with the student.” Another respondent had similar comments, “I think that

sometimes a tactic for getting a easier path to an “A” is to barrage professors with questions and requests for help.” Another noted, “Specifically, I think that people figure that this sort of behavior is exhausting and wears you down so that you’ll get tired and give a higher grade.” Another instructor reported that it seemed as if many students would wait until the end of the term and then would ask for grading concessions, citing personal reasons as to why the concessions should be allotted. Several times in the respondents answers the notion of providing personal reasons by students was often accompanied by multiple emails or contacts from the student. One respondent described the experience, stating, “I received probably 50 emails over several days from a student, listing all her problems in her life that keep them from completing work.” Another respondent noted how a student “sent emails pleading for their grade change as it was their only hope for scholarship” and another respondent describing how “students sent me emails trying to guilt me into changing their grade.”

Table 3
Student Retaliation

Retaliation	Students threatening to involve administration if a grade change or concession is not made	<p>“the student accused me of bias and incompetence and threatened to escalate the issue to higher authorities if the grade isn’t changed promptly.”</p> <p>“I had a student who went to higher ups saying I wouldn’t provide detailed editing on a paper (that I never offered to edit for students)... and then the student emailed other teachers in the college and dean stating that I didn’t respond correctly to her edit requests, and mirrored sentiments that I only cared about myself and my pregnancy, and I wasn’t there to help different students.”</p>
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Threats or acts of retaliation outside of school	<p>“He (a student) sent me a furious email accusing me of unfair grading asking me to give him a higher grade for some bogus reasons. He also threatened to post negative things about me online.”</p> <hr/> <p>“The student created a fake Instagram account which was a parody of me sharing memes and jokes at my expense.”</p> <hr/> <p>A student who used really strange phrasing (because ESL) in Rate My Professor. They gave me a 2 out of 5. The amount of time, energy and effort I put into this student was amazing. I don’t know if they just didn’t like me, but it was galling.”</p> <hr/> <p>In one instance, a student sent me multiple emails insisting that I change their grade because they felt it was unfair. They used aggressive language and threatened to spread false rumors about me if I didn’t comply.”</p> <hr/> <p>“The student expressed anger and frustration towards me and the grading system. They made explicit threats about seeking revenge and causing harm”.</p> <hr/> <p>“He (a student) also posted some unfavorable remarks about me on other social platforms, inciting other students to be dissatisfied with me.”</p>
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Students Threatening to Involve School Administration as a Form of Retaliation

Two respondents noted that the administration became involved by the student as a form of manipulation, threat, or to circumvent the faculty member. One participant recounted an event where a student circumvented the instructors, going to administration to complain about processes and policies. Another respondent described “the student

accused me of bias and incompetence and threatened to escalate the issue to higher authorities if the grade isn't changed promptly.”

Threats of Retaliation Outside of School

In five instances, participants responded that students used the threat of retaliation or engaged in retaliatory practices that had a reach beyond going to administration. In these situations, respondents noted that if they did not comply with a student's requests for grading or procedural concessions, the students would threaten them in ways such as physical harm. One respondent recounted how “The student expressed anger and frustration towards me and the grading system. They made explicit threats about seeking revenge and causing harm.” Other respondents provided accounts of how students would retaliate or threaten retaliation in online social media sites, such as posting false content online to damage their reputation. One instructor described how a student created a fake Instagram account which was a parody of the instructor “sharing memes and jokes at my expense.” Another respondent recounted an event where a student gave them a very low rating on an online forum, which was surprising as the faculty member helped this student so much in class, “in Rate My Professor. They gave me a 2 out of 5. The amount of time, energy and effort I put into this student was amazing.”

Table 4*Students Displaying Consumer Behavior*

Consumer behavior	<p>“If we consider students consumers of the university, then colleges should do everything we can do to keep consumers happy, such as valuing their personal opinions more than scientific rigor and making classes easier even if it means students learn less.”</p> <hr/> <p>“a student trying to guilt me into a grade change, or demonstrates a sense of entitlement or even that I lack in my ability to grade or create valid questions or a fair course. I suppose consumer benefit arises in these situations.”</p> <hr/> <p>“students will say that they paid for the course, so want a passing grade. Students will show entitlement or even that I lack in my ability to grade or create questions for a fair course.”</p> <hr/> <p>“They (a student) sent messages openly challenging my grading. The messages were filled with sarcasm and a sense of entitlement, as if they felt they could do whatever they wanted without consequences.”</p>
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Consumer Behavior

In four instructor responses, what instructors deemed as cyberbullying behaviors came in the form of student exhibiting what one instructor termed “consumers of the university”; “If we consider students consumers of the university, then colleges should do everything we can do to keep consumers happy, such as valuing their personal opinions more than scientific rigor and making classes easier even if it means students learn less.” Other respondents also provided responses which discussed how some students may feel entitled or behave in ways that airs of entitlement in grading practices. Specific examples

of this from responses include “a student trying to guilt me into a grade change or demonstrates a sense of entitlement or even that I lack in my ability to grade or create valid questions or a fair course. I suppose consumer benefit arises in these situations.”

Table 5

Sexual or Gender Harassment by Students

Sexual or gender harassment	“ this student claimed that I had favoritism towards female students.”
	“making lewd remarks and derogatory remarks about [my] gender.”
	“Once when I was checking the class group news, I found a student had posted some sexist remarks on the group, making malicious jokes and attacks on me. He said things like “female teachers just can’t do it”, and “they just read from the book”, and accompanied it with inappropriate pictures.”
	“snickering and making comments about my appearance and sexuality.”

Sexual or Gender Harassment

Two respondents noted that gender harassment has been prevalent during online classes, with students questioning their ability to teach as a woman, or making remarks about how a woman can’t grade, and making remarks on gender and appearance in general. One respondent accounted they were accused by students of gender favoritism. This respondent described a student who they felt was harassing, and who asserted in a public forum that the instructor “had favoritism towards female students.” In another instance, a respondent divulged that students would be harassed by “making lewd remarks and derogatory remarks about gender.”

RQ2: How are These Same Faculty Members Experiencing Stress Related to the Cyberbullying?

Table 6

Faculty Reporting Physical and Emotional Symptoms

Faculty reporting being overwhelmed or experiencing anxiety/ stress.	<p>“I felt overwhelmed by the constant criticism and negativity directed towards me.”</p> <hr/> <p>There was one instance where I received a barrage of negative emails. the thought of facing those students was overwhelming.”</p> <hr/> <p>“It was the relentless onslaught that made me feel constantly on edge and anxious.”</p> <hr/> <p>“When my position and livelihood are threatened, I panic and double- check myself to ensure I have done my job properly. It is a stressful and unnecessary use of my time.”</p> <hr/> <p>“I became increasingly paranoid about interacting with students online.”</p>
Faculty exhibiting physical symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression after harassing interactions with students	<p>“After receiving a series of threatening emails from a student, I started experiencing headaches and nausea whenever I checked my email or thought about the situation.”</p> <hr/> <p>“The whole thing was a combination of apathy, headaches, couldn’t eat well, just wanted to whole issue to be resolved as fast as possible.”</p> <hr/> <p>“My sleep was disrupted as I constantly found myself checking emails.”</p>
Faculty experiencing self- doubt in teaching abilities	<p>“When my position and livelihood are threatened, I panic and double-check myself to ensure I have done my job properly.”</p> <hr/> <p>“At it’s worst, I didn’t want to teach at all, and I was in a deep sense of self- doubt and despair, which was really bad.”</p> <hr/> <p>“The constant attacks from one student even one time can really shake your confidence as a professional.”</p>

“I felt that my dignity had been trampled on and that I had lost the authority I deserved with my students.”

“I was overwhelmed by the constant criticism and negativity directed towards me, leading to difficulty concentrating on my work and loss of confidence in my teaching abilities.”

Faculty Experiencing Fear/ Anxiety/ Stress/ Self-Doubt

Many respondents reported that they felt fear, anxiety, and stress because of online harassment by students. Several instructors discussed how they doubted their own teaching or grading methods because of students questioning them on these topics. A question regarding anxiety was specifically presented in the survey. Out of the 11 respondents, six provided details about feeling anxiety or stress specifically resulting from the counter-power harassment they have experienced online. Of those respondents, three reported specific physical symptoms arising from the anxiety and stress experienced. These physical symptoms include headaches, nausea, and sleeplessness.

Additionally, five respondents described how this fear and anxiety led to feelings of self-doubt in their teaching abilities. One respondent described how even just one student harassment incident can affect their confidence, citing “the constant attacks from one student can really shake your confidence as a professional.”

Table 7
Faculty Participating in Less Engagement

Faculty participating in limited or less engagement/ less stringent policies and grading	Limited or less engagement with students	“deliberately avoided contact with students”.
		“I even avoided classes and teaching altogether because the psychological pressure was too much to bear for me.”
		“I literally avoid grading or giving feedback.”
		“I didn’t want to go to class or teach at all”,
	Less stringent grading or policies	“universities see students as consumers overseeing them as the output, resulting in less rigorous classes and less well prepared graduates.”
		“put off grading until the very end of the term, scared I’m going to piss off students”

Limited or Less Engagement/ Less Stringent Policies and Grading

In other instances, instructors noted that they will put off grading or evaluation, because of fear of having to address a paper/ assignment grade that may get pushback from a student. One respondent recounted that they “put off grading until the very end of the term, scared I’m going to piss off students”, and another described that they “deliberately avoided contact with students.” With another respondent noting, “I literally avoid grading or giving feedback.” Others discussed possibly leaving the profession because of this occurrence happening, noting that they “didn’t want to go to class or teach at all”, or another proclaiming, “I even avoided classes and teaching altogether because the psychological pressure was too much to bear for me.”

Summary

In this chapter, I presented a summary of the context of the study, criteria for participation, participant recruitment and data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. I also summarized key findings from two data analysis procedures and presented results in table form to accompany a description of the key findings.

Through my data collection and analysis processes in this study, I determined that there were six main themes presented in respondents' answers which answer the two research questions of:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of online psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students?

RQ2: How are these same faculty members experiencing stress related to the cyberbullying?

The six main themes included:

- (1) Online students harassed online instructors by *using persistent communication* both during class and outside of class time.
- (2) Online *instructors reported experiencing both physical and emotional feelings of being overwhelmed, feeling stressed, and had feelings of anxiety* regarding the repeated and personal content interactions with online students.
- (3) Online students harassed online instructors by *providing information regarding unsolicited personal matters not related to class content* to the instructor.
- (4) Students harassed online instructors by *citing consumerist viewpoints* in order to receive grade or process concessions.

(5) Students who harassed online instructors may *threaten to retaliate or retaliate* if a grade or policy concession was not made.

(6) Online *instructors found themselves either avoiding student interactions or not stringently grading or enforcing processes* in order to avoid the above-described student interactions. In the next chapter, the findings of my study are interpreted, study limitations are described, and implications for future research are discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students experience stress. I conducted the study to investigate the experiences of online instructors being harassed by students and feeling stress afterwards, as well as contemplating leaving the profession because of this stress. This study was phenomenological in nature and was based on contrapower harassment theory. Participant feedback was obtained by administering surveys with open-ended questions derived from Lampman et al.'s (2009) ACPH to participants. ACPH was derived from Benson's contrapower harassment theory (1984). Data analysis was completed using the modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method.

The results of this study addressed two research questions:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of online psychology faculty who are cyberbullied by students?

RQ2: How are these same faculty members experiencing stress related to the cyberbullying?

As detailed in Chapter 4, there were six main themes that emerged from the data collection process. The themes revolve around the research questions above. The six themes included (a) Online students harass online instructors by using persistent communication both during class and outside of class time; (b) Online instructors reported experiencing both physical and emotional feelings of being overwhelmed, feeling stressed, and had feelings of anxiety regarding the repeated and personal content interactions with online students; (c) Online students harassed online instructors by

providing information regarding unsolicited personal matters not related to class content to the instructor; (d) Students harassed online instructors by citing consumerist viewpoints in order to receive grade or process concessions; (e) Students who harass online instructors threaten to retaliate if a grade or policy concession is not made; and (f) Online instructors found themselves either avoiding student interactions or not stringently grading or enforcing processes in order to avoid negative student interactions. A discussion on how the six themes are represented in results from this study, as well as in past research which informed this study, is presented in the next section.

Interpretation of the Findings

The results from this research are consistent with and extend upon previous knowledge in the field regarding online faculty and student interactions. A review of the main themes that are important to answer the research questions is included. The first set of themes presented is related to academic contrapower harassment theory. The following themes expand upon previous knowledge in the field.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretical implications include Benson's (1984) research on contrapower harassment and Lampman et al.'s (2009) research on academic contrapower harassment. This study was based on Lampman et al.'s (2009) and Lampman's (2012) research, which uncovered that contrapower harassment was often sexual in nature and typically from male students to female professors. Lampman et al. then conducted a follow up study in 2016. Lampman et al.'s 2016 study focused on the negative effects faculty

experience after being bullied by students. In Lampman et al.'s 2016 study, a majority of negative effects experienced were reported by female faculty.

In my study, sexual harassment was not a pervasive theme. One question in the survey specifically referenced sexual and gender harassment. No participants reported being sexually harassed online by students. Gender harassment was noted by participants several times. Implications of Lampman et al.'s (2009) academic contrapower harassment theory regarding sexual harassment from those in less power to those with more power were not substantiated in this study. Implications regarding gender harassment were substantiated in this study.

Empirical implications of Lampman et al.'s (2016) academic contrapower harassment theory that were substantiated in this study include the recipients of the harassment exhibiting emotional distress resulting from the interactions. Participants in the study overwhelmingly reported experiencing feelings of stress and burnout. Additional empirical implications included supporting a base assumption of contrapower harassment theory (Benson, 1984), that those with less power harass those with power over them to get something. In Benson's (1984) and Lampman et al.'s (2009, 2012) research, students may engage in sexual or gender harassment of instructors in hopes of receiving attention from the instructor or classmates. In my study, it was demonstrated that students who harass also do it to receive something; however, instead of attention, students are attempting to gain grades or policy exceptions.

Theme 1: Online students harass online instructors by using persistent communication both during class and outside of class time

According to research participants, students bully them through sending a rapid succession of emails that become more demanding over a short period of time. Instructors believe students do this without leaving appropriate time for responses on purpose. In this study, participants did not note if there were university requirements on response time. Guidelines regarding response time to answer emails may vary from university to university. However, two respondents noted that students would email them in “rapid succession”, explaining that students left no time for instructors to respond within a reasonable time frame (Participant 2, Participant 5).

In this study, bullying is repeated attempts at communication with the instructor, rising to what is perceived to be an unreasonable or excessive number of communication attempts (Cassidy et al., 2014). Students’ excessive communication tactics are an attempt to wear the instructor down in hopes of a grade or policy concessions. Many of these emails are redundant. Participant 2 stated, “one student repeatedly sent me emails challenging my authority.” Participant 9 recalled that students will “barrage professors with questions and requests for help.” Participants believe that this behavior often transitions from a tone of asking to demanding quickly. The excessive communications often include threats of administrative action if demands are not met. According to Participant 5, a student repeatedly threatened to go to the administration if the instructor did not comply with the students’ grading concession demands. Participant 1 recounted

that they believe students are using a form of “manipulation” when they threaten to escalate their grievances to administration if grading requests are not met.

Students’ excessive public shaming of instructors is also a common way that students attempt to get what they want (May and Tenzek, 2018). This includes posting negative messages about the instructor on the course chat pages, writing negative reviews about the instructor on sites such as *ratemyprofessor.com*, and emailing colleagues of the instructor to complain. Students gain attention to the matter through public shaming tactics before the instructor has time to respond. The instructor will concede to the students demands so the student stops the public shaming, threats of administrative action, and other forms of excessive communication (participant 4, participant 9).

Daumiller et al.’s (2020) study on online faculty motivation outlined why students engage in what faculty consider *excessive communication*. The format of asynchronous online courses sets the stage for the communication dynamics between faculty and students. The authors explained how the asynchronous course posting format opens communication lines between students and faculty. For example, when a faculty member makes a discussion post at eight o’clock pm, students can see the posting time. Students may believe it is common practice in the online classroom to establish communication during evening hours based on seeing the time the instructor was active. Students also may believe it is common practice to email until they receive a response. The expectations regarding communication may be unclear. Daumiller et al. (2021) researched faculty emotional responses after being bullied online. Participants in Daumiller et al.’s (2021) study felt burnt out after these excessive communications and

explained how feeling this way has made them want to leave the profession. In Kushlev and Dunn's 2015 study on student and faculty communications, researchers found that faculty who check email less frequently report experiencing less stress. The constant email communications from students are stressing participants out.

Theme 2: Online Instructors Reported Experiencing Both Physical and Emotional Feelings of Being Overwhelmed, Feeling Stressed, and Had Feelings of Anxiety Regarding the Repeated and Personal Content Interactions with Online Students

Several participants felt symptoms of stress after being bullied. Participants described the feelings they have after being cyberbullied as being “overwhelmed” (Participant 6), “stressed” (Participant 6, Participant 8), “anxious” (Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 7), and “on edge,” (Participant 2). Participants reported feeling overwhelmed by the constant communication, constant demand, and the feeling of guilt that they are experiencing when asked by students to provide grade changes or policy concessions. Participants experienced both physical and emotional symptoms of stress after being cyberbullied. One participant explained that their normal activities were disrupted because of the stress, “I became increasingly paranoid about student interactions” noting how their sleep was “disrupted” when experiencing cyberbullying by students (Participant 4). Several participants explained the physical stress reactions they felt. One participant (Participant 3) described the headaches they would experience after being cyberbullied by students, recalling, “I would get splitting headaches so bad that I could not concentrate on anything.” Another participant explained that they would feel “a wave of panic” when cyberbullied (Participant 4).

Previous research on the topic of faculty being cyberbullied by students yields similar results regarding faculty feeling overwhelmed. Morrissette (2001) and Lee and Chang (2022) provided literature syntheses on the topic of faculty being overwhelmed. Online instructors avoid student interactions, do not stringently grade, or do not enforce processes after being cyberbullied by students and experiencing burnout. Burnout is defined as instructors “experiencing negative emotional and physical effects and having a negative disposition regarding their position” (Morrissette, 2001, p.1). Lee and Chang (2022) described how faculty who had more job pressures, such as leadership roles and large class loads, burned out more easily. It can be concluded that faculty who are dealing with demanding student relationships may burn out fast, based on the logic presented in the research by Lee and Chang (2022).

Theme 3: Online Students Harassed Online Instructors by Providing Information Regarding Unsolicited Personal Matters Not Related to Class Content to the Instructor

Students provide personal information that is unrelated to class content to gain grading or policy concessions (Meires, 2018). Additionally, they may also provide personal information unrelated to class to gain sympathy from the instructor or to wear the instructor down. Participant 9 described why they think the student provides so much personal information: “I think that people figure that this sort of behavior is exhausting and wears you down so that you’ll get tired and give a higher grade.” The same participant continued to explain how responding to personal excuses from the students was a waste of time, noting more time was spent on reviewing non-applicable student

questions, which were “tangentially related to course content, but clearly about their own personal issues.”.

Theme 4: Students Harassed Online Instructors by Citing Consumerist Viewpoints in Order to Receive a Grade or Process Concessions

Tomlinson and Watermeyer (2022) defined the consumer driven- viewpoint by explaining that students have the perspective of a paying consumer. Students view college as a means to obtain a credential to get a job. Students do not see college as the pursuit of knowledge from this perspective and feel that they pay for the degree.

Participants in this research believe that interactions resulting from the consumer-driven viewpoint that some students hold are another way to bully teachers. Participant 10 recalled that “students say that they pay for the course, so they want a passing grade”. The same participant described the consumer-driven behavior as “a sense of entitlement.” Overall, the sentiment among several participants is that the industry of academia views consumer demands as more important than academics. Participant 11 summed up a consumer-focused viewpoint, explaining that they believe that universities value students’ satisfaction over academics, explaining that the administration “values a student’s personal problems over scientific rigor.”

Previous research on the topic of contrapower harassment also focuses on the consumer-driven viewpoint and students bullying faculty (Budd, 2017; Christensen et al., 2021; Johnson & Lester, 2022; Lu et al., 2024). Nursing faculty who are bullied by students believe that their students’ perspective as a consumer is a significant factor in the bullying (Christensen et al., 2021). May and Tenzek (2018) also discussed how student

entitlement is an element that triggers the student to harass faculty. The authors describe how consumer practice drives higher education, likening higher education to a business in reference to student consumer demands (May and Tenzek, 2018). The consumer-driven focus is overshadowing the respect students should hold for faculty in student-faculty interactions.

Theme 5: Students Who Harassed Online Instructors May Threaten to Retaliate or Retaliate if a Grade or Policy Concession Was Not Made

Students use threats to gain attention from faculty and to get what they are demanding (May and Tenzek, 2018). Students may threaten to involve school officials if requests are not met, or they may threaten to take their grievances about the faculty member to social media if their requests are not met. Students complain to the administration or other faculty without speaking to the instructor first. Participant 10 recalled, “the student emailed my supervisor, other teachers in the college and the Dean stating that I didn’t respond correctly to the student requests.”. Participant 9 explained how students use the threat of administration being involved as a scare tactic to get what they want. In their response, the participant reflected on a specific instance when a student sent an aggressive email threatening to escalate the issue to higher authorities if demands were not met. In this case, the demand from the student was a prompt grade change.

Students also threaten to create false narratives about faculty and post on social media when demands are not met. Participant 4 recounted a hostile interaction from a student, “he sent a furious email accusing me of unfair grading and asking me to give him

a higher grade for some bogus reasons. He also threatened to post negative things about me online if I didn't do it." Participant 5 recounted how a student threatened to post negative, false information about the instructor on social media if the instructor did not post the grade the student wanted. In both scenarios the students threaten to do something in retaliation if the instructor does not comply with demands.

Students threatening to retaliate to get what they want is found in previous research. May and Tenzek (2018) discussed how students manipulate instructors to achieve a desired outcome. The authors provide the example of a student threatening to embarrass the professor if demands were not met. May and Tenzek's research was conducted with faculty who interacted with students face-to-face. This research examines the student to professor bullying dynamic in the online classroom. Students bullied professors by threatening something to get what they desired in both research scenarios.

Theme 6: Online Instructors Found Themselves Either Avoiding Student Interactions or Not Stringently Grading or Enforcing Processes in Order to Avoid Negative Student Interactions

Participants avoid interacting with students online because they feel defeated and overwhelmed when they are bullied by students. Participants avoid providing feedback to students, avoid interacting with students, and in some cases avoid class altogether. Participants also are not providing stringent feedback to students because they are afraid that they will upset the student and then be bullied by the student. Participant 10 explained, "I often put grading or feedback to the end of the term, scared I'm going to piss off students. Even if they cheated or deserve it, I'm scared." Participant 3 shared that

once they stopped attending classes, the student was in so they could avoid the cyberbullying. They did this because they were nervous about interacting with the student and potentially being bullied. Several research participants noted that they wished there were more guidance from their colleagues or administration when this happened. The word unsupported was used several times in the responses, referencing administrations' role regarding grading outcomes and faculty adherence to grading policies.

This is in alignment with Hammoudi Halat et al.'s (2023) research on faculty and administrative rules and processes regarding cyberbullying. The authors concluded that faculty feel unsupported by the administration on processes and policies regarding student online incivility. They describe that there is often an incongruence between faculty, the administration, and a student's expectations of communication processes. The authors suggest that more clear processes on incivility and rule adherence could help bridge the gap between student and faculty expectations.

Limitations of the Study

Obtaining research participants in the study was a limiting factor of the study design. In the final design, I provided an online survey where participants could self-report responses to allow for a flexible answering format. In the initial research design, I had planned to conduct online interviews with participants. I amended the design and implemented the use of open-ended online surveys for data collection after a failed attempt at securing a participant pool willing to speak to me in an interview format. Participants began agreeing to take part in the research after I began using surveys that participants could fill out online as the data collection instrument. In addition,

participants were paid a gift card with a \$50.00 value for their inclusion in this study. It is possible that participants were motivated by the monetary incentive when deciding to participate. Offering payment to participants as compensation for the time it took to answer the questions may have affected the overall validity of the study and selection criteria.

Another possible limiting factor of this research is that the study representation is only from participants who are also part of online discussion forums. Faculty often utilize the forums to post topics regarding problems in their classrooms, seeking pedagogy tips, to discuss topics that are causing frustration, etc. Participants may have been primed or have prior opinions on this topic because of exposure to the topic of student bullying faculty in the online forums. This could affect the validity of information shared by participants. Additionally, the generalizability of results to all online faculty members could be limited by the inclusion of forums used to recruit participants.

A final limiting factor of this research was the lack of follow-up with participants built into the study design. There were several participants who provided student bullying examples on the survey, but did not specifically explain how they perceived the bullying. Several participants provided responses that were vague or unclear in their meaning. Asking follow-up and clarifying questions would help me gain a better understanding of the meaning of several participant responses. Gaining a deeper understanding would help increase the validity of the responses in reference to the research questions.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

According to Creswell (2007), the credibility of data refers to the accuracy with which data was collected and analyzed. Tactics used to increase the credibility of the study include prolonged contact, member checking processes (see Creswell, 2007), and saturation (see Naeem et al., 2023).

Saturation occurs when no additional information can be extracted (Naeem et al., 2023). Naeem et al. (2023) recommend using inductive thematic analysis after data have been coded to ensure saturation. I examined run lengths to do so. In this method, I determined how many themes were present in each interview. I then compared the number of themes found with the interview time length for each interview, coming up with an average number per interview that was expected. For any interviews that did not have a number of themes consistent with others, I again read and coded that interview, ensuring all themes and key points had been addressed.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of the research can be applied to other, similar situations (Creswell, 2007). Also termed external validity, it refers to the thickness of data. Ensuring the thickness of data means that the descriptions of participant characteristics are vivid and detailed enough so that readers can gain an accurate picture of the characteristics of the study population, so they can make an informed decision about whether the study results would apply to other individuals in settings outside of the research. Additionally, variation in participant selection can help

ensure transferability. Through using recruiting processes that reach all demographic areas, participants will hold varying characteristics from one another. Thus ensuring that participants are not too similar in characteristics, and more able to generalize results to others.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the concept that the results are consistent over time. I followed and documented detailed processes during all aspects of the research. This was done so that others can replicate the findings (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, documenting findings is an important part of establishing dependability, so others can replicate the study processes. In this study, an audit trail was diligently created so that another researcher could replicate the study. An audit trail is a thorough collection of all documents and processes related to the research (Creswell, 2007).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which findings are representative of the participants and not the opinions of the researcher. To help ensure confirmability, I practiced reflexivity, gaining an understanding of my own role in the research and my own opinions on the topic. I used the modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method to address reflexivity. With this method, the researcher takes purposeful time to write down and detail all their own experiences, preconceived notions, and possible biases related to the research topic (Moustakas, 1994). By doing this, I was able to identify any of my own possible biases and be aware of the intersectionality between those possible biases and data interpretations.

Reliability

Additionally, intracoder reliability between my own coding of themes and NVivo codes provided was considered as the data is coded. Ensuring consistency of the coding helped to achieve confirmability (Creswell, 2007). For this research, I used NVivo coding software to gain an initial understanding of themes and keywords in the data. However, before using the software to help decipher themes and keywords, I thoroughly read over all participant responses to ensure that I had a strong understanding of the meaning of the responses. After I used NVivo to code, I then again became wholly familiar with the coded notes. I compared results with the initial notes I had regarding meaning from my initial readthrough of responses, ensuring alignment of concepts.

Recommendations

A recommendation for future research is to use a research design that includes a data analysis spiral method. In the data analysis spiral method, the researcher completes analysis according to the previously described modified Stevick- Colaizzi- Keen method. The researcher then also provides follow-up questions to the study participants if necessary to gain more clarification on the participants' responses after analysis (see Creswell, 2007). An adequate method to provide this follow up is via phone call or via zoom call. This method may be appropriate as a second stage of research. The personal call between the researcher and participant may be appropriate at this time as participants already have a familiarity with the research topic and may be more comfortable than initially to elaborate on their responses with the researcher. The open-ended online survey is a good method to provide the initial interview questions, as the format provides

a sense of security and anonymity for participants. It is important that researchers gain a true understanding of the meaning and intent behind the open-ended survey responses collected online.

Data integrity would be better achieved by implementing a follow-up process with participants. An additional benefit of the follow up process with participants is that the study inclusion criteria would include availability of participants to complete a follow up telephone or zoom call with the researcher. This method may help eliminate any survey respondents who may consider providing inaccurate answers for the compensation only.

Studying this topic from a consumer viewpoint is an additional suggestion for future research to help better understand the topic of psychology faculty being bullied by students and the stress they experience. I assumed that students and instructors hold a viewpoint consistent with the academic institution of academic integrity and rigor in this study. Several participants in this research address the idea that students hold a consumer-driven viewpoint and that the students believe grades should be connected to the idea of paying for the class. Faculty participants in this study describe how they want to provide rigor in academics but feel they cannot because of students' expectations rooted in this consumer-driven viewpoint. Future research on how a faculty members' consumer-driven views factors into their interpretations of being bullied may be beneficial to understanding the topic better.

Future research on college and universities administration's viewpoints on the consumer- driven viewpoint may help us to understand the research questions of how

psychology faculty are cyberbullied by students as well. This research can help faculty and administration create more clear definitions of what the meaning of the educational experience at their institution is. The goal may be to ultimately come up with a plan together that serves the students' needs and students' learning best, while protecting and respecting the academically rigorous expectations and processes of faculty delivering the instruction. According to results from this study, faculty are feeling stress after interactions with students where there are inconsistent expectations of grading policies and class processes. Understanding the instructor's, university's, and students' positions on the expectations may help to reduce faculty member stress as less cognitive dissonance and uncertainty regarding the policies will be present.

Many instructors in this study discussed the notion that students may use excessive communication or not demonstrate limits regarding class policies with the instructor. In this study, many participants note that students email them repeatedly. Instructors often experience stress reactions after the constant interactions. Understanding why instructors feel that they must allow unlimited access and policy exceptions to students may be beneficial.

I did not require demographic information, such as the gender of the participant, to be disclosed in the present study. Future studies could focus on stress outcomes or faculty response to harassment and the gender of the faculty. The theory grounding this study, contrapower harassment theory, does focus on gender and sexual harassment as the main forms of contrapower harassment (Lampman, 2009). Additional studies looking at outcomes may be beneficial.

Additionally, future studies could examine the research questions framed around the level of support from the institution. In this study, several participants disclosed that they did not feel that they had support, formalized plans, or a response from their institution when the cyberbullying occurred. Understanding how support systems from the colleges and universities affect results of similar studies may be beneficial in helping to understand the impact of level of institutional support on faculty who experience online contrapower harassment.

Implications

Potential impact for positive social change that is consistent with and bounded by the scope of this study at the individual level includes assisting specific individuals involved in this study by helping them realize that their feelings may be in alignment with those of others who have also experienced being cyberbullied by students. The idea of being cyberbullied by students is not unique to participants, and sharing stories and information can be beneficial to those experiencing academic contrapower harassment. In addition, the implications from this study may inform individuals on courses of action that could be presented to their organization's administration. Participants or those reading the study could experience a direct change resulting from the study. Participants in this study will be emailed a website link where they can learn more information about the results of this study via a summary page and a published study link. Resources for cyberbullying victims in higher education will also be included.

Additionally, the results of this study could help to start conversations for the study participants and others related to or reading the study regarding the main points of

this study. By having an awareness of the problem of psychology faculty being cyberbullied by students, individuals may be more likely to engage in productive conversations or be ready to implement initiatives about the topic in their institutions.

Potential impact for positive social change at the organizational level includes bringing awareness to higher education administrators regarding online contrapower harassment and the negative consequences faculty experience. Programming and policy changes at the college and university level could be made to address contrapower harassment.

Specific programming efforts could address the consumer- focused viewpoint that was covered in this study. By higher education administrators gaining an understanding of how faculty are experiencing cyberbullying from the lens of the consumer-focused viewpoint some students hold, administrators can possibly align student recruitment and student college-readiness efforts to meet the expectations of faculty and students. Additionally, faculty could be coached on how to respond to and how to teach and evaluate within the lens of a consumer-focused viewpoint and share those communication strategies in a communication plan.

Additional organizational level programming efforts may include the implementation of technologies to address cyberbullying online, which may be adopted. For example, colleges and universities may choose to employ the use of cyberbullying detection systems, such as the CBD system created by the University of Colorado Denver. Detection systems such as this scan online entries for notes of certain words and phrases that may be considered bullying. Another outcome may be colleges and

universities utilizing electronic cyberbullying deterrent systems for online communication modalities and in online class platforms. An example of this would be using software such as Bullybuster.AI or the ReThink app, which both identify possible cyberbullying behaviors and electronically intervene with the student.

Another organizational level beneficial outcome of this research may be the adoption of student and faculty online communications standards. Colleges and universities may consider employing educational programs and standards that address communication expectations in online courses. Requiring that faculty outline specific communication policies, such as acceptable communication forums and response time expectations, in the course syllabi is an additional way that universities can provide guidance to students and faculty regarding online interactions. University-wide communications expectations and processes being adopted may make the expectations of procedures clearer for students and faculty. These suggestions regarding communication expectations are derived from research conducted by Kim and Lundburg (2016) where the researchers found that better communication between faculty and students around processes results in students performing better academically.

Results in this study that may apply to all online faculty and administrators include gaining an understanding of the challenges online faculty are facing regarding cyberbullying communications from students. A shared understanding among faculty and administrators regarding the specifics of cyberbullying could inform policies and programs to address the issues.

Online faculty in this study and other studies report feeling so much stress after cyberbullying instances that some leave the profession of education. Hopefully, more online faculty will be aware of the issues and have options for coping or recourse by addressing cyberbullying and the stress associated with it. This would, in turn, keep some faculty from leaving the profession. Students and faculty could feel safer in their roles in the online education experience.

With respect to how the implications of this study could benefit the larger population, I hope that ultimately, online students would have improved learning outcomes associated with less cyberbullying occurring in the online classroom. If being cyberbullied by students online is causing online faculty to be less stringent in grading, then less learning is occurring. By framing learning in universities in a shared way regarding consumer rights as well as a good education being delivered, finding that balance would ultimately benefit the students in receiving a good and fair education.

Conclusion

This study highlights several key points that online psychology faculty feel are important when discussing their experiences of being cyberbullied by students. This study continued to exemplify the idea that students harass faculty in order to receive an outcome, and faculty are experiencing negative consequences resulting from the interactions.

Previous research has illustrated that students harass faculty in various ways, often including gender and sexual harassment (King, 2019; Schultz, 2018). In this study, gender and sexual harassment were not discussed in detail by participants. However, a

common thread discussed greatly was harassment by students in order to gain grades or policy concessions, and through using excessive and repeated communication.

According to academic contrapower harassment theory, those with less power harass those with more power to gain something (Lampman et al., 2009). In earlier research (Benson, 1984; Lampman et al., 2009) offenders harassed to elicit sexual or gender related attention. In this and other recent studies (Christensen et al., 2021, May & Tenzek, 2018; Meires, 2018), it was found that students harass to receive grade changes or policy concessions. Participants in this study also indicated that repeated, excessive communication from students is a way in which they harass instructors online. It was also highlighted in this study that faculty are feeling stressed when they are harassed and giving up on work. *Giving-up* could look like less stringent grading, feeling apathy and disengaging with students, or even leaving the profession of teaching.

Participants in this study and in other recent studies (Matchen and DeSouza, 2000; May & Tenzek, 2018) suggested that school administrations' involvement in addressing academic contrapower harassment is essential. Participants either spoke about how leaning on administration helped when they were cyberbullied by students, or reflected on how administration is not at all involved. Participants who recounted no administration support often followed up with suggestions of how more support from administration may be beneficial.

Eleven participants in this open-ended question survey study described how they have experienced and currently do experience cyberbullying behaviors by students in the online university classroom format. Participants described how they feel and what they

do to respond to the cyberbullying behaviors. Six main themes were derived from this research, which surrounded the ideas of how students cyberbully faculty, how faculty are experiencing the cyberbullying, and what faculty do in response.

Study participants reported that they comply with student demands for grading or policy concessions to mitigate the cyberbullying behaviors and emotional toll they experienced resulting from being recipients of the cyberbullying. This is because it is easier than dealing with the stress of explaining or defending oneself to the student and administration. This often occurs after the student engages in excessive communication tactics to gain attention from the faculty member.

Many participants relate the cyberbullying to the ideas of grading or policy concessions. In this research, and in previous research on the topic of faculty being bullied by students, the idea of increased administration support for faculty regarding this consumer- driven viewpoint is discussed.

Participants in this study describe how students use excessive communication to possibly overwhelm the instructor so that the students' demands are met when the professor gives in. This leaves faculty feeling defeated and exhausted and often complying with student demands to stop the excessive communication.

A key missing element in this research is the role of administration when addressing policies regarding communication and grading standards. Future research on how administration can help balance faculty needs while also supporting student learning needs and expectations would help provide some clarity and direction to faculty on how to respond to student-to-faculty cyberbullying in higher education.

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Appendix A: Research Invitation

Hello colleagues, hoping several are able to spare 20 minutes for an online, anonymous survey, to provide valuable input on an important topic! Thank you for your consideration!

Interview study seeks online psychology faculty who have been cyberbullied by students.

There is a new study about the experiences of online psychology faculty who have experienced being cyberbullied by students, and the stress experienced as well. The results from this study could help develop policies to help minimize or protect against the possible negative effects of cyberbullying that faculty may experience.

About the study:

- *One online survey consisting of 5 questions where you fill in your responses. The time expected to take the survey is 20-30 minutes.*
- *To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.*

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- ***Online psychology faculty*** currently teaching at least one (3 credits or more) section of online psychology per year.
- *Have taught online psychology since the year 2021 or before.*

- ***Have been cyberbullied*** by students in the past or are currently being cyberbullied by students.

This research is part of the doctoral study for Sarah Hull, a Ph.D. student at Walden University.

If you feel you qualify and would like to participate, please access the informed consent and survey link below. Your shared experiences are important, and your participation is appreciated! The first ten respondents who are selected to be included will receive a \$50.00 Visa gift card for compensation, delivered via email.

Walden University's IRB approval number for this study is 02-27-24-0037213. It expires on February 26, 2025.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Have you ever received hostile or threatening electronic communications from a student? Can you describe that please.

2. Examples of cyberbullying behaviors may include when a student disrespects or challenges your authority through electronic means. Has this ever happened to you and can you describe it please.

2. A second instance of cyberbullying may be when a student demands a grade or policy change through electronic means. Has this happened to you before and can you describe what those experiences were like.

3. Contrapower harassment (students bullying faculty) has traditionally occurred in a sexual or gender disparaging way, have you experienced this via cyber modalities by a student? If so, could you please describe that.

4. Another component of this study is stress reactions experiences in regard to the cyberbullying. Stress reactions can include physical and emotional reactions, such as headaches, nausea, avoidance of student, even avoidance of class and teaching altogether. Have you experienced stress reactions that you believe may be related to cyberbullying that has occurred? If so, could you please describe those experiences and reactions.