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Cyberbullying Victimization: The Lived Experiences of Parents

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Abstract

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MS, Walden University, 2015

BS, University of Phoenix, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Cyberbullying continues to be a rising problem facing many households. As teenagers are the primary victims of cyberbullying, it is ultimately up to victims' parents to mediate and address cyberbullying incidents. The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to explore the lived experiences of parents who had addressed and/or mediated an incident following their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. Bandura's self-efficacy theory was the theoretical framework that guided this study. Participants were recruited using purposeful sampling. Individual semistructured telephone interviews were held with 9 participants who were parents of adolescent cyberbullying victims. Themes were generated and data were analyzed using Colaizzi's method of descriptive data analysis. This analysis involved a multistep process to inductively develop themes from participant responses. Findings revealed that participants experienced negative emotions as a result of their teens' victimization. Results further revealed that despite a lack of preparedness, participants found their efforts to intervene in the cyberbullying incident to be effective. Themes emerging from the study highlight participants' desire to raise awareness regarding cyberbullying. The impacts that the cyberbullying incident had on the parent-adolescent relationship were also documented in this study. This study provided an opportunity for participants to share their perceived self-efficacy in responding to incidents of adolescent cyberbullying. Findings from this study may be used to promote positive social change by informing various professionals of the challenges that parents face in addressing cyberbullying incidents.

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Dedication

I dedicate the completion of this academic journey to my children, Jahlik and Trinity. I hope this serves as testimony that despite humble beginnings and any challenges that may come your way, all things are possible with dedication, determination, and consistency. I also extend a heartfelt thank you to my father, Gregory Herring, who continues to be my rock, a source of support who continues to rejuvenate my passions and fuel my fire.

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my extreme appreciation to my dissertation committee. I affectionately refer to you all as the "Dream Team," as I truly believe that a large part of my success is due to having the right people to educate me, support me, and guide my steps on this journey. Thank you to my dissertation chair and content expert, Dr. Tracey Phillips, for believing in my study and helping me grow under your guidance. You never let me give up and gave me the reminders that I needed when I was being too hard on myself. I sincerely appreciate you accepting the invitation to be my chair. Thank you to my committee member and methodology expert, Dr. Avon Hart-Johnson. From having you as a Walden instructor, to having you on my dissertation committee, you have continued to share your knowledge and expertise while proving to be a reliable and supportive ally. I thank you for accepting my invitation to serve on my dissertation committee and giving clear, constructive feedback. To my University Research Reviewer, Dr. Sandra Harris, thank you for always being approachable and willing to answer questions, and for offering the support I needed to efficiently navigate this process. I appreciate each of you, and for your efforts and expertise, I am forever grateful.

I also want to thank and acknowledge all of my friends, family members, and colleagues (my village) who continued to encourage me and never let me stand in my own way. For adult learners with careers, families, and multiple competing responsibilities, it is easy to become distracted, discouraged, or displeased during this

process. However, I was often reminded that this race is not a sprint, and with each step, I came closer to the finish line. For my village, which helped to keep me mentally, physically, and spiritually present, I am thankful.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Cyberbullying is a phenomenon that has achieved great attention over the last few years (Bauman & Newman, 2013; Byrne, Katz, Lee, Linz, & McIlrath, 2014; Dredge, Gleeson, & de la Piedad Garcia, 2014; Slonje, Smith, & Frisen, 2013). With the click of a button, taunts, threats, or unreciprocated advances can be publicized and repeatedly disclosed (Beale & Hall, 2007; Donegan, 2012; Raskauskas & Hyuhn, 2015). These bullying behaviors can be committed by both known and unknown persons. Cyberbullying often occurs among adolescents and may include name calling, impersonation, or purposefully preventing someone from participating in social engagements online (Ioannou et al., 2017; Ozdemir, 2014; Robinson, 2013). Harassment via text messaging, emails, instant messaging, social networking sites, or group chats also constitutes cyberbullying (Ioannou et al., 2017; Ozdemir, 2014; Robinson, 2013). The detrimental effects of cyberbullying can range from victims experiencing academic decline and social isolation to victims attempting or completing suicide (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015; Bauman & Newman, 2013; Chen & Cheng, 2016; Kodish et al., 2016).

Parents have the responsibility of meeting their teens' growing needs, providing guidelines for appropriate online interactions, and determining how to best respond when their teens become victims of cyberbullying (Fousiani, Dimitropoulou, Michaelides, & Van Petegem, 2016; Goldstein, 2015; Symons, Ponnet, Walrave, & Heirman, 2017; Wadian, Jones, Sonnentag, & Barnett, 2016). In this study, I explored the lived

experiences of parents who had addressed and/or mediated an incident in which their adolescent was victimized by cyberbullying. This chapter provides an overview of the study, including past research on cyberbullying, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research question. Additionally, this chapter highlights the theoretical framework used to guide the study, the nature of the study, as well as the limitations and delimitations of this study.

Background

Much of the research on cyberbullying has compared traditional bullying to cyberbullying (Bauman & Newman, 2013; Byrne et al., 2014; Symons et al., 2017). Both forms of bullying have been associated with negative psychosocial outcomes for the victim and the victim's family (see Bannink, Broeren, van de Looij–Jansen, de Waart, & Raat, 2014; Ozdemir, 2014; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016). Zych, Ortega-Ruiz, and Del Rey (2015) conducted a review of the most frequently cited articles on traditional bullying and cyberbullying. The researchers concluded that while research on bullying is prevalent, none of the frequently referenced articles addressed prevention of and interventions for cyberbullying.

Researchers have further indicated that much of the literature on cyberbullying has been limited to quantitative studies (Hale, Fox, & Murray, 2017; Harcourt, Green, & Bowden, 2015). Harcourt et al. (2015) attempted to fill the gap in the literature by conducting a qualitative study that explored the experiences of parents whose children had been victims of bullying. Parents who participated in this study acknowledged the

effects that their child's victimization had on them. Participants reported feelings of worry, anger, and powerlessness. Those feelings were accompanied by various symptoms such as increased alcohol use, change in sleep patterns, and the onset of illnesses caused by stress. Only three out of 26 participants reported that their child had been cyberbullied in addition to traditional bullying. Additionally, each parent in the study believed that the schools should have provided more support to remedy the situation. A limitation of the Harcourt et al. study was that the researchers did not focus on any one specific bullying platform. The researchers linked cyberbullying with other forms of bullying. This study addresses the gap left by Harcourt et al.'s study by focusing on one specific type of bullying platform. In this study, I sought only to explore participants' experiences with responding to cyberbullying incidents. Another difference is that I specifically sought participants who were parents of adolescents aged 12 to 17 years, whereas the Harcourt et al. study involved participants who had children between the ages of 5 and 11 years.

While the number of reports of cyberbullying continues to increase, there is not a clear consensus on how the consequences for bullying behavior should be addressed. Heller (2015) reported that as of April 2014, only 20 of 50 U.S. states had statutes governing consequences for behaviors classified as cyberbullying. While Harcourt et al. (2015) found that participants believed that schools should be responsible for addressing and reprimanding bullying behaviors, the schools' ability to do so was limited. Due to the limited authority that schools have over students outside of the school day, there is an

increased interest in parents' reactions, interventions, and knowledge in relation to cyberbullying (Heller, 2015).

Parental awareness of cyberbullying has an impact on parents' potential responses to cyberbullying victimization (Cassidy, Brown, & Jackson, 2012). Cassidy et al. (2012) conducted a study in which parents were surveyed regarding their knowledge of cyberbullying. Cassidy et al. found that the participants surveyed lacked competence in navigating social networking sites. The participants surveyed also failed to understand the severity of the effects of cyberbullying (Cassidy et al., 2012). This lack of awareness, knowledge, and competence in relation to cyberbullying could impact parents' ability to effectively intervene and respond to situations in which their adolescents are victims of cyberbullying.

Roberto, Eden, Deisss, Savage, and Ramos-Salazar (2017) found that parents who viewed a presentation on cyberbullying indicated a heightened awareness of their teen's susceptibility to victimization. Participants who were educated on cyberbullying through the presentation were reportedly more likely to discuss cyberbullying with their adolescent when compared to participants who did not view the presentation (Roberto et al., 2017). Heller (2015) discussed the need for parents to possess competence in cyberbullying intervention and prevention methods. Increasing parental competence in the area of understanding cyberbullying intervention and prevention methods can assist parents in meeting the responsibility and liability that they have for protecting as well as controlling their adolescents' behaviors (Heller, 2015). Further research on parents'

experiences with addressing and/or mediating incidents of adolescent cyberbullying victimization is needed to determine whether parents believe that they are equipped to effectively handle this situation. Results from such a study could provide empirical information about whether additional education and resources for parents on the subject are needed.

Problem Statement

Harcourt et al. (2015) found that parents are impacted when their children or adolescents are victims of bullying. In a study completed by Harcourt et al. (2015), parents interviewed on their experiences with bullying reported experiencing increased conflict within the home, heightened stress levels, feelings of anger, disrupted sleep patterns, and a lack of control over the situation. Brown (2010) conducted a study exploring participants' experiences in the aftermath of their adolescents being victims of bullying while in middle school. Participants reported feeling hopeless and vulnerable, as well as having been exposed to a situation that was beyond their control (Brown, 2010). Harcourt, Jasperse, and Green (2014) also stated that parents are negatively impacted when their children are being bullied. Harcourt et al. (2014) found that participants reported feelings of guilt for not being able to protect their children from bullying and a sense of failed responsibility for being unable to improve the situation. Harcourt et al. (2014) also found that parents whose teens were victimized by cyberbullying expressed a feeling of helplessness. Parents expressed a belief that the Internet had eradicated the ability for parents to effectively control their children's behaviors (Harcourt et al., 2014).

Researchers have found that parents desire additional support and information on bullying and on how to appropriately intervene and respond to it (Brown, 2010; Harcourt et al., 2015; Harcourt et al., 2014).

As the popularity of and access to the Internet continue to grow, it is likely that cyberbullying will remain a topic of interest (Heller, 2015). Results from the 2010 Youth Internet Safety Survey conducted in 2000 and 2005 revealed that 97% of youth surveyed had access to the Internet from home, in comparison to just 74% in 2000 (Mitchell, Jones, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2014). These findings consequently revealed that there were increased opportunities for unwanted online bullying activities (Mitchel et al., 2014).

Despite research revealing that many adolescents become victims of cyberbullying while accessing the Internet at home, little research has explored the lived experiences of parents who have addressed and/or mediated an incident of their adolescents' cyberbullying victimization (Fousiani et al., 2016; Goldstein, 2015; Symons et al., 2017; Wadian et al., 2016). Many victims of cyberbullying disclose their victimization to their parents (Dillon, 2016; Jones, Mitchell, & Turner, 2015). Although the aforementioned research on cyberbullying illuminated important findings, I found no research that examined the lived experiences of parents who had addressed or mediated an incident of adolescent cyberbullying.

Purpose of the Study

This descriptive phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of parents who had addressed or mediated an incident of adolescent cyberbullying. Recent

studies on cyberbullying have been limited to exploring the prevalence of cyberbullying or have presented how cyberbullying impacts victims in comparison to traditional bullying (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015; Bauman & Newman, 2013; Dredge et al., 2014; Kodish et al., 2016). As the number of adolescent suicides due to cyberbullying continues to grow (Heller, 2015; Laird, 2013), it is imperative to fill the gap in research by exploring the experiences of parents whose adolescents have been victimized by cyberbullying.

Research Question

The research question was the following: What are the lived experiences of parents who have addressed and/or mediated an incident following their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework for this study was Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, which is used to explain how individuals perceive their competence for specific tasks. Self-efficacy theory is derived from social cognitive theory, which posits that learning occurs through the cyclic interactions between the person, the environment, and the person's behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1995). *Self-efficacy* refers to a person's belief that he or she possesses the capabilities to effectively achieve a desired goal (Bandura, 1995). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in his or her ability to perform a task facing him or her, without regard to his or her actual skill level in performing the task (Bandura, 1995). Bandura proposed that an individual's perception of his or her self-

efficacy is influenced by mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional state (Bandura, 1977, 1995, 1997). Self-efficacy theory was applicable to this study because the parents' perceived competency in addressing situations of cyberbullying impacted their overall experience and actions after becoming aware of their adolescents' victimization. This theory and its relation to the study are explored in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

This descriptive phenomenological qualitative study involved individual phone interviews with nine participants who were parents of adolescents aged 12-17 years who had been victimized by cyberbullying within the 2 years prior to the time of the interview. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants who had the shared experience and who met the inclusion criteria for participating in this study. The focus of the interviews was determining the parents' overall experiences with addressing and/or mediating an incident involving their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization.

Definitions

Adolescent: A young person in the process of transitioning from a child to an adult (Šléglová & Cerna, 2011; Wadian et al., 2016). For the purpose of this study, the term *adolescents* is used interchangeably with the words *youth* and *teens*.

Cyberbullying: Deliberately insulting, threatening, embarrassing, or harassing someone using a technology-based approach, such as via the Internet or via any electronic device (Kandlapalli, Shinde, Shriramoji, Uke, & Chaudhary, 2017, p. 716).

Online: Accessing the Internet using an electronic device. Communicating online can refer to any form of communication that requires the Internet, such as video chat, instant messaging, or interacting on a social media platform (Lee et al., 2017; Robinson, 2013).

Parent: The term *parent* refers to the biological mother, father, stepparent, or primary caretaker of a minor (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015; Kodish et al., 2016).

Assumptions

In conducting this study, I made several assumptions. I assumed that parents would have an interest in their adolescents' overall wellbeing and therefore might be significantly impacted by their teens' cyberbullying victimization. Based on findings from research that revealed that many adolescents confide in their parents about their cyberbullying victimization (Dillon, 2016; Jones et al., 2015), I assumed that there are parents who have lived experiences involving their adolescents being victims of cyberbullying. It was also assumed that participants would willingly share their stories in an honest manner, without influence or coercion. It was assumed that participants would be forthcoming regarding their experiences with addressing their adolescents' victimization. An additional assumption was that individual interviews held via telephone would be effective in eliciting rich responses about the participants' lived experiences. I also assumed that telephone interviews might maximize the participants' comfort in sharing their experiences.

Scope and Delimitations

Researchers have shown that the risk for cyberbullying peaks during middle school and high school (Ioannou et al., 2017; Robinson, 2013). This study did not explore the lived experiences of adolescents. Participation in this study was restricted to parents or primary caretakers of an adolescent aged 12-17 years who had been cyberbullied within the 2 years prior to the time of the interview. This study did not focus on the experiences of parents whose adolescents were the perpetrators of cyberbullying. Each interview was held via telephone, as opposed to being a traditional face-to-face interview. Telephone interviews are believed to increase the pool of eligible candidates and to allow participants additional flexibility (Drabble, Trocki, Salcedo, Walker, & Korcha, 2016; Farooq & De Villiers, 2017). In conducting interviews via telephone, participants chose the place and time where they felt most comfortable sharing the narrative of their experience.

Limitations

Participation was limited to individuals who contacted me after viewing an announcement for the study in the Walden Research Participant Pool or at local community venues. Snowball sampling was also used to recruit participants. Snowball sampling is a strategy whereby participants recruit other participants (Van Manen, 2017; Yardley, 2017). Participants were encouraged to refer potential candidates if they knew of other parents who might be eligible to participate in the study. The study had a relatively small sample size of nine participants, which might have biased the results;

however, the detailed data analysis and the rich descriptions gathered from the interviews enhance the transferability of findings from the study. The data collected were based on the self-reporting of experiences as described by participants. It is possible that details of the participants' experiences may have been omitted or embellished by the participants without my knowledge.

Researcher bias is possible in qualitative research; however, bracketing was used to enhance the credibility of the research. Bracketing involves researchers setting aside any preconceived ideas or experiences that could impact their ability to remain impartial throughout a research study. Member checking was used as an additional method for reducing researcher bias.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study contribute to the existing body of literature by providing information on participants' lived experiences with responding to adolescent cyberbullying. Findings include how participants were impacted when their adolescents became victims of cyberbullying. Human services professionals and other professionals could use findings from this study as evidence of the need for advocating for and developing programs to educate parents on how cyberbullying impacts their adolescents and themselves. Professionals could also use the information to advocate for educational programs to educate parents on how to effectively address situations of cyberbullying.

Summary

Cyberbullying has become a serious problem that negatively impacts adolescents who are victimized (Beale & Hall, 2007; Donegan, 2012; Raskauskas & Hyuhn, 2015). Additionally, the parents of cyberbullying victims are left with the task of determining what, if any, action should follow, as well as how to protect their adolescents from further victimization. Prior research has explored parental awareness of cyberbullying; however, I did not find any research that specifically explored the experiences of parents whose adolescents had been victims of cyberbullying. Parents' lived experiences of addressing and/or mediating incidents of their adolescents' cyberbullying victimization remain an underresearched area (Garaigordobil & Machimbarrena, 2017).

This chapter provided an overview of the study, which included a synopsis of the theoretical framework guiding the study in addition to the purpose of the study. Chapter 1 also highlighted the significance of the study, as well as the study's limitations. Chapter 2 offers a detailed literature review of previous studies on cyberbullying and includes a comparison of cyberbullying to traditional bullying, the prevalence of cyberbullying, the effects of cyberbullying, as well as the available literature on parental impact, mediation, and monitoring as it pertains to cyberbullying.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of parents who had addressed and/or mediated an incident following their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. As Internet usage increases, so does the opportunity for negative online interactions (Bannik et al., 2014; Kandlapalli et al., 2017; Ozdemir, 2014). *Cyberbullying* has many and varying definitions, which are discussed in depth later in this chapter; however, for the purpose of this study, cyberbullying was defined as "deliberately insulting, threatening, embarrassing or harassing" someone using a technology-based approach such as the Internet or a mobile device (Kandlapalli et al., 2017, p. 716). Teen usage of the Internet continues to grow worldwide. Studies in the United States have reported that over 90% of American teens access the Internet via personal devices to communicate with others or access various social media sites (Goldstein, 2016; Robinson, 2013; Shin & Kang, 2016; Symons et al., 2017; Wadian et al., 2016). Parents have the task of balancing their adolescents' desire for autonomy with their need to provide adequate monitoring of their teens' activities on electronic devices to minimize the various risks associated with having an online presence (Goldstein, 2015; Symons et al., 2017). While there is an abundance of studies available on cyberbullying, many of these studies overlook the experiences of parents. This disparity leaves a gap in the literature and provides opportunities for future research (Hale et al., 2017; Harcourt et al., 2015; Ozdemir, 2014).

In Chapter 2, I present the following topics: types of adolescent cyberbullying; comparing cyberbullying to traditional bullying; the prevalence of cyberbullying; and the effects of cyberbullying on individuals and society. Chapter 2 presents prior research and theories used to document the relationship between parental competency and adolescent cyberbullying. Bandura's self-efficacy theory served as the theoretical foundation for this study.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the Walden University Library to access various academic databases and journals to locate relevant literature for this study. The multidisciplinary databases that I searched included Google Scholar, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest, EBSCOHost, SAGE Premier, and Science Direct. The subject databases that I searched included SocINDEX, PsycINFO, and PsycARTICLES. I searched for peer-reviewed articles published in 2014 or later and input the following key words and key word combinations to obtain different results: *cyberbullying*, *cyber-bullying*, *cyber-aggression*, *cyber-victim, online bullying*, *online aggression*, and *self-efficacy theory.* The key word combinations inputted were "*cyberbullying and adolescents*," "*cyberbullying and teens*," "*cyberbullying and participants*," "*cyberbullying and self-efficacy*," "*participants and self-efficacy*," "*cyberbullying and competency*," and "*cyberbullying and theories*."

The seminal works of Bandura on self-efficacy theory were located and used to provide the theoretical framework for this study. It was determined that Bandura's self-efficacy theory directly aligned with the research question guiding this study. After

reviewing the articles collected, I separated them into major recurring themes, which coincide with the subtitles used in this literature review section.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, which explains an individual's personal judgement on his or her ability to achieve specific goals or complete tasks. Self-efficacy theory was derived from social cognitive theory, which purports that learning occurs through dynamic interactions between the person, the environment, and the person's behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1995). Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief that he or she possesses the capabilities to effectively achieve a desired goal (Bandura, 1995). Self-efficacy impacts individuals' behavior based on their confidence in their ability to perform a task facing them (Bandura, 1995). This confidence may not reflect a person's actual skill level in relation to the task (Bandura, 1995). The main components of self-efficacy theory are mastery experience, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977, 1995).

Mastery Experience

Mastery experience refers to the experience that a person has gained from previously completing a specific task (Bandura, 1977, 1995, 1997). If a person has successfully completed a task, he or she is likely to believe that he or she can successfully complete the task again (Bandura, 1995). Mastery experience can be related to how parents judge their ability to respond to cyberbullying incidents. Parents who have effectively dealt with bullying victimization before may have greater confidence in their

ability to mediate a bullying incident again. Parents who perceive their prior bullying intervention efforts to be ineffective may have lower self-efficacy regarding their ability to effectively address future incidents of cyberbullying.

Vicarious Experiences

Vicarious experiences involve learning that occurs by watching or observing others complete tasks (Bandura, 1977). If parents have not had experiences with addressing cyberbullying, they may contemplate how another parent responded to or addressed an incident of cyberbullying and then use that behavior as a model. The parents may imitate or repeat the actions taken by the models. Vicarious experiences can increase or decrease a person's self-efficacy based on how the outcome of the experience is perceived.

Verbal Persuasion

Verbal feedback and encouragement from others also affect a person's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995). Both positive and negative feedback can influence a person's self-efficacy in performing a task (Bandura, 1995; Capurso, Paradžik, & Čale Mratović, 2017). The type of feedback received can influence whether a person believes that they are doing a good job or if their efforts are futile. Parents' self-efficacy in responding to an incident of adolescent cyberbullying may be increased or decreased based on the feedback that they receive from those around them. Participants who have a stronger support system through which they receive consistent encouragement from others may

have increased confidence in their abilities to intervene and mediate incidents of cyberbullying (Capurso et al., 2017)

Emotional State

An individual's emotional response after performing a specific task can impact the person's perceptions of self-efficacy (Bandura, Adams, & Beyer, 1977). When contemplating a specific task leads to positive emotions such as excitement, an individual's confidence in his or her ability to perform the task may be enhanced. If a person's thoughts of performing a specific task elicit stress or fear, the person's self-efficacy may be negatively impacted. Stress is known to have a negative impact on perceived self-efficacy, as the emotional state can elicit fear of inability to handle a specific situation, which in turn affects how individuals cope with the stressor (Bandura, 1995; Bandura et al., 1977). Responding to an incident of cyberbullying can prove to be a challenging or stressful task for a parent, as the effects of this phenomenon itself include negative social, psychological, and emotional impacts (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015; Bauman & Newman, 2013; Chen & Cheng, 2016; Kodish et al., 2016; Šléglová & Cerna, 2011). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that parents' self-efficacy in handling the stressors related to adolescent cyberbullying could adversely affect their behavior, their perceived confidence in addressing the cyberbullying, and their ability to respond to the situation.

Previous Studies Using Self-Efficacy Theory

Previous studies have illuminated the role of parental competencies in navigating the complex roles of parenting. For example, Mouton and Roskam (2015) conducted a study with a sample of 42 mothers and their preschool children to determine whether mother's self-efficacy could be influenced by encouragement and support during times of stressful parenting (Mouton & Roskam, 2015). The researchers compared the parent participants in their study to a control group of participants who did not receive such praise (Mouton & Roskam, 2015). Mouton and Roskam concluded that the mothers who received peer support and encouragement achieved higher self-efficacy in their parenting skills, in contrast with those mothers who did not receive the same positive feedback from others. The change in self-efficacy was measured by self-reports from the mothers involved in the study, as well as observational reports from the researchers. Results from the study highlighted how verbal persuasion impacted the mothers' positive parenting behaviors.

Parental self-efficacy in responding to cyberbullying was also investigated in a study conducted by Roberto et al. (2017). Roberto et al. conducted a study in which they evaluated the immediate effects of a presentation on cybersafety and cyberbullying developed by the Arizona Attorney General and presented to parents. Participants in the study were 51 parents of middle school students. The participants were randomly assigned to take a survey either before or after viewing the presentation. The survey questioned participants' beliefs regarding their adolescent's susceptibility to becoming a

victim of cyberbullying. The survey also explored participants' likelihood of talking about cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts with their adolescents. One group of participants viewed the presentation and completed the survey after viewing the presentation. The participants assigned to the comparison group completed the survey on cyberbullying first and then viewed the presentation. Results revealed that participants who viewed the presentation before completing the survey felt better equipped for recognizing and handling issues of adolescent cyberbullying than participants who completed the surveys before the presentation. Roberto et al. used quantitative analysis and identified a relationship between parents' beliefs about their ability to adequately handle a situation and how obtaining education on the topic influenced self-efficacy in this area.

Raskauskas and Huynh (2015) conducted a review of available research on how individuals cope with cyberbullying victimization. They found that how individuals perceived or appraised the threat of cyberbullying impacted how they recognized their own self-efficacy in executing strategies to cope with cyberbullying. While multiple strategies and resources may be available for addressing incidents of cyberbullying, the methods chosen are likely to be driven by an individual's self-efficacy in in their ability to successfully execute the strategies available (Raskauskas & Huynh, 2015). The findings from this study further support the appropriateness of selecting self-efficacy theory to ground research exploring the lived experiences of parents who had mediated an incident in which their adolescent was victimized by cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying Defined

Despite an increasing amount of research focused on cyberbullying, there are various philosophies on how cyberbullying should be defined (Capurso et al., 2017; Corcoran, Guckin, & Prentice, 2015; Goldstein, 2015; Heller, 2015; Holla, Fenyvesiova, & Hanuliakova, 2017; Robinson, 2013). Common elements among definitions of cyberbullying include the intentional nature of harm caused to another person using electronic means. Causing harm using electronic means may refer to online impersonation, spreading rumors, or sending threatening messages, unsolicited pictures, or harassment via text messaging, instant messaging, or chat rooms (Capurso et al., 2017; Goldstein, 2015; Hale et al., 2017; Robinson, 2013; Soniya & Murugadoss, 2017; Wright, 2017). The term *cyberbullying* has also been used interchangeably with terms such as *online harassment*, *cyberaggression*, *online bullying*, *cyber harassment*, *online peer harassment*, and *cyber victimization* (Corcoran et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2015; Ozdemir, 2014; Wright, 2017).

Ioannou et al. (2017) categorized cyberbullying into the following four types of harassing actions: written/verbal, visual, exclusion, and impersonation. Written and verbal forms of cyberbullying refer to harassment that occurs via "phone calls, text messages, emails, instant messaging, chats, blogs, [and] social networking communities" (Ioannou et al., 2017, p. 2). Visual activities that constitute cyberbullying include posting or sending unflattering pictures or videos of a person to that individual or for others to view (Ioannou et al., 2017; Ozdemir, 2014; Robinson, 2013). Exclusion refers to

purposefully preventing someone from participating in social engagements online (Ellenbaas & Killen, 2016; Lee & Shin, 2017; Ozdemir, 2014). Social exclusion is a form of bullying that involves purposefully preventing someone from engaging with a particular group (Ellenbaas & Killen, 2016; Lee & Shin, 2017; Ozdemir, 2014). Social exclusion often involves isolating a person based on specific characteristics that have been determined as undesirable (Ellenbaas & Killen, 2016). Impersonation involves the creation of fake profiles or use of an individual's photos or personal information by an unauthorized person (Ioannou et al., 2017). Impersonation or creating a fake profile can damage a victim's reputation or existing social relationships because foul or untruthful information can be released in a manner that leads others to assume that the victim is making the posts. Each type of cyberbullying has been linked to negative psychological effects on the victim, which may lead to depression, anxiety, isolative behaviors, and poor academic performance (Ioannou et al., 2017; Kandlapalli, 2017).

Cyberbullies are not limited to a specific gender, physical size, academic intelligence level, or age, so it remains difficult to prove that an imbalance of power exists when cyberbullying occurs. Due to the inability to prove a distinctive imbalance of power in cyberbullying, it was not included in the definition of cyberbullying used to guide this study. The inability to prove the presence of an imbalance of power has led theorists to disagree on whether imbalance of power should be included in definitions of cyberbullying (Holla et al., 2017; Robinson, 2013).The lack of a consistent definition of cyberbullying has caused variance in the documented prevalence of cyberbullying

because different researchers have used different criteria to identify what constitutes cyberbullying (Holla et al., 2017; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016; Wright, 2017). This inconsistency has resulted in difficulty in accurately determining how often cyberbullying occurs (Holla et al., 2017; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016; Wright, 2017).

Prevalence of Cyberbullying

The prevalence of cyberbullying varies greatly across studies. The prevalence of cyberbullying is often measured by surveying participants on their experiences with cyberbullying (Capurso et al., 2017; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016; Robinson, 2013). Varying factors across studies include how many times a person must be harassed to classify a situation as bullying, the time span of the study, the age of the participants, data collection methods, and the scope of the study (Capurso et al., 2017; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016; Robinson, 2013). Despite the various ways in which cyberbullying is measured, it is generally accepted that cyberbullying is an international issue that negatively affects individuals (Capurso et al., 2017; Ozdemir, 2014; Robinson, 2013).

Robinson (2013) reported that in Australia, the prevalence rates for cyberbullying among adolescents ranged from 7% to 20%. Findings from one study of adolescent participants in Australia aged 12-17 revealed that 1 in 5 participants reported having received negative messages via text or another electronic platform (Robinson, 2013). Robinson (2013) also contended that online risk for cyberbullying does not equate to online harm. Parents are encouraged to aim for a balance between monitoring cybersafety and encouraging adolescent independence.

Patchin (2016) conducted a study to determine the prevalence of cyberbullying in the United States. The study included results from the Cyberbullying Research Center, which has studied cyberbullying over the past decade. The Cyberbullying Research Center surveys middle and high school students in the United States through random sampling. In 2016, the Cyberbullying Research Center surveyed 5,707 students, and 33.8% of respondents indicated that they had experienced being a victim of cyberbullying. Only 11.5% of that same sample admitted having been a perpetrator of cyberbullying (Patchin, 2016).

Lee and Shin (2017) studied the prevalence rate of cyberbullying among youth in Korea by surveying a sample of 4,000 adolescents. The researchers found that 34% of participants had been involved in cyberbullying in either the role of a bully, victim, or the dual role of a bully-victim (Lee & Shin, 2017). Of the participants who reported having experienced cyberbullying, only 6.3% acknowledged the sole role of being a bully, while 14.6% classified themselves as being a victim, and 13.1% of participants reported having experienced being both a victim and a bully.

Pereira, Spitzberg, and Matos (2016) also sought to determine the prevalence of cyberbullying among adolescents in Portugal. A sample of 627 Portuguese students ages 12-16 years completed an online survey regarding their experiences with cyberbullying. The researchers found that around 70% of participants indicated that they had been a victim of cyberbullying at least once, while approximately 60% reported being a victim of cyberbullying multiple times. Approximately 40% of participants admitted to being

both a perpetrator and a victim of cyberbullying. Findings from the Pereira et al. (2016) study supported the findings of Lee and Shin (2017) who had similar results with participants surveyed acknowledging that they have been both a victim and a perpetrator of cyberbullying. Pereira et al. (2016) found that those who experienced repeated victimization were more likely to retaliate and participate in cyberbullying behaviors. The researchers reported that the most common form of cyberbullying experienced by the sample was receiving unwanted calls or messages.

As the sample sizes, definition of cyberbullying and aim in studies on cyberbullying continue to vary, so will the prevalence rates. Some studies have focused solely on a specific type of cyberbullying (Elsaesser, Russell, Ohannessian, & Patton, 2017), such as harassment on social networking sites, omitting other methods, while other studies have gathered data on bullying experiences in general (Harcourt et al., 2015), whether the victimization occurred online or offline.

Cyberbullying Versus Traditional Bullying

When presenting research on cyberbullying, it would be remiss not to also include information on traditional bullying. Much of the available research on cyberbullying includes a comparison of cyberbullying to traditional bullying. Cyberbullying is considered a relatively new phenomenon, however cyberbullying is derived from and related to its long-studied predecessor, traditional bullying. While there are some similarities between the two types of bullying, there are unique attributes of each method of bullying.

Traditional bullying is defined as menacing behaviors inflicted by at least one individual on another individual who is unable to defend his or her self (Bannink et al., 2014; Fousiani et al., 2016; Heller, 2015; Holla et al., 2017). The inability to adequately defends one's self creates an imbalance of power which is a prominent factor of traditional bullying (Bannink et al., 2014; Fousiani et al., 2016; Heller, 2015; Holla et al., 2017). Behaviors categorized as bullying may include verbal and/ or physical assaults, as well as exclusion from social activities (Bannink et al., 2014; Harcourt et al., 2015; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016).

When comparing traditional bullying to cyberbullying, both forms of bullying have been associated with long-term, negative psychosocial outcomes for the victim (Bannink et al., 2014; Ozdemir, 2014; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016). For example, victimization from both traditional and cyberbullying have been linked to increased risk of suicide (Bannink et al., 2014). While traditional bullying involves repeated negative face to face confrontations with the bully, cyberbullying via electronic media allows online sharing of unwanted messages, pictures, or videos by the cyberbully or others (Holla et al., 2017; Robinson, 2013). Holla et al. (2017) and Harrison (2016) suggested that perpetrators of cyberbullying often victimize others via electronic communication to say things that they would not say in person, noting that many adolescents find bullying online easier to do than traditional bullying. Appel Stiglbauer, Batinic, and Holtz (2014) suggested that when communicating online adolescents may engage in "flaming", described as using harsher language online than they would use in face to face

communication. The harsh language used in flaming can result in cyberbullying if derogatory remarks are targeted towards a specific person. The publicity feature (how many people witness the event) in cyberbullying allows the victimization to continue long after the initial incident (Holla et al., 2017; Robinson, 2013).

Compared to traditional bullying that requires face to face interactions, the anonymity associated with cyberbullying is a distinct characteristic with this form of bullying (Appel et al., 2014; Heller, 2015; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016; Robinson, 2013). The anonymity allows the perpetrator to victimize someone repeatedly, while keeping his or her identity hidden. When victimizers can easily shield their identity with the use of screen names, multiple social media profiles, and lack of geographical boundaries, the risk of being caught is minimized (Pabian & Vanderbosch, 2015). Essentially, anyone with access to a mass communication system such as a smartphone, laptop, gaming system, tablet, or other electronic device which establishes a connection to the internet can be a potential cyberbully (Heller, 2015). The anonymity associated with cyberbullying minimizes the victim's ability to avoid or seek safety from the cyberbully (Dordolo, 2014; Heller, 2015; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016; Robinson, 2013). "Media enables bullies to be more powerful, gives victims less power to control the situation, or reduces the threshold difference in power needed for victimization" (Dordolo, 2014, p. 35). Dordolo (2014) argued that the anonymity, continuous opportunity for victimization, and publicity associated with cyberbullying is what creates the imbalance of power in cyberbullying.

The anonymity associated with cyberbullying creates a sense of detachment for the cyberbully (DeHue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008; Harrison, 2016). Bullying through electronic means removes the ability for those bullying online to directly witness their victim's reaction (DeHue, et al. 2008; Harrison, 2016). With traditional bullying, victims can identify the bully, which allows the victim a better attempt at avoiding confrontation (Harrison, 2016; Jones et al., 2015). Identifying the bully also increases the possibility of disclosure to an authority figure and limits the time in which the individual can be victimized (Harrison, 2016; Jones et al., 2015). Whereas cyberbullying allows the individual to be victimized anywhere through the use of electronic communication, including places thought to be safe, such as in the home (Harrison, 2016; Jones et al., 2015).

Publicity is another way in which traditional and cyberbullying differ. The publicity of an event refers to the amount of people witnessing the event (Holla et al., 2017; Robinson, 2013). The audience of cyberbullying occurs is potentially a lot larger than the audience associated with traditional bullying (Nixon, 2014; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016). Jones et al. (2015) reported that cyberbullying may be particularly distressing due to the possibility of having many witnesses to the bullying event. Witnesses for traditional, or face to face, bullying are limited to those who are in close proximity to the incident itself (Bannink et al., 2014). In contrast, cyberbullying often occurs online, which allows witnesses to view, join in, or share the incident with others. The publicity component in cyberbullying often plays a factor in the perceived severity of

the event by its victims; the more people who witness the event, the worse it is for the victim (Holla et al., 2017; Sticca & Perren, 2013).

Sticca and Perren (2013) conducted a study of approximately 850 adolescents who rated the severity of traditional bullying and cyberbullying scenarios. The severity was determined by how "bad" the adolescents perceived the bullying to be. Sticca and Perren used the type of bullying (traditional or cyber), the publicity, and anonymity of the bullying as independent variables. Sticca and Perren found that the publicity and anonymity of the bullying was a primary factor in determining severity. The scenarios that had larger audiences or included perpetrators who hid their identity were rated as being worse than scenarios that weren't public or anonymous.

Severity of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has been linked to a number of mental health issues for such as depression, anxiety, aggression, social withdrawal, poor self-esteem, poor grades in school, and suicidal behavior for victims of cyberbullying (Bauman & Bellmore, 2015; Bauman & Newman, 2013; Capurso et al., 2017; Chen & Cheng, 2016; Kodish et al., 2016; Nixon, 2014, Symons et al, 2017). In a review of international studies on cyberbullying, Nixon (2014) reported that cyberbullying has been identified as a stressor that has been associated with victims experiencing negative outcomes such as trauma. Nixon (2014) found that individuals who served a dual role as being a bully-victim, experienced the most severe health outcomes. Those who experienced being both a victim and a perpetrator of cyberbullying also had higher levels of depression (Nixon,

2014). This group of bully-victims was also credited with having a higher report of strained relationships with guardians than those who were either only a cyberbully or only a victim (Nixon, 2014).

Holla et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study surveying 1,118 Slovac Republic participants aged 11 to 18 years to determine the perceptions of the severity of cyberbullying. Severity is determined by the participant's individual perception of the hurtful impact each scenario would have on a victim. Data were collected using the Cyberbullying and Online Aggression questionnaire. Results revealed that threats via text messaging, posting cruel videos or creating web pages intended to hurt or embarrass someone were the most severe forms of cyberbullying (Holla et al., 2017).

Palladino et al. (2017) also examined adolescents' perceptions of the severity of cyberbullying among adolescents from various countries. The sample consisted of 1,964 adolescents aged 12 to 20 years old from Estonia, Italy, Germany, and Turkey. Participants rated 128 scenarios depicting multiple aspects of cyberbullying behaviors, which included, intentionality, repetitiveness, imbalance of power, anonymity and publicity. Palladino et al. concluded that the presence of an imbalance of power directly impacted how participants perceived severity of the cyberbullying behaviors. Intentionality and anonymity were also impacted how participants perceived the severity of cyberbullying, when the scenario depicted an incident that was combined with the presence of an imbalance of power (Palladino et al., 2017).

The various studies that have explored the severity of cyberbullying on victims have mostly been quantitative in nature (Holla et al., 2017; Palladino et al., 2017; Sticca & Perren, 2013) Previous studies on cyberbullying also have not examined the experiences of the parent responding to the situation of cyberbullying. Implications for further research, include the need for additional qualitative studies on the severity of cyberbullying.

Parental Awareness of Cyberbullying

As cyberbullying has continued to gain international attention, researchers have begun to investigate parental awareness of cyberbullying and involvement in matters related to cyberbullying. Parents are responsible for providing their children and adolescents with guidelines for appropriate online behavior, which includes providing education and intervention in regard to cyberbullying (Fousiani et al., 2016; Goldstein, 2015; Symons et al., 2017; Wadian et al., 2016). Parents often become aware of cyberbullying when their youth disclose that they have been bullied. Previous studies have revealed that many parents underestimate the possibility that their child or adolescent has had experiences with cyberbullying (Cassidy et al., 2012; Goldstein, 2016; Ozdemir, 2014).

Cassidy, Brown, and Jackson (2012) found that participants surveyed in their study lacked knowledge of social networking sites or the severity of the effects of cyberbullying. Only 11% of participants in this study acknowledged that their child had ever been victimized by cyberbullying, while in actuality 32% of participants' children

reported having been cyberbullied (Cassidy et al., 2012). Additionally, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very concerned, the average response was 3.5 when participants were questioned on how concerned they were about cyberbullying. Findings from the Cassidy et al. (2012) study revealed that many participants did not acknowledge the possibility that their child may have encountered cyberbullying.

Findings from the Ozdemir (2014) study revealed that parental involvement and communication could mitigate the adverse effects of cyberbullying on their children. Ozdemir (2014) conducted a study with the aim of identifying the relationship between parental communication, cyber victimization, and self-esteem in adolescents. The adolescents who communicated with their parents about their victimization ensured that their parents were aware of the cyberbullying, which provided the parents with the opportunity to intervene. Results of the study indicated that when parents had higher rates of communication with adolescents who were victimized by cyberbullying, the adolescents maintained higher levels of self-esteem. When parents were made aware of the cyberbullying victimization there were more favorable outcomes.

Goldstein (2016) surveyed 110- 11th and 12th grade students on their online behaviors, their voluntary disclosure of their online activities to parents, and their efforts to hide parts of their social lives from their parents. Participants were questioned about cyber-aggressive behaviors and whether they disclose or hide these behaviors from parents. The voluntary disclosure of the adolescent's cyber- aggressive behaviors directly impacts the parent's awareness of cyberbullying as the disclosure results in explicit

knowledge of the cyberbullying incident. Results of this quantitative study concluded that higher levels of secrecy correlated to increased levels of cyber aggression, and unsupervised socializing, whereas adolescents who disclosed more to their parents about their online, and offline activities were at less risk for cyber aggression (Goldstein, 2016). Parents who are more aware of their child's online experiences are better able to educate and impact their child's involvement with cyberbullying.

Parental Intervention and Mediation of Online Communication

To assist their adolescents in mediating cyberbullying incidents, it is imperative that parents gain knowledge about cyberbullying and exhibit concern regarding cyberbullying (Goldstein, 2016; Ozdemir, 2014; Symons et al., 2017). Parents are expected to implement behaviors that minimize and regulate their adolescent's involvement in cyberbullying situations (Goldstein, 2016; Ozdemir, 2014; Symons et al., 2017). Parents' task of achieving these goals is not without challenges, as adolescents' use and knowledge of online communication mechanisms such as social network sites may far outweigh that of their parents (Appel et al, 2014; DeHue et al., 2008; Shin & Kang, 2016; Symons et al., 2017). Adolescents may be resistant to their parents' regulation of their online activities (Appel et al, 2014; DeHue et al., 2008; Shin & Kang, 2016; Symons et al., 2017).

Goldstein's (2016) study revealed that adolescents who disclosed their experiences and behaviors to their parents had less exposure to cyberbullying. However, many times parents are not the adolescent's first choice when choosing who to confide in

about cyberbullying (Wadian et al., 2016). Wadian et al. (2016) surveyed 116 respondents aged 15 to 19 years on how they would handle cyberbullying and how they believed that their parents would advise them to handle cyberbullying (Wadian et al., 2016). Responses revealed that the most popular method used to handle cyberbullying would be to ignore the bully and this was also the strategy most respondents believed that their parents would recommend (Wadian et al., 2016). The adolescents also indicated that they would go to their peers as a primary source of support and advice before going to their parents for advice (Wadian et al., 2016). It can be concluded that parents would benefit from being proactive in seeking knowledge about their adolescent's online activities and experiences with cyberbullying. Parental involvement has positive effects; however, their teen may not instinctively disclose the cyberbullying experience.

Symons et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study that consisted of six focus groups with 34 parents of a teen aged 13 to 17 years. The aim of this study was to investigate participants' perceptions of their adolescent's internet usage and the methods parents used to mediate their adolescents' internet behaviors. Results revealed that participants had concerns regarding the possible risks associated with their adolescents' online usage, the negative images and vulgar language that their adolescents were exposed to, and the type of information the adolescents could share (Symons et al., 2017). To address these concerns, participants favored active mediation, implementing open communication on a regular basis with their child about their online presence, including social media interactions. Active mediation was found to be more effective than

restrictive mediation, which relies on rules for internet use to be adhered to by adolescents and enforced by parents (Symons et al., 2017). It was also noted that mediation strategies of their adolescent's internet usage are often contingent upon the parent's own knowledge of internet usage and capabilities (Symons et al., 2017).

Parents' choice of intervention strategies may impact the perception of their effectiveness in mediating an incident of adolescent cyberbullying. The current literature on parent intervention strategies as it relates to cyberbullying has been limited to quantitative research (Symons et al., 2017). This leaves a gap for future research to include studies examining the phenomenon from a qualitative approach.

Summary

This chapter presented a review of previous studies on cyberbullying. The philosophies on how to define and categorize cyberbullying were shared, in addition to the documented prevalence and severity of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is similar to traditional bullying in many ways. Anonymity, publicity and presence of an imbalance of power were identified in the literature as the major differences between traditional bullying and cyberbullying (Appel et al., 2014; Heller, 2015; Pabian & Vandebosch, 2016; Robinson, 2013).

Previous research on parents' experiences with bullying were presented, however those studies were limited to exploring parents' experiences with responding to traditional face to face to bullying (Hale et a l., 2017; Harcourt et al., 2015). Chapter 2 also presented literature on parental awareness of cyberbullying. Additionally, literature

on parental intervention and mediation of online activities was also reviewed. It was also concluded in this chapter that internet self-efficacy often impacts how parents monitor and mediate their adolescent's technological behaviors (Garaigordobil & Machimbarrena, 2017; Goldstein, 2015; Shin & Kang, 2016).

In this literature review it was revealed that available research on cyberbullying has overlooked the experiences of the parents of cyberbully victims. This omission in the research provides a gap for further research. This study sought to address this gap by utilizing a phenomenological approach to explore and understand the lived experiences of parents who have addressed and/or mediated an incident of their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. In Chapter 3, I identify the research question that served as the aim for this study, discuss the research design, and explain the rationale for choosing a phenomenological approach. Additionally, Chapter 3 will discuss the role of the researcher, including potential conflicts and ethical considerations in conducting this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This descriptive phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of parents who had addressed and/or mediated an incident in which their adolescent had been a victim of cyberbullying. This chapter details the rationale for implementing a descriptive phenomenological approach. In Chapter 3, my role as the researcher is explored, and known biases are discussed. In this chapter, I detail the research question guiding the study. I also describe concepts related to the phenomenon that was studied, the participant selection logic, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis procedures. Furthermore, I discuss the ethical procedures followed in accordance with university guidelines. I then explain the relationship between sample size and saturation. Finally, in Chapter 3, the trustworthiness of the study is presented, and procedures that were used to minimize harm to participants are explained.

Research Design and Rationale

This study explored the lived experiences of parents who had addressed and/or mediated an incident following their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. Based on the aim of the study, it was most appropriate to select a qualitative approach as the research design. Qualitative research is used to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon based on the experiences or perceptions of those who have experienced the phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Van Manen, 2017). Iared, de Oliveira, and Payne (2016) purported that qualitative research follows the premise that reality is specific to

the perceptions and interpretations of the individual, and that therefore the researcher's task is to report realities as experienced by the participant. Descriptive phenomenology is a qualitative research method that involves gathering detailed descriptions from participants about their lived experiences (Bevan, 2014; Van Manen, 2017; Yardley, 2017). The researcher analyzes the data and then interprets the core of the experience based on the responses of multiple participants (Bevan, 2014; Van Manen, 2017; Yardley, 2017).

I chose a descriptive phenomenological approach for this study, as this methodology allowed me to complete an in-depth exploration into the experience of the participants. Implementing a descriptive phenomenological approach was in alignment with the research question. Researchers in quantitative studies seek to use theory to generalize results across large populations (Anderson, 2017; Yardley, 2017). On the contrary, qualitative researchers seek to understand phenomena based on detailed descriptions of individuals' experiences as reported by participants (Iared et al., 2016; Moustakas, 1994; Yardley, 2017). This method involves collecting data without restricting possible responses to questions as quantitative surveys would (Iared et al., 2016; Moustakas, 1994; Yardley, 2017).

Research Question

The research question was the following: What are the lived experiences of parents who have addressed and/or mediated an incident following their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization?

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument; therefore, it becomes necessary to explicitly define the role of the researcher (Bevan, 2014; Harris, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As a measure of maintaining ethical standards within the study, I did not recruit people whom I knew. I did not recruit from my place of employment, and I did not recruit anyone over whom I had direct authority or influence.

A researcher's biased interpretations of participants' revelations can negatively impact the results of a study. Therefore, it is important for a researcher to be aware of how past experiences and current beliefs may impact findings of a study, so that the researcher may determine whether any researcher bias exists (Bevan, 2014; Yardley, 2017). I am a parent with a child who has been victimized by both traditional bullying and cyberbullying. With this experience as the researcher, I might have brought preconceived notions of how cyberbullying affected participants in the study. It was also possible that I would project my own opinions onto participants' testimonies. To minimize researcher bias, I used bracketing throughout the research process. I continuously identified and set aside any preconceptions or assumptions that might impact the study. Furthermore, I developed a series of interview questions to ensure that the questions asked in the interview were related to the research question and aim of the study. Those questions were intended to keep the interview focused on adequately capturing the participants' experiences. To further uphold ethical standards during data

collection, I entered the interview process with a state of neutrality, without any expectation of what the participants would say.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Recruitment strategy. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct this study (IRB approval #07-25-18-0477508), I used multiple strategies to recruit participants. I obtained permission to announce the study to the Walden University Research Participant pool. I also posted a flyer (Appendix A) with a brief description of the study at community organizations. The purpose of the flyer was to advertise the study. The flyer included a brief description of the study, which included eligibility criteria and information on how to contact me if individuals wanted to volunteer as participants in the study.

The recruitment flyer was posted at community organizations in which the appropriate staff had signed a letter of cooperation (Appendix B). The letter of cooperation documented that an organization had agreed to allow me to post the advertisement for the study on its premises for the purpose of recruiting participants. Candidates who met the inclusion criteria and consented to be interviewed each received a gift card worth $15 as a thank-you gift for participating. The gift card was sent via email after the interview concluded.

Sampling strategy. There are a multitude of strategies that can be used when determining how to recruit participants. For this study, purposive sampling was chosen

for recruitment. Purposive sampling refers to specifically selecting participants based on the purpose of a research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because I sought to select participants based on specific characteristics to elicit information-rich cases. I employed this purposive sampling strategy by ensuring that all participants met the same screening criteria. Another way to solicit participants who meet specific criteria is to use snowball sampling. Snowball sampling refers to using selected participants as referral agents for other potential candidates who may be eligible to participate in the study (Palinkas et al., 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). After each interview concluded, I encouraged participants to refer other parents whom they believed might be eligible to participate. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling strategies were used to recruit participants, as I sought to solicit participants who shared a unique experience and who met specific inclusion criteria. Using these specific sampling strategies was appropriate for this study, as purposive and snowball sampling strategies were expected to elicit information-rich cases.

Criteria for inclusion. To participate in this study, participants had to meet specific inclusion criteria. The term *inclusion criteria* refers to the traits or characteristics that make individuals eligible for participation (Boddy, 2016; Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017; Saldana, 2016). Each participant needed to be the parent or primary caregiver of an adolescent (aged 12 to 17 years) who had been a victim of cyberbullying within the 2 years prior to the time of the interview.

Exclusion criteria refer to conditions or situations that would disqualify a person from participating in a study (Boddy, 2016; Hennink et al., 2017; Saldana, 2016). Exclusion criteria also provide reasoning as to why a participant might have been initially eligible to participate for a study but later excluded (Boddy, 2016; Hennink et al., 2017; Saldana, 2016). Reasons that would have resulted in a participant being excluded from the study included failure to complete the interview, withdrawal of consent to participate, or determination that completion of the interview might cause undue harm. No volunteers were excluded from participating in this study.

Prescreening. The recruitment flyer and Walden Research Participant Pool advertisement instructed individuals who were interested in participating in the study to email me directly. Each candidate who emailed me was asked the same prescreening questions via email. A prescreening questionnaire (Appendix C) was used to confirm whether a candidate was the parent, guardian, or primary caregiver of an adolescent aged 12-17 years who had been a victim of cyberbullying during the 2 years preceding the interview. Next, I provided the definition of cyberbullying as it pertained to this study. Respondents who met the inclusion criteria were provided the opportunity to participate in the study.

Informed consent. After I prescreened the volunteers, eligible candidates were provided with an informed consent form via email inviting them to participate in a telephone interview. The consent form provided a detailed description of the study. The consent form also contained a description of the interview and data collection process.

The consent form detailed the measures to be used to maintain confidentiality and included an explanation of the anonymous nature of the interview. Prior to the interview, I also explained that pseudonyms would be used if reference was made to specific comments obtained during the interviews. The consent form outlined the minimal risks associated with participating in the study. The consent form also included details on how the information would be used. Additionally, participants were informed that the data collected would be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. In compliance with the Walden University IRB, consent forms that were sent to participants via email were returned to me via email. Participants were instructed to reply to the email with the phrase "I consent" to confirm that the consent form was understood and agreed to.

The interview. Each individual interview took place via telephone and was expected to last up to 90 minutes. Drabble et al. (2016) suggested planning for an interview to take approximately 60 minutes, a period that is generally sufficient for obtaining rich data. Drabble et al. also suggested that limiting an interview to a 60-minute timeframe prevents a researcher from taking too much of a participant's time. Telephone interviews were chosen as the data collection method because they offer more convenience, flexibility, and control than face-to-face interviews (Drabble et al., 2016; Farooq & De Villiers, 2017; Novick, 2008; Saura & Balsas, 2014). Telephone interviews allow participants to maintain greater control over their anonymity and privacy, which may be necessary when discussing sensitive or personal topics (Drabble et al., 2016;

Farooq & De Villiers, 2017). Telephone interviews provided more flexibility over the time and place in which interviews could be conducted, as participants did not have to travel great distances at awkward hours to meet with me. Telephone interviews provide the convenience of allowing individuals to participate in an interview from the comfort of their home or from any other convenient place of their choosing (Drabble et al., 2016; Farooq & De Villiers, 2017; Novick, 2008; Saura & Balsas, 2014). The location chosen for a telephone interview does not have to be convenient or in close proximity to the researcher. Traditional interviews require a neutral place that is suitable for both researcher and participant (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017).

Several researchers have found that when given a choice of interview method, participants have chosen telephone over face-to-face interviews (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017; Ward, Gott, & Hoare, 2015). Researchers have also found that the anonymity of telephone interviews increases credibility in a study and reduces researcher bias (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017; Ward et al., 2015). Novick (2008) identified cost-effectiveness and increased recruitment opportunities as benefits of choosing telephone interviews over in-person interviewing.

Scheduling for the interviews took place according to the availability of the interviewees. Ward et al. (2015) recommended that at the start of an interview, the researcher confirm that it is still a convenient time for the participant to complete the interview. At the beginning of each interview, I also summarized the consent form and

gained audio consent from participants to record. I also reminded participants that information obtained during the interviews would remain confidential.

Exit procedures were conducted at the end of each interview. The exit procedures included thanking the participants for their time, explaining how the results of the study could be accessed, and providing an opportunity for participants to ask any additional questions. If the allotted time had run out before all interview questions had been asked, or if additional clarification had been needed, the participant would have been asked if he or she was willing to continue the interview. If a participant had declined to continue the interview at any point, the interview would have been discontinued. The gift card awarded to each participant was sent to the email address that was used to acknowledge consent for participation.

Sample size. In qualitative research, there is no specific number of participants required in a given study. Sample size in a qualitative study depends on the type of qualitative methodology being used and the phenomenon of interest in the study (Boddy, 2016; Hennink et al., 2017). Boddy (2016) suggested that sample sizes ranging from six and 12 participants in phenomenological studies are generally effective in achieving saturation of data. In qualitative studies, researchers typically continue to recruit participants and collect data until saturation has been achieved. Saturation is achieved when no new information, insights, or themes can be extracted from the data (Boddy, 2016; Hennink et al., 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Hennink et al. (2017) reported that researchers may look for both code saturation and meaning saturation to determine when

they have gathered enough information for analysis. Code saturation is achieved when the thematic issues have been identified, whereas meaning saturation has occurred when the researcher has an in-depth understanding of the issues.

Instrumentation

Data Collection

Data collection instrument. Data for this study were collected using individual interviews. In qualitative interviews, the researcher serves as the primary instrument and as the data collection tool (Anderson, 2017; Bevan, 2014). Using an interview protocol allows a researcher to create a plan of action to use consistently with each interview (Anderson, 2017; Bevan, 2014; Boddy, 2016). Van Manen (2017) and Yardley (2017) suggested that interview questions be posed in an unbiased way. Questions should be open-ended, using wording that is not leading or rooted in assumptions (Van Manen, 2017; Yardley, 2017). Yardley contended that although qualitative researchers should have a goal for what they want to learn from interviews, the responses that they receive from participants should dictate subsequent questions. Participant responses will determine whether the researcher needs to ask follow-up questions for additional clarity.

Interview protocol. The interview protocol (Appendix D) included semistructured interview questions, as well as follow-up questions that were asked when needed. In addition to the interview questions, the interview protocol included the interview script greeting, salutation, and debriefing procedures. The interview protocol in its entirety was reviewed and vetted by my Walden University faculty committee

members. The committee members consisted of a content expert and a methodology expert to confirm that the qualitative research instrumentation used was valid to obtain data based on the research question guiding the study. The interview protocol was modified as needed based on the committee members' recommendations.

Data Analysis

The data analysis plan for this study involved following the Colaizzi method of descriptive data analysis (Morrow, Rodriguez, & King, 2015; Sosha, 2012). The Colaizzi method is a multi-step process that uses an inductive analytic approach to develop themes from participant responses. I incorporated reflexivity to examine the role of the researcher and identify my relationship with the phenomenon. Epoche, also known as bracketing, was used throughout the data analysis process. Bracketing was done prior to data collection. Bracketing involves setting aside any preexisting thoughts or experiences that the researcher has with the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994). Throughout the data collection, I continued to journal my thoughts and reactions to participant responses. The data collected for this study was in the form of recorded individual interviews. Each interview was transcribed and coded by the researcher. I transcribed each interview verbatim, listening to each recording multiple times, until I was sure that I had accurately transcribed the interviews from audio into print. Once transcribed, I read the printed interview a minimum of two times.

Colaizzi's descriptive data analysis method. The dated collected during the interviews were transcribed prior to the data analysis procedures. The data were then analyzed using Colaizzi's descriptive data analysis method as outlined below.

***Step 1: Familiarizing*.** I began with reading the transcripts several times to familiarize myself with each participant's account of his or her experience. This open coding process allowed me to identify key phrases, as well as statements that occurred across responses from the participants.

***Step 2: Identifying significant statements*.** I identified statements deemed significant to the phenomenon being studied. Any responses that directly related to the participants' experience with mediating or responding to their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization was highlighted and identified as a significant statement. An axial and selective coding process allowed me to identify key phrases, as well as statements that occurred across responses from the participants. In accordance with the Colaizzi method significant statements were identified from the transcripts and categorized into themes (Morrow, Rodriguez, & King, 2015; Sosha, 2012).

***Step 3: Formulate meanings*.** Meanings were formulated from the significant statements extracted from the transcripts as interpreted by the researcher (Morrow et al., 2015; Sosha, 2012).

***Step 4: Categorize meanings into themes*.** The meanings of each significant statement were then combined to develop overlapping themes that represented the

participants' lived experiences with mediating an incident cyberbullying involving their teens.

Step 5: Exhaustive description. The themes were then integrated to develop an exhaustive and inclusive description of the phenomenon as supported by participant statements. A description is exhaustive when it is both through and complete (Morrow et al., 2015; Sosha, 2012). Thus, creating a composite theme emerging across transcripts.

Step 6: Fundamental structure. The exhaustive description was summarized and reduced to develop a focused description of the overall lived experience of parents who had mediated an incident following their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. This focused description details the fundamental structure of participants' experience with the phenomenon.

Step 7: Validation of findings. Participants were provided with a copy of their transcripts to verify if their experience was accurately captured. I also compared the written transcripts with the audio tapes to ensure accuracy of participant's meanings. An in-depth description of the data analysis and coding process is discussed in Chapter 4.

Ethical Procedures

Throughout the research process I took several actions to maintain the participants' privacy and confidentiality. To maximize confidentiality and privacy, I minimized the amount of personally identifiable information that was needed to participate in this study. The interviews were conducted via telephone and recorded via the Google Voice App. The recorded interviews were then stored as an electronic file on

the Google Server. The electronic file is stored on a secure server that is password-protected. Each participant was given the Google Voice telephone number of the researcher and was instructed to call at the agreed upon scheduled time. Using the Google voice telephone number further protected the participants' privacy and confidentiality because participants were not required to share their personal telephone numbers. The password protected data is only accessible by the researcher. The recording for individual interviews were numbered based on the time and date stamp attached to the recorded file**.** This numbering schema further protected the privacy of the participants.

As described in the informed consent form, there were no names or identifying information of participants used in the doctoral project. Pseudonyms were used when making reference to specific comments obtained during the interview. The coded data and any notes associated with it, are kept in a locked cabinet in my home, which is only accessible by myself. I will keep the coded data, and its associated recordings for 5 years, as required by Walden University protocol.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the extent in which one can be confident that the results of a study are accurate (Anderson, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yardley, 2017). Trustworthiness should be measured at each phase of the data analysis process. To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were used to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility is a major concern in assessing the rigor of a qualitative the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Credibility in qualitative research is similar to internal validity in a quantitative research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Credibility refers to the accuracy of findings from a study based on the integrity of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To enhance the credibility of the study, I conducted member-checking, which is a procedure that allows participants to verify the accuracy of the information captured in the transcribed interview (Anderson, 2017; Yardley, 2017). I sent each participant a copy of the interview transcript, providing the opportunity for participants to confirm that the researcher has adequately captured their experience. Triangulation is a technique that also enhances the credibility of findings from a study (Anderson, 2017; Bevan, 2014). Triangulation refers to compiling and comparing data from multiple resources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Triangulation assists in developing an inclusive understanding of the phenomena (Carter et al., 2014).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which findings from a study could be applied to other contexts (Anderson, 2017; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Yardley, 2017). Using detailed description and explication, known as thick description, in data collection and analysis procedures improves transferability of results from a study (Anderson, 2017; Yardley, 2017). Providing detailed descriptions of participants' responses enhances trustworthiness of the results. Also, providing detailed explanations of how a researcher

makes connections to derive meaning across the various participant responses provides the reader with details of how conclusions were drawn during the data analysis (Anderson, 2017; Yardley, 2017). Thick description in the data analysis process provides context for the information being presented to the reader.

Dependability

Dependability is another aspect of fostering trustworthiness in qualitative research. Dependability refers to the stability of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dependability in qualitative research is important because it outlines the procedures for how the data were collected (Anderson, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yardley, 2017). Detailed descriptions of the different participant perspectives aids in presenting the credibility and dependability of the study. This explicit data collection and analysis process will offer justification for the codes and themes selected from the transcribed interviews (Anderson, 2017; Bevan, 2014). Another method incorporated to increase legitimacy of the results was to include discrepant cases. Discrepant cases occur when a participant presents experiences or accounts that differ greatly from the other interviews. When there are no discrepant cases, this is also noted in the data analysis. Reporting the absence of discrepant cases also enhances dependability as the reader is made aware that there was consideration made for presence of discrepant cases. Including discrepant cases is necessary, as all data is used to generate themes, with no perspective considered to be more significant than another. While a case may be discrepant, it should still be included if it accurately depicts the participant's experience with the phenomenon of interest

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Anderson (2017) suggests that including these discrepant cases contributes to presenting a more realistic study. Discrepant cases are included by detailing the experience as reported by the participant and identifying how this differs from other participant experiences with the same phenomenon.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to being able to clearly show that the findings of the study were based on the data collected from those who participated in the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Ravitch and Carl (2016) "one goal of confirmability is to acknowledge and explore the ways that our biases and prejudices map onto our interpretations of data and to mediate those to the fullest extent possible through structured reflexivity processes" (p. 189-190). I used bracketing and reflexivity conducted by the researcher prior to the study to improve confirmability in the study. Reflexivity is the self-examination of assumptions and is meant to identify any researcher biases present (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I implemented reflexivity to intentionally conduct a study that was free of preconceived notions about participants' experiences, coercive questioning, or projecting researcher's thoughts or opinions onto the participant (Bevan, 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yardley, 2017). To achieve bracketing and reflexivity I wrote down my personal experiences with cyberbullying and any assumptions that I had regarding parents' experiences with cyberbullying. I also disclosed that I had no personal relationship with any of the

participants. Bracketing and reflexivity required the researcher to be self-aware and disclose any experiences or assumptions that can influence the study.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the rationale for choosing a descriptive phenomenological approach, and the choice to include phone interviews, as opposed to in-person interviews was introduced. Next, the research question guiding the study was presented, followed by an explanation of the role of the researcher. The selection criteria, recruitment strategies to be employed, and the interview process were also detailed in Chapter 3. Instrumentation and the data analysis plan were detailed in Chapter 3. Finally, strategies implemented to address issues of trustworthiness were presented. Chapter 4 details the data collection methods and analysis used, identifying any discrepancies between what was proposed and what occurred. Additionally, Chapter 4 features the implementation of the strategies used to boost trustworthiness, concluding with a thorough presentation of the outcomes of the study. Chapter 4 explores the results of the interviews, presenting an alignment between the research question, interview questions, and the themes emerging from the analysis which explore the experiences of parents who have had a child victimized by cyberbullying.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This descriptive phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of parents who had addressed or mediated an incident of adolescent cyberbullying with their adolescent. Data were organized and analyzed following the Colaizzi phenomenological descriptive data analysis method. Using an inductive approach, I generated themes from the relevant data collected.

This chapter provides an overview of the setting for the interview, demographics of the participants, and methods used for data collection, in addition to detailing the steps followed for data analysis. Additionally, Chapter 4 details the methods used to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Finally, the chapter provides the results of the study, including the individual and collective themes derived from the participants' interview responses.

The following research question was used to guide this study: What are the lived experiences of parents who have addressed and/or mediated an incident following their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization?

Setting

Data for this study were collected through individual interviews held via telephone. Participants selected the date and time for their individual telephone interviews. I conducted each interview in a private area free from distraction. There were no personal or organizational conditions known to me that influenced participants or their

experience at the time of study. There were no known conditions that may have influenced interpretation of the study results. The individual interviews lasted no longer than 45 minutes.

Demographics

A total of nine participants took part in this study. Eight participants identified themselves as the biological mother of a victimized adolescent, and the remaining participant identified as the biological father of a victimized adolescent. Out of the nine participants in the study, five had teen daughters who had been victimized by cyberbullying, and the remaining four participants had teen boys who had been victimized. See Table 1 for complete demographic information. The ages at which the adolescents had been victimized ranged from 14 to 16 years. To further protect participant confidentiality, each participant interview has been labeled with a pseudonym.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Participant pseudonym	Relationship	Victimized adolescent	Age of victimized adolescent
Interview 1	Amy	Mother	Daughter	16
Interview 2	Brynn	Mother	Daughter	15
Interview 3	Claire	Mother	Son	16
Interview 4	Dana	Mother	Daughter	16
Interview 5	Evelyn	Mother	Son	15
Interview 6	Fran	Mother	Daughter	15
Interview 7	George	Father	Son	14
Interview 8	Hannah	Mother	Daughter	14
Interview 9	Ingrid	Mother	Son	15

Data Collection

After receiving approval from the Walden University IRB (IRB approval #07-25-18-0477508), I implemented the data collection strategies outlined in Chapter 3. Data were collected from nine participants. The original data analysis plan set in Chapter 3 proposed interviewing between 8 and 12 participants. The number of participants interviewed fell within the proposed range.

The individual telephone interviews lasted no more than 45 minutes each and were conducted over a period of 2 weeks. In Chapter 3, it was proposed that the interviews would take between 60 and 90 minutes; however, participants were able to answer the semistructured questions and subsequent follow-up questions in a shorter timeframe than was anticipated. The final interview question provided participants the opportunity to share additional remarks regarding their lived experience of mediating or responding to their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. Each interview was digitally recorded using the Google Voice app on a cellular device. At the end of each digitally recorded interview, a copy of the recording was automatically emailed to me. The email address receiving the recordings was created specifically for the purposes of this research study. The email account is password protected and only accessible by myself.

Data Analysis

The interviews continued until data saturation was achieved. Data saturation was determined by the lack of new ideas or concepts emerging from the data (Ravitch & Carl,

2016). An indicator of data saturation was when participant responses began to mimic those of preceding participants.

The data analysis for this study involved moving inductively from coded units to larger representations of the participants' lived experiences of mediating or responding to their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. An inductive approach to data analysis occurs when the researcher begins with collecting data, then uses the data to identify emergent themes among participant responses (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Prior to any data analysis, each interview was transcribed by me by hand from audio into text. This process involved listening to the recorded interviews several times to ensure that the participants' verbatim responses were accurately captured.

To incorporate Colaizzi's method for phenomenological data analysis, I followed the seven-step process as outlined in Chapter 3. I began with reading the transcripts several times to familiarize myself with each participant's account of his or her experience. Next, I identified statements deemed significant to the phenomenon being studied. I assigned codes to those statements that were then used in the open-coding process. During the open-coding process, I coded similar responses as key statements across all interviews.

I next used axial coding and selective coding to group key phrases and conceptualize the meanings that were derived from the initial codes. The fourth step in the analysis process was categorizing the meanings from the significant statements into themes. The themes were then used to develop an exhaustive description of the

participants' lived experiences. The exhaustive description was then condensed to a concise description that captured the essential components and fundamental structure of participants' experiences with the phenomenon. The final step in the process was to validate the findings by verifying accuracy with participants. Participants were provided with the list of major themes and their verbatim transcripts as interpreted by me. Providing the transcripts and resulting themes gave the participants an opportunity to confirm that their responses had been captured and interpreted correctly.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study was enhanced by incorporating strategies that improved the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research study. Implementing Colaizzi's rigorous method of phenomenological data analysis assisted in ensuring that the research study followed systematic procedures to produce a high-quality, ethical study (Morrow, Rodriguez, & King, 2015; Sosha, 2012). The methods of achieving credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability detailed in Chapter 3 were followed.

Credibility

In qualitative research, credibility is determined based on whether the results of a research study are deemed legitimate by the participants involved (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldana, 2016). Member checking was used to enhance the credibility of findings from the data analysis. Each participant was provided a copy of his or her transcript and the list of themes emerging from the data. Participants were provided with the opportunity to

review and critique the transcript for any discrepancies or perceived misinterpretations. Of the nine participants interviewed, five delivered feedback after receiving their interview transcript and resulting themes. Each responding participant verified that the transcript and thematic analysis accurately captured the experience with the phenomenon as it was relayed to the researcher. No changes were made to the transcripts based on participant feedback.

I used bracketing to journal my own thoughts on the topic. Bracketing was used to identify my own connection with the phenomenon being studied and reveal any biases that might influence how I interpreted the data. During each interview, I took field notes capturing my initial interpretation of participant responses. I also notated factors that would not be captured in the transcripts, such as pauses and emotional responses (e.g., a participant crying while describing an experience).

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research is related to external validity in quantitative research (Anderson, 2017; Yardley, 2017). Using thick, rich descriptions in data collection and analysis procedures improves the transferability of findings from a study (Anderson, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yardley, 2017). I have provided thick and rich descriptions of the data, detailing how the data were collected and analyzed. Additionally, I have provided a precise description of the research design and methodology employed in this research study. Purposive sampling was also used to increase transferability. For this study, specific selection criteria were used to recruit

participants with the shared experience of having an adolescent between the ages of 12 and 17 years who had been victimized by cyberbullying within the 2 years preceding the study.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitive research involves accounting for stability and consistency across study processes (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I developed an audit trail to enhance dependability. An audit trail is a detailed description of the procedures used to conduct a study (Anderson, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The records associated with this study, including the prescreening questionnaire, announcement of the study, IRB-approved consent form, and interview questions, were all part of the audit trail. By following the interview protocol (see Appendix D), I ensured that I asked each participant the same open-ended questions.

Confirmability

Confirmability is enhanced when strategies are used to identify and address any researcher bias or positionality issues that could influence a research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yardley, 2017). Reflexivity was used throughout the study to enhance confirmability. Reflexivity required me as the researcher to be cognizant of my role in the research. I sought to remain self-aware of any biases or assumptions that I possessed that could potentially influence the research. I took notes on my own thoughts and reactions to participant responses throughout the study to achieve reflexivity.

Results

The results of this study were generated from the participants' responses to the interview questions. The interview questions were specifically chosen to elicit responses that would address the sole research question that guided this study. The research question for this study was the following: What are the lived experiences of parents who have addressed and/or mediated an incident following their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization?

Participant Responses

Each participant was asked the same interview questions. Participants were asked to detail their experience with responding to their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. Each response regarding the experience included how the participants became aware of the cyberbullying. Participants were questioned about their initial reaction to discovering the cyberbullying. Participants each cited negative emotions such as feeling angry, sad, or helpless. Additionally, participants were asked how prepared they felt that they were to address the situation. The participants responded by stating that they felt prepared, very prepared, somewhat prepared or not prepared at all. Participants were also asked how effective they perceived themselves to be in responding to their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. A summary of participant responses to interview questions is presented in Table 2. For the full list of interview questions, see Appendix D.

Table 2

Participant Responses

Amy	Unwanted sharing of pictures on social media/name calling on social media	Didn't take it seriously until "it spread like wildfire"	Youth disclosed	Not prepared at all	Somewhat effective
Brynn	Text messages/name calling on social media	Upset, frustrated, and hurt	Youth disclosed	Prepared	Effective
Claire	Text messages	Anger	Youth disclosed after parent inquiry	Somewhat prepared	Effective
Dana	Unwanted sharing of pictures on social media	Anger	Youth disclosed	Very prepared	Very effective
Evelyn	Unwanted sharing of video on social media	Very sad	Youth disclosed after parent inquiry	Not prepared at all	Effective
Fran	Text messages	Angry, hurt, and sad	Youth disclosed	Not prepared at all	Effective
George	Name calling on social media	Shocked	Youth disclosed	Not prepared at all	Effective
Hannah	Threats on social media	Angry	Third-party disclosure—daughter's friend	Not prepared at all	Somewhat effective
Ingrid	Name calling on social media	Angry, hurt	Third party disclosure—school	Prepared	Effective

Participant responses to interview questions as presented in Table 2 revealed that cyberbullying via social media was the most common form of cyberbullying. Seven out of nine participants became aware that their adolescent was being bullied through a social media platform. Out of the seven participants who experienced their adolescent being bullied via social media, five had their adolescent disclose to them directly, while the other participants found out from a third party. The remaining two out of nine participants whose adolescents were not victimized via social media indicated that their teen's victimization occurred via text messaging. There was also a commonality among participants in that the cyberbullying incident involving their teen impacted them personally, with participants citing stress, missing time at work, and negative emotions. Anger presented as the most common initial reaction participants had after learning of the cyberbullying victimization. While seven out of nine participants indicated that their adolescent disclosed the victimization to them, two out of those seven participants stated that their adolescent did not disclose willingly. Those parents report being persistent in inquiring about what was bothering their teen before learning about the cyberbullying event.

The results regarding parents' perceptions of effectiveness in mediating their adolescents' cyberbullying victimization were mixed. Five out of nine participants indicated that they were not at all prepared, while the remaining four participants believed that they were at least somewhat prepared to handle the situation. Participants who reported previously experiencing cyberbullying with their other children associated

this experience with their preparedness to address the recent incident of cyberbullying. Despite the varying responses on preparedness, all participants interviewed in the study perceived themselves to be effective in mediating their adolescents' cyberbullying victimization. Perceived effectiveness was found to involve whether or not parents determined their mediation efforts to have garnered the desired results. As discussed in further detail throughout this chapter, participants used various methods to lead to the desired outcome. The methods used by participants in this study included contacting the school, contacting parents of the perpetrator, switching the adolescent's school, contacting the police, and submitting formal complaints on social media platforms. The participants who perceived their effectiveness to be only somewhat effective also found that their adolescent's cyberbullying situation was not fully resolved. Further details on participant responses are provided in the following section, which describes the thematic analysis for this study.

Themes

Based on participant responses and researcher notes, themes and sub-themes were generated in accordance with the Colaizzi phenomenological descriptive data analysis method. This section will include direct quotes from participants to assist in conveying how each theme was developed. Open, axial and selective coding was used to move inductively from participant responses to themes.

1. Negative emotional responses
2. Lack of awareness

3. Publicity of cyberbullying
4. Lack of support
5. Balancing parenting versus friendship
6. Desire to bring awareness
7. Strengthened parent/adolescent relationship

The themes and subthemes can be found in Table 3. Each theme is supported by detailed participant responses.

Table 3

Themes

Theme	Subtheme
Negative emotional response	Stress
	Fear
	Anger
	Helplessness
	Exhaustion
	Desire to protect
Lack of awareness	Participants not understanding severity
	Teens not aware of what constituted cyberbullying
Publicity of cyberbullying	Harder to resolve
	Larger audience
	Perception of severity
Lack of support	Lack of clear process on how to address
	Schools not doing enough
	Multiple attempts before resolution
Balancing parenting vs. friendship	Desire to have kids confide in them
	Freedom vs. monitoring
	Increased monitoring post victimization
	Kids feel they aren't trusted
Desire to bring awareness	Education needed for parents and youth
	Empower youth to handle situations

Strengthened parent/adolescent relationship	Advocate for child Problem solving Increased involvement Perceived parenting skills

The themes were generated based on participants' response to the initial request to detail their experience with their adolescent being a victim of cyberbullying. Themes also emerged from responses to questions in the interview protocol on participants' perceived effectiveness at mediating the cyberbullying event. Additional questions regarding how the cyberbullying impacted the participant personally and how the incident has impacted the parent/adolescent relationship led to themes generated. Participants will continue to be referred to by using the pseudonyms assigned to them earlier in this chapter.

Negative emotional responses. While it was not the parent who was the victim, each parent still reported experiencing negative emotional responses. Participants expressed feelings of stress, anger, and helplessness when asked about their initial reaction to their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. When questioned about her experience and initial reaction, Hannah stated "my experience was pretty horrible. I felt mad". Hannah also reported having to "take off work 4 times in a row to go up to the school and speak with the principal" regarding the students who were bullying her daughter on social media

While George reported feeling "shocked" upon learning that his son had become a victim of cyberbullying, Evelyn reported the she was "really sad, and it was like [*sic* there was] nothing I could do to help him. I felt helpless". Fran also identified feeling sad but added that her initial reaction included feeling "angry and hurt". Dana expressed

feeling “anger” and being “enraged” when her daughter’s assault at school was videotaped then shared on social media. As she recounted her experience, Dana stated,

> I said I don’t care what happens, I’m going to make them pay for this. I promise you that. And I looked at her and I said they’re not going to get away with this is, because they hurt you, so they hurt me.

Dana’s statement of feeling “hurt” supports the notion of a negative emotional response. In describing her experience, Brynn expressed feeling “frustrated” and filled with “stress”. She also reported physical affects that included migraine headaches. Claire also spoke about her initial reaction to her son’s cyberbullying victimization, stating:

> I was angry, helpless because I wanted to act and/ or react, and I knew that I had to be very careful about how I handled this situation. So, a lot of fear for him because I knew that I wouldn’t be with him on a daily basis to defend him if something were to happen.

Each parent’s account of their experience voiced frustration and concern for the well-being of their victimized adolescent.

Lack of awareness. Another theme that emerged was participants’ perception that both parents and youth alike possessed a lack of awareness regarding cyberbullying. As the participants detailed their experiences with mediating their adolescent’s cyberbullying victimization, statements regarding their own understanding of cyberbullying were detailed. A recurring theme from the participants was the notion that adolescents involved in cyberbullying, whether as the victim or perpetrator, may not be

fully aware of what actions constitute cyberbullying. Amy stated that her lack of knowledge on cyberbullying impacted her initial reaction to her daughter's victimization. When questioned about her prior knowledge on cyberbullying, Amy stated:

> I wasn't knowledgeable at all. I just kind of felt like I don't get how these kids get cyberbullied when they could just not use the Internet. I kind of thought it was pretty simple. Like if someone is bothering you on the Internet, then don't use the Internet.

Further addressing the lack of awareness, Amy also went on to say:

> I would just like to add that cyberbullying is real and like so many until I experienced it, I didn't think it was a real thing. I really learned how intense and how important technology was and what the effect it could have. Something that was essentially not real, can have real and long-lasting effects.

Evelyn also reported how her experience with cyberbullying was different than what she originally thought cyberbullying was. When questioned about her prior knowledge on cyberbullying Evelyn stated:

> In general, I thought that kids would just like pick on other kids via Facebook or social media. I didn't know that they would use recordings and things like that. My experience was totally different than what I thought it was, what I thought cyberbullying actually was.

Evelyn also described the lack of awareness that her son had. She stated, “He didn’t even think that he was getting bullied. He just thought that everybody was being mean, so I’m like no- you’re being bullied”.

Publicity of cyberbullying. One of the unique components of cyberbullying is that when it occurs via online platforms, it can become widespread very quickly. As participants described their experiences with mediating their adolescent’s cyberbullying victimization, participants voiced how publicity of the incident impacted the perception of its severity. The publicity feature of cyberbullying refers to how many people witness the bullying event. (Holla et al., 2017; Robinson, 2013). Parent accounts of their experiences led to identifying that the publicity of cyberbullying caused the incident to be harder to address. Participants also expressed that the publicity of cyberbullying caused the incident to have increased severity.

As Dana recounted her daughter’s cyberbullying victimization, she addressed the publicity of the incident and how it became widely shared, stating “She put it all over social media, from the beginning to the end. It went viral”. Evelyn also spoke on her son’s victimization being shared between multiple people and how having access to larger audiences makes cyberbullying worse.

> It was all on Instagram saying that he got beat up, calling him a whole bunch of names. He was isolated from all the rest of the kids. It was being shared between different schools. It was terrible. Like they just kept sharing it. It was just awful.

> The platform that we have today with all of the social media makes cyberbullying so much worse.

Amy also spoke on the publicity associated with cyberbullying. Amy shared detailed about her son's victimization being shared between multiple people and how having access to larger audiences makes cyberbullying more severe.

> It was all on Instagram saying that he got beat up, calling him a whole bunch of names. He was isolated from all the rest of the kids. It was being shared between different schools. It was terrible. Like they just kept sharing it. It was just awful. The platform that we have today with all of the social media makes cyberbullying so much worse.

Lack of support. The lack of support available often served as an additional factor impeding the participants' mediation efforts. It was also noted that there was often no clear process on how to effectively address the issue. Amy explained how the lack of verbal support and the absence of a clear process for addressing cyberbullying on social media platforms impacted her ability to thoroughly mediate the situation. She gave the following response about the incident:

> They will take down one page and make another page totally about her. Once she reports it to Snapchat, they take it to Instagram. We report it to Instagram, they take it to Facebook. We report it to Facebook and they make a private Facebook group that you can't get in and they circulate it. It's really no way to get rid of it until they focus their energy on another kid. Everything is so fast, but it's so

> concentrated. So, it seems like maybe a week, at best like 24 hours your picture and whatever they're saying about you is being shared to hundreds and thousands of people in a short timeframe. I feel like it should be a direct bullying department that immediately responds and immediately checks out whatever the issue is, some direct type of contact. All of this run around, you never get a resolution. It's just too uncertain of a process for it to be effective. I feel like I was effective as much as I can, but I also feel like it's a lot of red tape and it's not even a clear-cut process to combat it. Like you feel helpless as a parent.

Other participants also desired additional support in addressing the cyberbullying incidents. Several participants stated that their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization was from other students at school, therefore they sought assistance from the school in addressing the incident. Participants expressed that they would've appreciated more support from school officials.

Claire's son had been bullied via text messages by another student in the school band. Her son had received threatening text messages, and Claire went to the school to seek resolution. Claire stated, "I would have liked to have a little more support from the band teacher". Claire expressed feeling that the band teacher did not "speak up" for her son. The lack of positive verbal persuasion impacted her self-efficacy. Brynn's daughters were being bullied through text messages and via social media by other students. Based on what the participants shared about their experiences, the publicity of cyberbullying and lack of support while addressing the cyberbullying incident directly impacted

participants' feelings of self-efficacy in mediating their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization.

Balancing parenting vs. friendship. Participants who partook in this study reported the desire to have their adolescent confide in them. During her interview, Dana stated "You want to develop a relationship so that when something happens, you're the first person they come to, not their friends". Participants reported that they could be more effective in addressing situations if their adolescents come to them promptly when there is an issue. Responses from participants supported the theme that participants are plagued with finding an amicable balance of giving their teen freedom and providing sufficient monitoring of their online activities. Parents want to prevent their teens from becoming victims of cyberbullying, while also recognizing their adolescent's desire for independence.

Ingrid also addressed her experience and how she was faced with balancing parenting and friendship. Ingrid detailed her desire for having a relationship with her son where he is open with her.

> I'm just basically trying to teach my son that cyberbullying is wrong, but at the same token to have an open line of communication with me, so that I can know what is going on to be able to best help him in those types of situations.

A shared experience amongst participants was that the strategies used to monitor and regulate their teen's electronic use began or increased after their teen's cyberbullying victimization. The participants reported that the increased monitoring often led to teens

feeling that they weren't being trusted, while the parent's intent was to keep their adolescent safe. When questioned as to whether her monitoring tactics were used prior to the victimization, Fran admitted that she "did not really monitor her incoming stuff that much. That part started after". Fran went on to discuss how the victimization and resulting increased monitoring has impacted her as the parent.

> It's impacted me personally because now I'm more cautious, I'm more overprotective of her. It's harder for me to let go when she's getting older now and for me to give her that privacy and stuff like that. So, it's impacted me in a way of I am no longer able to trust and just give her that freedom as a teenager because I'm always constantly thinking something's going on or she may not tell me that something's going on.

Hannah also shared that strategies that she uses to monitor her daughter's online presence did not start until after the cyberbullying incident. Like, Fran, Hannah also expressed trust issues between she and her daughter that have risen after her adolescent's cyberbullying victimization.

> I think if she would've came and told me, it would've been better, instead of me finding out through a friend of hers. Now it's more like she has to tell me everything. I look through her phone now. I look through her diary. It's like nothing is a secret anymore. She's kind of like 'Mom, you should trust me'. But I'm like if you didn't tell me about it before, how do I know if it's going to be something more serious?

When it came to monitoring, Ingrid explained that she uses communication with her son about appropriate behaviors versus heavy monitoring tactics.

> I will say I monitor in a sense. He's a teenager, so I try to balance the privacy, as well as safety. So, it's always a fine line trying to balance the two. It's more so we have conversations about things that's appropriate, not appropriate, what shouldn't be shared, sites that they shouldn't be on, and then obviously monitoring screen time as well. Having a balance of friendship and parenthood; so, it's like I'm still your parent but also trying to be your friend too so that they can feel comfortable to come and talk to me.

Amy also described how the victimization caused her to be more cautious. Amy explained how she feels that she now has to remain technologically savvy to be effective in addressing potential negative online interactions.

> I feel like I have to be a little bit more on top of them and more of a detective to protect them from everything that's going on in the internet. Then, I have to stay on top of the new technology to know what they are using, because every day another social media app is popping up now, so I have to stay on top of that and I'm not even a technology person. Now you have to also know how to navigate these new technologies. I'm reading up on the latest crazes just so that if my kids are on it, I can be on it and know how to navigate it.

Amy's account of her experience detailed how the cyberbullying victimization has impacted her monitoring behaviors. Additionally, Amy's relationship with her daughter has been impacted long after the bullying incident has transpired.

Desire to bring awareness. While the participants described their experiences with the cyberbullying to be negative, participants also expressed that their experience gave them the desire to bring awareness to cyberbullying. Participants spoke about a desire to provide education for parents so that there is a clear process on how to respond to incidents of cyberbullying. Additionally, in their desire to bring awareness, a reoccurring theme was that participants wanted to empower their adolescents with knowledge on how to handle cyberbullying situations.

Dana's shared that the incident of cyberbullying against her daughter was videotaped and shared repeatedly. Her case became widely known and lead to media attention which led to an outpour of support for her daughter. Dana reported that while the ordeal was horrific, she believes that it had a positive outcome, as she was able to bring awareness.

> It was exhausting. We've had a time where we were all crying, me, and her and my other daughter. So, my goal was to say what needed to be said to bring awareness and not let them get away with this. So, we wrote the letter that my daughter posted on Twitter, and then I wrote a letter, my own letter. She posted hers that night, and I posted mine in the morning. And it went viral. I had also taken a letter and posted it to all of the news stations.

Dana's desire to bring awareness was achieved, therefore she perceived herself to be effective in responding to her daughter's cyberbullying victimization. Dana stated, "The goal that I wanted it to achieve was to bring awareness. So, I feel what happened was effective because not only does she have her self-esteem back, but I brought awareness to the issue".

Evelyn detailed her interest in increasing the support available for parents. She desires education on how to identify and address cyberbullying. Evelyn stated that parents can be better prepared if their awareness and knowledge about cyberbullying is increased.

> I feel like everybody should be educated and parents should know what cyberbullying is so that we can all be prepared, because now I have two other sons that's younger than him and I know what the symptoms are of being cyberbullied and I know what to look out for. I know how to monitor them to keep them protected and safe as well. I feel like if the schools had workshops for the parents to educate them about what signs to look out for, to let them know the definition of cyberbullying, what types of cyberbullying there is, that would have been really effective and helpful.

Claire detailed that her experience mediating her adolescent's cyberbullying victimization allowed her to show her son an effective way to handle problems. Claire stated that she believes that following this experience, her son was better equipped to handle a cyberbullying situation in the future. Claire stated, "It's helped me allow him to

be empowered to stand up for himself". Claire's son was bullied via text message by a classmate from school. Claire deciphered that her reaction to the bullying would impact her son's behavior regarding conflict resolution in the future. When detailing her reaction to the cyberbullying incident, Claire stated:

> I wanted to react probably completely irrationally at first, but I think it helped me to think outside of the box and see how my actions could negatively or positively impact the situation just by my son watching me react to something that happened to him. That was a negative experience that my positive reaction could make a difference.

Claire like the other participants expressed the desire to have something positive come as a result of the negative situation experienced.

Strengthened parent/adolescent relationship. The final major theme that emerged from the data were that the participants' expressed that their relationships with their adolescents were strengthened because of how they responded to their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. Participants detailed that their persistent efforts and quick responses further established their role as being an advocate for their adolescents. The participants reported that in their desires to serve as advocates for their adolescents, they implemented various problem-solving techniques. These techniques included contacting the school, reporting cyberbullying incidents on social media, switching schools, and/ or involving the police. All participants interviewed reported that their involvement with their teen's activities increased after the cyberbullying victimization. Participants

reported that increased involvement in their adolescents' activities strengthened their relationship as the adolescents viewed their parents as supporters to their well-being.

When questioned about the impact that the cyberbullying victimization had on their relationships with their victimized teens, most participants described how the relationship has improved. For instance, Evelyn responded that her bond with her son strengthened after she mediated the cyberbullying incident. Evelyn's son was in a physical altercation with an older student at his school. The fight was taped and circulated on social media. Evelyn stated that after she mediated the cyberbullying incident:

> I actually think that it brought us closer. He's happy that I helped him. Because some parent's initial response would've been anger, but I took the approach where I talked to the school because I know that the school has bullying policies for all forms of bullying. Even though I was sad about the whole situation, and they have hurt me as a parent, I'm actually glad that I was able to help, because a lot of kids was educated.

George also shared a sentiment similar to Evelyn's regarding her relationships with her son improving. He expressed that his relationship with his son was strengthened following his mediation of the cyberbullying incident. After reflecting on the experience, George stated the following:

> We grew in our relationship. It made us closer. It helped our relationship communicate. Things that he might not have told me about, now he's more open and he feels more comfortable with talking to me about things.

Claire also detailed that the positive impact that her mediation had on her relationship with her son by providing the following details:

> One thing I know my son is certain about, is that I will ride with him until the end. I will tell him if he's wrong, but right or wrong, we're riding together, and I think this situation only further highlighted that relationship.

Claire's perception of the strengthened bond with her adolescent following the cyberbullying incident was similar to the viewpoints of the other participants who were interviewed.

Results revealed that seven out of the nine participants interviewed concluded that their relationships with their victimized adolescents improved as a result of their intervention efforts. All participants indicated that their involvement with their adolescents increased post-victimization. Participants expressed the desire to have open communication with their teens. Participants reported remaining committed to being advocates for the safety and well-being of their adolescents.

Perceived parenting skills. As the participants expressed accounts of their lived experiences with responding to their teen's cyberbullying victimization, they also reflected on their perceived parenting skills. Participants spoke of how not knowing that their teens were being victimized impacted them. Evelyn shared that prior to her son's

victimization, she was not aware that he had social media. Had she known, Evelyn believes that she would have implemented additional parenting strategies. Evelyn said, “I didn’t even know that he had social media and I feel bad. But I didn’t know.” Claire expressed that mediating the cyberbullying situation ultimately made her feel more confident in her parenting skills, as she believed that she handled the situation appropriately. Claire stated, “It made me feel comfortable in my parenting…that he’s seen the proper way to kind of manage conflict resolution”. Amy did not perceive the cyberbullying incident to be her fault, but she expressed that the incident caused her feelings of inadequacy. Amy reported feeling helpless and unable to fully resolve the issue. When describing her experience Amy stated:

> As a parent nothing is worse than feeling like your hands are tied behind your back and you can’t help your child. It also makes you feel helpless because you want to protect your child, but your efforts are almost fruitless.

Dana shared that her previous experiences addressing adolescent bullying lead her to feel confident in her parenting skills. Dana also reported feeling confident in her ability to successfully address the cyberbullying victimization that occurred with her daughter. Dana added, “I just found a letter I wrote to that same superintendent where my son was being bullied. He went to that school before them, but he was bullied there as well.”

Overall, findings in this study revealed that the cyberbullying incident cause them to question the adequacy of their parenting skills. The participants expressed the desire to be “good” parents and enforce a safe environment for their teens. Their encounters

with cyberbullying were perceived as threats to their teen's safety. Therefore, participants felt motivated to resolve the issue as swiftly as possible, exhausting all possible resolution available.

Textural Description of Experiences

Data analysis in phenomenological studies is not complete without including the textural and structural description of participant experiences (Padilla-Diaz, 2015; Sosha, 2012). The textural description refers to "what" participants experienced (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). The verbatim text from participant interviews tell *what* the participants experienced in their own words. Participants experienced anger, fear, shock and sadness when their adolescent became a victim of cyberbullying. Learning that their teens had been victimized resulted in the participants feeling inadequate in their parenting skills and fear of additional victimization incidents.

Structural Description of Experiences

The structural description refers to "how" the phenomenon was experienced (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). The themes generated from conducting this study identified the common themes across participant experiences. This provides insight to how participants experienced being a parent responding to an incident when his or her adolescent was cyberbullied. Based on the data collected and analyzed, the essence of participant experiences was identified. Participant experiences led to motivation for increased monitoring and parental involvement. In the essence of their common experience, it was concluded that participants also felt victimized by their adolescents' victimization.

Participants were faced with a reality that they were not prepared for, to include their teen's susceptibility to cyberbullying. The inability to protect their adolescents caused participants to feel an increased sense of vulnerability to predatory attacks on their teens. This vulnerability resulted in participants feeling victimized by their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization.

Summary

In this chapter, the results of the research study were explored in detail, answering the research question guiding this study. Participants interviewed detailed their experience with mediating an incident where their adolescent had been a victim of cyberbullying. The findings revealed that participants experienced negative emotions as a result of their adolescent's victimization. While it was discovered that participants felt helpless, angry and often ill-supported, overall participants still perceived their efforts to be effective in addressing the situation. While the publicity of cyberbullying made it harder to address, participants used their newfound awareness and understanding of cyberbullying to advocate for and empower their adolescents. Participants' desire to protect their teens led to increased monitoring of online activities and this often resulted in participants' need for balancing parenting practices with their adolescent's desire for autonomy. Participants identified an interest in bringing awareness to both youth and other parents about the totality of cyberbullying. Participants' resilience led to persistent intervention efforts and ultimately strengthened the parent/adolescent relationship.

Chapter 5 will conclude this study and present the interpretation of the findings. Chapter 5 will also cite the limitations of the study. The recommendations for further research and implications for social change will also be detailed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This descriptive phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of parents of adolescents who had been victimized by cyberbullying within the 2 years preceding the study. This study involved data collected from nine participants who each had experience with mediating an incident of adolescent cyberbullying. The data were collected through individual telephone interviews. The results revealed themes from participant responses, including the impact that cyberbullying had on them as parents and the resulting impact on their parent/adolescent relationship.

There is a dearth of information on how parents address cyberbullying incidents involving their children (Fousiani et al., 2016; Goldstein, 2015. This study was conducted to determine how parents went about addressing situations of cyberbullying when they occurred and to fill a gap in the literature on this topic. The results from this study may help to bring awareness of the need for additional cyberbullying prevention and intervention training for parents of adolescents.

Results from the data analysis led to identification of the following seven themes: negative emotional responses, lack of awareness, publicity of cyberbullying, lack of support, balancing parenting versus friendship, a desire to bring awareness, and a strengthened parent/adolescent relationship. Findings revealed that participants were negatively impacted when their adolescents became victims of cyberbullying. Participant interviews also revealed that responding to their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization

included being an advocate, fostering safety, and developing prevention strategies to deter further victimization.

Interpretation of the Findings

This section presents the interpretation of the findings as determined by me, the researcher. Participant responses during interviews, my researcher notes, and review of past literature assisted in making these determinations. The findings from my study confirmed that parents are negatively impacted when their adolescents are victimized by cyberbullying.

Negative Emotional Responses

The results of the literature review in Chapter 2 indicated that parents often experienced negative emotions as a result of their adolescent's bullying victimization (Harcourt et al., 2015). Harcourt et al. (2015) found that participants revealed feeling upset and powerless in response to their child's victimization. Findings from this study confirmed what was revealed by Harcourt et al. (2015), as participants reported feeling upset, sad, helpless, and angry when questioned about their initial response when learning about their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. Kramer, Guillory, and Hancock (2014) postulated that emotions can be transferred from one person to another. This transfer of emotion can occur unknowingly (Kramer et al., 2014). When parents experience a negative emotional state as result of their adolescent's cyberbullying, it is possible to transfer these negative emotions to their adolescents.

Lack of Awareness/Desire to Bring Awareness

Lack of awareness of cyberbullying was classified as a major theme among participant responses. Each participant expressed not feeling connected to the possibility that their adolescent could encounter cyberbullying until after it occurred. Participants reported that they did not have a complete understanding of what cyberbullying entailed until they were forced to deal with it. Participants also expressed a perception that adolescents involved in cyberbullying, whether as victim or perpetrator, may not be aware that their electronic interactions can be categorized as a form of cyberbullying. Researchers have found that cyberbullies, due to not witnessing their victim's torment in person, are often desensitized to the effects that their actions have (Harrison, 2016; Jones et al., 2015; Robinson, 2013). It was this lack of awareness that led participants to report that they desired to have additional training on how to prevent and intervene when cyberbullying occurs. Ang (2015) posited that parents with "greater knowledge and awareness of adolescents' online activities" have adolescents who are a lower risk for cyberbullying experiences (p. 38).

Publicity Aspect of Cyberbullying

Findings also revealed that participants perceived the public forum associated with cyberbullying to make it a more difficult issue to address. This perception supports the assertion of Jones at al. (2015) that cyberbullying can be particularly severe due to its ability to have large audiences. Participants' perception of the role that the public forum plays in mediating cyberbullying incidents also supports the findings of Sticca and Perren

(2013), who found that the public forum and anonymity of a bullying incident was related to its perceived severity. Participants whose adolescent was bullied via social media explained how the victimization became exacerbated due to the large number of people who were able to participate in the cyberbullying. The publicity causes cyberbullying incidents to be more severe because it is harder to find resolution when there are multiple people participating in victimization.

Lack of Support

Participants also reported that with cyberbullying, there is not always a clear process for how to respond, leading to a desire for increased support. Participants whose adolescent was victimized by a schoolmate expressed a desire for the school to have increased responsibility in addressing cyberbullying incidents. This finding was consistent with findings from previous research that reported that parents hold the belief that schools should do more to resolve cyberbullying issues (Harcourt et al., 2015; Harcourt et al., 2014; Heller, 2015). This presented as a theme because several participants expressed a desire for more support and specifically detailed a perception that the school could have done more to mediate the cyberbullying event.

While the findings of this study support previous research on parental perceptions of the school's role in responding to cyberbullying incidents, participants also reported that they did feel adequately supported when law enforcement was involved. Both Dana and Brynn sought police involvement in response to their adolescents' cyberbullying victimization, and each parent reported positive experiences, citing feelings of support

and advocacy. As explained in Chapter 2, schools are often limited in what they are able to do, as most cyberbullying occurs outside of the school day, despite it occurring between students (Hale et al., 2017; Heller, 2015). Only 13 of the states that have statutes on cyberbullying permit schools to enforce consequences for cyberbullying that occurs between students outside of school (Heller, 2015). There continues to be a discrepancy between parents' perception of the school's responsibility for mediating cyberbullying incidents and the school's authority to do so.

Balancing Parenting Versus Friendship

Participants reported a need to balance the parenting relationship with the effort to have a friendship with their adolescent. Participants expressed the desire to have their teens talk to them and maintain an open line of communication, increasing the probability that their adolescent would come to them if any issues arose. While the desire to have teens communicate with them was evident, participants also revealed that realizing this aim was often made increasingly difficult. Participants often implemented monitoring behaviors intended to foster safety for their teens, which their teens viewed as indicating a lack of trust. Participants in this study sought to increase communication with their adolescents; this supports the finding of Ozdemir (2014) that parents desired to increase communication efforts with their adolescents because they believed that increased communication would garner better outcomes.

The findings of this study also are in alignment with the findings of Goldstein (2016) that adolescents who actively communicated with their parents were at less risk

for cyberbullying. Uniquely, this study also found that while participants reported initiating actions to garner safety after the incident, participants also felt inadequate and helpless for not being able to prevent their teen's victimization. These findings support previous research, as Hale et al. (2017) also found that participants cited feelings of helplessness regarding their child's cyberbullying victimization.

Strengthened Parent/Adolescent Relationship

Despite the negative emotional responses experienced by participants after learning about their adolescents' cyberbullying victimization, participants reported that the incident strengthened their overall relationship. Participants reported that they became advocates for their adolescents. Participants also reported being persistent in their efforts to demonstrate that they would "fight" for their teens to feel vindicated. The "fight" to protect and advocate for their adolescents led to a strengthened parent/adolescent relationship, as participants found that the bond with their adolescent had increased. Parents reported increasing the amount of positive interaction with their adolescents and wanting to be good role models. The sentiments expressed by participants confirmed the findings of Hale et al. (2017) that parents have a desire to be seen as "good parents."

Participants reported that they increased their involvement in their adolescents' lives post victimization. The increased involvement led to a strengthened parent/adolescent relationship as participants stated that they now did more activities together with their teens. Participants shared that their adolescents were also now more

forthcoming with issues and talked to them willingly. Ang (2015) posited that adolescents who have strong bonds with their parents are less likely to have cyberbullying experiences. Parents cited increased communication, interest in spending time together, and their teen regarding them as allies as ways that the parent/adolescent relationship had strengthened.

Connection to Theoretical Framework

Participants in this study shared their lived experiences of mediating an incident of adolescent cyberbullying. Participants provided their first-person accounts of how the cyberbullying was handled and determined how prepared they were to complete such a task. As participants spoke about their experiences in individual interviews, they revealed information about their perceived self-efficacy in mediating the cyberbullying incident. Bandura's self-efficacy theory provides an explanation for how people determine their sense of competency in performing a specific task (Bandura, 1995). The core components of self-efficacy theory are mastery experience, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1995). Findings from this study supported the premises of Bandura's self-efficacy theory.

Mastery Experience

Mastery experience refers to having successfully completed the same or a similar task previously. In the interviews, several participants disclosed having experienced multiple incidents in which their adolescents had experienced some form of bullying in the past. Previous experience mediating traditional bullying victimization resulted in the

participants possessing increased knowledge of school policies. These participants had a higher desire to hold school officials responsible and an enhanced determination to garner adequate results. Participants with mastery experience had higher self-efficacy in addressing cyberbullying. Participants used their past experiences to their advantage by applying strategies that they had found to be successful in the past and escalating their efforts when deemed necessary.

Those participants who did not have previous experiences with mediating any form of bullying reported feeling ill prepared to sufficiently address the situation of cyberbullying. Those participants were faced with a task that they had not yet mastered and were using various techniques to satisfactorily address the situation. As participants achieved desirable results from their intervention and monitoring efforts, their level of self-efficacy increased.

Vicarious Experience

Vicarious experience, as it relates to self-efficacy theory, involves witnessing someone else's experience and making a determination on how well one would perform in a similar situation based on how well the other person performed (Bandura, 1995, 1997). Several participants indicated that they had no previous experience with mediating cyberbullying. Those participants went on to discuss how they gained knowledge on how to address the cyberbullying of their adolescents. Participants reported primarily learning about cyberbullying from what was presented on media outlets or from what was mentioned in schools. One participant disclosed that she had a vicarious experience with

cyberbullying from observing her neighbor deal with a cyberbullying incident that involved her daughter. Vicarious experiences failed to increase participants' self-efficacy in relation to mediating cyberbullying incidents. During the interviews, participants explained that their level of understanding did not adequately prepare them for the task facing them. Several participants shared that cyberbullying was not "real" to them until they personally experienced it with their adolescent.

Verbal Persuasion

Verbal persuasion refers to the impact that verbal support or lack thereof has on a person's self-efficacy when performing a task (Bandura, 1995, 1997). Participants in this study expressed their desire to have additional support as they attempted to mediate their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. Participants voiced their displeasure when they believed that there was lack of positive feedback when seeking resolution to cyberbullying. In contrast, participants who did receive positive feedback felt supported and felt as though their efforts garnered desirable results. Participants who received positive verbal support were found to have higher self-efficacy; however, both groups of participants remained persistent in their mediation efforts.

The publicity of cyberbullying adversely affected the participants' perceived efficacy in mediating the cyberbullying occurrence due to the increased exposure of the victim. Participants detailed how the publicity of cyberbullying made it harder to address and resolve the incident. Participants specified how the response from social media network administrators, school officials, and those who witnessed the cyberbullying

incident impacted their perceptions of effectiveness and overall self-efficacy. Lack of verbal support from social media network administrators negatively impacted their self-efficacy because it caused the issue to persist longer and to be harder to resolve.

Emotional State

Self-efficacy theory purports that the emotional response that a person has when contemplating a new task affects how successful the person will be in completing the task (Bandura, 1977). Positive emotional responses such as excitement in anticipation of completing a task have been linked to higher levels of individual self-efficacy related to the task, whereas a negative emotional response such as fear, anxiety, or stress in anticipation of a specific event or task is often a predictor of lower self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

The theme of negative emotional response was generated from the findings in this study. Participants in this study reported numerous negative emotions when faced with the task of responding to their adolescent's cyberbullying. Participants reported feeling angry, sad, shocked, and helpless as their initial response to learning of their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. Consequently, the majority of participants had low self-efficacy and reported not feeling prepared to handle the cyberbullying incident. These findings relate to self-efficacy theory, as the presence of negative emotional responses was linked with participants' perceived self-efficacy. When participants found their mediation efforts to be successful, they experienced positive emotional responses such as

relief and joy. As participants experienced positive emotional responses, their perceived self-efficacy increased as well.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, I explored the lived experiences of Participants who have addressed or mediated an incident of adolescent cyberbullying. In addition to the limitations presented in Chapter 1, additional limitations arose as a result of conducting the research and analyzing the data. The demographics of the participants may affect the transferability of the data. Out of the nine participants, eight of them reported being the mother of a victimized adolescent. With an underrepresentation of fathers in the study, the results may not be transferable to fathers on a grander scale. A larger sample of fathers may generate different results.

Another limitation of this study is the age range of the participants' adolescent cyberbullying victims. This study sought out parents of adolescent cyberbullying victims ages 12 -17, however each of the participant's adolescents were ages 14-16 years old. It is possible that parents of younger or older adolescents may have handled mediating the cyberbullying victimization differently.

An additional limitation of this study to consider is that findings in this study are a direct report of self-reporting of experiences from participants. The possibility of researcher bias presents as a limitation of the study. Bracketing to identify and set aside researcher bias and utilizing member checking were strategies implemented to decrease this possibility.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is recommended that future research include additional studies on parental involvement in mediating incidents of adolescent cyberbullying. While participants in this study ultimately reported that their mediation efforts were perceived to be effective, participants still had low self-efficacy in responding to incidents of adolescent cyberbullying. A recommendation for future research would be to conduct a mixed-methods study that explore parents' experiences with programs that address cyberbullying. Stives, May, Pilkington, Bethel, and Eakin (2018) postulated that programs for participants that focus on cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts were an effective way to prepare parents for handling possible cyberbullying occurrences. The focus of this research could be to survey the parents of students to determine how many parents have partook in available cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs. The quantitative component would allow for the researcher to provide statistical data on parents' usage of available cyberbullying programs. The qualitative component would allow the researcher to obtain information- rich data of participants' detailed responses. Of those parents surveyed who have participated in cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs, a focus group could be used to identify participants' perception of the program's effectiveness at educating parents.

An additional recommendation for future research is to conduct a case study in which a parent and adolescent are interviewed regarding their experience with cyberbullying. This research would further explore what strategies were perceived to be

successful. This case study would allow the researcher to obtain a detailed view of the cyberbullying phenomenon from varying perspectives.

My final recommendation for future research is for a study to be designed exploring the feelings of guilt that parents may experience as a result of their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. Where past research has focused on the experiences of victimized adolescents, future research should explore the counseling options available for parents. Parents may have guilt regarding the inability to prevent their adolescent's victimization and seek counseling to assist with these feelings while obtaining strategies to decrease suicidal ideation that often accompanies cyberbullying victimization.

Implications for Social Change

Cyberbullying continues to be an issue that adversely members of many families (Barlett & Chamberlin, 2017; Larranaga, Yubero, Ovejero, & Navarro, 2016; Wright, 2016). It is imperative to understand how parents respond to incidents of cyberbullying. Parents also need to be provided the necessary supports to do so successfully. This study provided opportunity for parents to share experiences of responding to incidents of adolescent cyberbullying. Findings from this study may be used to inform various professionals of the challenges that parents face when it comes to addressing cyberbullying incidents. The findings from this study will be added to the existing body of literature.

Those participants who reported having previous knowledge of cyberbullying, were also those who indicated feeling prepared to handle the situation. This revelation

supported the findings of Stives et al. (2018) who found that misunderstandings about cyberbullying impacts perceived effectiveness. While most participants reported having at least some form of knowledge about cyberbullying prior to their adolescent's victimization, participants consistently stated that they did not fully understand cyberbullying. Parents reported not understanding the prevalence of cyberbullying or the magnitude of its effects until it happened to their youth and they were personally impacted. Participants acknowledged that their prior knowledge did not prepare them for the experience that they faced. This finding may be used to provide empirical evidence to establish the need for cyberbullying education programs. Parents, adolescents, or the community at-large may choose to advocate for such programs. Human services professionals and other professionals could use the information from this study to advocate for changes in policies and/or the creation of policies that outline procedures for addressing situations of cyberbullying.

Findings from this study may be used to indicate the increased need for cyberbullying intervention programs that better prepare parents for mediating cyberbullying incidents. Development and implementation of cyberbullying interventions and mediation training for parents could have implications for social change on both an individual and a community level. On an individual level, parents may feel better equipped to advocate for their adolescents when incidents of cyberbullying occur. On a community level the findings from this study may lead to a collaboration between

schools, parents, and adolescents on how to prevent and respond to incidences of adolescent cyberbullying.

Conclusion

This descriptive phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of parents who had an adolescent victimized by cyberbullying. Participants in this study confirmed that cyberbullying affects the family as a whole and not just the individual who was victimized. Parents have a multi-faceted role that include being an advocate, protector and source of support for their adolescent. Despite often having a low self-efficacy in facing this particular task, parents still chose strategies to attempt and remedy the incident of their adolescent's cyberbullying victimization. The lack of awareness of cyberbullying detailed by participants demonstrates the need for additional education on cyberbullying. While it has been learned that parents often do not contemplate cyberbullying until it impacts them directly, responding to adolescent cyberbullying continues to be a reality that many parents face each day.

This chapter provided a detailed discussion on the findings of the study. Additionally, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research were detailed in this chapter. Finally, the potential impacts for positive social change was covered in this chapter.

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Appendix A: Announcement of the Study

Walden University Doctoral Research Study

HAS YOUR TEEN BEEN CYBERBULLIED?

Looking for parents whose adolescent has been a victim of cyberbullying for a research study.

You can choose to participate in this study if you:

- Are a parent/guardian of an adolescent ages 12-17
- Your adolescent has been bullied online or via texting in the past 2 years
- You are willing to share your experience

If you agree to participate, you would:

- Share your experience in a 60-90 minute confidential interview with a researcher
- Help bring awareness to a major social issue
- Receive a $15 gift card to thank you for your time and participation

If you are interested, or for more information, Please contact:

Brittny Myrick

brittny.myrick@waldenu.edu

Sign up today!

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a doctoral student at Walden University, pursuing my Ph. D in Human and Social Services, and I am conducting a study exploring the lived experiences of parents who have had a child victimized by cyberbullying. Cyberbullying has become a widespread problem facing teens and their families, resulting in short and long-term psycho-social effects. To assist with this study, I am reaching out to local community partners for permission to advertise my study, with the intent of recruiting participants. I am interested in interviewing parents via phone who have had a child who was a victim of cyberbullying within the last 2 years. With your permission, I will advertise a flyer providing an overview of the study, and those who are interested can contact me directly. Your assistance is greatly valued, and I thank you in advance.

Student Researcher: Brittny Myrick Student ID#: A00477508

Dissertation Title: Cyberbullying Victimization: The Lived Experience of Parents

By signing below, you acknowledge and agree to the following:

- I understand that no participant recruitment will begin until after approval has been given by the Walden University Institutional Review Board.
- I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report resulting from this study.
- I understand that the organization reserves the right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time if our circumstances change.
- There is no guarantee that any number of people will agree to participate in the study, and I acknowledge that individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.
- I confirm that I am authorized to approve the student's request to advertise the flyer for recruitment.

Community Organization Name:_____

Organization Address: _____

Authorized Person (Name and Title): _____

Authorized Person (Sign & Date): _____

Appendix C: Prescreening Questionnaire

Hello, thank you for your interest in my study on parents' experiences with adolescent cyberbullying. Before we continue, I'd like to ask a few questions to confirm that you meet the criteria to participate in the study.

1. Are you the parent, guardian, or primary caregiver of an adolescent ages 12-17 years old?
2. **Cyberbullying-** deliberately insulting, threatening, embarrassing or harassing someone using a technology-based approach, such as via the internet, or an electronic device
   Based on the above definition, has your juvenile been a victim of cyberbullying within the past 2 years?
3. Would you be interested in talking about your experience with a researcher?

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Your time and willingness to share your thoughts and experiences are greatly appreciated. The purpose of this study is to expand the understanding of parents' experiences with their adolescent being victimized by cyberbullying. Any information that you share today will remain confidential and no identifying information will be shared. This interview should take 90 minutes or less. As explained previously, this interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. Is that still okay with you? If at any time, you no longer wish to continue with the interview, let me know, and we'll stop immediately.

1. Tell me about your overall experience with your son or daughter being cyberbullied.
    a. Follow-up questions if needed: What was your initial reaction? How did you feel?
2. What knowledge did you have of cyberbullying in general prior to your adolescent's victimization?
3. Tell me about any ways that you monitor your adolescent's online, and mobile device use in relation to cyberbullying.
4. How did you address the situation of cyberbullying?
5. How do you feel about your effectiveness in responding to the situation? How well do you feel that you were prepared to handle this situation?
    a. Follow up question if needed: How did you draw that conclusion?

6. What information would have been helpful in resolving the situation?
7. Describe how the knowledge of your adolescent being bullied has impacted you personally.
8. Describe any impact that this situation has had on your relationship with your adolescent.
9. Is there anything else that you would like to add about your experience?

So that concludes our interview. Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me and share your experience. The audio from this interview will be transcribed into text and provided to you via email for review. Upon review of the transcribed interview, please let me know if there's anything that was not captured correctly. Your gift card of $15 will be sent to the email address that you used to consent to this interview. Cyberbullying continues to be a pressing issue and the information that you have provided may be used to inform social change. If you have any questions or concerns following this interview, please email me at Brittny.myrick@waldenu.edu