

Silent Voices: The Perception of Cyber Bullying Roles Among Middle School Students

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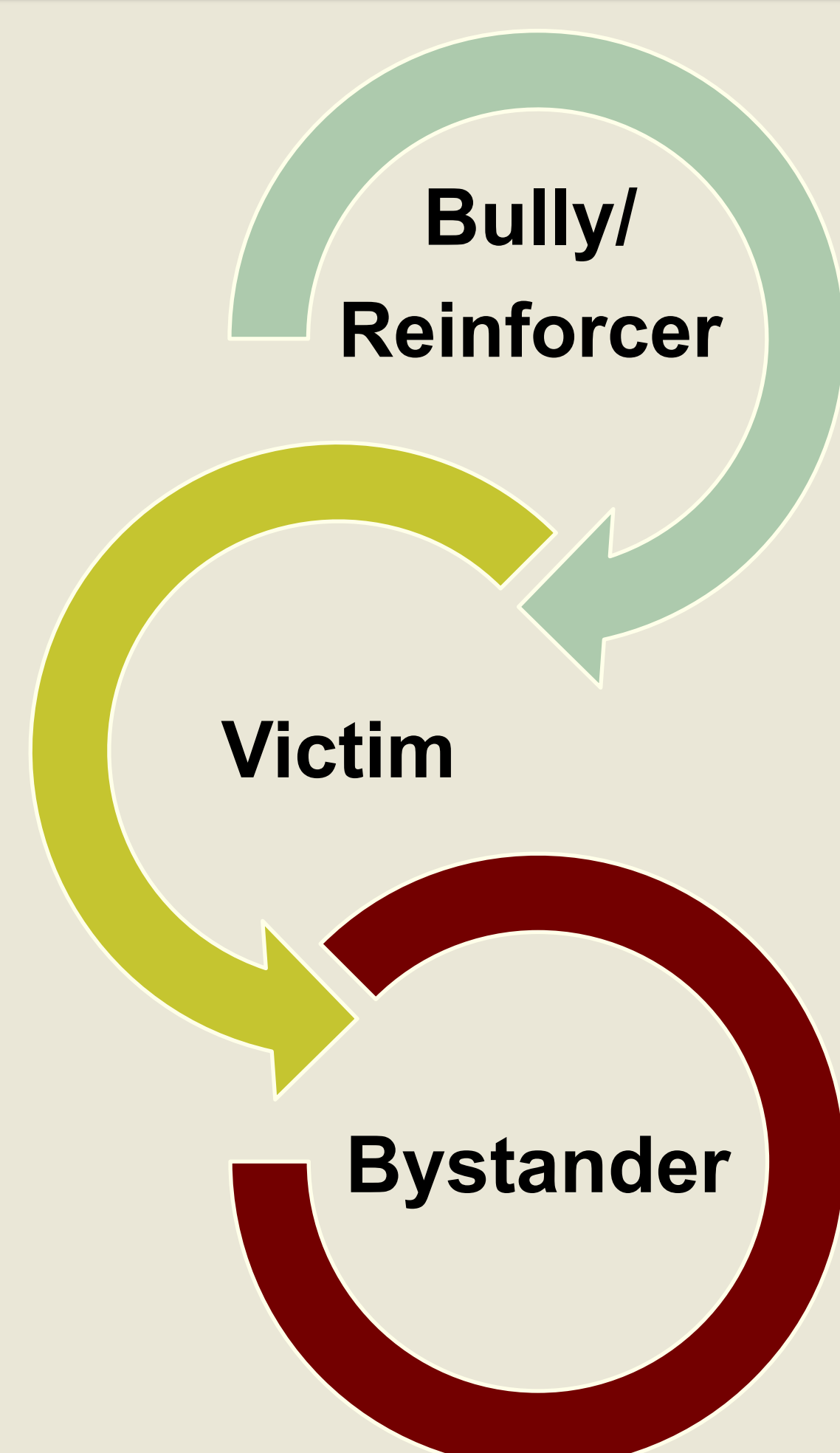
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Introduction

Abstract

In the age of social media, traditional bullying among students has assumed a new form – cyberbullying. As such, cyberbullying can trigger numerous emotional and physical stressors among students, which causes them to perform at a lower rate in their classes (especially among minority students and students with low SES). The purpose of this study was to discover the perceptions middle school students have about the different cyberbullying roles and how those roles can affect their academic and social lives during and after the school day. The preliminary results of this qualitative study indicate that speaking out about cyberbullying can result in lower self-efficacy for victims that, in turn, emboldens the bully/reinforcer especially using the 24/7 venue of social media.

Aims of the Research



The purpose of this study was to discover the perceptions middle school students have about the perceived cyberbullying roles of victim, bystander, and bully/reinforcer and how those roles affect student self-efficacy during the face-to-face school day and continuing after the school day on social media.

Research Questions

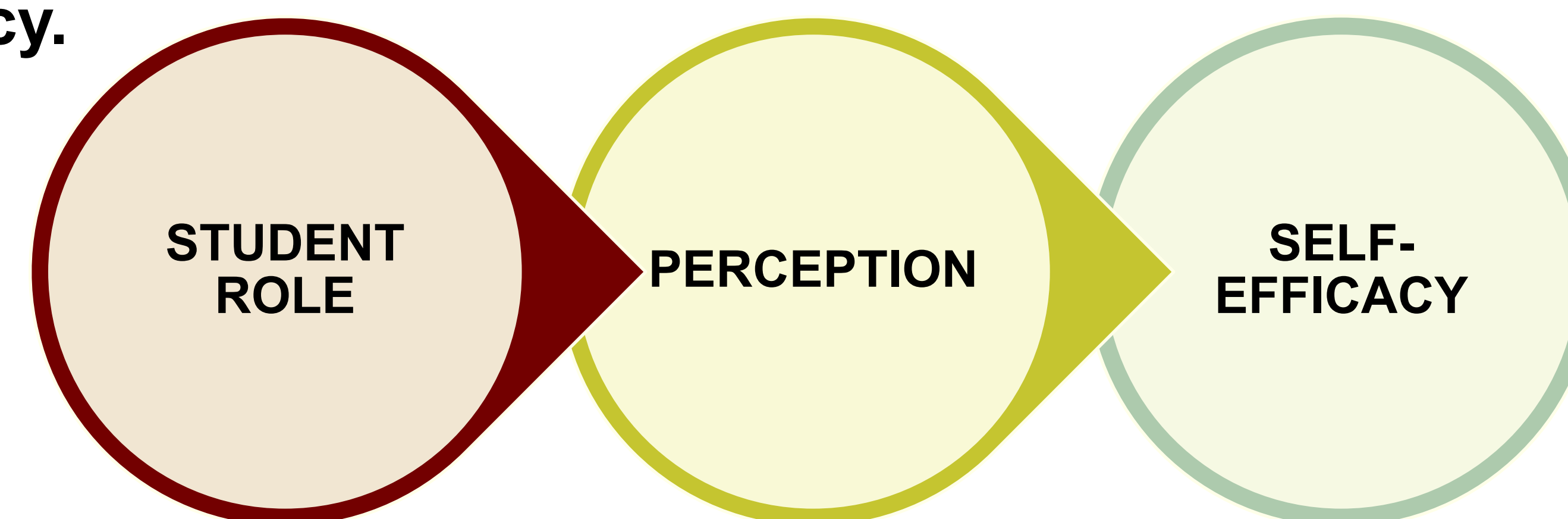
Two questions were considered for this study:

1. What perceptions do middle school students have on cyberbullying?
2. Is it difficult for middle school students to speak out about cyberbullying?

Method

Research Design

This study was designed using the qualitative technique of an explanatory case study. This technique was selected as the underlying purpose of the study was to explain how students identify their role, how their role is perceived in the cyberbullying process, and how that informs their self-efficacy.



Participants

The participants for the study (N=7) were selected using a non-random, purposeful sampling technique based on the following pre-determined criteria:

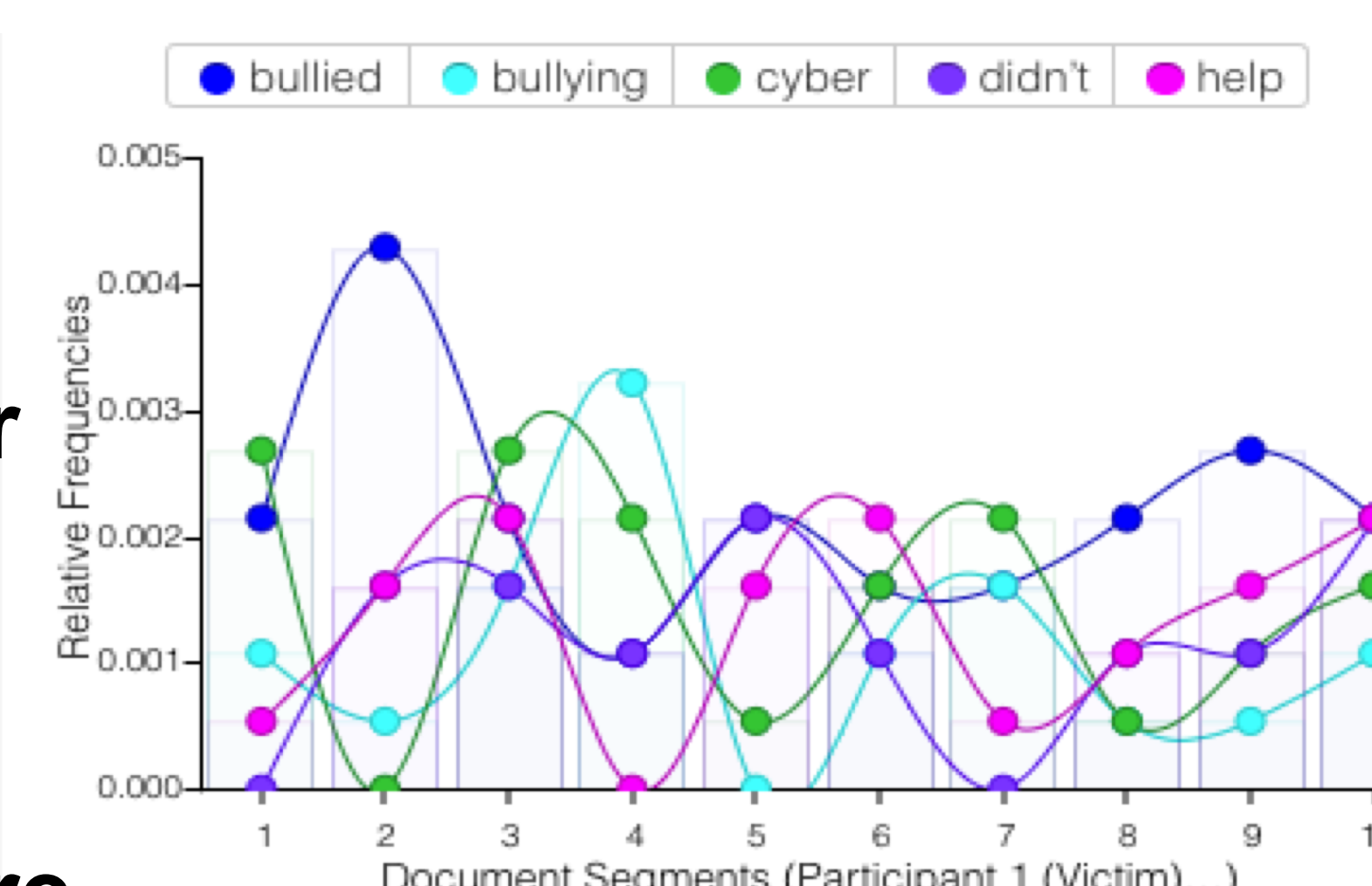
- Middle school students at North Florida Freedom School
- Self-reported role in traditional bullying as victim, bystander, or reinforcer
- Self-reported role in cyberbullying as victim, bystander, or reinforcer

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using the following two primary instruments:

1. Prosocial self-efficacy survey
2. Face-to-face interview questions

Surveys were administered prior to the interview questions. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for word-level analysis. The transcriptions were analyzed using the Voyant corpus analytic tool to uncover common linguistic trends among victims, bystanders, and reinforcers.



Results

Conclusion

By categorizing the seven participants into the different bullying roles through the self-efficacy survey and interviews, the following conclusions were reached:

1. Self-efficacy is directly related to the student's role
2. Experiences in said roles were different for each student
3. Students were reluctant (especially victims and bystanders) to be forthcoming with their experiences
4. Bullies/Reinforcers approached their participation from one of "self-defense" or preservation

Discussion

The role that cyberbullying plays in student self-efficacy perception, and ultimately, academic success is an evolving topic in the 21st century classroom environment. Administrators, teachers, and parents are at the precipice of understanding the long-term psychological impact of sustained exposure to cyberbullying across existing and emerging social media platforms. The results of this study implicate longitudinal research to explain better the interrelationship between role, perception, and self-efficacy on long-term student success.

Key References

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PURPOSE

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