4

The nature of covert bullying from a student perspective: Qualitative research

> "Bullying is a form of aggression, involving the abuse of power in relationships. It is recognized globally as a complex and serious problem. It has many faces, including the use of emerging technologies, and varies by age, gender, and culture."

(Kandersteg Declaration, Switzerland, June 10, 2007)[1]

4.1 Introduction

Definitions of bullying are important when considering its prevalence in schools. Research suggests that when students report on bullying behaviour they are more likely to restrict their definition to more overt bullying (verbal or physical) and are less likely to refer to social exclusion or other covert forms of bullying [2]. As part of this Project it was considered essential to listen carefully to what students say about bullying and to work with them to develop their conceptions of the phenomenon. This qualitative research phase of the Project was used to ensure that fundamental issues, related to the nature of covert bullying from a students' perspective, were understood. This phase was an essential prelude to the development of a national quantitative survey instrument. It helped to improve the validity, accuracy and representation of the large-scale quantitative data collection by:

a)   identifying and understanding from Australian children and adolescents the most salient types of covert bullying and the issues and contexts that support this behaviour (i.e. to adequately describe the nature of covert bullying, and then quantify its prevalence);

b)   ensuring that the quantitative survey captures all the age-specific forms of covert bullying; and

c)   using appropriate and understandable language and contexts when measuring covert bullying.

This Chapter reports on Phase 3 of the ACBPS Design (see Figure 1.1 on page 5).

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Research objectives

The research objectives addressed qualitatively during this phase are as follows.

- To improve our understanding of the nature and extent of covert bullying among students aged 8-14 years.

- To increase our knowledge and understanding of the degree to which young people experience, or are perpetrators of, covert bullying as well as the reasons for young people's involvement, examining questions such as:
  - when, how often and why young people are involved;
  - how do young people rationalise their bullying behaviour, what do they gain from it and how do they feel about it;
  - when does it happen, do people being bullied talk to anyone about it, and similar questions.

- To determine what young people believe to be the best form(s) of support for preventing and reducing the impact of covert bullying, to what extent they believe that parents, teachers, and other adults can intervene effectively, and what their main fears are regarding talking to adults.

4.2.2 Recruitment and sampling

Phase 3 involved two levels of data collection: an initial screening (quantitative) survey followed by an in-depth semi-structured interview with years 4, 6, 7 and 8 students from four metropolitan Western Australian schools (two Government primary schools, one Government secondary school and one Catholic Education Office K-12 school).

To recruit the schools each principal was contacted by email and then by phone. Of the five schools contacted, four provided consent to participate. One declined as it had competing higher priorities. These four schools provided the requisite number of students for this formative study phase.

Active parental consent was sought by means of a letter mailed home to parents for Years 4, 6, 7 and 8 students to participate in this phase of the research project. This letter provided information about the purpose of the student quantitative surveys and interviews and who was conducting the research. It described how their children would be involved in the study, explaining that their participation was voluntary. The letter indicated that if they provided consent they had the right to withdraw their child from the study at any time without prejudice. Information was also provided for schools to use in their newsletters to encourage and remind parents and students to participate. The principal of the Government secondary school also sent a letter to all Year 8 parents to encourage them to return their consent forms.

The screening survey was completed by 225 Year 4, 6, 7 and 8 students. Eighty five of those students were then invited, based on how they responded to the survey, to participate in the subsequent in-depth interviews. At the time of questionnaire administration, in addition to having their parents' consent, students were also asked to provide their own consent to participate in the study. Students were advised that if they did not want to complete this survey their classroom teacher would provide them with alternative work. Only one of the selected students chose not to complete the in-depth interviews. Students were also encouraged to contact a trusted adult (such as the school nurse or counsellor) or to call the Kids Help Line (a 24 hour confidential and anonymous telephone and online counselling service for children and young people) if the survey (or interview) raised any questions or concerns for them. A card describing how to contact the Kids Help Line was given to all students following the questionnaire administration.

4.2.3 Consent response rates

Table 4.1 presents the consent rates for the four schools involved in Phase 3 data collection. The highest proportion of consent forms were returned by the Year 4 students and the lowest proportion by the Year 8 students. Two hundred and twenty five students and their parents provided consent to complete the screening survey, and if selected, the in-depth interview.

Table 4.1: Phase 3 consent rates by year level

|	Year 4		Year 6		Year 7		Year 8	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total sample	138	100	129	100	193	100	336	100
Consent Received	61	44	35	27	64	33	65	19
No Consent	7	5	8	6	12	6	17	5
Consent form not returned	70	51	86	67	117	61	254	76

4.2.4 Data collection

4.2.4.1 Quantitative screening questionnaire

All students whose parents provided active consent were invited to complete a 15-item quantitative screening questionnaire, as described in the next section. This questionnaire was used to determine if students had any covert bullying experiences either through being bullied, bullying others or observing others engaging in this behaviour. By identifying their covert experiences, the study was able to enhance the representativeness of the sample of students selected for the in-depth interview.

4.2.4.2 Qualitative semi-structured face-to-face student interview

Eighty five students identified through the screening survey as having experienced covert bullying were invited to participate in the face-to-face interviews. These 85 interviews were used to help to understand the mechanisms and nature of covert bullying as well as how students felt about this bullying behaviour and what they believe are its effects.

Prior to commencing the quantitative and qualitative data collection in each school, the school staff member coordinating the data collection was asked by CHPRC staff to advise his or her school's pastoral care staff (e.g. nurse, counsellor, social worker) of the questionnaire administration date, should any student concerns or disclosure issues arise.
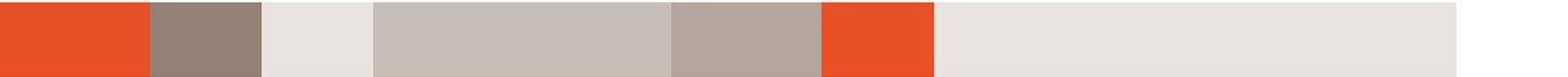
4.3 Quantitative screening questionnaire

Students with parental consent were asked to complete a brief self-administered screening questionnaire during class time. The screening questionnaire contained items developed for the Covert Bullying Project as well as items adapted from other research for use in the study. The primary aim of the screening questionnaire was to identify students who report that they had been covertly bullied; had covertly bullied others; or observed (i.e. were bystanders to) covert bullying.

The 15-item survey measured students' experiences of covert bullying such as being excluded, having rumours spread about them and being bullied via mobile phones or the internet. Questions also asked where the behaviour had occurred, the gender of the students involved in the bullying situations and the coping strategies students employed. A copy of the screening questionnaire is provided in Chapter 4, Appendix 1.

The questionnaire administration was conducted by trained CHPRC researchers who visited each class to administer and collect questionnaires from students. The questionnaire was read aloud to Year 4 and 6 students. Year 7 and 8 students completed the questionnaire individually after general introductory instructions from the trained administrator. A questionnaire was left for absent students to complete, if possible, when they returned to school.

Each school involved in this phase received a brief summary report of the general screening questionnaire findings for their school.

4.3.1 Screening Results

4.3.1.1 Screening response rates

As shown in Table 4.2, 199 students with consent completed the quantitative questionnaire. Year 6 students had the lowest levels of parental consent and Year 7 the highest.

Table 4.2: Student participation rates in the screening questionnaire

	Year 4		Year 6		Year 7		Year 8	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Consent Received	61	100	35	100	64	100	65	100
Questionnaires Completed	53	87	33	94	59	92	54	83

4.3.1.2 Rates of bullying

Table 4.3 shows that Year 4 students were more likely to report they were bullied for most of the listed forms of bullying (covert and overt), with approximately two-thirds of these students reporting that they were teased (71%) and excluded from groups (66%). Year 8 students reported the next highest levels of bullying behaviour, with 57% reporting they were teased and 47% reporting they had hurtful lies told about them. The most prevalent form of bullying across all year levels was hurtful teasing, followed by having lies told about them to make other students not like them. The least prevalent form of bullying reported across all year groups was having a group ganging up on students to hurt them.

Table 4.3: Student Responses to the item: this term (term 2), how often were you bullied in the following ways?

	Year 4			Year 6			Year 7			Year 8		
	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %
Students deliberately avoided or ignored me, didn't let me join in, or left me out of a group to hurt me	14	52	34	0	47	53	2	33	65	8	33	58
I was teased in nasty ways or was called hurtful names	29	42	29	9	22	69	4	27	69	12	45	43
Had a student tell me he/she wouldn't like me unless I did what he/she said	12	19	69	6	12	82	0	12	88	0	19	81
Students told lies about me and tried to make other students not like me	6	37	57	3	22	75	0	46	54	11	36	53
I was made to feel afraid that I would get hurt	15	25	60	3	19	78	0	10	90	6	14	80
My secrets were told to others to deliberately hurt me	4	33	63	9	12	78	2	25	73	2	21	77
Hurtful rumours were spread about me	8	26	66	6	19	75	2	35	62	15	17	68
Students deliberately tried to hurt me by not talking to me	14	35	51	6	22	72	0	23	77	2	25	73
A group decided to hurt me by ganging up on me	8	27	65	3	12	84	0	10	90	6	8	85
Someone deliberately tried to hurt me by trying to break up a friendship I had	12	40	48	3	29	68	0	31	69	6	31	62
Someone deliberately tried to frighten or threaten me by continually staring at me	10	29	61	6	12	81	2	8	90	6	17	77
I have been deliberately threatened physically or hurt physically by another student	14	33	53	6	19	75	0	21	79	4	21	75

Table 4.4 shows that the majority of students in Years 4, 6, 7 and 8 did not experience cyber bullying when they were in school. If it was to occur, Year 4 students most commonly reported bullying via an internet game (10%); Year 6 students reported bullying via pictures, webcam or video clips, email, social networking sites or web page (3% respectively); Year 7 students reported bullying via phone calls (6%); and Year 8 students reported bullying via chat rooms (14%).

Table 4.4: Student responses to the item: this term (term 2), how often have you been bullied in the following ways in school?

	Year 4			Year 6			Year 7			Year 8		
	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %
Text messages by mobile phone	0	4	96	0	0	100	0	4	96	0	10	90
Pictures, webcam or video clips	2	4	94	0	3	97	0	4	96	2	4	94
Phone calls	0	2	98	0	0	100	0	6	94	2	6	92
Email	0	6	94	0	3	97	0	4	96	0	8	92
Chat rooms	0	2	98	0	0	100	0	0	100	2	12	86
MSN messenger or another form of instant messenger	2	6	92	0	0	100	2	2	96	4	18	78
Social networking sites like MySpace	0	4	96	3	0	97	0	0	100	4	6	90
Internet game	2	8	90	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	6	94
Web log	2	0	98	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	8	92
Web page	0	4	96	0	3	97	0	0	100	0	6	94

Table 4.5 indicates the majority of students surveyed were not cyber bullied outside of school. If a Year 4, 7 and 8 student reported being bullied via the use of ICT; this was most likely to occur via MSN Messenger or another form of instant messenger (19% Year 4; 25% Year 7; 26% Year 8). Year 6 students were more likely to be bullied via phone calls (12%).

Table 4.5: Student responses to the item: this term (term 2), how often have you been bullied in the following ways outside of school?

	Year 4			Year 6			Year 7			Year 8		
	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %
Text messages by mobile phone	2	6	92	0	0	100	0	4	96	0	10	90
Pictures, webcam or video clips	0	8	92	0	0	100	0	8	92	2	2	96
Phone calls	0	14	86	0	12	88	0	23	77	2	6	92
Email	2	8	90	0	6	94	0	19	81	2	4	94
Chat rooms	0	12	88	0	0	100	0	4	96	2	10	88
MSN messenger or another form of instant messenger	4	15	81	6	0	94	2	23	75	4	22	74
Social networking sites like MySpace	2	7	91	0	0	100	0	2	98	2	8	90
Internet game	4	13	83	0	0	100	0	10	90	0	6	94
Web log	0	2	98	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	4	96
Web page	0	6	94	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	4	96

As shown in Table 4.6, Year 8 students were more likely to report bullying others using overt and covert means, with approximately half of Year 8 students reporting they excluded others from groups a few times (51%) or teased another student (47%). Year 4 students reported the next highest levels of bullying behaviour; with 39% reporting that they excluded others and 35% reporting they teased another student(s). The most prevalent form of bullying for Year 6 students was teasing others (19%) and for the Year 7 students it was excluding other students (23%).

Table 4.6: Student responses to the item: this term (term 2), how often have you on your own or in a group, bullied another student or students in the following ways?

	Year 4			Year 6			Year 7			Year 8		
	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %
I deliberately avoided or ignored another student or students, didn't let them join in, or left them out of a group to hurt them	2	37	61	3	16	81	0	23	77	0	51	49
I teased another student or students in nasty ways or called another student or students hurtful names	0	35	65	7	27	67	0	19	81	4	43	53
I told another student or students I wouldn't like them unless they did what I said	0	14	86	0	6	94	0	2	98	0	6	94
I told lies about another student or students and tried to make other students not like them	4	10	86	0	9	91	0	4	96	0	10	90
I made another student or students feel afraid that I would hurt them	4	10	86	3	3	94	0	4	96	0	18	82
I told another student or students secrets to others to deliberately hurt them	2	10	88	0	3	97	0	2	98	0	19	81
I spread hurtful rumours about another student or students	0	15	85	0	6	94	0	12	88	2	16	82
I deliberately tried to hurt a student or students by not talking to them	2	23	75	0	9	91	0	12	88	0	33	67

	Year 4			Year 6			Year 7			Year 8		
	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %
I was part of a group who decided to hurt another student or students by ganging up on them	4	19	77	0	12	88	0	10	90	2	26	72
I deliberately tried to hurt another student or students by trying to break up a friendship they had	4	8	88	0	3	97	0	2	98	0	6	94
I deliberately tried to frighten or threaten another student or students by continually staring at them	0	10	90	0	6	94	0	2	98	0	8	92
I deliberately threatened physically or hurt physically another student or students	2	8	90	3	9	88	0	6	94	0	16	84

Table 4.7 shows that the majority of students in Years 4, 6, 7 and 8 did not cyber bully others when they were in school. If they were to bully others in this way, the Year 4 students surveyed most commonly reported bullying via chat rooms or social networking sites (6% and 6% respectively); Year 6 students reported bullying via text messages or chat rooms (3%); Year 7 students reported bullying via phone calls (4%); and Year 8 students reported bullying through MSN Messenger or another form of instant messenger site (26%). These results indicate some disparity between the ways Year 4, 6, 7, and 8 students reported being bullied and the ways students reported bullying others.

Table 4.7: Student responses to the item: this term (term 2), how often have you bullied another student or students in the following ways in school?

	Year 4			Year 6			Year 7			Year 8		
	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %
Text messages by mobile phone	0	0	100	0	3	97	0	2	98	0	10	90
Pictures, webcam or video clips	0	3	97	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	8	92
Phone calls	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	4	96	0	14	86
Email	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	2	98	8	14	86
Chat rooms	0	6	94	0	3	97	0	2	98	2	10	88
MSN messenger or another form of instant messenger	3	0	97	0	0	100	0	2	98	4	22	74
Social networking sites like MySpace	3	3	94	0	0	100	0	2	98	0	8	92
Internet game	3	0	97	0	0	100	0	2	98	0	8	92
Web log	0	3	97	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	8	92
Web page	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	6	94

The majority of students surveyed reported they had not cyber bullied others outside of school, as described in Table 4.8. Students who reported bullying others were more likely to use MSN Messenger or another form of instant messenger to bully another student(s) in Years 4, 6 and 8 (86% Year 4; 94% Year 6; 65% Year 8). In Year 7 the students most commonly reported bullying others outside of school using phone calls (15%).

Table 4.8: Student responses to the item: this term (term 2), how often have you bullied another student or students in the following ways OUTSIDE of school?

	Year 4			Year 6			Year 7			Year 8		
	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %
Text messages by mobile phone	2	4	94	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	10	90
Pictures, webcam or video clips	2	6	92	0	0	100	0	2	98	0	4	96
Phone calls	2	2	96	0	3	97	0	15	85	4	6	90
Email	2	2	96	0	0	100	0	6	94	0	12	88
Chat rooms	0	6	94	0	3	97	0	0	100	0	10	90
MSN messenger or another form of instant messenger	2	12	86	0	6	94	0	8	92	0	35	65
Social networking sites like MySpace	2	0	98	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	12	88
Internet game	0	8	92	0	0	100	0	2	98	0	6	94
Web log	0	2	98	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	2	98
Web page	0	6	94	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	2	98

Table 4.9 describes the types of bullying students reported witnessing as bystanders. The majority of Year 4 students had witnessed physical bullying (62%) or verbal bullying (61%), whereas the majority of Year 6 and 7 students had witnessed verbal bullying behaviours (75% Year 6; 71% Year 7). Year 8 students reported witnessing physical (82%) and more covert social bullying (81%) at similar levels.

Table 4.9: Student responses to the item: this term (term 2), how often have you seen other students...

	Year 4			Year 6			Year 7			Year 8		
	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %
Being physically bullied at school?	20	42	38	19	53	28	0	52	48	14	68	18
Verbally bullying others by insults, put downs or threats at school?	10	51	39	16	59	25	17	54	29	22	55	23
Socially bullying others by deliberately leaving them out, spreading rumours or making them look bad?	16	35	49	12	56	31	12	52	36	20	61	19

Tables 4.10 and 4.11 show the majority of students surveyed had not witnessed cyber bullying in or outside of school. If Year 4 students had witnessed cyber bullying in school, it was likely to involve the use of pictures, webcam or video clips (9%) whereas outside of school it occurred via text messages or MSN or another form of instant messenger (6%). The most common form of cyber bullying witnessed by Year 6 students in school occurred in chat rooms or during internet gaming (3%). If a Year 6 student witnessed cyber bullying outside of school, it was most likely to be via phone calls (9%). Year 7 students reported witnessing cyber bullying in (15%) and outside (29%) of school using MSN or another form of instant messenger. Finally, the Year 8 students surveyed reported witnessing cyber bullying in school via text messages (26%) and outside of school using MSN Messenger or another form of instant messenger (41%).

Table 4.10: Student responses to the item: this term (term 2), how often have you seen other students getting bullied in the following ways IN school?

	Year 4			Year 6			Year 7			Year 8		
	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %
Text messages by mobile phone	3	0	97	0	0	100	0	15	85	2	24	74
Pictures, webcam or video clips	3	6	91	0	0	100	0	2	98	2	18	80
Phone calls	3	3	94	0	0	100	0	6	94	2	21	77
Email	3	3	94	0	0	100	0	8	92	6	16	78
Chat rooms	3	0	97	0	3	97	0	10	90	2	14	84
MSN messenger or another form of instant messenger	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	15	85	2	22	76
Social networking sites like MySpace	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	6	94	4	16	80
Internet game	0	0	100	0	3	97	0	2	98	2	6	92
Web log	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	2	8	90
Web page	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	4	96	2	8	90

Table 4.11: Student responses to the item: this Term (Term 2), how often have you seen other students getting bullied in the following ways OUTSIDE of school?

	Year 4			Year 6			Year 7			Year 8		
	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %	Lots of times %	A few times %	Never %
Text messages by mobile phone	2	14	84	0	3	97	2	10	88	2	29	69
Pictures, webcam or video clips	0	8	92	0	0	100	0	10	90	2	12	86
Phone calls	2	12	86	0	19	81	2	25	73	2	20	78
Email	2	8	90	3	3	94	0	17	83	2	18	80
Chat rooms	2	8	90	3	3	94	2	6	92	2	12	86
MSN messenger or another form of instant messenger	4	12	84	3	3	94	0	29	71	2	39	59
Social networking sites like MySpace	2	6	92	3	0	97	0	6	94	2	29	69
Internet game	0	14	86	3	9	88	2	2	96	2	8	90
Web log	0	4	96	0	0	100	0	0	100	2	4	94
Web page	0	8	92	0	3	97	0	10	90	2	4	94

4.4 Face-to-face interviews

Data from the screening questionnaires were analysed to identify four mutually exclusive groups of student bullying experiences. These categories included those students who were:

a)   Not covertly bullied and were not covertly bullying others.

b)   Covertly bullied only.

c)   Covertly bullying others only.

d)   Both covertly bullied and were covertly bullying others.

The Project Team also identified students in group a) who reported they had been a bystander in at least one bullying incident. In each school equivalent numbers of student representatives (where possible) from each of the four categories and some bystanders in the selected year levels were interviewed. More Year 8 students were interviewed as it was expected that the oldest group would have the most experience with cyber bullying behaviour.

4.4.1 Interview protocol

The student interview protocol was developed in collaboration with experts with experience in education, bullying prevention, health promotion, social marketing and psychology. The protocol included a mix of open-ended questioning and indirect methods of inquiry regarding the nature of covert bullying. Some storytelling projective techniques were also used to encourage students to provide third person disclosures (references to 'other people', 'someone else', 'people you know'), as well as more directed questioning expanding on items from the screening survey instrument.

The semi-structured interview comprised a brief welcome and introduction, warm-up questions related to what students enjoy and dislike about school, questions about terminology for communication technology, and contextual questions related to a case study presented about a student who was treated badly by his/her peers at school and at home. A copy of the Interview protocol is provided in Chapter 4, Appendix 2. The interview protocol was pilot tested with a purposeful sample of primary and high school students.

4.4.2 Interview administration

The 25 to 30 minute semi-structured interviews were conducted in a quiet room at each school, usually in a staff member's office while other students and teachers were in class. Permission was sought from students to audio record the interview.

At the completion of the interview students were given the contact details for the Kids Helpline should the interview have raised any issues or concerns for them. Students were also given a pen and a ruler as a token of appreciation for their participation.

4.4.3 Data analyses

Interview data were analysed using a three step process of organising, shaping, and explaining as outlined by Hawe, Degeling and Hall [3]. The data were organised by transcribing recorded interview data and observers' notes for each interview question and coding categories created for each question. The information was coded by two researchers independently and then compared for differences in interpretation of categories. The data were then shaped in accordance with similarities and differences between the groups' data. Finally the data were explained as part of this report.

4.4.4 Interview results

4.4.4.1 Interview response rates

Eighty-five students were selected to participate in the in-depth interviews. As shown in Table 4.12, these comprised 15 Year 4 and 15 Year 6 students, 20 Year 7 students and 35 Year 8 students.

Table 4.12: Student participation rates in the face-to-face interviews

	Year 4		Year 6		Year 7		Year 8	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Consent Received	61	100	35	100	64	100	65	100
Questionnaires Completed	15	26	15	43	20	31	35	53

4.4.4.2 Interview results

The face-to-face interview was divided into three sections to determine:

a)   terminology used by students to describe different types of bullying;

b)   terminology used by students to describe technology they may use to communicate (and covertly bully others); and

c)   context-specific covert bullying terminology used by students to describe actions to prevent or manage this bullying.

The findings are described as follows:

Terminology used by students to describe types of bullying

To ensure that the terminology used in the large national quantitative survey would be understood and accepted by Years 4 to 9 students in describing covert and overt bullying behaviours, students were asked to suggest alternative or additional terms to those provided to the students during the interview. Table 4.13 summarises the terms suggested by students as alternative names for the behaviours described during the interview. As can be seen, very few new terms, other than 'blackmailing' and 'stealing friends', beyond those suggested were reported by students.

Table 4.13: Student terminology suggestions to describe bullying

Terminology currently used	Terms suggested by most students
Deliberately avoided or ignored, not allowed to join in, or left out of a group	Excluded
Teased in nasty ways or called hurtful names	Bullying
Telling you he/she won't like you unless you do what he/she said	Blackmailing or threatening
Telling lies about you or someone trying to make other students not like you	Rumours
Making you feel afraid that you will get hurt	Threatened
Telling your secrets to others to deliberately hurt you	Bullying or rumours
Spreading hurtful rumours	Bullying
A group ganging up on you	Bullying
Trying to break up a friendship you had	Stealing friends
Someone deliberately tried to frighten or threaten you by continually staring at you	Threatening

Terminology for technology used by young people to communicate

Because the use of technology to bully is a new phenomenon, terminology commonly used to describe this behaviour was tested with Year 4 to 9 students. While most students agreed with the following terminology to describe various types of communication technology (e.g. email, text message), few suggestions were offered for an overarching term to describe this group of communication technology.

Students were also asked to suggest other methods they used to communicate with each other that were not included in the list in Table 4.14. The Years 4, 6 and 7 students reported they would use a mobile phone, computer, home phone, face-to-face conversation, or visit their friends at their house to keep in contact with them. By Year 8, students were more likely to report they used a computer, mobile phone or home phone to communicate with others.

Many students understood the terms technology and communication but would specifically refer to types of technology, rather than grouping them under a single heading such as 'communication technology'.

Table 4.14: Student terminology suggestions for technology used by young people to communicate

Terminology currently used	Terms suggested by most students
Text messages on the mobile phone	Text messages, SMS, text or message
Pictures sent on the internet or mobile phone, webcam or video clips	Webcam, pics, pictures
Phone calls	Phone calls, calls
Email	Email
Chat rooms	Chat rooms, MSN
Instant messenger (eg MSN)	Instant messenger, MSN
Social networking sites (eg MySpace)	MySpace
Internet games	Internet games or game names such as: • Yr 4 Miniclip; Bejewelled or Club Penguin • Yr 6 Ruinscape and Free Rider • Yr 7 Ruinscape and Dragracer Version 3 • Yr 8 Miniclip, Ruinscape and Gamesloth
Web log/blog	Web log or blog
Web page/website	Webpage, website
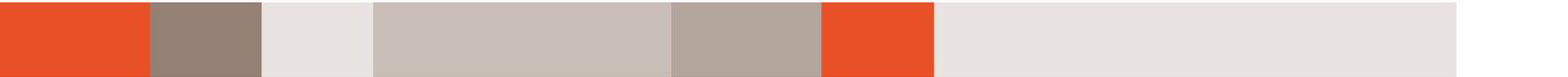
Context-specific terminology for covert bullying

To determine more context-specific language commonly used by young people to describe the covert bullying behaviours used by students their age, the second part of the interview asked students to consider a scenario that described another student their age being covertly bullied. The scenario allowed the students to consider covert bullying in the third person rather than reveal their personal experiences with covert bullying. The scenario is shown below.

> *Chris is in Year 7 and has a close group of friends. However, one morning things seemed to change. Some of his/her friends started treating him/her badly in ways that other people and especially teachers couldn't see during class. This continues every day until later in the week they start treating Chris in the same way also during the recess and lunch break. No-one else seemed to notice and he/she didn't tell anyone. Things went from bad to worse the next week for Chris when he/she went home and found the kids at school had found a way to treat him/her badly at home as well. He/she definitely didn't want to tell his/her parents about what they had done, and especially not about how they were reaching him/her to hurt him/her at home. Even though his/her parents were pretty good and around a lot they had no idea what Chris was going through. Chris felt he/she could put up with how they were treating him/her at school more than he/she could put up with how they were reaching him/her in his/her home as well. He/she finally told one of his/her favourite teachers*

'Chris' was identified as male or female in the story to match the sex of the student being interviewed, that is: if the student was female the story was read as though Chris was female also. After listening to the scenario the students were asked to add detail to the story based on what they had witnessed or understand other students their age have experienced with covert bullying.

Ways in which students may be treating Chris badly

When asked what Chris's friends might be doing to Chris at school to treat him/her badly, most age groups of students reported Chris's friends could be calling him/her names, teasing or saying other mean things to him/her. All year groups of students except Year 7 indicated that Chris could be being physically hurt, with Year 6, 7 and 8 students also suggesting he/she could be being excluded.

Ways in which students may be hurting Chris that teachers do not see during class

'Unseen' behaviours reported by the students from all year levels included: exclusion; calling a student bad names; whispering; physically hurting another student; swearing; teasing; weird or threatening looks; throwing things; talking about a student behind his/her back; hand gestures; spreading rumours; or bullying. Most of the Year 6, 7 and 8 students also reported teachers did not see or want to see students' passing notes to each other in the classroom. When asked to suggest any additional ways some students may hurt others without easily being seen by teachers, students suggested lying to the teacher or 'mouthing' something.

Ways in which students could be hurting Chris at home that his/her parents won't easily see

Students commonly reported that students mostly use technology to hurt others at home because parents can't easily see this form of bullying. Year 4, 6, 7 and 8 students all suggested these students may be sending nasty emails and messages to Chris's phone. By Year 6 and onwards to the Year 7s and 8s, students began mentioning the use of MSN, MySpace and Bebo (social networking sites). Others suggested bullying behaviour that could occur in Chris' home included sending him/her letters; using a chat room to talk about him/her or call him/her names; and making pictures of him/her 'doing weird stuff' and posting it on the internet or mobile phone.

Prevalence and nature of covert bullying

When asked how often this sort of behaviour occurred in their school, the majority of Year 4 and Year 7 students reported it happened 'not often or a bit'. Most Year 6 students believed bullying happened to other students at least once a week in their school with Year 8 students reporting this behaviour occurred as often as every day at their school.

Gender, age and covert bullying behaviours

The Years 4 and 6 students reported that girls were the most likely to bully others in covert ways, with the majority of Years 6, 7 and 8 students believing girls were more likely to be bullied in covert ways than boys. In contrast, Years 7 and 8 students believed both boys and girls would equally engage in this behaviour. Interestingly, Year 4 students reported that boys only were the most likely to experience this covert bullying behaviour.

Students reported that girls are more likely to engage in behaviours such as spreading rumours; talking behind another's back; name calling; passing notes; saying mean things about others; exclusion; gossip; teasing; telling secrets; mean looks; writing letters; and physical actions such as pulling hair, biting, slapping, pushing and preventing access to the toilets, whereas boys were reported as more likely to engage in behaviours that are physical such as punching, kicking, pushing, or hitting; name calling or teasing; threatening; sending notes; saying nasty things; spreading rumours; hand gestures; swearing; gossiping; and staring.

Most Years 4, 6 and 7 students reported that older students were the most likely be involved in bullying others in covert ways, with one Year 7 stating, 'if they were really mean they would have started in Year 3-4'. In Year 8, a high proportion of students equally reported older students and students their age bullied in this way, for example, 'sometimes it's something that develops, but you probably start getting meaner as you get older – about as a teenager' (Year 7 student). Most respondents agreed that this type of bullying occurred to students in the same year level as them. Years 4, 6 and 7 students believed it also happened to students older than them, whereas most Year 8 students believed it happened to students in their year level.

Covert bullying and where it occurs

Years 4, 6, 7 and 8 respondents argued that differences in bullying behaviour occurred at school during class-time and break-times due to the levels of teacher supervision. Students in all year groups responded that the behaviour is more likely to be physical and meaner and nastier during break times. Conversely, in the classroom, respondents indicated the behaviours are 'sneakier and more careful', with note-passing described as the most common form. A small proportion of Years 6 and 7 students also reported that while threats of violence occurred in the classroom, students get more hurt in the school yard.

Types of bullying behaviour that can follow students home

A high proportion of all respondents reported that Chris could also be bullied by students when he was at home, with some students indicating Chris could also be hurt on his way home from school. Many suggested he could be teased and threatened everywhere he went using communication technology. Students indicated Chris would also still be thinking about being bullied even if he/she wasn't being bullied at home.

Ways in which students can hurt other students at home, without actually being there and in ways that their parents won't easily find out

The majority of Year 4, 6, 7 and 8 students said Chris could be hurt using technology, such as through phone calls, email, text messages, MSN and via the internet, e.g. using websites. One Year 6 girl commented, 'send her emails that are kind of threatening, not about her life, I know this sounds weird, but threatening her popularity'. Year 8 students also reported more specific social networking sites such as MySpace, as well as being teased or threatened using letters; chat rooms; blogs; internet games; prank calls and sending pictures that have been modified. A small proportion of Year 6 and Year 8 students suggested Chris could be being hurt at home because he/she couldn't forget the bullying that he/she was experiencing at school. Hence, students' believed the behaviour does not need to be occurring at the time for it to impact on a student's wellbeing.

Respondents suggested parents' lack of knowledge about technology as another reason why they may not know their son/daughter was being hurt at home. This was summarised by one Year 4 student as follows:

'Parents might not be up to scratch with technology'. Similarly, a Year 7 student noted, 'my mum doesn't go on the computer a lot, so Chris' parents (probably) won't go on the computer a lot so they won't find out on the computer'. Privacy associated with mobile phones and email use was also suggested, 'her parents wouldn't really look in her emails or phone' (Year 6 student) and 'Unless her parents keep strict supervision when she's on the computer, I don't reckon they'd know' (Year 7 student). Student embarrassment was suggested as another reason why parents may not be aware this type of behaviour was happening to their children, 'you don't really tell your parents you got a mean message unless it's pretty bad … so she might not have told her parents because she'd be embarrassed' (Year 7 student).

Prevalence of cyber bullying

Few students, particularly primary school students, reported knowing a family member or friend who had been sent nasty messages via technology. The majority of students suggested that being hurt by technology would most likely happen in the teenage years, when they were in high school. Students suggested this occurred because of their increased access to technology; increased responsibility and maturity; an increase in the number of people they don't like; being tougher; knowing more ways to hurt others; learning from older people; and because they could bully younger people more often. '..people 16 and over are faster at text messaging, know more words that would hurt them and they would know things about them' (Year 6 student) and 'When you're a little bit older, you're smarter and you know how to do it more and you know what to do so they don't find out it's you' (Year 6 student).

Most students agreed that bullying begins at school and follows students home, rather than the reverse, or occurs in both locations at once. Some students, mainly Year 4 students, reported bullying just stays at school.

Covert behaviours that would hurt students the most

Most students in all year groups reported being hurt at school in ways adults and others couldn't easily see would hurt more than being hurt via the use of technology in your home, because everyone else can see what is happening; they can be physically hurt; they have no-one to tell what happened; the students hurting Chris are at school with him/her; it would keep happening unless he/she reported it; teachers wouldn't find out unless it was really bad; and there were more friends to bully Chris. One Year 8 student suggested for example, 'if she's on MSN she can easily leave or ignore it, but at school they're always going to be there'.

A smaller proportion of students reported that it would hurt more if the nasty behaviour occurred at home via technology. Students cited a variety of reasons why it would hurt more at home including: home is no longer a safe place for example, 'she doesn't feel safe wherever she goes. When she got home she thought that was a way to escape all of those things but now they're hurting her at home' (Year 6 student); some words can hurt more than actions; students could say anything because there may be no-one around to tell; it is easier to take things the wrong way when you are not face-to-face; it can
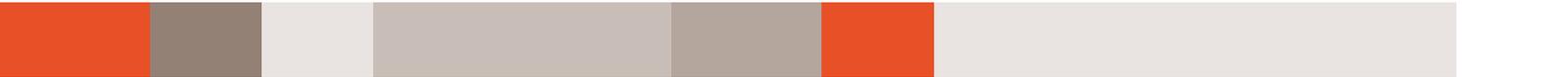
happen for longer periods of the day; and you would feel more scared when you returned to school. One Year 8 student highlighted the effects of the covert nature of cyber bullying '…even though you know you have the support of your family if you go to them, if you're at the computer and someone's sending stuff it's harder because they're not actually standing there saying it'.

Reasons why some students use technology to hurt others

A high proportion of Year 4 students believe that some students used technology to deliberately hurt others because parents and teachers could not see it occurring. Year 6 and 7 students reported the anonymity associated with technology also meant they were less likely to get into trouble, for example, 'they can conceal their identity, so if they wanted to they could do it over and over again with no one finding out'. Year 8 students also reported that the use of technology was an easy and faster way to hurt others.

Students also reported using technology because: they didn't want to hurt others face-to-face; they think it's fun; it was another way to reach a student; they just didn't like someone; and because they were jealous; and they could act mean or tough, for example,'…they act more tough on MSN, but at school they might not necessarily say it like that' (Year 8 student). Similar to a US study of 1500 adolescents [4], some students also thought bullying via technology would be fun.

The majority of students from all year levels agreed it was easier to hurt someone when you don't have to look at them face-to-face, '...When you hurt someone face to face you don't feel good because you can see they don't really like it' (Year 6 student); 'They might be afraid to face them up, it might be easier for them to sign on and email them, than threaten them to their face' (Year 6 student); 'it could be harder for you to say it, whereas using technology you don't have to be there and … just type in a few buttons' (Year 7 student).

Nasty behaviours that hurt the most

Across all year levels, the most hurtful behaviour identified by students was 'name calling'. One Year 4 student stated, 'When you hurt someone, as in punch them, then it would be just a punch or a kick, but when you say something nasty it hurts them not only on the outside, but on the inside too'. A Year 8 student said, 'calling them names, people feel differently about themselves'.

Students also reported exclusion, spreading rumours, teasing and being physically hurt as more hurtful behaviours. When asked why these behaviours hurt more than other ways, students said 'with physical bullying you would actually get physically hurt' and exclusion would result in feelings of loneliness, for example, 'knowing that you're not wanted by a group even if you want to be friends with them' (Year 7 student); and 'verbal bullying would mean others would know your secrets'.

When asked if it would be more difficult to deal with this kind of behaviour if it was perpetrated by someone of the opposite sex, most Year 4, 6 and 7 students agreed it would. Reasons for this included:

boys and girls do different things; 'boys are stronger'; and girls didn't engage in as many physical types of behaviours. In contrast, the majority of Year 8 students believed nasty behaviour by the opposite sex would not be harder to deal with because they didn't care what students of the opposite sex thought; and because boys have to be nice to girls.
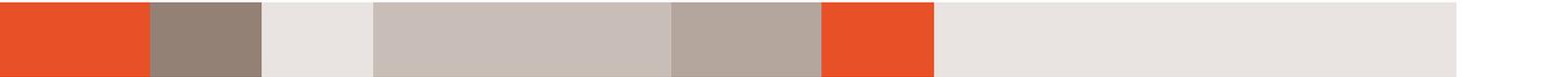
Reasons students don't tell their parents

When asked why students might not tell an adult about being bullied, most Year 6, 7 and 8 students believed it was because they were frightened they would be hurt more. Year 7 and 8 students indicated that Chris would not tell his/her parents because he/she would not want them to contact his/her school, for example, '[It] might be something you don't want to tell your parents because they might go completely psycho and tell the school' (Year 7 student); 'If they found out they would start this ordeal and make it bigger than it is' (Year 6 student). Interestingly, most Year 4 students thought Chris would not tell his/her parents because he/she didn't want to 'dob' his/her friends in and get them into trouble.

Some students from each year level reported they didn't tell because they didn't want to worry their parents, for example, 'I tell them [my parents] when they're ready, not when they're having a bad day'; because they may get into trouble; or because they feel embarrassed, scared or shy. One Year 8 student commented, 'I think you have a certain shyness when it comes to telling your parents about personal things like that. Sometimes it's hard to know if they'll understand your point of view'.

Only one Year 8 student suggested Chris did not tell his parents because he/she didn't want them to stop him from using the internet; 'If someone was bullying him on MSN and he told his parents, they'd ban him from using MSN'. Previous findings indicate almost one half of students who were bullied using technology told nobody, for fear of having their computers or mobile phones taken away from them [4; 5].

Actions parents should take to help their children talk to them about covert bullying

Whereas most Year 4 students were unsure how parents could help their child talk about covert bullying, older students (Years 6, 7 and 8) suggested parents should ask their child about this behaviour every day and help them to 'sort it out'. For example, a Year 8 student said; 'Try not to put the blame back onto the children, try to get the problem sorted out properly, regularly talk to them after school and give them tips on what to say to people in general and about things that happen'. A Year 6 student stated, 'It would be easier if they saw something was wrong… they should probably sit the person down and ask them if something was wrong because it's easier answering than asking the question'. The older students also reported parents could: talk to the child's teacher; tell their child to walk away and ignore it; make sure their child knows they can talk to them; talk to their child privately face-to-face; and speak to the parents of the child who is bullying them.

Reasons students don't tell their teachers

Overall, the students reported Chris may not tell his or her teacher because he/she might get bullied more as a result. One Year 8 student stated 'The kids come back harder if they get in trouble from the teachers'. Many students mentioned Chris may be scared his/her teachers might not care or believe him/her, with one Year 8 student saying 'teachers might say she's fibbing. She doesn't have much confidence'. The students also reported it was likely Chris didn't want to dob in his/her friends or was afraid he/she might get into trouble or what his/her friends might think, 'All his friends would think he's a wuss and not want to be friends with him anymore' (Year 4 student). Some students though he/she may not have reported it because he/she was embarrassed, 'If your teacher talks to the class about it most people will know it was you and that's a bit embarrassing' (Year 7 student); he/she thought it would stop; would prefer to tell his/her family because they are closer; and he/she didn't want his/her teacher to tell everyone.

Actions teachers should take to help students talk to them about covert bullying

Talking to the student being bullied and encouraging discussion between the student being bullied and the student bullying others was one of the key strategies recommended by most students as actions teachers could take to help students deal with the bullying. Other suggested strategies included classroom meetings to discuss problems; having a 'worry box' for students to anonymously place concerns they wanted the class to discuss; separating students at break times; talking to the class about bullying; keeping 'an eye' on the people involved; showing they care and being more friendly; and telling students it is okay to talk to them if something is wrong.

Feelings if you were being bullied

When asked how they would feel if they were Chris, the majority of students indicated they would feel 'sad, bad or very upset'. Other reported feelings included: being lonely; scared; angry; hurt; not enjoying going to school; annoyed; embarrassed; stressed; helpless; threatened; and either not knowing who to talk to or not wanting to talk to anyone. One student said, '[If I was Chris I'd feel] upset and want to be by myself where no one knew where I was. I wouldn't want to go back to school.' (Year 8 student)

Feelings if you were one of the students hurting another student

When asked how they would feel if they were one of the students hurting Chris, the majority of students said they would feel sorry for Chris or feel 'really bad, mean; ashamed, embarrassed or sad'. One Year 4 student stated, 'If I found out I was hurting Chris a lot, I'd feel sorry for him. If I found out I was hurting him a little, I might just do it a bit, like once a week. But if I found out I was hurting him at home, I wouldn't do it because at home you're supposed to enjoy it'. A number of students indicated they would feel scared, guilty or feel some regret, for example, 'Some kids might not really care, but if it was me I might regret it' (Year 6 student).

Students also indicated they may experience some conflict between their actions and their feelings, 'At the time of bullying her I'd probably feel good but bad. You might be looking good in front of everyone but feel bad because you know you're hurting someone. Later on when you see what's happened to Chris and how upset she is you'd feel really bad but you can't go back on what you did because people will think you're softer' (Year 8 student). Some negative responses were also suggested by students including not caring about Chris; feeling powerful and proud of their actions and believing it would be really good or fun, 'because Chris is just taking it in and not just giving up and not telling anyone' (Year 7 student).

Benefits of bullying

The majority of students think students bully others because they think it's fun or they enjoy it; because they feel tough or strong; to make themselves feel good; to feel big/powerful or in control; to feel popular; because they don't like the person; because they have been bullied themselves; to get revenge for something in the past that hurt them badly; they think it's cool; to be mean; because they have problems at home; or to make people scared of them; 'Some of them have been bullied all their life – they know what they're doing' (Year 8 student).

Suggested strategies to prevent or manage bullying

Students were asked what strategies they would include in a program to help stop students hurting each other in these ways. The students' suggestions are listed below.

- Classroom lessons about what bullying is and how to stop it, for example, encouraging students to ignore people hurting them or walk away or saying 'stop bullying me, I don't like it', 'Say what you can do, have lots of scenarios that you can use for examples' (Year 6 student) and 'Have an action plan of what to do' (Year7 student).

- Strategies to encourage bystanders to take action, for example, if you're a bystander to get help and not stand there … if you're a bystander and just stand there you're really contributing to the bullying yourself. You could go and get the nearest teacher…' (Year 7 student).

- Access to a school counsellor, friendly teacher or someone with whom students could talk one-on-one about what happened, 'Have a school counsellor that you could talk to [one-on-one]. A school counsellor would work because they're not a teacher but they have to be friendly. A friendly teacher would probably work as well' (Year 7 student).

- Meetings with students who are bullying others and those who are being bullied.

- Increased teacher supervision and safe places in the school supervised by teachers, 'A place that you can go to, like a classroom or section of the playground, where there's lots of teachers always there where there's no bullies' (Year 8 student).
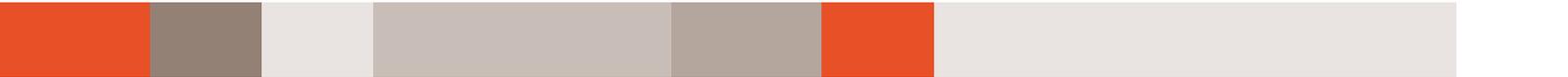
- Questionnaires about bullying.

- Strategies to build student confidence.

- Activities to help students say what they feel.

- Encouraging parents to talk to their children about bullying.

- Stories from the perspective of a person being bullied, 'I'd say how it makes other people feel because they might not understand and that's why they do it' (Year 6 student).

- An anonymous 'worry box'.

- Detention for students bullying others, 'If they bully someone they get detention, be very strict on the bullying thing' (Year 6 student).

- Times where students talk to and work with other students they do not normally interact with, 'Have time where everyone talks to people they don't usually talk to' (Year 7 student).

- Invisible security cameras.

- Posters around the school indicating where students can seek help.

- Separating students who are hurting each other.

- Computer programs to filter swear words from text messages.

- Theatre productions about bullying incidents and how to prevent it.

- Announcements from the school principal.

- Fewer students per school.

- Non-competitive games, 'Other things to do besides talking about negative things, play non-competitive games' (Year 8 student).

4.5 Summary of findings

The qualitative research phase of the ACBPS was used to ensure that fundamental issues about covert bullying from a students' perspective were understood. This research phase provided key information to improve the validity, accuracy and representativeness of the quantitative survey. Data collected through the screening instrument and face-to-face interviews identified the most salient age-specific types of covert bullying experienced by children and adolescents and the contexts that enable or inhibit this behaviour. It also helped to determine the most appropriate and understandable language for the quantitative survey.

Defining covert bullying

- Students reported that the term 'covert' bullying was an adult term not typically used by young people. Students suggested that young people would think about this form of bullying as a series of discreet behaviours rather than classifying them as covert. Moreover, they suggested that covert bullying is any form of bullying behaviour that is 'not seen by adults'. Hence, while covert bullying is defined in the literature as a less direct form of 'hidden' bullying, the students suggested that covert bullying to them was 'any form of bullying that is hidden'. They reported the following examples of covert bullying behaviours are difficult for teachers and other adults to see including: 'anything behind her back'; hand gestures; weird or threatening looks; whispering; excluding; blackmailing; spreading rumours; threatening; and stealing friends. Other behaviours suggested include damaging social relationships, playing practical jokes, breaking secrets, gossiping, criticising clothes and personalities, abusive notes, facial expressions, and turning your back on a person.

- Cyber bullying was defined as cruel covert bullying used primarily by young people to harm others using technology such as: social networking sites, other chat-rooms, mobile phones, websites and web-cameras.

Prevalence of bullying generally

- When asked qualitatively why some students bully, most believed it was because the person bullying didn't like the person they were bullying; found bullying fun; enjoyed bullying others; liked to feel tough and strong, in control and popular.

Prevalence of covert bullying

- The main findings of the (screening) quantitative analyses show that Year 4 and 8 students report the highest prevalence of bullying behaviour and that hurtful teasing is the most prevalent behaviour experienced by students, followed by having hurtful lies told about them.
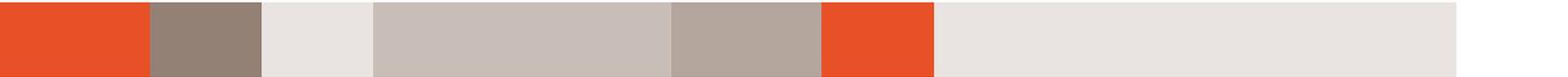
Prevalence of cyber bullying

- Differences were found in each age group regarding the mode of technology most prevalent for cyber bullying in and out of school. More internet-based bullying through social networking sites was reported than through mobile phones, especially as students get older.

- Cyber bullying appears to be related to age, with older students more likely to engage in cyber bullying than younger students.

- Students reported that home cyber bullying is likely to be higher among older students, especially if parents don't have the knowledge and skills to help their child.

Covert bullying and gender of students

- Qualitative data from students suggested girls were more likely than boys to bully in covert ways, with students beginning this behaviour as young as Year 3.

Covert bullying and age of students

- Cyber bullying differences were found in each year group (Year 4 to 9) regarding the mode of technology, with nasty messages more likely to be sent via the internet (most often through social networking sites) than via mobile phones, more especially as students get older.

Covert bullying locations

- Students who provided qualitative data suggested covert bullying is more likely to happen and be nastier during break times and that its prevalence was related to the type of teacher supervision in the school yard. In contrast, students suggested that in the classroom its form is 'sneakier and more careful', with the most common form being note passing.

- Bullying tends to reflect the constraints of the situation, such that covert bullying may be more common in the classroom and overt bullying more common in the school yard.

- The majority of students who provided qualitative data also felt that being hurt at school during break times, in ways teachers cannot see, would be worse than being cyber bullied at home.

- Students who provided qualitative data suggested that places where older students cyber bully or were cyber bullied include social networking sites such as MSN, MySpace and Bebo, whereas younger students referred more to bullying by sending emails and messages to phones.

Effects of covert bullying

- Across most year levels the most hurtful behaviour identified by students qualitatively was name calling (hurtful teasing) followed by exclusion, with the majority of students reporting it would be more hurtful to be bullied by the opposite sex.

- Students reported qualitatively that if they were covertly bullied they would feel lonely, scared, angry, hurt, annoyed, embarrassed, stressed, helpless, and would not enjoy school. Similarly, if they were doing the bullying they would feel 'really bad', mean, ashamed, embarrassed, guilty or sad.

Responding to covert bullying

- Young people reported losing faith in reporting bullying behaviour because some teachers and other adults are not taking action or not recognising covert bullying as bullying when they see it or when it is reported, especially via cyber means.

- Students reported qualitatively they would not tell an adult if they were being or had been cyber bullied for fear of having their computer or mobile phone removed.

Strategies to reduce covert bullying in schools

- Qualitative data from students suggested a variety of actions that they believe teachers could take to reduce covert bullying including helping young people to talk more with their parents and other trusted adults about these issues using strategies such as classroom meetings, an anonymous 'worry box', and separating different age groups of students during break times.

4.6 References

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