Designing an Anti-Cyberbullying Programme in Thailand

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Abstract

A high number of young people in Thailand spend several hours a day online and mainly from their smartphone. Not all of their online experiences are positive and many are victims of cyberbullying. However this and other online safety issues are not discussed in schools or generally in Thai society. There are no national or local programmes that address the issues and it is not on the curriculum in schools. Therefore, to initiate such a programme workshops were carried out to find out what kind of activities would engage Thai students. Altogether 83 students from three schools participated in the four workshops conducted. Each session was evaluated afterwards and suggestions for improvements were implemented in the next one. The most successful activities were the showing of a Thai video on cyberbullying, the listing of their online activities and the Buddhist teaching of sati (mindfulness). However, it was clear that there is a passive acceptance of cyberbullying. It was found most would not talk about it to parents or teachers and only sometimes with friends. Therefore, the workshops were a good introduction to the topic of cyberbullying and demonstrate a need for more of these kinds of online safety awareness raising initiatives.

Keywords

Awareness, Education, Children, Online Safety

1   Introduction

In Thailand, as in other less developed countries there is a lack of online safety awareness research and education. Livingstone, Byrne and Bulger (2015) noted that, "in many countries … and especially in the global south, there is too little research to gain a sufficient understanding of children's practices and contexts of Internet use" (p. 9). Without it we cannot design relevant and effective education materials. Very little research (at the time of writing) has been conducted in Thailand; therefore a survey (Young People Online) was carried out with 206 students from 2 local schools in the North East of the country. This was undertaken in November and December 2016 (Herkanaidu, Furnell & Papadaki, 2017) and showed that Thai students were big consumers of the Internet. This is backed up by the Internet World Stats website (2018)

which states that out of a population of 69 million, 57 million (82%) were connected to the Internet and 46 million (66%) were on Facebook.

The survey showed that Thai students are exposed to a great deal of content and interactions that may potentially be harmful. Figure 1 below shows an infographic created to promote the findings of the survey and gives a breakdown of the most significant ones which includes that 71% of students had been upset by something online, 60% had been cyberbullied and 44% admitted they acted as the bully.
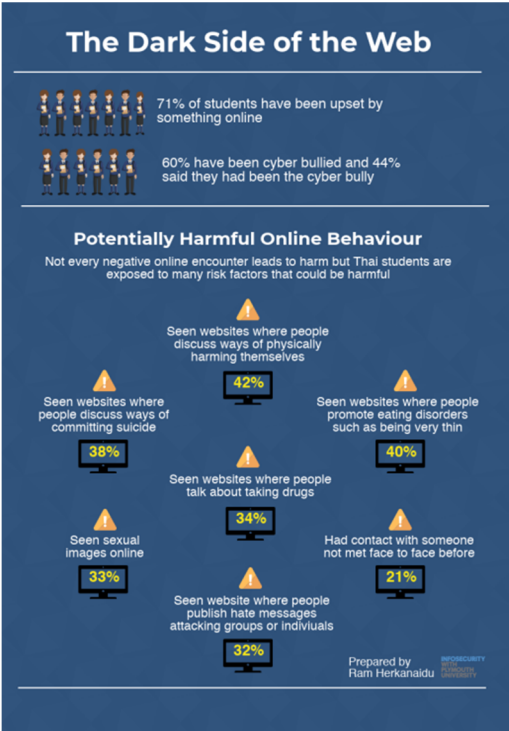
**Figure 1: The Dark Side of the Web in Thailand (Herkanaidu, 2017)**

This result is not unexpected. The Wisdom Society for Public Opinion Research of Thailand in 2009 found that online intimidation was 43% amongst 12 to 24 year olds (Sittichai &Smith 2013, pg. 37). The nobullying.com website describes the prevalence of bullying in Thailand, "as a normal experience children go through at schools to toughen up" (2015).

In the next section, the model that informed the research will be described as well as the pedagogic approach taken when designing the anti-cyberbullying programme. Section 3 details the design of the workshops followed by the results from the Thai classrooms. Section 4 gives an overall assessment and sets out plans for future work.
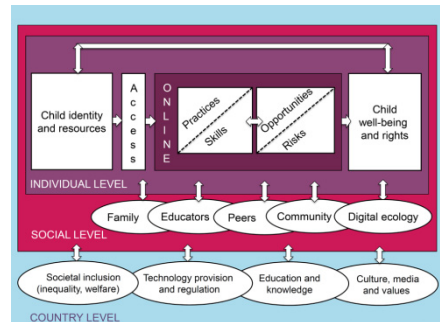
2   Methodology

2.1   Model

The Young People Online model (Figure 2a) developed by the principal researcher is a simplified version of the Global Kids Online model (Figure 2b). The latter project has the benefit of several years' worth of data that has informed their now fairly sophisticated model.
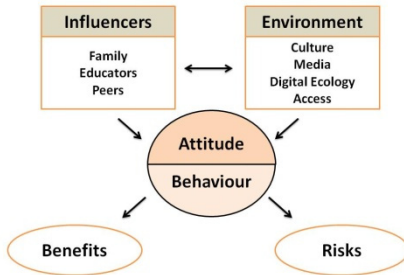
**Figure 2a: Young People Online
Model (Herkanaidu, 2017)**

**Figure 2b: EU Kids Online Model
(Livingstone et al. 2015)**

It is hoped that the young people online project will develop in a similar fashion. In the current model the attitude and behaviour of young people are determined by people who influence them, their family, teachers and other young people. The social and economic fabric of the country plays a part, cultural expectations and the ease of getting online. For instance, the survey found that 94% of girls and 85% of boys owned a smartphone (Herkanaidu, Furnell & Papadaki, 2017). This is in part due to Thailand's digital ecology where there is 70% smartphone penetration and an average user consume around 7GB of data monthly, (Leesa-Nguansuk, 2018). This is possible because mobile data coverage is extensive and inexpensive and cheap smartphones are plentiful even in rural areas where the survey was conducted.

2.2   Action Research

Action Research was thought to be the most appropriate method in determining the educational activities that would resonate with Thai students. Souto-Manning (2012) calls this "a systematic and sustained study of some aspect of teaching and learning". There are five phases and the circular nature of the process (Figure 3) means that it is ongoing and you should "identify additional questions raised by the data and plan for additional improvements, revisions, and next steps" (Ferrance, 2000, p. 13).
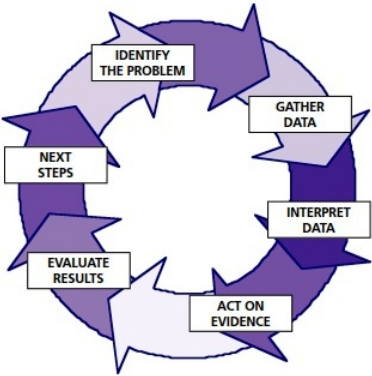
Figure 3: Action Research Cycle (Ferrance, 2000)

The first three phases will be used to outline our proposed anti-cyberbullying programme. The last two; action based on data and reflection will be in the next sections.

2.3 Identification of Problem Area

Online safety is not on the curriculum in Thailand. Schools have ad hoc policies around the use of smartphones and the Internet i.e. some allow students to use smartphones while others strictly prohibit it during lessons. While most schools have computers and are connected to the Internet many do not have skilled and experienced computer teachers that can deliver online safety lessons.

2.4 Collection and Organisation of Data

The Young People Online survey (Herkanaidu, Furnell & Papadaki, 2017) was an in-depth survey that looked at the online behaviour of Thai students; how they accessed the Internet, what apps and services they use, the online risks they were exposed to and the mediation from educators and parents/guardians. This was followed up in December 2017 with 13 interviews (from one of the schools in the survey) to give context to some of the findings. In the survey, "48% of parents/guardians and 64% of teachers had suggested ways to use the Internet safely. At school, over half, 53% said that teachers had made rules about what you can do on the Internet" (Herkanaidu et al. 2017). However, when asked during the interviews the actual advice was very basic. Common replies were' "don't spend too much time," "don't share bad news or bad videos," "don't chat with some boys don't use spend too much time on playing game," and "don't go to bad websites." In particular, the advice from teachers was not part of an instructive lesson they were just given informally in conversation.

2.5 Interpretation of Data

The survey and interviews indicate that young people are high users of online services especially Facebook and Facebook Messenger (Herkanaidu et al. 2017) and they do

so primarily using smartphones. They are also engaging in behaviour that could be potentially harmful. Figure 1 above notes some of these such as; 21% had met with someone that they only previously knew online, 42% had seen websites where people discussed ways of physically harming themselves and 38% had seen websites where people discussed ways of committing suicide.

In the follow-up interviews when asked what they do when they encounter such sites they usually say they just ignore and if on Facebook just scroll past it. As one interviewee (via a translator) puts it, "just ignore and pass." When asked if they talked about it with parents or teachers most said they did not and when asked why not they were reticent in their replies. Talking to one teacher this reticence is because of the students' fear of the reaction of their parents. They do not want to be blamed for seeing or accessing content that has upset them. For example, one student when she was 12 had been sent a naked photo on Facebook by a foreigner. She blocked them but when asked if they told their parents she said she "don't dare to tell to her father."

There is a lack of awareness of the issues facing young people online as well as a lack of communication between them and their parents/guardians and teachers. Any programme will need to take both of these factors into account.

3   Online Safety Workshop

Originally the workshop was titled, 'Anti-cyberbullying Workshop.' However the word bully has no direct translation into Thai and it was thought that it would be best to not jump straight into the subject matter. Therefore it was given a more generic title, 'Online Safety Workshop.'

The first workshop was divided into 5 distinct activities, as outlined below.

Activity 1: Write 5 things you do online. The objective is to get students to think about all the different ways they consume online services.

Activity 2: In groups discuss and write down 5 good things and 5 bad things about being online. They are not told what constitutes a 'good thing' as opposed to a 'bad thing.' They would then present their findings in front of the class.

Activity 3: What is cyberbullying? This question is posed on the board and the class as one group are asked (with help from the teachers) what it is. This is tricky as there is no direct translation of 'bully' into Thai. In Sittichai and Smith (2013) they outline the various phrases with their associated meanings

  "*Nisai mai dee means bad habit, generally bad behavior; klang (klaēng) refers to more verbal behaviors, and tum raai (thamrāi) to more physical behaviors. Two other terms current nowadays are rang kae (rangkaē) which also means physical aggression and raow which means general aggression*" (pp 34-35).

This activity is meant to generate discussion of aspects of bullying and how it relates to online behaviour.

Activity 4: Reporting / Mediation. This is another class discussion on what a person should do if they are being cyberbullied and what advice should parents/guardians and educators advise.

Activity 5: Sati (mindfulness). Thailand is an overwhelmingly Buddhist nation so it was thought that maybe employing some Buddhist teaching within the context of the workshop would be an effective way to communicate with students. This is especially so as fellow author and workshop facilitator Dr Tharabun Khuchinda is an ex Buddhist monk. Grossman and Van Dam (2011) defines Sati as

> "*a practice or process... ranging from mindfulness of bodily sensations to awareness of more expansive mental content and processes, such as emotion and altered view of self. It connotes several features: (1) deliberate, open-hearted awareness of moment-to-moment perceptible experience; (2) a process held and sustained by such qualities as kindness, tolerance, patience and courage (as underpinnings of a stance of nonjudgmentalness and acceptance); (3) a practice of nondiscursive, non-analytic investigation of ongoing experience; (4) an awareness markedly different from everyday modes of attention*" (p 221)

This activity is meant to bring the workshop to a positive conclusion and give students a means to becoming more resilient from upsetting online interactions.

3.1 Workshop 1 & 2

These workshops were delivered to 21 M2 (13 year olds) and 28 M3 (14 year olds) students at the first of the three schools taking part in our study in Roi Et Province North Eastern part of Thailand, May 2018. The lessons were conducted in English by Ram Herkanaidu (non Thai-speaker) and translated by Dr Tharabun Khuchinda (Native Thai speaker). Each 1-hour workshop progressed in a similar fashion.

For the first activity the students were given around five minutes to write down what they did online. They were then asked in turn to name one item on their list. The catch was that they could not repeat what someone else had said already. Their answers were written on the board in Thai and in English. M2 students came up with 19 activities and M3 16 activities. The most popular were; searching for information, using Facebook, Youtube, Messenger, LINE and playing various games.

For activity 2 they were asked to organise themselves into groups of 4 or 5. They were then given 10 minutes to come up with five good and five bad things about being online. Some groups were more active than others and some students allowed others to do all the work. When they presented (In Thai) it was insisted upon that all had to speak at least once.

After the presentations the word 'Cyberbullying' was written on the board. In both workshops no one had heard of the term. They were given a few definitions (as above) and asked for more possible definitions and examples. The most common one was the sending and receiving of bad chat messages. When asked what they do if they received a bad message some said they would send a bad message back, others would block that person. When asked if they would talk to a parent or teacher all said no. They would either talk to a friend or just ignore it.

For the last activity, learning how to practice sati, they were introduced to its principles and its method demonstrated. They were told that they should never reply back or take rash actions when angry. By using sati it could be a way to calm themselves down. The last part was to get them to close their eyes and to practice the sati breathing technique.

3.1.1   Reflection on Workshops 1 & 2

These 2 workshops which were held back to back followed a similar pattern. Most students were engaged though this in part is due to the novelty of the lesson. The facilitators only had assistance from a school teacher at the start of the first workshop. It would have been very helpful if their usual teacher were present for the whole lesson. As there was a native English speaker it would maybe had made sense to do the workshop as an English lesson too.

For activity 1 to make it more interactive rather than shouting out answers students should come up to the board and write the answers. In activity 2 the students self organised themselves into groups. This process took quite a long time while students were negotiating with each other. In the first workshop one girl was left on her own until a group was found for her. From a time management point of view another way should be found to make up groups. Some students did not seem interested and let others do the thinking and writing. The presentations were fairly poor, most elicited only one or two words before passing the paper (with the list of good and bad things about being online) to another group member.

Activities 3 and 4 effectively became one. No one had heard the term cyberbullying and when they were asked for possible definitions and examples they were not forthcoming. It is possible they did not understand what was expected of them. Maybe giving them more information at the start of the activity would have helped. When asked how they cope with aspects of cyberbullying like, for example, if someone wrote something bad about them some said they would retaliate in kind and others said they would just ignore it. They do not speak to parents or teachers and only sometimes their friends. A few boys joked about calling the police.

Introducing them to sati in activity 5 was supposed to give them one way to cope with cyberbullying. M3 took this a little more seriously than the younger M2 students, asking more questions about what it was and how to do it properly. Both sets were fairly noisy throughout though.

3.2 Workshop 3

This was carried out with 16 M3 students at our second school in Roi Et. It was agreed with the director to make it into an English lesson and for the English teacher to assist us. For activity 1 they needed to list their online activities in English. The students then in turn had to write on the board, again in English. This turned out to be quite a fun exercise with the students helping each other with the spelling of the words.

For activity 2 students were already arranged in groups of 4. With the help of the 2 Thai/English speakers they would write in Thai and English and then present their respective lists in English. Activity 3 was now the combined 'what is cyberbullying?' and what to do if you have been cyberbullied. More information and examples were given at the start so they could better understand the concept. Their replies on how they react if cyberbullied was the same as the first 2 workshops. They would either react in kind or try to ignore it and they would not report it to parents or teachers. For activity 4, the practice of sati, again more information was given at the beginning to explain what it was and how it could help.

3.2.1 Reflection on Workshop 3

Turning the workshop into an English lesson was mostly positive. In activity 1 the students were more engaged and seemed to like the challenge of having to write in English. Activity 2 turned out very hard work for Tharabun. The school's English teacher disappeared for some time. The facilitators suspect that it is because her English is not very good. In Thai culture losing face (i.e. losing respect) is to be avoided. Teachers are supposed to have the answers, in this case translating Thai into English for the students. Instead Tharabun had to do this for all the groups and so extra time was allowed for the activity.

Front loading more information at the start of the cyberbullying and sati sections seemed to work better than the first two workshops. For the latter especially the students were very attentive and followed instructions on how to practice sati well.

3.3 Workshop 4

At our third school the workshop was with 18 M3 students. The only innovation from the previous workshops was the introduction of a short Thai video on cyberbulling, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AMvJJgJMOs (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Thai Cyberbullying Video

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AMvJJgJMOs, 2018)

3.3.1 Reflection on Workshop 4

There was excellent cooperation from the young English teacher who as well as good English skills had very good classroom management in maintaining order and motivating the students. In activity 1 everyone wanted to write on the board realising that it is easier to be one of the first rather than one of the last (i.e. because you cannot repeat the same item). Activity 2 was similar to the other workshops in that only one or two individuals in each group were active. Presentations too were not very good; students were nervous giving one-word answers, looking at each other or on the floor. It may be a good idea to include presentation skills training as part of the programme especially as it can be a way to build confidence and self esteem.

During the playing of the video the students were very attentive. It was the best that the facilitators could find on the subject matter in Thai. Most videos have gory endings with self harm and worse. This one too (see Figure 4 above) had a hanging scene but it is over fairly quickly. When the English teacher was asked if it was appropriate for her students she thought it was very good and informative. The students were asked if they thought cyberbullying was a common feature of their lives. Quite a few agreed that it happens a lot. When asked if they reported it, just like in the other workshops, they said they would not tell teachers or parents just friends.

4 Review and Discussion

These workshops demonstrated that there is a need for online safety and cyberbulling awareness in Thailand. Of the 3 schools in this study two did have rules about the use of phones. At one, students had to hand in the phones and collect during lunchtime and after school. The other had a no phone in class rule though some were seen being used. The third school left it to individual teachers. None of the schools had a policy on cyberbullying or a reporting mechanism for students. Actually no teacher or student from the three schools had even heard the term, cyberbullying. In creating a

programme thought will have to be given on how to involve teachers and parents as there is lack of general awareness of online safety issues and how to deal with them.

The action research approach whereby reflecting after each workshop to evaluate its effectiveness proved to be a good way in determining the kind of activities Thai students responded well to. It was found that for activity 1 getting the students to write by themselves on the board was a much more fun way than to just reply verbally. As there was a native English speaker turning the lesson into an English class was mostly positive as well. This is as long as you have the school's own teacher motivated to help deliver the content as was the case in the last workshop.

Activity 2 proved problematic throughout all four workshops. Some students were disengaged and left it to other to write the list of good things and bad things about being online. The presentations too were poor both in Thai and in English. Over the course of the workshops there were 19 groups that completed this activity. Table 1 gives a list of the top answers for both good and bad that had 3 or more mentions.

Good	Mentions	Bad	Mentions
Find information	13	Porn	12
LINE /Messenger chat	9	Being cheated/deceived	8
Online Shopping	9	Addicted to Phone	7
Watch News	6	Hack Facebook Account	4
Online translation	4	Hacking	4
Listen to music	4	Bad to Eyes	3
Facebook	4	Pay Money	3
Learning	3		

Table 1. Activity 2: Roi Et Workshops

The facilitators were very careful not to tell them what constituted a good or bad thing. In this way we get an unbiased insight into what they think of as good or bad. By collecting such information it can inform the content on future workshops. It's interesting to note that in the bad column there was not one mention of online harassment or other activity directly related to cyberbullying.

In the first two workshops the facilitators tried to get students to come up with their own terms of what constitutes cyberbullying. As mentioned above there is no direct translation of this word into Thai. This proved not to be so successful. In the third workshop they were given the different definitions and then asked for examples. However, it was not until the fourth workshop when the Thai cyberbullying video was shown that they truly engaged with this part. In all the workshops when asked how they deal with cyberbullying all said they would not talk to parents or teachers and only sometimes with friends. This aspect will need to be addressed in future workshop. Material should be created for schools including best practice guides on policies and rules. Teacher and parent guides on online safety and cyberbullying awareness would prove useful too.

It should be noted that in Thai society problems and conflicts are often ignored and not discussed. The commonly used phrase, 'mai pen rai' is often said in these

situations. Young (2013) notes that this "can be translated as 'never mind,' 'don't worry about it,' 'forget it,' or 'don't bother. Yet it also implies the assumption that since problems and adversary will eventually become better, worrying about them will achieve nothing" (p 5). In other words, Thai's in general do not discuss problems directly with each other and actively try to avoid any kind of conflict. Any programme will need to treat this issue in an intelligent and culturally sensitive way.

The last activity introduced the Buddhist teaching of sati or mindfulness. In the first two workshops the students were quite noisy and were not that attentive. The latter two workshops were more successful possibly because there was more explanation about it and what it is supposed to achieve. Finding and adding other Thai aspects to complement the existing activities would be beneficial as the students will relate to it more easily.

5 Conclusion and Future Work

These workshops proved to be a useful first step into creating an anti-cyberbullying programme possibly as part of a wider online safety programme. It was found that cyber bullying was very common yet awareness of the issues it raised was very low. Furthermore, as a reflection of Thai society problems are rarely talked about. Students agreed that cyber bullying was a regular occurrence but they would not talk to parents or teachers about it. Any programme will need to address this fundamental issue.

The most successful activities were, the cyberbulling video and discussion and the principles of sati. The least successful was activity 2 where they had to work in groups to come up with 5 good and 5 bad things about the Internet. To develop the programme further we need to explore other kinds of activities such as the use of art, games and role playing. By testing out different approaches and activities we will have a better idea of which ones will be most effective in the Thai setting. In conjunction with creating activities for students, it will be necessary to create material for schools, teachers and parents.

6 Acknowledgements

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