

Definition of Cyberbullying

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In short, cyberbullying is
"willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text"
(Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

The constructs of "malicious intent," "violence," "repetition," and "power differential" appear most salient when constructing a comprehensive definition of traditional bullying, and are similarly appropriate when attempting to define this new permutation. To be sure, cyberbullies are malicious aggressors who seek implicit or explicit pleasure or profit through the mistreatment of another individual. Violence is often associated with aggression, and corresponds to actions intended to inflict injury (of any type).

One instance of mistreatment, while potentially destructive, cannot accurately be equated to bullying, and so cyberbullying must also involve harmful behavior of a repetitive nature. Finally, due to the very nature of the behavior, cyberbullies have some perceived or actual power over their victims. While "power" in traditional bullying might be physical (stature) or social (competency or popularity), online power may simply stem from proficiency. That is, youth who are able to navigate the electronic world and utilize technology in a way that allows them to harass others are in a position of power relative to a victim. There are two major electronic devices that young bullies can employ to harass their victims from afar. First, using a personal computer a bully can send harassing emails or instant messages, post obscene, insulting, and slanderous messages to online bulletin boards, or develop web sites to promote and disseminate defamatory content. Second, harassing text messages can be sent to the victim via cellular phones.

CITATION: Patchin, J. W. and Hinduja, S. (2006). Bullies Move beyond the Schoolyard: A Preliminary Look at Cyberbullying. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 4(2), 148-169. Available here.

Forthcoming
Publications

Dr. Hinduja and Dr. Patchin have recently published in Deviant Behavior and Journal of School Violence. The citations are below:

Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J. (2008). Offline Consequences of Online Victimization: School Violence and Delinquency. Journal of School Violence, 6 (3), 89-112.

Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J. (2008). Cyberbullying: An Exploratory Analysis of Factors Related to Offending and Victimization. Deviant Behavior, 29 (2).

With Amanda Burgess-Proctor of Michigan State University, Dr. Patchin and Dr. Hinduja have written a book chapter entitled Cyberbullying and online harassment: Reconceptualizing the victimization of adolescent girls to be featured in Female Crime Victims: Reality Reconsidered (Venessa Garcia & Janice Clifford, editors). The book will be published by Prentice Hall under its Women in Criminal Justice Series and released in 2008.

Summaries

The following documents outline some of the findings from an empirical study conducted in January 2005 of approximately 1,500 Internet-using adolescents. More comprehensive analyses are forthcoming in several manuscripts that are currently under review with academic journals.

Cyberbullying Victimization Among an Adolescent Population - Executive Summary (.pdf)

Cyberbullying Offending Among an Adolescent Population - Executive Summary (.pdf)

Downloadable Data Images - click on the thumbnail for the full-sized chart

Over 1/3rd (33.4%) of the youth studied had been victimized through cyberbullying.

Among that group, the most frequent types of cyberbullying victimization include being ignored (43.2%) and disrespected (39.8%).

Importantly, almost five percent were scared for their own safety.

The primary locations in (or mediums through) which cyberbullying victimization occurs are chat rooms (55.6%), via instant message (48.9%), and via email (28.0%).

Dysphoric and maladaptive emotional responses are commonplace amongst those victimized.

Over 1/3rd (34%) felt frustrated, 30.6% felt angry, and 21.8% felt sad. These affective outcomes have been tied to various forms of antinormative behavior in other research.

Concerning those who have been cyberbullied, a significantly greater proportion of females felt frustrated or angry as compared to males. This finding is contrary to expectations as we would expect males to experience such emotions more often than females, while females experience sadness much more often than males.

Again with regard to cyberbullying victims, a relatively equal percentage of elementary, middle, and high school students felt frustrated and angry. A notably larger proportion of elementary students felt sad as compared to the other groups.

Over 2/5ths (41.5%) of respondents who were cyberbullied did not tell anyone of their victimization.

However, 38% told an online friend. Perhaps evidencing a distrust or disinclination to tell authority figures is the fact that only 11.3% told their mother or father, and only 3% told a teacher or other adult.

Finally, in less than 1/5th (19.2%) of the instances did the situation get better for the victim when he or she told someone else.

Cyberbullying negatively affects

a sizable proportion of those victimized in multiple contexts - at home (23.5%), at school (18.4%), and with friends (15.8%).

A respectable 16.7% of those youth who participated in the study have bullied others online.

Most instances involved ignoring (39.8%) and disrespecting (15.2%) other individuals.

A nontrivial number have also threatened (4.1%) others and made others scared for their own safety (2.7%).

Offenders of cyberbullying tend to rationalize their behavior in certain ways. Half (50%) justify it as being done in fun, instructive (22.2%), or as an indirect tool used to strengthen victims (13%).

The vast majority (79.8%) of respondents indicated that cyberbullying occurs online, while over 1/3rd (36.3%) state that they have personally witnessed their friends bully others in cyberspace.

Most respondents (59.7%) believe that online bullying is as bad (or worse than) bullying that occurs in real life.

In addition, 39.5% revealed that they have been bullied in real life in the last six months.

Over 1/5th (22.6%) stated that
they have bullied others in the last six months