



BoysTown

Experiences, impacts and coping strategies for cyberbullying

As told by Australian young people

2010 NCAB CONFERENCE

National Centre Against Bullying Conference

Navigating the maze: Cybersafety and wellbeing solutions for schools

Presenter: Megan Price

8-10 April, 2010
Melbourne, Victoria

Agenda

Kids Helpline and cyberbullying

Research objectives and methodology

Detailed Research Findings

Prevalence and forms of cyberbullying

Impacts of cyberbullying

Use and effectiveness of coping strategies

Conclusions and Discussion

2010 NCAE CONFERENCE

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2010 NCAE CONFERENCE

Kids Helpline



Australia's only national 'one-stop shop' for counselling, support, referral and information services for children and youth

- No problem too big or too small.
- Founded in 1991, offering telephone counselling.
- In 1999 commenced email counselling.
- Real-time web chat world-first commenced in 2000.
- New interactive web-site launched in 2009 offering 3 micro-sites targeting 5 to 14 year olds, 15 to 25 year olds and 'grown ups'.

Freecall: 1800 55 1800

www.kidshelp.com.au

Kids Helpline's unique service...



- Experienced *professional* counselling service:
 - Credentials in: Social Work, Psychology, Education, Counselling, etc
 - On-going professional development provided (Cyberbullying, Cultural awareness in counselling, Mental Health, Trauma, etc.)
 - Specialised training in counselling in both telephone and online environments
- Ability to ask for male or female counsellor.
- Ability to re-engage with same counsellor.
- Offer case management for complex recurring presentations.
- Offer 'wrap-around care' working collaboratively with grassroots agencies to provide integrated case management.
- Access to a national referral database containing 8,000 youth agencies.

Our experience with bullying



- Kids Helpline counsellors record data on the range of problems and issues facing children and young people.
- Between 2005-2009, Kid Helpline received a total of 14,471 counselling contacts where the primary purpose of the contact related to bullying/assault*, including cyberbullying:
 - an average of approximately 57 contacts per week
- In July 2008 a separate problem type specific to cyberbullying was added in recognition of the increasing number of contacts relating to this new form of harassment.
- Since July 2008, Kids Helpline counsellors have responded to 277 contacts from young people where cyberbullying was the primary purpose of the contact.
- About a quarter of contacts are made via email / real-time web counselling.

* Excluding sexual assault, relationship violence and child abuse

How we define cyberbullying



- Like traditional bullying, cyberbullying can be defined by 3 core elements:
 1. A deliberate intent to harm
 2. A power imbalance between the victim and aggressor
 3. (Often) repeated behaviour
- It is unique in that it specifically refers to the transmission of hurtful messages and images by SMS, email or internet, used to cause psychological and social harm to others⁸.

What we know about cyberbullying

- Bullying, in general, has been identified as one of the major issues facing children and young people today¹.
- It affects both the victim and the bully⁹.
- As the use of communication technologies increase, particularly among young people, the potential for cyberbullying also increases.
- Whilst the impact of any bullying experience can be severe and long-term some suggest the unique nature of cyberbullying increases its severity¹¹:
 - a wider audience
 - able to penetrate the home...even the bedroom!

What we *don't* know



Whilst research is increasing, overall little is still known about cyberbullying...

- Who is being cyberbullied? ...and by what means?
- What impact is it having?
- How is it related to traditional bullying?
- What are young people doing in response to cyberbullying?
- What's the best way to support young people who have been cyberbullied?

2010 NCAB CONFERENCE

Agenda

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2010 NCAE CONFERENCE

Research objectives

- Primarily to inform Kids Helpline's supported response to young people.
- To achieve this, four key objectives were identified:

Understand the prevalence of different forms of cyberbullying

Identify short-term impacts of cyberbullying

Identify coping strategies used by young people (online and offline)

Understand how effective young people consider different strategies to be

Research methodology



- An online, publicly accessible, anonymous, self-report survey tool.
- 18 questions (16 quantitative and 2 qualitative).
- Measures included:
 - current age + age(s) when bullied
 - bullying medium(s) experienced e.g. mobile phone, email
 - type(s) of bullying e.g. threat, rumour
 - awareness of bully's identity
 - short-term impacts of bullying
 - usage of coping strategies (online and offline)
 - effectiveness of coping strategies (3-point Likert scale)
- Majority of questions were multiple choice.
- Questions were designed in consultation with qualified Kids Helpline Counsellors and Clinical Practitioners, then piloted online.
- Contact details for Kids Helpline were provided in the survey.

Recruitment of participants



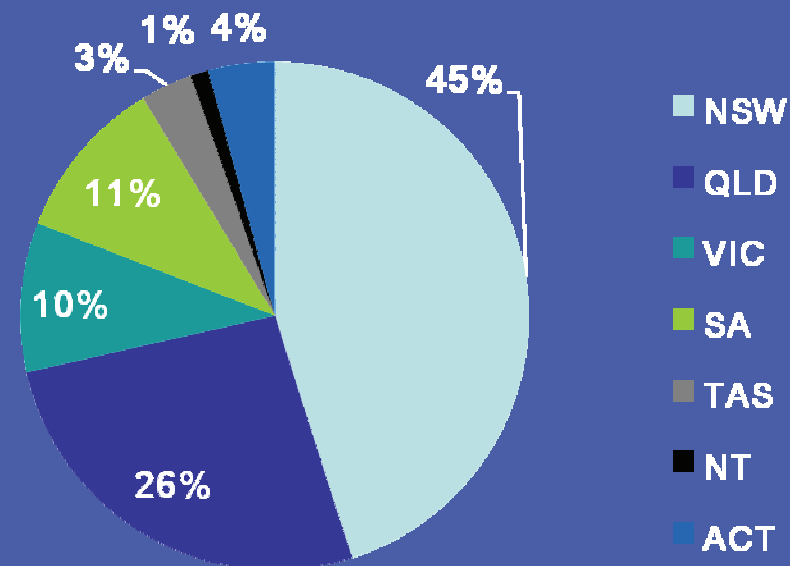
- Recruited from January to August 2009.
- Online and offline recruitment strategies were used:
 - Kids Helpline website and email-counselling auto reply message
 - Promoted on ABC's Behind the News website and TV program
 - Email to YouthGas membership
- Youth were invited to participate if they had experienced cyberbullying and wanted to share their story.
- No parental consent was obtained because the recruitment took place via the Internet and the survey was anonymous.
-nor did we want to deter those most likely to be keeping experiences silent!

Profile of participants

A total of 548 young people from across Australia participated:

- open to all <25 years: no quotas on age, gender or location
- the result was a strong female bias, consistent with general help-seeking trends

	Male	Female
5--9 yrs	2	6
10-14 yrs	70	204
15-18 yrs	29	203
19-25 yrs	0	34
TOTAL	101	447



Agenda

Kids Helpline and cyberbullying

Research objectives and methodology

Detailed Research Findings

*Prevalence and forms of
cyberbullying*

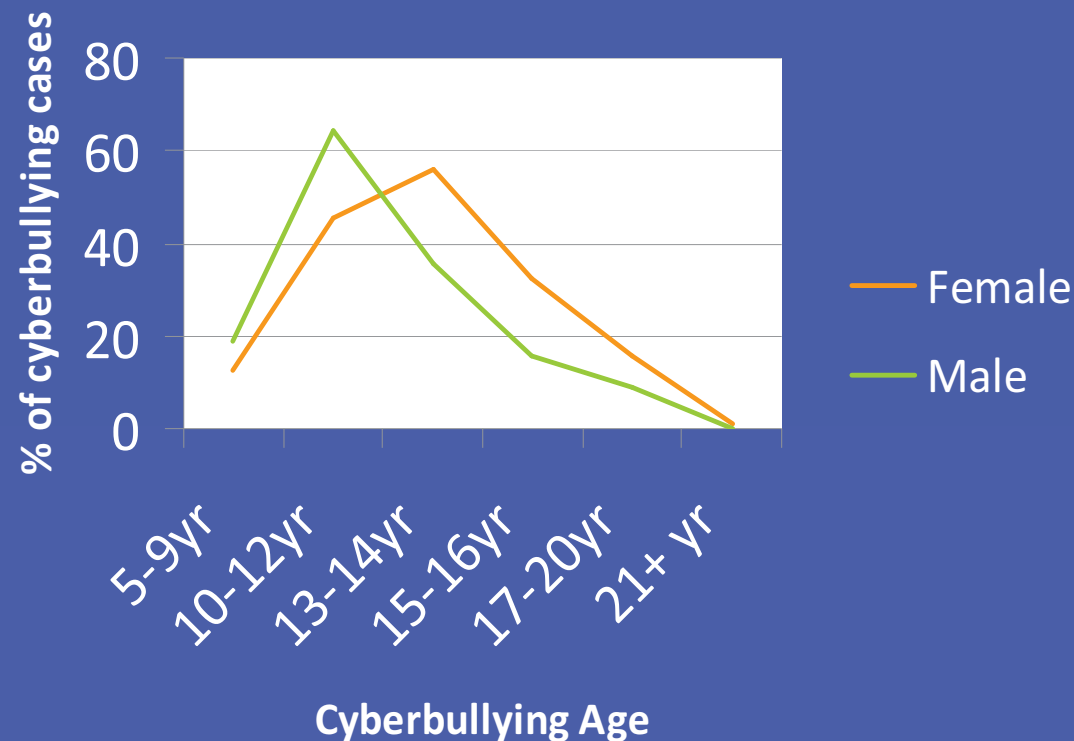
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Use and effectiveness of coping strategies

Conclusions and Discussion

2010 NCAE CONFERENCE

Age of cyberbullying experience(s)

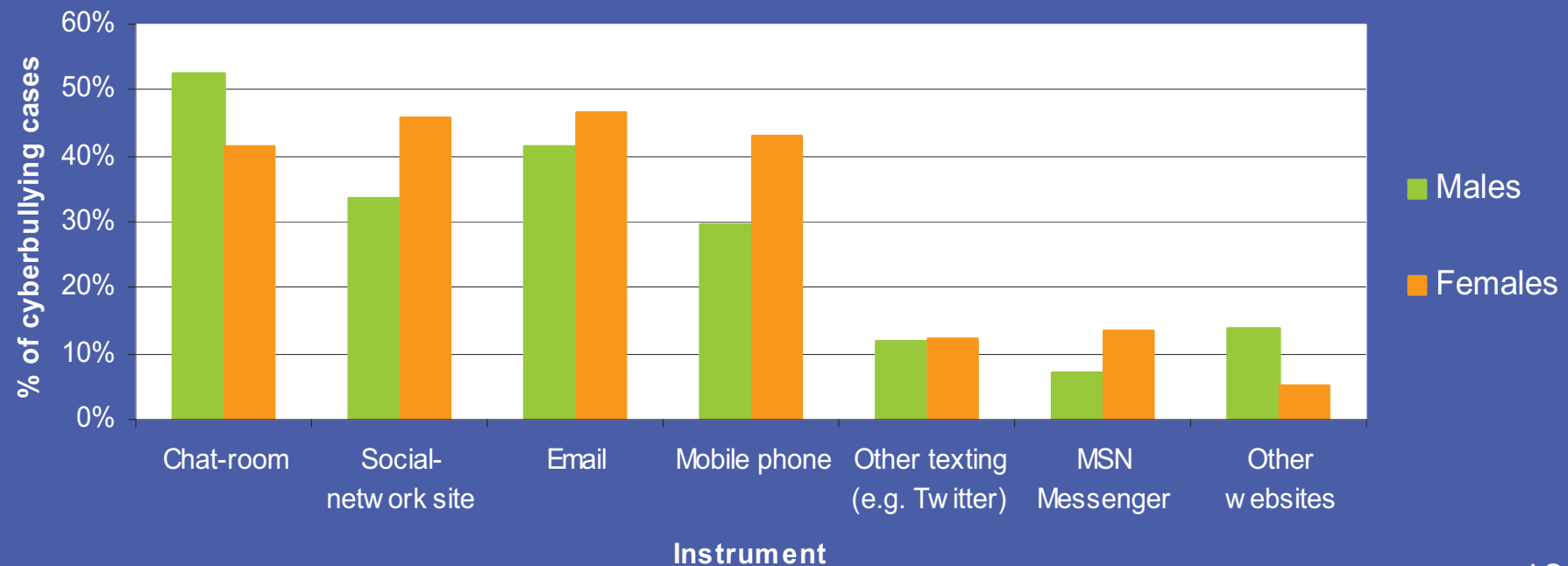


Findings are similar to Kids Helpline data where the majority (51%) of cyberbullying contacts in 2009 were aged 10-14 years. Ages 15-18 were the second most common (44%).

- On average, participants experienced cyberbullying during more than one age group ($M=1.49$).
- Most common ages were the transition ages between primary and high school:
 - 10-12 yrs (49%)
 - 13-14yrs (52%)
- Males more likely to report younger experiences than females.
- Older cohorts also reported most common ages as being between 13-18 years.

Through what mediums is it occurring? Differences by gender

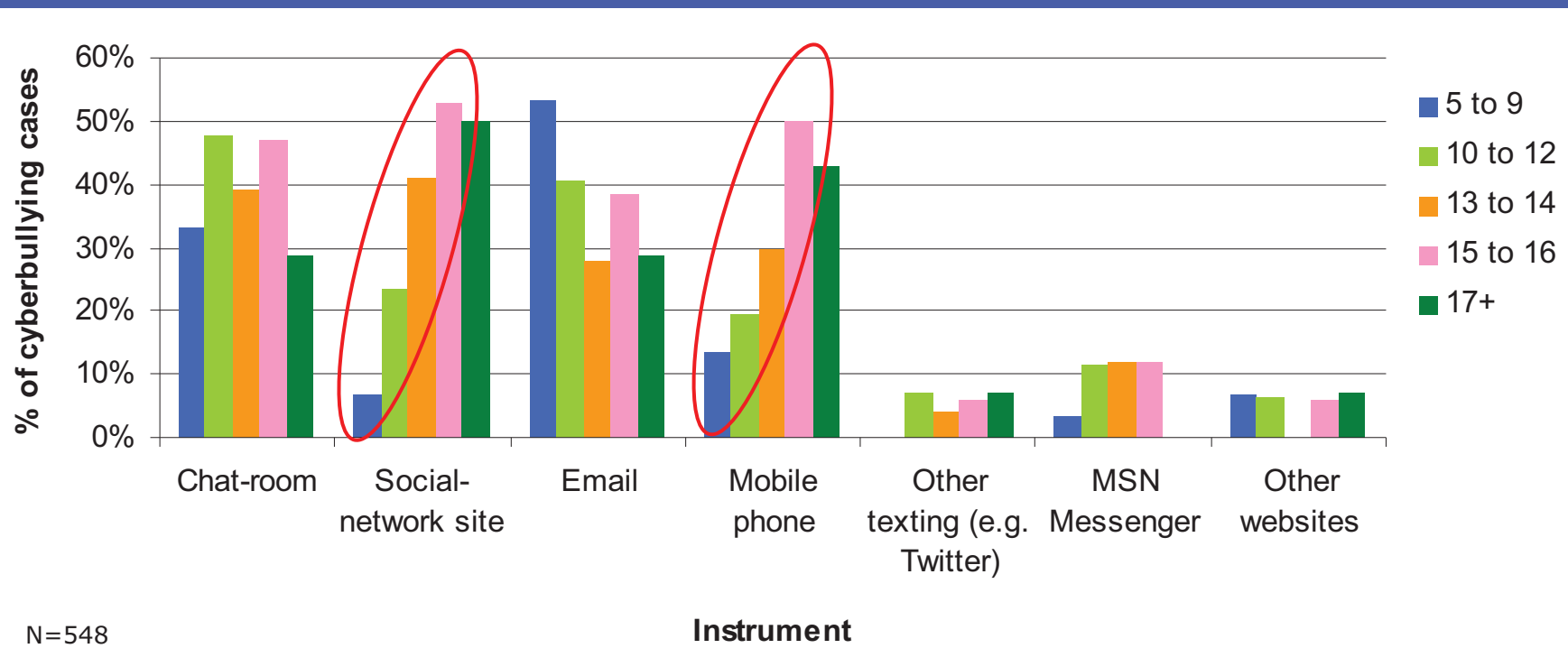
- On average, participants were each bullied by 2.14 different mediums.
- Most common were email, chat-rooms, social-network sites, mobile phones.
- Little difference between genders....although chat-rooms clearly more common for males, whereas females show a more even distribution across mediums.



N=548

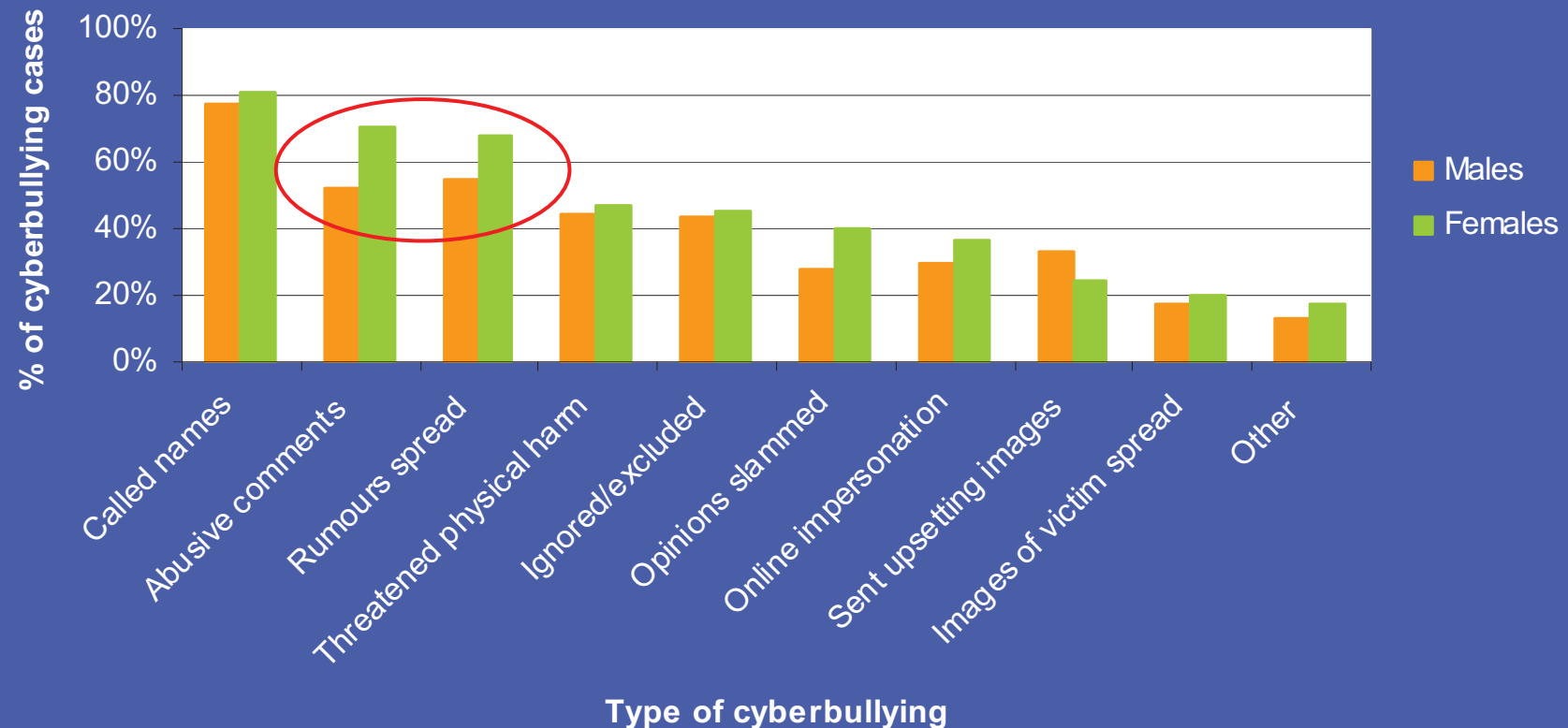
Differences in methods across age group

- For younger cohorts (5-12yrs) chat-room and email methods dominate.
- 13+ yrs: social-networking sites become most common, increasing with age.
- Mobile phones become increasingly more common with age.



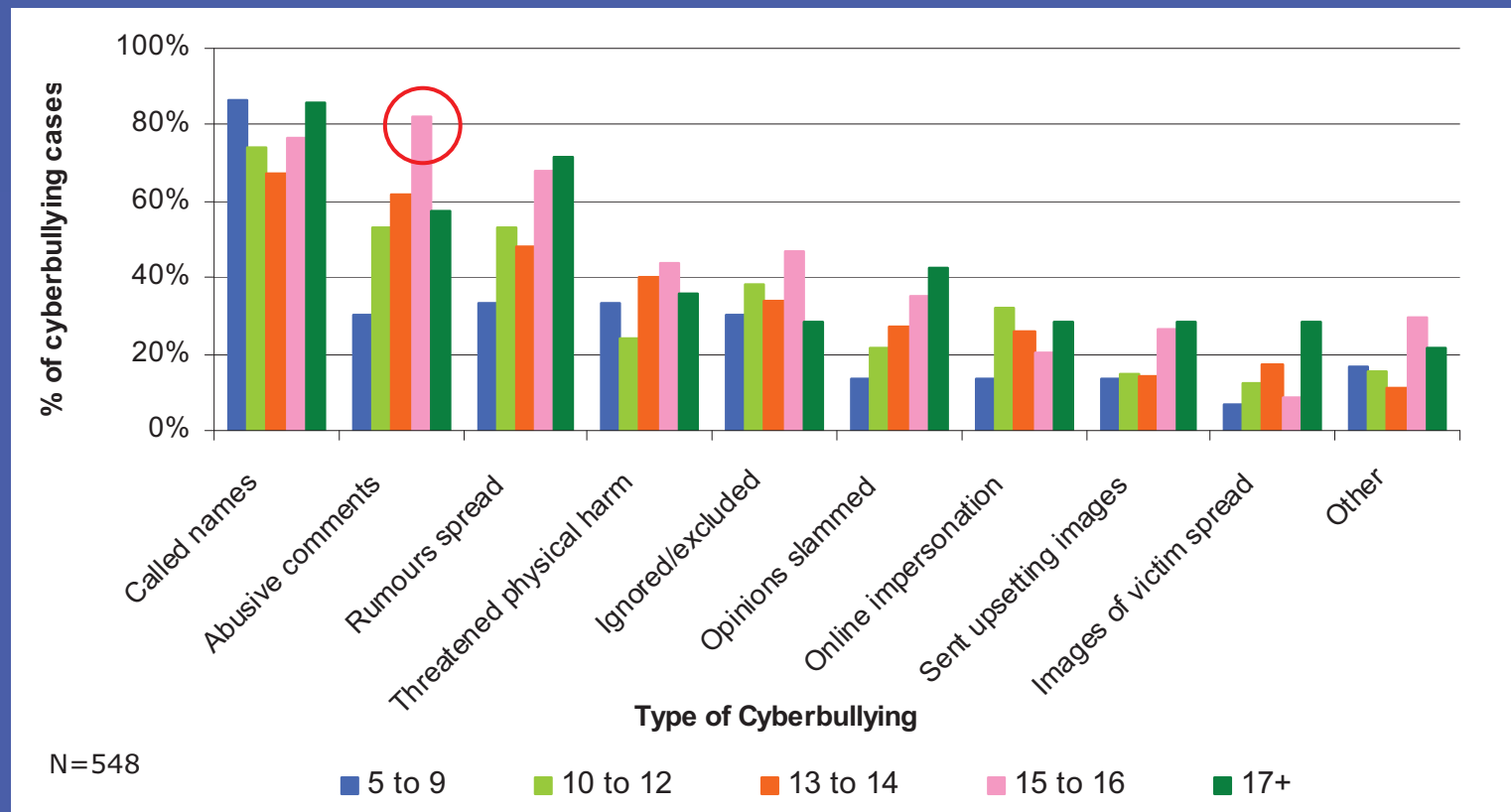
Types of cyberbullying

- Across age and gender the most common types of cyberbullying included name calling, abusive comments and spreading rumours:
- Abusive comments and spreading rumours were significantly more common among females than males, and among 15-16 year olds.



Types of cyberbullying: Differences by age

- Name calling was the most common form of cyberbullying overall.
- Abusive comments were found to be significantly more common among 15-16 year olds compared to other cohorts.



NB: Age analysis was conducted only on participants for whom bullying was reported as occurring at only one age group (N=306)

Victim, bystander or bully?

- Often young people are not exclusively classifiable as 'bully' or 'victim':
 - at various times they may be bullied, be the bully or act as a witness⁹
- 27% of participants reported that they had bullied others in the past, with no significant differences found between genders.
- In most cases traditional face-to-face bullying methods were used more often than cyberbullying methods. A minority (9%) used both methods.
- Although not enough evidence to suggest that bullying behaviour is a consequence of one's own victimisation, we know anger and retaliation are two common responses to being bullied.



Agenda



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Detailed Research Findings



Prevalence and forms of cyberbullying



Impacts of cyberbullying



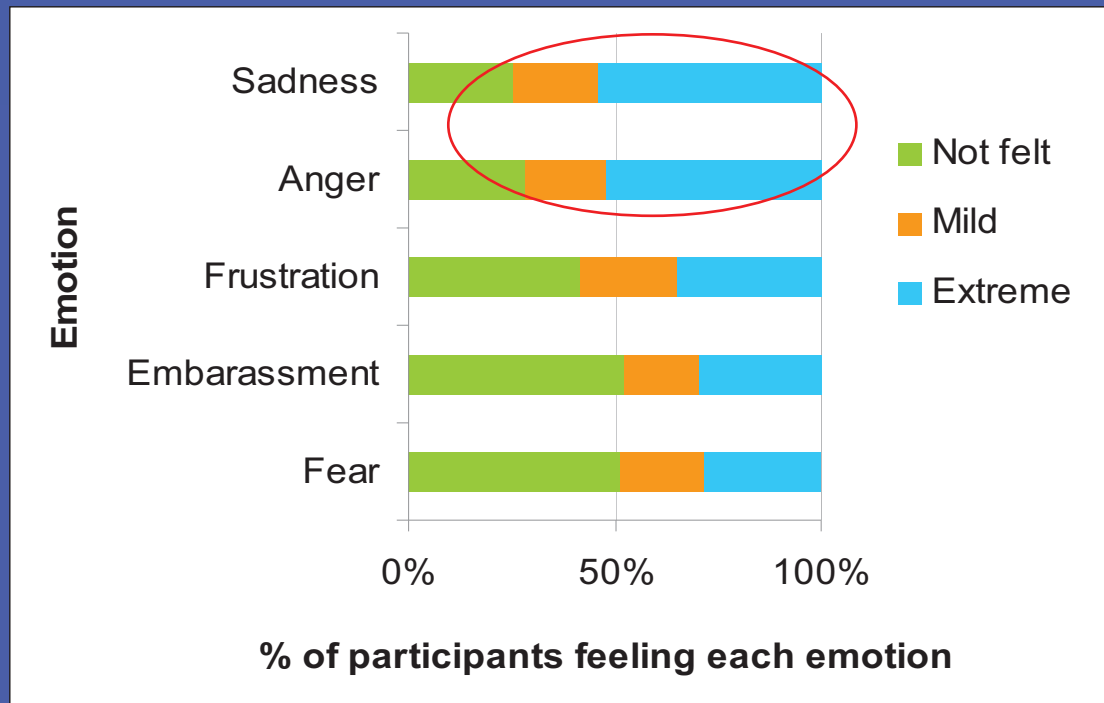
Use and effectiveness of coping strategies



Conclusions and Discussion

Emotional response to cyberbullying

- Young people who are cyberbullied vary in their reactions.
- Sadness and anger were the most common and most extreme responses.
- In addition, 30% reported experiencing other emotions including loneliness, confusion, anxiety, betrayal and guilt.



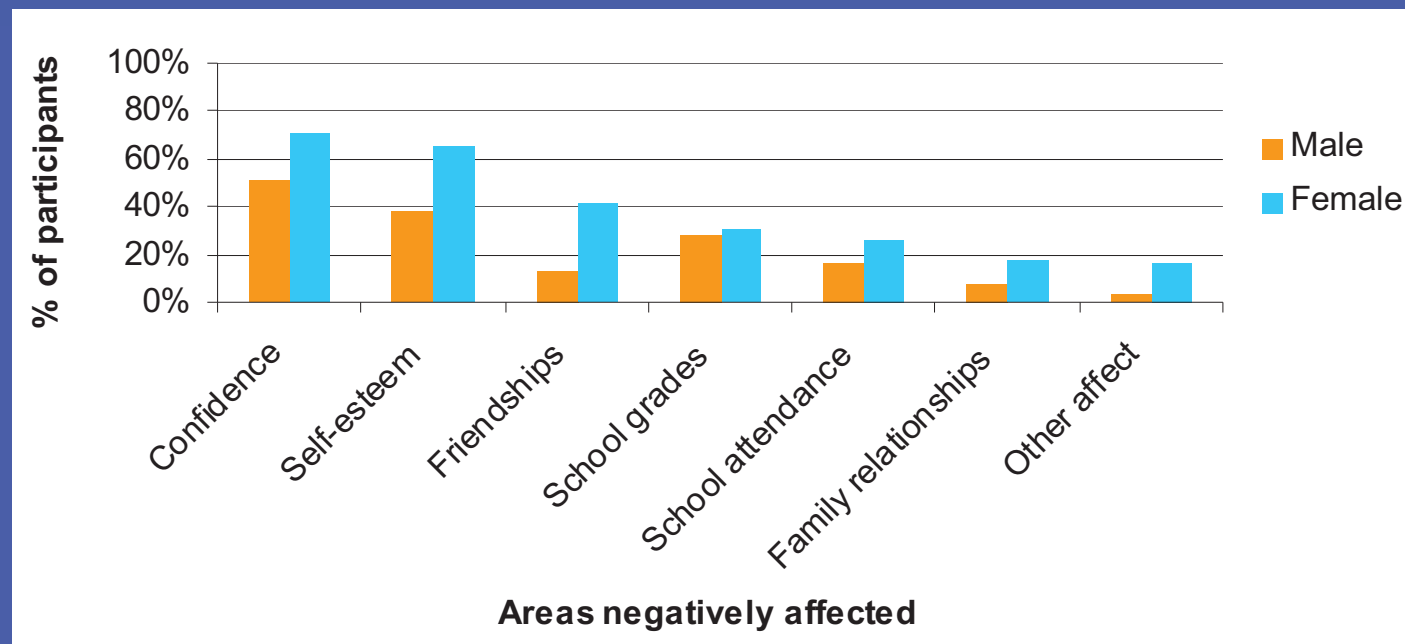
I felt like I was ugly and worthless

It made me feel scared to go back to school

I felt confused, alone, stupid... like I'd done something wrong

Areas impacted by cyberbullying

- Over 85% reported that cyberbullying had had some negative affect on an area(s) of their life.
- Confidence (67%) and self-esteem (60%) were most commonly affected.
- School grades were affected in almost a third of males (28%) and females (30%).



N=548



Agenda



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Detailed Research Findings



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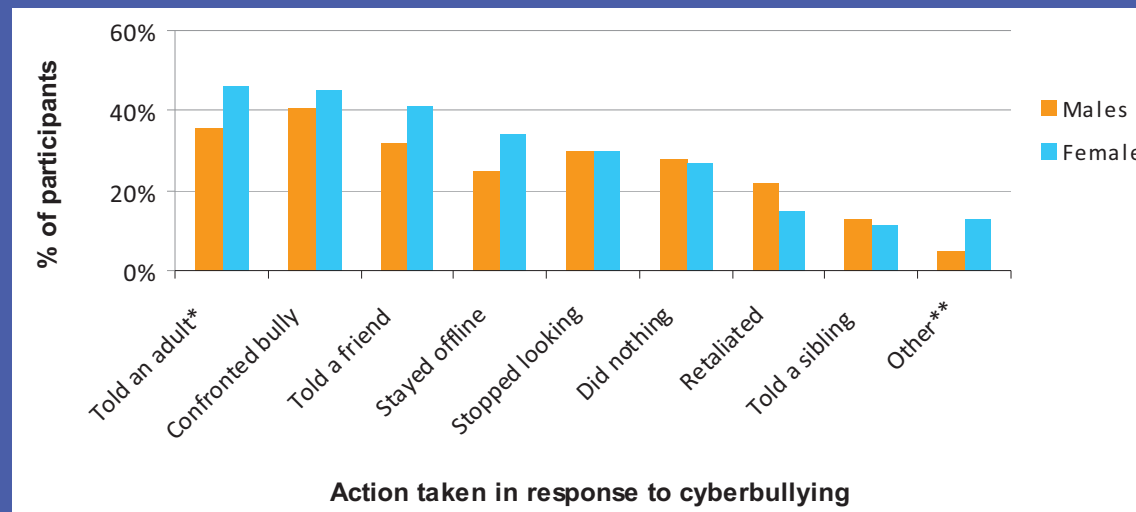
Use and effectiveness of coping strategies



Conclusions and Discussion

Strategies used by young people

- Almost 80% had tried at least one strategy to stop the cyberbullying:
 - many used a number of different strategies ($M=2.8$ per participant).
- Overall, telling an adult and confronting the bully were the two most common offline strategies used.
- Males were much less likely to tell an adult or a friend. Most commonly they would confront the bully.



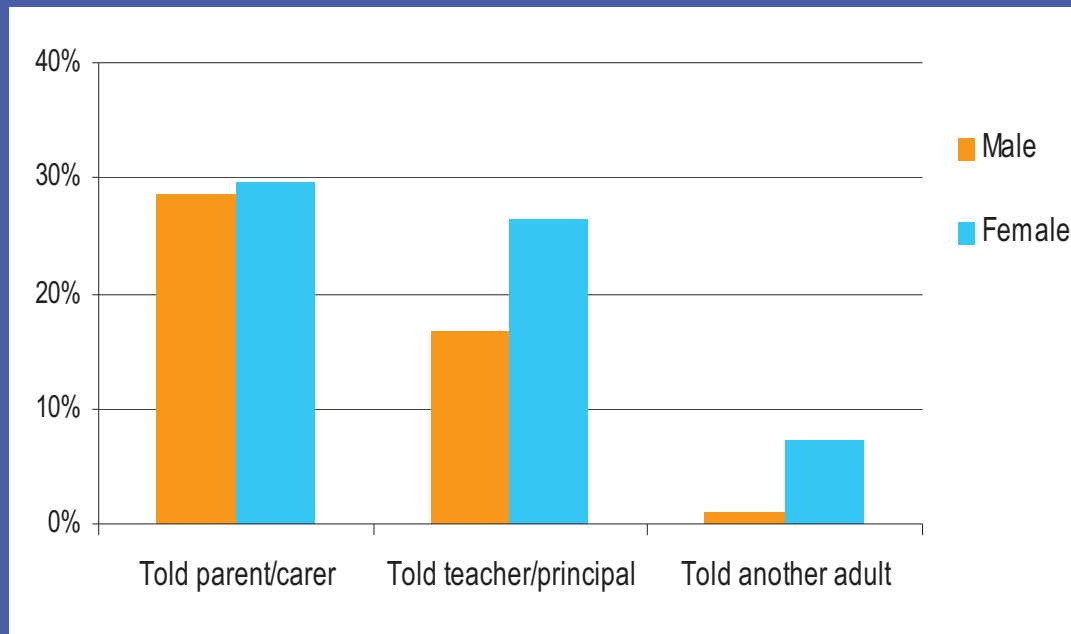
N=548

* A combined total of the various adult types measured.

** Included things such as changing schools, bullying others, telling a partner / extended family

Telling an adult

- Although the most common offline strategy...
- Only used by 44% participants overall:
 - 5-9 year olds were the most likely (60%)
 - males less likely than females to tell a teacher/principal (17% v 26%)



N=548

Barriers to telling:¹¹

- Access to communication devices denied.
- Fear of event being minimised.
- Fear of increased retribution from bully.

Effectiveness of offline strategies used



- Ironically, one of the most commonly used strategies was also least effective.
- Telling an adult and/or a friend however were considered most effective.
- Of some concern is the large proportion of participants reporting retaliation as effective. However, numbers who tried reflect only a small proportion overall.

Strategy	% who tried	% who rated some degree of helpfulness
Told an adult	44.3%	76.0%
Approached bully	44.2%	31.8%
Told a friend	39.4%	68.5%
Stayed offline	32.3%	62.9%
Stopped looking	29.7%	59.3%
Did nothing	27.0%	35.5%
Retaliated	16.1%	51.7%

N=548

Use and effectiveness of online strategies

- Consistent with other research, many young people were found to be familiar with, and often active users of, various online intervention tools¹⁰.
- Blocking the bully was clearly the most common...however, is not always an available option.
- High use and effectiveness of blocking strategies suggest that reinforcement of this response by parents and schools is likely to be fruitful - less disruptive and 'punishing' than having to change own details.

Strategy	% who tried	% who rated some degree of helpfulness
Blocked the bully	71.4%	76.4%
Removed as 'buddy'	45.9%	66.0%
Changed own avatar / mobile number	23.2%	50.5%

N=259

Agenda

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Conclusions and their implications



Victimisation can encompass multiple environments, both online and offline.



Inter-relatedness means school interventions need to focus on improving peer-relations in general, not just cyber-safety.

Young people are not restricted to exclusively being 'bully' or 'victim' – they can be both.



Understanding the dynamics of a young person's peer network is critical to any effective anti-bullying strategy.

The transitional years between primary and secondary school are a common time for cyberbullying.



Parents, community and schools need to recognise this key transition point for young people and provide appropriate support.

Despite reported efficacy, telling an adult is still only used by a minority.



More encouragement and information for young people is needed about who to and how to speak out.

Conclusions and their implications (2)

The impacts of cyberbullying can be disruptive and severe, both in the short and long-term.



Interventions must:

- ensure strength-based support and advice is provided to young people in order to minimise effects.
- include integrated case management – across services and accessible both on- and off-line.

There are still barriers to overcome and room to improve the effectiveness of telling an adult.



Adults need to be informed on how best to respond to cyberbullying complaints and where to seek support. Traps of minimisation or unintentional blame must be avoided.

Online poses a double-edged sword – it can be the medium for harm but also an effective help-seeking tool.



Government funding needs to be directed at providing effective online coping tools and online counselling to ensure young people have a variety of help-seeking options.

BoysTown believes...



- All children and young people deserve the right to grow up in an environment free from bullying, harassment and violence.
- Victims of bullying should never be made to feel that they are to blame – it is **not** their fault.
- School and community environments should encourage and support care, respect, inclusion, diversity, cooperation and non-violent resolution of conflict.
- All children and young people should be encouraged to speak out and be supported to ensure their safety once they have spoken out.
- It is critical that support services respect contemporary communication behaviour and help-seeking preferences of young people. This includes offering not only face to face psychological support, but also telephone and online counselling together with interactive and informative web sites.



Questions?



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