

Longitudinal Predictors of Cyber bullying Perpetration and Victimization in Victorian Secondary School Students

Associate Professor Sheryl Hemphill

Principal Research Fellow

Centre for Adolescent Health, Department of Paediatrics, The University of Melbourne and Royal Children's Hospital

Senior Research Fellow, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute

“Technology and adolescents seem destined for each other; both are young, fast paced, and ever changing” Hertz & David-Ferdon (2008)

Overview of Content

- Cyber bullying – brief intro
- Background to the research
- The International Youth Development Study
- Our findings:
 - Predictors of cyber bullying perpetration relative to traditional bullying
 - Predictors of cyber bullying victimisation relative to traditional bullying
- Opportunities to discuss findings in groups
- Summary
- Resources
- Questions

What is Cyber bullying?

“An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, **using electronic forms of contact**, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.”

(Smith et al., 2008)

Examples of Cyber bullying

- malicious or threatening text or online messaging
- text ‘wars’
- ‘hate’ pages about an individual on the web
- fake or malicious blogs designed to humiliate another
- degrading images (pictures or video clips)
- impersonating the victim and then sending malicious messages → thus putting victim at risk
- pretending to be somebody else and then attacking the victim under the guise of the fake name or username

Unique features of Cyber bullying

- Anonymity
- Crosses boundaries of place and time
- Wide exposure and rapid circulation
- Hidden and covert
- Difficult to intervene

Summary of Published Research

- Research in its infancy
- Relatively few large-scale studies
- Most research → U.S., Canada & U.K.
- No standardized measure of cyber bullying so difficult to compare findings

Prevalence

- Varies widely depending on study and measure used → typically 10 – 30% of young people report being cyber bullied;
- Mixed findings regarding gender differences
- More prevalent in older age groups – peaking around year 9

Characteristics of cyber bullies

- poor caregiver-child relationship
- infrequent parental monitoring
- involved in delinquency
- targets of traditional bullying
- substance use
- frequent internet use

Characteristics of cyber victims

- time spent online
- social problems who were victims in other contexts

Long-term predictors

- Williams & Guerra (2007) - large US longitudinal study
- Predictors of cyber bullying:
 - moral beliefs approving of bullying
 - negative school climate
 - negative peer support

Research Questions

1. What are the rates of cyber bullying relative to traditional bullying? Are there gender differences?
2. What are the predictors of cyber bullying perpetration and victimisation and how do they compare?
3. Are the predictors for cyber bullying similar to those for traditional bullying?

International Youth Development Study

- Recruited students in Years 5, 7 and 9 in 2002
- Followed up students in the years following (2002-2004)
- High retention rates (98% in 2004)
- State representative sample
- All sectors represented (government, Catholic, independent schools)
- Equal numbers of boys and girls

Victorian Youngest Cohort

- 927 students
- 10-11 year olds in 2002
- Followed up in Years 6, 7, 9, 10 & 11
- Asked about cyber bullying from Year 9 (2006)
- Retention rate 89% in Year 11

Student Self-Report Survey

- Risk and protective factors
 - 5 levels (community, school, family, peer, individual)
- Cyber bullying perpetration, past year
- Cyber bullying victimization, past year
- Traditional bullying perpetration, past year
- Traditional bullying victimization, past year

4 categories

Never bullied or victimised

Bullying perpetration only

Bullying victimisation only

Both bullying perpetration and victimisation

Prevalence in past 12 months

	Cyber %	Traditional %
Neither bully or victim	77	58
Bully only	6	9
Victim only	8	21
Bully & victim	11	13

What factors measured in Year 7 predict cyber bullying in Year 9?

School factors

- Academic failure and low school commitment predict
 - Cyber bullying
 - Cyberbullying and victimisation
 - Traditional bullying
 - Traditional bullying and victimisation

- Opportunities for prosocial involvement (protective)
 - Traditional bullying and victimisation
- School suspension predicts cyber bullying

“The vast majority of electronic aggression appears to be experienced and perpetrated away from school grounds” Hertz & David-Ferdon (2008)

Summary of findings

- Few predictors of cyber bullying or victimisation were identified
- Some factors identified for traditional bullying (characteristics of the student, their families and peers).

Implications of findings

- Both forms of bullying (cyber & traditional) are influenced by multiple factors
- Schools are one context in which prevention of (cyber) bullying in young people is possible
- Other factors not measured in this study may relate more strongly to cyber bullying
 - Need to identify what these are
- Results for traditional bullying support a multifaceted approach that includes skills training for young people, and working with families & peers

7 things schools can do

- Review current policies and ensure they include cyber bullying (clearly defined)
- Implement evidence-based prevention programs to teach young people social, interpersonal, problem solving and conflict resolution skills
- Adopt whole-school evidence-based approaches to bullying prevention that apply to all members of the school community
- Provide training for educators and administrators in cyber bullying
- Be mindful of the risks of exacerbation of behaviour problems if young people with antisocial behaviour interact together
- Run information sessions for parents on cyber bullying
- Know how to link families with community agencies for the support they need

“Thus, while blocking software may be one important tool that caregivers and schools choose to use, the panel emphasised the need for comprehensive solutions.”

Hertz & David-Ferdon (2008)

Seeking help from an adult

- Adults do not always take action when they see cyber bullying or it is reported to them so young people lose confidence in reporting it (Cross et al., 2009)
- Seeking help from adults not always effective

- 45% situation stayed the same or got worse
- 28% improved
 - (Cross et al., 2009)
- Risk YP think adults condone it

“Educators, teens, and caregivers are far ahead of researchers in identifying trends in electronic aggression and bringing attention to potential causes and solutions.”
Hertz & David-Ferdon (2008)

“We send our children out into the world every day to explore and learn, and we hope that they will approach a trusted adult if they encounter a challenge; now, we need to apply this message to the virtual world.”

Hertz & David-Ferdon (2008)

Resources available

Cyberbullying

www.netalert.gov.au

www.bullyingnoway.com.au

www.cybersmartkids.com.au

<http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/cyber-bullying.aspx>

<http://www.cyberbullying.info/resources/resources.php>

<http://www.ceosyd.catholic.edu.au/cms/webday/site/curriculumonline/shared/Pastoral%20Care/STRATEGIES%20FOR%20DEALING%20WITH%20CYBERBULLYING%20150808.pdf>

International Youth Development Study

www.rch.org.au/iyds

- Hertz & David-Ferdon (2008) Electronic media and youth violence: A CDC issue brief for educators and caregivers. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control.
- Cross, D., Shaw, T. et al (2009). Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS). Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth.
- McQuade, SC, Colt, JP & Meyer, NBB (2009) Cyber bullying: Protecting kids and adults from online bullies. London: Praeger.
- Shariff, S. (2008). Cyber-bullying: Issues and solutions for the school, the classroom and the home. London: Routledge.
- Kowalski, RM, Limber, SP, & Agatston, PW. (2008). Cyber bullying: Bullying in the digital age. Carlton: Blackwell.

Acknowledgements

- Rachel Smith, Aneta Kotevski, Michelle Tollit, Todd Herrenkohl, John Toumbourou, Richard Catalano
- Australian Research Council (2006-2008; 2008-2010)
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (US)