

Cyberbullying and Its Emotional Consequences

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Some Helpful Definitions

Cyberbullying- the willful and repeated harm inflicted through use of computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices

Self-esteem- "a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the self" (Rosenberg, 1965:15)

Anger/Frustration- How likely respondents are to react to a situation with anger and frustration

Suicidal Ideation- Thoughts about Suicide, thoughts about death and dying, thoughts about suicidal intent

Hypotheses

- Victims of cyberbullying tend to have lower self-esteem than those not involved in cyberbullying.
- Those involved in cyberbullying are more likely to report angry behavior than those not involved in cyberbullying.
- Those involved in cyberbullying are more likely to suffer from suicidal ideations than those who are not involved in cyberbullying.

Methods

Sample

About 2000 randomly selected middle school students from 30 middle schools in the 11th largest school district in the country.

Instrument

The independent variables, traditional bullying and cyberbullying, as well as the dependent variables, self-esteem, anger/frustration, and suicidal ideation were measured using several questions for each variable. The reliability of each of the measures had a Cronbach's α value of .70 or greater.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS (version 15.0). Descriptive statistics were initially computed to better understand the nature of cyberbullying experienced and perpetrated by middle schoolers in this population. Then we computed a series of ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression models to estimate the relationship between cyberbullying victimization and offending and self-esteem while controlling for age, gender, and race.

Findings

Table 1. Ordinary Least Squares Regression: The Effect of Bullying Victimization on Self-Esteem (N=1963)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	b	β	b	β	b	β
Constant	3.58*** (0.19)		3.61*** (0.18)		3.50*** (0.18)	
Male	-0.08** (0.03)	-0.07	-0.08* (0.03)	-0.07	-0.09** (0.03)	-0.08
White	0.09** (0.03)	0.08	0.09** (0.03)	0.08	0.08* (0.03)	0.07
Age	-0.05** (0.01)	-0.10	-0.05** (0.01)	-0.09	-0.04** (0.01)	-0.07
Bullying Victim			-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.19		
Cyberbullying Victim					-0.04*** (0.00)	-0.22
F(df)	10.68 (3)***		20.15 (4)***		23.23 (4)***	
R ² (Adjusted R ²)	0.02 (0.02)		0.06 (0.06)		0.07 (0.07)	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (two-tailed)

Respondent who were involved in cyberbullying tended to have lower self-esteem than those not involved.

Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares Regression: The Effect of Bullying Victimization on Anger/Frustration (N=1963)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	b	β	b	β	b	β
Constant	0.60* (0.22)		0.31 (0.21)		0.31*** (0.22)	
Male	-0.22*** (0.04)	-0.14	-0.24*** (0.04)	-0.15	-0.21*** (0.04)	-0.14
White	0.05 (0.04)	0.03	0.04 (0.04)	0.02	0.05 (0.04)	0.03
Age	0.05** (0.02)	0.07	0.05** (0.02)	0.07	0.04* (0.02)	0.05
Bullying Victim			0.05*** (0.03)	0.35		
Cyberbullying Victim					0.04*** (0.01)	0.14
F(df)	13.59 (3)***		70.36 (4)***		19.51 (4)***	
R ² (Adjusted R ²)	0.023 (0.022)		0.142 (0.140)		0.044 (0.042)	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (two-tailed)

Respondents who were involved in cyberbullying were more likely to experience more anger/frustration than those not involved.

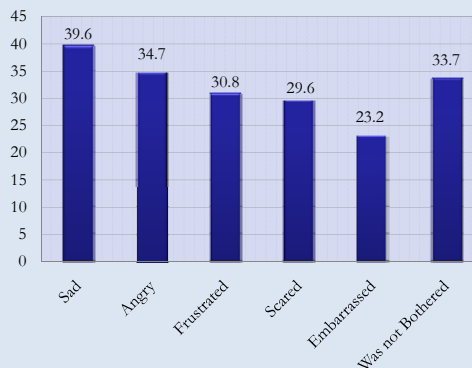
Table 3. Ordinary Least Squares Regression: The Effect of Bullying Victimization on Suicidal Ideation (N=1963)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	b	β	b	β	b	β
Constant	0.41 (0.32)		0.24 (0.31)		0.56 (0.31)	
Male	0.01 (0.05)	0.00	-0.00 (0.05)	0.00	0.02 (0.05)	0.01
White	-0.23*** (0.05)	-0.10	-0.24*** (0.05)	-0.11	-0.22*** (0.05)	-0.10
Age	0.04 (0.03)	0.04	0.04 (0.02)	0.04	0.03 (0.02)	0.02
Bullying Victim			0.05*** (0.00)	0.23		
Cyberbullying Victim					0.00*** (0.01)	0.25
F(df)	7.45 (3)***		30.27 (4)***		33.51 (4)***	
R ² (Adjusted R ²)	0.013 (0.011)		0.067 (0.065)		0.074 (0.071)	

***p<.001 (two-tailed)

Respondents who were involved in cyberbullying were more likely to suffer from suicidal ideations than those not involved.

How Victims of Cyberbullying Felt



Discussion

The results of this study provide strong evidence to support the stated hypotheses; respondents who were involved in cyberbullying were significantly more likely to have low self-esteem, experience anger/frustration, and suffer from suicidal ideations than those not involved in cyberbullying. As the title suggests, the goal of this study is to explore and describe the emotional consequences of cyberbullying. The tables above and the graph to the left clearly show that cyberbullying has a relationship with several negative emotional issues. The cross-sectional nature of this study as well as most studies focused on cyberbullying or traditional bullying make it difficult to determine if cyberbullying is causing, directly or indirectly, the emotional issues discussed in this study or if individuals suffering from these negative emotional issues are more likely to be involved in bullying, either as a bully or a victim. Regardless, the results of this study go a long way to dispel the notion that cyberbullying is an insignificant issue. Considering these results with general strain theory in mind, which says that those who feel strained are more likely to act deviantly, sheds more light on the significance of cyberbullying. The implications of the findings here are vast. One suggestion to those who work as educators is to include information on cyberbullying in curriculum. Suggestions for future research on the topic include using a longitudinal method to explore the nature of the relationships between cyberbullying and negative emotional consequences more fully and exploring cyberbullying's relationship to other behaviors such as school performance.