

CYBERBULLYING *and* CHILDREN | 2024

What is cyberbullying?

While no formalized definition exists, cyberbullying encompasses all online harassment and aggression, particularly interactions that are characterized by intention, repetition, and power imbalance and can include features particular to digital spaces, such as perpetrator anonymity and publicity.

(Barlett, 2019; Nocentini et al., 2010; Olweus, 1993)

How prevalent is it?

Conservative estimates indicate that 10-15% of youth have experienced cyberbullying.

(Alhajji et al., 2019; Levine et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023; Patchin & Hinduja, 2021; Zhu et al., 2021)



Perpetrator anonymity:

when the victim does not know the identity of the bully.

Publicity:

acts where a large audience is involved (e.g. group messages, images/videos posted on social media)

(Barlett, 2019; Nocentini et al., 2010)

Cyberbullying Victimization and Perpetration RISK FACTORS AND IMPACTS

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS FOR CYBERBULLYING VICTIMIZATION

- Young Adolescents (~11-14 years old)
- Sexual minority and transgender youth
- Girls
- Heavy screen users (increased risk with each additional daily hour)

(Abreu & Kenny, 2018; Alhajji et al., 2019; Blinka et al., 2023; Kreski et al., 2022; Nagata et al., 2022; Patchin & Hinduja, 2021; Williams & Guerra, 2007; Wright & Wachs, 2023; Yan et al., 2023)

RISK FACTORS FOR MORE SEVERE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS

- Being targeted because of racial minority status
- Member of sexual minority
- Existing Depression
- Subject to multiple stressful/traumatic life events
- Subject to cyberbullying combined with in-person bullying

(Baiden & Tadeo, 2020; DeSmet et al., 2021; Levine et al., 2022; Meyer, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2023; Peng et al., 2019; Valentine & Shipherd, 2018)



Risk factors for being a cyberbullying perpetrator

- Being victimized by cyberbullying
- Bullying behavior offline
- Higher screen use

(Blinka et al., 2023; Nagata et al., 2022)

Motivations behind youth cyberbullying perpetration

- Revenge
- Anonymity
- Convenience
- Dislike
- Jealousy

(Wright, 2023)

CYBERBULLYING VICTIM/PERPETRATOR CYCLE



CYBERBULLYING AND HEALTH

Experiencing cyberbullying has been associated with increased risk of several negative health outcomes.

- Suicide ideation
- Suicide attempts
- Depression
- Self-harm
- Substance use (including prescription stimulants, prescription painkillers, cigarettes, and alcohol)
- Stress
- Sleep problems
- Eating disorders

(John et al., 2018; Kerr & Kingsbury, 2023; Levine et al., 2022; Morin et al., 2018; Peng et al., 2019; Yoon et al., 2019)



Prevention and Coping With Cyberbullying



PARENTAL STRATEGIES

- Having open, ongoing communication with children and teens may reduce the chances of cybervictimization, and reduce the mental health impacts.
- Supporting young people's autonomy can help decrease the risk of cyberbullying victimization, and mitigate the harmful mental health effects.

(DeSmet et al., 2021; Eroglu et al., 2022; Lee & Hancock, 2023; Wu et al., 2022)



DEVELOPING RESILIENCE

- Youth who develop effective coping strategies aren't as susceptible to the harmful mental health effects of cyberbullying.
- Seeking and receiving help from peers, teachers and caregivers lessens impacts of cyberbullying to adolescents.
- Programs to help build "digital resilience" may help young people deal with cyberbullying.

(Chen et al., 2023; DeSmet et al., 2021; Wright & Wachs, 2018; Wu et al., 2022)



INTERVENTIONS

- Bystander interventions are increasingly popular, with strategies that combine all the below interventions, and incorporate teachers and caregivers, showing the most promise for efficacy.
- Universal interventions—focus on reducing risk/skill promotion for entire school community
- Selective—focus on individuals likely to be involved in bullying
- Indicated—focus on individuals who have been exposed to bullying and/or who may continue to participate in bullying

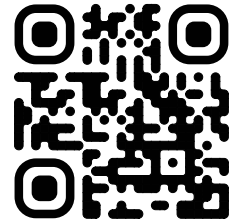
(Bezerra et al., 2023)

“It's a really good idea to emphasize healthy use of screens and strong social skills because these are the kinds of things that we know help avoid cyberbullying... having conversations about screen safety and your kids' relationships with their friends are really really really important.”

Elizabeth Englander, PhD

Executive Director and Founder, Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center,
Professor of Psychology, Bridgewater State University

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Cyberbullying is associated with a higher risk of serious, negative mental and physical health consequences.
- When children experience offline bullying and cyberbullying together, the impacts are much more severe.
- Additional hours of screen time increase the risk of being a victim and a perpetrator of cyberbullying.
- Cyberbullying victimization and perpetration increases significantly after the age of 9 and peaks around age 14. Cyberbullying decreases in later adolescence and early adulthood.

- Sexual minority, transgender, and cisgender girl youth experience higher rates of cybervictimization, but not perpetration.
- Interventions that incorporate teachers and caregivers, and that utilize multiple types of bystander interventions, are the most effective at lessening (or mitigating) impacts from cyberbullying.
- Social support from friends, caregivers, and educators lessens harmful impacts from cyberbullying.

(Abreu & Kenny, 2018; Kreski et al., 2022; Nagata et al., 2022; Patchin & Hinduja, 2021; Williams & Guerra, 2007; Wright & Wachs, 2023)