

Cyberbullying and Adolescent Mental Health



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ABSTRACT

This study is a secondary data analysis exploring the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being, life satisfaction and perceptions of family relationships in an adolescent population. The data set is a secondary longitudinal, nationally representative sample collected through a three-stage stratified design and this sample was composed of 314 out of 475 schools nationwide, with 12,623 students that participated. ANOVA analyses indicated adolescents who had been cyberbullied were more satisfied in their lives than those who were cyberbullied multiple times, had poorer family relationships and lower levels of psychological wellbeing. This created positive predictors for satisfaction in their psychological well-being and family relationships, then those exposed multiple times in the past months developed a negative predictor for low life satisfaction and family relationships. Study contributions were also explored.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of Study

- Cyberbullying can lead to depression, suicidal ideation, anxiety, and low self-esteem through those who have been affected by online bullying.
- Family social support can benefit as a protective factor in stressful situations as a coping mechanism adolescents can positively use.

Purpose of Research

- This study identifies the relationship between cyberbullying and mental health well-being among adolescents and family relationships.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between cyberbullying and adolescent happiness (satisfaction) with their life?
- What is the relationship between happiness (satisfaction) with their family relationships on cyberbullying among adolescents?

Hypotheses

- The current study has hypothesized that adolescents who experience cyberbullying will lead to increases in mental health challenges. The study also hypothesized that adolescents who have involved parents would experience fewer negative psychological consequences when cyberbullied.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Impact of Cyberbullying

- The relationship between internalizing issues and cyberbullying is causing adolescents to harm themselves and develop a deeper internal stressor.
- Suicidal ideation appeared to be higher for cyberbullying victims almost two times more likely than offenders (1.5) to attempt suicide than those who were never bullied.

Cyberbullying and Depression

- Online harassment promoted depressive symptoms by a prevalence rate of 13.4% of adolescents who were harassed online having symptoms of major depression compared to 4.6% who also stated significant depressive symptoms but were not victims of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying and Positive Parenting

- Providing an authoritative parenting style and more family cohesion can be a positive alternative for families to help their children feel protected from cyberbullying
- When parents provide that unconditional love and autonomy support, they are encouraged to allow the child to make the right decisions and set the limits by prohibiting disruptive behaviors.

METHODOLOGY

Research design and Data Collection

- The study is a secondary longitudinal cross-national representative data sample from collected through a three-stage stratified design that used only one-point measurement during the school year of adolescents in grades 5th to 10th grade.
- The HBSC survey sample was recruited through multiple questions about bullying, violence, physical activity, relationships at home with family and friends, substance use, nutrition, and a supportive school environment.

Sample and Sampling Method

- The sampling frame was a nationally representative sample collected through a longitudinal three-stage stratified design.
- The survey also included census divisions, grades as strata, and samples of school districts as primary sampling units (PSU).
- The sample was done between three districts, schools, and classes.

Measures

Adolescent Life Satisfaction and Cyberbullying

- Adolescent life satisfaction and cyberbullying was measured through a self assessment questionnaire of 4 questions of how often they have been bullied.

- The four questions were asked on a nominal scale (1= I have not been bullied in this way in the past couple months, 2= only once or twice, 3= 2 or 3 times a month, 4= about once a week, 5= several times a week)

Satisfaction in Family Relationships

- Satisfaction in family relationships was measured by seven questions on a nominal scale. asked students on how easy it was for participants to talk to the following people about things that really bother them: mother, father, stepfather, stepmother, elder brother, elder sister, and best friend.

- The seven questions were asked through a nominal scale (1= very easy, 2= easy, 3= difficult, 4= very difficult, 5= don't have or see this person)

RESULTS

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Results

Life Satisfaction Scale

- Using Tukey's post hoc test analysis, adolescents who admitted to experiencing cyberbullying on at least one or more occasions were more likely to also experience a **statistically significant** reduction in life satisfaction.
 - Results indicated adolescents who had never been cyberbullied experienced higher mean rates of life satisfaction and positive psychological wellbeing.

Satisfaction in Family Relationships

- Using Tukey's post hoc test analysis, adolescents who experienced the most peer cyberbullying were **statistically significant** (two to three times a week) to show low levels of family relationship satisfaction.
 - Results indicated that poor family relationships and low life satisfaction can be strong predictors of being at a higher risk of experiencing cyberbullying.



Table 1

Sample Characteristics (N=12,623)

Characteristic	f	%
Gender		
Male	6502	51.4
Female	6136	48.6
Age in years	<i>M</i> = 12.95	<i>SD</i> = 1.751
Racial origin		
White	6,061	47.9
Black and/or African American	10,080	79.7
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	11,994	94.9
Asian	11,961	94.6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	12,417	98.2
Race: two or more races	828	6.5
Hispanic	3,407	26.9
Grades		
Age		
10 and younger	1,157	9.2
11	1,828	14.5
12	2,229	17.6
13	2,473	19.6
14	2,143	17.0
15	1,888	14.9
16	772	6.1
17 and older	133	1.0

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics: Study Variables (N = 12,623)

Variables	f	%
Cyberbullied outside of school using computer/email:		
Not bullied in past months	10,776	85.2
Only once or twice	462	3.7
Two to three times a month	177	1.4
About once a week	98	.8
Several times a week	175	1.4
Adolescent Happiness of Life Satisfaction	<i>M</i> =7.49	<i>SD</i> = 2.000
Adolescent Happiness among family relationships	<i>M</i> = 7.87	<i>SD</i> = 2.393

Table 5

Results of One-Way ANOVA for Life Satisfaction Scale

	<u>I have not</u> <u>been bullied in</u> <u>this way in the</u> <u>past couple</u> <u>months</u>		<u>Only Once</u> <u>or twice</u>		<u>2 or 3 times</u> <u>a month</u>		<u>About once</u> <u>a week</u>		<u>Several</u> <u>times a</u> <u>week</u>		ANOVA		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Life Satisfaction	7.52	1.938	7.10	2.021	7.06	2.118	7.05	2.421	6.75	2.751	14.116	4	<.001

Table 6

Results of One-Way ANOVA for Satisfied with Family Relationships Scale

	<u>I have not been bullied in this way in the past couple months</u>		<u>Only Once or twice</u>		<u>2 or 3 times a month</u>		<u>About once a week</u>		<u>Several times a week</u>		ANOVA		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Satisfied with Family Relationships	7.91	2.355	7.21	2.628	7.28	2.425	7.11	2.936	7.13	3.235	18.443	4	<.001

DISCUSSION

Summary of Key Findings

- Adolescent participants who admitted to experiencing cyberbullying on at least one or more occasion were more likely to also experience a statistically significant reduction in life satisfaction.
- Adolescents who had never been cyberbullied experiencing far higher rates of life satisfaction and positive psychological wellbeing.
- Statistical analyses also revealed a statistically significant relationship between cyberbullying and satisfaction levels in their family relationships, with those adolescents who experienced the most peer cyberbullying (two to three times a week) having low levels of family relationship satisfaction and adolescents who had not been bullied in the past few months by their peers being significantly more likely to be satisfied with their family relationships.
- These results indicate that poor family relationships and low life satisfaction may be strong predictors of being at a higher risk of experiencing cyberbullying.

Implications for Research and Practice

- Integrating school-based programs within the schools will provide access for adolescents to learn how to cope and build resiliency to improve their mental health in the schools to normalize discussing their emotions with other paraprofessionals.
- Further research should encourage psychoeducation to parents on the risks factors of online engagement and aid the youth in learning valuable tools to deal with online harassment positively.
- social workers can work closely with the schools to develop strict guidelines for consequences towards violators of cyberbullying to promote preventative programs.

Strengths and Limitations

- Strengths of this study include its large sample size of different ethnicities and exploring different sections of school-level information about health-related topics such as nutrition, food services, physical activity programs, and violence within the school and outside.
- The survey resulted in a reasonable response rate for their longitudinal study, which provided an excellent outcome to compare results.
- Limitations to the research was not having a pre and post questionnaire to compare changes from risk factors after 10th grade
- There could be more to analyze if the research provided more questions on mental health symptoms that affected the participants

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