

**Title:** Cyber-Bullying And Children's Unmonitored Media Violence Exposure

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**Measure:** Cyber-bullying and Online-Aggression-Survey

**Participants:** EU

### **Introduction**

With technological evolution, interpersonal communication is constantly advancing; as a result comes the more frequent unregulated access of children to cyber-space and media violence exposure (DePaolis, & Williford, 2015), whilst risking involvement to cyber-bullying (CB). CB is commonly defined as purposefully causing repetitively harm to others through electronic devices created for interpersonal communication (Rigby, 2002). Its main differentiation from traditional bullying is the perpetrator's ability to anonymously and effortless harass multiple victims at any time and geographic location (Hemphill, Tollit, Kotevski & Heerde, 2015). Research (for example see Mishna, Cook, Gadalla, Daciuk & Solomon, 2010) has indicated CB rates of up to 49.5% for cyber-victimisation and 33.7% for cyber-perpetration. Students consider some of the most common CB ways as posting victims' embarrassing/humiliating videos on video-hosting sites; creating profiles on social media to humiliate victims and posting/forwarding victims' private information/images without permission (NHS, 2015).

According to Rigby and Smith (2011), CB is a worldwide concern and on the rise since 2002. Therefore, researchers (Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla & Daciuk, 2012; Bertolotti & Magnani, 2013) have focused on the risk factors and amongst the factors they found that computer and social media use for many hours every day are risk factors for CB victimisation and perpetration. For example Mark and Ratliffe (2011) reported that out of the 265 young participants, 96% had access to computers and the Internet at home; with 33% accessing cyber-space daily, out of which 54% of were cyber-victimised. Moreover, with

constant technological evolution, a gap emerges between generations leaving parents less experienced and knowledgeable about the Internet, compared to their children. As a result children access cyber-space unregulated and become exposed to media violence; therefore ensuing in continued increase of electronic aggression (David-Ferdon & Hertz, 2007).

Literature (Low & Espelage, 2013) indicated that parental monitoring could affect CB rates. Particularly, Khurana, Bleakley, Jordan and Romer (2015) informed that parental monitoring through communication and efforts to regulate specific forms of Internet use are associated with reduced rates of CB. Nonetheless, parental monitoring does not necessarily prevent cyber-perpetration (Floros, Siomos, Fisoun, Dafouli & Geroukalis, 2013).

### *Aims*

The rising CB rates, the severity of consequences, and the need for parental awareness regarding the effects of children being exposed unmonitored to media violence, lead to this study that aimed to examine for relationships between CB and youths' unmonitored media violence exposure.

## **2. Methodology**

Participants ( $N = 238$ ) were recruited through advertisement in the social media and completed the questionnaire electronically. The project and questionnaire completion complied with the BPS ethical guidelines. Participants were UK based, and a small percentage was EU based; CB was defined according to the Cyber-bullying and Online-Aggression-Survey:

“Cyber-bullying is when someone repeatedly makes fun of another person online or repeatedly picks on another person through email or text message or when someone posts something online about another person that they don't like” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

The scale is 52-item measure with two subscales to measure CB victimization and perpetration. However, for this study we only used the two items that addressed cyber-

victimisation and cyber-perpetration, and asked participants if they were ever cyber-victimised and if they ever cyber-bullied someone else.

### 3. Analysis

Out of the 238 participants 186 were female and 52 male. Participants' age ranged from 16 to 63 ( $M = 23.6$ ,  $SD = 8.9$ ), 99.6% owned a laptop, a desktop computer, a tablet and a cellular phone. Participants' online access varied from 24 to zero hours ( $M = 5.2$ ,  $SD = 4.2$ ); while 21.8% reported media-violence-exposure when accessing the Internet, 8% reported sort-of and 70% no. The 29.8% that were exposed to online violence reported visiting platforms that contained combat-sports, horror-films, violent-movies, violent-games, mortal-combat, and YouTube videos containing violent attacks. Out of the 238 participants, 17.6% engaged for the first time with social media at age 13, 16.4% at age 12, 12.6% at age 11, while 5.9% had online accounts since birth, and lastly 12% engaged in social media after the age of 20 ( $M = 14.3$ ,  $SD = 7.1$ ).

To the question if they ever harmed someone online, 92% reported no, 3.4% sort-of, and 4.2% yes; however, cyber-perpetration through Facebook was higher (9% a few-times, 9.7% once-or-twice); to the question if someone else ever hurt them online, 67.6% reported no, 6.7% sort-of, and 25.6% reported yes; likewise cyber-victimisation through Facebook appeared higher (32.8% once-or-twice 21.8% a-few-times, 11.8% many-times).

In terms of Internet monitoring, 74.8% reported that their parents have not set rules about Internet access duration, 15.1% said sort-of, and only 10.1% reported yes. Likewise, 71.4% reported that their parents did not set rules about restricting particular sites, 8.8% reported sort-of and 19.7% reported yes, out of which 24.4% didn't follow the rules.

The strongest positive correlations were shown between age and onset-of-social-media-use ( $r_s(236) = .56$ ,  $p < .01$ ); parental monitoring regarding how many hours children are allowed online, which sites they can use ( $r_s(236) = .49$ ,  $p < .01$ ); and cyber-perpetration

with online violence exposure ( $r_s(236) = .27, p < .01$ ). On the contrary, the strongest negative association appeared only between cyber-victimisation and cyber-victimisation-through-Facebook ( $r_s(236) = -.42, p < .01$ ). Weaker associations were found between other variables (see Table 1).

*Table 1. Correlations - Spearman's rho correlation coefficient*

	Internet-Access-Hours	Age	Onset-Media-Age	Cyber-perpetration	Cyber-perpetration-Facebook	Cyber-victimisation	Parental-Monitoring-Internet-Use-Hours
Internet-Access-Hours							
Age	.2**						
Onset-Media-Age	-	.56**					
Cyber-perpetration	-	-	-				
Cyber-perpetration-Facebook	-	-.14*	-.16*	-.15*			
Cyber-victimisation	-	.19**	.17**	-	-.14*		
Cyber-victimisation-Facebook	-	-	-.14*	-	.21**	-.42**	
Online-Violence-Exposure	-	-	.18**	.27**	-.13*	-	
Parental-Monitoring-Internet-Site-Access	-	-	-	-	-	-	.49**

#### 4. Discussion

Due to the advancement in technology, adolescents have turned their focus to the Internet as part of their daily communication with their peers. This change has exposed young people to unmonitored access to cyberspace and media violence, which is a risk factor for CB involvement. With this study we aimed to examine relationships between CB and adolescents' unmonitored media violence exposure.

Results indicate that only social-media-use is strongly associated to parental-monitoring, while a weak positive association was also found between cyber-perpetration and online-violence-exposure. In other words, our results fall in line with previous findings (Khurana, et al., 2015) that indicated online-violence-exposure as a risk factor for involvement in CB. The latter finding along with the high rates of unrestricted Internet access

duration (74.8%) and site use (71.4%), are the most important findings. Perhaps, parents have indeed become more lenient and/or ignorant regarding regulation of their children's online behavior, which could be an outcome of the gap between the generations concerning technological knowledge and experience.

Although the current study found relatively low CB rates, nonetheless, we conclude that parents must be aware that when children access the Internet unmonitored they could be potentially exposed to online dangers, such as cyber-aggression, involvement to cyber-victimisation and/or cyber-perpetration.

No material of conflict exists in the current study.

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