Cyber bullying - Myths and Facts: Some findings from research in Newfoundland and Labrador schools.

By

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Overview of my presentation

• Bullying defined
• Myths
• Prevalence
• Differs from traditional types of bullying
• Takes many forms
• Family characteristics of bullies
• School environments that can encourage or discourage bullying
• Methods
• Results
• Facts
• Conclusions
Bullying defined:

• We say a student is being bullied when another student, or several other students:

• say mean and hurtful things or make fun of him or her or call him or her mean and hurtful names,
• completely ignore or exclude him or her from their group of friends or leave him or her out of things on purpose,
• hit, kick, push, shove around, or lock him or her inside a room,
• tell lies or spread false rumours about him or her or send mean notes and try to make other students dislike him or her,
• and other hurtful things like that.
• When we talk about bullying, these things may happen repeatedly, and it is difficult for the student being bullied to defend himself or herself. We also call it bullying when a student is teased repeatedly in a mean and hurtful way.

• But we don’t call it bullying when the teasing is done in a friendly and playful way. Also, it is not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argue or fight.

• Three elements: _Intentionality, repeated_ and there is an _imbalance of power_. Dan Olweus, 2013
Myth 1: Everyone knows what cyber bullying is:

- There is no one set definition. Even among cyber bullying researchers there are disagreements. What goes into a definition can affect the rates that we hear reported in the news.
- Continuum of behaviours which includes: behaviours ranging from annoying or disappointing to severe, persistent, and pervasive attacks on others.
- Bullying behavior is characterized by intention, repetition, harm, and power imbalance.

(Sabella, Patchin, & Hinduja, 2013).
Myth 2: Cyber bullying is occurring at epidemic levels:

- My research shows that this is not the case. Other research also backs up this case. The epidemic is more a product of the media and the fact that the use of technology and bullying is new. Very little research was conducted before 2004. In fact this sense of epidemic may be related to poor research.

- Problems with labeling it as an epidemic:
  - (1). Peers see the behavior as normative behavior and thus not a big deal,
  - (2). Gives youth a bad reputation,
  - (3). May lead to bad policies (zero-tolerance policies, taking cell phones away or access to technology).

- (Sabella, Patchin, & Hinduja, 2013).
Myth 3: Cyber bullying causes suicide:

- Most youth who are cyber bullied do not commit suicide.
- Those who do commit suicide often have other issues such as depression, social withdrawal, disability, social hopelessness, or other psychological issues in their lives which make it difficult to separate out the major cause.
- One study found that bullying increases the risk factors such as depression and anxiety, which can be associated with suicidal ideation and/or behaviours.
- It is difficult, if not impossible, to conclude that there is causation.

(Sabella, Patchin, & Hinduja, 2013).
Myth 4: Cyber bullying occurs more often than traditional bullying:

- Rates of traditional bullying (physical, verbal, and social) are much greater. My research shows this and national research on traditional bullying also agrees with my findings.
- We are now seeing that many of the resources for traditional bullying types being put into cyber bullying at the expense of what is happening in the schools.

(Olweus, 2013; Sabella, Patchin, & Hinduja, 2013).
Myth 5: To stop cyber bullying, we just need to turn off the computer or cell phone:

- Unrealistic and ineffective long-term strategy.
- Technology is an important social and educational tool.
- You are punishing the victim.
- Does not stop the cyber bullying since rumors can be circulated via cell phones, online text message, or forums.
- The harassment can be used as evidence against the bully.

(Sabella, Patchin, & Hinduja, 2013).
Prevalence of cyber bullying

- Between 4.0% and 35.7% of students have admitted to being cyber bullies in national and international studies.
Differs from traditional types of bullying

- Can reach a larger audience.
- The person carrying out the cyber bullying may be less aware or unaware of the consequences of their actions, and as a result there may be few opportunities to display empathy or remorse, making it difficult for intervention.
- It can be stopped by blocking the bullying.
- Does not cause direct physical harm.
Takes many forms

- Sending cruel, vicious, and sometimes threatening messages.
- Creating web sites that have stories, cartoons, pictures, and jokes ridiculing others.
- Posting pictures of classmates online and asking students to rate them, with questions such as "Who is the biggest (add a derogatory term)?"
- Breaking into an e-mail account and sending vicious or embarrassing material to others.
- Engaging someone in instant messaging, tricking that person into revealing sensitive information, and forwarding the personal information to others.
Family characteristics of bullies:

- Having an absent father, low cohesion, little warmth, parents with high power needs that permit or encourage aggression, physical abuse, poor family functioning, negative affect (anxiety, depress or guilt), authoritarian parenting, and harsh physical punishment.
School environments that encourage or discourage bullying:

- Lack of teacher support, schools with unfavorable environments, poor-teacher relations, where rules are perceived as unfair and not uniformly enforced.
- Bullying depends on the extent to which teachers take an active role in promoting student welfare, are interested in helping students, allow the possibility of alternative forms of self-expression, promote cooperation, and create an equitable school environment.
Methods

Data collection phase

October and November of 2008

Sample

- 92 schools
- 5966 students

Questionnaire

- Was a modified version on the Safe School and Social Responsibility for Elementary Students Survey (2006). Institute for Safe Schools of BC at the University College of the Fraser Valley with permission.
Results
Figure 1. Prevalence of cyber bullying over the past 12 months
Figure 2. Prevalence of cyber bullying over the past 12 months by gender

- **Female**: 81.4% (Never), 18.6% (Bully)
- **Male**: 81.7% (Never), 18.3% (Bully)
- **Total**: 81.6% (Never), 18.4% (Bully)
Figure 3. Cyber bullying over the past 12 months by grade level

- Grade 6: 91.6% (Never), 8.4% (Bully)
- Grade 9: 75.8% (Never), 24.2% (Bully)
- Grade 12: 75.1% (Never), 24.9% (Bully)
- Total: 81.2% (Never), 18.8% (Bully)
Figure 4. Prevalence of cyber bullying over the past 12 months by geographic location

- Rural: 79.1%
- Urban: 82.4%
- Total: 81.2%

Legend: Never - Bully
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Verbal Bully</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Never</strong></td>
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<td>64.7</td>
<td>4774</td>
<td>81.2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cyber Bully</strong></td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>1105</td>
<td>18.8</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3272</td>
<td>2607</td>
<td>5879</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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Table 2
Cyber bullying by social bullying

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<tr>
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<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>4780</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Bully</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>1105</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3791</td>
<td>2094</td>
<td>5885</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Physical Bully</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>4780</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Bully</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>1105</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4153</td>
<td>1732</td>
<td>5885</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, I have a lot to be proud of.

A lot of things about me are good.

I am as good as most other people.

Cyber bullies and self-esteem.
Cyber bullies and student anti-social behaviours.

- **Q45. Threatened someone with physical violence.**
  - Never: 10.4%
  - Once or a few times: 31.6%
  - About once a month: 55.8%
  - About once a week: 54.8%
  - Many times a week: 47.2%

- **Q46. Carried a weapon.**
  - Never: 14.6%
  - Once or a few times: 62.0%
  - About once a month: 65.8%
  - About once a week: 55.4%
  - Many times a week: 40.8%

- **Q47. Stolen someone else’s property.**
  - Never: 13.4%
  - Once or a few times: 39.8%
  - About once a month: 56.0%
  - About once a week: 67.8%
  - Many times a week: 70.0%

- **Q48. Damaged school or someone else’s property (including graffiti).**
  - Never: 11.3%
  - Once or a few times: 34.8%
  - About once a month: 59.4%
  - About once a week: 60.9%
  - Many times a week: 69.3%
Cyber bullies and student attitudes to bullying.

- Q57. Bullying is just a normal part of being a kid.
- Q60. In my group of friends, bullying is okay.
- Q62. Many students get bullied because they deserve it.

Strongly agree  |  Agree  |  Undecided  |  Disagree  |  Strongly disagree
---|---|---|---|---
Q57: 38.6 | 28.9 | 18.8 | 15.0 | 7.9
Q60: 39.1 | 36.9 | 28.2 | 18.3 | 9.1
Q62: 39.2 | 30.6 | 21.5 | 18.3 | 9.7
Cyber bullies and family responsiveness.

Q23. I can get extra help from my family if I need it.
- Never: 43.4%
- Hardly ever: 36.8%
- Some of the time: 30.8%
- Most of the time: 20.8%
- Always: 14.2%

Q30. Adults in my family respect me.
- Never: 45.6%
- Hardly ever: 41.3%
- Some of the time: 36.1%
- Most of the time: 24.2%
- Always: 13.7%

Q35. There is an adult in my family that I can go to for support or advice or talk to about my problems and worries.
- Never: 39.4%
- Hardly ever: 34.3%
- Some of the time: 34.6%
- Most of the time: 23.2%
- Always: 13.6%
Cyber bullies and adult responsiveness.

Q40. Adults at my school do a good job of responding to bullying and harassment.

- Never: 42.0
- Hardly ever: 31.8
- Some of the time: 24.3
- Most of the time: 16.2
- Always: 10.3

Q41. Adults at my school do a good job of responding to physical violence (punching, kicking, weapons).

- Never: 42.4
- Hardly ever: 31.5
- Some of the time: 28.5
- Most of the time: 18.7
- Always: 10.9
Q21. The adults at my school treat students fairly.

- Never: 46.6%
- Hardly ever: 40.5%
- Some of the time: 25.2%
- Most of the time: 17.0%
- Always: 7.8%

Q29. Adults in my school respect me.

- Never: 48.8%
- Hardly ever: 39.0%
- Some of the time: 29.3%
- Most of the time: 18.7%
- Always: 10.1%
Q22. I can get extra help from adults at my school if I need it.

- 50.3% Never
- 37.7% Hardly ever
- 25.0% Some of the time
- 20.0% Most of the time
- 12.9% Always
Cyber bullies and student respect for teachers and adults.

Q37. Students treat teachers and adults at school with respect.

- **Never**: 47.1%
- **Hardly ever**: 27.8%
- **Some of the time**: 24.2%
- **Most of the time**: 13.0%
- **Always**: 9.1%
Why should we care?
Physical, Psychological, and Health Issues Associated with Being a Bully

Bullies are more likely than non-involved children:

- to attempt suicide or of attempting self harm/self-mutilation,
- to engage in risk-taking behaviours such as smoking, drinking often, and fighting,
- less likely to wear seat belts and are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours,
- more likely to use cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana,
- bullies who engaged in one type of deviant behaviour were also more likely to engage in other deviant behaviours.
Education outcomes and the Criminal Justice System Associated with Being a Bully

- Bullies are more likely than non-involved children:
  - to be failing students in both middle and high school,
  - longitudinal data following males over a period of eight years discovered that those who continued to be bullies after school completion were at a much greater risk of ending up in prison over an eight year period,
  - are far more likely to end up in the criminal justice system,
  - bullying at school was a strong predictor of self-reported violence, delinquency, and other anti-social outcomes in young adulthood,
  - the probability for criminal offending up to eleven years later was two and a half times greater for bullies.
Preventing Cyberbullying: Top Ten Tips for Educators.

1. Cultivate a positive school climate.
2. Formally assess the extent and scope of the problem.
3. Teach students that all forms of bullying are unacceptable.
4. Specify clear rules regarding the use of the Internet, computers, and other electronic devices.
5. Use peer mentoring.
Preventing Cyberbullying: Top Ten Tips for Educators.

6. Create a comprehensive formal contract specific to cyberbullying in the school's policy manual, or introduce clauses within the formal “honor code” which identify cyberbullying as an example of inappropriate behavior.

7. Implement blocking/filtering software on your computer network to prevent access to certain Web sites and software.

8. Educate your community. Utilize specially-created cyberbullying curricula, or general information sessions such as assemblies and in-class discussions to raise awareness among youth. Invite specialists to come talk to staff and students.
Preventing Cyberbullying: Top Ten Tips for Educators.

9. Designate a "Cyberbullying Expert" at your school who is responsible for educating him/herself about the issues and then passing on important points to other youth-serving adults on campus.

10. Consult with your school attorney BEFORE incidents occur to find out what actions you can or must take in varying situations.
Treatment:

- Secondary prevention programs involve the identification of bullying incidents and interventions designed to prevent bullying from recurring. Secondary prevention is accomplished through monitoring, reporting, and intervening in cases of bullying.

- A third level of prevention, tertiary prevention, includes all medical interventions (family therapy, social skills development, cognitive therapy) to prevent the reoccurrence of bullying instances that failed to stop the initial bullying. This is carried out by a medical evaluation of the bully, mental health treatment, and ongoing monitoring of that individual (Srabstein, Joshi, Due, & Wright 2008).
Conclusions: Cyber bullies

- Have low self-esteem.
- Engage in anti-social behaviours.
- Believe that bullying is normal, is okay, and victims deserves to be bullied.
- Come from families with adults who are seen as unsupportive and less respectful.
Conclusions: Adult interactions and cyber bullying

- Cyber bullies are more likely to think that adults in schools are not doing a good job dealing with bullying and violence.
- Cyber bullies are more likely to not see teachers as respectful.
- Cyber bullies are more likely to not see teachers as helpful.
Sources


- Center for Disease Control. (2011). Bullying among middle school and high school students – Massachusetts. *MMWR, 60*, 465-471.

Sources


Sources


Sources