

Cyberbullying and Emotional Well-Being: An Analysis of Lim & Lee (2021)

Akela Villegas

November 15, 2025

CYSE 201S: Cybersecurity & Social Science

Abstract

The article *Cyberbullying: Its Social and Psychological Harms Among Schoolers* by Lim and Lee (2021) examines how cyberbullying affects students' emotional and social well-being, and whether adult or peer support can reduce the harm caused by these experiences. The authors use national survey data to explore how online harassment influences fear, sadness, depression, and social withdrawal among school-aged victims. Because this topic deals with behavior, relationships, technology, and mental health, it fits directly into the social-science perspective of understanding human behavior within a broader social environment. The findings connect with many concepts that have been discussed in this course, especially those related to human factors, psychology, victim vulnerability, and sociological patterns.

Connection to Social Science Principles

The study clearly reflects the principle of empiricism, which emphasizes that conclusions should be based on evidence rather than assumptions. Lim and Lee (2021) rely on measurable data from the National Crime Victimization Survey-School Crime Supplement rather than speculation about how cyberbullying affects young people. Their approach shows exactly what the course stresses, which is that strong social-science research must be grounded in real data.

The authors also demonstrate objectivity and ethical neutrality. Cyberbullying is emotionally charged, but the article does not shame victims or demonize offenders. Instead, it examines the effects of cyberbullying and the role of support systems in a neutral, scientific manner. This mirrors the idea that researchers should separate their personal feelings from work in order to accurately understand patterns of behavior.

Research Question, Hypotheses, IV & DV

Lim and Lee (2021) center their study around two main questions:

1. How does cyberbullying victimization affect students socially and psychologically?
2. Can emotional support from adults or peers reduce this harm?
 - Hypothesis: The authors anticipate that students who receive more support will experience less harm.
 - Independent Variable (IV): Cyberbullying victimization and the level of adult and peer support
 - Dependent Variable (DV): Self-reports of student experiences.
 - Social harm like trouble interacting with peers and psychological harm like sadness, distress, or fear

Research Methods, Data, & Analysis

The researchers used a quantitative, non-experimental design by analyzing large-scale survey data rather than conducting an experiment. This fits with the course content from Module 6, which explains that many cybersecurity studies rely on correlational and observational data rather than controlled experiments. Lim and Lee (2021) analyze student responses and use statistical models to examine how different support levels relate to harm outcomes.

The data comes from self-reports of student experiences within the NCVS-SCS. Students answered questions about:

- Whether they had been cyberbullied
- How the experience affected them
- Whether they felt supported by adults or friends

The authors found that emotional support from both adults and peers significantly reduces harmful outcomes. Victims with strong support networks showed less sadness and social withdrawal than those who lacked support. This not only demonstrates the power of human relationships but also reinforces course discussions about how social systems can minimize risk.

Relation to Course Concepts

The findings relate to several ideas from our course materials:

- Human Factors and Psychology
 - Certain psychological traits like emotional instability, low self-control, or risk-taking can increase one's chance of being victimized online. Lim and Lee's findings show that emotional vulnerability and lack of support make cyberbullying more damaging.
- Social Influence and Peer Behavior
 - Peer groups play a huge role in online environments. Module 7 highlights how peers set norms, reward certain behaviors, and sometimes contribute to victimization. The researchers confirm this by showing how peer support directly lowers psychological harm, meaning peers can also play a protective role when they respond with empathy instead of aggression.
- Social Paradigms
 - Cyberbullying can be analyzed through conflict theory (power imbalance between students), symbolic interactionism (meaning behind online messages and emojis), and structural functionalism (how schools respond with policies). Lim and Lee's study reinforces how social structures and group dynamics influence victimization outcomes.

Marginalized Groups: Challenges, Concerns, & Contributions

Although the article focuses broadly on youth, the findings connect to broader discussions about marginalized groups. Students who lack a strong support network, who feel isolated, or who belong to groups that experience discrimination are often more vulnerable. This relates to Module 8 content on social inequality and how factors such as family structure, wealth, or school environment influence cybersecurity experiences and risks.

Contribution to Society

This article offers several important contributions:

1. It shows that support systems, something schools can influence, significantly reduce the negative effects of victimization.
2. It uses real, large-scale data to clarify how cyberbullying affects youth emotionally and socially.
3. It aligns with psychological research showing that emotional connectedness and human factors play a major role in cybersecurity outcomes

The study emphasizes the idea that improving digital safety is not just about monitoring devices; it is about building strong, supportive relationships and addressing emotional needs.

Conclusion

Lim and Lee (2021) offer a clear, research-based understanding of how cyberbullying impacts students and how support from peers and adults can significantly reduce emotional and social harm. The article connects to major social-science principles such as empiricism and ethical neutrality and ties directly to lessons about human factors, psychological vulnerability,

and sociological patterns. This review demonstrated that cybersecurity issues are deeply human, and understanding them requires paying attention to people, their relationships, emotions, behaviors, and social environments as much as the technology they use.

References

Lim, H., & Lee, H. (2021). Cyberbullying: Its Social and Psychological Harms Among Schoolers, International Journal of Cybersecurity Intelligence & Cybercrime, 4(1), 25-45.
<https://www.doi.org/10.52306/04010321KNSZ7360>