

Consequences of cyberbullying

Keyon Gordon

Old Dominion University

CYSE 201S: Cybersecurity and the Social Sciences

Diwakar Yalpi

11/14/25

Introduction

With the rise of technology, new environments were created where young kids can interact with each other. New platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, and online gaming are hubs where kids can interact with each other, but unfortunately, cyberbullying has also come along. The article “*Prevalence and Trends of Depression among Cyberbullied Adolescents—Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2011–2019*” by Nicholson, Marcum, and Higgins (2023) researches how cyberbullying relates to teen depression over time across demographics. This review will go over the study using social science principles and theories, and the overall contribution of the study.

Connection to social science principles

The core principles of social science used in this article are psychology and criminology. Social science focuses on the study of social structure and interaction. Cyberbullying is a technological way of communication with peers, involving power dynamics and social norms. As explained in this study, depression is not just a psychological issue, but a reflection of social structure, digital culture, and having a sense of belonging. The authors used general strain theory, which theorizes that individuals facing stress may experience negative emotions such as depression. This article demonstrates how social environments, specifically online spaces, can generate negative emotions in teens.

Research Questions, Hypotheses, Independent and Dependent Variables

Nicholson, Marcum, and Higgins (2023) have two research questions

1. To what extent does depression prevalence differ by being cyberbullied, cyberbullied biological sex, and cyberbullied race/ethnicity?
2. Among cyberbullied individuals, to what extent did depression trends vary by biological sex (male/ female) and race/ethnicity (non-Hispanic black, non-Hispanic white, or Hispanic)?

The independent variable in this study is the Cyberbullying victims, their sex, and ethnicity.

The dependent variable is depression

Although a hypothesis is never stated, it is implied that they believe that teens who are cyberbullied experience higher levels of depression compared to non-victims

Research methods

The authors used quantitative data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2017) National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS provides data on adolescent health behaviors across 50 states. The method relied on self-reported surveys from teens in school.

Data analysis

The data being used consists of thousands of surveys collected in 2011-2019 by students in grades 9-12. The main variables included in the survey were sex, race/ethnicity, depression levels, and cyberbullying status. The main analysis included discovering patterns of cyberbullying victims by sex and ethnicity, and the comparisons between victims and non-victims. Nicholson, Marcum, and Higgins (2023) found that cyberbullied teens reported higher rates of depression compared to non-victims. They also noticed that depression rates were

steadily rising among cyberbullying victims throughout 2011 – 2019. These findings support the idea that cyberbullying is a growing mental health concern, especially among teens.

Connection to course concepts.

A connection to the course concepts found in this article is sampling. It is impossible to do a study on an entire population or group of people. So, selecting a sample population of interest as a representative can help create data that generalizes the population. In this study, the group of interest was adolescents who experienced depression because of cyberbullying. Every teen in the world couldn't be surveyed, so instead the authors chose a sample of teens and built data from the selected teens.

Marginalized groups

The great thing about this study is the attention that marginalized groups get throughout the analysis. It highlights the different experiences that each group has regarding cyberbullying. Females reported much higher depression rates because of gender norms and societal pressure. Whereas African American teens showed rising depression trends, highlighting the radicalization of social media over the years. These show that not everyone experiences cyberbullying the same way. Its effects show through inequality and the culture that surrounds that environment.

Conclusion

Nicholson, Marcum, and Higgins (2023) have a great study to highlight the mental health consequences of cyberbullying among U.S. teens. This study uses social science principles and survey data to shed light on the rising trend of depression among teens who have been cyberbullied. By studying the differences across sex and ethnicity, it highlights inequality in cyberbullied victims. Nicholson, Marcum, and Higgins (2023) contribute greatly to highlighting the rise of depression among teens because of cyberbullying, which is great for understanding how to combat this and create a safer environment for youths in online social spaces.

Reference

Nicholson, J., Marcum, C., & Higgins, G. E. (2023). Prevalence and Trends of Depression among Cyberbullied Adolescents - Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2011 – 2019. *International Journal of Cybersecurity Intelligence and Cybercrime*, 6(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.52306/2578-3289.1156>