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A comparison of bullying online and offline: Findings from a national survey

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* Thank you for your interest in this presentation. Please note that analyses included herein are preliminary. More recent, finalized analyses may be available by contacting ISK for further information.



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Background: Bullying

- An estimated 41% of 6th – 10th graders are bullied
- 17% are bullied "sometimes" or more frequently
- Health problems, emotional adjustment problems, school adjustment problems, and poorer relationships with classmates are consistently reported for victims

Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla et al., 2001; Due, Holstein, Lynch et al., 2005; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Sourander, Helstela, Helenius et al., 2000

Background: The Internet

- More than 9 in 10 adolescents use the internet, often multiple times throughout the day.
- The internet serves as an important tool for accessing health information and communication
- Similar to other environments, negative experiences happen to some youth online, including bullying.

Lenhart et al, 2008



Background: Harassment and bullying online

- Rates for Internet harassment vary widely, from 9% - 36% of children and adolescents.
- Differences are mostly due to measurement variations.
- Victimization is associated cross-sectionally with depressive symptomatology, poor caregiver-child relationships, social problems, substance use, and behavior problems at school.

Wolak, Mitchell, Finkelhor, 2006; Ybarra, Diener-West, Leaf, 2007; Finkelhor, Mitchell, Wolak, 2000



Research Question

There have been comparisons of bullying online and offline, none have used parallel measures. The current presentation aims to:

1. Compare and contrast the frequency of bullying that occurs via technology (e.g., internet, cell phone) and offline (e.g., school, community), and
2. Report the characteristics of youth reporting these experiences.



Growing up with Media Methodology

- 2-year longitudinal survey of 1,588 households (one caregiver, one child)
- Questions were added to the 14-month follow-up survey to assess bullying across multiple environments
- Data are from Wave 2, collected in 2007
- Participants recruited from Harris Poll On Line. Data are comparable with RDD telephone surveys when weighting and propensity scores are applied.



Youth Demographic Characteristics

- 48% Female
- Mean age: 12.6 years (Range: 10-15)
- 72% White, 13% Black, 9% Mixed, 7% Other
- 18% Hispanic
- Median household income: \$50,000-\$74,999
- Median time spent online on a typical day: 31 minutes – 1 hour

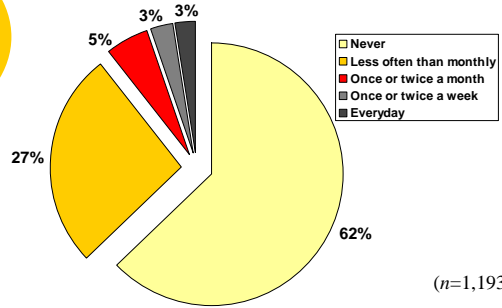
Defining Bullying

We say a young person is being bullied or harassed when someone else or a group of people **repeatedly** hits, kicks, threatens, or says nasty or unpleasant things to them. Another example is when no one ever talks to them. These things can happen at school, online, or other places young people hang out. It is **not** bullying when two young people of about the **same strength** fight or tease each other.

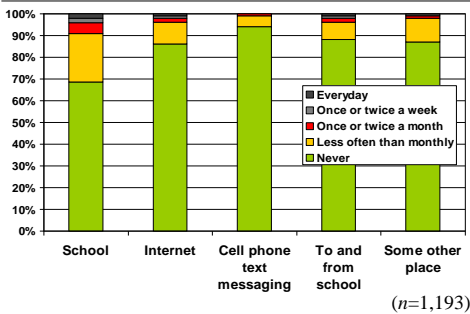
How often has this happened to you in the following environments...?

- School
- Internet
- Cell phones
- On the way to and from school
- Somewhere else

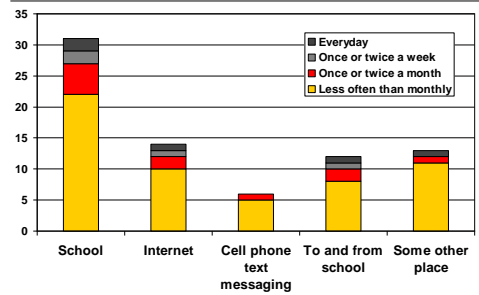
Frequency of bullying victimization among 11-16 year olds



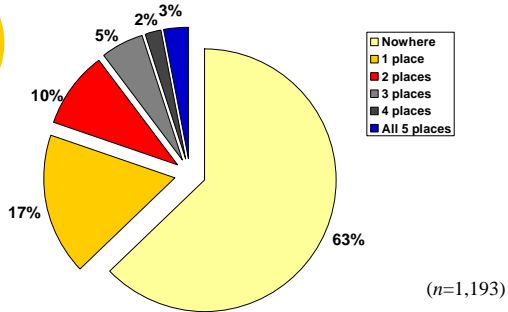
...by environment



Frequency of victimization by environment (among those bullied)



Victimization across environments



Being bullied online and at school

- 10% of youth report being bullied in both environments
 - 21.5% bullied in school only
 - 3% bullied online only
- Perpetrators:
 - 43% are the same person at school and online
 - 23% are different
 - 25% are both the same and different people
 - 8% are unsure about who the online bully is

Do you know who is bullying you?

Location	% yes
School	86%
Internet	41%
Cell phone text messaging	59%
To and from school	75%
Somewhere else	55%

Summary: Frequency of bullying

- Two in five youth are bullied (37%). Findings are very similar to previously reported national estimates of bullying.
- Bullying is reported twice as often at school as online
- One in five youth (20%) are bullied in two or more environments



Summary: Bullying online and at school

- One in ten youth report being bullied online and at school
- About 2 in 3 youth bullied online and at school are bullied by the same person
- About half are bullied by different people online and at school.



Implications

Recent prevention efforts aimed at targeting online behaviors and experiences to the exclusion of their offline counterparts

1. May not be the most efficient use of limited resources, and
2. They might seriously under-acknowledge the presence of a larger spectrum of problems with common elements.



Implications

Internet use does not exist in vacuum.

It is critical to not simply focus prevention efforts on the internet domain; we need to focus on the individual not just the modality.



Contact Information

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