



Cyberbullying with Psychosocial Difficulties

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ABOUT THE STUDY

The use of social media accounts for a significant portion of the time young people around the world spend online, and its negative effects are increasingly being reported in many countries. Bullying using such media causes serious mental health problems for many young people, including self-harm and suicide. The purpose of this study is to relate to the epidemic of cyberbullying among young people in Singapore, psychosocial problems such as self-harm and suicidal behavior, and how to seek help after young people experience cyberbullying.

A representative sample of 3,319 students aged 12 to 17 years was used in this longitudinal study to assess the scale of cyberbullying, psychosocial difficulties, self-harm, suicidal tendencies, and help-seeking behavior. The prevalence of cyberbullying was first examined using descriptive statistics, followed by Pearson's chi-square test, one-way ANOVA, and multinomial logistic regression related to various psychosocial problems. Public awareness of the consequences of unhealthy cyber use can be increased to detect cyberbullying early among school children and adolescents. In addition, cyber wellness programs should be considered as part of larger suicide prevention efforts in schools and communities.

A two-step sampling strategy was used. First, schools were randomly selected from a list of mainstream local schools and stratified by type and geographic area. The principal of the selected school was sent an invitation to explain the rationale and design of the study. If the school refuses to participate the next school in the same shift was approached according to the original shift plan. A total of

28 schools agreed to participate in the survey. The second phase systematically recruited approximately 120 students from each participating school to achieve representative educational levels and academic performance throughout the sample.

We found that 13.9% of young people were involved in cyberbullying as either victims or bullying. This figure is much lower than another local study of Facebook users, which captured incidence of cyberbullying over a one year period instead of six months and recruiting subjects from only two government secondary schools. Also, we used a narrower measure for cyberbullying which was adapted from Sourander and colleagues. Female adolescents were more likely to be cybervictimised while males had higher cyberbullying perpetration rates. On the other hand, no ethnicity and age difference among groups were detected, which are consistent with previous studies.

With an increase in reporting of youth suicide reporting all over the world in relation to cyberbullying, more needs to be done to safeguard young people from the adverse effects of cyberbullying and to keep the cyberspace safe for all. The findings of cyberbullying should raise public awareness of the consequences of unhealthy use of cyberbullying and contribute to the early detection of cyberbullying among school children and young people. In particular, the link between cyberbullying and self-destructive behavior suggests that cyber-wellness programs should be considered as part of greater suicide prevention efforts in schools and communities. Studies have consistently shown that school-wide approaches involving teachers, children, and parents are likely to produce significant positive results.

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