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## The offline impact of cyberbullying

Kathleen Ortiz

*University of Central Florida*



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### Recommended Citation

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# THE OFFLINE IMPACT OF CYBERBULLYING

by

KATHLEEN GRACE ORTIZ

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Sociology  
in the College of Sciences  
and in The Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term 2013

Thesis Chair: Dr. Amy Donley

## **ABSTRACT**

Over the recent years, we have seen an immense increase in technology. Though the Internet can be convenient to students, it can also bear negative repercussions. Cyberbullying has impacted millions of people across the nation hindering them in many ways. The Bullying occurs through different outlets, from websites, emails to text messages. Victims cannot truly escape the matter because it follows them wherever they may go.

The intent of this thesis was to see who the victims of cyberbullying are, what the aftermath effect is, and whether they notify an adult about their situation. Using data from the School Crime Supplement based on the National Crime Victimization Survey, the findings suggest that females are victims of cyber bullying more frequently than males and that adults are not commonly notified when victimization occurs. Furthermore, the repercussions of victimization include fear of harm or attack, as well as skipping classes to avoid the problem. By exploring cyberbullying and its effect, through time studies such as this one will raise awareness in society and contribute towards the solution of cyberbullying.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all the victims of cyberbullying who have yet to overcome this problem.

To my loving parents for always supporting me in every way they can. Thank you mom for understanding me more than I understand myself, you are my role model and my best friend. Dad you are a true inspiration, I look up to you in more ways than you can imagine, thanks for always believing in me and being by my side, I love you both so much, I'm truly blessed to have you as my parents.

To my grandmothers, Felicita and Gladys for being in my life and gifting me with gentle words of encouragement. Also for my aunt Mildred who is the strongest woman I know. To my best friends/sisters Molly and Cecilia, thank you for allowing me to take you in this journey with me. I've made it this far partly due to your encouragement and support. I love you guys.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my gratitude to my Thesis Chair Dr. Amy Donley for believing in me and aiding me in this whole process, when I felt overwhelmed you were able to make feel at ease due to your calm nature. You truly made me want to be a part of this project and for that I thank you.

To my committee members, Dr. Fernando Rivera and Dr. Kristina Childs, I also feel grateful to you for being part of this journey. Your constructive criticism made me want to do better and overall made this process a successful one.

Also thanks to my research friend Amber Krauss, we kept each other on top of our work and were able to accomplish something we never saw ourselves doing.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The fast-paced upsurge of technology in the 21st century has introduced positive and negative impacts to our society; cyber-bullying is one of these negative aspects. It is defined as “the use of the internet or other digital communication devices to insult or threaten someone” (Juvonen & Gross 2008:497). Findings report forty percent of American teens being victims of cyber-bullying (Bhat 2008). By definition, cyber-bullying involves outlets such as e-mail, cell phones, websites and instant messages to communicate damaging information to others (Anderson & Sturm 2007). Like bullying, it is an intended act with severe psychological consequences, which occur more than once. The difference is that a person can engage in bullying and remain completely anonymous. Due to the increase of technology, parents are often unaware of the consequences of modern media or the victimization of their children (Dehue, Bolman & Vollink 2008). At the same time, students are exposed to the internet regularly to access information and aid their studies (Dilmac & Aydogan 2010). The purpose of the current research is to explore who is at higher risk of being victimized by cyberbullying and how aware are adults of it.



## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The World Wide Web has many purposes which vary depending on those who use it. A study done by Kite, Gable and Filippelli (2010) measured 588 middle school students and their internet activity. They found that 74% of students agreed that most of their classmates have some form of social network such as Facebook or MySpace, with 49% of them logging into an instant messaging (IM) website at least once a day. Another study done by Accordini and Accordini (2011) showed that 73% of their sample of 124 sixth grade students, had email addresses and 32% believed cyber-bullying was a problem at school. They also concluded that the more time spent online the higher chances of being cyber-bullied. A study done by Juvonen and Gross (2008) also showed that instant messaging and e-mail were the most frequented online tools in their sample of 1,454 students ranging from 12-17 years old, with 58% of them using IM daily. This study also found that name calling and insults were the most popular forms of cyber-bullying with password theft and invasion of privacy following behind, most of these taking place in IM and message boards.

When it comes to gender differences in cyberbullying there have been significant findings. Li (2006) found males as more likely to be cyber-bullies while females as more likely to be victims. This study also showed that female victims were more likely to speak to a parent about the subject when compared to males. In a study of 1,501 students Dowell, Burgess and Cavanaugh (2009) found that girls reported having more email addresses than boys, and although both had instant messaging chosen as one of their top internet activities, girls used IM more frequently. Girls also noted the internet as being more important to them when compared to boys. In terms of cyber-bullying, it was found that 29.5% of boys and 27.8% of girls posted

negative comments about someone online. Interesting enough females seem to prefer chatroom and online outlet to bully others (Li 2006).

Over the years researchers began to question if age affected cyberbullying. For instance a study done by Devine and Lloyd (2011) interpreted data from the 2009 Kid's Life and Time Survey, which contained 3,657 respondents within the age of 10-11 years old. The findings suggested 48% of the respondents were on some type of social networking site (SNS). While young girls focused on communication networks containing chatrooms, messaging and blogging functions, boys preferred gaming and downloading software. 87% of the participants reported talking to a parent or teacher about internet safety, with girls having higher likeliness of reporting. Another study found student participants between the ages of 14-15 years having higher reports of cyberbullying involvement (Robson & Witenberg 2013).

### Occurrence and its Consequences

Research shows that cyber-bullying has become a problem on a national level, for example Kite et al states that "The cyber-bully has almost limitless time to harass, degrade and assert control over his or her victims". A problem encountered on the web includes the removal of "social cues" such as tone and body language, since there is no face to face interaction. Volk et al. (2012) describes bullying as a type of aggression, where there is a repetition of a powerful individual causing harm to a weaker one. Whereas Anderson and Sturm (2007) believe cyber-bullying is a migration from psychological aggression after the increase of technology and anonymity. In general, cyber-bullying has major consequences as Faris and Felmlee (2011) suggest that bullies have enough power to make other people's lives miserable, which in several cases has resulted in death.

As previously mentioned cyber-bullying uses media outlets to bring misfortune to others, examples such as sending offensive text messages via cell phones and emails, displaying private information about someone to others, or inviting people to comment on a website set up to humiliate someone. The damage this produces is at times far worse than intended, bringing a sense of hopelessness and fear (Dilmac & Aydogan 2010). Self-esteem is particularly affected, as seen in a study with a sample of 1,963 middle school students from 30 schools done by Patchin and Hinduja (2010). Participants were asked to complete self-report surveys regarding internet usage and cyberbullying. The findings indicated that 30% of the students were victims of it and found a correlation between self-esteem and cyber bullying, with both victims and offenders showing lower levels of self esteem. Findings also noted that the most common type of cyber bullying was posting something about someone else online to embarrass them.

An increase in social anxiety is also seen with victims of cyber-bullying. Experiencing online harassment is in addition associated with high levels of distress similar to school bullying, mostly due to the “no escape” setting (Juvonen & Gross 2008). Another study shows that victims can end up having serious physical, social and psychological problems; in some cases the kids would skip school due to their feelings of anger and sadness (Dehue et al. 2008). Other consequences involve high levels of stress, tension, depression and tremendous repercussions such as suicide or “bullycide”. Most of this is due to the fact that victims are mainly attacked in their own homes where they are meant to feel safe. Some of the reasons found as to why they simply do not delete their IM or turn off cell phones, is the fact that victims do not want to have to refrain from their daily lives (Anderson & Sturm 2007).

### Parent and Children Relationship

There is research on the impact parenting has on cyber-bullying. According to a study done by Dehue et al. (2008), most parents are unaware of what their kids do during their online activities due to modern technology. Another study found that 62% of students agreed that they are better at navigating the web than their parents are and 53% of them were not sure if their friend's parents knew what they did online. (Kite et al.). Some studies found that victims of cyber-bullying often feel apprehensive in discussing what occurred with their parents. Juvonen and Gross (2008) found that 90% of victims do not tell adults about the incident, with 50% of them believing they must deal with the situation by themselves. The same study also found that 31% of victims reported not telling an adult because they were concerned that their internet access might be limited. Sbarbaro and Smith (2011) found that when students were asked who they speak to after a bullying incident 48% of them responded a friend, while 19% responded teacher/parent.

Dedue et al. (2008) found that parents set up rules for their kids regarding the use of internet, with 60% discussing how often they are allowed to use it and 80% discussing what they are allowed to do with it. However, they also discovered that less than 4.8% of the parents were actually aware of their child being victims of cyber-bullying, the study did not test if the kids followed their parents rules or not. Parenting styles have also been found to have an effect on the likelihood of bullying (Accordino & Accordino 2011). If there is a distant parent-child relationship in the family, incidents of cyber-bullying are more likely to occur. They explain that it could be due to victims not receiving the proper strategies needed to deal with and avoid cyber-bullying, with lack of guidance and support also having an effect.

In a previous study, Byrne and Lee (2011) referenced three parenting styles developed by Baumrind (1967); permissive, authoritarian and authoritative. Permissive parents are found to be less strict and more lenient when confronting their children, authoritarian parents address their kids in a stern non-negotiable manner, and authoritative parents are a combination of both, meaning they listen to their children but are also firm about rules. Their study discussed that children of authoritarian parents are resistant at giving them their password or adding them as “friends” on social networks. However a counterintuitive finding from the same study, dealt with communicating about dangers on the internet, it found that permissive parents reported having difficulty in communicating with their children, while authoritarian and authoritative had easier reports of it. Another study by Dilmac and Aydogan (2010) found that incorrect parenting can lead to cyber-harm. They found that authoritarian parents were the most noted predictors, given that their study found that most of their bullies came from an authoritarian household. Children with parents who oppress them and limit their freedom might be provoked to be insensitive and offensive to others, which results in cyber-bullying.

## **THEORETICAL ORIENTATION**

Accordino and Accordino (2011) believe a major problem in cyber-bullying is disinhibition. They elaborate on five theoretical factors to explain the issue. The first one is anonymity which often happens because individuals have the opportunity to hide their real identity behind a computer. The second one is the lack of empathy due to not being able to visualize the harm they are causing to others. Third are the social norms that encourage and support some of the bad online behavior, fourth are people adapting online personalities which lead to feeling less guilty if they were to say something offensive to others. Lastly are those who use technology as a means to get revenge on others, these people tend to be a lot more outspoken online than in real life and are often cyberbullies.

Routine activity theory could also be applied to cyberbullying, it entails motivated offenders, suitable targets and the absence of capable guardianship (Cohen and Felson 1979). The suitable targets being internet users, for instance young people who expose their information to the online community. The motivated offenders are the cyber-bullies who target the suitable targets. Lastly Mesch (2009) illustrates the concept of guardianship as a factor in parental mediation. Within the theory, guardianship means that if there is a presence of some type it will lower the chances of victimization. Two techniques of parental mediation are discussed; Restrictive mediation has to do with limiting what the child watches and time spend online, and Evaluative mediation which refers to parents openly discussing issues regarding internet usage and regulations, for instance the location of the computer.

A closer look into the motivated offender could be seen with social dominance theory. The theory states that bullying behaviors occur to force compliance, which can be primarily seen in young males, who are power hungry and often preys on the weaker (Sbarbaro & Smith 2011). Finally when looking at the different types of internet usage by males and females we come across Social Theory Role. Devine & Lloyd (2011) discuss the different socialization are due to gender roles based on society. Men and women are fitted into certain social categories which can explain why females are seen to use social network sites more frequently, as well as to why males prefer gaming sites.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

Who is at higher risk of being cyber-bullied and how aware are adults of it?



## **HYPOTHESES**

- (H1) Females are more prone to cyber-bullying than males.
- (H2) Younger kids are victimized more often than older kids.
- (H3) The primary source of cyber-bullying is via instant messaging.
- (H4) Most parents are unaware of their kid's victimization.
- (H5) There are noticeable changes in character after victimization.

## **METHODS/SAMPLE**

The 2009 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (SCS/NCVS) was used as the data source for this study. The study is done every two years. In 2009, 8,986 students, ranging from ages 12 through 18 were surveyed from public and private elementary, middle and high schools across the United States. The survey collected information on victimization, crime and school safety.

## MEASUREMENTS

*Demographics.* Three demographic variables are used in this present study. Race measurement was recoded as White, Black, and all other races. School standing was measured with options varying between 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Student's sex was measured with a simple male or female question.

*Dependent Variables.* For this study the dependent variable was cyber-bullying victimization. The SCS/NCVS measured it with questions asking the most frequent method of cyber-bullying and providing choices which included, what media source the bullying appears, varying from "posts of hurtful information through internet", "threatened or insulted via email", "via instant messaging", "via text messaging", "online gaming" or "exclusion from online community". Questions regarding how often victimization occurred were also asked, starting from "Once or twice this school year", "Once or twice a month", "Once or twice a week" to "Almost every day".

*Independent Variable.* For this study the independent variables are the student's grade level, sex and adult notification, with a question asking "yes or no" if an adult was notified after victimization. Changes in character was also measured with the use of four questions asking "yes or no" if after victimization did the student "skipped school", "skipped class", "avoided school activities", or "carried a weapon to school" due to fear of attack or harm. Levels of distress are measured through a likert scale question with choices varying from "not at all distress" to "severely distress".

## RESULTS

Frequencies were run to be able to determine general demographics of the study participants. Table 1 shows that there is almost an even amount of male (51.2%) and female (48.7%) respondents. The majority of respondents are white (78.8%) and 15 is the mean age. The age of respondents ranges from 12-18yrs old. Due to missing data the percentage of class standing do not equal to 100%.

Table 1: Demographics

<b>Characteristic (N=8,986)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	51.2
Female	48.7
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
White	78.8
Black/African American	13.9
Other	7.3
<b>Age*</b>	15.08
<b>Age standard deviation</b>	2.002
<b>Class standing</b>	
Fifth or under	.7
Sixth	4.6
Seventh	7.4
Eighth	7.4
Ninth	7.2
Tenth	7.9
Eleventh	7.0
Twelfth	6.7

\*Mean Result

As shown in table 2, a frequency was run to show the percentage of participants who notified a teacher or an adult if they were victimized, with more than half of the respondents (64.4%) answering “No”.

Table 2: Teacher/Adult notification of victimization (total percentage)

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes (N=86)</b>	29.8
<b>No (N=186)</b>	64.4

To measure sex differences within adult or teacher notification, a cross tabulation was performed. Table 3 shows that within the respondents, females (35.5%) are significantly more likely to notify an adult about victimization compared to males (21.4%).

Table 3: Teacher/Adult notification of victimization (Sex differences)

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Chi Square</b>
<b>Female (N=61)</b>	35.5	<b>6.644</b>
<b>Male (N=25)</b>	21.4	

\*Significance Level .036

Table 4 shows another cross tabulation between age differences and adult/teacher notification; although no significant difference was found, 12 year olds (40.0%) have the highest rate of notifying while 16 year olds (14.3%) have the lowest. This could be due to younger kids not being as fearful to speak up.

Table 4: Teacher/Adult notification of victimization (Age differences)

<b>Age (N=285)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Chi Square</b>
<b>12</b>	40.0	<b>18.860</b>
<b>13</b>	35.3	
<b>14</b>	36.7	
<b>15</b>	22.9	
<b>16</b>	14.3	
<b>17</b>	31.8	
<b>18</b>	30.8	

\*Significance level .092

To test how often cyberbullying occurred between sexes a cross tabulation was performed, with an occurrence variable ranging from “once or twice this school year” to “almost every day”. Table 5 shows the data not to be significant, however highest percentages are seen occurring “once or twice this school year” for both males and females.

Table 5: Cyberbullying Occurrence (Sex differences)

	<b>Female (N=172)</b>	<b>Male (N=117)</b>	<b>Chi Square</b>
<b>Once or twice this school year</b>	61.0%	62.4%	<b>7.172</b>
<b>Once or twice a month</b>	16.9%	12.8%	
<b>Once or twice a week</b>	12.2%	6.8%	
<b>Almost every day</b>	2.9%	7.7%	

\*significance level .208

To measure how often cyberbullying occurred between ages 12-18, a correlation was performed. Table 6 shows significance of a negative correlation between age and occurrence.

Table 6: Correlation table (Cyberbullying occurrence and Age)

<b>How often did cyberbullying occurred (N=285)</b>	<b>Age</b>
<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	-.129
<b>Significance 2 tailed</b>	.030

\*significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

As shown in table 7, a frequency was performed to see the percentages of distinct cyberbullying victimization. Types of victimization include post of hurtful information through internet, threatened or insulted via email, instant messaging, text messaging, online gaming and exclusion from online community. Results show that the most common type of victimization “threatened or insulted through Text message (3.1%) while the lowest type is “threatened or insulted through online gaming” (.7%)

Table 7: Types of cyberbullying (percentages)

	<b>Percentages (N=4,377)</b>
<b>Posted hurtful information about you on the Internet</b>	2.1
<b>Threatened or insulted you through email</b>	1.4
<b>Threatened or insulted you through instant message</b>	1.8
<b>Threatened or insulted you through text messaging</b>	3.1
<b>Threatened or insulted you through online gaming</b>	.7
<b>Purposefully excluded you from an online community</b>	.9

A cross tabulation was run to determine if males and females experience different types of cyberbullying. Table 8 shows both males and females to have higher victimization rates through text messaging, females with 4.0% and males with 2.0%. This goes together with the previous table showing text messaging as the most common type of cyberbullying. The only type of victimization that was found as not significant was “purposefully exclusion from an online community”. Overall females had higher percentages of victimization compared to males, except when it came to online gaming, since according to finding males for the most part participate in this activity more often.

Table 8: Victimization (sex differences)

(N=4,377)	Female	Male	Chi <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
<b>Posted hurtful information about you on the Internet</b>	3.1%	1.2%	19.008	.000*
<b>Threatened or insulted you through email</b>	2.1%	0.7%	16.158	.000*
<b>Threatened or insulted you through instant message</b>	2.6%	1.1%	14.090	.000*
<b>Threatened or insulted you through text messaging</b>	4.2%	2.0%	17.572	.000*
<b>Threatened or insulted you through online gaming</b>	0.1%	1.4%	23.817	.000*
<b>Purposefully excluded you from an online community</b>	1.0%	0.8%	.543	.461

\*p< .05 = significant



A cross tabulation was performed for Table 9, to test the different distress levels ranging from “not at all distress” “mildly distress”, “moderately distress” to “severely distress” in relation to those who answered “yes” to cyberbullying victimization. Results show as not significant, however “Moderately distress” is found as the highest distress level across the victimization categories. Threatened or insulted through text message (21.4%) was found as the highest percentage again. Due to missing data the percentages do not equal to 100%.

Table 9: Distress levels based on different types of cyberbullying

<b>Distress Level</b>	<b>Hurtful info on Internet ( N=77)</b>	<b>Threat/insult through email (N=77)</b>	<b>Threat/insult through IM (N=76)</b>	<b>Threat/insult through Text (N=76)</b>
<b>Not at all</b>	0%	0%	11.1%	16.7%
<b>Mildly</b>	7.7%	3.8%	11.5%	15.4%
<b>Moderately</b>	14.3%	7.1%	7.1%	21.4%
<b>Severely</b>	12.5%	0%	0%	0%

\*No significance found

A Cross tabulation was run which looks at the changes in behavior after cyberbullying occurred (Table 10). The significant results show that cyberbullying impacts victim's behavior. Changes in behavior include avoiding school activities, classes and staying home out of fear of harm, as well as carrying a knife as a weapon. The highest percentages were seen with behaviors of avoiding class (20.0%) and staying home out of fear of harm (17.9%). Also 8.9% avoided school activities out of fear of harm and 9.1% of participant felt the need to carry a knife to school to protect themselves.

Table 10: Changes in behavior after victimization

	<b>Cyberbullied (N=4,365)</b>	<b>Chi square</b>	<b>Sig. level</b>
<b>Avoid school activities out of fear of harm</b>	8.9%	12.891	.005*
<b>Avoid classes out of fear of harm</b>	20.0%	39.111	.000*
<b>Stayed home out of fear of harm</b>	17.9%	33.977	.000*
<b>Carried a knife as a weapon</b>	9.1%	29.229	.000*

\*p< .05 = significant

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of the current study, one out of the five hypotheses was not supported (hypothesis 3). The first hypothesis which was supported, predicted that females would have higher rates of victimization than males. Earlier research found males to predominately be the bullies and females to be the victims. Table 8 shows this to be the case for this study as well, in the terms of females having higher chances of being victims of cyberbullying. The most popular form of cyberbullying victimization for both males and females was found to be text messaging. Previous research does not explain why females are more likely to experience bullying than males. However, some potential reasons include females in general to be more involved in social networking websites such as Facebook, twitter and Instagram. These websites are a gate for bullies to target female more often since they are so exposed to the online community.

Although previous studies suggested instant messaging as the most popular form of victimization, after a frequency was run on the distinct types, it proved to not be the case for this study and instead showed text messaging as the most popular method of cyberbullying. These results led hypothesis 3 to not be supported. Reasons for these findings could be the fact that today cell phones have become a basic “necessity” in student’s lives, making it easier for bullies to attack whenever they choose to, knowing that the victims are never truly safe as long as they carry their phones.

Hypothesis 2 predicted younger kids would be prone to victimization more often than older kids; this hypothesis appears to be supported. The data as seen in table 6, showed a

significant negative correlation between both variables. Age does seem to have an impact in victimization occurrence in this study. As previous findings showed, kids begin to use social networking sites at an early age which makes them more likely to be targets of cyber-bullies.

Hypothesis 4 was supported by both previous research and data used for this study. This hypothesis focuses on whether adults or teachers get notified after victimization occurs. Table 2 shows more than half of the respondents answering “no” to notifying an adult of cyberbullying victimization. Reasons behind this could be due to fear that internet privileges will be limited if parents were to find out as earlier research showed. Furthermore, victims may feel like they should deal with the problem by themselves perhaps due to embarrassment or pride. Although the data shows that most participants did not notify an adult, Table 3 shows that within those who do notify, females (35.5%) are more likely than males (21.4%) to speak up. Reasons as to why this happens could be due to males feeling ashamed of the situation and thinking they do not need the help of anybody to solve the issue. Although females may feel like that as well, in society males are seen as strong and capable, which makes it difficult for them to confide in someone due to their gender role.

The last hypothesis to be supported by the data is hypothesis 5. Upon starting this study previous research showed victimization to have an effect on anxiety and stress levels. To test this relationship, table 9 looked at the different levels of distress ranging from “not at all” to “severely distress” with the different types of cyberbullying. Mildly and moderately distress seemed to hold most of the percentages when testing within victimizations, cyberbullying via text message once again proved to be the higher cause of problem, 21.4% going to moderately

distressed. The fact that victims suffer from the “no escape” setting as stated in research explains the higher percentages. Having no control over the situation makes victims feel anxious, tense and trapped.

This next discussion goes together with the last supported hypothesis which expected changes in behavior to occur after victimization. As discussed earlier, previous research found victims to have serious physical, social and psychological problems that lead them to do things they normally wouldn't. Table 10 shows changes which include skipping class, skipping school activities and carrying weapons. The highest percentages found in the current study were seen with behaviors of avoiding class out of fear of harm (20.0%) and staying home out of fear of harm (17.9%). Also 9.1% of participant felt the need to carry a knife to school in order to defend themselves if something were to happen. Victims feel the need to take these actions in order to feel some type of safety. Previous research also found that feelings of anger and sadness could lead victims to hide in their own homes and avoid school.

These findings relate to the theoretical framework for this study in various ways. With Routine Activity theory we see the motivated offenders as the cyberbullies, suitable targets being the victims and the lack of capable guardianship with the adult notification. Studies showed that cyberbullying was more likely to occur to those who did not notify an adult about the situation. If adults are more aware of what their kids are doing online then it might help to decrease victimization. As Mesch (2009) discussed earlier, the two techniques of parental mediation can be imposed to prevent further victimization. Adults should be able to discuss issues and consequences regarding cyberspace, as well as regulating the types of websites young kids are

visiting. Programs at school should teach kids to be more careful of the internet, this could be done by having guest speakers or blocking some websites at school.

Another theory that could be applied to the findings is Social Role theory. Devine & Lloyd (2011) had discussed males and females having distinct internet usage due to the gender roles society has created. The results from this study showed females being cyberbullied more frequently through social networking sites, while males had higher percentages through gaming sites. If we apply this theory we can say females are seen involved in social networking websites regularly because their gender role calls for it, whereas the gaming community attracts the male population at higher rates.

An example of what the extend of cyberbullying could cause is seen in the case of Megan Meier, a 13-year-old girl who took her life in October of 2006 at the expense of cyberbullying. Her life took a turn when she befriended a boy named Josh through networking site MySpace, what started as a nice friendship turned out to have horrible consequences. Josh turned out to be the mother of one of Megan's friend, disguising herself to find out what Megan had been saying about her daughter. Bulletins on the sites began claiming Megan was "a slut" and "fat" leading the young girl to commit suicide right before her 14<sup>th</sup> birthday (ABCNews 2006). There are multiple of cases that end in tragic ways such as this one, the fact that these social networks sites are out in the open for everyone to see is one of the reasons as to why victims feel trap. The feeling of being judged and perceived a certain way makes them feel hopeless and secluded.

To prevent cases such as this, future studies should survey victims of cyberbullying alone, questions pertaining to reasons as to why they rather not notify an adult can be studied in order to

come up with solutions to the issue. Also parents could be questioned as to why they missed the changes in their children's behaviors that cause them to be unaware of the situation. It's important to explore why females are targeted more than males, as well as studies on the cyberbullies themselves in order to understand the reasons as to why they choose to victimize their peers. The intent of this study was to raise awareness of the issue and motivate people to further the research that will lead to the answer that will one day prevent or end cyberbullying victimization.

Some limitations in this study were the lack of participants who were victims of cyberbullying. Since secondary data from the SCS/NCVS was utilized, the sample was quite large and contained many other types of victimization that made some of the cyberbullying information not significant. This research serves to show there are plenty of factors yet to be observed to be able to comprehend cyberbullying to the fullest. Cyberbullying has many ways to target a victim as shown throughout research, especially due to the anonymous factor, therefore as technology advances so will the victimizations. It is important to educate others about the negative consequences it brings in order to help those who are victims of it. The fact that it targets mostly students should be an important factor to look into. School days are crucial times for kids to develop and educate themselves, however how can they focus on anything when they are constantly targeted by bullies. Cyberbullying could be seen as worse than normal bullying since it is able to attack their victims on an emotional level, there are still plenty of victims without a voice than have not been able to overcome the problem and for that reason, research should continue.

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