

Exploring Cyber Victimization among Middle School Students with Visual and Hearing Disabilities (Poster)

Tali Heiman The Open University of Israel talihe@openu.ac.il	Dorit Olenik-Shemesh The Open University of Israel doritol@openu.ac.il	Dana Kaspi Tsahor The Open University of Israel danakas@openu.ac.il
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Abstract

This study examined the internet involvement and cyber victimization of adolescents with visual and hearing disabilities (sensory impairment-SI) attending middle schools. The study investigated their patterns of internet behavior, and their involvement in cyberbullying in relation to cybervictimization, self-reported scholastic achievements and social support. The sample consisted of 60 students with SI and 519 typical achieving students. All students completed self-report cyberbullying and social support questionnaires. Findings indicated that although no significant differences emerge in the amount of surfing hours and students' expertise in the use of the internet, students with SI are more likely to be cybervictims; more likely to know others who were hurt due to cyberbullying and students with SI who are cybervictims are more likely to report lower scholastic achievements and lower social support, compared to their peers without disabilities.

Cyberbullying (CB) may be viewed as a new form of bullying and refers to negative activity aimed at deliberate and repeated harm through the use of a variety of electronic media. Findings indicated that around 25% of school students are directly involved in CB (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009, Tokunaga, 2010).

Various studies have examined online victimization among adolescent students with impairments, suggesting they are victimized more than their typical peers (Sullivan, 2006). CB has been found to be associated with multiple psychosocial harm and delinquency (Son, Parish, & Peterson, 2012).

The aim of this study was to examine the patterns of internet behavior and CB experience among students with SI attending middle schools.

The study investigated the relationships between being cyber victims, the students' academic achievements as well as students' socio-support satisfaction. In addition, the relations between the research variables, the usage patterns and students' personal background were examined.

Participants were asked to fill a self-report Cyberbullying questionnaire (Smith, et al, 2008), social support scale (Zimet, et al., 1988) and background characteristics. The sample included 579 students ($M = 14.4$, $SD = 1.18$), 60 with SI and 519 typical achieving students.

Examining the different of internet surfing patterns the by groups revealed no significant differences. Significant difference was found for the variety of usages, as students with SI reported a lower diversity use of media communication ($M = 11.4$, $SD = 7.3$) than the typical achieving students ($M = 13.4$, $SD = 6.6$). Students were asked to report their experience of being a victim, a perpetrator, a witness, or knowing someone who was hurt on the internet.

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Findings revealed that among students with SI: 29.5% reported being cybervictimized compared to 15.9% of the students without disabilities; 16.9% reported being a perpetrator vs. 13.9% of students without disabilities; 36.5% were witness to CB vs. 33.1 % of students without disabilities, and 50.8% were familiar with others who were hurt due to CB acts vs. 39.2%. Furthermore, 41.2% of students with SI who reported being cybervictims reported deterioration in their scholastic achievements compared to 15.1% of typical achieving students, and 43.84% of students with SI compared to 14.9% typical achieving students reported having fewer friends. The findings indicate a need for promoting awareness of students and educational staff to cyber aggression. It is recommended to implement a unique prevention and intervention programs for the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

Keywords: Cyber victimization, Visual deficits, Hearing deficits, social support, academic achievements.

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