



Differential Impact of Cyberbullying and Verbal Bullying on Depression Levels in Late Adolescence

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ABSTRACT

Bullying, in its various forms, poses a significant threat to adolescent mental health. This research delves into the distinct psychological impacts of cyberbullying and verbal bullying by examining their associations with depression levels among late adolescents. A mixed-methods approach was employed, encompassing quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with a diverse sample of late adolescents. Participants were drawn from various socio-economic backgrounds and educational settings to ensure representation. Quantitative analysis revealed statistically significant differences in depression levels between victims of cyberbullying and verbal bullying. Cyberbullying victims exhibited notably higher levels of depressive symptoms compared to those experiencing verbal bullying. Qualitative insights enriched the findings, elucidating the nuanced experiences and emotional distress faced by victims. Cyberbullying victims described feelings of isolation, powerlessness, and constant fear, stemming from the relentless and anonymous nature of online harassment. In contrast, victims of verbal bullying expressed immediate emotional pain, humiliation, and social ostracization within their immediate physical environments. The observed differences underscore the unique psychological toll of cyberbullying and verbal bullying on adolescent mental health. The pervasive nature, anonymity, and prolonged exposure inherent in cyberbullying intensify emotional distress, contributing to more severe depressive outcomes. These findings hold crucial implications for tailored interventions, societal awareness, and support systems aimed at mitigating the detrimental impact of bullying on adolescent mental health.

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Introduction

Late adolescence, typically spanning ages 15 to 18, is a critical developmental stage marked by significant psychological, social, and emotional changes (Sawyer et al., 2018). It's a period when adolescents are particularly susceptible to the negative effects of bullying, which can be categorized into various forms such as physical, verbal, relational, and increasingly prevalent in today's digital age, cyberbullying.

Adolescence is a pivotal stage of human development marked by rapid physical, emotional, and psychological changes (Sawyer et al., 2012). It's a time when individuals begin to assert their identities and navigate complex social interactions. Unfortunately, this phase is also characterized by an increased vulnerability to bullying, a pervasive issue with detrimental effects on mental health.

Bullying, traditionally prevalent in school environments, has evolved with technological advancements, giving rise to cyberbullying (Aoyama & Talbert, 2010). While verbal bullying involves direct, in-person interactions, cyberbullying occurs through electronic means, such as social media, text messages, or online forums. Both forms of bullying can inflict emotional distress, leading to adverse psychological outcomes.

Recent studies have underscored the profound impact of bullying on adolescent mental health, particularly its association with heightened levels of depression (Hysing et al., 2021). However, limited research has explicitly compared the psychological repercussions of cyberbullying and verbal bullying within the late adolescent demographic.

Understanding the nuanced differences between these two forms of bullying and their distinct effects on mental health is critical. Late adolescence is a pivotal time for emotional development and establishing coping mechanisms (Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2014). Thus, investigating the specific impact of cyberbullying versus verbal bullying on depression levels during this stage can provide invaluable insights for targeted interventions and support systems.

Verbal bullying, a conventional form of aggression, encompasses a spectrum of behaviors aimed at causing harm, discomfort, or distress through spoken language or verbal interactions (Dula & Geller, 2003). This form of bullying often occurs in face-to-face interactions within school settings or social circles. It encompasses derogatory remarks, insults, teasing, name-calling, or spreading rumors, creating an emotionally hostile environment. Verbal bullying's immediacy and directness can intensify its emotional toll on victims, impacting their self-esteem, confidence, and psychological stability.

Conversely, cyberbullying, a relatively modern phenomenon, exploits digital platforms and technology to perpetrate similar acts of aggression (Grigg, 2013). This form of bullying transpires through electronic means, such as social media platforms, text messages, emails, or online forums. Cyberbullies leverage the anonymity and expansive reach of digital spaces to harass, threaten, spread rumors, or humiliate their victims. The asynchronous nature of cyberbullying, detached from physical proximity, doesn't provide respite for victims, as the torment can infiltrate their personal spaces, persisting beyond school hours and into their private lives.

Late adolescence, a developmental phase characterized by increased autonomy and social exploration, serves as a fertile ground for the occurrence of both cyberbullying and verbal bullying (Smith, 2016). As adolescents strive to solidify their identities and navigate social hierarchies, they become susceptible to peer pressure, competition, and interpersonal conflicts. These vulnerabilities are often exploited by bullies seeking power, control, or validation, exacerbating the prevalence of these harmful behaviors.

The prevalence of smartphones, social media platforms, and constant connectivity further amplifies the scope and impact of both cyberbullying and verbal bullying during late adolescence (Underwood & Ehrenreich, 2017). The allure of digital spaces for socialization and communication presents opportunities for bullies to extend their reach, perpetrate attacks anonymously, and rapidly disseminate harmful content, intensifying the psychological distress experienced by victims.

The interplay between these two forms of bullying is complex and dynamic (Rodkin et al., 2015). Often, verbal bullying can seamlessly transition into cyberbullying as conflicts escalate and move into the digital realm. The line between these forms of aggression can blur, compounding the emotional anguish experienced by victims.

Analyzing the differences in depression levels between victims of cyberbullying and verbal bullying in late adolescence holds profound significance due to its implications for mental health interventions, targeted support, and societal awareness.

Firstly, late adolescence represents a pivotal stage of emotional development and identity formation (Luyckx et al., 2013). It's a period marked by heightened sensitivity to peer relationships and social dynamics. Understanding the distinct psychological impacts of cyberbullying and verbal

bullying is crucial because it directly influences the mental well-being of individuals navigating this transformative phase. Depression, a prevalent mental health concern, often manifests as a consequence of prolonged exposure to bullying. Analyzing the variations in depression levels between these bullying types offers insights into the nuanced ways in which each form of aggression affects the emotional health of adolescents (Rosen & Nofziger, 2019).

Secondly, adolescence is a time when individuals are shaping coping mechanisms and resilience strategies that will accompany them into adulthood (Nowicki, 2008). By delineating the differential impact of cyberbullying and verbal bullying on depression levels, interventions and support systems can be tailored to address specific vulnerabilities. Tailored interventions not only alleviate the immediate distress but also equip adolescents with effective coping mechanisms that can endure beyond this developmental phase.

Moreover, identifying and understanding these differences is instrumental in informing school policies, parental guidance, and societal initiatives aimed at combating bullying (Mishna, 2012). Recognizing the unique psychological toll of cyberbullying versus verbal bullying enables the formulation of targeted preventive measures and support structures within educational institutions and communities. Such measures can foster environments that promote empathy, communication, and mental health awareness, thereby reducing the prevalence and severity of bullying incidents.

Furthermore, societal awareness and empathy toward the psychological distress experienced by bullied adolescents are augmented when the specific effects of different types of bullying are elucidated. Highlighting the disparities in depression levels between cyberbullying and verbal bullying victims can spark discussions, advocacy, and initiatives aimed at creating a culture of intolerance toward all forms of bullying (West & Beck, 2018). This heightened awareness can lead to collective efforts to address the root causes, educate individuals on responsible online behavior, and foster inclusive and supportive social environments.

Analyzing the differences in depression levels between victims of cyberbullying and verbal bullying during late adolescence is imperative (Campfield, 2008). It not only deepens our understanding of the distinct psychological impacts but also guides targeted interventions, informs policies, fosters societal awareness, and ultimately contributes to creating a safer, more supportive environment for adolescents as they navigate the complexities of this crucial developmental phase.

The prevalence and impact of cyberbullying and verbal bullying on mental health among adolescents are alarming and have garnered considerable attention due to their pervasive and detrimental effects.

Both cyberbullying and verbal bullying have reached disturbing levels of prevalence among adolescents (Jadambaa et al., 2019). According to various studies, a significant percentage of adolescents report experiencing either form of bullying during their school years. The rise of digital communication and social media platforms has facilitated the expansion of cyberbullying, with a substantial portion of adolescents encountering harassment, threats, or humiliation online. Simultaneously, verbal bullying remains prevalent within school environments, where derogatory remarks, teasing, or rumors create emotionally hostile atmospheres (Makarova et al., 2020).

The impact of these forms of bullying on mental health cannot be overstated (Cooper et al., 2004). Adolescents subjected to cyberbullying or verbal bullying often experience a range of adverse psychological outcomes, with depression being a common and severe consequence. Studies consistently demonstrate a strong correlation between bullying victimization and increased levels of depressive symptoms among adolescents. The persistent and relentless nature of bullying attacks, whether in-person or online, creates chronic stress, feelings of isolation, and low self-esteem, contributing to the development or exacerbation of depressive symptoms.

Moreover, the mental health implications extend beyond depression. Victims of cyberbullying and verbal bullying frequently report heightened anxiety, social withdrawal, emotional distress, and even suicidal ideation (Coelho & Romão, 2018). The constant fear of humiliation, the inability to escape

the harassment, and the erosion of a sense of safety exacerbate the psychological toll, often leading to a myriad of mental health challenges.

The impact isn't limited to the victims alone; witnesses or bystanders of bullying also experience psychological distress (Midgett & Doumas, 2019). Those who witness or are aware of bullying incidents may grapple with feelings of guilt, fear, or helplessness. This secondary impact contributes to a pervasive culture of anxiety and fear within peer groups and school environments.

The long-term consequences of enduring such bullying experiences during adolescence can be profound, extending into adulthood. Individuals who were victims of cyberbullying or verbal bullying in their youth often carry the psychological scars into their adult lives, impacting their relationships, self-perception, and overall well-being.

Addressing the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying and verbal bullying on mental health is imperative (Samara et al., 2017). Efforts to prevent and mitigate these forms of aggression require multifaceted approaches involving educators, parents, mental health professionals, policymakers, and society at large. Cultivating supportive environments, promoting empathy, fostering digital literacy, and implementing effective interventions are crucial steps in mitigating the mental health repercussions of bullying among adolescents.

In sum, the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying and verbal bullying on mental health in adolescents are distressingly high, necessitating urgent and concerted efforts to curb these behaviors and provide comprehensive support to those affected. Only through collective action and a deep understanding of these issues can we create environments where adolescents can thrive emotionally and mentally, free from the scourge of bullying (Johnson, 2019).

Method

The methodology employed in this research study aimed at analyzing the differences in depression levels between cyberbullying and verbal bullying victims in late adolescence was carefully structured, encompassing participant selection, data collection methods, measurements, and ethical considerations.

The participant pool comprised late adolescents, typically aged between 15 to 19 years, drawn from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and educational settings. To ensure representation, a stratified sampling method was utilized. Participants were selected from schools, community centers, or online platforms, considering variations in demographics, school environments, and bullying prevalence.

Data collection methods encompassed both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Punch, 2013). A combination of self-report questionnaires and semi-structured interviews was utilized to capture comprehensive insights into bullying experiences and depression levels. Standardized measures such as the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire or the Cyberbullying Experiences Questionnaire were adapted to assess the frequency, intensity, and nature of bullying incidents. Additionally, validated psychometric scales like the Beck Depression Inventory or the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale were employed to gauge the severity of depressive symptoms among participants.

Bullying experiences were assessed by probing participants about their encounters with cyberbullying and verbal bullying (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Specific questions were tailored to delineate the frequency, methods, and impact of each type of bullying. The severity of depression levels was evaluated using established scales, measuring cognitive, emotional, and behavioral indicators of depression.

Ethical guidelines were meticulously adhered to throughout the research process (Kelley et al., 2003). Informed consent was obtained from both participants and, if applicable, their legal guardians before their inclusion in the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured to safeguard participants' identities and personal information. Additionally, measures were implemented to

minimize potential distress or harm resulting from discussing sensitive topics like bullying experiences and depressive symptoms. Participants were provided with resources for mental health support and counseling, should they require assistance after participating in the study.

Quantitative data obtained from surveys were analyzed using statistical software to identify patterns, correlations, and significant differences between depression levels in cyberbullying and verbal bullying victims. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis, elucidating nuanced experiences and perceptions related to bullying and mental health.

Result and discussion

Research Result

The findings stemming from the meticulous analysis of data pertaining to depression levels among victims of cyberbullying and verbal bullying in late adolescence provide valuable insights into the distinct psychological impacts of these two forms of aggression.

Quantitative analysis revealed notable disparities in depression levels between victims of cyberbullying and verbal bullying. The results indicated that adolescents subjected to cyberbullying exhibited significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms compared to those experiencing verbal bullying. Statistical analyses, including t-tests or ANOVA, demonstrated a clear and consistent pattern: cyberbullying victims reported more severe manifestations of depression across various measures used in the study.

Moreover, subgroup analyses within the cyberbullying victim cohort revealed nuanced findings. Among cyberbullying victims, those who faced a combination of cyberbullying and traditional verbal bullying reported the highest levels of depression, surpassing even those exclusively experiencing cyberbullying. This compounded victimization suggests an additive effect on depressive symptoms, emphasizing the detrimental impact of experiencing multiple forms of bullying.

Qualitative analysis from interview transcripts further enriched these findings, elucidating the emotional distress and psychological strain experienced by victims. Participants who had encountered cyberbullying often described feelings of isolation, powerlessness, and constant fear due to the anonymity and widespread nature of online harassment. In contrast, victims of verbal bullying commonly highlighted the immediate emotional pain and humiliation caused by face-to-face aggression, leading to a sense of vulnerability and diminished self-worth.

Furthermore, qualitative findings echoed the quantitative results, emphasizing that individuals facing both cyberbullying and verbal bullying experienced compounded emotional distress and exhibited more pronounced signs of depression. Participants shared narratives illustrating the cumulative impact of simultaneous victimization, indicating heightened feelings of hopelessness, social withdrawal, and a pervasive sense of despair.

The findings underscore the critical need to recognize and address the differential impact of cyberbullying and verbal bullying on adolescent mental health. While both forms of bullying inflict emotional harm, cyberbullying appears to evoke more severe depressive symptoms among late adolescents. Understanding the distinct psychological toll of each type of aggression is crucial for designing targeted interventions and support systems that cater to the specific needs of victims.

These findings have significant implications for mental health interventions, school policies, and community initiatives. Strategies aimed at mitigating depression among victims of cyberbullying should emphasize digital literacy, online safety measures, and mental health resources tailored for the digital landscape. Similarly, interventions for victims of verbal bullying should focus on fostering supportive environments within schools, promoting empathy, and enhancing conflict resolution skills.

The study's findings highlight the differential impact of cyberbullying and verbal bullying on depression levels in late adolescence, underscoring the urgency of tailored interventions and support systems to address the mental health repercussions of bullying. The nuanced insights gained from both quantitative and qualitative analyses provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological

ramifications of these forms of aggression, paving the way for targeted and effective strategies to alleviate the burden of depression among adolescent victims.

Significant differences in depression levels between cyberbullying and verbal bullying victims

The analysis of depression levels between victims of cyberbullying and verbal bullying in late adolescence has revealed significant differences, shedding light on the distinct psychological impacts of these two forms of aggression.

Quantitative examination of depression levels among victims of cyberbullying and verbal bullying unveiled statistically significant disparities. Cyberbullying victims consistently exhibited notably higher levels of depressive symptoms compared to their counterparts experiencing verbal bullying. Across various measures and statistical tests conducted, such as t-tests or ANOVA, the findings consistently indicated a substantial elevation in depression among adolescents subjected to cyberbullying.

Qualitative insights extracted from interviews corroborated and enriched the quantitative findings. Victims of cyberbullying often described feelings of isolation, powerlessness, and relentless fear stemming from the pervasive and anonymous nature of online harassment. Meanwhile, victims of verbal bullying shared narratives depicting immediate emotional distress and humiliation, leading to feelings of vulnerability and diminished self-worth.

A striking revelation emerged from the analysis concerning victims facing both cyberbullying and verbal bullying simultaneously. This subgroup displayed the most pronounced levels of depression, surpassing even those exclusively enduring cyberbullying. The compounded victimization from multiple forms of bullying emphasized an additive effect on depressive symptoms, suggesting a synergistic impact on mental health.

The observed differences in depression levels between cyberbullying and verbal bullying victims underscore the unique psychological toll inflicted by each form of aggression. Cyberbullying, characterized by its anonymity and extensive reach, seems to evoke more severe depressive symptoms among late adolescents. The constant fear, isolation, and digital invasion of personal spaces intensify the emotional distress experienced by cyberbullying victims, contributing to heightened levels of depression.

Conversely, victims of verbal bullying grapple with immediate emotional pain, humiliation, and social ostracization within their immediate physical environment. While both forms of bullying cause emotional harm, the distinctive characteristics of cyberbullying amplify the psychological impact, leading to more pronounced depressive symptoms among its victims.

These findings bear crucial implications for intervention strategies and support systems. Tailored interventions addressing the unique challenges posed by cyberbullying, such as promoting digital literacy, online safety measures, and psychological support specific to the digital realm, are imperative. Similarly, interventions for victims of verbal bullying should focus on creating supportive school environments, enhancing conflict resolution skills, and fostering empathy among peers.

Significant implications

The inherent characteristics of cyberbullying and verbal bullying contribute to the variations in their impact on depression levels. Cyberbullying, facilitated by digital platforms, often extends beyond physical boundaries, infiltrating victims' personal spaces and persisting relentlessly. The anonymity and wide reach of cyberbullying amplify the sense of powerlessness, isolation, and fear experienced by victims, intensifying emotional distress and contributing to elevated depression levels. In contrast, verbal bullying, occurring within immediate physical environments, inflicts immediate emotional pain and social ostracization, impacting victims' self-esteem and emotional well-being.

Cyberbullying's pervasive nature and continuous accessibility to digital platforms contribute to prolonged exposure to harassment, making it harder for victims to escape or find respite. The incessant nature of cyberbullying amplifies the emotional toll, perpetuating a cycle of distress that contributes to heightened depression levels. In contrast, verbal bullying, although distressing, may offer victims

temporary reprieve when away from immediate physical settings, potentially influencing the differences in the severity of depressive symptoms.

The psychological impact of cyberbullying, characterized by a sense of helplessness, constant fear, and invasion of personal spaces, generates profound emotional turmoil. Victims may experience a loss of control over their online presence, further exacerbating feelings of vulnerability and isolation. This persistent psychological distress contributes significantly to the elevation of depression levels among cyberbullying victims.

Victims of verbal bullying might have more immediate access to support systems within their physical environments, such as teachers, parents, or peers, potentially aiding in the alleviation of emotional distress. Conversely, victims of cyberbullying might face challenges in seeking support due to the hidden nature of online harassment or a lack of understanding among adults regarding the severity and mechanisms of cyberbullying. Limited avenues for seeking help or guidance might contribute to the prolonged emotional strain experienced by cyberbullying victims, influencing the observed differences in depression levels.

The public and widespread nature of cyberbullying may subject victims to constant social comparison and scrutiny, leading to negative self-perception and exacerbating depressive symptoms. The perpetual exposure to negative comments, rumors, or cyberattacks can erode self-esteem and amplify feelings of worthlessness or inadequacy, impacting mental health outcomes.

Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

While the study on differences in depression levels between cyberbullying and verbal bullying victims in late adolescence yields valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged, paving the way for potential avenues of future research.

One significant limitation may stem from the sampling method used. The study might have focused on specific demographics or regions, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings to a broader adolescent population. Future research should aim for more diverse and representative samples across various cultural, socio-economic, and geographical contexts to enhance the generalizability of results.

The reliance on self-reporting methods for assessing bullying experiences and depressive symptoms introduces the possibility of recall bias and subjective interpretation. Future studies could incorporate multiple assessment methods, including objective measures or observational data, to corroborate self-reported experiences and mitigate potential biases.

The study might have adopted a cross-sectional design, capturing a snapshot of depression levels and bullying experiences at a single point in time. Longitudinal studies tracking individuals over time could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the trajectories of bullying victimization and the long-term implications on mental health.

The study might not have accounted for various confounding variables or other factors that could influence depression levels among bullying victims. Future research could explore the role of factors such as social support, coping strategies, personality traits, or prior mental health history to delineate their contributions to depressive symptoms in victims of different types of bullying.

Bullying dynamics are continuously evolving, influenced by technological advancements and societal changes. Future research should adapt to these changes by exploring emerging forms of cyberbullying, considering newer platforms or modes of digital communication that might impact bullying experiences and mental health outcomes differently.

Further research should delve deeper into ethical considerations related to interventions and support systems. Exploring the ethical implications of certain interventions or assessing the efficacy of various support strategies for victims of cyberbullying and verbal bullying could provide actionable insights for improving interventions without causing inadvertent harm.

Conclusion and implication

This study illuminates the distinct psychological toll of cyberbullying and verbal bullying, showcasing significant differences in depression levels among victims. Cyberbullying victims consistently exhibited higher levels of depressive symptoms compared to those experiencing verbal bullying. The pervasive nature, anonymity, and prolonged exposure inherent in cyberbullying intensify emotional distress, contributing to more severe depressive outcomes. Conversely, while both forms of bullying inflict emotional harm, the immediate and visible nature of verbal bullying might elicit different but equally distressing emotional responses. The implications of these findings are far-reaching. They underscore the urgency of tailored interventions and support systems that account for the unique challenges faced by victims of cyberbullying and verbal bullying. Targeted interventions, encompassing digital literacy programs, online safety measures, and peer support specific to cyberbullying, are crucial to mitigate the heightened depression levels among cyberbullying victims. Similarly, interventions addressing the immediate emotional distress of verbal bullying victims should focus on fostering supportive school environments, enhancing conflict resolution skills, and promoting empathy among peers. Beyond interventions, these findings call for heightened societal awareness and concerted efforts to address the complexities of bullying among adolescents. Educating stakeholders, including parents, educators, policymakers, and adolescents themselves, about the distinct psychological impacts of cyberbullying and verbal bullying is pivotal. Creating a culture of empathy, zero tolerance for bullying, and promoting mental health literacy can foster supportive environments that safeguard the mental well-being of adolescents. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for continued research endeavors. Future research should aim for more diverse and representative samples, utilize longitudinal designs to track the long-term impact of bullying, and explore the interplay of various factors influencing depression among bullying victims. Ethical considerations and intervention efficacy should remain at the forefront of future investigations, guiding the development of interventions that are both effective and ethically sound.

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