Electronic Bullying: Definition and Prevalence

What is Electronic Bullying?

- Electronic bullying, also referred to as cyberbullying, is willful and repeated harm inflicted through electronic media.
- It includes the use of electronic devices or the internet to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships.
- Various forms of electronic bullying include:
  - Text message bullying
  - Picture/video-clip bullying via mobile phone cameras
  - Phone call bullying via mobile phone
  - Email bullying
  - Chat room bullying
  - Bullying through instant messaging (IM)
  - Bullying via websites

Key Research Findings

- Despite its recent emergence, electronic bullying is very common among adolescents: Electronic bullying perpetration rates range from 4-18% and victimization rates are considerably higher at 7-35%.\(^1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10\)
- Among youth who bully others electronically, 6% report frequent bullying, 6% report occasional bullying, and 17% report limited bullying within the previous year.\(^11\)
- 55% of youth who are victimized report multiple electronic bullying incidents in the previous year.\(^12\)
- Electronic bullying tends to be low in grade 5, peak in grade 8, and decline by grade 11.\(^13\)
- Findings on gender differences are mixed. Many studies indicate no gender differences in electronic perpetration or victimization;\(^14,15,16\) other studies indicate that male youth are more likely to bully and be victimized.\(^17,18\)
- About 50% of adolescents know someone who has been victimized online.\(^19,20,21,22\)
- A majority of teachers (84%) report that they have been electronically bullied.\(^23\)

Key Themes

- Electronic bullying and victimization rates are high and warrant attention.
- Most youth who are victimized experience electronic bullying on multiple occasions.
- Electronic bullying peaks during middle school (grades 7 and 8).
- Gender associations with electronic bullying and victimization are not clear.
- Majority of youth know someone who is being victimized through electronic bullying.

Implications

Education and Training

- Adults responsible for children and youth require knowledge about electronic bullying in its many forms.
• Involving youth in developing the training may be critical, as they are the experts and know about the extent and complexity of the electronic bullying problem.

**Assessment**
• Because electronic bullying is covert, adults may underestimate the number of youth involved in and affected by electronic bullying.
• A student survey focused on the various forms of electronic bullying will reveal trends that will help in prevention and intervention efforts, as well as in developing policies.

**Prevention and Intervention**
• Because electronic bullying affects substantial numbers of youth, prevention and intervention strategies are essential.
• Prevention strategies, such as education about electronic bullying and developing understanding regarding respectful use of electronic media should begin before it peaks in middle school.

**Policy**
• It is critical to establish clear policies regarding cyberbullying, not only at school but in all contexts where it might occur. These policies need to define cyberbullying and appropriate cyber-conduct.

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See note 3 above.

See note 1 above.


See note 2 above.

See note 3 above.

See note 10 above.

See note 3 above.

Browne, L. (2007). 84 per cent of teachers have been cyberbullied. *Professionally Speaking, 3,* 15-17.