Cyberbullying, self-esteem, empathy and loneliness

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## Sample

British adolescents (N = 90) aged 16–18 years recruited from Further Education colleges.

# Abstract

Cyberbullying is a unique phenomenon, distinguished from traditional bullying by the speed at which
information is distributed, permanence of material and availability of victims. There is however a paucity
of research in this area, and few studies have examined the factors contributing to cyberbullying behaviour. The present study investigated the influence of self-esteem, empathy and loneliness on cyberbullying victimisation and perpetration. British adolescents (N = 90) aged 16–18 years were recruited from
Further Education colleges. Participants completed the Revised Cyber Bullying Inventory (RCBI, Topcu
 Erdur-Baker, 2010), the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, Ferguson, 1978), Toronto Empathy
Questionnaire (TEQ, Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, Levine, 2009) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
(Rosenberg, 1965) online. Standard multiple regressions revealed that together, loneliness, empathy
and self-esteem predicted levels of cyberbullying victimisation and perpetration. Self-esteem was a significant individual predictor of cyberbullying victimisation and perpetration, such that those with low
self-esteem were most likely to report experience of cyberbullying. Empathy was a significant individual
predictor of cyberbullying perpetration, such that as empathy decreases, likelihood of cyberbullying
perpetration increases. These findings indicate that self-esteem and empathy oriented interventions
may successfully address cyberbullying behaviour.

# Outcome

"The present study identified substantial levels of cyberbullying
perpetration and victimisation. Prevalence was higher than reported in previous studies (Slonje Smith, 2008), highlighting the
importance of investigating the incidence of cyberbullying in each
population type. The cyberbullying acts most frequently experienced by victims were being insulted in online forums, comments
being made fun of in online forums, and private internet conversations being shared without their knowledge. The acts most frequently reported by perpetrators were making fun of comments
in online forums, sharing private internet conversations without
the other’s knowledge, and insulting others in online forums. Thus
interventions may prioritise these behaviours. Together, loneliness,
empathy and self-esteem predicted incidence of both cyberbullying
victimisation and perpetration. Self-esteem was a significant individual predictor of cyberbullying victimisation, such that those with
low levels of self-esteem were most likely to report victimisation.
Self-esteem and empathy were significant individual predictors of
cyberbullying perpetration. Adolescents with low levels of self-esteem and empathy were most likely to engage in cyberbullying." (Brewer and Kerslake, 2015: 258).