“I feel like everyone does it”- adolescents' perceptions and awareness of the association between humour, banter, and cyberbullying

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## Authors

Steer O.;Betts L.;Baguley T.;Binder J.

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## Sample

28 United Kingdom based secondary school students (female ¼ 20, male ¼ 8) aged between 11
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## Implications For Educators About

Digital citizenship

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Creating a safe environment for children online

# Abstract

Literature has acknowledged the alliance between face-to-face bullying behaviours and humour. However,
comparably, little is known regarding humour and cyberbullying. Humour may be a motivating factor and, as
such, explain why some individuals engage in cyberbullying. This study aimed to gain insight into adolescents’
views and perceptions of how humour and ‘banter’ play a role within cyberbullying. Seven focus groups were
carried out with 28 United Kingdom based secondary school students (female ¼ 20, male ¼ 8) aged between 11
and 15 years old. Reflexive thematic analysis identified three prominent overarching themes which became
salient across each focus group: Banter as a social interaction, Online misinterpretation, and “Bad” banter and
cyberbullying. Results indicate young people have a shared understanding of online humoristic aggressive behaviours,
such as online banter, describing them as ambiguous and difficult to interpret. Participants demonstrated
an understanding of how ambiguity, caused by the online environment combined with banter
interactions, can be interpreted as perceived or fully acknowledged cyberbullying behaviour. Motivations for
these behaviours are considered within the findings of the data analysis and previous literature. Findings are
discussed with potential preventative implications and considerations for future research.

# Outcome

"This study demonstrates online humour or banter can be viewed as
cyberbullying behaviour from a young person’s perspective. Owing to
the online environment having a lack of nonverbal redressive cues and
social context cues, online banter can be misinterpreted and perceived as
targeted cyberbullying and therefore may occur more frequently.
Findings also establish that humour can be a form of online aggression
used to cyberbully others, motivated by the possible aim to achieve or
maintain popularity and status. Aspects of these findings challenge two
definitional criterion of cyberbullying, power imbalance and harmful
intentions of the perpetrator. For example, the data suggest victims’
perceptions of a perpetrator’s intentions carry some weight in determining
if an act of online aggression is cyberbullying behaviour. Overall,
this study offers a unique perspective of how adolescents view humour
and banter within the context of cyberbullying." (Steer et al., 2020: 9).