Cyber Dating Abuse Victimization Among Secondary School Students From a Lifestyle-Routine Activities Theory Perspective

# Details

## Year

2016

## DOI

10.1177/0886260516629390

## Issued

2016

## Language

English

## Volume

33

## Issue

17

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Journal of Interpersonal Violence

## Publisher

SAGE Publications

## Topics

## Sample

The original sample was of 1187 secondary school students from 7 Flemish secondary schools between 16 and 22 years old.
Respondents were asked if they were currently in a romantic relationship with someone or had a girlfriend/boyfriend. The analyses is based on this sample of 466 students (71.0% girls)) between 16 and 22 years old inclusion of secondary school students from the seventh year.

# Abstract

Controlling one’s romantic partner through digital media is a form of cyber dating abuse. To design effective educational campaigns, a deeper understanding of how some young people become victim of this type of abuse within their romantic relationships is warranted. This study is the first to adopt a lifestyle-routine activities theory perspective toward online romantic partner monitoring, by looking at whether secondary school students’ risky digital lifestyle and their digital media use are linked to a higher chance of being controlled by a romantic partner, taking into account gender, age, and the length of the romantic relationship. The data of 466 secondary school students (71.0% girls, n = 331) between 16 and 22 years old ( M = 17.99 years; SD = 0.92) who were in a romantic relationship are analyzed. Linear regression analysis suggests that engagement in online risk behavior, the length of the romantic relationship, engagement in sexting with the romantic partner, and the amount of social networking site use were significantly linked to victimization of digital controlling behavior. The results are important to practitioners, as they indicate that messages about safe Internet use should be incorporated in prevention and educational campaigns with regard to cyber dating abuse. Suggestions for future research are discussed.

# Outcome

"This study focused on factors that contribute to becoming a victim of digital controlling behavior from a lifestyle-routine activities theory perspective. Young people’s engagement in online risk behaviors is the most important predictor of becoming a victim of their partner’s digital controlling behavior. This might be explained by the assumption that youth who engage in online risk behavior are often
more in online situations in which guardianship is absent or that they could are less aware of the importance of protecting their online profiles and digital devices. Therefore, educational initiatives about cyber dating abuse victimization could focus on providing information about safe internet use by discussing the risks of sharing one’s passwords or the pin codes with a romantic partner and discussing privacy measures to limit the access. There is also a link between the time that youth spend on social networking sites and becoming a victim of controlling behaviors. The more time spent on these sites, the more opportunities for perpetrators to contact their victims. Victims often create more content and engage in more contacts with others by using social networking sites frequently, they might unintentionally make it more interesting for perpetrators to control their partner’s online content." (Van Ouytsel et al., 2018, pp. 2774-2775)