The Short-Term Longitudinal and Reciprocal Relations Between Peer Victimization on Facebook and Adolescents’ Well-Being

# Details

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* Social mediation
* Risks and harms
* Wellbeing

## Sample

1235 students from 12- to 19-year-olds from 15 randomly selected Flemish high schools participated in
both waves

# Abstract

Although studies have shown that depressive
symptoms, life satisfaction, and adolescents’ online peer
victimization are associated, there remain critical gaps in
our understanding of these relationships. To address these
gaps, the present two-wave panel study (NTime1 = 1840)
(1) examines the short-term longitudinal and reciprocal
relationships between peer victimization on Facebook,
depressive symptoms and life satisfaction during adoles\_x0002\_cence, and (2) explores the moderating role of adolescents’
gender, age, and perceived friend support. Self-report data
from 1621 adolescent Facebook users (48 % girls;
MAge = 14.76; SD = 1.41) were used to test our
hypotheses. The majority of the sample (92 %) was born in
Belgium. Cross-lagged analyses indicated that peer vic\_x0002\_timization on Facebook marginally predicted decreases in
life satisfaction, and life satisfaction predicted decreases in
peer victimization on Facebook. However, depressive
symptoms were a risk factor for peer victimization on
Facebook, rather than an outcome. In addition, support
from friends protected adolescents from the harmful out\_x0002\_comes of peer victimization on Facebook. Both theoretical
and practical implications are discussed.

# Outcome

"Eighty-four percent of the youth who reported having an account on Facebook also reported that they had experienced at least one negative interaction with a peer. Victimized youth might interpret negative peer acts on Facebook as negative peer evaluations which might stimulate negative self-evaluation or even decrease youth’s feelings of belonging. An additional explaination could be to feel helpless or hopeless to stop perpetrators’ negative online acts. Yet, peer victimization on Facebook did not predict increases in depressive symptoms but is rather an important risk factor. While perpetrators can behave anonymously on the Internet, anonymous perpetration is far more difficult in a Facebook setting. Socially vulnerable adolescents, that is those who score low on life satisfaction, but high on depressive symptoms, may be at higher risk to be victimized on Facebook since perpetrators may interpret an expression of life dissatisfaction or depressive symptoms as a sign of weakness. This sign of weakness, in turn, may stimulate perpetrators’ perception that dissatisfied or depressed peers are unable to defend themselves properly, making them the ideal targets for aversive online acts. Friend support was effective in moderating the harmful impact of online peer victimization on participants’ depressive symptoms and life satisfaction since it offered protection and serves as an efficient buffer against the harmful impact of negative Facebook experiences." (Frison et al., 2016, pp. 1766-1767)