Empathic responses by cyberbystanders: the importance of proximity

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## Sample

453 Czech adolescent cyberbystanders (age 12–18)

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Stepping up awareness and empowerment

# Abstract

Cyberaggression, and its’ specific sub-type, cyberbullying, have
become a widely debated and studied issues, but we still lack
knowledge about cyberbystanders, whose reactions (or lack
thereof) can play a crucial role. One of the important factors
determining behavioral outcomes is cyberbystanders’ empathic
response to the incident. Certain features of cyberaggression
incidents (e.g. distance and the invisibility of those involved) raise
the question of what conditions tend to encourage (or inhibit)
empathetic responses on the part of cyberbystanders. Therefore,
we investigated the link between the empathic responses of 453
Czech adolescent cyberbystanders (age 12–18) and the context in
which they become aware of ongoing cybervictimization. We
found that being directly present and being informed by the
victim increased emotional response, while witnessing it only
online or being informed by others had no effect. We discuss the
importance of including the dimensions of ‘proximity’ or
‘directness’ in both prevention and intervention efforts and future
research on cyberbystanders’ reactions.

# Outcome

"...the dimension of ‘directness’ or ‘proximity’ (i.e. being directly present, being informed by the victim, having an existing relationship with the victim) influences the empathic response: the more direct the encounter is, the more intense the response" (Machackova et al., 2015, pp. 802)