Social Media Use and Cyber-Bullying: A Cross-National Analysis of Young People in 42 Countries

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Risks and harms

## Sample

181 thousand adolescents from 42 countries. representative samples of 11-, 13-, and 15-year-old children

# Abstract

"Purpose: Social media use (SMU) has become an intrinsic part of adolescent life. Negative consequences
of SMU for adolescent health could include exposures to online forms of aggression. We
explored age, gender, and cross-national differences in adolescents' engagement in SMU, then
relationships between SMU and victimization and the perpetration of cyber-bullying.
Methods: We used data on young people aged 11e15 years (weighted n ¼ 180,919 in 42 countries)
who participated in the 2017e2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study to describe
engagement in the three types of SMU (intense, problematic, and talking with strangers online) by
age and gender and then in the perpetration and victimization of cyber-bullying. Relationships
between SMU and cyber-bullying outcomes were estimated using Poisson regression (weighted
n ¼ 166,647 from 42 countries).
Results: Variations in SMU and cyber-bullying follow developmental and gender-based patterns
across countries. In pooled analyses, engagement in SMU related to cyber-bullying victimization
(adjusted relative risks ¼ 1.14 [95% confidence interval (CI): 1.10e1.19] to 1.48 [95% CI: 1.42e1.55]) and perpetration (adjusted relative risk ¼ 1.31 [95% CI: 1.26e1.36] to 1.84 [95% CI: 1.74e1.95]).
These associations were stronger for cyber-perpetration versus cyber-victimization and for girls
versus boys. Problematic SMU was most strongly and consistently associated with cyber-bullying,
both for victimization and perpetration. Stratified analyses showed that SMU related to cybervictimization
in 19%e45% of countries and to cyber-perpetration in 38%e86% of countries.
Conclusions: Accessibility to social media and its pervasive use has led to new opportunities for
online aggression. The time adolescents spend on social media, engage in problematic use, and talk
to strangers online each relate to cyber-bullying and merit public health intervention. Problematic
use of social media poses the strongest and most consistent risk."

# Outcome

The present study tries to explore age, gender, and cross-national differences in adolescents' engagement in social media use (SMU), then relationships between SMU and victimization and the perpetration of cyber-bullying (Craig et al., 2020). There are 3 main findings presented in the study: First, the researchers observed more consistent relationships across countries for each of the three types of SMU with perpetration of cyber-bullying compared with cyber victimization.
Second, there are relationships in more countries for girls than boys, for both cyber-bullying and cyber victimization.
Third, for both boys and girls, problematic media use related to cyber-bullying and cyber-victimization in the most countries and estimates indicated the presence of modest to strong effects that merit public health intervention.