Cyberbullying Victimization in WhatsApp Classmate Groups among Israeli Elementary, Middle, and High School Students

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## Sample

Data were collected from 4,477 students (52% females), sampled from 194 classes in 28 public schools: elementary schools—fourth to sixth grades (n = 2,940, 65%)—middle schools—seventh to ninth grades (n = 1,326, 30%)— and a high school—10th to 12th grades (n = 211, 5%). Schools that participated in the study were involved in a large-scale preventive intervention program aimed at reducing cyberbullying and improving usage norms in WhatsApp classmate groups

## Implications For Educators About

School networking

# Abstract

In recent years children and adolescents lead their social lives in the virtual world no less than in the real one. Social networking sites such as WhatsApp play a major role as popular social communication platforms. More than 97% of Israeli youth use WhatsApp and are members of WhatsApp classmate
groups. The growing use of WhatsApp is accompanied by increased frequency of cyberbullying, that is, intended and repeated aggressive online behavior aimed to inflict harm. Cyberbullying victimization has received a fair amount of attention due to its association with serious psychosocial, affective, behavioral, and academic problems. Although much has been written about cyberbullying on Facebook, literature about WhatsApp and cyberbullying is scarce. Based on a large-scale survey that examined the prevalence and
expressions of cyberbullying the current cross-sectional study provides a detailed description of cyberbullying victimization in WhatsApp classmate groups across grade level and gender among Israeli school-age children and adolescents. The study included 4,477 elementary, middle, and high school
students in Israel who completed questionnaires regarding cyberbullying victimization in their WhatsApp classmate groups. According to the study findings, approximately 30% of all survey participants report personal victimization from cyberbullying in their WhatsApp classmate groups, and almost double that report victimized aggression at least once in the recent past. Demographic variables such as school grade level and gender appear to moderate cyberbullying. Increased cyberbullying was found in elementary school compared with middle and high school, and more female compared with male students were victims of cyberbullying in WhatsApp classmate groups. The article outlines several areas of concern in cyberbullying research and discusses issues that future research might address. Education policy guidelines and implications for intervention are also discussed.

# Outcome

study findings (Aizenkot Kashy-Rosenbaum, 2019) show that about one-third of the students
were victims of cyberbullying, and approximately two-thirds were victims of aggressive behavior while participating in their WhatsApp classmate groups. According to the current study findings, the most common type of cyberbullying victimization is verbal violence, followed by group violence and selectivity, participation avoidance due to fear of offensive responses, and visual violence. females are significantly
more likely than males to be victimized by cyberbullying in WhatsApp classmate groups due to higher victimization from verbal violence, group violence, and selectivity and participation avoidance. Nonetheless, male students reported significantly more victimization from curse words than females. findings of the current study showed differences between school grade levels, with significantly decreased cyberbullying
victimization inversely related to school grade level