Bystanders’ Behavior in Cyberbullying Episodes: Active and Passive Patterns in the Context of Personal–Socio- Emotional Factors

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## Authors

Olenik-Shemesh D.;Heiman T.;Eden S.

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## Sample

The sample consisted of 1,094 Israeli adolescents ages 9 to 18 years (M = 12.87, SD = 2.09): 527 girls (48.4%) and 561 boys (51.6%). The study took place in 18 schools in the north, center, and south of Israel. Fifty-one percent of the students were enrolled in primary schools, 33% in junior high school, and 16% in high school

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Stepping up awareness and empowerment

# Abstract

The present study explored bystanders’ behavior in cyberbullying (CB) episodes among children and youth, focusing on active and passive behavior patterns. The study examined prevalence and characteristics of bystanders’ behavior following CB episodes, and their active–passive intervention patterns in relation to personal (age, gender) and socio-emotional (self-efficacy, social support, sense of loneliness) factors. Of the 1,094 participants (ages 9-18), 497 (46.4%) reported they were bystanders to CB episodes. Of the bystanders, 55.4% were identified as having a passive pattern of behavior—they did not provide any help to cyber-victims, whereas 44.6% were identified as having an active pattern—helping the cyber-victim. In line with the “bystanders’ effect,” only 35.6% of the bystanders offered direct help to cyber-victims after witnessing CB. When studying the personal–socio-emotional differences between active and passive bystanders, it was found that the “active bystanders” are more often girls, older, have more social support from significant others, and have lower levels of emotional loneliness than bystanders in the passive group. Differences within the passive and active patterns were studied as well. A logistic regression revealed the unique contribution of each predictor to the probability of being an active bystander. It was found that gender and age predicted the probability of being an active bystander: Girls are more likely than boys, and older bystanders are more likely than younger ones, to choose an active pattern and provide help to cyber-victims. In addition, implications for CB prevention and intervention involvement programs to encourage bystanders to help cyber-victims are discussed.

# Outcome

The findings indicate that a high number of children (46.4% of the 1,094 participants) were bystanders to CB episodes (Olenik-Shemesh, Heiman Eden, 2016). In addition, more than half of the bystanders were passive (55.4%) and did not provide any help to cyber-victims, most of them out of fear and a few because they thought the incident was not their business. Only one third of all CB bystanders online actually gave assistance to cyber-victims directly, in real time. the results indicated that girls were more likely than boys to intervene and assist cyber-victims. Moreover, the current findings indicate that active bystanders, who provided help to cyber-victims, are older than passive bystanders. Findings also indicate that the socio-emotional aspects that are associated with an active pattern of providing help to cyber-victims are social support from a significant other and lower levels of emotional loneliness, compared with the bystanders who manifested a passive pattern. The current findings suggest that a low sense of loneliness and
high levels of social support from someone close and valuable are significantly correlated with providing help to cyber-victims. The logistic regression model has revealed that gender and age predicted the probability of being an active bystander, helping the victim