Does cyberbullying overlap with school bullying when taking modality of involvement into account?

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# Abstract

Education professionals and researchers are concerned by school bullying and cyberbullying because of its repercussions on students’ health and the school climate. However, only a few studies investigating the impact of school versus cyberbullying have systematically explored whether student victims and perpetrators are involved in school bullying only, cyberbullying only, or both. The aim of the present study was thus to examine the possible overlap, as well as the similarities and/or differences, between these two forms of bullying when taking modality of involvement into account. Individual interviews were conducted with 1422 junior high- and high-school students (girls = 43%, boys = 57%, mean age = 14.3 ± 2.7 years). Results showed that cyberbullying and school bullying overlapped very little. The majority of students involved in cyberbullying were not simultaneously involved in school bullying. Moreover, results indicated that psychosocial problems (psychological distress, social disintegration, general aggression) varied according to the form of bullying. Victims of school bullying had greater internalizing problems than cybervictims, while school bullies were more aggressive than cyberbullies. Given the sizable proportion of adolescents involved in bullying (school and cyber) and its significant relationship with mental health, the issue warrants serious attention from school and public health authorities.

# Outcome

n the sample, 366 students (26%) reported being involved in school bullying: 211 of them were victims (15% of the sample), 109 were bullies (8% of the sample) and 46 were bullies/victims (3% of the sample).
Regarding cyberbullying, 386 (27%) students reported being involved in this kind of activity in cyberspace: 249 of them (18%) were cybervictims, 59 (4%) were cyberbullies and 76 (5%) were cyberbully-victims.
Concerning the question of profile stability across cyber and school bullying, results showed that these two forms of bullying overlapped very little. Overall, less than a quarter of students had the same profile in both cyber and school bullying: 13% (n = 10) of cyberbully-victims were also bullies/victims at school, 22% (n = 13) of cyberbullies were also school bullies; and 26% (n = 66) of cybervictims were also victims at school. Moreover, in the majority of cases, adolescents involved in cyberbullying were not the same as those involved in school bullying: 62% (n = 155) of cybervictims, 60% (n = 36) of cyberbullies and 51% (n = 59) of cyberbully-victims had a neutral profile in school bullying.