Psychological Well-Being in a Connected World: The Impact of Cybervictimization in Children’s and Young People’s Life in France

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# Abstract

The Internet is at the heart of our children’s and adolescents’ way of life. Although itopens up many positive perspectives in terms of access to information, knowledge,and communication, it also presents risks and potential negative experiences that canhave severe consequences at the individual level. In this paper, we are interestedin studying the link between cybervictimization, psychological well-being, and socialcompetence. More specifically, we want to study how children and adolescents’ anxiety,impulsivity, self-esteem, and deviant behaviors may be related to cybervictimization.We collected data from 1019 children and young people in France aged 9–17 in thecontext of the EU Kids online survey. Sampling was performed building a random-probability nationally representative sample of households with children using theInternet. Participants completed a questionnaire online by computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI). Structural equation model reveals that (1) cybervictimization isrelated to lower well-being, such as anxiety and low self-esteem, as well as lower socialcompetence, such as impulsivity and deviant behaviors, and that (2) all dimensionsof (non)well-being and social (in)competence are related to each other. Findings arediscussed in the light of Agnew general strain theory and previous research findings onthe consequences of cybervictimization.

# Outcome

Descriptive statistics show that although victims were not thatnumerous, more than one respondent in 10 (12.5%) had receivedmean or insulting messages, and 8.27% were ostracized froman online activity. Other types of victimization were marginal.The findings of our survey show that cybervictimization isassociated with strong negative consequences, such as higheranxiety and lower self-esteem, confirming previous conclusionsfrom research in France (Kubiszewski et al., 2013). Together,these results suggest that the more people report being victims,the higher they score on all the negative dimensions of well-being assessed in this paper. Moreover, cybervictimizationis also correlated with lower social competence, such asimpulsivity and deviant behavior. Our results meet previousevidence that cybervictimization is a major mental health hazard (Ortega et al., 2012; Kubiszewski et al., 2013; Kowalski et al.,2014; Lucas-Molina et al., 2018).