Moral Disengagement and Risk Prototypes in the Context of Adolescent Cyberbullying: Findings From Two Countries

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## Sample

"The sample of the study consisted of adolescent and young students attending public secondary schools in Italy and Greece. The age range of the participants was between 14 and 20 years
(M = 14.7, SD = 1.20; 55.5% females).
[...] The Italian sample (n = 1710, M = 16.35 years old, SD = 1.49, age range 14–20 years,
54.5% females) was recruited from 39 secondary schools in two
central regions of Italy (Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany)." (Lazuras et al., 2019, pp. 3-4).

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Cyberbullying is associated with a wide range of mental health difficulties and behavioral problems in adolescents and research is needed to better understand psychological correlates of this behavior. The present study used a novel model that incorporated Social Cognitive Theory and the prototype/willingness model to identify the correlates of behavioral willingness to engage in cyberbullying in two countries. Adolescent students were randomly selected from secondary schools in Italy (n = 1710) and Greece (n = 355), and completed anonymous measures of moral disengagement, descriptive norms, risk prototype evaluations and behavioral willingness to engage in cyberbullying. Hierarchical linear regression analyses showed that willingness to engage in cyberbullying was associated with moral disengagement, prototype evaluations and descriptive social norms in Italy, and with gender, moral disengagement and descriptive social norms in Greece. Regression-based multiple mediation modeling further showed that the association between moral disengagement and cyberbullying willingness was mediated by prototype evaluations in Italy and by descriptive norms in Greece. The implications of our findings are discussed in the context of self-regulating cyberbullying perpetration in adolescents and informing school-based policies and interventions to prevent cyberbullying behavior.

# Outcome

"The results supported the first hypothesis of the study by
showing that moral disengagement was positively associated
with willingness to engage in cyberbullying in both countries.
Instead of TPB-based intention measures, in the present study
we employed a more situation-based behavioral willingness
measure to reflect the behavioral tendency to engage in
cyberbullying perpetration in specific situations and social
contexts in the future (Gibbons et al., 1998; Todd et al.,
2016). [...] The present findings only partially supported the second
hypothesis of the study. In particular, different variables emerged
as mediators in the two countries. More specifically, in the
Italian sample, moral disengagement retained a significant effect
on willingness after PWM constructs were controlled for and
this is in line with previous research. [...] Overall, the findings of the present study indicated that
although moral disengagement is a strong predictor of
willingness to cyberbully, its effect can be mediated by different
constructs under different circumstances." (Lazuras et al., 2019, pp. 6-8).