An Investigation of Short-Term Longitudinal Associations Between Social Anxiety and Victimization and Perpetration of Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying

# Details

## Year

2016

## DOI

10.1007/s10964-015-0259-3

## Issued

2015

## Language

English

## Volume

45

## Issue

2

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Journal of Youth and Adolescence

## Publisher

Springer Science and Business Media LLC

## Topics

## Sample

A short-term longitudinal study of 2,128 students in Belgium among 10–17 year olds, there was a six-month interval between the
two measurements

## Implications For Parents About

Other

## Other Parent Implication

Learn their children social skills to defend themselves against cyberbullies

## Implications For Educators About

Other

# Abstract

Previous research has suggested that social anxiety is associated with victimization and
perpetration of (cyber)bullying. The direction and causality of this relationship has not yet
been empirically supported for both traditional and cyberbullying involvement. This study
examined short-term longitudinal associations between feelings of social anxiety and
involvement in traditional bullying and cyberbullying among 2,128 adolescents aged 10 to 17
(56.6 % girls). A cross-lagged panel analysis provided evidence for the contribution of social
anxiety to later victimization of bullying, both on- and offline. The possibility of a reciprocal
relationship was also examined, although it was not supported. Furthermore, longitudinal
bidirectional relationships between social anxiety and the perpetration of bullying were
investigated. Only one significant longitudinal association was found: the perpetration of
traditional bullying predicted subsequent higher levels of social anxiety. The implications of
these findings are discussed.

# Outcome

"Social anxiety is a significant risk factor for victimization of (cyber)bullying, rather than an outcome of being victimized. Perpetrators might choose socially anxious peers because they have less developed social skills to interact and communicate with others and/or are less able to defend themselves. Victimization of traditional bullying and cyberbullying, did predict (respectively) later perpetration of bullying. Socially anxious victims might be more inclined to use only anonymous and private types of cyberbullying instead of all cyberbullying forms. Additionally, cyberbullying might represent a form of bullying that is more accepted than traditional bullying or even
increase the popularity of the perpetrator. Moreover, even when cyberbullying evokes negative reactions from others, cyberbullies might be less affected by them because they might have cyberbullied anonymously and did
not receive personally addressed negative reactions.
For prevention and intervention programs, further development of these skills might be a suitable strategy to enhance defensibility and to diminish bullying. Parents and educators should be aware of the importance of providing social skills training to relieve anxiety, to enhance peer relationships, and to handle potentially aggressive behavior offline and online. Additional (longitudinal) research is also needed that compares bystanders‟ and peers‟ reactions to the perpetration of traditional bullying versus the perpetration of cyberbullying and the influence
of these reactions on perpetrators‟ level of social anxiety." (Pabian Vandebosch, 2016, pp. 17-19)