Young, Bullying, and Connected. Common Pathways to Cyberbullying and Problematic Internet Use in Adolescence

# Details

## Year

2019

## DOI

10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01467

## Issued

2019

## Language

English

## Volume

10

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Frontiers in Psychology

## Publisher

Frontiers Media SA

## Topics

* Social mediation
* Risks and harms
* Wellbeing

## Sample

The survey was completed by "3602 students (56% were males, n = 2010), including Lower Secondary School students (n = 934, 26%) and Upper Secondary School students (n = 2668, 74%). Students’ ages ranged from 11 to 20 years (M = 14.64, SD = 1.70). Students with non-Italian citizenship represented 17.1% of the sample (21% in Lower Secondary Schools and 15.4% in Upper Secondary Schools)." (Brighi et al., 2019, p. 3)

## Implications For Parents About

# Abstract

Cyberbullying perpetration (CBP) and problematic Internet use (PIU) are the most studied risky online activities for adolescents in the current generation. However, few studies have investigated the relationship between CBP and PIU. Still lacking is a clear understanding of common or differentiated risk and protective pathways for adolescents interacting in the cyber world. The aim of this study was to understand the role of individual (emotional symptoms) and environmental variables (parental monitoring) underpinning both CBP and PIU, with time spent online as a mediator of these factors. Furthermore, we investigated gender and school level differences in these dynamics. A questionnaire was filled in by 3,602 students from Italian Lower Secondary Schools and Upper Secondary Schools. Structural equation modeling was used to test the effects of emotional symptoms and parental monitoring on CBP and PIU mediated by time spent online, controlling for school level. In addition, the model was implemented for girls and boys, respectively. Negative emotional symptoms and low levels of parental monitoring were risk factors for both CBP and PIU, and their effect was mediated by the time spent online. In addition, parental monitoring highlighted the strongest total effect on both CBP and PIU. Risk and protective pathways were similar in girls and boys across Lower Secondary and Upper Secondary Schools, although there were some slight differences. CBP and PIU are the outcomes of an interplay between risk factors in the individual and environmental systems. The results highlight the need to design interventions to reduce emotional symptoms among adolescents, to support parental monitoring, and to regulate the time spent online by adolescents in order to prevent risky online activities.

# Outcome

"Our study sought to investigate the role of emotional symptoms
and parental monitoring of online activities on CBP and PIU,
taking into account the time spent online as a mediator. This
study presents an important element of innovation, since it
considers both CBP and PIU as outcomes of common risk
pathways, within an ecological framework by exploring the
contribution of individual and contextual factors.
According to our results, both CBP and PIU are behaviors with
a worrisome diffusion among Italian adolescents. Concerning
CBP, about one-quarter of the adolescents admitted some forms
of CBP. Our data confirmed high involvement in cyberbullying
among Italian students, as already described in previous studies
in Europe (Genta et al., 2012; Del Rey et al., 2015). Concerning
PIU, indexes of serious PIU were displayed by about 30% of the
adolescents, with some signs of an addictive relationship with
communication technologies.
[...] Concerning individual and contextual factors, more than half
of respondents did not report any kind of parental monitoring
over their online activity, depicting an image of distance between
parents and children in reference to what happens on the
Internet. Almost one-third of adolescents reported negative
emotional symptoms. [...] Analyzing how emotional symptoms and parental monitoring
of online activities could be connected to CBP and PIU, and
as problematic outcomes of the interplay between individual
and contextual factors, our results highlighted that negative
emotional symptoms and a lack of parental monitoring both had
a direct effect and an indirect effect, mediated by time spent
online, on CBP and PIU, increasing the risk for both of them.
However, it is worth noting that time online alone was not a
sufficient risk factor for CBP and PIU as its mediation explained
only about one-fourth of the effects. It increased, instead, the
risk, starting from a situation of vulnerability. Time online, in
fact, seemed to add further risk, in the framework of a general
underlying risky configuration, where high emotional symptoms
and lack of parental monitoring depicted a scenario of potential
vulnerability to CBP and PIU." (Brighi et al., 2019, p. 8)