

# Cyberbullying and Teenage Mental Health

## How the Online Activity of Teenagers Can Impact Their Well-Being

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### Abstract

- Cyberbullying is prevalent in today's digital society and impacts more than one age group, but the primary age group is 13-18.
- This qualitative analysis of existing data approaches cyberbullying from a mental health standpoint. This poster shows why certain demographics are more susceptible to the impact of cyberbullying, what mental illnesses are caused by cyberbullying, and present statistics that could lead to solutions.
- In this project, I hope to capture attention, inform people, and encourage action.

### Introduction

- Cyberbullying has become a prevalent and hot-button topic in the United States.
- Often, the times that this issue is brought to light are when tragedy occurs, which is most often teen suicide or a mass shooting.
- Teens seem jaded by the impact of cyberbullying on their lives.
- However, the impact of cyberbullying, particularly on teenage mental health, should be considered by members of society.
- An abundance of channels exists through which this can happen.
- People seem to always have negative things to say, and these various media channels only make it easier for them to do so.
- Overall, cyberbullying is an issue that we only see increasing due to the various mediums and ways to remain anonymous.
- The purpose of this research is to inform different demographic groups of the impact of cyberbullying on the typical teenager's life.
- This research examined how and why cyberbullying occurs.

### Literature Review

- A September 2018 Pew Research Center study reported that 59% of teenagers experienced some form of cyberbullying.
- Victims of cyberbullying report more social difficulties, anxiety and depression, and are more likely to suffer from ideation of suicide (McLoughlin, 2019).
- In one study, mental health of both boys and girls is impacted by cyberbullying in the short term, but the impact differs between the genders over the long term (Bannink, 2014).
- The link between cyberbullying and mental health is solidified by research.
- "There is an emerging body of empirical work showing an association between social media and negative moods such as loneliness, anxiety, suicide rates, and depressive symptoms" (Sasso, 2019).
- Overall, emotional cognition is highly impacted by social media, and it is concerning (Sasso).
- However, the role of social media has a positive side in the topic of mental health.
- One of the most identifiable impacts of social media on mental health is the way that mental health has been brought to light.
- Social support is the main way that this has become so prevalent.
- In fact, students who report higher levels of social media usage and support report lower levels of depressive thoughts, anxiety, etc. (Drouin, 2018).

### Sources

- Bannink, Rienke, et al. "Cyber and Traditional Bullying Victimization as a Risk Factor for Mental Health Problems and Suicidal Ideation in Adolescents." PLOS ONE, vol. 9, April 2014.
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- Larisa T. McLoughlin (2019). Understanding and measuring coping with cyberbullying in adolescents: exploratory factor analysis of the brief coping orientation to problems experienced inventory. *Current Psychology*, 10.1007/s12144-019-00378-8.
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- Sasso, M. P., Giovanetti, A. K., Schied, A. L., Burke, H. H., & Haeffel, G. J. (2019). #Sad: Twitter Content Predicts Changes in Cognitive Vulnerability and Depressive Symptoms. *Cognitive Therapy & Research*, 43(4), 657-665. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.waterfield.murraystate.edu/10.1007/s10608-019-10001-6>.

### Data

- In the 2017-18 school year, 3,245 cases of "harassing communication" were reported throughout public school systems in Kentucky. The numbers were distributed in the following way:

Grade	# of cases
0	25
1	31
2	67
3	111
4	133
5	125
6	493
7	548
8	436
9	599
10	371
11	181
12	124
14	1

- The most notable area in this data set is grades 6-9, or the 12-15 year-old age group, which has the highest number of reported "harassing communication" cases.
- However, I approached this data with a different viewpoint: How many of these cases are going unreported?

**Source:** Morrison, Lee Ann, and Kristie R. Blevins. "Kentucky 2017-2018 16th Annual Safe Schools Data Project." Kentucky Center for School Safety, February 2019.

### Discussion

- Literature shows an abundance of academic research to support claim that teenage mental health is impacted by cyberbullying.
- Attention is needed to remedy this problem.
- I advocate for the awareness of mental health, particularly because I struggle with it myself.
- Teens struggle with it, even though they may not vocalize it.
- Teens look for ways to better themselves. Social media is prone to producing unrealistic expectations when it comes to esteem, causing incidences of cyberbullying to occur.
- "Victims of cyberbullying report significantly more social difficulties, higher levels of anxiety and depression, and are more likely to suffer suicidal ideation than victims of traditional bullying," (McLoughlin).
- Additional problems that stem from cyberbullying are isolation and lack of social connectedness (McLoughlin).
- Future research on this topic could go a variety of ways. There is an abundance of studies that could be performed to analyze the many aspects of this situation.

### For more information

<https://emmarenfro10.wixsite.com/jmc168>

### Conclusion

- Overall, mental health does not receive enough attention.
- Teenagers are the future of this world, whether society truly realizes it. They are the next set of creative minds, the future doctors and lawyers, the ones who will be teaching and preparing the next set of minds.
- As a society, we should do things that truly matter and truly show that mental health is a priority.
- Protection of mental health is key, and combatting cyberbullying is one way to start.



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