

Relationship seen across studies between cyberbullying, depression

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The median percentage of children and adolescents who reported being bullied online was 23 percent and there appears to be a consistent relationship between cyberbullying and reports of depression in a review of social media studies, according to an article published online by *JAMA Pediatrics*.

Social media is a presence in the lives of young people, with reports indicating 95 percent of American teenagers use the Internet and that 81 percent of them use social media. But these online interactions can coincide with potential risks and safety concerns regarding social media, including [cyberbullying](#).

Michele P. Hamm, Ph.D., of the University of Alberta, Canada, and coauthors reviewed 36 studies to examine the health-related effects of cyberbullying through social media among [children](#) and adolescents. Most of the studies were conducted in the United States and included middle and [high school students](#) between the ages of 12 and 18 and the majority were female. Facebook was the most commonly used platform with 89 percent to 97.5 percent of social media users indicating they had an account.

The authors found 23 percent was the median percentage of children and adolescents who reported cyberbullying, although reports of its prevalence ranged from 4.8 percent to 73.5 percent. The most common reason for online bullying was relationship issues, with girls most often being the recipient of the bullying.

The review of studies also indicates that cyberbullying was consistently associated with an increased likelihood of depression. Some studies reported weak or inconsistent correlations between cyberbullying and anxiety, according to the results.

Common social media platforms for cyberbullying included blogs, Twitter, [social networking sites](#) and message boards. Name-calling, spreading gossip and rumors, and circulating pictures were common forms of bullying. The most common strategies children and adolescents reported using to cope with cyberbullying were passive, such as blocking the sender, ignoring or avoiding messages, and protecting personal information. Children and adolescents also tended to believe that little could be done to prevent or reduce cyberbullying.

The authors note there were considerable variations in definitions, measures used and results cited across the 36 studies they included.

"The evolution of [social media](#) has created an online world that has benefits and potential harms to children and [adolescents](#). Cyberbullying has emerged as a primary concern in terms of safety, and, while publications remain inconclusive regarding its effects on mental health, there is some evidence to suggest that there are associations of harms with exposure to cyberbullying as well as cyberbullying behavior. This review provides important information characterizing the issue of cyberbullying that will help inform prevention and management strategies, including attributes of the recipients and perpetrators, reasons for and the nature of bullying behaviors, and how recipients currently react to and manage bullying behaviors," the study concludes.

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