

Researchers receive Facebook grant to study cyberbullying and teen dating violence

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Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D., a cyberbullying expert, co-director of the Cyberbullying Research Center and a professor of criminology and criminal justice at Florida Atlantic University has received a \$188,776 grant from the Digital Trust Foundation, formed by Facebook, to collect nationally-representative data on cyberbullying and teen dating violence. The overarching goal of this study is to illuminate the nationwide prevalence, frequency and scope of cyberbullying and electronic dating violence among a population of youth.

"Cyberbullying is a unique form of digital abuse that involves a range of tormenting, humiliating, threatening, embarrassing and harassing behaviors and has gained a lot of attention in recent years," said Hinduja. "Many teens across the United States also experience dating violence that typically consists of various forms of mistreatment from insults and rumor spreads to threats and physical assaults."

Hinduja and his collaborator Justin Patchin, Ph.D., a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and co-director of the Cyberbullying Research Center, will rigorously construct a nationally-representative panel of teens - ages 12 to 17 years old - who will be surveyed with parental consent. Apart from descriptive findings by age, gender, grade, and other important demographics, the researchers also will collect data on contributing factors to perpetration and victimization, as well as the negative outcomes that stem from cyberbullying participation as an aggressor or a target.

There are a number of similarities between cyberbullying and electronic dating violence. Both naturally employ technology and lead to specific emotional, psychological, physical, and behavioral consequences. Cyberbullying tends to occur between individuals who do not like and do not want to be around each other. Electronic dating violence transpires between two people who are attracted to each other, at least on some level.

Studies have shown that patterns of dating violence often start during adolescence and then carry on into adulthood, and that the degree of [intimate partner violence](#) tends to increase if the behavior has taken root during one's formative years.

"Most previous studies have focused on local schools or school districts as data sources. This leads to a key methodological limitation - the potential lack of generalizability - which can be addressed with a nationally-representative replication," said Hinduja. "Moreover, the few nationally-representative data sources that have been analyzed are woefully out of date."

Significant media attention has recently been directed toward small samples consisting of students from one particular school. This study will consist of a large nationally-representative sample of youth from which more valid conclusions can be drawn about the nature, extent, and correlates of cyberbullying and electronic teen dating violence.

Results of this study will be disseminated through blogs and fact sheets posted on the Cyberbullying Research Center website, which receives approximately 8,000 unique visitors each day, as well as through peer-reviewed journal articles and academic and professional conference presentations. Hinduja and Patchin will work with parenting and educator groups, policymakers, legal scholars and legislators, and the data obtained in this project will contribute valuable evidence to these discussions.

The Cyberbullying Research Center has been collecting data from middle and high school students since 2002. Hinduja and Patchin have surveyed more than 15,000 students from middle and high schools from across the U.S. in 11 unique projects. Findings show that overall, about 26 percent of the students surveyed over the last nine studies have reported that they have been cyberbullied at some point in their

lifetimes. About 9 percent said they were cyberbullied in the 30 days preceding the survey. Similarly, about 16 percent of those surveyed admitted that they had cyberbullied others at some point in their lifetimes (about 6 percent in the most recent 30 days).

Hinduja and Patchin also recently reviewed 73 published research articles available on the prevalence rates for cyberbullying. Fifty-one of those articles included cyberbullying victimization rates and 42 included cyberbullying offending rates. Rates across all of the studies ranged widely, from 2.3 percent to 72 percent for victimization and from 1.2 percent to 44.1 percent for offending.

"The average across all of these studies was remarkably similar to the rates found in our work - about 21 percent of teens have been cyberbullied and about 15 percent admitted to cyberbullying others at some point in their lifetimes," said Hinduja. "Taken as a whole, it seems safe to conclude that about one out of every four teens has experienced cyberbullying, and about one out of every six teens has done it to others."

Hinduja received the Global Anti-Bullying Hero Award for 2015 from Auburn University for his efforts and contributions on the subject and recently spoke on Capitol Hill at a Congressional Briefing about cyberbullying and teen [dating violence](#).

Provided by Florida Atlantic University

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