

Researchers find adolescent cyberbullies also more likely to be victims

February 20 2023



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Early adolescents who engage in cyberbullying are more likely to

become victims, according to new research from the University of the Sunshine Coast.

In a recent journal article supervised by researchers at UniSC's Thompson Institute, lead researcher Lia Mills said the study originally set out to establish if there were any direct links between [cyberbullying](#) in 12-year-olds, and gender, [social connectedness](#) and impulsivity.

The results painted an entirely different picture.

"We didn't find any [significant relationship](#) between cyberbullying and social connectedness, impulsivity or gender, but we did find that low social connectedness predicted high levels of impulsivity," Mills said.

"We also found that those who participate in cyberbullying perpetration, are also more likely to be cybervictims—and vice versa."

This group are at particularly high risk for depression, anxiety and less engagement with school.

"The good news is that our sample of 12-year-olds reported having very low levels of cyberbullying experience and involvement," Mills said.

Mills said the correlation between low social connectedness and high impulsivity was also concerning.

"Research has also found that social connectedness can help mediate some of the negative outcomes of bullying involvement. If young people who are being bullied already lack social connection, they may have fewer resources to help them cope with the bullying, and may have high rates of impulsivity," Mills said.

"Individuals with high [impulsivity](#) have also been shown to be at an

increased risk of suicidal behavior and risk-taking behavior."

The study is another result of the Thompson Institute's world-first Longitudinal Adolescent Brain Study—a five-year research project dedicated to better understanding the brains of young people.

Thompson Institute Deputy Director Professor Daniel Hermens said the [longitudinal study](#) aimed to address the sobering reality that more than half of all [mental health](#) disorders present by the age of 14 years.

"If we are to solve this, it really is imperative that we understand more about how a young person's mental health is linked to [brain](#) development throughout its most crucial and dynamic phase of adolescence," Professor Hermens said.

"The way we work, interact and even socialize is increasingly occurring in online environments. Cyberbullying can have quite a dramatic impact on young people in terms of their mental health and well-being. Through LABS, the team is developing a greater understanding of not only the impact of cyberbullying on mental health but also why people engage in such activity."

Mills said she's planning further research investigating social connectedness, suicidality and cyber-bullying in a larger group of [young people](#), and the physical effects on the brain.

"This research will also look at adolescents' brain activity, to see if cyberbullying and its correlates are affecting adolescent brain activity and development," Mills said.

The work is published in the *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*.

More information: Lia Mills et al, Social Connectedness and Impulsivity as Predictors of Cyberbullying Behaviors in Early Adolescence, *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* (2023).
[DOI: 10.1080/10926771.2022.2164535](https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2022.2164535)

Provided by University of the Sunshine Coast

Citation: Researchers find adolescent cyberbullies also more likely to be victims (2023, February 20) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-02-adolescent-cyberbullies-victims.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.