

Cyberbullying hurts everyone including bystanders

February 9 2016, by Fiona Tyrrell

Cyberbullying hurts everyone including the bystanders who witness the behaviour, according a bullying expert from Trinity College Dublin.

Up to 20 per cent of young people are victims of cyberbullying, however a much greater number of young people who witness cyberbullying as [bystanders](#) are also negatively affected by the phenomenon, according to Conor Mc Guckin, Assistant Professor in Education at Trinity, who has recently published a new book on cyberbullying entitled "Cyberbullying: From Theory to Interventions".

Dr Mc Guckin commented: "We can think of a class of pupils being subdivided into four groups: bullies, victims, those that are both bullies and victims at the same time, and bystanders. Even those young people who witness cyberbullying as bystanders are negatively affected. They have to make a decision – should I try to stop it, help the victim, or, more commonly, make a decision not to intervene in case it makes them a target of the bully. We must teach children to be 'upstanders' who stand up for the victim and not passive 'bystanders'."

Dr Mc Guckin's new book, "Cyberbullying: From Theory to Interventions", co-edited with colleagues in the Netherlands, sets out the definition and theoretical background to the emerging issue of cyberbullying and describes new evidence-based interventions to prevent and combat cyberbullying.

Dr Mc Guckin added: "New technology opens up exciting opportunities

for us all. However, cyberbullying is a reality and is on the increase. Practical strategies to combat cyberbullying include ensuring that adults and teachers understand the technology themselves, teaching young people about the importance of strong and effective passwords and encouraging open communication with young people about the benefits and problems associated with technology."

"In considering any new legislation or policies we need to be careful not to create a new set of victims by turning children and young people into criminals when they inadvertently cross a line when they are online. Instead we need to teach young people to have basic good manners and respect in all their online engagements and teach them about the importance of coping skills and how to reflect and ask for help when things get out of hand."

Key messages in the book:

- An estimated 15-20% of young people are affected by cyberbullying compared to 30-40% of young people affected by traditional bullying. However, many more [young people](#) are involved in cyberbullying as witnesses or bystanders.
- Cyberbullying is related to a host of negative consequences including lower self-esteem, increased depression and self-harm, impaired relationships and concentration and other behavioural problems.
- There is a big overlap between cyberbullying and traditional bullying. Most research finds that the same children involved in traditional bullying are also those that are involved in [cyberbullying](#).
- Cyberbullying is defined as any behaviour performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort to others

Provided by Trinity College Dublin

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