

What are the risks of student cyberbullying?

5 September 2013

Details of a survey of middle and high school student attitudes to cyberbullying and online safety will be published in the *International Journal of Social Media and Interactive Learning Environments*. The analysis of the results shows that many children are bullied and few understand internet safety.

Stacey Kite, Robert Gable and Lawrence Filippelli of the Johnson & Wales University, in Providence, Rhode Island, USA, surveyed more than 4200 students about their knowledge of potential risks, appropriate use, and their behaviors on the internet and social networking sites, especially regarding behaviors that may lead to cyber bullying or contact with potential internet predators. The survey was based on the 47 items and five dimensions of the "Survey of knowledge of internet risk and behavior" (SKIRB).

The team found that an alarming number of students, almost one in three admitted to being bullied at [school](#). They also found that parental involvement in monitoring internet activity is low among this group with about a third of middle school and 17% of high school students reporting that their parents monitor their internet. Overall, the researchers found that students had little or no knowledge of [internet safety](#).

While parents and carers endeavor to protect children from danger usually outside the home, the environment in which the so-called digital natives are growing up in is very different from the world in which their parents reached adulthood. Information and communications technology is almost ubiquitous with almost nine out of every ten children having access to a computer at home now and 93% of teens using the internet.

"The need to monitor children's behaviors has become increasingly difficult with the extension of the internet and cell phones. No longer are children safe and sound in their home or school. In fact, the threats found on the internet may be more dangerous and threatening since there are often

no barriers," the team says. They add that it is becoming increasingly apparent that many teens are unaware of the risks of inappropriate behaviors online, viewing them as trivial and taking an "it won't happen to me" stance. Unfortunately, this lack of understanding and frivolous interpretation often leads to them coping on their own, not informing a parent or adult in a judicious time, if at all, and exposing them to real dangers in the offline world.

The team reports that educating youngsters about the risks in a non-patronizing way as well as teaching them about respect and having an open anti-bullying approach to relationships is vital to reduce the risk of [children](#) and teens being exposed to potential harm, whether physical or psychological, originating online.

More information: "Cyber threats: a study of what middle and high school student know about threatening behaviors and internet safety" in *Int. J. Social Media and Interactive Learning Environments*, 2013, 1, 240-254

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