Online Harassment and Cyberbullying II

An extended report on the "Coping strategies in adolescents facing cyberbullying" research project conducted in the Czech Republic in 2011-2012.

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Introduction

In this extended report[1] we present the findings from our project focused on managing cyberbullying and online harassment in adolescence. Our study followed up on the international "COST Action - Cyberbullying"[2] project, which dealt with managing the negative aspects of using new forms of technology as well as supporting positive approaches to their use.

The research team in the Czech Republic was comprised of: Assoc. Prof. PhDr. David Šmahel, Ph.D., Anna Ševčíková, Ph.D., Alena Černá, M.A., Hana Macháčková, M.A., and Lenka Dědková, M.A.

The aim of our project was to discover how adolescents who were the target of online attacks and cyberbullying coped with their experiences.3 We examined what influenced their reasons for choosing certain strategies for coping with cyberbullying, as well as the effectiveness of these strategies. The study was based on a questionnaire survey filled out by more than two thousand students ranging from primary school sixth graders to third year secondary school students in the South Moravian Region of the Czech Republic. The survey started in November 2011 and was completed in January of the following year.

The aim of both the project and this report is to provide a basic overview of how cyberbullying victims cope with cyberbullying, as well as how adolescent bystanders react to cyberbullying and online attacks. In the conclusion we outline some possible ways to avoid and/or stop cyberbullying.

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[1] You can find the original report (in Czech) on http://www.cyberpsychology.eu/team/storage/2012-Machackova-Online_obtezovani_a_kybersikana.pdf
[2] More information can also be found on http://sites.google.com/site/costis0801
[3] More information about the project can be found on the homepage of the Institute for Research on Children, Youth and Family: http://ivdmr.fss.muni.cz/projekt-copingove-strategie-kybersikany-u-adolescentu.

1. Study participants

Age	Percentage
12	10%
13	14%
14	17%
15	15%
16	15%
17	19%
18	10%
Total	2,092 students

Data were obtained from 2,092 students aged 12 to 18 studying at primary and secondary schools in the South Moravian Region at the time of the study. The study sample was randomly selected; thirty-four schools participated in the study. The average age of students participating in the study was 15 years; 55% of participants were girls.

2. Online Harassment and Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon that has arisen with the spread of information and communication technology into our daily lives. It is a compound word, consisting of two main terms – "cyber" and "bullying" – as it is *bullying* that takes place in *cyberspace*, primarily on the Internet and through mobile phones.

Given the fact that cyberbullying has emerged with the massive expansion of ICT use, its definition is constantly developing and becoming more specific. It seems that it is very important to differentiate between different types of online attacks, as they may take on many forms: some attacks may be isolated and relatively banal incidents (for example when someone has received an offensive e-mail from an unknown sender) that have practically no impact on the recipient, whereas other forms of harassment can be long-term and serious in nature and may lead the victim to suicidal thoughts. Experts on cyberbullying agree that online attacks can be classified as cyberbullying only if:

1) They are aggressive and intentionally hurtful (whether conducted by a group or individual).
2) They happen repeatedly.

3) They put the victim into a situation where he/she cannot defend him/herself from online attacks (and thus power inequality is present).

4) The attacks take place on the Internet or using mobile phones.

5) The victim perceives this activity to be hurtful.

Attacks which do not meet these criteria are not considered to be acts of cyberbullying. Instead they are considered to be forms of online harassment, which, as opposed to cyberbullying, does not have such a strong impact on the victim (in less serious cases such harassment simply involves mere teasing amongst peers). Therefore, in this study we emphasize the difference between **online harassment** and **cyberbullying.** We use the broader term "online harassment" for all respondents who have faced some kind of online attack, whereas we use the term "cyberbullying" only in cases when the above-described criteria have been met. We therefore classify cyberbullying as a subset of online harassment.

In the first part of this report we describe the occurrence of both of these phenomena and then we focus on the characteristics and reactions of cyberbullying victims, and finally we examine the behavior of people who have witnessed online harassment and cyberbullying.

# 3. The occurrence of online harassment

In our study we asked students about their experience with online attacks. In the questionnaire we described negative forms of behavior such as: "*when someone uses the Internet or a mobile telephone to intentionally hurt another person or to cause trouble to them. Such behavior can, for example, involve: sending offensive and vulgar e-mails, SMS messages, or ICQ or chat messages; making public or otherwise distributing unflattering or modified pictures of someone to make fun of them; impersonating someone else and writing messages to people in that person's name; making fun of someone, threatening someone, talking about someone behind their back, etc.*"

We also asked the students if:

a) Something similar has happened to them.
b) They have done something similar to someone else.
c) They know of someone who has had something similar happen to them.

These questions helped us gain a basic overview of the occurrence of <u>online harassment</u>, which is depicted in the following graph. In this graph we do not yet differentiate between online harassment and cyberbullying. Most students (43%) have no personal experience with online harassment – they have never faced unpleasant behavior on the Internet, nor do they know anyone who has. This is without a doubt a very positive finding. In contrast we found that the percentage of students who have been the aggressors in online harassment is the lowest at almost 4%. There were a few more students who have been involved in online harassment in the roles of both victim and aggressor at almost 5%. Another 17% of students had experience with online harassment only as victims. There was a relatively high number of students who have experienced online harassment as a bystander or who know of someone who has been a victim (almost 32%).

Graph 1: The occurrence of online harassment by role.
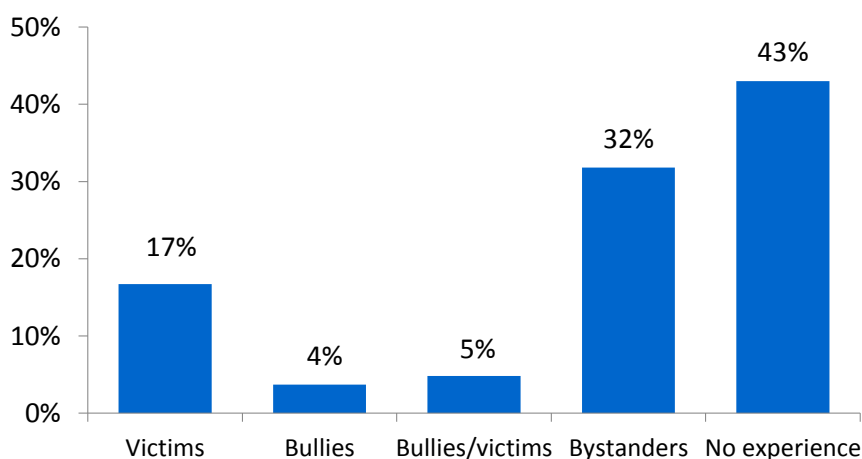
Percentages in the graph relate to **all students involved in the study.**
(N = 2092)

4. Identifying the victims of cyberbullying

Students reporting that they had been the victims of online harassment were asked to recall one specific incident or a series of incidents in which they were harassed that they considered to be the most hurtful and to answer further questions related only to these incidents.

In order to differentiate between victims of online harassment and cyberbullying we also took into account the following two criteria following the above definition of cyberbullying:

a) the intensity of harm caused by the incident as perceived by the victim

b) the length of time the victim felt upset about what happened

Of the total number of students harassed on the Internet 8% were "*not at all*" upset , 34% were "*a bit*" upset , 40% were "*fairly*" upset and only 17% were "*very*" upset . Graph 2 displays how much the students suffered and for how long by percentage. As you can see, the more intense the feeling of harm the victims reported, the longer it lasted.

Graph 2: Intensity of perceived harm and "length of time the victim perceived it"
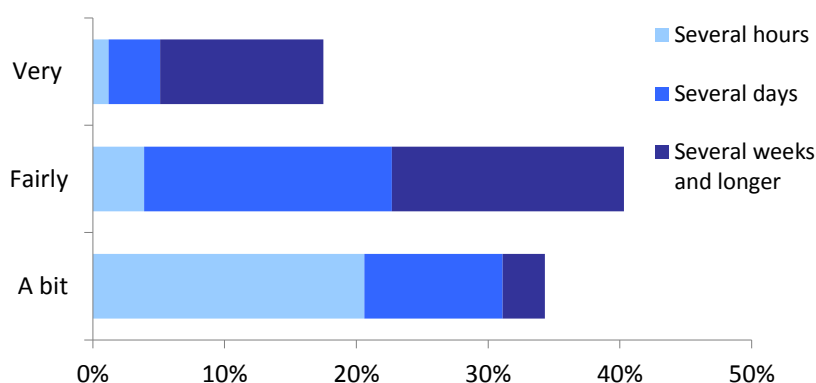
The percentages in the graph relate only **to students who have experienced online harassment** (N = 450)

In this report we consider students that have suffered "enough" or "really a lot" for at least several weeks several weeks to be victims of cyberbullying. If we take these criteria into account, we find that approximately 6% of students from the entire sample were victims of cyberbullying (i.e. 130 of the 2,092 students who participated in the study). Thus, victims of

cyberbullying make up 30% of the group of students who have been the victim of online harassment which we have already described (and who make up 22% of all children). Looking at it the other way around, 94% of students are not cyberbullied.

Children who are not targets of online aggression: 79%

Victims of online harassment: 21%

Victims of cyberbullying: 6%
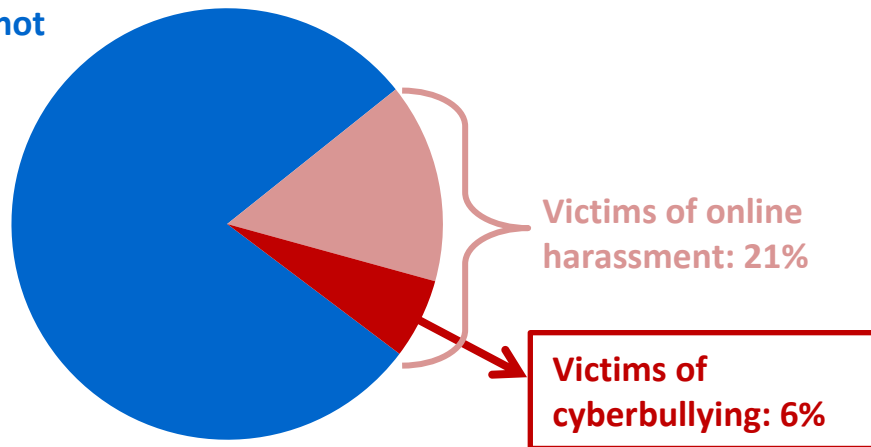
The percentage of cyberbullying victims in the study population is relatively low, which corresponds with the findings of other studies, including foreign ones. We would also like to mention the fact that we should understand the percentage of aggressors and bystanders depicted in Graph 1 in a similar way. It is more than likely that not all of these students are aggressors of true cyberbullying and that not all know about cases of true cyberbullying.

If we compare the victims of online harassment and cyberbullying by sex (see Graph 3), we can see a disparity – girls are more frequently the victims of both online harassment and cyberbullying. For cyberbullying the difference is truly significant – girls make up almost 90% of the victims. This seems to be caused by the fact that girls are not only harassed on the Internet or through mobile phones more frequently, but that the harm caused by this harassment is more intense and lasts longer than it does for boys.

In the next section we present findings related only to **victims of cyberbullying**, i.e. those students whose experience with online harassment caused them to be "fairly" or "very" upset for a period of several weeks. It should be noted that this makes up just 6% of all students.

Graph 3: Victims of cyberbullying by sex, by percentage.
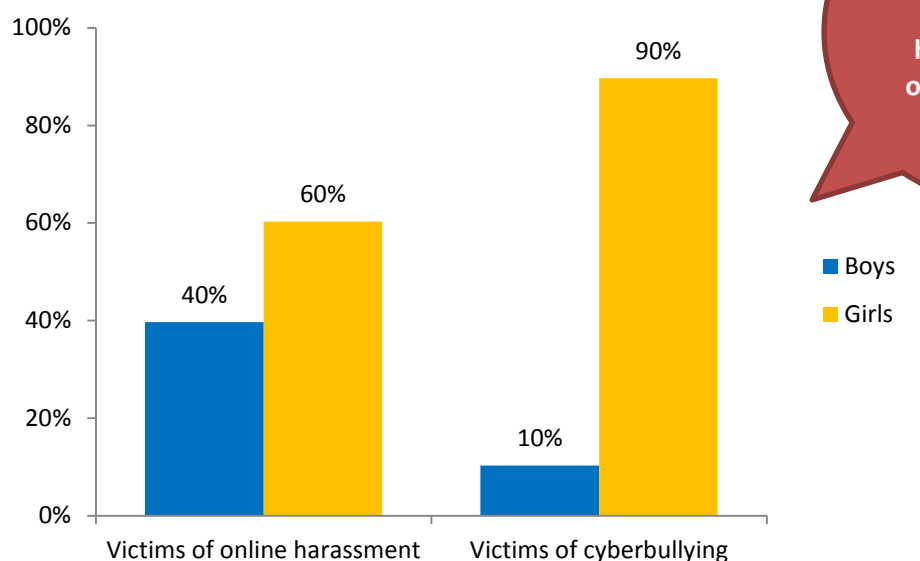
- Boys
- Girls

5. Victims of cyberbullying

When studying victims' experiences with cyberbullying we focused on two main issues – the incident itself (when it occurred and how) and how the students coped with it.

As cyberbullying can take on multiple forms simultaneously (for example, the victim may receive offensive e-mails and at the same time be publicly gossiped about on the Internet), we asked students about what type of cyberbullying they experienced. Their answers are depicted in Graph 5. It was discovered that the most frequent form of cyberbullying was gossiping or spreading untrue information through mobile phones or on the Internet. 84% of victims experienced this form of cyberbullying. It was also common for someone to impersonate the victim on the Internet or on mobile phones and to do things with which the victim did not agree (67%). The third most common form of cyberbullying was receiving offensive or threatening e-mails or messages (57%). It was the least common for photographs and videos which the victim was ashamed of to be made public, despite the fact that more than a third of the victims experienced this (42%). It must be emphasized that

students could have experienced more than one form of cyberbullying, and therefore the percentages presented do not represent mutually exclusive groups.

Graph 4: Forms of cyberbullying.

Form	Percentage
I was bad-mouthed or rumors were spread about me on the internet or through mobile phones.	84%
Someone impersonated me on the internet or through a mobile phone and did things I did not agree with.	67%
I received emails or other messages containing threats or curses.	57%
I was publicly cursed at or threatened on the internet.	52%
My personal information was made public and spread on the internet or through mobile phones.	51%
A photo or video of me that I was ashamed of was made public on the internet.	41%
Something else happened.	36%

Percentages in the graph relate only to **the victims of cyberbullying** (N = 130)

We also asked the victims of cyberbullying if and how they know the aggressor. People often talk about anonymous attackers when they talk about cyberbullying. However, from Graph 5 it is clear that in the majority of cases victims of cyberbullying know "their aggressors" – nearly 60% know their bully from school and another 30% personally know the bully from elsewhere. This corresponds to findings that cyberbullying is in most cases related to school bullying. It therefore appears that the Internet and mobile phones serve as *means* for facilitating undesirable behavior – behavior that is however based in the real world; technology is therefore not the cause of such behavior.

Graph 5: Where do victims of cyberbullying know the bully from.
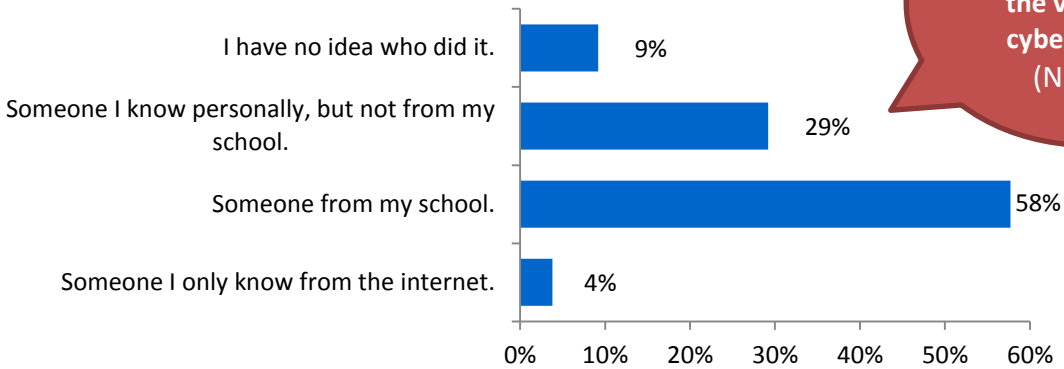
Percentages in the graph relate only to **the victims of cyberbullying** (N = 130)

I have no idea who did it.	9%
Someone I know personally, but not from my school.	29%
Someone from my school.	58%
Someone I only know from the internet.	4%

When students experience cyberbullying, their immediate emotional reactions differ. How they perceive such situations can affect how they deal with the entire situation. Therefore we asked students what feelings predominated at the time they were cyberbullied. The most common reaction to the behavior of bullies was anger. Following this feeling were feelings of powerlessness and sadness. All of the reactions are depicted in Graph 6.
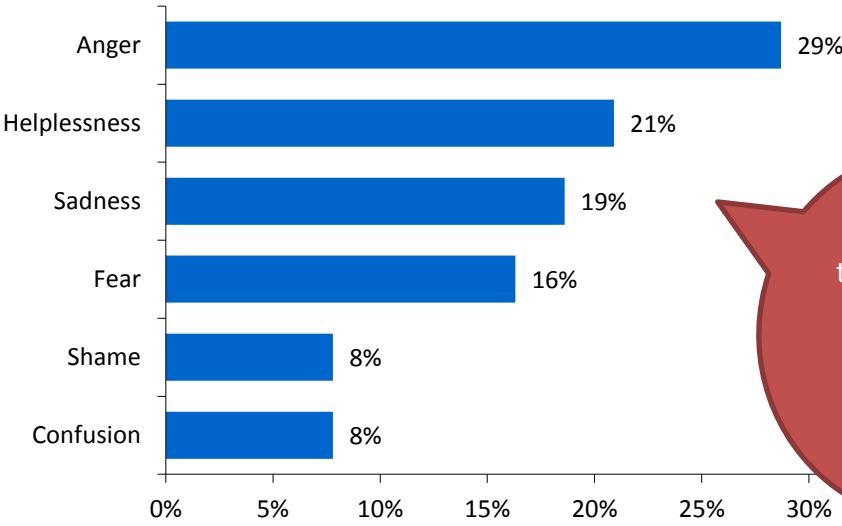
Graph 6: The immediate emotional reaction of victims of cyberbullying.

Percentages in the graph relate only to **the victims of cyberbullying** (N = 130)

Anger	29%
Helplessness	21%
Sadness	19%
Fear	16%
Shame	8%
Confusion	8%

After the first emotional reaction to harassment, victims may decide to act and do something to cope with the situation. For example, they may report the incident to someone, or they may speak with the aggressor and talk him/her into stopping bullying. In

order for victims to muster the courage to deal with cyberbullying they must first believe that something can be done to help in their situation. Therefore we asked victims how much confidence they had that they could somehow prevent this from happening again or somehow make it stop. Their answers are depicted in Graph 7. We can see that the majority of cyberbullying victims had only "a bit" of confidence, and some "none" (23%).

Graph 7: How much confidence did victims have that they could somehow prevent this from happening again or somehow make it stop?

Percentages in the graph relate only to **the victims of cyberbullying** (N = 130)
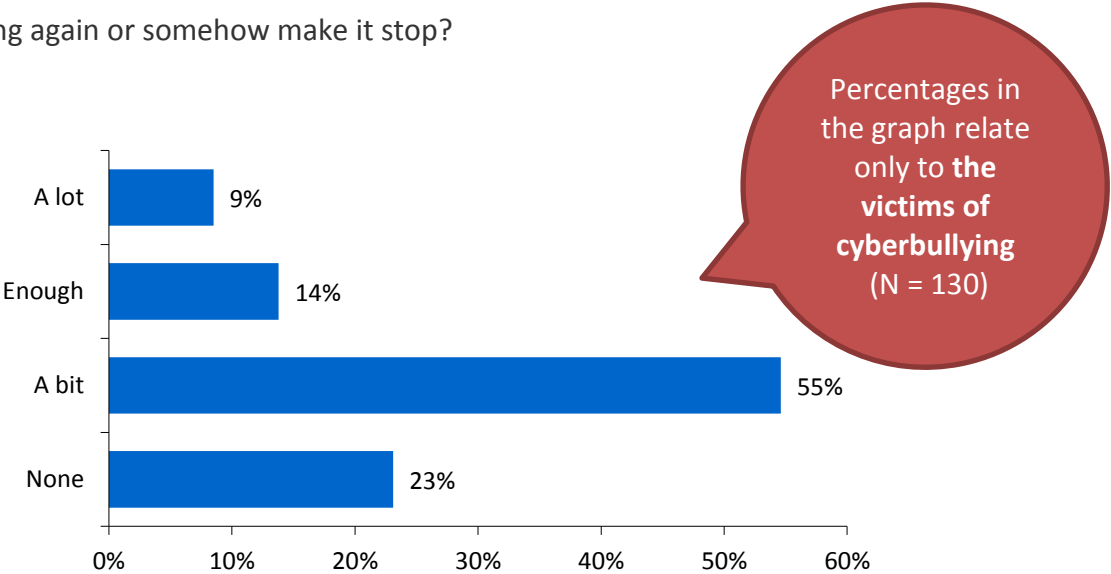
There are a multitude of strategies that students can use to cope with cyberbullying. Some strategies are very active and focus on solving the problem (e.g. reporting an incident to an administrator), whereas other strategies are based on managing negative feelings (e.g. by focusing on something else, by turning attention to something else, by telling someone about it, etc.) The strategies our respondents used are described in Graph 8.

Graph 8: Coping strategies of cyberbullying victims.

Coping strategy	Percentage
I thought to myself that the person was pitiful and stupid.	84%
I tried to focus on something else to avoid thinking about what happened.	82%
I told someone about it.	75%
I thought to myself that whoever is doing this to me is not worth my time.	69%
I deleted the person from my contacts.	68%
I started avoiding the person in real life.	58%
I changed my settings so that the person could not contact me anymore (e.g. blocking the person, filtering).	57%
I decided to ignore it.	56%
I deleted the messages that I found hurtful.	54%
I tried talking to the person on the internet or via mobile phone to persuade him or her to stop.	45%
I thought to myself that if something similar were to happen in real life, it would be much worse.	44%
I tried talking with the person face-to-face about the behavior or tried to persuade him or her to stop.	43%
I thought to myself that such things simply happen on the internet.	38%
I changed my phone no./email/profile/nickname.	30%
I thought to myself that he or she wouldn't do something similar to me in real life.	28%
I stopped visiting the web pages where it happened.	26%
I simply took it lightly.	23%
I searched for advice on the internet.	22%
I thought to myself that something like this could not hurt me.	21%
I deleted my profile on the web pages where it happened.	16%
I reported it to an administrator.	13%
I didn´t pay attention to it.	12%
I did something similar to the person, face-to-face (in real life).	12%
I did the same thing or something similar to the person online or via mobile phones.	11%
I thought to myself that it was only happening online, and that it wasn't actually real.	10%
I thought to myself that it was actually nothing serious.	6%

Percentages in the graph relate only to **the victims of cyberbullying** (N = 130)

The most frequently used strategies involved looking at the aggressor as someone who is not worth the victim's time, as someone who is pitiful and stupid, etc. It was also common for victims to distract themselves from unpleasant thoughts, to ignore the situation, and to tell someone about what happened.
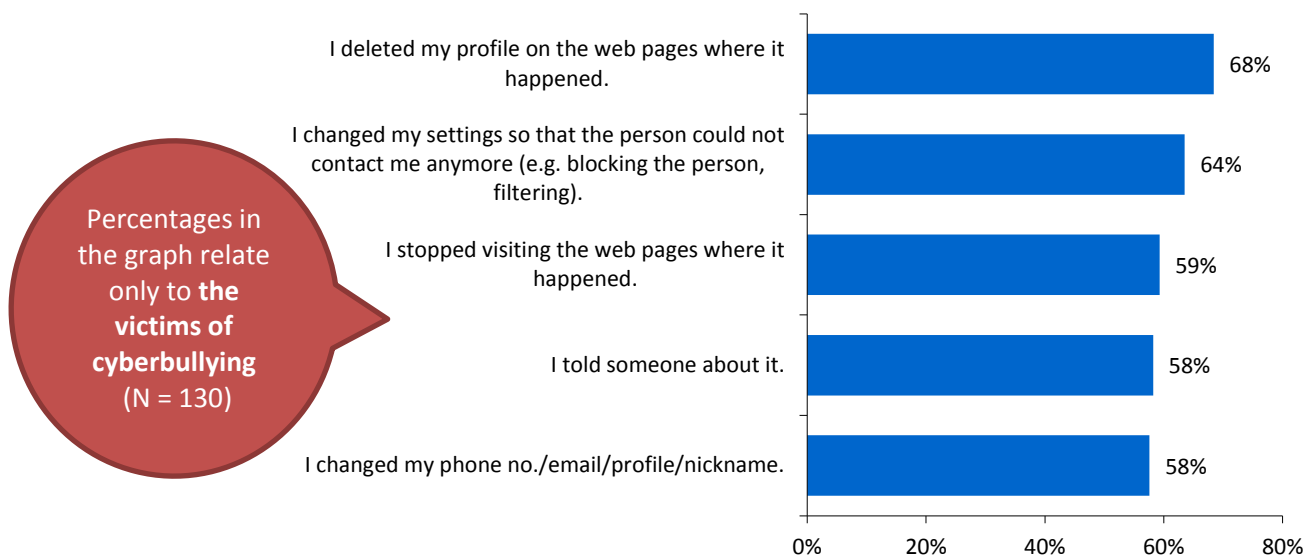
A relatively large number of respondents deleted the aggressor from their contacts. In general more technical strategies (including changing user settings, deleting contacts, etc. – also referred to as "technical coping strategies"), were used very frequently to cope with cyberbullying if the situation allowed. Least frequently victims deleted their own profile on the website where the cyberbullying incident occurred. This is understandable, especially given the fact that young people do not like giving up the benefits the Internet provides. This would have an unfavorable impact on their social relationships.

Retaliation against the bully using mobile phones or on the Internet was a rarely used strategy, as was face-to-face retaliation. It is noteworthy that victims decided to negotiate with their bullies (both online and face-to-face) more frequently than to retaliate; retaliation may seem like the easiest way to defend oneself, especially with the lack of face-to-face contact on the Internet. Another strategy that was rarely used was searching for advice on the Internet.

Although victims could apply multiple strategies, not all strategies could necessarily help them put an end to cyberbullying. Therefore we asked which strategies helped victims stop bullying. Strategies that helped victims the most are listed in Graph 9. We should first keep in mind that each strategy for stopping cyberbullying is inextricably connected to a specific form of cyberbullying, and therefore not all strategies can be used in all situations.

Victims often used more than one strategy. The more strategies used, the greater the likelihood of stopping cyberbullying. Therefore, children should be made aware of the fact that there are many possible strategies for dealing with such situations.

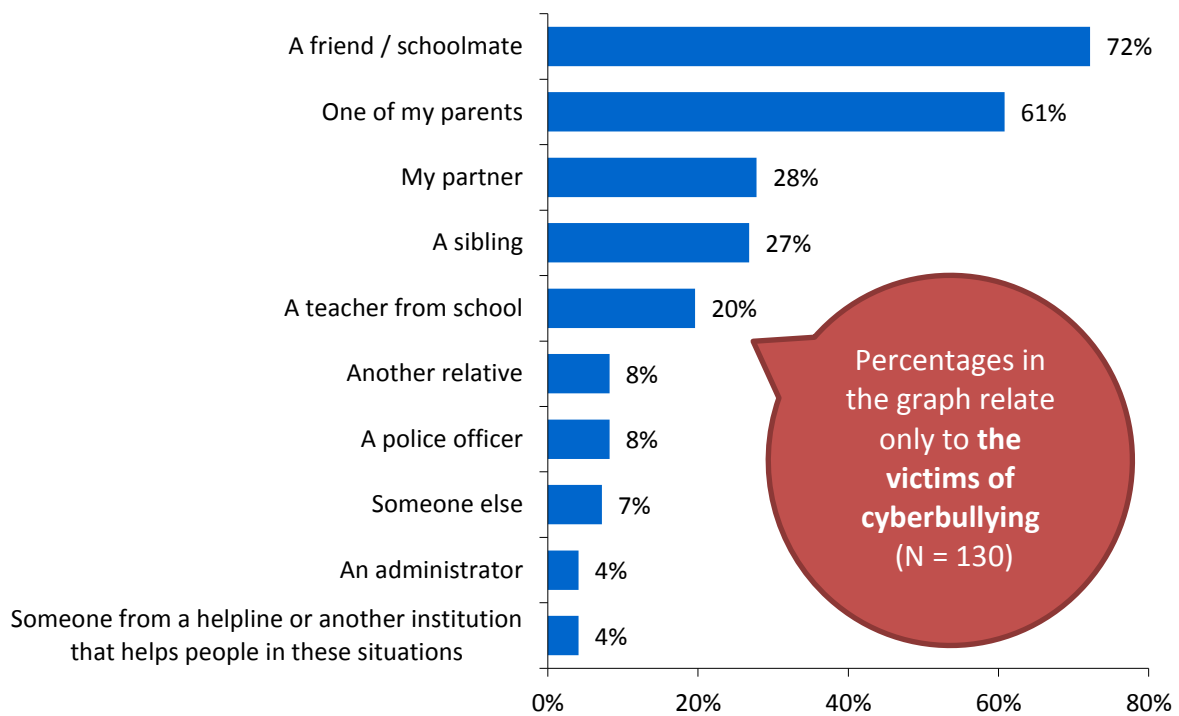Graph 9: Most frequent strategies which helped stop cyberbullying.

Percentages in the graph relate only to **the victims of cyberbullying** (N = 130)

Strategy	Percentage
I deleted my profile on the web pages where it happened.	68%
I changed my settings so that the person could not contact me anymore (e.g. blocking the person, filtering).	64%
I stopped visiting the web pages where it happened.	59%
I told someone about it.	58%
I changed my phone no./email/profile/nickname.	58%

According to victims, the most effective strategy was to delete their profile on the website where cyberbullying occurred (recall, however, that this strategy is not very popular among victims). Changing user settings so that the user could no longer be contacted by the bully proved to be a successful strategy and helped stop the harassment. Blocking the bully, using special filters, and no longer visiting the websites involved also helped.

Strategies such as deleting profiles and changing user settings generally belong to the group of strategies we have already described as "technical coping" strategies. These strategies are based on using the tools available on websites and online applications to stop harassment or to prevent it from happening in the first place. This strategy is potentially very effective, as long as the victim knows how to use the opportunities provided by the Internet to this end.

Talking to someone else about cyberbullying also had a positive effect, as that person could potentially help to deal with the situation. Telling someone about cyberbullying is a frequently recommended strategy for dealing with the problem, and, as we can see from Graph 9, there is a good reason for this. These people can help make the victim feel better and can also directly assist the victim in solving the bullying problem, or can even directly deal with the problem themselves to some extent. This is why we were also interested in discovering who victims of cyberbullying share their experiences with (Graph 10). In many cases friends or schoolmates of the victim hear about the situation. Next, victims turned to

their families for support – to parents and siblings. Other authorities such as teachers, law enforcement officials, and administrators were not frequently listed as people with whom victims of cyberbullying share their experiences.

Graph 10: People to whom victims of cyberbullying reveal their problems.

Percentages in the graph relate only to **the victims of cyberbullying** (N = 130)

A friend / schoolmate	72%
One of my parents	61%
My partner	28%
A sibling	27%
A teacher from school	20%
Another relative	8%
A police officer	8%
Someone else	7%
An administrator	4%
Someone from a helpline or another institution that helps people in these situations	4%

6. Bystanders and peers

Once online harassment or cyberbullying occurs, how other people in the victim's social surroundings react to the situation is critical. For children and adolescents, relationships with their peers are of great importance. Peers may offer social support and help each other with their troubles, but they can also be the source of problems. Peers also play an important role in how children faced with bullying or cyberbullying cope with their situation and in how the bullying situation progresses. If, for example, a bystander in a cyberbullying situation clearly expresses disagreement, this may stop the cyberbully. In doing so, they also provide

invaluable emotional support to the victim. On the other hand, if bystanders begin to support the bully, the situation of the victim will become worse. Witnessing cyberbullying can also have an impact on bystanders: if they are witnesses of online aggression, they may hesitate to use the Internet in fear of becoming victims themselves. They may also turn to online harassment themselves in the future if they see a bully getting away with bullying or gaining something from it. So far, we have spoken mainly about bystanders in cyberbullying situations. In our study, we also focused on adolescents who have only heard about incidences of cyberbullying and online harassment occurring. We asked them if they knew someone who has experienced something similar.

Thus, findings pertain to a larger group of adolescents than just "direct witnesses", but nonetheless, we will continue to use the term "bystander" for the sake of clarity. In addition, in our study, students who had only come into contact with cyberbullying, but who had never acted in the role of victim or aggressor, were included as bystanders.

We asked bystanders what type of harassment they had witnessed (or had heard about). The most frequently witnessed behavior was gossiping about someone on the Internet; other forms of harassment or cyberbullying are listed in Graph X.

Graph 11: Forms of cyberbullying or online harassment witnessed.
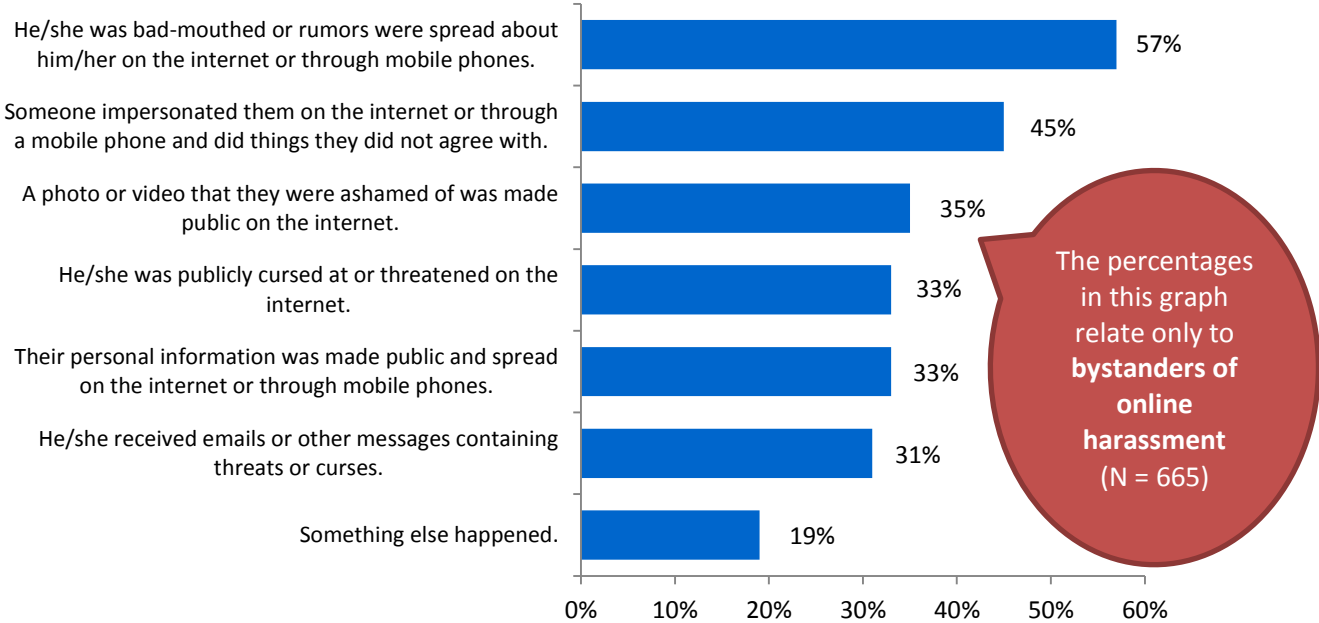
We also asked bystanders how they heard about incidents of harassment. As there are many possible ways they could have heard about such incidents, students could choose from several possible answers. For example, 27% of them stated that they had been a direct witness to harassment, and 55% had seen an online record of the situation or read about it. A relatively large number (45%) of students had heard about the situation directly from the victim.
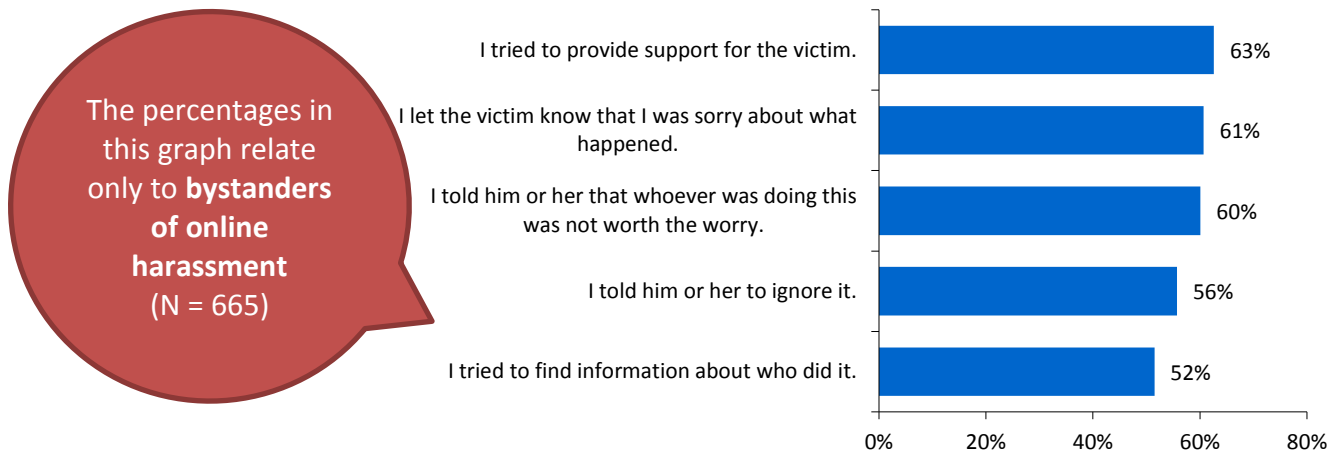
We have already mentioned the fact that how bystanders react to bullying may have a large impact on the situation. We can generally identify three possible types of reactions: a bystander may help the victim (e.g., by offering advice and support), help the aggressor (e.g., by further bad-mouthing the victim or by spreading other damaging material), or remain passive (e.g., by not reacting to the situation). In our study, most bystanders stated that they were on the side of the victim. This corresponds to the fact that bystanders most frequently reacted by supporting the victim in some way; as we can see in Graph 11, the vast majority of bystanders somehow helped the victim, while a mere 1% aided the aggressor. It is interesting to note the overlapping 9% of study participants who in some way helped both victim and aggressor. Ten per cent were passive.

Graph 12: How bystanders reacted to online harassment.

The percentages in this graph relate only to **bystanders of online harassment** (N = 665)
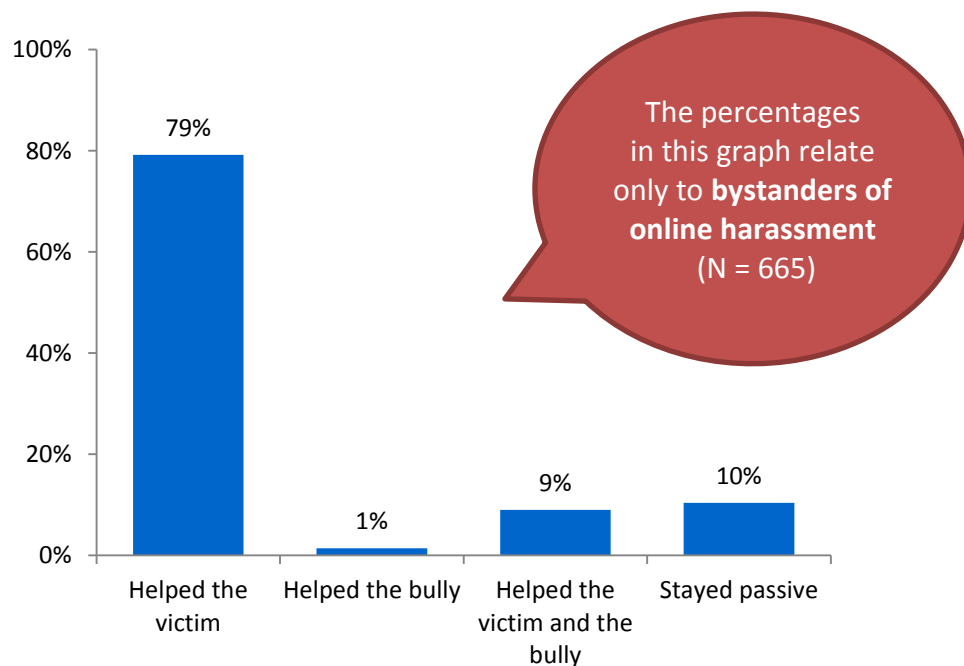
We also asked bystanders about how *exactly* they behaved in response to the incident. We would like to once again remind the reader that bystanders could have reacted to the situation in many ways simultaneously. The most common reactions mentioned by study participants are listed in Graph 11.

Graph 13: The most common reactions of bystanders to online harassment.

The percentages in this graph relate only to **bystanders of online harassment** (N = 665)

Reaction	Percentage
I tried to provide support for the victim.	63%
I let the victim know that I was sorry about what happened.	61%
I told him or her that whoever was doing this was not worth the worry.	60%
I told him or her to ignore it.	56%
I tried to find information about who did it.	52%

In most cases, bystanders tried to support or somehow console the victim. Negative answers were rarely reported. For example, only 3% helped spread negative information about the victim, 5% added a comment agreeing with the aggressor (whereas 48% added comments expressing disagreement), and 4% of bystanders encouraged the aggressor. As stated above, one of the most frequently recommended strategies for dealing with ongoing harassment is to tell someone about it, as other people may be able to help. This piece of advice applies not just to victims, but also to bystanders. Only 26% of bystanders in our study did so, however. In most of these cases, bystanders told friends or schoolmates about cyberbullying or online harassment (57%) or told one of their parents (50%); 22% spoke with a school teacher. We were also interested in finding out why some bystanders did not tell anyone. One of the most frequent reasons given for this was the fact that students simply assumed that these situations were none of their business (39%); 28% did not know whom to tell; and 25% behaved in this way because the victim asked them not to tell anyone. It was a relatively positive finding to discover that only 12% stated that they did not tell anyone

about the situation because they thought no one could help. Despite this, we should emphasize that nearly a third of all bystanders did not know whom to turn to.

In order to better understand the reactions of bystanders, we asked them about certain circumstances that could have influenced their their reactions. The first such circumstance was the bystander's relationship to the victim and aggressor. It was discovered that in a majority of cases bystanders knew the victim in some way: in 42% of the reported cases they knew the victim personally (but not from school); 37% knew the victim from school; 10% knew the victim only from the Internet. Only 12% of bystanders stated that they did not know the victim of harassment at all (whereas 36% stated that they did not know the aggressor). It is also important to note, as we have already mentioned, that a vast majority of bystanders were on the side of the victim; 73% stated that the situation disturbed them.

The bystanders' reactions were influenced by whether or not they were asked by someone to help the victim. We must realize that for bystanders of online attacks, it is very difficult to adequately evaluate such situations – from the outside, such incidents may seem to be just friendly teasing or a one-time occurrence that is already over and that has been recorded and preserved on the Internet (for example in the form of a message or picture). In order for a bystander to properly assess the situation, it is often necessary for the victim to clearly express that they are being bullied. Twenty percent of participants in our study were asked for help. We also asked those who were not asked for help and were on the side of the victim whether, if asked, would they be willing to give help; 84% answered yes.

Bystanders may also be afraid of intervening out of fear of becoming another target of the aggressor, or they may think that intervening could make the situation worse. Twenty seven per-cent of study participants confirmed that they were afraid of intervening.

Finally, we asked bystanders if they thought their reactions helped stop harassment. Positive responses were given by 23% of bystanders, whereas 14% said no. It is interesting to note that 64% of bystanders had no idea if their actions had any effect. This may be explained by the fact that bystanders were not in the physical presence of the victim and thus could not determine what importance their reaction had.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, the most important findings from our research are as follows:

- ✓ Although approximately 20% of children in our sample of primary and secondary school students in the South Moravian Region have come into some kind of contact with online attacks, the phenomenon of actual cyberbullying is less common – **only 6% of students were the victims of cyberbullying**. This low occurrence of cyberbullying corresponds with previous findings from international research projects (see for example the EU Kids Online II project[4]).

- ✓ Girls are predominately the victims of online harrasment and cyberbullying.

- ✓ The most frequent immediate emotional reactions to cyberbullying are anger, a sense of powerlessness, sadness, and fear.

- ✓ Strategies that victims of cyberbullying use to manage and deal with their problems mainly include focusing on something else, depreciating the aggressor, and telling other people about their victimization.

- ✓ Victims that were able to put an end to the entire situation used more than one coping strategy simultaneously. One such successful strategy was telling another person; victims most frequently told friends or parents about their troubles.

- ✓ Another strategy that contributed to stopping cyberbullying involved technical measures: deleting accounts or profiles, blocking telephone numbers, etc.

- ✓ Almost 80% of bystanders stated that they tried to help victims of online harassment in some way.

- ✓ If a victim turned to a bystander for help, most bystanders would provide help.

Several basic recommendations can be drawn from our study to help students better cope with cyberbullying and online harassment (more detailed recommendations can be

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[4] http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20II%20(2009-11)/EUKidsOnlineIIReports/D4FullFindings.pdf

found in the publication *Guidelines for Preventing Cyber-Bullying in the School Environment: A Review and Recommendations*[5]).

✓ Young Internet users should be informed about how they can deal with aggressive attacks on the Internet or through mobile phones. When victims use more than one coping strategy, the chance of successfully fighting cyberbullying is increased; thus, it is suggested to use more than one strategy.

✓ Technical solutions also contribute to stopping cyberbullying. Nonetheless, using these methods requires carefulness as well as consideration of possible unfavorable consequences. Blocking telephone numbers, for example, seems to be a good strategy. This restricts the aggressor's access to the victim via mobile phone; at the same time, the victim can still continue using his/her phone and can still utilize the advantages it offers (for example, being able to easily communicate with peers.) Deleting profiles and accounts from social networking sites could stop cyberbullying; nonetheless, if this strategy is used, the victim is in danger of losing contact with peers who could potentially provide help or support.

✓ It is not good to face cyberbullying alone. Victims should be encouraged to tell someone that something bad is happening to them. It should also be recognized that not all hurtful behavior can be noticed and identified on the Internet. If a victim does not tell anyone, no one may know about the cyberbullying they are experiencing. In contrast, if a victim asks a bystander for help, it is highly likely that the bystander will help in some way.

✓ It was also discovered that students – both victims of cyberbullying and bystanders – often experience feelings of powerlessness and helplessness. They should be made more aware of what they can do if they are the victim of an online attack and should know which adults in their life they can turn to if they have problems with cyberbullying.

✓ Considering the fact that victims of cyberbullying are often also the victims of school bullying, it is necessary to cope with cyberbullying through a collaborative effort

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[5]It is available for download in both Czech and English here: https://sites.google.com/site/costis0801/guideline

between teachers, students, and parents. Only if all of these parties are involved can an effective solution to the problem be found. Teachers and parents should evaluate how serious the cyberbullying is and if necessary request help from other institutions, or in very serious situations, from the police.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize the main positive finding of our study: cyberbullying is much less common among school children than it may seem from the news presented in the Czech media or from the information provided by companies providing training about this phenomenon. **A vast majority of Czech children have not been the victim of cyberbullying**. Despite these findings, this phenomenon cannot be entirely ignored or underestimated. Therefore we would like to emphasize the fact that it is advisable to support programs that prevent the development and spread of cyberbullying; without the help of others this new phenomenon is difficult to tackle.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in our study, either by filling out a questionnaire, by allowing research to be conducted in their schools, or by any other means. If you have any questions or are interested in additional information, do not hesitate to contact the authors of this report (contact e-mail: hmachack@fss.muni.cz).

INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

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