

Cyberbullying victims: Mediation and coping



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INTRODUCTION

The perception or even presence of negative consequences in victims of cyberbullying can be influenced by several factors. One of the most important ones is **coping strategy** (or strategies) employed by the victim. In our study, we focused on two coping strategies: **1) talking to parents and 2) talking peers about this negative experience**. These strategies were chosen because social context is considered to be important in understanding perception of distress by victims and actions taken by them (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005; Machmutow et al., 2012; Price & Dalgleish, 2010). We examined those strategies **in context of parental and also peer mediation of internet use**. While parental mediation is most commonly studied, we included peer influence due to significant role of peers in children's lives.

The aim of this study is to investigate whether there is a relation between mediation of Internet use and coping via talking about cyberbullying. Moreover, as gender, age and intensity of perceived harm are important factors in the coping process, their influence is also studied.

SAMPLE

The analyses were conducted on the sample of cyberbullying victims aged 9-16 ($N = 1,024$; 59% females, $M_{age} = 13.4$, $SD = 2.1$) from the EU Kids Online II project. Using two logistic regressions, we predicted talking to parents and peers after cyberbullying experience based on type of mediation, gender, age and perceived harm.

RESULTS

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Odds Ratio
TALKING TO PARENTS			
Constant	-1.81	1.17	
Age	-0.09	0.07	0.92
Gender (F)	0.35	0.21	1.43
Active1	0.65	0.38	1.91
Restriction	0.41	0.3	1.5
Monitoring	0.49	0.32	1.63
Technical	-0.39	0.37	0.68
Active2	1.59**	0.37	4.9
Peer mediation	-1.17**	0.33	0.31
Perceived harm	0.36**	0.1	1.43

$R^2 = .16$ (Cox & Snell), $.22$ (Nagelkerke). Model $\chi^2(9) = 99.32$, $p < .001$

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Odds Ratio
TALKING TO PEERS			
Constant	-2.38	1.1	
Age	0.09	0.06	1.09
Gender (F)	0.44*	0.19	1.55
Active1	-0.08	0.34	0.92
Restriction	0.18	0.28	1.19
Monitoring	-0.84*	0.31	0.43
Technical	0.21	0.34	1.23
Active2	0.06	0.33	1.06
Peer mediation	0.47	0.3	1.61
Perceived harm	0.22*	0.09	1.24

$R^2 = .05$ (Cox & Snell), $.07$ (Nagelkerke). Model $\chi^2(9) = 30.54$, $p < .001$
Note: ** $p < .001$, * $p < .01$

MEASURES

Parental mediation

➤ **Active mediation of online activities (Active1)** (alpha: .64, 5 items, $M = 0.49$, $SD = 0.31$)

e.g. if either parent talked with the participant about online activities or sat with him/her when they were online

➤ **Active mediation of safety (Active2)** (alpha: .82, 6 items, $M = 0.58$, $SD = 0.53$)

e.g. if parents ever helped with something difficult on the Internet or explained why some websites were good or bad

➤ **Restrictive mediation** (alpha: .78, 6 items, $M = 1.48$, $SD = 0.46$)
e.g. if either parent allowed the participant to use IM, download music or films, or watch videos online)

➤ **Technical mediation** (alpha: .66, 4 items, $M = 0.13$, $SD = 0.26$)
e.g. if parents use filtering, blocking or tracking software

➤ **Monitoring** (alpha: .82, 4 items, $M = 0.27$, $SD = 0.36$)
e.g. if parents checked history of visited websites or the child's profile on SNS

Peer mediation

➤ **Active mediation** (alpha: .75, 5 items, $M = 0.49$, $SD = 0.34$)

Perceived harm

Participants were asked how upset they were about what happened (if at all). Those who answered "very" or "fairly" upset were labelled "bothered", those answering "a bit" or "not at all" upset were labelled "not bothered".



Talking to parents

Talking to peers

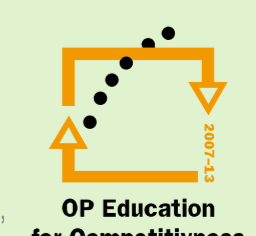
DISCUSSION

The results show that parental active mediation of the child's Internet safety and intensity of harm perceived by victim positively predicted talking to parents, while peer active mediation predicted talking to parents negatively. Moreover, talking to peers is negatively predicted by parental monitoring of online activities and perceived harm and gender predicts talking to peers positively (girls talk to peers more likely in such setting).

This supports the general hypothesis that parental mediation (including more restrictive, such as monitoring) indicates interest in the area of children's media use, and consequently encourages them to speak about negative experiences with technology. However, when peer mediation is present (suggesting close relationships within the peer group), children might be less likely to talk to parents and might be relying on peer resources instead, which might be caused by a shift to a reliance on peer support in adolescence (Rueger, Malecki & Demaray, 2010). Moreover, girls are more likely to seek support as a coping strategy, so the effect is pronounced within the peer group (Eschenbeck et al., 2007). The intensity of perceived harm positively predicts talking to both parents and peers, which confirms the importance of social support in more severe cases of cyberbullying.

Presented at Cyberbullying: A Challenge for researchers and practitioners
Gothenburg, Sweden
May 2014

The authors acknowledge the support of the VITOVIN project (CZ.1.07/2.3.00/20.0184), which is co-financed by the European Social Fund and the state budget of Czech Republic; and the support of the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University.



INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT