

## PARENTS INVOLVEMENT IN CYBER BULLYING EXPERIENCE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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**Abstract:** Cyber bullying has been widespread among youth during the last few decades, sometimes with deadly consequences. This type of violence remains too often out of adult's control since for many parents and teachers Internet and social media still represent an unknown territory. The objective of the current study is the analysis of the scope of parental involvement in children's online experience and their peer cyber bullying experience, and the analysis of connection between these two phenomena. Peer cyber bullying included: name calling, harassment, gossiping, identity-misrepresentation, sharing of private photos, videos and communication, social exclusion, stalking via SMS, e-mail, social media and other online communication platforms. The study included 249 middle school students (age 11–16 years, 50.6% female) in Pljevlja, Montenegro. The questionnaire was created for the current study purposes. The results showed that 63.1% students reported that their parents/care-givers talked to them about how to behave toward others when using Internet and 65.2% reported that their parents/care-givers monitor what they do online. Among study subjects there were 13.8% (N = 32) victims of cyber bullying. One third of them (34.4%, N = 11) reported victimization to their parent/caregivers. On the other side, 27.7% (N = 69) students reported that they knew a schoolmate who was cyber bullying the victim, and one quarter of them (24.6%, N = 17) reported schoolmate's victimization to their parents/ care-givers. Victimization was reported to the parents/care-givers significantly more by the students whose parents/care-givers talked to them how to behave toward others when using Internet [ $\chi^2 = 12.626(1)$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ], and significantly more by the students whose online activities were monitored by their parents/ care-givers [ $\chi^2 = 6.145(1)$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ] than by the students with whom parents did not have such activities. Also, victimization of their schoolmate was reported to parents/care-givers significantly more by the students whose parents talked about how to behave toward others when using Internet [ $\chi^2 = 7.585(1)$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ] and significantly more by the students whose online activities were monitored by their parents/care-givers [ $\chi^2 = 7.622(1)$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ], than by the students to whom parents did not have such activities. The strongest correlation was between reporting personal cyber bullying victimization and reporting cyber bullying victimization of a schoolmate [ $\chi^2 = 22.543(1)$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ]. There was no significant correlation between reporting perpetration of cyber bullying and parental involvement in children's online experience, either through conversation about online behaviour or through monitoring. The findings of the research and its implications for the practice were discussed. As the results clearly imply that in practice parents should be encouraged to take an active role in their children's online and cyber bullying experience, some recommendation were presented regarding effective parental involvement, the role of school, police and prosecution in preventing cybercrime and healing its consequences. Strong collaboration between schools and parents, educational campaigns for students and their parents, whole school approach with programs actively involving students like peer education and peer mediation are equally important, as well as the evidence based interventions by psycho-social experts and legislative representatives when it is needed.

**Keywords:** cyber bullying victims, parental communication, parental control, talking to parents, teacher's involvement, prevention.