

114th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association
Aug 10-13 2006, New Orleans, LA

EXAMINING CHARACTERISTICS AND ASSOCIATED DISTRESS RELATED TO INTERNET HARASSMENT: FINDINGS FROM THE SECOND YOUTH INTERNET SAFETY SURVEY

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FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN AND THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION.

* Thank you for your interest in this presentation. Please note that analyses included herein are preliminary. More recent, finalized analyses can be found in: Ybarra, M., Mitchell, K., Wolak, J., & Finkelhor, D. (2006). Examining characteristics and associated distress related to Internet harassment: Findings from the Second Youth Internet Safety Survey. *Pediatrics*, 118(6), e1169-e1177, or by contacting CIPHR for further information.

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BACKGROUND

- Approximately 9 in 10 youth use the Internet.
- Benefits associated with Internet use:
 - Increased social support
 - Access to sensitive health information
- Risks associated with Internet use:
 - Internet harassment (“cyberbullying”)
 - Unwanted sexual solicitation

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YISS 2 METHODS & SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

- Methods:
 - Telephone survey of a national sample of young Internet users (ages 10-17) and one caregiver
 - Care taken to preserve youth privacy and confidentiality
 - Interviews took place from March to June 2005
- Demographic characteristics:
 - 51% female
 - 76% White, 9% Hispanic ethnicity
 - 40% annual household income \$75,000 or more
 - 22% lived with an adult with a postgraduate education

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DEFINITION OF INTERNET HARASSMENT

Feeling worried or threatened because someone was bothering or harassing youth online

Someone used the Internet to threaten or embarrass the youth by posting or sending messages about the youth for other people to see.

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EXAMPLES OF INTERNET HARASSMENT

“I got a instant message from some girl from school and she was telling me that she wanted to beat the living crap out of me and talking badly about me at school in front of my friends.”

“They just kept telling me that they wanted to see me and they thought that I was cute. They kept telling me information that described me and was true about me and I didn't know where they were getting that information from.”

“He basically threatened to come and beat me up and hurt my family and my friend...he did some things to my friend that really hurt and i was talking to him about it and he spazzed out.”

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1-YEAR PREVALENCE OF ONLINE HARASSMENT

- 9% of youth reported being a target of online harassment in the previous year. Of these,
 - 65% felt worried or threatened because someone was harassing or bothering them online
 - 35% felt threatened or embarrassed by personal information that was posted or sent online

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CHARACTERISTICS OF TARGETS OF INTERNET HARASSMENT

- Personal characteristics
 - Mean age: 14.6 (1.8)
 - 58% female
- Psychosocial characteristics
 - Clinical/borderline social problems (AOR=2.4)
 - Offline interpersonal victimization (AOR=1.5)
 - Harasser of others online (AOR=3.6)
- Online activities
 - Use of instant messaging (AOR=3.4)
 - Blogging (AOR=2.1)
 - Use of chat rooms (AOR=1.7)

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EPISODE CHARACTERISTICS

- 32% of youth reported chronic harassment (≥ 3 times by the same person)
- 68% of youth disclosed the incident:
 - 44% to a friend
 - 32% to a parent
 - 12% to an authority
- 38% of harassed youth reported being very or extremely upset or afraid over the incident.

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DISTRESSING HARASSMENT EXPERIENCES

- Harasser is an adult (AOR=4.1)
- Harasser asked youth to send picture (AOR=3)
- Aggressive offline contact by harasser (AOR=3.9)
- Preadolescent (10-12 years) (AOR=5.5)
- Youth uses chat rooms (AOR=0.3)

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DISCUSSION: Reasons to be positive

- Majority of young Internet users not harassed and of those who are, the majority are not upset by it.
- Most harassment incidents are disclosed.

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DISCUSSION: Reasons for ongoing vigilance

- 50% increase in reports of online harassment over the past 5 years (6% to 9%).
- Can be serious event (chronic, aggressive offline contact, adult involvement).
- About 2 in 5 are distressed

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DISCUSSION

- Similarities and differences from traditional bullying.
 - Age and sex differences
 - Power differential
- Findings suggest directions for Internet safety.
 - Adults should partner with youth, don't punish youth
 - Acknowledge different types of harassment experiences call for different preventive behaviors
 - Professionals should be mindful of circumstances surrounding online harassment to aid in early identification and provide support.

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LIMITATIONS

- Cross-sectional data
- Data reflect youth's most distressing event – cannot evaluate across multiple incidents and harassers
- Low response rate (45%), although national telephone surveys still provide representative samples of Americans.