Beatbullying Study: Virtual Violence II: Progress and Challenges in the Fight against Cyberbullying (Pupils)

Aims

Beatbullying's second large-scale research study of cyberbullying among 11-16 year olds in the UK aimed to explore the phenomenon of cyberbullying two years on from the first study, *Virtual Violence: Protecting Children from Cyberbullying*.

Key Findings

- 28% of 11-16 year olds reported that they have been targeted by some form of cyberbullying. Of these, one quarter experienced this as persistent over time.

- 17% of 11-16 year olds reported cyberbullying others, a marked reduction from the 33% found in our first study.

- The effects and consequences for those who are cyberbullied are severe. 20% said that fear of bullies made them reluctant to go to school, 19% experienced a decline in confidence and self-esteem, and 14% did not feel safe. At the more extreme end of the spectrum, 11% felt depressed, 5% self-harmed and 3% attempted suicide.

- Those who reported having Special Educational Needs (SEN) were 12% more likely to have experienced cyberbullying than those who did not. Those who are young carers were 13% more likely; those who receive free school meals 3% more likely; and those with disabilities 18% more likely to have experienced cyberbullying than the average.

- Motivations for cyberbullying behaviour ranged from 39% indicating 'revenge' to 26% who did it 'for a joke'. 16% did it because they were 'angry about stuff', and 15% said they did it because they were bored.

- The most common way in which respondents were cyberbullied was by text message (13%) and 10% by comments on their social networking profile.

- 52% of those who were cyberbullied cited Facebook, and 24% cited MSN Messenger, as the most common platforms where cyberbullying occurred.

- 27% of those who were cyberbullied ignored the message and hoped it would go away, 21% deleted the message, and 9% responded by spending less time online.

- Only 22% took action to block the person who was sending them messages. 23% told a friend or peer, whilst only 10% told a teacher or member of staff at their school, and 20% told a parent or another adult.

- The methods with the highest success rates in stopping cyberbullying were pressing the report button (67%) and blocking the person who was sending the messages (63%). Telling a

peer mentor worked in 57% of cases, and was as effective as telling a member of school staff.

- 45% of 11-16 year olds felt that websites do not do enough to protect children from cyberbullying, 46% called for better reporting mechanisms, and 30% called for more education generally in this area.

Policy Context

Policies responding to cyberbullying need to be informed by a thorough and up-to-date understanding of the situation. *Virtual Violence II* and its precursor *Virtual Violence* provide an in-depth quantitative and qualitative overview of cyberbullying: prevalence, intensity, methods, motivations, platforms, responses, effects and consequences and recommendations for change. This evidence helps to inform responses and target interventions.

Methodology

This large-scale representative study of 4,605 11-16 year old secondary school pupils in the UK was completed online between September and December 2011.

Background

The research for *Virtual Violence II: Progress and Challenges in the Fight against Cyberbullying* was intended both to stand alone and as a comparison with the first study, tracking changes in the 'landscape' of cyberbullying in the context of increased publicity, attempts at education and prevention and the increasing availability of communications technology in the last few years. It was commissioned by Nominet Trust and researched in association with the National Association for Head Teachers (NAHT).

Source http://www.beatbullying.org/pdfs/Virtual-Violence-II.pdf (published February 2012)
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