



# The Effects of Parental Guidance and Internet Use on Teenagers Experiencing Cyberbullying

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Table #2: Descriptive Statistics

		No N (Valid %)	Yes N (Valid %)	Total N/100%
Being Bullied	Unweighted	736 (92.1%)	63 (7.9%)	799
	Weighted	3927 (92.3%)	330 (7.7%)	4257
Safe Internet Use	Unweighted	116 (15.0%)	659 (85.0%)	775
	Weighted	614 (15.0%)	3469 (85.0%)	4083
Parental Concern	Unweighted	116 (15.0%)	659 (85.0%)	551
	Weighted	801 (19.0%)	3403 (81.0%)	2873
Parental Controls	Unweighted	325 (43.1%)	429 (56.9%)	754
	Weighted	1764 (45.0%)	2156 (55.0%)	3920
		<b>White N (Valid %)</b>	<b>Nonwhite N (Valid %)</b>	<b>N</b>
Parent's Race	Unweighted	550 (72.8%)	206 (27.2%)	756
	Weighted	3027 (75.3%)	993 (23.3%)	4021
		<b>M (SD)</b>	<b>Min: Max</b>	<b>N</b>
Parent's Age	Unweighted	45.93 (10.616)	18:82	799
	Weighted	45.10 (10.529)	18:82	4257
Parent's Income	Unweighted	14.03 (26.882)	1:9	799
	Weighted	11.97 (24.376)	1:9	3947
Use of Social Networking Sites	Unweighted	3.75 (1.389)	0:5	622
	Weighted	3.65 (1.499)	0:5	3265
Use of Internet	Unweighted	3.90 (1.354)	0:5	2051
	Weighted	4.08 (1.212)	0:5	767

## Background & Hypotheses

Despite efforts to end bullying, this problem continues to be a widespread issue (Beale and Hall 2007). Although bullying is typically something that is thought of to be face-to-face, bullying online has become an increasing issue with the easy access of the Internet (Cassidy, Jackson, and Brown 2009). Cyberbullying is an appealing way to belittle someone because of how simple it is to hide one's identity (Erdur-Baker 2010). The anonymity the Internet provides leaves seemingly no consequences to cyberbullying, which, in turn, makes cyberbullying even more prevalent (Beale and Hall 2007). Teens do not typically disclose their bullying experiences, and this study seeks to bring this information to light so that is able to change (Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla, and Daciuk 2011).

### Hypotheses:

- (H1) Teens whose parents show them safe Internet use are less likely to be cyberbullied than teens whose parents do not show them safe Internet use.
- (H2) Teens whose parents are concerned about how teens treat each other online are less likely to be cyberbullied than teens whose parents are not concerned about how teens treat each other online.
- (H3) Teens whose parents use parental controls are less likely to be cyberbullied than teens whose parents do not use parental controls.
- (H4) Teens who use social networking sites more often are more likely to be cyberbullied than those who do not use social networking sites often.
- (H5) Teens who use the Internet more often are more likely to be cyberbullied than those who do not use the Internet as often.

## Research Design

The data for this study was collected by the Pew Research Center. The survey used for this study was the 2011 Teens and Digital Citizenship Survey (Pew research Center, 2011). This survey took a sample of teenagers, ages 12-17, and their parents (n=799). Using phone interviews, researchers asked a variety of questions about both online and offline behaviors/experiences.

Using SPSS 23, weighted data from this survey, was used to run a multivariate logistic regression analysis. This analysis determined how much the independent variables affect likelihood of being cyberbullied. Odds ratio and probability were used to specifically determine how much of a chance there is of being cyberbullied.

## Parental Guidance

**Parental Concern:** Contrary to hypothesis two, teens whose parents are concerned about how teens treat each other online are about 67% more likely to be cyberbullied than teens whose parents are not concerned about how teens treat each other online. Teens whose parents are concerned about teen behavior online have almost a 10% chance of being cyberbullied, whereas teens whose parents are not concerned about online behavior from teens have only about a 6% chance of being cyberbullied.

**Safe Internet Use:** Contrary to hypothesis one, teens whose parents show them how to use the Internet safely are three times more likely to be cyberbullied than teens whose parents do not show them safe Internet use. Teens who are shown by their parents how to safely use the Internet have about a 10% chance of being cyberbullied, whereas teens whose parents do not show them how to safely use the Internet have almost a 3% chance of being cyberbullied.

**Parental Controls:** Contrary to hypothesis three, teens whose parents use parental controls are almost 56% more likely to be cyberbullied than teens whose parents do not use parental controls. Specifically, teens whose parents use parental controls have about a 11% chance of being cyberbullied, whereas teens whose parents do not use parental controls have only a 7% chance of being cyberbullied.

## Internet Use

**Internet Use:** Contrary to hypothesis five, teens who use the Internet more often are 28% less likely to be cyberbullied than teens who use the Internet less often. Compared to teens who use the Internet less often, those who use the Internet every few weeks have a 20% chance of being cyberbullied. Teens using the Internet 1-2 days a week are about a 15% chance of being cyberbullied and teens using the Internet 3-5 days a week have a 11% chance of being cyberbullied. Teens who use the Internet about once a day have a 9% chance of being cyberbullied. Teens who use the Internet several times a day have about a 6% chance of being cyberbullied, whereas teens who use the Internet less often have a 25% chance of being cyberbullied.

**Social Networking Sites:** Consistent with hypothesis four, teens who use social networking site often are 51% more likely to be cyberbullied than teens who do not use social networking sites often. Compared to teens who use social networking sites less often, teens using these sites every few weeks have a 3% chance of being cyberbullied. Teens using social networking sites 1-2 days a week have about a 5% chance of being cyberbullied. Teens who use social networking sites 3-5 days a week have almost a 7% chance of being cyberbullied, whereas teens using these sites about once a day have over a 10% of being cyberbullied. Finally, teens who use social networking sites several times a day have almost a 14% chance of being cyberbullied, whereas teens who use social networking sites less often have about a 2% chance of being cyberbullied.

## Connection to the Literature

As the number of youth online continues to grow, so does their risk for negative and even unsafe experiences while online (Ybarra and Mitchell 2004). The Internet can be used as a place to let out anxiety as well as for social purposes (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, and Lattanner 2014). With the growing uses for the internet, it is important to teach children how to safely use the internet. Lack of parent-monitoring and being anonymous can create an environment where a bully may feel safe from being caught for their actions (Erdur-Baker 2010). One of the main issues with cyberbullying is that it is largely not reported to parents or other adults (Beale and Hall 2007). Parent involvement in their child's life has shown children to be more likely to report when they are bullied (Ybarra and Mitchell 2004). The Internet is widely known and used as a learning and educational resource (Agius and Bagnall (1996). Along with the Internet being an educational resource, it is now used for social purposes as well as a place to let out anxiety (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, and Lattanner 2014). Young children are becoming well-acquainted with Internet usage and are beginning to use it more frequently (Valcke, Wever, Keer, and Schellens 2011).

Table #1: A Multivariate Logistic Regression Analysis of the Impact of the Independent Variables on the Likelihood of Being Cyberbullied (N=4257)

	B (S.E)	Exp(B)
Parental Concern	.510 ** (.208)	1.666
Safe Internet Use	1.293 *** (.265)	3.645
Parental Controls	.446 *** (.130)	1.561
Use of Internet <sup>1</sup>	-.324 *** (.065)	.723
Use of Social Networking Sites <sup>1</sup>	.414 *** (.064)	1.513
Parent Income <sup>2</sup>	.008 (.029)	1.008
Parent Race	-.467 ** (.161)	.627
Parent Age	.001 (.008)	1.001
Model $\chi^2$	110.343 ***	
Nagelkerke r <sup>2</sup>	.079	

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

## Discussion

This study was intended to look at parent roles and involvement in their child's online world and how general and specific Internet use differ in relation to cyberbullying. Hopefully, this study can be used to bring awareness to the prevention of cyberbullying in the future. Previous research supports most of the hypotheses in this study. Previous research has shown that general Internet use does not have a direct correlation to be cyberbullied. As table one shows, all of the findings are statistically significant, but all but one of the hypotheses were rejected.

**Limitations:** Though the dataset used in this study accurately represented the U.S. population, there were some limitations with this data. The main limiting factor to this dataset was that the response options were mostly dichotomous. This did not explain the extent to which the variables were used. Another factor was due to the cross-sectional nature of the study. This brought up a timeline issue, and begs for future research to use a longitudinal study and look at these factors overtime.

**Findings:** These findings suggest two things: (1) safe Internet use, parental concern with teen online behavior, and using parental controls do not completely prevent cyberbullying and (2) general Internet use does not provide enough support in regards to being cyberbullied, but use of social networking sites does increase the likelihood of being cyberbullied.

## Conclusion

With teens using the Internet more frequently, awareness and prevention of cyberbullying play an important role. Educating the youth on safe Internet practices is crucial in preventing bullying. Education should also be provided for parents and school systems in order for teens to feel comfortable sharing their bullying experiences, as this study has shown. This education could help mend the gap between parents and teens in regards to technology. The findings presented in this study reiterate previous research about usage of the Internet and the chances of being cyberbullied. Using the Internet more frequently does not increase the likelihood of being bullied. Rather, these findings as well as many other studies find that specifically what and how the Internet is used can increase the chances of being bullied. Accordingly, practicing safe Internet uses, like parental controls and other types of parental involvement are not inherently connected to being less likely to be cyberbullied. Again, further research is needed to fully understand if these safe practices were instilled before or after any bullying occurred to get an accurate understanding.