Exploring the Perceptions of Cyberbullying and Cyber Aggression in Emerging Adults

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What is cyberbullying?

"An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact repeatedly & overtime against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself"

— Smith et al. (2008)

What is cyber aggression?

"Intentional harm delivered by the use of electronic means to a person or a group of people irrespective of their age, who perceive acts as offensive, derogatory harmful or unwanted"

— Grigg (2010)

The same or different?

Cyberbullying

"An aggressive, *intentional* act carried out by a group or individual, using *electronic forms* of contact **repeatedly & overtime** against a victim who **cannot easily defend him or herself**"
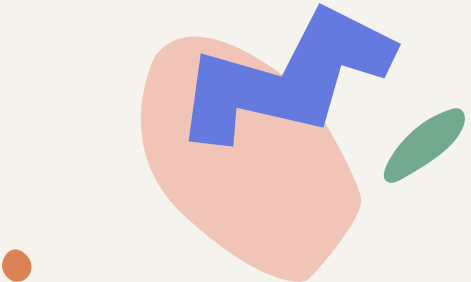
Cyber Aggression

"*Intentional harm* delivered by the use of *electronic means* to a person or a group of people irrespective of their age, who perceive acts as offensive, derogatory harmful or unwanted"

# Background

Cyberbullying is a "vague, inadequate and restricted"
term, thus the term cyber aggression was constructed
to encompass a broader range of negative online
• behaviours, such as cyberbullying, cyberstalking and
cybertrolling (Grigg, 2010).

The term cyberbullying is considered as
outdated, not very descriptive and is not
well understood by college students
(Crosslin & Golman, 2014).
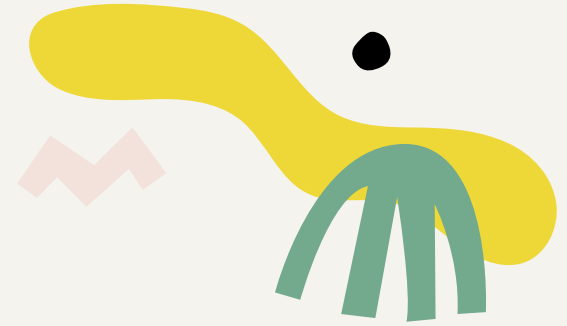
Key Issues

- Research predominately focuses on children and adolescents

- Primary focus of cyberbullying, with cyber aggression often overlooked

- Inconsistent use of the terms cyberbullying and cyber aggression

Research Aims

- Understand how emerging adults perceive cyberbullying and cyber aggression

- Explore whether cyberbullying and cyber aggression perceived to be the same or different

Method

Pilot Study

Participants

Four undergraduate students aged between 18-25 (3 female, 1 male; mean age 18.5, SD = 0.577)

Outcome

Questions were considered appropriate and easily understood, however booking slots should be increased
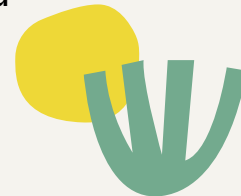
Participants

Twenty-three undergraduate students aged between 18-25 (19 female and 4 males; mean age = 19, SD = 1.434).

All recruited through the Psychology Research Participation Scheme and were awarded course credit in exchange for participation.

Procedure

Three focus groups

- Mixed-sex
- 7-8 Participants in each
- 48 minutes on average

Questions

- 15 main questions
- Opening, introductory and transition questions

Thematic analysis

- Braun and Clarke (2006)
- Identify common themes

Question Examples

How would you define online aggression?

Could you tell me the difference between online bullying
and a joke?

Do you think there is a difference between the aggressive
online behaviours first discussed and online bullying?

Results

Themes

1
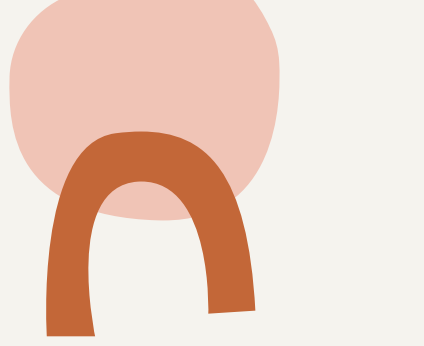
Unclear line

2

Part of the experience

3

Nothing will be done because of your age

Theme 1

Unclear line

"again it's another one of those with like the sort of **blurry lines** at what point does it become (.) **bullying** and not just the odd comment"
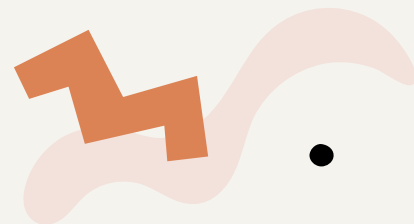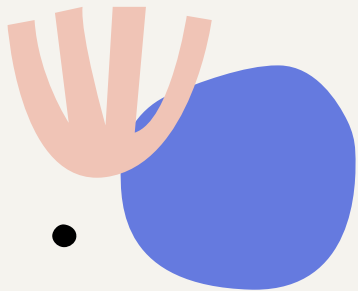
-E27

"you could comment on their photos and stuff like that could be a form of bullying like it's still using aggressive behaviours it's like **it's like they intertwine with each other** don't they"

-E11

"it's a **dodgy line** because there's a **blurry line** as to when it **becomes offensive** to some people in it (.) ..."

-E24

Theme 2

Part of the experience

"I think **it's become normal now** for people to just be nasty and it to just be fine (.) like commenting on people's things like your ugly and whatever it's like they don't even think about it (.) **it's just normal and acceptable I think**"

-E05

"If it was someone bullying me I'd just ignore it (.) but like **if you're willing to put yourself online you've got to have thick enough skin to be able to take some crap of people** (.) and if you can't then (.) **you shouldn't really be there**..."

-E25

"Not really (.) unless you kind of turn off your social media [okay] **it's part of the experience** "

-E24

Theme 3

"...if it's in your messages and stuff (.) I think **the only proper way is to take it to the police** but it's not really something anyone wants to go through (.) but **there should be an easier way**"
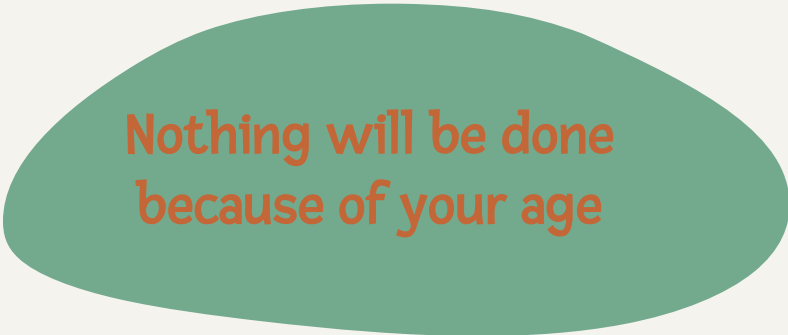
-E18

"you **can't really go to the police** about something like a little comment about something"

-E11

"but if you were to do it now it could be **just as harmful** for someone and **nothing will be done (.) because your like what 19 20 years old**"

-E08

Nothing will be done because of your age

Discussion

Provides an insight into how emerging adults perceive the concepts of cyberbullying and cyber aggression

Demonstrates how normal it is to experience aggressive behaviours on social media

Highlights a gap regarding support for emerging adults at university

Future Research

Investigate the perceptions of cyberbullying and cyber aggression in adolescents

Further research whether emerging adults can distinguish between acts of cyber aggression and cyberbullying

Explore the desired support for emerging adults who have experienced cyber aggression or cyberbullying
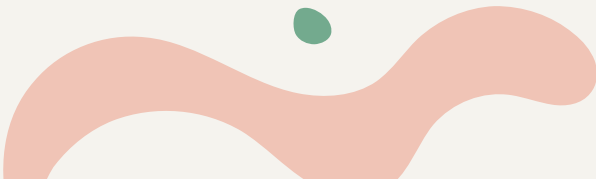
THANK YOU!

Does anyone have any questions?

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