

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL MEDIATION
AND FACEBOOK VICTIMIZATION AND IN-PERSON
VICTIMIZATION, BOTH DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY
BEING MEDIATED BY THE INTENSITY OF FACEBOOK USE
BY MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AN INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL IN BANGKOK, THAILAND**

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Abstract: The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between parental mediation and victimization that occurs from being bullied on Facebook, and victimization from bullying in-person, both directly and indirectly being mediated by the intensity of Facebook use. Also examined in the study was the overall difference in frequencies from victimization on Facebook and victimization which occurs from bullying in-person, amongst middle school students at an International school in Bangkok, Thailand. All students who participated in the study were below the authorized age for Facebook use; 13. A total of 93 students participated in the study by filling out a self-administered survey questionnaire designed to measure the primary variables of the study (styles of parental mediation: intensity of Facebook use, victimization that occurs from bullying on Facebook, and victimization that occurs from in-person bullying). Results from the path analysis showed that certain forms of parental mediation directly influenced student's responses per intensity of Facebook use, victimization on the Facebook platform, and victimization that occurs in person. Also examined in the final analysis were the differences from overall victimization experiences on Facebook and those that occur in-person. The study found that students with parents that use *parental mediation - guidance* as a strategy for media use showed less frequency for intensity of Facebook use, victimization via Facebook bullying, and victimization from bullying in-person. Results also revealed that more students, overall, reported higher incidents of victimization from bullying on Facebook, than victimization that occurs from bullying face-to-face. The study's conclusions, implications, and avenues for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Parental Mediation, Facebook Victimization, Facebook Bullying, Middle School Students Online Use, In-Person Bullying, Middle School Bullying, Parental Supervision-Guidance, Parental Meditation-Supervision, Parental Mediation-Non-Supervision, Intensity Of Facebook Use.

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Introduction

There is a long tradition in psychology of researching the impact new technologies have on children. From small electronic toys to major innovations like the Internet, questions have been posed about both the benefits and possible perils that new technology may have on children's social well-being. For many researchers in the human sciences, the subjective aspect of technology is examined – not for what the tool does, but for the manner in which the technology has the ability to transform users ways of thinking, behaving, and their greater understanding of self (Turkle, 2011). This tradition of researching the effects of technology has provided a vast amount of research over the last 6 decades as a flood of new technologies have been introduced to children at a steady continuum- from electronic toys to online gaming. Today, the use of Facebook appears to be a new arena for children's socializations. As a result, many playground friendships have moved to virtual friendships on Facebook. As have the schoolyard bullies and their victims.

Researchers who have investigated the Internet's influence on children, have examined everything from the effects of content exposure (Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Wolak, 2000), usage practices (Steyer & Clinton, 2003), to modes of online social interactions (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield 2008, KidsHealth, 2004). Studies that have examined the effects of inappropriate online content exposure to children have produced results in concordance to television and video games from previous studies. (Donnerstein, Slaby & Eron, 1994; Fleming & Rickwood, 2001; Furk & Buchman, 1996; Strasburg & Donnerstein, 1999). Exposure to inappropriate online content yields negative outcomes such as increased aggression, fear, desensitization, identity confusion and poor self-perception, (Cho & Cheon, 2005; Wartella & Jennings, 2000; Livingstone & Bober 2005).

The introduction of social networking on Facebook, and the ongoing personal contributions it requires of users, incorporates elements of past technologies, such as exposure to content, but it also introduces a new platform wherein personal bids for connection can either be made, ignored, or abused. Research has revealed that there is also a correlation with the intensity and amount of time spent online, and negative online social interactions encountered by users (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Facebook is now one of the most trafficked sites in the world (Grossman, 2011). Without a doubt, Facebook usage has become a common means to communicate. It can influence how people think, how they interact socially online, and how they function in-person. The current study looks at the relationship between avid Facebook use by adolescents and negative online experiences from the victim's perspective both online and in face-to-face interactions. It also investigates the manner in which various styles of parental mediation may safeguard or influence middle school student's media use.

Past research has found that the approach in which parents either restrict or guide online media can influence whether or not young users engage in risky online interactions (Nikken & deGraaf, 2013). It is well established that children in middle childhood undergo important cognitive, social and moral changes that contribute to their identity and future development into adolescence and adulthood (Eccles, 1999; Harter, 1982; Hughes, 2002; Maccoby, 1980) therefore, it is important to investigate possible variables that may effect this demographic of young users engaging in Facebook use. To date, minimal research exists on the frequency, likelihood, and

occurrences of cyberbullying and victimization as it occurs to young users who are interacting on Facebook, and how this corresponds to parental mediation strategies, and student's relationships offline. The current study looked at such factors as they affected students in middle school studying at an International school in Bangkok Thailand.

Past research on adolescent bullying and victimization has found that there are negative consequences that carry through to adulthood (Forero, McLellan, Rissel & Bauman, 1999). Difficulties can include everything from physical health problems, psychological issues, suicidal ideation (Kim, Koh & Leventhal, 2005), in addition to crime, alcohol and drug abuse (Magnusson, Stattin, & Duner, 1983; Tofu, Farrington, 2011). The level of parental mediation of Facebook use and general online practices, have also been shown to either incite psychological reactance in adolescents' behaviors to either rebel or behave within accepted familial norms (Stattin & Kerr, 200). The manner in which parents mediate their adolescents' Facebook use could have tremendous impact on the child and family, with possible positive or negative repercussions in the short term, and future. As Facebook is being utilized more regularly by young users, it is important that in-depth research be conducted that examines how children interact, and are impacted by their social interactions and experiences on Facebook. This research is particularly important if intensity of usage results in increased exposure to negative interactions online.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined the process of intentional negative interactions on Facebook; such as victimization from bullying, and compared how these interactions were related to face-to-face occurrences transpiring on the schoolyard. The study used quantitative research methods to examine how Facebook was being utilized by the one audience it explicitly prohibits from usage—children who are currently 12 years-of age and under. These under-age users of the study were referred in the research as “*Facebook.5 users.*”

There is a need to investigate the broad social, cultural and emotional implications that Facebook may have on developing children who are utilizing the site. This study examines the extent to which time spent on Facebook is related to exposure of bullying and victimization on Facebook, and how this relates to conflicts occurring in person. This study also examined parental mediation of Facebook use, as a predictor of time spent online, and victimization on the site. The Facebook.5 users participating in this research may be part of the first generation to grow-up using social media regularly to communicate. It is important that in-depth studies be conducted on Facebook.5 users.

Research Hypothesis

Following previous studies and literature analysis on the subject, the following hypothesis were proposed:

- H1. Parental mediation of Facebook use, of middle school children of an International school in Bangkok, Thailand, has a direct influence on victimization that occurs from bullying on Facebook, and victimization that occurs from bullying in person.

- H2. Parental mediation of Facebook use of middle school children of a selected International school in Bangkok, Thailand, has an indirect influence on victimization from being bullied on Facebook and victimization from school bullying, being mediated by intensity of Facebook use by Facebook.5 users.
- H3. There is a significant mean difference in the level of victimization that occurs from bullying on Facebook and victimization from being bullied in person by Facebook.5 users, from a selected International school in Bangkok Thailand.

Method

Participants of the Study

Participants were selected upon convenience sampling from an International School in Bangkok Thailand. Following the ethical guidelines and principals as set forth by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2014) approval to conduct research was first obtained from the school principal at the International School in Bangkok, Thailand, where the research took place. Teachers and parents were given a brief synopsis pertaining to the goals of the study prior to the testing dates. Parent request forms for students to participate in the study were also included.

Selection of participants consisted of the following:

- a) 5th and 6th grade students, under 13 years of age.
- b) International School Students.
- c) Students with Facebook Membership.
- d) Students with parental consent to participate in the study.
- e) Selected via convenience sampling upon criteria of all other above variables, (a- e).
- f) Student who gave their verbal ascent to participate in the study.

Research Instrumentation

Research instrumentation consisted of the following five sections:

Section one requested demographic information from participants that addressed age, gender and grade level. The questionnaires were constructed by the researcher and explicitly omitted personal information that could identify respondents.

Section two consisted of the *Facebook Intensity Scale* (Ellison *et al.*, 2007) revised for Facebook by Kwan & Skoric (2013). Questions elicited information on the amount of time and levels of attachment users had towards Facebook. Participants were asked six questions based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Kwan and Skoric's measures of this construct were reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha =.82. For the present study, Cronbach's Alpha =.926.

Section three contained a parental mediation scale by Sasson & Mesch (2014) which had been adapted from the study *EU kids online* by Livingstone *et al.*, (2010). The survey examined parental mediation styles from restrictive monitoring measures, cooperative use, to guidance techniques. The questionnaire consisted of 17 items which were comprised of three sub-variables; parental mediation through guidance, (Cronbach's Alpha =.778) parental mediation supervision (Cronbach's Alpha = .765) and parental mediation nonintervention (Cronbach's Alpha =.713). Sasson & Mesch

(2014) reported Cronbach's Alpha as .84, .73 and 0.84 for the three sub scales respectively.

Section four comprised Measurements specific to Facebook bullying and Facebook victimization which were also used from studies by Kwan & Skoric (2013). These measures had been adapted from previous questionnaires by Cassidy *et al.* (2009) and Patchin and Hinduja (2010). To assess the extent to which Facebook.5 users experienced cyberbullying, two scales were used that measured cyberbullying and victimization. Participants were asked to indicate the number of times in which they had actively engaged or been subject to some sort of online bullying interaction since the start of the school year. Kwan & Skoric's scale was found to be reliable with Cronbach's Alpha of = .89. The study which had been adapted from Cassidy *et al.* (2009) utilized similar questions that were not Facebook specific but addressed bullying behaviors on social networking sites. The present study found Cronbach's Alpha = .894

Section five examined both school bullying and in-person victimization from bullying based off a scale used by Kwan & Skoric (2013) which had been adapted from a questionnaire used by Ng & Rigby's (2010). In an effort to examine if Facebook bullying and victimization were separate constructs to in-person bullying and victimization, a scale similar to that of Facebook bullying was used that provided a list of different instances that elicited information on whether students had acted as bullies or been victimized in-person. These items consisted of physical, verbal, and relational bullying. The study had 14 items for school victimization (Cronbach's Alpha = .88). The current study found Cronbach's Alpha = .814

Procedures and Measures in Testing

Students with parental consent to participate in the survey and those who had also given their verbal assent to participate were permitted to participate in the in-class survey. Subjects were told that all information obtained from the questionnaire would be kept confidential. Students were instructed to maintain anonymity by omitting the use of names on the questionnaire. Students were also advised that any questions that they did not want to answer, or understand, did not need to be addressed. As well, students were informed that at any time, whether or not all answers have been supplied, participants had the choice to complete or not complete the questionnaire.

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The sample consisted of 93 participants of whom 47 (50.5%) were males and 46 (49.5%) were females. Their ages ranged from 10 years to 12 years, with a mean age 11.47 years. The majority of the students were enrolled in the 6th ($N=40$, 43%) and 7th ($N=51$, 54.8%) grades.

The following Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the five computed factors.

Table 1: The Means and Standard Deviations for The Five Computed Factors

	Mean	S.D.	Mid-point
Parental mediation through guidance.	1.41	.33	1.50
Parental mediation through supervision.	1.33	.33	1.50
Parental mediation through non- intervention.	1.68	.27	1.50
Frequency/intensity of Facebook use.	3.26	1.05	3.00
Facebook bullying - victim's perspective.	1.70	.69	3.50
Face-to-face bullying - victim's Perspective	1.37	.35	3.50

As can be seen from Table 1, the participants were more likely to endorse their parental mediation of their internet use through non-intervention method, as well as rating their frequency/intensity of Facebook use as somewhat high. Alternatively, the participants were less likely to endorse their parental mediation of their internet use through their parents' guidance and supervision. The participants also rated themselves low as victims of both Facebook and face-to-face victimization.

Test of difference in frequencies of reported victimization via Facebook and face-to-face

Interaction

Hypothesis 3 of the study predicted that there would be significant difference in the frequencies of reported victimization via Facebook and face-to-face interaction. Paired *t*-test was conducted to test this hypothesis. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the reported frequencies of victimization via Facebook and face-to-face.

Table 2: The Means and Standard Deviations of The Reported Frequencies of Victimization via Facebook and Face-to-Face

	Mean	S.D.
Facebook victimization.	1.70	.69
Face-to-face victimization.	1.37	.35

Note: Scale scoring of reported victimization for the last year – 1=never, 2=2 to 4 times, 3=5 to 7 times, 4=8 to 10 times, 5=more than 10 times

Results from the paired *t*-test showed that there is a highly significant difference in the participants' reported frequencies of victimization via Facebook and face-to-face interaction, with the participants reporting significantly higher rates of victimization via Facebook ($M=1.70$, $SD=.69$) than via face-to-face interaction ($M=1.37$, $SD=.35$), $t(df=92)=5.36$, $p<.001$.

Path Analysis

In order to test the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships represented by the path model, path analysis via regression analysis was conducted on the participants' perspectives as victims of both Facebook and face-to-face victimization. The analysis involved (1) regressing the dependent variables of 'Facebook bullying - victim's perspective' and 'face-to-face bullying - victim's perspective' on the 3 predictor

variables of parental mediation and ‘frequency/intensity of Facebook use;’ and (2) regressing the mediator variables of ‘frequency/intensity of Facebook use’ on the 3 predictor variables of parental mediation The results of the path analysis *are below*.

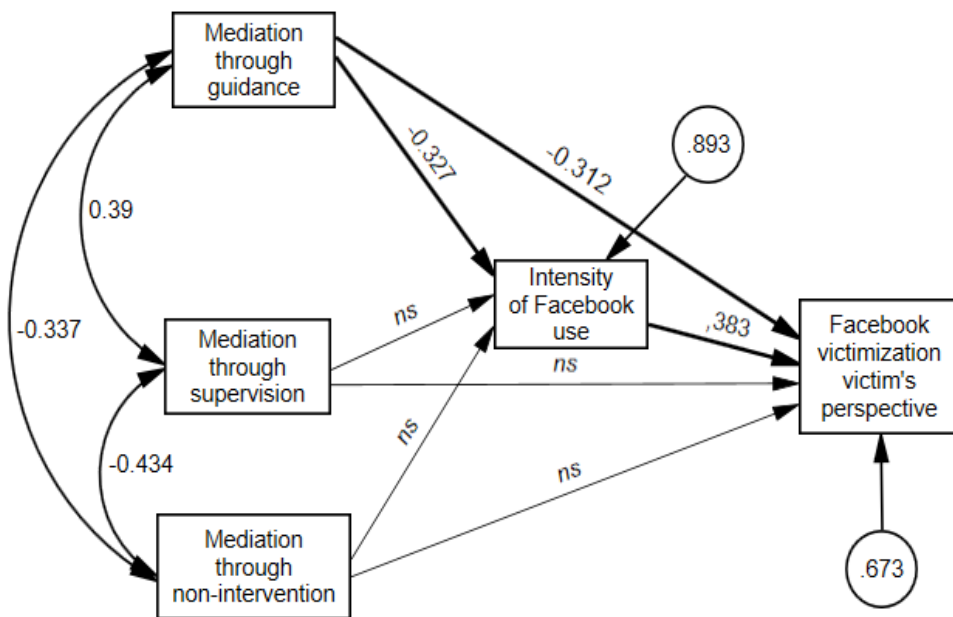


Figure 1: Facebook Bullying - Victim's Perspective

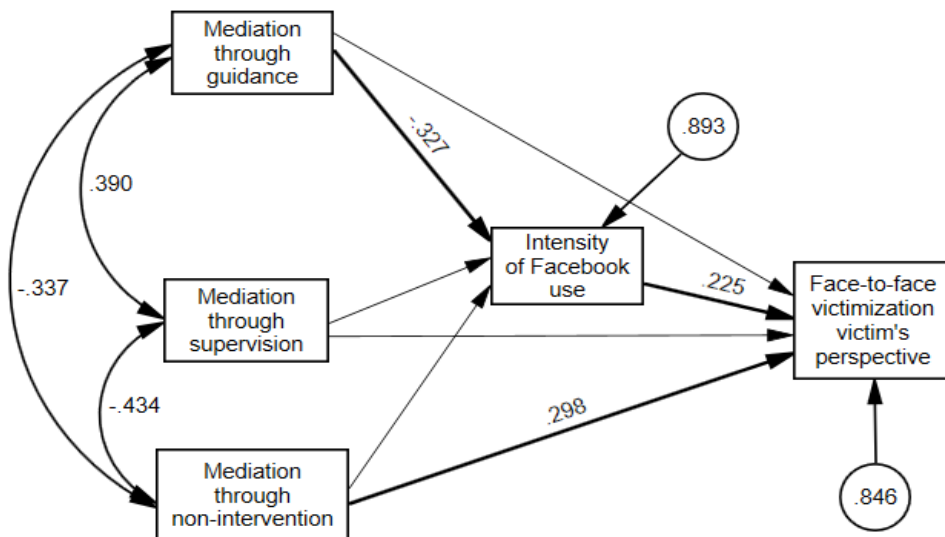


Figure 2: Face-to-Face Bullying - Victim's Perspective

Standardized regression weights for 'Facebook bullying - victim's perspective

The results showed that for the participants in the present study, their perceived parental mediation strategy of 'mediation through guidance' has both direct and indirect significant influences on their reported level of being victims of Facebook bullying. Thus, the more students endorsed their parents strategy of mediation through guidance, (1) the less they reported themselves as victims of Facebook bullying (Beta=-0.312), as well the lower their frequency/intensity of their Facebook use (Beta=-0.327), and (2) the lower their frequency/intensity of their Facebook use, the less they reported themselves as victims of Facebook bullying (Beta=0.383). The other two parental mediation strategies of 'parental mediation through supervision' and 'parental mediation through non-intervention' were not found to have either direct or indirect influences on the participants' reported level of being victims of Facebook bullying ($p>.05$).

Standardized regression weights for 'face-to-face bullying - victim's perspective'

The results from the path analysis showed that the pattern of structural relationships between the exogenous predictor parental mediation variables, the mediator variable of 'frequency/intensity of Facebook use,' and the criterion variable of 'face-to-face bullying - victim's perspective' is somewhat different from the pattern of structural relationships depicted for the 'Facebook bullying - victim's perspective' model. Thus, for the present 'face-to-face bullying - victim's perspective' model, the participants' perceived parental mediation strategy of 'mediation through non-intervention' has a direct and positive influence on their reported level of being victims of face-to-face bullying. Thus, the more they endorsed their parental strategy of mediation through non-intervention, the more they reported themselves as victims of face-to-face bullying (Beta=0.298).

The results from the path analysis also showed that the participants' perceived parental mediation strategy of 'mediation through guidance' has an indirect influence on their reported level of being victims of face-to-face bullying, being mediated by the frequency/intensity of Facebook use. Thus, the more they endorsed their parental strategy of mediation through guidance, (1) the lower their reported intensity/frequency of their Facebook use (Beta = -.327), and (2) the lower their reported intensity/frequency of their Facebook use, the less they reported themselves as victims of face-to-face bullying (Beta=0.225). The parental mediation strategy of 'parental mediation through supervision' was not found to have either direct or indirect influences on the participants' reported level of being victims of face-to-face bullying ($p>.05$).

Discussion

The study reveals several important themes that can help researchers, parents, and educators better understand how new technology may influence how young users socially interact in-person and on Facebook. The study found overall, that more negative interactions occur on the Facebook platform than in-person. However, the influence of parenting behaviors in predicting victimization on Facebook, and in-person, varies according to the type of parental mediation strategy implemented.

Parental Mediation - Guidance

In the study, parental mediation through guidance showed to have a significant relationship with lower frequency of intense Facebook use and victimization from bullying on the Facebook platform. Parental mediation through guidance was also shown to be significantly associated with fewer reported incidents of victimization via bullying in-person. This finding is supported by previous research which posits that parental mediation through guidance is stated to be brought upon through an ongoing process of parenting that extends beyond the fixed use of media (Grolnick *et al.*, 1997). As parental mediation through guidance involves talking about opinions and sharing open perspectives with young adolescents about their choice of media, familial values, and is based on an established level of trust amongst family (Valkenburg *et al.*, 2013) it follows that balanced social interactions with peers remain fairly consistent in both online and offline use.

Parental Mediation-Supervision

In contrast to parental mediation-guidance, parents can also use structure and supervision to control adolescent's media use. Results from the research showed that parental mediation via supervision was found to have neither direct or indirect influence on the participants reported levels of victimization from Facebook bullying or victimization in-person. Young students in middle school consider media as part of their social domain; therefore parental mediation that restricts or intervenes in this area could result in reactant behaviors that are contrary to their parents attempts at mediation control (Valkenburg *et al.*, 2013). Findings from this study are in line with previous research in this area, which has produced mixed results (Valkenburg *et al.*, 2013). The methods that parents use to supervise and implement interventions of online use may be a factor for such findings. Such findings may be due to the fact that parental supervision that entails the use of blocking software, or setting usage limits, may be received with more defiance by young adolescents than supervision that involves checking a child's online profile of Facebook friends. Facebook.5 users may be more inclined to defy their parent's directives of mediation if such measures intervene with peer social norms. Conversely, children may comply with parents if the form of mediation seems moderate and unobtrusive to the adolescent's social life. The antecedent of parental mediation via supervision was also found to have neither direct nor indirect influences on the participants reported levels of intense Facebook use.

Parental Mediation –Non-intervention

Findings from this research show that student's with parents that utilize non-intervention as a mediation strategy self-reported that their engagements online and in-person were not consistent for occurrences of victimization. Parental mediation, via non-intervention, had a significant and direct influence on students reported levels of victimization from in-person bullying. However, parental mediation non-intervention was found to have either direct, or indirect influences on the participants reported levels of being bullied on the Facebook platform. Past studies have shown that non-intervention parenting styles can cause reactive behaviors for adolescents to either follow peer norms or rebel (Austin, 2001). Non-intervention media strategies may be internalized by some children as inconsistent parenting, thus children are left

to guess or experiment towards what may be acceptable, or not, when interacting online and in-person (Pollak, 2012).

The types of relationships children have with their parent's influences whether students are more or less inclined to be victimized. In past studies, students with permissive parents have been shown to experience more incidents of victimization as well as delinquent behaviors (Brenda & Whiteside, 1996; Dunham & Zimmerman, 1997). Students who reported that their parents were not instructive, or helpful in guiding media use reported to experience more incidents of personal victimization in face-to-face interactions with peers; over other students in the study. Interestingly, this was not consistent for their self-reported incidents of victimization from bullying on Facebook - which was found not significant.

As the Internet can be used as an outlet to explore beyond ones' current, in-person, social circle, it's possible that these students are using Facebook as a pro-social vehicle to foster positive interactions online. Conversely, students could also be using the platform as an outlet to anonymously engage in negative, perpetrator interactions, and thus experience less victimization on Facebook than in-person. The findings from this study highlight the need to further investigate parental mediation styles beyond this initial research. Overall, the study revealed that parental mediation strategies on middle schools student's Facebook use does have an impact on students frequency and intensity of online experiences, with guidance strategies minimizing usage and exposure to victimization online. In previous studies, parental mediation through *guidance* has been found to support students use for media, as a result students take on the roles and responsibilities which act in accordance to positive socialization and healthy adjustment (Pettit, Bates & Dodge, 1997). The findings from this study also showed that students who reported greater mediation through guidance, reported less intensity and frequency of Facebook use, in conjunction with less reported incidents of victimization from bullying on Facebook and in-person.

Facebook Bullying – victim's perspective and face-to-face bullying – victim's perspective

The findings from this study have shown to be consistent with the proposed hypothesis, thus victimization that occurs from bullying on Facebook is not consistent with the occurrence of reported incidents of victimization in-person, at an International School in Bangkok, Thailand. The study found that students reported to experience more negative interactions on Facebook than in-person. What occurs on the school yard is not a direct translation to online within this particular audience researched. Causality may be due to the fact that online Facebook users are exposed to a wider audience, and can be victimized out-of-sight by the perpetrator. Perceived anonymity by the perpetrator could also be a variable for the discrepancy between negative interactions that happen on the Facebook platform and those that occur in-person at this international school in Bangkok Thailand.

The findings from this study are not consistent with Kwan & Storik (2013) who found that being victimized at school was strongly related to being victimized in person. Due to the open nature of the Facebook platform, students may be receiving derogatory messages from individuals outside school, competing schools, peers using the open medium as a proxy to hide, or even strangers. In addition, the International

School in Bangkok, Thailand, where this study was conducted is a commuter school and has a high percent of ESL students (English as a Second Language). Peer students may be using Facebook for its ease in providing time and space to target victims without problematic language barriers which occur in face-to-face. As well, in-person victimization that has been known to occur just outside school grounds isn't possible to carry out in a commuter school setting unless perhaps, these interactions are now being transmitted to online. Mark and Ratliff (2011) found that cyberbullying incidents had risen within the population of their study from 24% to 51.2%, in two years. Online bullying and victimization is on the rise. As is the case for this study, the amount of bullying and victimization incidents that occur on social networking sites like Facebook are problematic.

Conclusion

The study found overall, that more negative interactions occur on the Facebook platform than in-person. However, the influence of parenting behaviors in predicting victimization on Facebook, and in-person, varies according to the type of parental mediation strategy implemented. In addition, the intensity of ones' Facebook use is also related to parental mediation, and associated with reported incidents of victimization on Facebook.

Face-to-face bullying intervention programs are now fairly common within the curriculum of many International Schools, and it is only recently that educators have been addressing appropriate conduct for students when interacting online. The International school that was examined for the research in this study, has not had any formal education programs or in-services with parents that address appropriate online conduct for students, or strategies for parents to safely guide online use.

From early childhood onwards, many parents are hands-on in instructing children how to engage with others in a positive and mannerly demeanor in-person. However, parents and educators tend to be more reluctant and disparate on strategies for utilizing Internet technology. The effect of bullying on victims has been shown to have severe ongoing repercussions that could include everything from depression, anxiety, substance abuse to suicidal ideation (Sharp, 1995, Rigby, 2000). This is inclusive of both online and in-person victimization. As online technology is vastly becoming an ever more present aspect of young users' daily social interactions, parental mediation strategies on positive online use is of consequential importance. The findings highlight the need to increase education and awareness on social dynamics of respectful online use, which is inclusive of positive, caring, proactive strategies to be implemented by parents, counselors, Educators, and those in a position of influence to a young person's life.

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