

Impact of bullying and depression psychology essay



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Bullying may be defined as the activity of repeated, aggressive behavior intended to hurt another person, physically or mentally. Bullying is characterized by an individual behaving in a certain way to gain power over another person (Besag, 1989). The word “bully” was first used in the 1530s meaning “sweetheart”, the verb “to bully” is first attested in 1710.

In literary work bullying was used by Charles Dickens and published in 1838. *Oliver Twist* was one of the first novels in the English language to focus on the bullying and criminal maltreatment of a child protagonist. Dr Dan Olweus did the world first systematic research on bullying in 1970. The results of his studies were published in a Swedish book in 1973 and in the United States in 1978 under the title *Aggression in the Schools, Bullies and Whipping Boys*. In 1980 Dr Dan Olweus proposed enacting law against bullying in school. By the mid-1990s, these arguments led to legislation against bullying by the Swedish and Norwegian parliaments.

In 1993, Olweus wrote *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can do*, and is now widely considered to be the world’s leading authority on bullying behavior. Olweus groundbreaking research and intervention programs have played a significant role in increasing awareness that bullying is a growing social problem, one that must be taken seriously by researchers, educators, lawmakers, parents, students, and society in general.

In 2001, *The Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that more than 160, 000 students skip school every day because they are anxious and afraid of being bullied by other students. School is suppose to be a safe

haven where learning takes place not where a student has to defend themselves from peers because of differences.

In January 2006, the US Congress passed a law making it a federal crime to “annoy, abuse, threaten or harass” another person over the internet. One of the first cyber bullying laws is passed in California; Assembly Bill 86 2008 gives school administrators the authority to discipline students for bullying others offline or online.

On Friday 16 March 2012 schools throughout Australia will join together to celebrate the annual National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence. The focus of the 2012 day will be on parents and families delightful a stand together with school communities and recognizing the essential role everyone plays.

Physical bullying includes hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing or damaging property.

Verbal bullying includes name calling, insults, teasing, threats, homophobic or racially prejudiced remarks, or verbal abuse.

Covert bullying is often harder to recognize and can be carried out behind the bullied person’s back. It is intended to harm someone’s social reputation and/or cause embarrassment.

Cyber bullying is overt or covert bullying behaviors using digital technologies. Examples include harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or intentionally without someone from social networking spaces. Cyber bullying can happen at any time. It can be in <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-bullying-and-depression-psychology-essay/>

public or in private and sometimes only identified to the target and the person bullying.

Bullying have negative impact on people either it is verbal, physical, social or cyber bullying. Its not just effect the physical health of the person but also have effects on the psychological health of the person who become victim of the bullying.

The psychological troubles which face by the sufferers of bullying like stress, anxiety, depression, isolation and the savoir psychological problem is suicide.

Bullying is killing our kids. Being different is killing our kids and the kids who are bullying are dying inside. We have to save our kids whether they are bullied or they are bullying. They are all in pain.

(Cat Cora, 2011)

Depression “ Depression is a state of low mood and aversion to activity that can have a negative effect on a person’s thoughts, behavior, feelings, world view, and physical well-being” (Salmans, 1997).

The seminal scholarly work of the 17th century was English scholar Robert Burton’s book, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, sketch on several theories and the author’s have experiences. Burton recommended that melancholy could be combated with a well diet, satisfactory sleep, music, and “ meaningful work”, along with discussion about the problem with a friend.

During the 18th century, the humeral theory of melancholia was increasingly challenged by mechanical and electrical explanations; references to dark and depressing states gave way to ideas of slowed circulation and exhausted energy. German physician Johann Christian Heinroth, however, argued melancholia was a disturbance of the soul due to moral conflict inside the patient.

Eventually, various authors proposed up to 30 different subtypes of melancholia, and alternative terms were suggested and discarded.

Hypochondria came to be seen as a separate disorder. Melancholia and Melancholy had been used interchangeably until the 19th century, but the former came to refer to a pathological state and the latter to a disposition.

The term depression was derived from the Latin verb *deprimere*, “to press down”. From the 14th century, “to depress” meant to subjugate or to bring down in spirits. It was used in 1665 in English author Richard Baker’s *Chronicle* to refer to someone having “a huge depression of spirit”, and by English author Samuel Johnson in a similar sense in 1753.

The powerful system put forward by Kraepelin cohesive nearly all types of mood disorder into manic-depressive insanity. Kraepelin worked from an assumption of underlying brain pathology, but also promoted a distinction between endogenous (internally caused) and exogenous (externally caused) types.

German psychiatrist Kurt Schneider coined the terms endogenous depression and reactive depression in 1920, the latter referring to reactivity in mood and not reaction to outside events, and therefore often

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misinterpreted. The dissection was challenged in 1926 by Edward Mapother who originates no clear distinction between the types.

The Unitarian view became more popular in the United Kingdom, while the binary view held sway in the US, influenced by the work of Swiss psychiatrist Adolf Meyer and before him Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis.

Freud had likened the state of melancholia to mourning in his 1917 paper *Mourning and Melancholia*. He theorized that objective loss, such as the loss of a valued relationship through death or a romantic break-up, results in subjective loss as well; the depressed individual has identified with the object of affection through an unconscious, narcissistic process called the libidinal cathexis of the ego.

The DSM-I (1952) limited depressive reaction and the DSM-II (1968) depressive neurosis, defined as an excessive reaction to internal conflict or an identifiable event, and also included a depressive type of manic-depressive psychosis within Major affective disorders.

In the mid-20th century, researchers theorized that depression was caused by a chemical imbalance in neurotransmitters in the brain, a theory based on observations made in the 1950s of the effects of reserpine and isoniazid in altering monoamine neurotransmitter levels and affecting depressive symptoms. During the 1960s and 70s, manic-depression came to refer to just one type of mood disorder which was distinguished from depression. The terms unipolar and bipolar had been coined by German psychiatrist Karl Kleist.

The term Major depressive disorder was introduced by a group of US clinicians in the mid-1970s as part of proposals for diagnostic criteria based on patterns of symptoms and was incorporated in to the DSM-III in 1980. To maintain consistency the ICD-10 used the same criteria, with only minor alterations, but using the DSM diagnostic threshold to mark a mild depressive episode, adding higher threshold categories for moderate and severe episodes.

Major depression Sometimes this is called major depressive disorder, clinical depression, unipolar depression or simply depression. It involves low moods, and loss of interest and satisfaction in usual activities, as well as other more common symptoms.

Melancholia is a term used to describe a severe form of depression in which several of the physical symptoms of depression are present. For example, one of the major changes is that the person moves more gradually. The person is also more likely to have depressed mood characterized by complete loss of pleasure in everything or almost everything.

Psychotic depression Sometimes people with a depressive disorder can lose touch with reality. Experiencing psychosis can involve hallucinations or delusions. People with this type of severe depression may believe they are bad or evil, being watched or followed, or feel as though everyone is against them (paranoia), or that they are the cause of infection or bad events occurring around them.

Bipolar disorder used to be known as ‘ manic depression’ because the person experiences periods of depression as well as periods of mania. In between, there are periods of normal mood. Mania is like the opposite of depression and can vary in intensity – symptoms include feeling great, having plenty of energy, racing thoughts and little need for sleep, conversation fast, having trouble focusing on tasks, and feeling frustrated and irritable. This is not just a brief experience.

Dysthymia symptoms are similar to those of major depression, but are less severe. However symptoms of dysthymia last longer than those of major depression. A person has to have this milder form of depression for more than two years to be diagnosed with dysthymia.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a mood disorder that has a seasonal pattern. The source of the disorder is unclear, but it is deliberation to be related to the variation in light exposure in different seasons. SAD is characterized by mood disturbances (either periods of depression or mania) that begin and end in a particular season. Depression which starts in winter and subsides when the season ends is the most widespread.

Academic achievement or (academic) performance is the outcome of education – the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals (Annie Wardm, 1996).

Individual differences in academic performance have been linked to differences in intelligence and personality. Students with higher mental ability as verified by IQ tests (quick learners) and those who are higher in conscientiousness (linked to effort and achievement motivation) tend to accomplish highly in academic settings. A recent meta-analysis recommended that mental curiosity (as measured by typical intellectual engagement) has a significant influence on academic achievement in addition to intelligence and conscientiousness.

Children's' first few years of life are critical to the development of language and social skills. School vigilance in these areas help students adjust to academic expectancies.

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Literature Review

Bullying is defined in different ways, but researchers agree that it is a form of aggression, and for bullying to occur, three characteristics must be present:

(1) the behavior is meant to inflict physical and/or psychological harm, (2) the behavior must be repeated over time, and (3) there is an imbalance of power among the people involved (Banks, 1997).

Lynn Carney, another Penn State researcher, said, “ It’s the indirect aggression, such as spreading rumors and marginalizing a child that does the most damage” (Beattie-Moss, 2005). In the continuum of participants in a bullying situation, a person may be a bully, a victim, a bystander, a bully-victim, or a non-bully and non-victim. There are many stereotypes of each of these classifications; however, most of the stereotypes do not hold true. For example, although bullies may often choose victims who are physically smaller in stature, it is not true that the typical victim also has red hair and glasses (APA Conversations Series, 1995). In his book *bullying at School*, Dr. Dan Olweus gives general characteristics of both victims and bullies. Victims, generally, are physically weaker than peers, may have “ body anxiety,” are often quiet, shy, withdrawn, anxious, unassertive in peer groups, and closer to adults than to peers (Olweus, 1993). Some victims, however, are classified as “ provocative victims” because they share some characteristics as those of bullies, including a “ hot temper” and hyperactivity. Generally, bullies are seen to have the following characteristics: greater physical strength than classmates, the need to dominate others, hot-tempered, impulsive, “ tough,” low empathy, and are often oppositional, defiant, and aggressive toward adults (Olweus, 1993).

A bystander is a person, who witnesses the bullying behavior, and can either help or harm the situation depending on his or her actions, such as sustaining the bully or standing up for the victim. A bully-victims someone who has been a victim of bullying and later, becomes a bully himself. This sub-group, according to Perren and Hornung (2005), is the aggressive victims or provocative victims that Olweus discussed in his research. Non-bullies and non-victims, also known as the “ non-involved pupils” in Perren and Hornung’s study (2005), are students who well none of the other categories of students and are not involved in the bullying situation at hand, although it is unsurprising that these students at some point, will at least witness a bullying incident, even if they never bully or are victims of bullying.

Demographic Influences. Bullying behaviors are influenced by many factors including demographic variables, family, peers, and aggression. In 2000, Espelage et al. tested sex, grade, race, price of lunch, and poverty status as demographic variables. In their study, only sex was associated with bullying behavior, with males reporting more participation than females (2000).

Nansel et al.’s study in 2001 shows the same results with respect to sex as a demographic variable, with males bullying and being bullied more than females. However, they also found some differences in bullying behaviors with respect to race, that Hispanic youth reported slightly more sensible and frequent bullying than other races, and that black students reported being bullied slightly less often than students of other races (2001, 4). The findings of Seals and Young in 2003 concur with the results of both Espelage et al. in 2000 and Nansel et al. in 2001, with males reporting more bullying than females. In addition, younger students, seventh graders compared to eighth

graders, participated in more bullying behaviors than older students (Seals & Young, 2003).

Familial Influences. Family relations also influence bullying. According to the article by Cohn and Canter in 2003, two family influences on bullying are the amount of adult direction a child receives and seeing family members display bullying behaviors.

Because bullying occurs when one person exerts power over another person, children who are physically punished at home or who receive negative messages about themselves from people at home are more likely to bully in order to feel better about themselves (Cohn & Canter, 2003). In the 2000 study by Espelage et al., over seventeen percent of the middle school students reported at least sometimes being physically punished when breaking a rule at home. Almost thirty-four percent of the subjects spent more than an hour per day without adult supervision (Espelage et al., 2000). It is suggested that these students are at risk for exhibiting bullying behaviors than other students. Findings from research conducted by Espelage and Swearer in 2003 also support the hypothesis that family environment influences bullying. In their article “ Research on school bullying and victimization: What have we learned and where do we go from here?” the authors cite sources who found associations between aggression and “ a lack of family cohesion

(Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Zelli, & Huesmann, 1996), inadequate parental supervision

(Farrington, 1991), family violence (Thornberry, 1994), hostile discipline techniques

(Loeber & Dishion, 1983), and poor modeling of problem-solving skills (Tolan, Cromwell, & Braswell, 1986)” (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Many of these aggressive behaviors lead to and are a part of bullying behaviors. In addition, it was found that many students who bully their peers in school also bully their siblings at home (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

Peer Influences. Relationships with peers influence bullying as well. Even perceptions of peer involvement in negative behaviors can affect how students behave (Espelage et al., 2000). Espelage and Swearer, in their 2003 study, suggest that students will spend their time with other students who are similar to them, called homophile.

Furthermore, the subjects of the study formed peer groups with students who bullied at a similar frequency as they did (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). In addition, they suggested that the dominance theory can also explain adolescent bullying. The dominance theory is essentially the idea that in adolescence, particularly in middle school, children set up a hierarchy based on power or access to resources (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Espelage and Swearer suggest that bullying is often a way that adolescents provide evidence their dominance (2003). In environments that do not tackle bullying behaviors, Cohn and Canter state, “ some children may bully their peers in an effort to ‘ fit in’ even though the behavior may make them uncomfortable” (2003, 2).

Aggression. Since bullying is a subset of aggression, different types of aggression can lead to dissimilar manifestations of bullying behaviors. Espelage and Swearer in 2003 list different types of aggression, including proactive versus reactive aggression, direct versus indirect aggression, overt versus covert aggression, and relational aggression.

Proactive aggression is when a person seeks a target for a certain purpose, like when a bully targets a weaker victim senseless (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Reactive aggression is when a bully targets a victim as a result of an earlier incident that angered the bully (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Overt, or direct, aggression includes physical or verbal bullying behaviors such as fighting, kicking, and name-calling, for example, and covert, or indirect, aggression includes a third-party through which the bullying occurs; it is not face-to-face, rather, it is social exclusion or rumor-spreading (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Relational aggression is aggression or bullying that damages a relationship; it is when peer pressure is used to convince another person to participate in bullying either through verbal threats of social exclusion or even threats of physical harm, both of which serve to damage relationships (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). In a study by Crick and

Nelson (2002), the researchers found that victims of physical bullying were mainly boys, while victims of relational (or psychological) bullying were mainly girls. In addition, the authors found that more than seventy percent of girls in their study were victims of relational bullying, which included both verbal and psychological behaviors, such as saying, “ My friend tells me she won’t like me unless I do what she says” (2002, p. 601).

Emotional Influences. Other emotional factors affect bullying behaviors. A review of literature cited in Espelage and Swearer's 2003 article states that in 1999, Bosworth, found anger to be the strongest predictor of bullying. Depression is another major emotional factor related to bullying. In the same article, it was noted that depression levels are higher in victims as well as in bullies compared to non-bullies or non-victims (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

School Influences. School environment affects the prevalence of bullying as well.

When school faculty members ignore bullying behaviors, students are reinforced for the behavior (Cohn & Canter, 2003). Similarly, less bullying occurs in schools where respect for others is taught and valued and where high standards are set for interpersonal behavior (Cohn & Canter, 2003, 2). Espelage and Swearer support these notions also: " If students attend schools in which bullying behaviors are accepted by adults and peers, it is plausible that they will engage in more of these behaviors" (2003).

Additionally, Ma, in 2002, reports that " schools with less bullying have positive disciplinary actions, strong parental involvement, and high academic standards" (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Nansel report that poorer perceived school climate is related to bullying, while other factors such as poorer relationships with classmates and loneliness are related to being bullied and coincident bullying/being bullied (2001).

Community Influences. Though little research has focused on the effect of communities and neighborhoods on bullying behaviors, there is evidence that indicates that bullying may occur more frequently in neighborhoods that

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are perceived to be unsafe (Espelage, 2000). In the 2000 study by Espelage, “neighborhood safety concerns were strongly correlated with bullying behavior”.

Barbara Coloroso, in her book *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander*, cites fourteen specific examples of school shootings and teen suicides associated to peer harassment, one of them being the 1999 Columbine incident.

Another reason that educators need to be aware of the problems associated with bullying and the extent of bullying in our society is because of the effects that bullying has on students involved in bullying incidents. Bullying negatively affects bullies, victims, bully-victims, and bystanders. As previously stated, Banks’ article “Bullying in schools” states that there is a strong correlation between bullying during school years and having criminal or legal problems in adulthood (1997). These problems affect the bullies’ ability to have strong, positive relationships in their adult years (Banks, 1997).

Espelage and Swearer found that bullies in their study had clinically elevated depression levels (2003). The NEA’s National Bullying Awareness Campaign states similar findings, including that bullies often perpetuate family violence in adulthood, and that forty percent of boys identified as bullies in sixth to ninth grades had three or more arrests by age thirty ([www. nea. org](http://www.nea.org)).

Victims are also negatively affected by bullying. The NEA’s National Bullying Awareness Campaign states effects on victims of bullying, including fear of going to school, using the bathrooms in school, riding the bus to and from

school, as well as physical symptoms of illness and a reduced ability to learn (www. nea. org). Espelage and Swearer in 2003 report similar findings, which state that depression is common in victims of bullying, and that anxiety may lead victims of bullying to avoid school. Banks (1997) reports that “ as many as seven percent of America’s eighth graders stay at home at least once a month because of bullies”. He also reports that being a victim of bullying often increases a student’s isolation because other students are afraid to associate with the victim for fear of becoming a victim of bullying too (1997).

Espelage and Swearer conducted some research on bully-victims and found that bully-victims have the highest level of depression compared to others along the continuum, had the highest risk for depression, and were the most at-risk for suicide ideation (2003). Bully-victims report to have higher levels of anxiety compared to either bullies or victims (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Seals and Young reported in 2003 that bully-victims had the lowest self-esteem of everyone on the bullying continuum.

Less research has been conducted on the effects of bullying on bystanders; however, the NEA’s National Bullying Awareness Campaign lists some negative consequences to being a bystander. Most of the consequences are negative emotions such as anger and helplessness for not knowing what to do, fear of being the next target, guilt for not taking action, and fear of certain areas of a school building (www. nea. org).

Pellegrini and Long (2002) studied the occurrence of bullying and victimization as students transition from primary school to secondary school. They found an initial increase in bullying and aggression among children

during the transition to secondary school followed by a decline in bullying and aggressive behaviors. Shifting from primary school to a larger and less supportive environment can result in greater use of aggression as a strategy for establishing status among a changing peer group. On the other hand, victimization was found to decline from primary to secondary school. The researchers propose individuals who are initially victims in primary school have learned to avoid, disregard, or retaliate against bullies. Another proposed explanation is that bullies target a specific smaller group of victims. For example, a bully may target a student with a low peer status, but not target the entire population of students in the school (Long, 2002).

Distinct gender differences regarding the use of direct and indirect bullying behaviors have also been studied. Boys are often recognized as more frequently engaging in bullying behaviors and using more physical forms of bullying (Olweus, 1993).

However, school systems often fail to recognize girls' involvement in bullying. Girls are more likely to engage in indirect acts to damage an individual's peer relationships, feelings of acceptance, and inclusion in social groups (Tran, 2006). Indirect aggression can be an effective way for an aggressor to seek revenge or attention from a peer group (Merrell, 2006). The use of indirect aggression allows girls to become part of a group and feel a sense of importance among friends (Slee, 2000). Indirect aggression often goes undetected in the school environment and can even remain undetected in the classroom with a teacher present through the passing of notes, rumors, or the exclusion of an individual from a group (Smith, 1994).

Defining characteristics of bullies and victims has also contributed to the understanding of bullying. Bullies generally display aggressive, impulsive, and hostile tendencies and show insensitivity to the feelings of others (Olweus, 1993). There are several theories regarding factors which may contribute to bullying behavior. Aggressive and impulsive tendencies of bullies may have developed due to the exposure to parental models of aggression (Dodge, 1997). According to Dodge (1997), students who frequently use aggression misinterpret the behaviors of others and often rationalize that the victim deserved to get hurt. Bullies are thought to interpret the perceived weak stance of peers as an indication that they will receive positive outcomes (Fox & Boulton, 2006). Physical differences between a bully and victim can impact a bully's ability to assert dominance and control and decreases the likelihood that a victim will retaliate. A study conducted by Atlas and Pepler (1998) assessed bullying behaviors based on observations of children's interactions in the classroom. Height and weight ratings were coded for each episode of direct bullying that was observed. The relative estimates found bullies were often coded as being taller and heavier than victims in most instances of bullying. A power difference between a bully and victim is frequent in bullying situations (Pepler, 1998). Additionally, once an individual has been victimized he or she becomes an easy target and is likely to submit to another peer's control (Hunter, 2002).

An individual may be victimized due to physical difference or even achievement in school (Smokowski, 2005). Victimized individuals often feel responsible for the bullying situation (Smokowski, 2005). They are characteristically anxious, insecure, and cautious (Banks, 1997). Victims of

frequent bullying are at risk of suffering depression, poor self-esteem, which may continue into adulthood, and a lack of engagement in school (Smokowski, 2005). They typically lack social support and are avoided by peers because others fear being bullied themselves or losing social status (Veenstra, 2005). The loss of peer support diminishes a victim's ability to cope with bullying (Lev-Wiesel, 2006).

Victims typically fear attending school; 7% of U. S. eighth graders have stayed home from school at least one day a month because of bullying (Smokowski, 2005). Victims avoid school to diminish bullying, resulting in the deterioration of academic success (Smokowski, 2005).

While some victims avoid bullying situations, some victims learn to retaliate productively alongside their bullying peer or peers. Victims who are likely to retaliate against peers are often considered to be highly aggressive and seem to provoke attacks from others (Bernstein & Watson, 1997). These individuals are often known to be bullies in one interaction and victims in another (Atlas & Pepler, 1998).

Cyber bullying is an invasive phenomenon which negatively impacts an individual (Patchin, 2006). Cyber bullying involves harassing others through the use of electronic media (Li, 2005). For example, individuals may post or send harmful messages through the internet as well as leave threatening text messages on a cell phone (Li, 2005). While some individuals may believe a victim has the ability to escape from bullying by deleting messages or going offline, the ability to escape is not often possible (Brown et al, 2006; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Hurtful messages may be broadcast worldwide and

are often irretrievable (Brown et al, 2006). Rumors or gossip may spread throughout the school (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). According to Brown (2006) online harassment can occur at school and home. Students who are electronically engaged can be cyber bullied at any time. As a result, individuals of cyber bullying experience a prolonged sense of victimization similar to other forms of bullying (Brown, 2006).

Li (2005) studied the extent of adolescents' experience of cyber bullying and the relationship between traditional bullying and cyber bullying. Overall, almost 54% of the students reported being bully-victims and over a quarter of the students reported being cyber bullied. Almost one in three students had bullied other students in a traditional setting, and almost 15% had bullied other students using electronic tools. One third of traditional bully-victims reported being cyber-victims and 16.7% of traditional bully-victims reported they had cyber bullied others through electronic media (Li, 2005). Beran and Li (2005) surveyed 432 students from grades 7 to 9 to examine adolescents' experiences of cyber bullying. The majority of students who experienced cyber bullying were also victimized at school. More than half of the students who were victims of cyber bullying also reported victimization by other forms of bullying. Many students also indicated being negatively impacted by cyber bullying. The majority of students who were victimized by cyber bullying reported feeling angry, hurt, or sad (Beran & Li, 2005).

In traditional bullying, a power differential exists between the bully and victim which are often physical. However, individuals who cyberbully gain a sense of power and control behind a keyboard they do not experience during face-to-face interactions (Beran & Li, 2005). Victims of traditional bullying

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may use the internet as a place to assert dominance over others as compensation for being bullied in person (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). On the internet there is no central power or real explanation of territory, and victims can take on a more aggressive persona (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). As a result, victims recognize the a