

# Cyber-Aggression: Definition and Concept of Cyberbullying

**Dorothy Wunmi Grigg**

*Goldsmiths University of London, United Kingdom*

**T**his study examined definitions and concepts of cyberbullying. It identified words, terms and definitions used for negative acts on the internet and mobile phones across different age groups in the United Kingdom. Young people and adults' ( $N = 32$ ; age = 8–54) constructs and perceptions of negative online behaviours were also reported. Focus groups and individual interviews were employed using qualitative triangulation: Thematic Analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The study examined current definitions and concepts of cyberbullying and how these differ in its findings; and considered different ways to foster positive online behaviour for the context of practitioners. The concept of cyber-aggression is used to describe a wide range of behaviours other than cyberbullying. The findings indicate that there is a need to include a broader definition in line with the current trend of a range of behaviours that are common with internet and mobile phone usage.

■ **KEYWORDS:** definitions, concepts, cyberbullying, cyber-aggression

Using mobile phones and the internet for communication purposes is a fast and reliable means of communication, particularly with the instant feedback they give to the sender(s) of such messages. Examples of these are short messaging services (SMSs; Gillespie, 2006) delivery status on mobile phones and 'message sent' reports of emails on the internet. On the one hand, mobile phones open possibilities for verbal communications, independent of restrictions of mobility and portability that is associated with landline telephones. The internet, on the other hand, enhances communication across the globe via emails and/or chat rooms. While these instances can be seen as advantages, some experiences can make the use of mobile phones and internet more devastating than the enjoyment of the spontaneity they offer. Among such distressing experiences are receiving unwanted aggressive messages (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell et al., 2008; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008), happy slapping (Smith et al., 2008); flaming (Gillespie, 2006; Smith et al., 2008), sexting (Bocij & McFarlane, 2003; Gillespie, 2006; Spears, Slee, Owens, & Johnson, 2009), and other forms of aggressive behaviours using various media of communication (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

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*Address for Correspondence:* Dorothy W. Grigg, Unit for Schools and Family Studies, Department of Psychology, Goldsmiths' University of London, 16 Lewisham Way, New Cross, London, SE14 6NW, United Kingdom.  
E-mail: d.grigg@gold.ac.uk

Some negative acts that have been identified within these media of communication are bullying, harassment, assault, abuse and stalking (Gillespie, 2006; Smith et al., 2008; Dooley, Pyzaski, & Cross, 2009). In the United Kingdom, for instance, cyberbullying has been used as a common phrase for most of these subsets of aggressive acts. Cyberbullying is defined as ‘an aggressive intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself’ (Smith et al., 2008, p. 376). This definition follows traditional definitions of bullying (Olweus, 1993) where one person or a group of people repeatedly demonstrate aggressive behaviour towards another person or group of persons with an ‘imbalance of power’ (Monks, Smith, & Swettenham, 2005; Menesini, Fonzi, & Smith, 2002).

In summary, both definitions share three common criteria and one difference: First, traditional bullying and cyberbullying include an intentional harm and therefore can be seen as special cases of aggression (for aggression see Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Krahé, 2001). Second, the imbalance of power is another common aspect, which is an advantage of the perpetrator(s) of aggression. Third, repetition of victimisation is seen as a common criterion for traditional as well as for cyberbullying. However, the difference to traditional bullying lies in the fact that in cyberbullying, technological devices are being used for carrying out such aggressive acts (Campbell, 2005; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008; Spears, et al., 2009; Dooley et al., 2009).

Some researchers have suggested that there is a need to address the definition issues within the area of aggression and bullying via communication devices (Coyne, Chesney, Logan, & Madden, 2009; Menesini & Nocentini, 2009). I suggest that the definitions of intended harm and the use of technological devices are not controversial. This study therefore focuses on two criteria for cyberbullying that merit more attention: the imbalance of power, and repetition.

## ■ Imbalance of Power

If a target of cyberbullying ‘cannot easily defend him or herself’, there exists an imbalance of power in favour of the perpetrator(s) of the aggressive act. But how can this power imbalance be understood in cases of cyberbullying? Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008, p. 499) point out that this imbalance would be based on a ‘real life’ power criterion that consists of physical strength or age, interpreted as media expertise in cyberbullying. In traditional bullying, avoiding physical attack and possible intimidating acts seem plausible; however, it may be complicated to apply the analogy of physical strength and age to the cyber environment. More so, an imbalance of power can also lie in the situational advantage(s) that the bully has over his or her victim. One such advantage belongs to the same ‘in-group’ within social identity repertoire (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). In comparison to the online sense, the in-group could be those who associate or belong to the same chatroom(s) and social networking sites. Arguably, the power imbalance may occur when a group of people start bullying a person or group of people who newly enter a chatroom, or perhaps make suggestive comments about the group or person within the social site. This traditional analogy of the influence of social

identity is also eminent in cyber-interrelationships. Campbell (2005) points out that old behaviours happen in new forms; in this case this would mean that cyberbullying is delivered by an online group whose mechanisms function comparable to offline groups.

Furthermore, imbalance of power has been likened to media knowledge (Smith et al., 2008) and a 'power of technology' (Dooley et al., 2009) to 'media expertise' due to the 'anonymity' involved in sending unwanted messages in form of videos and pictures or abusive phone calls (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). It may be worth stating that both those who are cyber-bullied and those who cyberbully, may have similar media knowledge as they both use these technologies for communication purposes. However to my knowledge, it has not been systematically researched and proven that there is an advantage of cyber-bullies in media expertise, nor that both parties are comparable in this aspect.

### Repetition

In cyberbullying, some acts may be carried out just once by the primary perpetrator and therefore may not fit into 'repetition of the act'. Examples of these are 'outing'; 'happy slapping'; 'flaming' and 'sexting' (Coyne et al., 2009; Dooley, et al., 2009; Spears et al., 2009). In happy slapping, for instance, aggressive or degrading video(s) are taken by a bystander and then forwarded to other people's phones or posted on a website. Also in sexting, a perpetrator sends sexual contents of someone else (in this case the victim) to another person or a group of people without the victim's consent (Spears et al., 2009). In other words, the issue of repetition in these situations is likened to the amount of times that the videos or texts are viewed by various recipients or passed along by various bystanders (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008; Smith et al., 2008). Consequentially, offensive pictures and video clips are perceived as especially devastating, due to the breadth of audience who view these contents and the resulting psychological impact that these may pose to the targets (Gillespie, 2006; Smith et al., 2008). However, there remains vagueness of clarity as to who performs the repeated acts: primary sender or the bystanders.

The traditional concepts of bullying emphasise repetition on the part of the primary offender(s). It is acknowledged there are situations that are clearly repeated by the primary offender that will, in other words, classify as cyberbullying. However, when repetition is likened to the amount of time that the negative contents are viewed or passed along by other people, it is suggested that perhaps there is a need to include bystanders in this definitional analogy, as these online acts are viewed by bystanders and may have been videoed by them. Thus, cyber-bystanders can reinforce the harassment by passing on the information, or they can support the victim by devaluing the negative behaviour or simply ignoring it (Smith et al., 2008). Therefore, when we as researchers refer to a one-time act by the primary aggressor, it may be plausible to include bystanders in the definition of cyberbullying, due to the abovementioned 'pass along' nature. Research has also shown that the role of definition may play a part in how civil, criminal and common law punishment and policies could apply within cyberbullying (Bocij & McFarlane, 2003; Gillespie, 2006). Consequently, extreme cases of aggressive internet acts do go unpunished (Bocij & McFarlane, 2003; Gillespie, 2006; Spears, et

al., 2009). The definition of cyberbullying may ignore the seriousness of a particular behaviour, as pointed out in happy slapping and sexting, due to the unclear concept as to who repeatedly carries out the negative acts.

### **Aims of the Article**

Past and current researchers have looked at the impact of cyberbullying on students' interrelationships both at home and in schools (Smith et al., 2008; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Menesini & Nocentini, 2009). Others have examined cyberbullying experiences from the points of view of cyber-victims and even cyber-bullies and practitioners (Campbell, 2005; Dooley et al., 2009; Spears et al., 2009); however, there is no empirical study that has looked at terminologies used for such negative behaviours from the viewpoint of pupils, students and adults. The aim of this article is to determine what pupils, students and adults perceive as cyberbullying; to examine the broad aspect of negative acts that occur with the use of mobile phones and the internet; and to test participants' knowledge about cyberbullying. Definitions have focused on 'unwanted messages'; it would be worth examining this further by looking at a range of negative behaviours associated with internet and mobile phone use.

It is proposed that it would be worth examining from a general perspective a layperson's overview of this phenomenon. It is not suggested that the lay notion would elucidate our way of defining concepts, rather that it would help practitioners better understand the experience.

## **Methodology**

A qualitative, interpretative approach, using purposive and convenience sampling was employed.

### **Participants**

$N = 32$ , 8–54 years old.

#### **Subsample 1:**

Primary school pupils (8–11 years old; 3 girls, 2 boys,  $n = 5$ ).

#### **Subsample 2:**

4 x focus groups: Secondary (11–16 yrs old,  $n = 15$ ):

- Group 1: 12–15 year olds (1 boy, 2 girls).
- Group 2: 11–14 year olds (3 boys, 1 girl).
- Group 3: 12–16 year olds (2 boys, 2 girls).
- Group 4: 11–14 year olds (2 boys, 2 girls).

#### **Subsample 3:**

Adult participants (24–54 year olds; 11 men 1 woman,  $n = 12$ ).

Participants have received one or more unwanted messages or phone calls since owning a mobile phone and during the cause of using the internet.

## ■ Procedure

Ethical approval was sought from the Department of Psychology Ethics Committee at Goldsmiths University. Permission was also sought from various school authorities to work with children in primary and secondary schools. Permissions from the authorities involved were granted. Primary and secondary school participants were selected from different schools in England. Interviews were carried out during school visits. Some of the participants were selected by head teachers, while some were selected by school program coordinators. Students signed additional consent forms to give their approval for participating in the study.

The adult participants were recruited through online social networking sites ‘tagged’ and ‘FaceBook’. Participants were then added as ‘buddies’ and interviewed on instant messaging Microsoft Network (MSN). This method of recruitment provided participants with the opportunity to remember some of the negative acts that take place on the internet as they are within the area of research under investigation. Consequently, participants can easily be distracted and lose concentration because of the absence of a face-to-face interaction. This was evident during three of the interviews: a participant received a phone call and became unresponsive; after a reminder ‘nudge’ (a form of tone alert that a message was waiting for a response); he then apologised and wanted a reschedule. Another participant withdrew from the study, saying he wanted a ‘nice’ chat instead. The last of the three participants withdrew from the study because he was not comfortable giving his name as a sign of consent to participating in the study.

With the young participants, the interview atmosphere was calm and relaxing, with the option of light refreshments. All participants were fully informed of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so. They were advised to turn off their phones. Adult participants were told to close down any other messaging applications if applicable, so as not to get distracted during interviews. They confirmed that there were no distractions before the commencement of interviews.

Mainly open-ended questions were used, with one exception: participants were asked whether or not they used mobile phones and the computers for internet purposes. The open-ended questions included: ‘What are the negative things that can happen with people using mobile phones and the internet?’, ‘What does cyberbullying mean to you?’, and ‘How useful is the term “cyberbullying”?’ Participants were prompted at appropriate times in order to encourage them to stay within the parameters of the matter under investigation.

Individual interviews were undertaken with primary school and adult participants, and four focus group interviews were conducted with secondary school students. The individual interviews lasted about 20 minutes on average, and the focus group interviews lasted about 30 minutes each. At the end of each contact, participants were thanked for contributing to the study and received help sheets regarding what to do and who to contact in cases of cyberbullying (see Appendix A).

## Analyses

Thematic analysis (Miles & Hubberman, 1994) and Interpretative Phenomenological analysis (IPA: Smith, 1995) were used for individual and focus groups interviews. Pupils’ and students’ interviews were recorded with a digital recorder, while

adult participants typed out their answers on the MSN chat window. Participants' responses were typed using their own words, then the raw data were coded into six content areas according to the focus of the six questions posed: whether or not participants use mobile phones and or internet, identifying the negative acts that occur in the use of mobile phones and the internet, describing and naming negative behaviours that can occur via mobile phones and internet, what can be done about negative behaviours that happen on the internet and mobile phones, the meaning of 'cyberbullying', and whether or not 'cyberbullying' is a useful term. Subthemes were extracted from the codes to build on participants' thoughts and feelings. Themes emerged after several revisitations of coded data and subthemes. Finally, using these themes and participants' cases, the phenomena under investigation was interpreted.

The purpose of these combined methods is to enquire into the general perception of the phenomena under investigation from participants' own perspective, and to give a richer and deeper qualitative meaning to the study. Thus, on the one hand, thematic analyses gave an insight into the contents and themes that emerged within a cyberbullying arena; from the participants' perspective on the other hand, IPA allowed for generalisation of cases by comparing and contrasting emerging themes and their usage by participants (Smith, 1995). The IPA also allows for implicitness of data to be explicit (Smith, 1995).

## ■ Results

The themes that emerged from each research question are demonstrated in Table 1. Data were interpreted with selected cases, using similar case responses, so as to avoid repetition and ambiguity of results. Themes are in italics.

### **Participants Use of Internet and Mobile Phones**

*Basic media knowledge:* All participants' answers were in the affirmative to this question; they use both mobile phones and the internet for communication purposes.

### **Naming and Identifying Negative Acts that Take Place on the Internet and Mobile Phones**

- ▶ 148 Participants' lists of negative behaviours were broad. These acts were described as anonymous, fraudulent, aggressive, unwanted messages, spreading rumours, hacking into people's email accounts, threats, harassment, attacks, unwanted phone calls, malicious, abusive messages. These acts as a result of senders' behaviours resulted in the theme of media abuse and vulnerability. There was no age or gender difference in the way participants perceived these acts.

#### *Media abuse and vulnerability:*

Boy 8: 'Horrible things happen, they hide behind people's identity.'

Group 1: 'They could send offensive messages to you.'

Woman 24: 'You can't see the face of the person who you're talking to.'

Man 33: 'Abusive messages, unwarranted texts and calls at any time of the day and night.'

Man 38: 'Arguing by text, incessant phone calls, sending obscene phone calls without permission.'

**TABLE 1****Emerging Themes for the 6 Interview Questions**

Questions	Themes	Subthemes
Participants use of internet and mobile phones	Basic media knowledge	Affirmation, positive
Naming and identifying negative acts	Media abuse, vulnerability	Bullying, unwanted messages, attack, racism, aggressive language, hatred and intimidation, disrespectful, harassment and aggressive acts
Describing behaviours	Invasion of privacy, anger, frustration	Intimidating, rude, upsetting, antisocial, unreal, frustrating, cowardly, fraudulent and intentional, bullying, selfish
Solutions to problems	Control, empowerment	Awareness, information, blocking, prevention, avoidance information
Meaning of cyberbullying	Media knowledge, generalisation	Threatening via the internet, mobile phone bullying, offensive written or video materials using remote technology, downloading of virus
Is cyberbullying is a useful term?	Restriction, vague, uncertainty	Inadequate, not enough, useful to some specific cases, narrow, trendy phrase

Man 38: 'Abusive texts and phone calls, threats, unwanted messages.'

Man 43: 'Personal attacks, aggressive language and threats, malicious and false information being provided by others to undermine relationships.'

### **Describing Negative Behaviour From Participants' Perspective**

Anger and frustration in the participants' tone of voice were deciphered, resulting from the feeling of invasion of privacy. From the participants' points of view, people tend to act in a way they would not normally do on a face-to-face basis due to the anonymity involved. There was no age difference in participants' feelings in describing these negative acts. The feelings are also the same across gender.

#### ***Invasion of privacy, anger and frustration:***

Boy 8: 'They are just nasty, upsetting, rude and false.'

Girl 11: 'Frustrating, hurtful, swearing ... just upset the other person.'

Group 4: 'They can be described as cowards because they do not say things to people's faces ... they act immature and inappropriate.'

Woman 24: 'Not very social behaviour ... there could be chance that people can act colder than they are in real life.'

Man 28: 'It's possibly exaggerated compared to how it would be face to face.'

Man 2, 28: 'Cruel, vindictive, and sad. It's usually done by people with low self-esteem; cowardly ... if they want to be negative they should have the decency to say it to someone's face rather than via a phone.'

Man 29: 'Hostile, inappropriate behaviour ... people say things they wouldn't say to a person's face ... different personality when using remote technology.'

Man 42: 'It is criminal act and also frustrating.'

Man 43: 'I think it is fraudulent, especially when they try to steal your details for their own selfish purposes.'



### **Solution to Problems About Cyberbullying**

There was agreement across all age groups that awareness needs to be raised; people have to be cautious about how they share information on the internet and mobile phones. There is an element of control when participants talked about possible things that could be done to minimise mobile phones and aggressive behaviours on the internet. The theme of vulnerability arose from participants' stance in having to suggest '... change mobile phones', losing their email accounts and passwords to hacking, viruses and spam sent via the internet. There was also avoidance in the sense that participants stated how the best approach is to ignore and block people who send them unwanted contents and messages. They suggested not adding people they do not recognise to their email accounts, social networking groups and mobile phone contacts. This avoidance illustrates further control and empowerment from the participants' viewpoint. An example of empowerment is seen where participants (Group 2) stated that there was no need to change mobile phones.

#### *Empowerment, control and avoidance:*

Group 1: '... speak about it ... ignore the phone calls.'

Group 2: 'Inform police and report to teachers, there is no point changing mobile phones just for one person.'

Group 3: 'People should be more aware, it would reduce cyberbullying and make people know what bullying really is.'

Man 28: '... raise awareness ... and getting victims to tell their stories.'

Man 29: '... very little...see the person face to face with video phone may help.'

Man 43: '... blocking the people ... use message as evidence.'

Man 42: '... change your number.'

Man 50: '... block them, change your number and get on with your life.'

### **Meaning of Cyberbullying**

Most of the participants understood what cyberbullying meant and where it takes place. Younger participants seemed to know what cyberbullying represented; however, there was an age difference in the sense that three adults aged 38, 43 and 54 reported not having heard of the term 'cyberbullying'.

#### *Media knowledge:*

Boy 10: 'Fighting on the internet.'

Boy 11: 'Bullying on the internet and mobile phones.'

Group 2: 'On internet forums, people can talk nasty to you, they can easily attack personally.'

Group 4: 'Bullying over the internet or mobile phones.'

Man 29: 'Using internet as a tool for bullying as well as phones, not just through texts and calls ... it's now happening through applications — you can download them.'

Man 38: 'Bullying via the internet.'

Man 38: 'I don't know what it means.'

Man 43: 'I have no idea what cyberbullying is.'

Man 54: 'Nothing, never heard of it.'

### Is Cyberbullying a Useful Term?

Participants described how 'cyberbullying' identifies certain behaviours, but when it comes to a broader account of what happens on the internet and mobile phones, it is not considered broad enough to describe these behaviours. Participants tended to generalise negative acts as cyberbullying. Having identified what they thought cyberbullying stood for, some participants thought that it was not a useful term. Perhaps this is due to the broad nature of the negative acts that occur via internet and mobile phone. One would have hoped that participants would have mentioned that the term was useful because it focused on bullying; however, the general use of the term may have impeded their initial response that identified what cyberbullying stood for. These feelings were the same across age generally, and gender, among school children.

#### *Vague, inadequate and restricted:*

Boy 11: 'No, it is not a useful term, when you say cyberbullying, people just think it is only bullying it could be something else.'

Group 2: 'Not useful because it makes people think it's the same as bullying, but many other things are involved ... it is a bit vague and too restricted they might think it is just bullying but also involve photos and videos.'

Man 29: '... is a simple catch-all phrase that can be shown in headlines and news reports which will grab people's attention ... it is only a general term ... it may also detract from face-to-face bullying that is happening at the same time.'

Man 33: 'Some things which are against the law would still be classed as cyberbullying, just more severe threats to people's welfare, child grooming.'

Man 38: 'Not very useful, it only specifies that something bad has taken place on the phone and internet ... could be a better term.'

Man 50: 'It is a trendy phrase that adds just as much as it highlights ... same as happy slapping, cyber-sabotage ... on a scale of 1–10 I will say 5.'

## ■ Discussion

It is apparent that there are various acts that take place via mobile phones and internet beyond the scope and concept of cyberbullying, like hacking into people's accounts, changing passwords to pose as the original owners so as to send unwanted messages to potential victims; targeting actions of people and businesses; downloading and uploading viruses. The results suggest that various aggressive acts can occur when people are involved with mobile phone and internet communications. Some of these acts are cyberbullying, others are forms of aggressive acts, and some are neither bullying nor aggression. Nevertheless, the findings support previous research that describes negative internet behaviours as upsetting and psychologically frustrating.

Generally, it is apparent that owning a mobile phone or having a computer with internet access creates an avenue not only for positive experiences, but can also render one vulnerable in the sense that having these media of communication may allow for invasion of privacy by receiving unwanted contents and messages at any time of the day at the whim of the perpetrator. The sense of vulnerability can be

linked to 'helplessness' in the traditional sense of bullying, where a victim is not easily able to defend him or herself. Participants suggested that perpetrators be blocked when the perpetrating acts persist. It is acknowledged that the media devices used for being anonymous by the perpetrators, would fall within the functions menu used by the targets to block cyber-aggressors. It is apparent that participants can demonstrate these functions, therefore it is emphasised that the misuse of these media functions by the perpetrators is 'media abuse' in the place of media expertise. Sequentially, those who cyberbully do possess the 'intention' to invade other cyber-users privacy by sending them unwanted, abusive and offensive contents so as to cause them to be frustrated and angered by their actions.

The questions as to what cyberbullying meant to participants, and whether or not cyberbullying is a useful term tested participants' knowledge of the meaning of cyberbullying. Apparently, if participants understood that cyberbullying refers to bullying acts over the internet and mobile phones, then one would assume that cyberbullying would be a useful term. However, participants' responses look at the broadness of negative acts that occur on the internet and mobile phones; hence the vagueness, restrictiveness and ambiguity as to the usefulness of the term.

Perhaps what we as researchers look at online is not just cyberbullying but also cyber-aggression, going by the broadness of the negative acts that occur within these media of communication. Dooley et al. (2009) identify bullying, stalking and harassment as repeated forms of aggression. Monks et al. (2005) also describe bullying as a subdivision of aggression. Aggression is any behaviour carried out with the intent to cause harm when the target is motivated to avoid the behaviour (e.g., Baron & Richardson, 1994; Berkowitz, 1993; Geen, 2001). I define this term 'cyber-aggression' as intentional harm delivered by the use of electronic means to a person or a group of people irrespective of their age, who perceive(s) such acts as offensive, derogatory, harmful or unwanted. My proposition is that behaviours using mobile phones or the internet to carry out bullying, harassment, stalking, abuse, assault or hostility, as well as violent behaviours such as 'happy slapping', 'outing' and 'flaming' be classified under the term of 'cyber-aggression'. This definition does not focus on an imbalance of power or repetition of the act, which may be relevant criteria for cyberbullying as mentioned above. Instead, it is possible to include bystanders' role in a cyber-aggressive environment (e.g., in cases of 'happy slapping') in order to give a clear construct for cyber-aggression.

It is acknowledged that the field of cyberbullying is a relatively new one and, as such, research within this area has to propose a broader concept that embraces negative behaviours of internet and mobile phone users without current cyberbullying definitional and conceptual issues. 'Cyber-aggression' describes broad negative behaviours that may occur when people are engaged in internet behaviours. This term includes repeated and unrepeated acts that are likely to cause harm to the intended recipient(s) of such message(s).

A limitation of this study was the absence of participants in the age group 17 to 23 years old. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with participants aged between 8 to 16 years and 24 to 54 years. The results may be different when other age groups are used for similar studies, but central to the current study were the perspectives of primary school pupils, secondary school students,

and adults. It is recommended that future studies use more female participants among the adult samples, so as to determine whether or not there would be differences in perception of the measured phenomenon. Also, as cyber-aggression is intended to cover online activities that are not considered acts of bullying, it would be interesting to have some data that attempts to categorise these in future research. Furthermore, in terms of its methodology, the application of online methods for qualitative analysis may not have the same effect that face-to-face interviews may have on participants in terms of the tone of prompts, probes and body language analysis.

Following from the findings are some ideas for prevention of cyberbullying and cyber-aggression. Research on prevention and intervention of cyberbullying is at its early stage, therefore only few insights for empirically established measures of reduction of aggression and bullying via internet or mobile phones exist (Menesini, 2009). For example, Pfetsch, Steffgen and König (2009) highlighted that banning mobile phones at school will neither reduce the frequency of mobile phone use nor the prevalence of cyberbullying inside or outside of school. Therefore, a complete ban of mobile phones and internet at school will not solve the problem. However, preventive and educational measures should combine to set a functional foundation embedded in School Charta and Policy so as to express a zero tolerance for cyber-aggression and cyberbullying (Pfetsch, 2010). These processes should encompass the participation of teachers, school governors, heads of school and students, and may be supplemented by technological approaches like password protection of school computers and filter software for internet browsers (Pfetsch 2010). Curricular materials focusing on media literacy and cyberbullying could raise awareness among students about the consequences of cyber-aggression and effective ways to deal with it. This may also include training in media competencies and the positive use of communication technology, like a video film project or school radio project (Pfetsch, 2010). Furthermore, general prevention of traditional bullying and aggression can help sustain specific proactive measures against cyberbullying — for example, fostering a positive school climate, developing prosocial class rules, and training in constructive conflict resolution (see Wilson & Lipsey, 2007, for an overview). If schools were effective in establishing a prosocial and helping norm system among all students, the prevalence of aggression may diminish (Pfetsch, 2010). For example, in an evaluation study of over 1000 participants, students reported significantly less passive bystanding behaviour, more cognitive and affective empathy, and less victimisation among students. By transferring these ideas to the prevention of cyber-aggression, schools could foster cyber-civil courage of online or offline bystanders of cyberbullying and cyber-aggression. Also, peers' support for cyber-victims may be a promising way to counteract cyberbullying and cyber-aggression (Smith et al. 2008).

In general, cyber-aggression and cyberbullying are quite prevalent among children and youth (e.g., Ybarra, Diener-West & Leaf, 2007; Steffgen, Pfetsch, König & Bredemus, 2009; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008) and all persons involved can be affected negatively (Gradinger, Strohmeier & Spiel, 2009; Ortega, Elipe, Mora-Merchán, Calmaestra, & Vega, 2009). Therefore, practitioners should not relent in their actions against these negative human phenomenon.

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## Appendix A

### PLEASE KEEP THIS SHEET

If you have a problem with any of the issues relating to bullying or cyberbullying mentioned in this focus group, please talk to someone (such as a teacher, Headteacher, community centre manager) who will be able to help you. If you do not feel comfortable talking to someone in your school or community centre, you can talk to a parent or guardian, and they can come with you to talk to a teacher, or you or they can contact a mobile phone company or internet service provider about the problem.

You can also call Childline FREE on 0800 1111, someone is there all the time and the number will not show up on the telephone bill. If you cannot get through the first time please try again.

If you have access to the internet you can look on the websites below for further information and advice.

#### Bullying

[www.bbc.co.uk/education/bully](http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/bully)  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)  
[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

#### Cyberbullying

[www.bebo.com/Cyberbullying.jsp](http://www.bebo.com/Cyberbullying.jsp)  
[www.wirekids.com](http://www.wirekids.com)  
[www.bullyonline.org/schoolbully/](http://www.bullyonline.org/schoolbully/)

It is important to remember that bullying and cyberbullying happens to many people, and you are not alone. There are people in your school and trained professionals who can listen and offer advice.

### REMEMBER

**KEEPING QUIET ABOUT BULLYING ALLOWS IT TO GO ON**