The Amplification of Cyberhate Victimization by Discrimination and Low Life Satisfaction: Can Supportive Environments Mitigate the Risks?

Anke Görzig, Catherine Blaya, Marie Bedrosova, Catherine Audrin, Hana Machackova
What is cyberhate?

Hate speech expressed on the internet (incl. bullying, insults, discrimination):

- Xenophobia, and other forms of hatred based on intolerance (Council of Europe, 2003)
- Skin colour, supposed race, ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation or political or religious beliefs - also refers to anti-Semitism and historical revisionism (Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism)
- Online denigration, harassment, and advocacy of violence against specific social groups because of assigned or selected characteristics (i.e., sexual orientation, race, gender) (Hawdon et al., 2017; Wachs & Wright, 2018)
- Identity-based cyberbullying (Blaya, 2018)

Cyberbullying = intention to harm, ICT-related cyber aggression; Cyberbullying ≠ group related, single incident
Prevalence

EU Kids Online IV, 2017/2019, 11-17 yrs, 7 European countries (Machackova et al. 2019)

Exposure
- 29%-59%
  - *Seen* hateful or degrading messages or comments online, against people or certain groups of people. (This could for example be Muslims, Migrants, Jews, etc.)

Victimisation
- 3%-13%
  - *Received* hateful or degrading messages or comments online, against you or your community?

Perpetration
- 1%-8%
  - *Sent* hateful or degrading messages or comments online, against someone or a group of people?
Cyberhate and Discrimination

- Cyberhate focused on the community or social group; hence, those from discriminated against backgrounds more likely targets.

- Exposure to cyberhate associated with offline victimization and hate crimes (Oksanen et al., 2014; Räsänen et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2020).

- Ethnic minority young people are targeted by cyberhate (Blaya, 2019; Oksanen et al., 2019).

- Amongst discriminated against adolescents, those from ethnic or religious groups most at risk of victimization by cyberhate (UK Safer Internet Centre, 2016).
Cyberhate and Life Satisfaction

- **Life satisfaction** = global judgement of subjective well-being composed of three parts: positive affect, negative affect, domain satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999).

- **Greater life satisfaction** allows for greater social advancement, coping resources and buffer against negative behavioural reactions (Diener et al., 1999; Lazarus, 1991).

- **Lower life satisfaction** associated with being victimised (i.e., threatened or injured; Valois et al., 2001).

- Low life satisfaction associated with **victimisation due to “being an easy target”** (Kowalski & Limber, 2013) - perceived otherness, lack of fit with normative expectations, lack of agency (Valois et al., 2001; Wachs, Görzig et al., 2020).

- Aspects of life satisfaction (positive / negative affect) **associated with cyberhate victimisation** (e.g., Tynes et al., 2008; Wachs, Gámez-Guadix et al., 2020).
The Buffering Effect of Supportive Environments

- Social support by families, peers and schools have generally found to be crucial protective factors for online aggression (e.g., Fanti et al., 2012; Kowalski et al., 2014; Zych et al., 2019).

- Offline social support has also shown to affect the risk for cyberhate victimization (Räsänen et al., 2016).

- Family attachment and parental support associated with exposure to cyberhate and religious and ethnic based cyberhate victimization (Oksanen et al., 2014; Wachs, Costello et al., 2020).

- Peer support decreased victimisation and were strongest protective factor for online aggression (Kowalski et al., 2014; Zych et al., 2019) as well as effective in interventions against cyberhate (Regan, 2020).

- A positive school climate shown to be protective for online victimization (Hinduja & Patchin, 2017; Kowalski et al., 2014; Smith & Steffgen, 2013).

- Amongst those from discriminated against groups, social support and enhanced sense of belonging are particularly relevant (Austin & Craig, 2013; Klein & Golub, 2016; Roche & Kuperminc, 2012).

- Adolescents low in life satisfaction have shown to benefit strongly from social support and belonging (Frison et al., 2016; Kaakinen et al., 2018; Oberle et al., 2011).
Cyberhate: The Buffering Effect of Supportive Environments

- Online denigration, harassment, and advocacy of violence against specific social groups (i.e., sexual orientation, race, gender) (Hawdon et al., 2017; Wachs & Wright, 2018)
- Identity-based cyberbullying (Blaya, 2018)

Vulnerability factors
- Discrimination: focus on the community or social group an individual belongs to
- Life satisfaction (low): perceived otherness, lack of fit with norms, lack of agency

Protective factors - resilience
- Social support: Peers, Family, School (key socialisation agents; Bandura, 2005)
Cyberhate: The Buffering Effect of Supportive Environments

EU Kids Online IV (2017-2018):

- $N = 3.396$, 4 (of 18) countries
  - Czech Rep, France, Poland, Romania
- Age 11 to 17
  - ($M = 14.00; SD = 1.91, 51.0\%$ girls)
- CASI/CAWI
Cyberhate: The Buffering Effect of Supportive Environments

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Supportive Environments

- Peers
- Family
- School

Discrimination → Life Satisfaction → Cyberhate victimization

Görzig, Blaya, Bedrošová, Audin, & Machackova (under review).
**Research Instruments: Cyberhate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEATURE</th>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>ANSWER OPTIONS</th>
<th>REFERENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyberhate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No (0) – Yes (1)</td>
<td>Audrin &amp; Blaya, 2020 Zlamal et al., 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyberhate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a few times (1) – daily or almost daily (4)</td>
<td>Audrin &amp; Blaya, 2020 Zlamal et al., 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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→ 5-point scale of cyberhate victimisation: Never (0) - Daily or almost daily (4)
## Research Instruments: Discrimination & Life Satisfaction

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<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>“Do you sometimes <strong>feel that you are treated badly because of the following?</strong> – “where my family is from”, “my skin colour”, “my religion”</td>
<td>0 = no, 1 = yes</td>
<td>Williams et al., 1997, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>“Here is a picture of a ladder. Imagine that the top of the ladder ‘10’ is the best possible life for you and the bottom ‘0’ is the worst possible life for you. In general, where on the ladder do you feel you stand at the moment?”</td>
<td>Bottom(0) – Top (10)</td>
<td>Currie et al., 2010</td>
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## Research Instruments: Support

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td>3 (α = .77) – e.g., “My family really tries to help me”; “When I speak someone listens to what I say”</td>
<td>1 = not true, 4 = very true</td>
<td>Zimet et al., 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Support</td>
<td>3 (α = .90) – e.g., “My friends really try to help me”; “I can count on my friends when things go wrong”</td>
<td>1 = not true, 4 = very true</td>
<td>Zimet et al., 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Support</td>
<td>5 (α = .84) – e.g., “Other students are kind and helpful”; “Teachers care about me as a person”</td>
<td>1 = not true, 4 = very true</td>
<td>Currie et al., 2010 (HBSC)</td>
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</table>
Data Analyses

Discrimination and life satisfaction affect cyberhate victimization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES</th>
<th>Moderators (Support)</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Cyberhate victimisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life satisfaction</td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
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- controlled by age, sex and country

- Moderation analysis was conducted with PROCESS (Hayes, 2018)
- All continuous variables were z-standardized
Moderation effects for Discrimination

Discrimination → Family Support: $\beta = -.06^{***}$, CI$_{95\%}$ [-.12, -.03]

Discrimination → Peer Support: $\beta = -.04^*$, CI$_{95\%}$ [-.10, -.01]

Discrimination → School Support: $\beta = .01$, CI$_{95\%}$ [-.06, .08]

Peer Support → Cyberhate victimisation: $\beta = .15^{***}$, CI$_{95\%}$ [.11, .21]
Moderation effects for Life Satisfaction

- Family Support: $\beta = .0$, CI$_{95\%} [-.05, .05]$
- Peer Support: $\beta = .04^*$, CI$_{95\%} [.01, .09]$
- School Support: $\beta = -.03$, CI$_{95\%} [-.08, .03]$

$\beta = -.04^*$, CI$_{95\%} [-.08, -.01]$
Figure 3

Simple Slopes for the Regression of Life Satisfaction on Cyberhate Victimization at Different Levels of Peer Support (Standardized Scores)
Cyberhate victimization associated with perceived discrimination
- reduced by **family support** ↓
- reduced by **peer support** ↓

Cyberhate victimization associated with low life satisfaction
- reduced by **peer support** ↓

**No effect of school support** on either of the risk factors
Theoretical Implications

- Minority groups are more vulnerable to cyberhate victimization
- Those with lower life satisfaction are more prone to be targets of aggression
- Different environmental levels (i.e., family, peers and school) need to be considered separately as well as their interactions with individual characteristics
  - Amongst discriminated against groups strong family bonds are particularly important (Austin & Craig, 2013; Klein & Golub, 2016)
  - Peers support becomes increasingly important in the period of adolescence, conveys a sense of belonging, buffers against adversity (Frison et al., 2016; Oberle et al., 2011; Hymel & Swearer, 2015)
  - A positive climate within a group (i.e., school or classroom) may affect cyberbullying but perhaps not cyberhate -> online aggression towards another group
Applied Implications

- Educate/support **parents and families** in relation to cyberhate as well as empathy towards adolescents in general
- Encourage particular support for those from discriminated against backgrounds in terms of **family as well as peers**

Specifically those from **disadvantaged backgrounds** may benefit from support

- By social services, schools or youth clubs where **vulnerable groups can be reached and supported**
Limitations & Future Directions

- Cyberhate victimization and discrimination measures focus on examples of a specific set of group identities
- Weak effects -> additional factors at play explaining cyberhate victimisation
- Cross-sectional design limits the possibilities of causal interpretations
  → Longitudinal and more complex models with a greater number of explanatory variables may be investigated in an intersectional approach
  → More inclusive measures
Thank you!

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