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Youth online aggressive behaviors and cyber-victimization as correlated with psycho-social aspects and sense of well-being

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During the last decade, internet and social networks have become an inseparable part of youth lives, providing them with new forms of social space that enables new opportunities for social connections, but at the same time expose youth to aggressive and cyberbullying behaviors and injuries. The current presentation is based on a series of studies conducted during 2010-2017, explored the nature of online harassment and vulnerability among youth, its' expressions, relationships with psycho-social aspects and typical emotional and behavioral reactions, focusing on cyber-victimization. Online harassment and vulnerability, named also cyberbullying, refers to a deliberate aggressive activity that takes place using electronic technology, aimed at harassing others through digital communication means. The unique features offered by the electronic technology communication, such as: anonymity, rapid communication, wide accessibility, online disinhibition effect make cyberbullying have a particularly strong effect on youth' well-being. 1680 adolescents completed questionnaires examining their involvement in online harassment in relation to key socio-psychological variables. One third of the participants reported being cyber-victims (with a significant increase over the years). Significant correlations were found between cyber-victimization and high levels of depressive mood, loneliness, low levels of self-efficacy and self- image and low well-being among youth. Cyber-victims tended to share the harm with close friends, but not with parents. Possibilities for prevention intervention programs will be discussed, focusing on the role of youth bystanders and social support in the social networks environment.

Biography

Dorit Olenik Shemesh completed her PhD at the University of Haifa, Israel. She is a Researcher, Lecturer and Course Coordinator in the Department of Education and Psychology (2006) at the Open University of Israel, Israel. Her main research interests focuses on: the psychology of adolescents (different sectors), especially in the context of emotional abilities, stress encounters and coping, youth at risk, affective and emotional intelligence. In recent years she has been intensively engaged in research and national as well as international projects related to violence and bullying on the internet (Cyberbullying) and youth sense of well being and satisfaction with life indicators.

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