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The association between electronic bullying victimization and psychological distress among US adolescents

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The purpose of this research was to examine the association between electronic bullying victimization and psychological distress in a nationally-representative sample of US high school students stratified by gender, race/ethnicity, grade level, and year. For this research, data from the pooled 2011 and 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) were analyzed using the Complex Samples Module of IBM SPSS 23™. The dependent variables used include 1) depressive symptoms, 2) suicidal ideation and 3) suicide attempts. We analyzed data using multiple logistic regression analyses for all students, and also separately for males and females. Results showed females were more likely to experience both electronic bullying victimization and psychological distress than males. There was also a significant relationship between electronic bullying victimization and psychological distress among both males and females. The relationship between grade level and psychological distress and between race/ethnicity and psychological distress were each contingent upon gender. These results show the devastating effects of electronic bullying on psychological well-being among high school students. As social media is an integral part of today's adolescent experience, nurses and other professionals must recognize that electronic bullying victimization is distressing, and related to suicidality. Vigilant assessment and intervention within a trauma-informed model of care is essential. Further research is needed to identify best practices for screening and intervention.

Biography

Nancy Pontes completed her training as a Family Nurse Practitioner at the University of Florida, and her Ph.D. from Columbia University. She is an Assistant Professor at Rutgers University, School of Nursing-Camden. Recently, she set-up and managed the Rutgers/LEAP Health and Wellness Center, a school-based health center. Prior to this position, Dr. Pontes spent ten years at Rowan University as the Assistant Vice President for Health and Wellness and Adjunct Professor of Nursing. Her area of research focuses upon the social determinants of health and wellbeing in youth and families.

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