

Cyberbullying among Adolescents with Chronic Illnesses: Prevalence and Risk Factors

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Background: The use of the internet and social media to enhances the quality of life in adolescents living with chronic health conditions; however, there is risk of cyberbullying. The study around cyberbullying in Thai setting is limited.

Objectives: We aimed to study the frequency of cyberbullying among adolescents with chronic illnesses and risk factors associated with cyberbullied.

Methods: This cross-sectional study randomly recruited adolescents aged 11-18 year-old with various chronic health conditions follow-up at Siriraj Hospital during 2019-2020. The participants were asked to respond the validated online-questionnaires to evaluate health-risk behaviors, cyberbully-experience and depression screening (modified PHQ-2) anonymously. We evaluated the factors associated with being cyberbullied.

Results: Of the 341 participants responded, the mean age was 15.02 ± 2.17-year-old (the 25th, 75th percentile was 12.8, 17.2). There were 75 participants (21.9%) reported risky behaviors; sexually active 42, 56%, smoking 26, 34.6%, alcohol drinking 43, 57.3% and recreational substance abuses 4, 5.3%. Also 38 participants (11.1%) reported feeling depressed within 2-week. Two-third of the participants (226, 66.2%) experienced cyberbullying and 56 (16.4%) were cyberbully-victim. Of those victims, 25 (44.6%) were cyber-offenders. After adjusting the confounding factors, having previous cyberbully-experience (odds ratio (OR) 5.25 (95%CI=1.80-15.29), $p < 0.001$), living in the drug-abuse area (OR 11.43 (95%CI =1.07-122.43), $p = .04$), and having positive depression screening (OR 6.182 (95%CI=2.41-15.85), $p < .001$) were strongly associated with being cyberbully-victim. The type and severity of underlying health conditions was not found to associated with cyberbullying.

Conclusion: Risk-behaviors and cyberbully-prevalence were common among adolescents with chronic illnesses. Early detection of these factors during clinic-visit provides the opportunity to intervene and prevent cyberbullying.

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Key word: cyberbully, cyber-victim, cyber-victimization, chronic illness, adolescents

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