Abstract

This study aims to contribute to the research field on cyberbullying by offering a comprehensive theoretical framework that helps to predict adolescents' perpetration of cyberbullying. One thousand forty-two pupils from 12 to 18 years old in 30 different Belgian secondary schools participated in two surveys within a three-month interval. Structural equation modeling was used to test whether the overall model of theory of planned behavior (TPB) helps to predict adolescents' self-reported perpetration in cyberbullying. Overall, the present study provides strong support for the theoretical utility of the TPB in cyberbullying research. The model accounted for 44.8% of the variance in adolescents' behavioral intention to cyberbully and 33.2% of the variance in self-reported cyberbullying perpetration. We found a strong positive relationship between adolescents' attitude towards cyberbullying and their behavioral intention to perpetrate it. Perceived behavioral control and subjective norm, the other two TPB-constructs, were also significant albeit relatively less important predictors of adolescents' intention to cyberbully. The finding that adolescents' attitude is the most important predictor of perpetration, entails that prevention and intervention strategies should aim at reducing the perceived acceptability of cyberbullying among adolescents by converting neutral or positive attitudes towards this anti-social behavior into negative evaluations.