

Cyber bullying common among schoolchildren (SCMP, 04/07/2010)

By Adrian Wan

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As many as a third of secondary school students have fallen victim to cyber bullies, while one in five have admitted to abusing others online, a survey has found.

The Hong Kong Family Welfare Society, a non-governmental organisation that promotes family well-being, commissioned the Chinese University of Hong Kong to survey secondary school students on cyber bullying from December last year to February. More than 1,800 students responded and about a 30 per cent of those polled reported they had fallen victim to cyber bullying.

Close to 20 per cent of respondents said they had bullied others online. For instance, they had threatened, vilified, or insulted others or distributed private or indecent photographs of them.

In all cases, more boys than girls were involved. Spreading messages of hate was most common.

Students who have been bullied online may develop depression in the most serious cases, warned Dr Chen Ji-kang, assistant professor of social work at Chinese University, who led the study.

"School violence has a great negative impact on pupils and will affect their academic results, intention to go to school and their normal school life. So we should pay close attention to it," Chen said.

Often, school and peer support were more important for victims than support from family, he said.

He suggested that internet service providers set up a management mechanisms to curb the problem.