

44th APS Annual Conference DARWIN



MEDIA RELEASE

30 September – 4 October 2009

Darwin Convention Centre, Northern Territory

29 September 2009

Biggest bullies are still in the playground

Children are more likely to experience bullying in the playground than online or by SMS, a psychological study of 612 students has found.

The study also found the major difference between cyber bullying and playground bullying is that children are more likely to be cyber-bullied by the opposite sex.

“It’s unusual for children to bully the opposite sex face-to-face,” said study author and psychologist, Dr Kay Bussey, who will present her findings at the Australian Psychological Society’s 44th Annual Conference in Darwin this week.

“However, among cyber bullies, it’s common for girls to bully boys and vice versa. This perhaps indicates children feel more comfortable bullying the opposite sex in the comfort of their own home when others are not there to witness it.”

According to the study, 37 per cent of Australian children aged 11 to 15 have experienced bullying, of which seven per cent have experienced cyber bullying.

“Although the levels of playground bullying have not changed significantly in recent years, cyber bullying is a growing problem in schools,” said Dr Bussey.

The study found children who were regularly bullied experienced higher levels of anxiety and depression.

“We found relational bullying, which involves spreading rumours, social exclusion and gossiping, increased levels of anxiety and depression significantly in children - even more so than other forms of bullying, including cyber and physical. “

“Relational bullying may have a bigger impact on children because it aims to disrupt their relationships and it’s felt as more of a personal attack.”

Dr Bussey said despite ‘*No Tolerance*’ bullying policies in schools, children continue to receive inconsistent messages on bullying.

“Teachers, parents and media all play a role in influencing how children receive and react to bullying. Messages often conflict, which allows room for bullies to justify their behaviour,” said Dr Bussey.

“Bullies are good at bullying and believe they are, so intervention strategies need to focus on changing that belief. The only way anti-bullying strategies will make a difference is to prevent bullying from occurring in the first place.”

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The Australian study of 612 students investigated the frequency and impact of physical, relational and cyber bullying in children, aged 11 to 15.

To find out more information on the 44th APS Annual Conference visit:
www.apsconference.com.au

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To coordinate an interview with Dr Kay Bussey, please contact: Elaine Grant on 0412 683 068 or Ellise McLoughlan on 0428 445 097.

About the 44th APS Annual Conference:

This year's Conference will be held at the Darwin Convention Centre from 30 September to 4 October 2009. The Conference will bring together prominent psychologists, practitioners and researchers to explore topical issues including: psychological responses to disaster, emotional intelligence, Indigenous mental health and wellbeing, women in management, body image and youth substance abuse issues.

About Australian Psychological Society:

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the peak professional body for Australian psychologists. With more than 17,500 members and 40 branches across the country, the APS is the largest of all non-medical health professionals' associations in Australia.

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