

# The Ethnocultural-religious Context in Israel: Exploring the Role of the Sociocultural Factor in Cyberbullying

**Noam Lapidot-Lefler, PhD**

Oranim Academic College of Education, Israel

## **Abstract**

The presentation examines the impact of sociocultural factors, specifically, ethnocultural and religious background characteristics (culture-based attitudes regarding individualism vs. collectivism, religion, and gender) on cyberbullying and on involvement as cybervictims, cyberbullies, and cyberbystanders. In past years, research on bullying sought to examine and understand factors related to the individual bully or victim; more recently, the social context of cyberbullying (e.g., the group or the sociocultural characteristics) has become the focus of research in the field. Nevertheless, previous research on the sociocultural characteristics of cyberbullying in Israel (Lapidot-Lefler & Hosri, 2016; Lapidot-Lefler, 2017) resulted in mixed findings, an outcome that is insufficient for advancing our understanding of the role of the social context in cyberbullying. Addressing the social context of cyberbullying in Israel, this presentation explores what we have yet to understand about the sociocultural factor of cyberbullying.

The findings serve as a point of departure for discussing the influence of sociocultural and religious characteristics on the cyberbullying phenomenon in a multicultural society.

If we consider the Jewish sector to be overall more individualistic than the Arab sector, then we may interpret the results of Study 1 as suggesting that people with a stronger sense of individualism are less prone to aggressively attack other individuals and are more likely to witness cyberbullying or be victimized by it. By contrast, collectivism demands a high degree of conformity, such that a departure from the accepted behavioral patterns is apt to be the target of bullying.

The fact that in the Arab sector (beyond the Arab participants' religion) neither individualism nor collectivism correlated with any of the cyber-related activities observed in Study 2 suggests that although this variable is recognized as significant when comparing cultures, perhaps within the Arab culture this particular dichotomy does not play a significant role. Conversely, it is possible that the construct used to measure these categories in the current study needs to be refined for use with various cultures.

**It is argued that culturally-bound constructs, such as the individualism vs. collectivism dichotomy, are complex and that cyberbullying may involve deeper structures, which we have yet to fully understand.**