

# Standing Up or Standing By: Understanding Bystanders' Proactive Reporting Responses to Social Media Harassment

Why do bystanders intervene by using built-in reporting functions to report social media harassment, and what factors shape their willingness?

This study by Jason Thatcher and colleagues, published in Information Systems Research, investigates the factors that influence bystanders' willingness to report social media harassment using built-in reporting functions on platforms like Facebook. The authors integrate the bystander intervention framework with a sociotechnical perspective to understand how social and technical elements shape reporting behavior.

They collected data from 291 active Facebook users who witnessed harassment incidents and applied structural equation modeling to test their contextualized research model. Four key factors increase willingness to report: perceived emergency of the harassment, perceived personal responsibility to report, perceived self-efficacy in using reporting tools, and belief in the outcome effectiveness of reporting functions.

The study also finds that the presence of others negatively affects willingness to report, due to diffusion of responsibility and fear of negative evaluation. However, confidence in the anonymity of the reporting system mitigates this effect, encouraging intervention despite others' presence. Surprisingly, perceived reporting justice and climate had less direct impact on reporting willingness but influenced beliefs about reporting effectiveness.

These findings highlight the importance of designing social media reporting tools that bolster user confidence and promote a sense of responsibility. The authors suggest platform designers improve anonymity features, provide clear reporting guidelines, and raise awareness of the urgency of harassment incidents to encourage proactive bystander reporting. This work advances understanding of cyberbullying interventions and informs safer social media platform design.

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## MAJOR TAKEAWAYS:

- Perceived emergency, responsibility, self-efficacy, and outcome effectiveness strongly influence bystander willingness to report social media harassment.
- Presence of others discourages reporting, but confidence in anonymity counters this effect and encourages intervention.
- Platform design improving anonymity and awareness can increase bystander reporting and help mitigate social media harassment.

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## WHO NEEDS TO KNOW:

- Social Media Platform Designers
- Cybersecurity Researchers
- Social Media Users

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