Chapter 79
Cyberbullying and Traditional Bullying:
The Experiences of Poly–Victimization Among Diverse Youth

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to advance the authors' understanding of the relationship between traditional bullying (i.e., verbal and physical) and cyberbullying. Data were collected from 1,182 participants, ages 13 to 25 (M = 19.66; SD = 3.03) from 75 different countries via an on-line, world-wide survey. Results found that participants experienced both in-person bullying and cyberbullying (i.e., poly-victimization). Additionally, bisexual, pansexual, or queer participants reported more frequent cyberbullying victimization when compared to both heterosexual and gay or lesbian participants. Sexual minority participants also reported victimization through significantly more electronic sources. Specifically, gay and lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and queer participants reported higher numbers of victimization modalities when compared to heterosexual participants. Results from this study expand the authors' awareness of the poly-victimization experiences of youth and young adults and fill in important gaps in understanding these experiences for diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

INTRODUCTION

The use and availability of technology has grown exponentially over the past two decades. A recent investigation of adolescent technology use found that 95% of teenagers use the Internet (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013). While this finding likely comes as little surprise to any clinician, parent, or educator, what may be surprising is how frequently technology is being used. In a recent Pew research study, over 90% of youth between the ages of 13 and 17 reported using technology daily, with over half of participants reporting using the Internet several times each day (Lenhart, 2015). In addition, Lenhart (2015) found that over 70% of youth reported using numerous social media sites and applications. This evolving online landscape has drastically altered how youth interact with one another, with many youth reporting creating friendships via their social media accounts (Lenhart, Smith, Anderson, Duggan, & Perrin, 2015). Therefore, this constantly developing online environment provides a digital space for youth to connect and create supportive friendships that can survive both inside and outside the face-to-face world. However, this increase in connectivity has provided outlets for other behaviors, such as cyberbullying.

Currently, there is no one definition of cyberbullying agreed upon by researchers. However, many agree that cyberbullying shares aspects of the definition for traditional bullying developed by Olweus (1997). Traditional conceptualizations have defined bullying as an intentionally aggressive act that occurs more than once where the perpetrator exudes some type of power over the victim, either real or imagined (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014). However, cyberbullying also contains distinctive characteristics that differentiate the modality as a unique form of bullying. The most obvious difference is the method in which individuals perpetrate the bullying behavior. While traditional forms of bullying are perpetrated largely face-to-face, cyberbullying occurs using an electronic source (Smith & Slonje, 2010), allowing for victimization to extend beyond normal school hours (i.e., 24/7) and the in-person settings often associated with traditional bullying. This factor alone has created a unique challenge for cyberbullying researchers due to the ever-changing and expanding list of technology sources. For example, early investigations of cyberbullying indicated that phone text messaging was reported minimally when compared to other electronic resources (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). However, recent research has indicated that these findings may no longer be accurate, with the majority of participants reporting texting as their primary source of cyberbullying (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2015). In addition, social media sites and applications (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) have not only grown rapidly in registered members, but also in reported use for cyberbullying (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015; Whittaker & Kowalski, 2015). Thus, given the moving target that is cyberbullying, it is imperative that researchers continue to include topical modalities and locations (i.e., specific social media platforms) in their assessment of cyberbullying so that an accurate representation of the bullying landscape can be gained. Thus, one of the primary goals of this investigation was to provide updated information regarding the most commonly used modalities for cyberbullying, including social media outlets, instant messaging services, and online gaming platforms.

Prevalence and Co-Occurrence

An additional aspect that has varied across studies is the reported prevalence of cyberbullying behaviors. This variability stems from measurement issues that plague the cyberbullying literature, such as the lack of a universally-accepted definition, as well as disagreement regarding whether a definition of

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