What Is Cyberbullying?

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INTRODUCTION

Children and adolescents spend a great deal of time using and interacting through electronic technologies, including cell phones, gaming consoles, and the Internet (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013). They engage in and are exposed to different behaviors and content. Some of their involvement with electronic technologies includes many benefits, such as the ability to engage in quick communication with just about anyone, including friends and family, and having access to a multitude of rich information. Despite the many opportunities afforded by electronic technologies, many children and adolescents are exposed to risks, including identify theft, exposure to pedophiles, and viewing unwanted, gory, and/or graphic content. One risk associated with electronic technology usage among children and adolescents is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying occurs through electronic technologies, including gaming consoles, email, instant messaging, chatrooms, social media, and text messages via mobile phones. The attention given to cyberbullying incidences are due to the nature of electronic communications. Through electronic technologies, children and adolescents can remain anonymous, allowing them to harm their victims without experiencing repercussions. The rapid exchange of information and other content through electronic technologies is another concern. For example, a nasty image or video can spread within seconds through electronic technologies. Cyberbullying can also involve multiple bystanders who are also capable of resharing content. The literature in this chapter draws on research from various disciplines, including communication, computer science, education, media studies, psychology, social work, and sociology. Furthermore, the literature involves a variety of different research designs, including cross-sectional and longitudinal methodologies as well as qualitative and quantitative designs. The chapter is organized into the following six sections:

(1) The first section provides definitions of cyberbullying, the technologies used to target others, the features of anonymity as applied to cyberbullying, and the prevalence rates of children's and adolescents' involvement in cyberbullying.
(2) The second section describes the individual characteristics and risks associated with children's and adolescents' involvement in cyberbullying.
(3) The third section details the role of parents and families in children's and adolescents' cyberbullying perpetration and victimization.
(4) Similar to the third section, the fourth section explains the role of peers and school in children's and adolescents' cyberbullying involvement.
(5) The purpose of the fifth section is to review literature on the psychological, behavioral, and academic consequences associated with cyberbullying involvement among children and adolescents.
(6) The final section discusses future research and public policy recommendations related to drawing attention to cyberbullying as an important global health concern.

The Nature of Cyberbullying

As deliberately embarrassing or intimating, cyberbullying involves the usage of modern electronic technologies to harm others using hostile and repetitive behaviors (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Topcu, Erdur-Backer, & Aydin, 2008; Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007; Ybarra, West, & Leaf, 2007). Cyberbullying is described as an extension of traditional face-to-face bullying, and it also includes elements of an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim as well as the incorporation of a technological component (Olweus, 1999; Topcu et al., 2008; Ybarra et al., 2007). These behaviors are repetitive, deliberate, and intentionally carried out by bullies with malicious intent (Grigg, 2010). Similar to the definition of traditional face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying can also involve repetition, although this component of the definition is more complex when the behavior involves electronic technologies. For instance, bullies might target victims once by posting humiliating videos but the victimization might continue when bystanders forward the content to others, either with malicious or benign intent. Similar to traditional face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying can also include behaviors with a face-to-face equivalent, such as spreading a rumor about a victim, harassment, physical threats, social exclusion, humiliation, gossiping about a victim to get others not to like the victim, and/or verbal insults. There are also physical forms of cyberbullying, like in traditional face-to-face bullying, which can include hacking. It can include making anonymous phone calls, theft of identity information by pretending to be someone else, distributing explicit videos via various websites, and harassment using instant messenger, social networking websites, and text messages through mobile phones (Wolak et al., 2007; Wright & Li, 2012; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Other forms of cyberbullying involve happy slapping and flaming (Smith et al., 2008). Furthermore, cyberbullying can involve using various electronic technologies, with on studying revealing that over half of their sample harmed others through instant messaging tools and social networking websites (Arslan et al., 2012).

Researchers have attempted to understand why children and adolescents engage in cyberbullying. One proposal is that new electronic technologies allow cyberbullies to hide their identities, furthering the power differential between the cyberbully and the cybervictim (Wright, 2013; Ybarra et al., 2007). Being anonymous through electronic technologies involves an imbalance of power between cyberbullies and cybervictims. Many children and adolescents who engage in cyberbullying choose to remain anonymous while perpetrating cyberbullying (Dehue, Bolman, & Vollink, 2008; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Wright, 2014a; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Another proposal relates to new electronic technologies' ability to allow the cyberbully to perpetrate frequent, repeated, and prolonged anonymous and/or non-anonymous harassment (Wolak et al., 2007; Wright, 2014a; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Cyberbullying might be perpetrated because of the cyberbullies' ability to remain anonymous. Rates of anonymous cyberbullying vary from 12% in one study (Wright, 2014b) to 80% in another study (Arslan et al., 2012). Some research approaches the relationship between anonymity and cyberbullying differently. In this research, Moore et al. (2012) found that more anonymous forums triggered more cyberbullying incidences than less anonymous forums which require login details and passwords. Wright (2013; 2014a) found that when individuals felt more confidence in their ability to remain anonymous while using electronic technologies they engaged in more cyberbullying, especially when they could perpetrate cyberbullying anonymously. Anonymous cyberbullying intensifies cybervictims' negative feelings, including powerlessness (Dooley, Pyzalski, & Cross, 2009; Nocentini, Galmaestra, & Schultze-Krumbholz, 2010).

When an awareness of cyberbullying was gained by researchers, there were many studies conducted to understand how frequently children and adolescents were involved in these behaviors. In 2007, Wolak and colleagues (2007) conducted one of the earliest studies on cyberbullying in the United States. They

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