

## Chapter 10

# Cyberbullying From a Research Viewpoint: A Bibliometric Approach

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### ABSTRACT

*In less than two decades, social media has become a part of life for many people, increasing the positive and negative effects of social relationships. In a sense, the traditional offline behaviors moved into a ubiquitous environment, enhancing the social phenomenon of cyberbullying. Thus, it attracted much attention from different fields within academia. To understand how research has been conducted in the last 20 years and the topics addressed, this study applied a bibliometric analysis to academic literature from 2000 to 2020 related to cyberbullying in social media, using techniques such as citation analysis, co-citation analysis, and content analysis. The growing interest of the field is confirmed, and some research gaps are unveiled. Since this is one of the first studies to explore cyberbullying that occurs in social media networks, it is hoped that this chapter will stimulate further research on this topic reinforcing the gaps found.*

### INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a human behavior, exercised from a self towards another human being, which is perpetuated in time, inflicting harmful effects on the victims. In fact, bullying is an attack on human sustainability, understood in this context as the set of political, social, educational and ethical conditions and behavior's that favor the process of developing balanced, dignified and responsible human life.

The widespread use of new communication technologies, alongside with the web evolution led to a new form of bullying: cyberbullying. Nowadays, through the internet, computer, mobile, tablets and

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other devices, social networks can be easily accessed and allow perpetrating violence against others, humiliating them, attacking their self-esteem, leading them, creating an environment of hopelessness, depression and psychosocial problems, the loss of self and of their identity.

The growth of the phenomenon of cyberbullying in the 21st century has aroused the interest of researchers, from different areas of knowledge, and, consequently, has motivated and increased by research in this field. Thus, it is important to understand how the research process of cyberbullying developed, analyzing which countries, areas and time periods registered the greatest difference in studies at this time.

In this article we present a study that involves a bibliometric analysis of cyberbullying in the academic bibliography of the specialty, from 2000 to 2020, carrying out a survey of the areas, authors and countries that have been dedicated to the study of this theme and a content analysis of 2289 research works referenced in Web of Science.

This study aims to promote a wider understanding of a violent phenomenon raised in the 21st century - cyberbullying, identifying which domains have been mostly studying, which concepts, contexts and behaviors have been associated with it and identifying the gaps in the literature, in order to develop a prophylactic investigation, inducing the promotion of improvement and prevention of cyberbullying behavior, particularly in educational contexts.

## **BACKGROUND**

As technology advances are widely adopted by people, social interactions tend to change from face-to-face to virtual exchanges. When looking at both theoretical and empirical research studies on social networks it can be found that traditionally they are an interdisciplinary endeavor (Zych, Ortega-Ruiz, & Del Rey, 2015). Thus, this phenomenon has its starting point as a broad range of social phenomena present since the begin of humankind history, has been complexity crosscutting multiple levels of analysis, especially since the birth of online social networks.

Social network sites have been present on the Internet for almost 20 years, and in the last eight years have deeply affected relationships established between users. According to Marwick and Boyd (2011) social media should be ruled by a social norm of personal authenticity. Thus, in this networked world, people post tweets, likes and become fans, explore millions of mobile apps, and search, create and share content; people tend to actively live virtually. which encourages youths to share aspects of their personal life with their social network (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Users stay connected through multiple devices which increase efficiency, convenience, access to information, a wider spectrum of information, and broader selections of data sources (Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2012), changing communication flows and information ownership (Berthon, Hulbert, & Pitt, 2005).

The users' communication empowerment occurred alongside with internet evolution, not only modifying information access, but also shaping users' behaviors and motivations. In the early years of Internet, Web 1.0 appeared as a tool linking documents and turning them electronically available on the Internet. This allowed users to search and read a wide range of information. At this point Tim Berners-Lee noted that the web could be compared to files extensions as "read-only" (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). With Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 communication flows in both directions, allowed users to interact and share information among each other, users, enabling the creation of virtual communities of users and social networks (Singh, Iyer, & Salam, 2009). This new reality may enable bonding and communication among users,

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