

Chapter 8

Individual, Social, and Occupational Effects of Cyberbullying During Adolescence

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ABSTRACT

Technological developments enable adolescents to establish crowded peer groups through communication over extensive social networks that are difficult to supervise. However, inappropriate and unsupervised use of information and communication technologies can make adolescents the target of behaviors related to cyberbullying. Cyberbullying and victimization have severe negative effects on individuals' social, academic, and emotional lives. The negative effects of cyberbullying can be experienced more intensely during adolescence as a result of the changes occurring in the cognitive developmental field. The cyberbullying experienced in adolescence is also a predictor of bullying behaviors in social relations and professional lives as adults. The effects of bullying behaviors in adulthood can be an indication of the long-term effects of cyberbullying. Taking this as the starting point, this chapter aims to examine the types, prevalence, short and long-term effects of cyberbullying behaviors during adolescence.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4912-4.ch008

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is described as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood during which biological, social, cognitive, physical developments and changes are experienced (Gander & Gardiner, 2010; Dolgin, 2014; Steinberg, 2007). In parallel to the changes occurring at developments fields during adolescence, an intense effort for autonomy and identity search is also observed. One of the fundamental developmental duties of adolescents, during this period, is to gain adult roles and responsibilities as part of their healthy identity development. Adolescents who gain a sense of identity by the end of adolescence also develop skills that help them establish and maintain close relationships, choose a profession, and a partner, and take on adult roles in the society. If this period is completed successfully, a sense of identity can be gained; otherwise, adolescents would experience a conflict of roles. According to Erikson's theory, individuals deal with an unresolved conflict for a lifetime and each developmental period is built upon the previous; thus, it can be said that the conflict of roles experienced during adolescence may have an impact on adulthood (Erikson, 1984).

Interpersonal relations are an important component of identity development during adolescence and they are also needed to test different relations to succeed in future adult roles. An adolescent who is in search of an identity and demonstrates efforts of individualization, attempts to meet his or her social needs such as belonging to a group, acceptance and approval, commitment by diverging away from his parents and getting close to the peer network. Dolgin (2014) states that the emotional support needed from the family during childhood is searched within peer groups during adolescence. Peers and social environment of adolescents play a crucial role in their search for autonomy and identity development as they are differentiated from their families and peer influence is highlighted to be more on adolescents compared to family influence (Steinberg, 2007). Relations with peers and the social environment contribute to shaping social relations and their worldview in adulthood. In this regard, it is believed that adolescents' relation with their social environment and peers would have an effect on social and professional functionality during adulthood. Adolescents learn the societal, social and personal skills that would help them become a part of the adults' world from their peers. The emotional commitment they feel towards people and a certain group also increases (Dolgin, 2014). The peer network of adolescents is an indication of their personal sense of identity that would be formed during adulthood (Bee & Boyd, 2009).

Considering that adolescence is the period of gaining experience regarding the social relationships that can be formed in adulthood; the social relations formed during adolescence can be said to be the precursor of the relations in both their professional and social life during adulthood. From this perspective, adolescents' involvement in bullying either as the bully or the victim in terms of social relations can be an indicator of their social relations in adulthood. Being a victim of bullying has long-term effects on people's lives. Individuals who exhibit bullying during childhood and adolescence continue their violent intentions in future years. According to a study, being involved in bullying either as a victim or the bully during childhood was found to be associated with negative outcome in terms on social relations, health, income and education levels in adulthood (Wolke et al., 2013). It is underlined that children who implement peer bullying also exhibit tyrannous behaviors in future professional lives and may become psychological abusers in the workplace (Uçar, 2015).

The technological developments in recent years have changed adolescents' interaction and communication with their social environment and peers. Today's adolescents are faced with a technology-based world from the moment they are born and can communicate with their peers at any time or location using information and communication technologies. The unmonitored and unsupervised use of information

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