Chapter 14
Cyber-Victimization and Cyber-Aggression:
Personal and Situational Factors

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ABSTRACT

This chapter review some of the principal personal and situational factors established through recent international research that contribute to explain the phenomenon of cyber-victimization and cyber-aggression among adolescents, as well as its relations with socio-demographic variables (age, sex, grade level). Personal factors, like emotions, motives, normative beliefs, and moral disengagement were discussed jointly with situational factors, as the role of peers, friends, school and family environments, in addition to the possible interactions of these variables on cyber-bullying. The chapter ends with a discussion of future directions about the research on this phenomenon, namely in what concern educational programs that can use digital technology to help adolescents, schools and families to deal with cyber-bullying.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade cyberbullying has been the focus of attention of several researchers that emphasize the transcultural and transnational nature of the phenomenon (e.g., Kowalski, Giummetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014; Menesini, Smith, & Zukauskiene, 2010; Paladino, Menesini, Nocentini, Luik, Naruskov, Ucanok, … & Sheithauer, 2017) as well as its association with the proliferation of digital technologies use among children and youth (e.g., Livingstone, Haddon, Gorzig, & Olafsson, 2011; Twyman, Saylor, Taylor, & Comeaux, 2010).

Several studies (Beran & Li, 2007; Li, 2007; Ortega, Calmaestra, & Mora-Merchan, 2008; Ortega, Elipe, Mora-Merchan, Calmaestra, & Vega, 2009) suggested that cyberbullying is not a new type of bullying, but it's rather a new manifestation of bullying through digital means. Cyberbullying has been generally defined as repeated aggressive and intentional actions (as was bullying) but with the use of electronic devices (e.g., cell phones and computers) and associated programs (e.g., e-mail, social networks, and other Internet tools), by means of sending messages and/or creating websites that insult, denigrate, threaten, or harass others in some way (Amado, Freire, Matos, Vieira, & Pessoa, 2012; Amado, Matos, & Pessoa, 2009; Li, 2007; Kowalski, Limber, & Agaston, 2008; Martins, Veiga Simão, Freire, Caetano, & Matos, 2016; Smith, 2009; Willard, 2005). So it consists of an indirect form of bullying and frequently represents continuations of face-to-face bullying situations that amplify the roles played on face-to-face bullying or change those roles (Caetano, Amado, Martins, Veiga-Simão, Freire, & Pessoa, 2017; Kowalski, Giummetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014; Ortega, Calmaestra, & Mora-Merchan, 2008; Ortega, Elipe, Mora-Merchan, Calmaestra, & Vega, 2009; Twyman et al., 2010). Paladino et al. (2017) in study aimed to examine the role of different criteria in the perceived severity of cyberbullying incidents, and the differences between four countries (Estonia, Turley, Germany and Italy) found that the criteria used by adolescents are the same across the four countries, and include imbalance of power, intentionality, repetition and anonymity. However, the specific level of severity associated with each factor differs from country to country.

In contrast with other types of bullying, cyberbullying does not tend to decrease with age or grade level; generally it is found a pattern of increase from elementary to secondary education, and this tendency can also be found in college and university students (Francisco, Veiga Simão, Ferreira, Martins, 2015; Kowalski et al., 2014; Souza, Veiga Simão, Ferreira, & Ferreira, 2017; Walker, Sockman, & Koehn, 2011).

The enormous amount of research done in the last decade about cyberbullying allowed to identify several variables that are associated either with cyber-aggression as well as cyber-victimization and these variables can be grouped in three types:

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