Chapter 12
The Nature, Extent, Causes, and Consequences of Cyberbullying

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ABSTRACT

Raised in a digitally connected world, children and adolescents do not remember a time in which new media and technology were not such integral parts or their lives. There are many opportunities afforded by new media and technology, such as the ability to communicate efficiently with just about anyone and having access to an assortment of information at their fingertips. There is a darker side to children's and adolescents' immersion in the digitally connected world. One such consequence is cyberbullying, which has increased over the years, due to children's and adolescents' increasing usage of new media and technology. Further attention has been given to cyberbullying because of high profile cases of victims committing suicide as a consequence of being targeted by these behaviors. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying as well as cultural differences in these behaviors and theoretical underpinnings. Concluding this chapter are recommendations for future research and public policy.

INTRODUCTION

Children and adolescents spend a great deal of time using and interacting through electronic technologies, including cell phones, gaming consoles, and the Internet. Some of their engagement with electronic technologies involves 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. One risk associated with electronic technology usage among adolescents and children is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying occurs through electronic technologies, including gaming consoles, email, instant messaging, chatrooms, social media, and text messages via mobile phones. 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 eight sections:

1. The first section provides a background of the nature of cyberbullying by focusing on defining it and describing the technologies used to target others and the features of anonymity as applied to cyberbullying.
2. The second section describes the extent of cyberbullying by focusing on the prevalence rates of children's and adolescents' involvement in cyberbullying.
3. The third section describes the individual characteristics and risks associated with children's and adolescents' involvement in cyberbullying.
4. The fourth section details the role of parents and families in children's and adolescents' cyberbullying perpetration and victimization.
5. Similar to the fourth section, the fifth section explains the role of peers and school in children's and adolescents' cyberbullying involvement.
6. The purpose of the sixth section is to review literature on the psychological, behavioral, and academic consequences associated with cyberbullying involvement among children and adolescents.
7. The seventh section discusses future research directions.
8. The final section provides concluding remarks on cyberbullying.

BACKGROUND

As deliberately embarrassing or intimating, cyberbullying involves the usage of modern electronic technologies to harm others using hostile and repetitive behaviors (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). These behaviors are repetitive, deliberate, and intentionally carried out by bullies with malicious 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; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Other forms of cyberbullying involve happy slapping and flaming (Smith et al., 2008). Furthermore, cyberbullying can involve using various electronic technologies, instant messaging tools and social networking websites.

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). Many children and adolescents who engage in cyberbullying choose to remain anonymous while perpetrating cyberbullying (Dehue, Bolman, Vollink, & Pouwelse, 2012; Wright, 2014a; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Another proposal relates to new electronic technologies' ability to allow the cyberbully to perpetrate

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