

Chapter 12

Cyberbullying Internationally Increasing: New Challenges in the Technology Generation

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying is a growing phenomenon among adolescents, teens, and young adults who either perpetrate and/or are the recipients of harassing and threatening behaviors through the use of technologies such as emails, Internet communities and social networking Web sites, chat rooms, and cell phones. The incidences of cyberbullying have increased predominantly among students who are residents of technologically advanced countries throughout North America, Europe, and Asia (Anderson & Sturm, 2007; Li, 2006). Several studies have shown that as many as 57% of school age students in the U.S. have experienced some types of cyber harassment (Cook, Williams, Guera & Tuthill, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2005; Lenhart, 2007; Li, 2004). However, many schools and teachers may not fully be aware of the increase of cyberbullying and the psycho-emotional and physical problems that arise from both the perpetuation and the receipt of cyberbullying. The purpose of this chapter is to present the characteristics and theoretical frameworks that define and contextualize cyberbullying including the international prevalence and related statistics, backgrounds and profiles of perpetrators, and adults' roles (Campbell, 2005; Cook, et al., 2007; Kennedy, 2005; Lenhart, 2007; Willard, 2005). This chapter will also provide educators and parents with prevention and intervention strategies to address cyberbullying among youth. Useful Web resources and additional readings are listed as well.

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INTRODUCTION

Internationally, school bullying has been one of the major concerns since the 1980s and various studies have been conducted by researchers with regard to the prevalence, the nature, the short/long-term consequences, perceptions of parents'/teachers', measures of prevention/intervention, and the cultural differences that define and distinguish traditional bullying (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O-Brennan, 2007; Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006; Holt, Finkelhor, & Kantor, 2007). In most western societies, traditional bullying is characterized by physical behaviors such as hitting, punching and spitting, or nonphysical aggression such as verbal assault, teasing, ridicule, sarcasm, and scapegoating (Campbell, 2005; Kanetsuna, et al., 2006; Smorti, Menesini, & Smith, 2003). It involves not only the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s), but also a large number of bystanders who witness the bullying events but do not interfere due to the fear of being the next victim (Akiba, 2005; Campbell, 2005; Talbert, 2004; Talbert & Glanzer, 2006; Talbert & White, 2003). The scientific definition of bullying is complex because it has to refer not only to a single act of aggression but also to situation, power-relation, and bullies' intent to harm (Carey, 2003; Eslea, et al., 2003; Smorti, et al., 2003).

The difficulty of establishing a definitive operational concept of bullying is further exacerbated by the cultural and linguistic derivations of the concept in non-western cultures. Oftentimes there is no equivalent word to describe exactly the same meaning of the English term, *bullying*, in other languages (Eslea, et al., 2003; Smorti, et al., 2003). For example, in Japanese, a word, *Ijime*, is a close linguistic cousin to the western notion of bullying. However, the concept of *ijime* has a more nuanced application and intent than is ascribed to traditional bullying in western society. Unlike the western definition of bullying, which is "aggressive behaviour characterized by repetition of action and asymmetric power relationship"

(Kanetsuna, et al., 2006, p. 570), *ijime* often takes psychological and indirect forms, such as ostracism/exclusion and systematic ignorance from a peer group, (Akiba, 2005; Kanetsuna, et al., 2006; Smorti, et al., 2003; Trembl, 2001), and multiple perpetrators, often a whole class, target one victim (Akiba, 2005; Maeda, 1999; Smorti, et al., 2003). In fact, over 90% of Japanese students believed that only group-to-one harassments are *ijime* and they clearly distinguish *ijime* and fighting (Maeda, 1999). In a collective culture like Japan, it can be a serious threat to become an *ijime* victim because Japanese form their identity based on their roles in a community (Akiba, 2005; Nesdale & Naito, 2007). Japanese students think social isolation is the most dreadful thing that could happen (Akiba, 2005). Victims are often blamed and considered to be worthy of bullying because their behaviors are "Selfish", "Noisy", "Inappropriate", "Not following school rules", or "Different" (Akiba, 2005; Trembl, 2001). In a collective society, being different can threaten to disturb the harmony within the group (Nesdale & Naito, 2007; Trembl, 2001). The Japanese saying: "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down" reflects the concept well.

As described, there are many studies to demonstrate the distinctions that comprise traditional bullying between cultures and countries; however, little research on cyberbullying has been conducted. Analysis of several studies demonstrated a consistent description of the characteristics of cyberbullying as "the willful use of computers or computerized mechanics as tools to intentionally and repeatedly causes harm or discomfort through verbal or relational aggression that targets a specific person or group of persons" (Cook, et al., 2007, p. 4) and can be categorized into two distinct types: the use of computer technology or cell phones to bully others in the real world and the use of cyber space to bully others in the virtual world. More teachers, school administrators, and parents seem to be interested in cyberbullying; however, they may not be fully aware of the various ways that students use technology and

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