Chapter 12
The Roles of Age, Gender, and Ethnicity in Cyberbullying

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ABSTRACT

Children and adolescents have become active users of electronic technologies, with many of them blogging, watching videos, and chatting via instant messenger and social networking sites. Many of these activities have become a typical part of their lives. Electronic technologies have brought many conveniences to the lives of children and adolescents. Along with the opportunities associated with these technologies, children and adolescents are also susceptible to risks, including cyberbullying. Therefore, many researchers have become concerned with identifying which factors might predict children's and adolescents' involvement in these behaviors. Some predictors that researchers have focused on include age, gender, and ethnicity, but the findings were mixed. This chapter draws on research to review studies on the relationship of age, gender, and ethnicity to children's and adolescents' cyberbullying involvement and concludes with solutions and recommendations as well as future directions for research focused on these predictors and cyberbullying.

INTRODUCTION

Millions of children and adolescents utilize electronic technologies everyday (e.g., cell phones, the internet) (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013). Such technologies offer many conveniences, including the opportunity to communicate with friends and family, the ability to research and access information for personal and educational use, watch videos, and play online games. Although electronic technology use offers children and adolescents many benefits, there are some notable risks, including exposure to unwanted electronic content through video, images, and text, identify theft, sexual predators, and internet addiction. Cyberbullying is another risk associated with children's and adolescents' electronic technology use.

Cyberbullying has gained increased attention among researchers, educators, parents, and the general public. Defined as an extension of traditional bullying, cyberbullying involves bullying behaviors

using electronic technologies, like instant messenger, social networking websites, email, and text messages (Grigg, 2010, 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010). Because cyberspace offers the opportunity to remain anonymous, those engaged in cyberbullying are able to harm their victims without experiencing the consequences associated with their actions (Wright, 2014b).

Researchers have proposed that the online disinhibition effect is also present in the cyber context (Moore, Nakano, Enomoto, & Suda, 2012; Suler, 2004; Wright, 2014a). This effect leads many children and adolescents to say and/or do things through electronic technologies that they would never do or say in the offline world. Cyberbullying can also involve more bystanders than traditional school bullying in the offline world. In particular, posting a video online can receive thousands of watches and be shared amongst other people over and over again. Researchers have recognized the importance of focusing their attention on cyberbullying, and many of them have investigated the predictors associated with children's and adolescents' involvement in these behaviors. Three predictors: age, gender, and ethnicity, have proven to be inconsistent predictors of cyberbullying involvement (Barlett & Coyne, 2014; Fredrick, 2010; O'Neil & Dinh, 2013; Pornari & Wood, 2010; Shapka & Law, 2013; Wright & Li, 2013b).

This chapter draws on research from a variety of disciplines, including psychology, education, sociology, communication, computer science, and media studies in order to describe the roles of age, gender, and ethnicity in cyberbullying among children and adolescents from elementary, middle, and high schools. This chapter is divided into seven sections:

1. Description of cyberbullying including the definitions, technologies used, the role of anonymity, and prevalence rates of cyberbullying,
2. Discussion of the role of age in children's and adolescents' cyberbullying involvement,
3. Explanation of the research related to the role of gender in children's and adolescents' cyberbullying involvement,
4. Summary of the studies examining cyberbullying among children and adolescents of different ethnicities,
5. **Solutions and Recommendations:** A discussion of the strategies that can be used to prevent cyberbullying among children and adolescents,
6. **Future Research Directions:** A description of various recommendations to further research on the role of age, gender, and ethnicity in children's and adolescents' cyberbullying involvement, and
7. Final remarks about the current state of cyberbullying literature and how age, gender, and ethnicity impact children's and adolescents' involvement in these behaviors.

The studies reviewed in this chapter utilize a variety of research designs, including cross-sectional, longitudinal, qualitative, and quantitative.

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

In the literature, cyberbullying is defined as utilizing electronic technologies (e.g., email, text messages via mobile phones, social networking websites) to intentionally harass, embarrass, and intimidate others (Arslan, Savaser, Hallett, & Balci, 2012; Ferdon & Hertz, 2007; Joinson, 1998; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Mouttapa, Valente, Gallagher, Rohrbach, & Unger, 2004; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Topcu, Erdur-Baker, & Aydin, 2008; Ybarra, West, & Leaf, 2007). Cyberbullying behaviors might include sending

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