

# Chapter 4

## Cyberbullying

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### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this chapter is to view cyberbullying as a worldwide public health issue. It commences by providing a definition of cyberbullying and enumerating the various behaviors and technologies associated with it. Subsequently, it delves into the risk factors linked to children and adolescents being involved in cyberbullying, followed by an examination of the psychological and academic challenges associated with both perpetration and victimization of cyberbullying. Moving forward, the chapter discusses intervention program suggestions for children, adolescents, and their parents. Lastly, the chapter wraps up by outlining recommendations for future research in this field.*

### INTRODUCTION

Millions of children and adolescents regularly use digital technologies, such as mobile phones and the Internet, which offer various opportunities like global communication, access to vast information, and entertainment through online games and videos (Lenhart, 2015). Despite the positive aspects, these technologies also expose young individuals to potential online risks, such as encountering gory or sexually explicit content, identity theft, online bullying, and cyberbullying, which extends traditional face-to-face bullying into the digital realm.

Cyberbullying is defined as negative behaviors perpetrated or experienced through digital platforms like email, instant messenger, social media, and text messages (Bauman et al., 2013; Grigg, 2012). The cyber environment provides anonymity to cyberbullies, enabling them to harm their victims without facing immediate consequences or empathy for the impact of their actions (Wright, 2014b). The online disinhibition effect can cause children and adolescents to behave differently online than they would offline (Suler, 2004; Wright, 2014a). Digital technologies also facilitate rapid communication, allowing cyberbullies to target victims quickly and potentially making it hard for victims to escape. Moreover, cyberbullying can reach a larger audience, as bystanders can perpetuate the cycle by sharing cyberbullying content with others online.

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This chapter aims to explore cyberbullying among children and adolescents in different school levels, reviewing literature from various disciplines such as psychology, education, communication, sociology, media studies, computer science, information technology, and gender studies. The literature may include research with diverse methodologies like cross-sectional, longitudinal, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches. It begins by providing a definition and characteristics of cyberbullying.

### **DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CYBERBULLYING**

Cyberbullying is defined as using digital technologies to intentionally embarrass, harass, and/or intimidate others (Smith et al., 2013). In addition, cyberbullying involves repetition and an imbalance of power between the bully/bullies and the victim/victims. This component of the cyberbullying definition is consistent with the definition of traditional face-to-face bullying. The cyberbully/cyberbullies might target the victim/victims multiple times by repeatedly sharing humiliating and embarrassing videos or text messages with one person or multiple people (Bauman et al., 2013). Bystanders can further share the content again with other people, who could also continue the cycle by sharing the content once more. Thus, cyberbullying might involve repetition, but not always, although repetitiveness of cyberbullying behaviors highlights the continuous cycle of this form of bullying. The digital technologies requirement of the cyberbullying definition distinguishes this form of bullying from traditional face-to-face bullying (Curelaru et al., 2009).

Cyberbullying behaviors might include sending mean and/or nasty messages through texts, chat programs, and emails, as well as identity theft, pretending to be someone else or spoofing their social media profiles, making hostile and anonymous phone calls, sharing a victim's or victims' secrets with others, gaining someone's trust and then sharing their secrets with others, spreading mean and untrue rumors using social media, threatening to harm someone offline, and/or uploading embarrassing pictures or videos of someone who does not want the image or video shared (Bauman et al., 2013). There is also alignment between traditional face-to-face bullying behaviors and cyberbullying behaviors, such as harassment, insults, teasing, physical threats, social exclusion, humiliation, and gossip.

Cyberbullying can occur through an assortment of digital technologies, including social media, text messages, chat programs, online gaming, websites by including defamatory information about someone else, and using someone else's identity to create fake social media pages (Rideout et al., 2005). Gaming consoles, instant messaging, and social media are the most commonly used digital technologies to engage in cyberbullying (Ybarra et al., 2007). Happy slapping is another example of cyberbullying. This type of cyberbullying involves a group of people insulting another person at random while recording the incident and then uploading the images and/or videos online for others to watch. Another type of cyberbullying is flaming, which occurs when provocative or offensive messages are posted in a public forum with the aim to provoke hostile responses or an argument amongst members of the forum.

Prevalence rates of cyberbullying. The earliest investigations of cyberbullying involved examining the prevalence rates of cyberbullying among children and adolescents. Kimber and Limber (2007) examined 3,767 middle school students', ages 11 through 14, cyberbullying involvement. Findings from this study revealed that 4% were cyberbullies, 11% were cybervictims at least once, and 7% were both cyberbullies and cybervictims. In another study, Patchin and Hinduja (2006) found higher prevalence rates than Kowalski and Limber (2007). Of Patchin and Hinduja's sample, 29% reported that they were cybervictims and 47% revealed that they were bystanders of cyberbullying. Using an older sample of

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