

## Chapter 3

# Cyberbullying: Bullying in the Digital Age

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### ABSTRACT

*Children and adolescents grow up in a constantly connected digital world. They maintain active involvement in the digital world through the creation of blogs, communication via social networking sites, and watching videos. Despite the opportunities seeming almost limitless in a digitally connected world, there is a darker side to electronic technology usage. Cyberbullying is a darker side to children's and adolescents' immersion in a digital world. Incorporating research from around the world and across multiple disciplines, the aim of this chapter is to describe the nature, extent, causes, and consequences associated with children's and adolescents' cyberbullying involvement. The chapter concludes with solutions and recommendations in order to further cyberbullying intervention and prevention. Such an approach is important as cyberbullying is a phenomenon occurring throughout the world. Future research directions are also given, with the aim of furthering research on cyberbullying in an effort to improve the world's understanding of these behaviors.*

### INTRODUCTION

Fully embracing electronic technologies (e.g., cell phones, the Internet, gaming consoles, computers), around 92% of children and adolescents utilize some form of technology daily (Lenhart, 2015). Electronic technologies allow children and adolescents many opportunities in their lives, including communication with friends and family, looking up information for personal, leisure, and school purposes, watching videos, and creating content, like blogs and wikis. Although electronic technologies allow many opportunities, there are also risks associated with this usage, including being exposed to fake or incorrect information, identity theft, sexual predators, and viewing unwanted and/or gory electronic content via videos, images, text messages, and writing. Cyberbullying is another risk factor related to children's and adolescents' electronic technology usage. Conceptualized as an extension of traditional face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying involves bullying through electronic technologies, including email, instant mes-

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## **Cyberbullying**

saging, social networking sites, text messaging via mobile devices, gaming consoles, and video content (Grigg, 2010, 2012; Nocentini et al., 2010). Being able to remain anonymous in the cyber context allows cyberbullies the flexibility to harm their victims without threat or fear of the consequences associated with their actions as they are able to hide their identity, often avoiding retribution from victims (Wright, 2014b). The anonymity created by the cyber context leads to the online disinhibition effect. This effect leads children and adolescents to do or say things to others in the cyber context that they would never do or say in the offline world (Moore, Nakano, Enomoto, & Suda, 2012; Suler, 2004; Wright, 2014a). The cyber context allows cyberbullies to harm their victims much quicker (e.g., it could take less than a minute or so to spread a rumor in the online world versus several hours or days to do so in the offline world), as much as they want (e.g., bullying in the online world often follows victims into their homes, whereas traditional face-to-face school bullying is usually localized to the school environment, allowing the victim to escape once he or she is home), and involve various people or bystanders in the bullying incident (e.g., posting a video online can receive thousands of watches and be shared multiple times by other people in the cyber context).

The aim of this chapter is to describe cyberbullying among children and adolescents, while incorporating research from psychology, education, media studies, communication, sociology, social work, human development, and computer science. The research also includes qualitative and quantitative studies as well as cross-sectional and longitudinal designs and those that incorporate cross-cultural and cross-national samples. Organized into nine sections, this chapter includes:

1. A description of cyberbullying, including the definition, types of electronic technologies used, anonymity, and prevalence rates of children's and adolescents' involvement in these behaviors,
2. An explanation of the predictors of children's and adolescents' perpetration of cyberbullying and cyber victimization,
3. A discussion of the role of parents in their children's cyberbullying involvement as perpetrators and/or victims,
4. A description of the role of schools and peers in children's and adolescents' cyberbullying involvement,
5. A review of the consequences (e.g., psychological, behavioral, academic) related to children's and adolescents' cyberbullying perpetration and cyber victimization,
6. A discussion of the cross-cultural differences in children's and adolescents' cyberbullying involvement,
7. An explanation of the solutions and recommendation for preventing and intervening in cyberbullying involvement as well as public policy recommendations for the intervention and prevention of these behaviors,
8. A description of possible future research directions regarding children's and adolescents' cyberbullying involvement,
9. A conclusion regarding the current state of the literature on children's and adolescents' cyberbullying perpetration and cyber victimization.

## **CYBERBULLYING**

Researchers define cyberbullying as children's and adolescents' utilization of electronic technologies in order to hostilely and intentionally harass, embarrass, and intimidate others, including their peers and strangers (Ferdon & Hertz, 2007; Joinson, 1998; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Slonje & Smith, 2008;

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