

Chapter 4

Adolescent Victim Experiences of Cyberbullying: Current Status and Future Directions

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ABSTRACT

This chapter started by introducing a recent research study that disclosed adolescent victim experiences across seven major types of cyberbullying, significant gender and age differences, and reasons for not reporting incidents of cyberbullying to adults. The chapter then related the research findings to major areas in the literature on the nature and forms of cyberbullying in contrast to traditional forms of bullying, its prevalence among school-aged youths, the effects of gender and age on adolescent victim experiences of cyberbullying, and the factors that contribute to adolescent attitude toward reporting cyberbullying incidents to adults. The chapter suggested that future research should further explore issues such as how various types of cyberbullying affect adolescent mental wellbeing, how age and gender affect school-aged youth victim experiences of various forms of cyberbullying, and how professionals and other adults may help adolescents counter cyberbullying.

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INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying is “a unique form of bullying” (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010, p. 614) that involves “sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication devices” (Willard, 2004, p.1). The rapidly evolving information technology provides numerous easy avenues for spreading negative messages, and thus enables various forms of cyberbullying behaviors. Willard (2004) has identified the following forms of cyberbullying:

1. **Flaming:** Sending angry, rude, vulgar messages directed at a person or persons privately or to an online group;
2. **Denigration (put-downs):** Sending or posting harmful, untrue, or cruel statements about a person to the person or other people;
3. **Online harassment:** Repeatedly sending a person offensive messages;
4. **Cyberstalking:** Harassment that include threats of harm or is highly intimidating;
5. **Outing:** Sending or posting material about a person that contains sensitive, private, or embarrassing information, including forwarding private messages or images. Engag[ing] in tricks to solicit embarrassing information that is then made public;
6. **Masquerade:** Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material that makes that person look bad or places that person in potential danger;
7. **Exclusion:** Actions that specifically and intentionally exclude a person from an online group.

In the following sections, we will first introduce a recent research study that we conducted to explore adolescent experience as victims of various forms of cyberbullying as well as their explanations of why they decide to report or not to report their victim experience of cyberbullying. We will then relate our main findings to major research areas in the literature on the nature and forms of cyberbullying and its prevalence among school-aged youths, the effects of gender and age on adolescent victim experiences of cyberbullying, and the factors that contribute to adolescent attitude toward reporting cyberbullying incidents to adults. Finally, we will end this chapter by pinpointing future directions pertaining to the understanding and intervention of school-aged youth’s victim experiences of cyberbullying.

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