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# A Holistic Overview of Cyberbullying across the World: Review of Theories and Models

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## Abstract

This chapter reviews cyberbullying research from across the world. Not only it is important to be familiar with the range of impact and risks that commonly fall upon cyber victims, but much can be learned when reviewing a myriad of research focused on the bullies themselves. In addition to that, it provides some theoretical discussion for other researchers who wish to study cyberbullying through a specific lens that may help standardize the research and better understand what is truly happening behind the screens. This chapter also explores how those involved with cyber aggressive behaviors choose to cope, whether positively or negatively. In depth, this chapter explores cyberbullies in hopes of creating more awareness of signs for parents or educators that may be able to prevent perpetration or targeting.

**Keywords:** cyberbullying, cyber aggression, adolescents, emerging adults, depression, suicidal ideation

## 1. Introduction

The connection between mental illness and social media use has been well documented over the past decade [1, 2]. What has been most concerning, however, is the pervasive nature and impact of unwanted cyber aggression over the years. As social media has adapted and changed, there have been increased risks of suicidal ideation, suicide, sexual exploitation or solicitations and a myriad of other negative coping methods such as quitting school or losing self-control. Through a meta-analysis, a primary consequence of cyber victimization was found to be increased levels of depression, particularly among females [3]. Because of this phenomenon, it is important to address the impact cyberaggression has on various ages, primarily adolescent ages but also emerging adults and that have provided some insight into how they cope or manage cyberbullying. This chapter will also provide a review of theoretical frameworks that helps to explain motivation behind the screen and why some are more at risk than others. The secondary purpose of this chapter is to explore motivation of the bully or the harasser, connections between bullies and victim, self-harm, internalized and externalized coping.

### 1.1 Defining characteristics of cyberbullies and cyber victims

Prior to describing the impact from involvement in cyberaggressive activities, it is important to describe commonly found characteristics among individuals

often identified as cyberbullies as well as cyber victims, as well as the historical context from which cyberbullying ascended.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, internet access within the home was becoming a normal available tool to have. Chatrooms had already existed for several years and social media was beginning to take off. By the year 2000, the term “cyberbullying” began to appear in anti-bullying laws but was not required until years later after cases of suicides and online bullying became the center of media attention and exposure [4].

Face-to-face bullying had already existed for decades but researchers began to notice online bullies were often not physically dominant over their victims. Olweus [5] claimed a bully had to have some physical dominance, or more power, thus a power imbalance over their victim(s). Unlike traditional bullies, today cyberbullies can be of any size or age and through anonymous accounts, can remove that necessary power-feature to be stronger or physically more dominant. Another characteristic found among cyberbullies are that they often report higher psychosocial challenges, depressive symptomatology and other problematic behaviors [6]. Sabella et al., [7] also found cyberbullies tend to be motivated by revenge-seeking behaviors (see [8]).

To understand key indications for cyber victimization, researchers had been exploring risks such as spending time online, little to no parental monitoring, peer-network connecting online, etc., These were each significantly associated with increases in cyber victimization [6]. However, little was still known about the psychosocial risks of involvement for online victims. To consider the cyber victims’ perceptions and understanding, Campfield [9] explored psychosocial characteristics of both victims and bullies. Specifically among cyber victims, Campfield discovered that victims were significantly more likely to have low self-esteem, more feelings of loneliness and other emotional problems.

While researchers have found some differences among bullies and victims as described, it is important to note that the commonly shared element are elevated levels of psychosomatic disturbances (see [10]). As studies investigate these characteristics, unique differences, or similarities even, the research all suggest concerns for such individuals, especially those that behave as both bullies and victims [9, 11].

## **2. Impact cyberaggression leaves on targeted victims**

Nearly the entire world is connected online in one form or another. Especially in the western world virtually everyone spends time on the internet connected to others socially [12]. Likewise, cyberbullying has quickly grown over the last decade, nearly parallel to the growth and interest in social media networking (SNS) [12]. While SNS are a wonderful tool that helps maintain relationships and allows for immediate connection to family and friends as well as potentially new and interesting people, cyber aggressive activities may constrain the benefits of using social networks. For example, a recent study of adolescent students reportedly found such online aggression led to elevated levels of fear and sadness among cyber victims [13]. Over the past decade, research has followed and uncovered coping methods including serious negative coping methods such as depression or suicide. This chapter describes cross-cultural research across the world to provide a more holistic lens of this phenomenon.

In the Czech Republic, [14] researchers explored the potential impact from being targeted. They were primarily interested in how cyber victims coped after receiving online abuse or attacks. Through open-ended responses, one of the

immediate consequences was actually a primary prevention method: becoming more cautious and limiting trust in others, especially online. Some respondents reported as going as far as completely removing social network profiles, blocking individuals, or removing personal profile information (e.g., photos). Personal information became more restricted as a direct result of previous online attacks, which should be considered a positive coping response.

In terms of negative impact, Sleglova and Cerna [14] found some cyber victims had a negative psychological impact as well. While there were findings of resilience, some struggled with letting incidents (attacks) go, or moving on from them. As discussed, some reported loss of trust as well as feeling helpless, disillusioned, drop on self-confidence for some cyber victims. One of the participants shared incidence of recurring nightmares. In some other cases, some lost close friends or peer groups, traditional bullies started bullying as well. A major concern reported was that of self-harm. Respondents shared cutting became a method of coping, another had weight gain changes.

## **2.1 Victimization among emerging adults**

Cyberbullying among emerging adults is also concern today. When considering emerging adults and all of their transitions and decisions they have to make, cyber victims within this age group may suffer from losing relationships due to online disagreements, harassment or targeting for their own worldviews or political opinions. Consistent targeting may also lead to unwanted attention that may obstruct their focus on academics as well as leading to decreased levels of self-esteem or increased levels of depression even [2]. However, its prevalence is somewhat uncertain according to one college study in the US [15].

Due to various approaches and new scales assessing cyber aggressive activity on each campus, research findings have projected a great range of results and experiences from victims. Research has shown some variability among findings concerning cyberbullying experiences among youth [16] as well, but majority of research in this field is adolescent-specific for several reasons, namely adolescents are much more involved in SNS and take more risks due to cognitive and socio-emotional differences compared to their emerging-adult peers. Such behaviors are believed to peak during middle school in which peer pressure and lack of forethought are often reasons for misguided actions among youth, especially when online.

For example of emerging adult cross-cultural comparisons, in South Korea, one study [17] reported majority of college students, three of every four college students, personally knew someone who was an actual victim of cyberbullying and over half of the sample also knew a cyberbully. In the US, one study [18] examined the rate of occurrence of several types of online bullying among emerging adults minorities. The study included questions that identified perpetrators of bullying as well as self-identified victims.

Findings indicated that well over one-third of students personally knew a cyber victim (38%). Nearly a quarter of students self-identified as victims of bullying themselves (22%). In terms of gender or ethnic differences they did not find any significant differences between type or groups but reported significant correlations between witnessing bullying and all types of cyberbully measures. Finally in terms of perpetration, they found only about 9% of participants admitted to bullying others online, a significant decline compared to the study in South Korea and slightly less frequency than another US-based study [19] that reported 10% of their sample as self-reported cyber victims and 9% for cyberstalking. Despite the variance among measures of cyber aggression, the last decade or so of findings indicate a real concern among emerging adults as well.

Another study [20] based out of the mid-Atlantic US reviewed prevalence, impact and coping strategies among college students who were targeted online within the last year. Researchers reported a fairly low percentage of reported cyberbully victims (about 9% of a sample of 800 participants), while this low number may seem positive it is important to note that among those who did report recent attacks online, the psychological impact of said attacks are quite concerning. According to the study, higher amounts of psychological distress were found among this group than compared to their non-bullied counterparts in the sample. Analyses drawn from the symptom checklist (SLC-90-R) indicated significant differences between victims and non-victims with respect to increased rates of depression, higher levels of anxiety and feelings of paranoia.

With regard to how victims behave or think after online targeting Schenk and Fremouw [20] followed up with cyber victims about their experience and how it had impacted them, if at all. Close to half of the victims had reported feelings of frustration (46%), others felt stressed out (41%). Many victims also reported feeling sadness or being hurt (38%), some were angry about the attack (s) (34%) and some shared that they were struggled to concentrate on various tasks (24%). These types of feelings may lead not only to decreased levels of self-esteem, more anger, less trust, etc., but it may become a more serious situation as this study also reported nearly 6% (5.7%) had attempted suicide and a total of 10% reported that they were thinking about suicide. For comparison, the non-victim participants reported neither suicide attempts, nor any ideation about suicide.

Comparatively, (see 13) a study in Turkey measured college students finding that over half (55%) of college students (n = 666) had been cyber victims, while nearly one quarter (22.5%) had bullied others online at least once. Females reported more victimization than males. Interestingly, succorance (to solicit sympathy or affection from others) predicted behaving as a perpetrator (as did aggression). Among cyber victims, endurance (persistence to complete tasks) was the only significant predictor of cyberbullying exposure. The author suggested that these significant “needs” reveal “psychological characteristics related to cyberbullying” (p. 1319).

### **3. Theoretical approach in understanding cyberbullying victimization**

Although cyberbullying studies are often atheoretical [16], there are studies available that have quite a range of different lenses to use theory to provide a framework in which to better understand the internalized struggles in individual’s psychological and behavioral processes, but also social and relational factors with peers-to-peer relationships, familial relationships and even workplace environments. Some examples of seldom used theories include intergroup emotion theory [21] which provides explanation among peer-groups and negative or intense emotions felt between a member of the group and members within the group. Within the context of cyberbullying, hateful or mean messages could elicit emotional responses. Choice theory [22] could provide another potentially helpful lens, as this theory suggests that perpetrators or victims are responsible for their own interpretations and maintain control of their own lives.

In terms of a more contemporary offering, Social dominance theory (SDT) was originally designed to uncover disparities in hierarchy and power [23]. This theory may be applicable in helping researchers to better understand victimization because this framework suggests that a cyberbully’s goal is typically to inflict feelings of hurtfulness, fear, or helplessness, in other words, to harass someone and force them into submission [24]. Because cyberbullies cannot see their target’s immediate

reaction, they will be even more aggressive and callous to ensure harm to the victim, ultimately, ensuring dominance over the victim. If cyber victims realize they are being attacked, but do not allow attackers to see or sense their reactions, perhaps by ignoring them, this may inhibit a sense of domination and counteract the threat. On the other hand, at-risk youth in particular, have a difficult time ignoring directly harmful messages and could be at a greater risk for becoming dominated by a bully which could lead to misguided decisions.

Another lens that helps with understanding cyber victimization is routine-activities theory (RAT). Cohen and Felson [25] originally created the framework emphasizing necessity for a motivated perpetrator, an identified target and lack of surrounding safeguards (e.g., lack of monitoring, authority figure). This study has been applied to cyber aggressive research more often than most frameworks [26–29]. Even attempts to explain motivation for cyberstalking [30] or importance parental influence [31] have been explored. RAT helps to identify where victims are being targeted, methods used by cyber victims as well as to help find risk factors among victims, patterns that prevention specialists can identify and warn others with. Understanding differences in lifestyle choices between victims and non-victims may help expose risk and rate of victimization. As found in one study [32], researchers were able to determine why some targets are selected as well as why some cyber victims respond so different from others. Stemming from some types and differences of internet activities leads to increased rates of victimization. Social media being the leading cause followed by sharing personal information online.

#### **4. Perspectives of negative coping from the perpetrator**

Many studies on cyber aggression tend to focus on behaviors and responses from cyber victims after attacks, often anonymous and repetitive. Few tend to explore motives from a standpoint of the perpetrator, those that do often presume it is a revenge-seeking behavior primarily [8]. For example, in Argentina, researchers examined several emotional issues and personality types among cyberbullies [33]. These differences were compared to traditional bullies and other peers (n = 898) not involved as in either type of perpetrator. Eight percent identified as cyberbullies and only 4% as both traditional and cyberbullies. Interestingly, cyberbullies actually reported lowered amounts of depression or anxiety than traditional bullies reported. Cyberbullies were also less neurotic and more agreeable than traditional bullies. Perhaps the face-to-face nature of traditional bullying has higher stakes in terms of internal and external impact than online bullying in which perpetrators may not be able to see if their messages even reach their target.

Another article that wanted to understand more from the perspective of a perpetrator focused on revealing possible characteristics that are commonly found among cyberbullies [34]. One additional element the study first noted was that emerging adults, often moving away from home for first time are subject to little or no monitoring of their time or online behaviors and may be more likely to engage in or receive more online harassment [35].

##### **4.1 The association between perpetration and victimization**

The findings of the study (see [34]) just discussed only include cyberbullies who were involved in a minimum of four online attacks. Under this condition, only about 8% of participants (n = 799, 57% female) qualified as cyberbullies. A more selective process would theoretically increase likelihood of identifying important differences between perpetrators from others. Comparing this group

of perpetrators to those who also reported as being both a cyberbully and a cyber victim, significant increases of psychological symptomology were found, especially when both of those groups were compared to the non-bully group that had significantly lower amounts of symptomology. These findings included increased reports of suicidal ideation (especially for those most heavily involved in bullying and being targeted).

In addition to exploring how those involved internalize this online phenomenon, the study also explored aggression, specifically proactive and reactive aggression. It turns out that both the cyberbullies and the bully-victims group (both cyberbullies and cyber victims) reported significantly higher levels of aggression compared to the non-involved group. So those who do not self-identify as cyberbullies or as cyber victims report significantly less aggressive behaviors. Moreover, the authors measured acceptance levels of theft, violent acts, and drug use. The group of participants that were both bullies and victims endorsed crime the most, followed by cyberbullies, both of which also significantly higher than those not involved in cyberaggression at all.

An additional study in Turkey by Aricak et al. [36] measured similar internalized responses from involvement in negative online behaviors. Although Turkey shares similarities with westernized cultures there are still significant differences in expected public and private behaviors. This could also mean significantly larger differences in how victimization is felt and/or reported. However, what this study found seems comparable to others in that one-in-five college students within the study self-reported engaging in cyberbullying and just over half at least once in the past year. Over one-third (37%) reported as being only cyber victims from unwanted online attacks. Comparatively, and uniquely high compared to other studies, is that nearly 18% of the participants identified as being a cyberbully and cyber victim. Two key takeaways from this particular study is that one, the majority of cyberbullies pretended to be someone else to mask their identity; second, that higher levels of hostility towards others and psychoticism significantly predicted involvement in cyberbullying. From the studies discussed so far, it is apparent that something is psychologically wrong with individuals who are recipients of cyberbullying as well as a perpetrator of said phenomena.

Another Turkish study [37] surveyed emerging adults and found close to 23% of their participants (n = 666) bullied others online at least one time. One of the unique findings from this study was that it was found that soliciting attention or sympathy from others predicted cyberbully behaviors; same was true for higher rates of aggression. This particular finding may suggest that narcissism or other attention-seeking behaviors may draw attention to oneself, but not necessarily in the way originally intended which may lead to lashing out or other aggressive behaviors.

A study in Portugal [13] (reviewed in depth below) assessed group-level differences between the non-victims, cyberbully-victims and cyberbullies, researchers found elevated levels of fear, sadness for cyber victims as discussed earlier but physical fights were highest among cyberbullies as well as having an easier time making new friends. Adolescent youth, particularly true for males, have long used aggressive behaviors against peers for their social gain [38] and this could explain motivation behind perpetration online as well as in person [39]. Those who engage in aggressive motives also lack empathy [40] often.

## **4.2 Digital self-harm**

In the US, a study by Patchin and Hinduja [41] explored the act of cyberbullying oneself anonymously among a nationally representative sample of 12–17 year

olds. Over 6% admitted that they had anonymously posted something mean about themselves. Just over one-third (35%) did this a few times and over 10% reported posting mean things about themselves multiple times. Moving beyond simply posting mean things about oneself, 5% of the sample reported actually self-cyberbullying. Of those who did self-cyberbully, 18% did so many times with males being significantly more likely to do so than their female counterparts. By means of open-ended questioning, the authors were able to identify reasoning first, for posting mean things about oneself and also explore reasoning for actually the cyberbullying of oneself. Over 30 reported it was due hating themselves, some shared it was an attempt at seeking attention. While more individuals reported it was just to be funny or joking around when bored, 15 individuals shared depressive symptoms and suicidal feelings.

In 2019, another exploratory study conducted in New Zealand [42] presented findings centered on extent of prevalence of self-harm. The study defined digital self-harm as “anonymous online posting or sharing of mean or negative online content about oneself” (p. 1). Self-cyberbullying has seldom been considered (see [43]) as an area of concern prior to this exploratory study but due to narcissistic behaviors often connected to selfie-taking culture [44], it is wise to explore this phenomena.

Among their randomized sample of just over 1000 adolescents (13–17), they reported 6% of New Zealand teens have participated in digital self-harm within the last year. Further, that those who did participate in this behavior, nearly two-thirds (65%) did so more than one occasion. Younger teenagers were more likely to engage in this phenomenon of self-harm compared to older teens. Some of the motivations behind digital self-harm uncovered were that individuals wanted to simply make a self-deprecating joke to entertain others, others wanted to prove or show their own resilience to receiving negative feedback. Teenagers were also motivated to do this as an attention-seeking behavior as a means of amassing sympathy from friends, to receive their reassurance of peer-support and friendship.

In terms of other unique differences that may help shield some light on this are gender differences that were revealed specifically about motivation. Girls tended to focus on aspect of showing resilience, reassurance from peers (as discussed) whereas boys were more likely to share reasoning from perspective of simply making a joke. Perhaps to be expected, those who did not participate in digital self-harm believed their peers engage in the behavior to gain attention and sympathy. Just over one-third of those who did the behavior however, reported achieving the desired outcome from engaging.

### **4.3 Perpetration by sexism**

In 2019, a study conducted among university students in Spain also took a different approach into trying to understand perspectives of a cyberbully [45]. By examining dating relationships through mobile phone and online means of communication, this study sought to identify if cyberbullying by via acts of sexism was a significant factor among males towards their female counterparts. Indeed preliminary data revealed males engaged in higher levels of cyberbullying directed towards their girlfriends, significantly more than girlfriends did to their male counterparts. When considering sex and attitude as a contributing factor it was found that male hostile beliefs predicted cyberbullying toward their girlfriends through both mobile phone and the internet.

A qualitative study in Australia [46] by means of a focus group with adolescent youth sought to explore their understanding of sexting and cyberbullying. The researcher provided video clips to start conversation which covered the topic of slut-shaming. While participants understood slut-shaming as a form of sexism and

even cyberbullying, some within the focus group justified the label as deserved in some cases. Interestingly, the study found that girls shared concern of being bullied because of nude or partial-nude images that may not even actually have been their own. An added area of concern was reported that individuals could be cyberbullied even if images or messages were shared without consent.

#### **4.4 Drug and alcohol use**

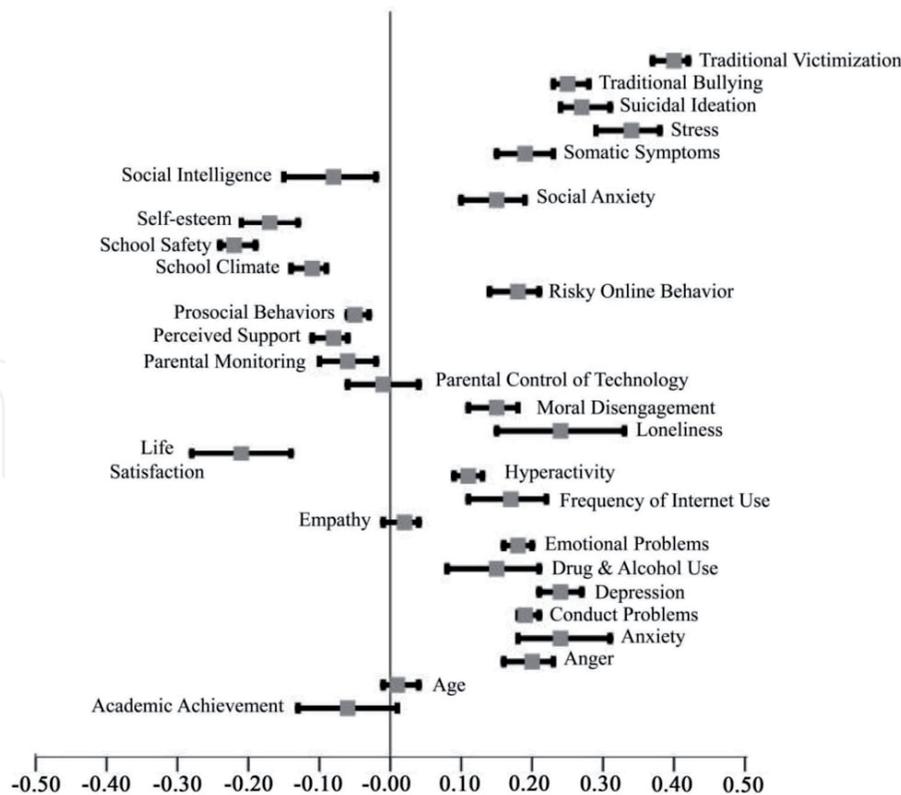
Another important consideration for researchers in understanding how cyberbullies behave should involve exploration of drugs and alcohol. Understanding how cyberbullies may cope with their own issues or engage in risky behaviors may provide important answers in learning how to prevent cyberbullying in the future as well as lower risky behaviors that may cause endangerment to self or other innocent people.

Recently, a study explored drug and alcohol use with a nationally representative sample of adolescents in Portugal [13]. Significant differences were found in consumption of alcohol and drug consumption. Cyberbullies did report a larger consumption of drugs, however it was the cyberbully-victims (both a victim and perpetrator of bullying) that most significantly used alcohol, even more than victims-only group. Researchers also explored peers' perspective of school-involvement and found cyber victims remained more connected to school whereas cyberbullies were less connected and also had lower well-being. Perhaps social/cultural connections are more constrained among cyberbullies for whatever reason, but there are clear differences among these group comparisons.

### **5. Motivation of a perpetrator**

In a meta-analysis exploring an expansive body of work involving traditional bullying, traditional victimization, cyberbullying, and cyber victimization) researchers conducted a forest plot (see **Figure 1** below) which displayed predictor and outcome relationships in regard to cyberbullying ([3]. Strength (and direction) of correlations are available at the bottom of the figure. As this chapter has discussed, the figure illustrates quite clearly areas of concern among cyberbully perpetrators, their lack of empathy, low self-esteem, connection to victimization and traditional bullying, as well as a myriad of other negative internalized and externalized coping methods (e.g., lonely) or behaviors (e.g., spending time online).

In greater detail, those experiencing cyber victimization was strongly (positively) related to also being a perpetrator. The same was true of traditional bullies thus indicating the comorbid nature of bullying in person or online as suggested by previous works [1, 16]. Other, more moderate findings from the body of work presented in the findings were positive associations with acceptance of aggression and moral disengagement. Online risky behaviors were not as strongly correlated with cyberbullying but were significant; the same was true of narcissistic behavior, or feelings of anger. Increased level of cyberbullying perpetrations were also inversely correlated with safety, empathy and parental monitoring. By combining the works of several studies these findings provide a larger picture of the state of mind of cyberbullies and is useful for those interested in helping cyberbullies learn to cope more positively with past negative interactions, in person or online. Low parental monitoring and personal beliefs about aggression may be especially important to address particularly among youth and adolescents. By teaching digital citizenry early and assertively, they may develop better, more healthy coping skills.



**Figure 1.** Forest plot for meta-analytic correlates of cyberbullying perpetration. Permission to share this original figure [3] granted from American Psychological Association.

### 5.1 Motivation and reasoning in hiding behind the screen

In 2008, a qualitative study by Vandebosch and Van Cleemput [47] included over 50 focus groups comprised of youth and adolescents from 10 to 18 years of age. Within these groups the authors explored how youngsters interpreted cyberbullying behaviors, more specifically, the motivation in hiding behind a screen and aim of the perpetrator. Some findings from the focus groups indicated a clear understanding that cyberbullies want to cause actual pain and are sometimes motivated by revenge from traditional bullying during school. Some also cyberbullied anonymously because of arguments or disagreements they had face-to-face and wanted to get back at them. Boredom was also shared as a reason for engaging in cyberbullying as well as a feeling or sense of power and skill, while also understanding the importance of not divulging who they were.

Researchers were able to find that one common theme among those who admitted to cyberbullying others was that they were disguising themselves largely because their targets knew who they were in real life. Their targets were also considered weak for some or stronger for others and so motivation of bullying had some range. Weaker targets were also traditionally bullied, but stronger targets were chosen to empower the cyberbully, to feel like they could have some strength that otherwise would not get in a face-to-face situation. Individuals also shared that in some cases (friends or past friends), they were willing to give up their anonymity after some time.

Through a path model analyses, another study [48] was able to show the importance of anonymity as a predictor for cyberbullying. Anonymity was found to mediate sending IMs (instant messages) and cyberbullying. Being anonymous also served as a moderator between positive attitude toward acting as a perpetrator

and frequency of attacking others. Thus, once anonymity is thought to be achieved, consequences of punishment are lowered and cyberbullying is more likely to occur. Use of e-mail was negatively related to anonymity and positive attitude towards cyberbullying, most likely due to difficulty of keeping email from being identifiable. These findings are important to understand given the nature of new and ever-changing SNSs and applications. Apps that come out, even those designed for younger children may have talking, messaging, or direct messaging features and if permitted, the ability to remain anonymous will predictably allow for cyberbullying.

## **6. Theoretical approaches in understanding perpetration**

General strain theory (GST) may serve as one of the superior frameworks for understanding motivation behind cyberbullies. Originally, this theory was used to explain the gap between feelings of aspiration and expectation [49]. In the 1930s, Merton suggested that the American dream was difficult to achieve and for those who felt the pressures of success but did not reach their expectations, they were more likely to engage in deviant, even criminal behaviors in order to help themselves reach their aspirations. Today, GST suggests that as individuals are pressured or rather, strained and pushed up against a wall, this will eventually result in negative feelings and ultimately towards deviant or risky behaviors. In the context of the internet and social media, individuals that are not as popular, or are bullied at school because of a power imbalance, could turn to cyberbullying as a means of coping or seeking revenge.

One study [50] applied GST in order to explain adolescent youth engaging in two forms of bullying (traditional/face-to-face and cyberbullying). The researchers were able to find support for GST by means of a direct relationship both types of bullying and strain. In other words, those who did feel increasingly more strain were more likely to engage in bullying in face-to-face situations but also cyberbullying. Negative emotions (e.g., anger, frustration) were correlated to bullying and these may serve as vehicle of strain pushing these youth to turn to perpetration. Moreover, negative copings methods may also lead to an increase of feelings of strain that may also lead towards deviant behaviors or potentially, self-harm.

In 2010, researchers actually applied GST to explore how strain may be built up among cyber victims, leading to self-harm [51]. GST is usually thought of as a lens for going on the offensive, committing crimes or attacking others; however, it does make sense to explore victims' responses when on the receiving side of bullying. Results from a survey involving over 400 adolescents found that traditional bullying victimization and cyber victimization were positively related to self-harm and thoughts about suicide. Similar to the aforementioned study, negative emotions are connected to feelings of strain. One additional element important to the scope and nature of feelings of strain was that one parenting style (authoritative-parents that are firm but fair) and having a high level of self-control removed any harmful effect from bullying.

Another theoretical lens that serves to explain motivation of perpetrators may be that of deindividuation theory (DT). Zimbardo [52, 53] created experimental conditions in which individuals could inflict pain anonymously. Indeed, those who were anonymous did shock confederates for a longer period of time. As the Stanford Prison Experiment is famously remembered, a deindividuated state yielded increased acts of aggression in the prison setting and the study was canceled altogether. Today, this lens may be more helpful as it suggests why individuals that are hidden, anonymous, or at least feel/believe that they are will eventually drop

their guard, lowering their self-awareness which eventually may lead to antinormative behaviors [54]. Such behaviors may include engaging in unwanted sexual solicitations, getting into arguments and eventually encouraging their targets to kill themselves as discussions escalate. Brandtzaeg and colleagues suggested that anonymity is not the only important element in choosing to bully others, but that a lack of self-awareness is necessary to allow oneself to forget who they are, what they may stand for and to freely attack others online.

In 2017 another study [55] explored how DT may help explain lack of remorse among a large sample of college student cyberbullies. Cyber victims were also surveyed about their feelings of anonymous attacks. Through chi-square analyses and a series of regression models they found partial support for DT. While anonymity should provide a cover for perpetrators, cyber victims from this study were somewhat confident in identifying who their anonymous attacker was. In terms of cyberbullies, they were able to find that indeed, feelings of anonymity enabled cyberbullying behaviors. One additional finding from responses suggest that while anonymity helps permit aggressive actions, simply being hidden and keeping one's true identity secret should not be considered cyberbullying.

Oblad et al. [55] also gathered qualitative data from a series of open-ended questions to further investigate DT. Three themes emerged when participants were asked about their perceived acceptance of cyberbullying and anonymity. Majority of respondents were not okay with it at any level and many recommended avoiding involvement at all costs. Another theme suggested that there are some acceptable behaviors as long as they do not cross just joking or teasing, several hundred responses indicated that even when joking it may be perceived as targeting and thus is a "gray area," especially if messages are received or posted anonymously. The last theme that emerged suggested that participating indirectly is also a form of cyberbullying, for example liking or sharing videos or hurtful messages and not reporting them crosses the line.

## **7. Conclusions**

This chapter has reviewed ways in which cyber victims are impacted negatively when they are victimized online or through social media. Many cyber victims lose self-esteem, delete their social media profiles, feel more depressed or even attempt suicide. Other victims simply ignore the bullying or report it and have no negative coping methods. Theoretical frameworks are important to help understand why and how some cyber victims are more capable than others in coping methods and routine activities theory may provide that knowledge.

Cyberbullying research typically focuses on victimization and the impact among them; however, cyberbullies themselves suffer from a myriad of mental and emotional issues. Their aggressive behaviors and other risk-behaviors were discussed to provide some reasoning, signs of maladaptive behaviors and examples of negative coping methods for those interested in preventing individuals from intentionally harming others as well as themselves. This field has come a long way over the last 15 years and it is clear that our cognitive and social-emotional states are somewhat well-connected to our online presence. What remains unclear is the best way to maintain safe, positive digital citizenship and how to help individuals avoid falling into deindividuated states, leading to aggressive acts against others.

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