

Adolescent Cyberbullying: A Worldwide Concern

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the burgeoning number of research conducted, along with intervention programs developed, cyberbullying continues to be a serious public health concern that affects children, adolescents, and adults. Cyberbullying affects children and teens particularly since they increasingly rely on information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, etc.) and engaging in numerous internet-based activities, such as playing games, seeking information, and communicating with friends. Although numerous benefits of social media on adolescent development have been documented, such as greater connections with peers, identity development, and aspirational development (Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011; Uhls, 2015), social media can also open them up to cyberbullying, cyberstalking, and sexual predation via cyberspace—all of which undermine their safety and psychological wellbeing (Tokunaga, 2010).

Cyberbullying, in particular, is a problem at home, in classrooms, schoolyards, and public areas (e.g., internet cafés). In schools, students use electronic communication devices to bully other students, which calls for schoolteachers and school administrators to take necessary actions (Li, 2006). Although the issues of cyberbullying vary by country and region, it is nonetheless a worldwide concern. Similar to face-to-face bullying victimization, psychosocial and health consequences of cyberbullying victimization, such as mental health problems, particularly depression; declining academic performance; substance use; self-harm; and suicidality have been documented (Cénat et al., 2018; Maurya et al., 2022; Nixon, 2014; Tsitsika et al., 2015; Zaborskis et al., 2019). Despite the numerous consequences of cyberbullying, many adolescents do not disclose their experiences of bullying to adults, such as parents and teachers (DeLara, 2012).

This chapter aims to explore adolescent cyberbullying victimization within global contexts. The chapter begins with a background, which consists of definitions and prevalence of cyberbullying around the world, followed by how cyberbullying had been addressed around the world; solutions and recommendations for practice and policy; and future research directions.

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BACKGROUND

Definition and Conceptualization of Cyberbullying

Numerous definitions of cyberbullying have been proposed in the research literature, and there appear to be challenges as well as debates within the scientific community about how cyberbullying should be conceptualized (Menesini et al., 2012). The challenge of defining cyberbullying is attributed to a lack of clarity on how cyberbullying should be conceptualized (Tokunaga, 2010; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008) as well as the rapid evolution of new technologies (Nocentini et al., 2010). Despite these challenges, researchers have realized the importance of including the definitions of cyberbullying in their surveys (Tokunaga, 2010). They, however, have debated whether the three criteria proposed by Olweus (1993) for defining face-to-face (or traditional) bullying, including intentionality, repetition, and imbalance of power, would apply to cyberbullying (Menesini et al., 2012).

Despite the debates regarding how cyberbullying should be defined among researchers, the definitions used in research share one common feature: Cyberbullying is a type of bullying, which occurs in the digital realm or medium of electronic text (Notar et al., 2013; Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2011). Moreover, research on cyberbullying highlights that there are a variety of terminologies for the phenomenon, depending on which acts are considered in the definition, including internet harassment, online harassment, and online bullying (Menesini et al., 2012). The five common criteria for the definition of cyberbullying, such as intentionality, repetition, imbalance of power, anonymity, and public vs. private, are included in the definition of cyberbullying used in research conducted in several countries (Menesini et al., 2012). In addition, according to Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008), definitions of cyberbullying also include behaviors that are not covered by face-to-face bullying. Such behaviors include having personal communications copied and sent to others, forwarding large amounts of icons and emoticons to others, changing the photos, and sending them for others to view.

Prevalence of Cyberbullying Across the World

Due to the challenges of defining cyberbullying and variability in the range of measures and study methodologies across countries and age groups, it is difficult to compare the prevalence of cyberbullying around the world (Brochado et al., 2017). Below are the prevalence rates of cyberbullying perpetration and victimization for selected continents around the world.

Europe

A recent study comparing rates of cyberbullying across eight European countries and a sample of 4,847 students found the highest rates in Bulgaria and Hungary and the lowest prevalence in Spain (Sorrentino et al., 2019). The overall rate of cyberbullying perpetration across the eight European countries was about 17% for males and 11% for females while cyberbullying victimization was about 16.5% for males and 16.4% for females (Sorrentino et al., 2019). The prevalence rates in other cross-cultural studies examining European countries have varied. For example, Lobe et al. (2011) examined 25 European countries and found overall rates of about 6% for cyberbullying victimization and 3% for cyberbullying perpetration with the highest rates in Romania (14%) and Estonia (13%). Conversely, Tsitsika et al. (2015) (6 countries) and Athanasiou et al. (2018) (7 countries) found rates of 21.4% and 21.9% cyberbullying victimization,

respectively. Tsitsika et al. (2015) also reported that more than one in five European adolescents reported cyberbullying victimization.

Asia-Pacific

The Internet and social media have been widely and rapidly disseminated in Asian countries and societies since the late 1990s, and Mainland China has the highest number of Internet users, followed by South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (Internet World Stats, 2020). Although cyberbullying is a serious concern in Asian-Pacific societies, prevalence rates for cyberbullying vary widely. For example, an average prevalence rate of 23% for cyberbullying victimization has been reported in studies conducted in Mainland China (Brochado et al., 2017), while only 5% was reported in Australia (Brochado et al., 2017), 16.4% in Singapore (Ang et al., 2013), and about 30.2% of cyberbullying victimization was reported among South Korean students (Lee & Shin, 2017) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Prevalence Rate of Cyberbullying in Asia-Pacific



■ China ■ Australia ■ Singapore ■ South Korea

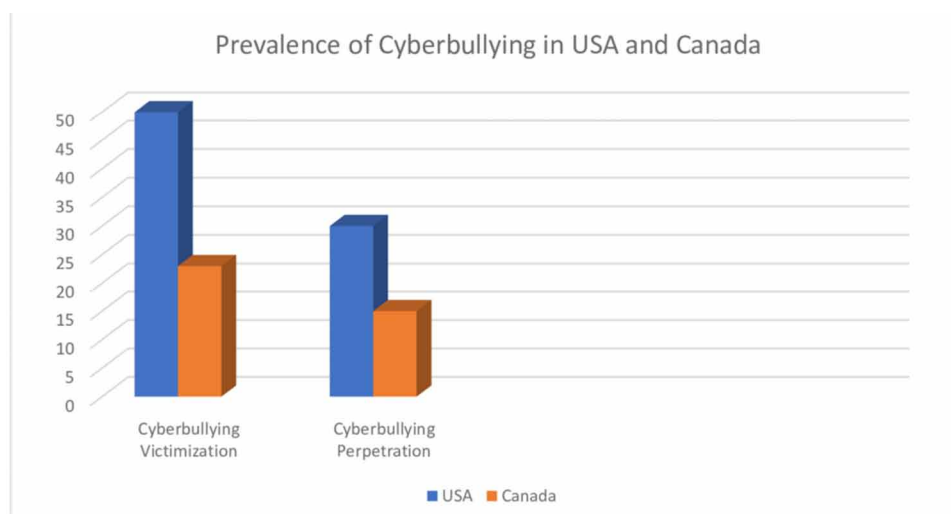
Also, according to a very recent study, the rate of cyberbullying perpetration in Chinese societies ranged from 8% to 20% in Taiwan, 13% to 62% in Hong Kong, and 3% to 69% in Mainland China (Chen & Chen, 2020). The study also found that the rate of cyberbullying victimization was reported at 13% to 35% in Taiwan, 12% to 72% in Hong Kong, and 14% to 57% in Mainland China (Chen & Chen, 2020). Another study comparing the prevalence rates in India, Mainland China, and Japan found higher rates of cyberbullying perpetration and victimization in India than students in China and Japan (Wright et al., 2015). Lastly, a cross-country study comparing the United States with Japan found higher rates among U.S. students than Japanese students (Barlett et al., 2014).

There appears to be a paucity of research on cyberbullying conducted in Southeast Asian countries, such as Singapore, Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam. However, a recent review of research on cyberbullying in Southeast Asian countries indicated that cyberbullying appears to vary by country: 14.2% to 59.4% for victimization in Singapore, 59% in Thailand, and 80% in Indonesia, (Ruangnapakul et al., 2019).

North America

Research examining prevalence rates of cyberbullying in the United States and Canada also shows the high variability of cyberbullying. For example, in a meta-analytic review of cyberbullying studies, Brochado et al. (2017) report a prevalence rate for cyberbullying victimization to be as high as 50% with a median prevalence of about 18% in the United States. Studies reporting the prevalence rates of cyberbullying perpetration in the United States showed rates as high as 30% and a median of about 15% (Brochado et al., 2017). In Canada, the median prevalence for cyberbullying victimization was about 23%, and 15% for cyberbullying perpetration and victimization (Brochado et al., 2017) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.



In another study using a nationally representative sample of Canadian children ages 10-17, about 14% had been cyberbullied during the past month (Beran et al., 2015). Similarly, the most recent National

Center for Education Statistics reports that about 15% of U.S. students were victims of cyberbullying in the year 2017 (Musu et al., 2019).

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Central/Latin America

Internet users in Latin America have increased over the years, and studies examining prevalence rates of cyberbullying involvement in Latin America are an emergent area of research. Similar to other regions, the prevalence of cyberbullying varies in Latin American countries. In Colombia, the prevalence of cyberbullying ranges from 30% to 60%, and in Argentina and Mexico, it is reported to be as high as 49% (Yudes-Gomez et al., 2018). In a cross-cultural study of students' experiences with cyberbullying in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, México, Peru, and Venezuela, Del Rio et al. (2009) found an overall rate of involvement of about 12.1% for these Latin American countries. Similarly, García et al. (2010) found a total prevalence rate of 12.9% in a sample of 1,703 students (grades 3rd to 5th high school) from Peru. Also, according to the Kids Online Brazil study, cyberbullying increased from 9% in 2012 to 15% in 2014 among Brazilian youth, ages 9-17 (Barbosa, 2015). Lastly, a study of 1,357 Chilean adolescents in grades 7th to 12th found a rate of 12.5% for cyberbullying victimization in Chile (Varela et al., 2014).

Africa

Like Latin America, studies reporting cyberbullying rates from African countries are lacking in the research literature, and examples are mostly concentrated in research coming from South Africa and a few other countries. For example, a study examining the prevalence rates of cyberbullying victimization in South Africa found that 8% of students had experienced cyberbullying victimization (Motswi & Mashegoane, 2017). However, another study of South African adolescents found that 16.2% of the respondents indicated that they had been victims of cyberbullying during the last two months (Payne & Van Belle, 2017). Reported rates of cyberbullying victimization were higher in countries, such as Nigeria, Egypt, and Ghana. In one study, which examined the prevalence and predictors of cyberbullying perpetration among school-aged children in Nigeria, researchers found that 23.9% had perpetrated cyberbullying, 39.8% had been victimized online, and 21.0% were both victims and perpetrators (Olumide et al., 2016). Another study, which was conducted on Egyptian females, also found that 41.6% of the study participants reported experiencing cyberbullying during the previous years, and 45.3% of those victims were victimized multiple times (Hassan et al., 2020) (see Figure 3).

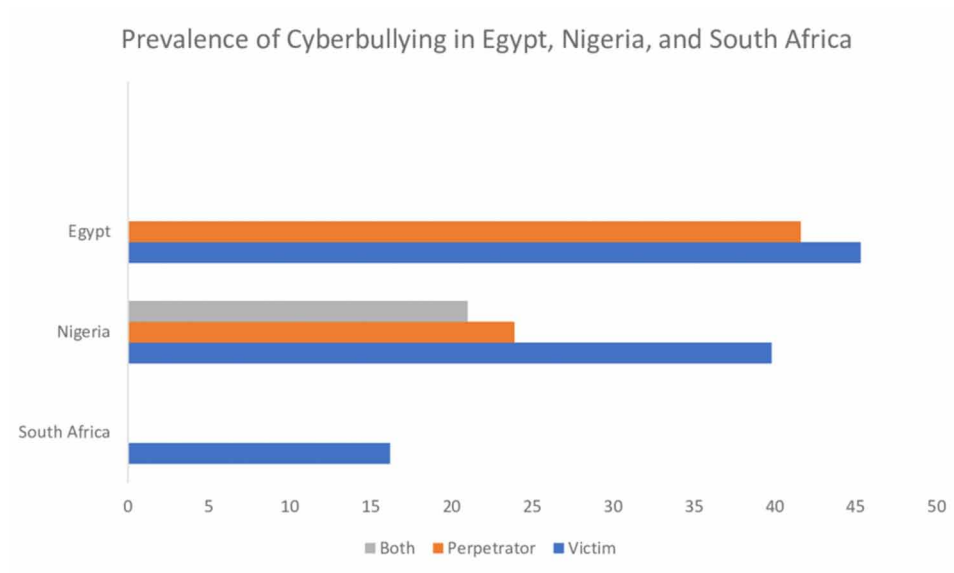
In a study conducted in Ghana, 70% of junior high school and 92% of senior high school students reported experiencing cyberbullying victimization at least once during the past six months (Sam et al., 2019).

FOCUS OF THE ARTICLE

How Has Cyberbullying Been Addressed Across the World?

Schools around the world are increasingly under pressure to develop prevention and intervention programming to reduce students' bullying and cyberbullying (Bhat et al., 2013). Most authorities would concur that due to the negative impact of cyberbullying on students, schools need to respond actively by

Figure 3.



developing policies on addressing not only bullying but also cyberbullying (Snakenborg et al., 2011). Responses to adolescent cyberbullying tend to differ by country and region.

Europe

In 2016, a report by the European Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee (Dalla Pozza et al., 2016) highlighted the EU's shortcomings in dealing with cyberbullying and made a series of recommendations to tackle the problem. In the first instance, the report entitled "Cyberbullying among Young People" urged EU countries to adopt an official definition of cyberbullying to make sure there was a common understanding. Secondly, while the report acknowledged the links between cyberbullying and traditional bullying, its authors stressed the importance of considering and tackling cyberbullying per se. Thirdly, the document called for the implementation of educational and protective measures for the actors involved (families, educators, young people, and children), and underlined the need to work on harmonizing data collection across Europe to find out the true extent of cyberbullying. Fourth place, they called on the European Commission to introduce soft-law instruments, such as guidance for Internet providers on how to effectively detect, monitor, and report cases of cyberbullying. Finally, an appeal was made for the creation of a specific legal framework laying the groundwork for victim protection and preventive actions that could curb a growing phenomenon across the European Union (EU).

Years on from this report, cyberbullying continues to be a challenge for European countries, but more and more resources are being made available to tackle it. While there is still no specific EU-level legislation on cyberbullying, some manifestations of cyberbullying would be covered by the European Union directives on the rights of victims under 18 years of age in the areas of racism, xenophobia, and sexual abuse (Directive 2012/29/EU; Directive 2011/93/EU). Furthermore, the Better Internet for Kids strategy was adopted in 2012. This proposed a series of actions to be undertaken by the Commission, Member States, and the ICT industry to ensure the enjoyment and protection of digital life for children and adolescents. The strategy was updated in 2022 (BIK+) with the development of various actions to

protect children online, develop their skills, and empower them to enjoy and shape their online lives safely (European Commission, 2022a).

Actions developed through this initiative include awareness-raising campaigns, setting up Internet helplines and hotlines, working in partnership with industry to make products and services safer, and collaborating with research partners to gather evidence on issues affecting children and young people. These actions are mostly coordinated and channeled through the Safer Internet Centers in all Member States, which are co-funded by the European Commission. These centers run national awareness campaigns; organize conferences and events aimed at children, young people, families, educators, and professionals working with minors; deliver workshops and training activities for parents and educators; provide free practical resources for educators. Each of them also operates a nationwide helpline, offering advice and assistance to children and young people facing harmful online content or conduct. Cyberbullying is the number one reason for contacting these helplines (European Commission, 2022b).

Although very few of the 27 EU Member States have adopted specific legal provisions for cyberbullying, some countries have drafted specific legislation to combat cyberbullying. For example, in Italy, the so-called “Anti-Cyberbullying Law” (Law No. 71/2017) brought in preventive measures designed to shift the focus to the protection of victims and their families while re-educating offenders. The law establishes that, in the most serious cases of defamation, threat, or dissemination of data, the sanction will be subject to the willingness of the victim or their family to report offenders, especially those under fourteen years old, to avoid imposing the most serious criminal penalties on minors (Greco, 2020). Although not a member of the European Union or the European Economic Area, it is worth noting that Albania was the first continental European country to legislate against cyberbullying. The law provides penalties for all forms of cyberbullying, including the dissemination of false information about someone on the Internet with the intent to intimidate (Tagaymuratovna, 2022).

In other countries, the law dictates what schools must do to tackle traditional bullying and cyberbullying. In Ireland, for example, plans to combat bullying include cyberbullying as one form, and antibullying plans have been developed for prevention and intervention in elementary and high schools (Gottschalk, 2022). Schools in Sweden are responsible for actively preventing both kinds of behavior, and a whole-school approach has been adopted to combat them (Låftman, Östberg, & Modin, 2017). In Spain, cyberbullying is covered by Law 8/2021 on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents against violence. This stipulates that as well as putting coexistence plans in place in educational centers, action protocols must be created to deal with bullying and cyberbullying, and every school should have a welfare and protection coordinator.

Along similar lines, in the Netherlands, schools must have protocols in place indicating the professional who will coordinate action plans and to whom parents, children, and young people should report cases of bullying and cyberbullying (Burns & Gottschalk, 2019). Other countries, such as Hungary, have no legislation or national plan to address bullying and cyberbullying. However, they have signed up for European initiatives to tackle bullying and cyberbullying in schools. These include the European Network Against Bullying in Learning and Leisure Environments (ENABLE), which includes training educators and psychologists in social-emotional learning and anti-bullying measures, although impact data are not yet available (Pongó, 2019). In the United Kingdom, no longer part of the EU since 2020, cyberbullying is addressed through legislative initiatives on cybercrime and measures introduced to prevent and respond to traditional bullying and cyberbullying. As an example, since 1998, public schools in the United Kingdom have been required by law to have anti-bullying policies. Similar requirements have been in place for private schools since 2003 (Tagaymuratovna, 2022; Yang & Grinshteyn, 2016).

Multiple programs have been developed and evaluated in countries across Europe to protect children and young people from cyberbullying. Broadly speaking, interventions include the development of curricular and multimedia materials, psychoeducational measures, training for teachers and family members, school policies, initiatives to improve the school climate, and specific actions for victims and perpetrators. Gottschalk (2022) reviewed some of the leading empirically evaluated interventions that have been rolled out across Europe and have proven effective in reducing cyberbullying, including: the Viennese Social Competence program (ViSC, Strohmeier & Spiel, 2019), a school-based intervention developed in Austria with success in reducing cybervictimization and cyberbullying and later implemented in Cyprus, Turkey, Kosovo, and Romania with mixed results; the KiVa program (Salmivalli & Poskiparta, 2012; Valenzuela et al., 2022), a school-based intervention developed, rolled out, and evaluated in Finland as a national antibullying strategy that has successfully reduced cybervictimization, including in Italy (Nocentini & Mensini, 2016) and the Netherlands (Huitsing et al., 2020); the Medienhelden (Media Heroes, Schultze-Krumbholz et al., 2016), a German school-based intervention successfully promoting behavioral control and coping strategies against cyberbullying; the TEI (Peer Tutoring, Ferrer-Cascales et al., 2019), a school-based intervention developed and used in Spain that promotes emotional self-regulation, social competence, and the use of digital tools, achieving a significant reduction in cyberbullying; the Noncadiamointrappola! Program (NoTrap!, Menesini et al., 2018), a digital and school-based intervention developed and rolled out in Italy that promotes protective factors such as social support and interaction with other students and achieved a small yet significant reduction in cyberbullying and cyber victimization. Digital and game-based interventions also exist to raise awareness of cyberbullying and promote strategies to curb it such as the Dutch program Online Pestkoppentoppen (Stop Online Bullies; Dehue et al., 2018) or the Spanish program Conectado (Calvo-Morata et al., 2021).

Despite recent progress in Europe, some of the recommendations made by the aforementioned European Parliament report have not yet been implemented (Dalla Pozza et al., 2016). For example, there is still no common definition of cyberbullying across European countries. Recent research (Henares-Montiel et al., 2022) has shown that data collection on the prevalence of cyberbullying in Europe has not yet been harmonized. This makes it difficult to determine the true extent of the problem and whether or not the different measures implemented by the European Union and its member countries are helping to reduce it.

Asia-Pacific

Laws and provisions to address cyberbullying vary by country and region in the Asia-Pacific. According to a study by Chen and Chen (2020), in Chinese societies, for example, although there is a national policy to address school violence and face-to-face bullying, there is a dearth of nationally sponsored strategies for addressing cyberbullying. However, anti-cyberbullying legislation has been considered and implemented in many Asian countries and/or regions. Such countries and/or regions include South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. In South Korea, a policy mandating internet users to provide their real names when communicating in chat rooms was a response to two celebrities who died by suicide after they were victimized online (Bhat et al., 2013). In Singapore, after a series of discussions, lawmakers came up with a decision that education and prevention efforts would be most effective in addressing cyberbullying (Bhat et al., 2013). In Taiwan, the anti-cyberbullying measure is included only in the “Regulations on the Prevention of School Bullying” and is addressed using the Criminal Code as a guide (Bhat et al., 2013).

Among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which comprises ten Southeast Asian countries, only a few countries legislated laws regarding cyberbullying (Rahamathulla, 2021). In Indonesia, the

Electronic Information Technology Law of 2008 made cyberbullying punishable, and Article 59A and Article 69 of the Child Protection Act protect children from cyberbullying (Arliman et al., 2018; Rahamathulla, 2021). In Laos, the Minister of Post and Telecommunications signed a law in August 2020 to authorize the Laos Computer Emergency Response Team to receive complaints from those whose children were victims of cyberbullying (Phonevilay, 2020). In the Philippines, the Anti-Bullying Act was passed in 2013, which directed all primary and secondary schools to adopt policies to address bullying (Rahamathulla, 2021). In Singapore, a law criminalizing cyberbullying and stalking was enacted in 2014, which prohibited cyberharassment, bullying, and sexual harassment (Palatino, 2014; Rahamathulla, 2021). In Vietnam, the Penal Code of 2015 implied that cyberbullying infringed upon an individual's dignity or honor, but there is no legal framework to outlaw cyberbullying of children (Rahamathulla, 2021).

North America

In the United States, there are no federal laws that directly address bullying or cyberbullying (stopbullying.gov, 2021); as a result, states responded by passing their laws on bullying and cyberbullying (Smit, 2015; stopbullying.gov, 2021). Concerns about cyberbullying first surfaced in 2004, and Georgia was the first state to codify requirements for school districts to address bullying among students in public schools (Willard, 2011; Smit, 2015). It was not until 2010 when the Federal Prevention Task Force was established to investigate cyberbullying, and school districts were mandated to protect students and staff from harassment and discrimination (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011), although they were required to respect the right to be free speech (Smit, 2015). Currently, the majority of the states include cyberbullying or online harassment in the anti-bullying measures, and most have criminal sanctions for cyberbullying or online harassment (Cyberbullying Research Center, n.d.). In Canada, at least nine provinces have passed legislation that specifically addresses youth cyberbullying (Felt, 2015). Bill C-13, "Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act," was passed in 2014 to protect children and adolescents from cyberbullying. However, the Bill was met with criticisms of which critics have argued that such a Bill would infringe on individual privacy because of the increased power of law enforcement to investigate and enforce online crime (Coburn et al., 2015). In Mexico, the National Action Party presented a legislative initiative in 2012, which was designed to regulate cyberbullying by increasing penalties when images are disseminated without authorization (Gomez & Armenta, 2015). In 2013, the cyberbullying regulation was approved, although the cyberbullying act was limited to an act of defamation (Gomez & Armenta, 2015).

Central/Latin America

There are notable disparities between the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of their scientific production on cyberbullying. As such, we see corresponding disparities in the way it is perceived and in the steps taken to tackle it (Gondim & Ribero, 2020). Nevertheless, to varying degrees, their governments have developed laws, policies, and programs to meet the challenges posed by information and communication technologies and the risks involved in using the Internet. However, approaches to cyberbullying differ from one country to the next depending on the conceptualization of the phenomenon, the availability of prevalence data, and the perceived severity of its impact (Bustacara & Cubide-Cárdenas, 2021). The most common ways of tackling the problem in Latin America have revolved around three areas: legislative intervention, the adoption of national or local action plans, and the implementation of prevention and intervention programs in schools. Although some countries have

developed policies specifically addressing cyberbullying, most governments have embedded it within the broader umbrella of traditional bullying prevention (Escudero-Muñoz, 2018).

In terms of legislative intervention, since 2010, 13 countries have drafted domestic legislation to combat traditional school bullying or have written additional antibullying provisions into existing legislation on the prevention of school violence and/or discrimination (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay). Others, such as Mexico, have not yet established national legislation against traditional bullying and preventive efforts depend on the laws of each state (Escudero-Muñoz, 2018; Rivas-Castillo, 2020).

The analysis by Woolley et al. (2021) of legal initiatives to combat traditional bullying in Latin America and the Caribbean found that the legislative texts reviewed contained at least three components: 1) a statement of scope (for diagnosing, preventing, avoiding, or sanctioning bullying), 2) a definition of bullying and the types of behaviors to be prevented, avoided, or punished, and 3) the requirement for schools to develop a coexistence plan and anti-bullying policies. Among the main preventive measures to be put in place by schools, the legislative texts included awareness-raising campaigns, school staff training, the promotion of peaceful coexistence measures (e.g., promoting conflict resolution programs, enhancing social skills and empathy), and working in partnership with the home environment.

However, the level of detail of these laws varies from country to country. As an example, less than half of existing laws spell out whether or not manifestations of out-of-school bullying, such as cyberbullying, fall within the scope of the law. Several of the countries mentioned have provisions regarding offending the dignity of individuals via the Internet (Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, and Paraguay), but no specific laws addressing cyberbullying. Moreover, when remedial and punitive measures do figure in the text, they are often short on detail and fail to describe how they will be applied at the local and national levels. Also unclear is the budget that schools will have available for rolling out the measures envisaged by the legislation, or how their success will be evaluated. Little is therefore known about the effectiveness of such legislation as no studies analyzing its impact have yet been carried out (Woolley et al., 2021).

Along with legislative initiatives, several countries have tackled school violence through mandatory, nationwide school programs. In general, the programs aim to prohibit, prevent, and intervene in violent behavior against any member of the educational community. The principal mechanisms are the development of awareness-raising, education, and training programs for teachers or, in the case of Chile, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, the imposition of administrative sanctions on those involved (Rivas-Castillo, 2020). Within these programs, each country has its distinctive approach to guaranteeing coexistence within schools. In Chile, for instance, each school must set up a school coexistence committee that designates a school professional in charge of coexistence and has responsibility for the implementation of specific measures and an antibullying management plan. Peru stipulates that a psychology professional, tasked with the prevention and management of bullying cases, must be involved in the implementation of the programs in each center. In Puerto Rico, schools are asked to develop student body regulations outlining rights and responsibilities, behavioral norms, and corresponding sanctions in the event of non-compliance, with particular attention to bullying (Escudero-Muñoz, 2018). In Mexico, a nationwide program to improve school coexistence was developed through an online course for elementary school teachers and principals to raise awareness of bullying, its diagnosis, and prevention. Curricular autonomy clubs, made up of students from different grades, were also established to improve student coexistence and integration (Rivas-Castillo, 2020). Furthermore, for victims and their families in the Mexican capital at least, toll-free telephone assistance, medical and psychological care, and legal advice are offered (Escudero-Muñoz, 2018). In

Colombia, school programs are overseen by the National System of School Coexistence and Training. This body takes measures to promote human rights, sexuality education, and school violence prevention, and cyberbullying is included and defined. In addition, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies has deployed pedagogical strategies to help society responsibly manage and engage with ICTs (Bustacara & Cubides-Cárdenas, 2021).

To a greater or lesser extent, these national initiatives have taken the form of school-based interventions to prevent and intervene in bullying, albeit not always on cyberbullying. Three interventions have been empirically evaluated to date. Among them is the “Vínculos” program rolled out in Chile with students aged 9-18 to prevent and intervene in bullying and cyberbullying (Pérez et al., 2013). This is an awareness-raising program aimed at school staff, students, and families from different educational levels throughout the school. Included in its development were awareness-raising talks, the establishment of anonymous mechanisms for reporting cases of bullying and cyberbullying, the reinforcement of coexistence rules, the promotion of social-emotional skills, coexistence days to enhance social connections within each grade, and periodic meetings to follow up on any cases detected. Following the intervention, there was a statistically significant reduction in the perception of being a victim of bullying and cyberbullying, although pre-intervention prevalence levels were low. The program’s limitations include the absence of a control group and the fact that the center was sex-segregated, precluding the analysis of differences by gender. In Chile, the KiVa program’s success in preventing bullying victimization and perpetration has also been evaluated (Valenzuela et al., 2022). However, the implementation of this antibullying program had mixed results. Only a small effect on victimization and witnessing bullying was noted, and the impact on cyberbullying was not explored.

Two programs have been evaluated in Mexico. To begin with, Martínez-Vilchis et al. (2018) developed an emotional competencies program to prevent cyberbullying in students aged 15-18, through the promotion of social skills and emotional awareness and regulation competencies. The design of the activities for the promotion of emotional competencies took into account their use in virtual contexts involving ICTs. The program had a positive and significant impact on cyberbullying in high school students, decreasing victimization and justification of this type of violence in the experimental group. In contrast, there was an increase in victimization in the control group. There was no significant reduction in perpetration levels. Meanwhile, Pozas et al. (2018) designed and evaluated a program to improve cyber-coexistence and prevent cyberbullying among students aged 15-18. The program consisted of eight weekly one-hour sessions structured around three thematic areas: 1) everyday life on the Internet (four sessions); b) norms in virtual environments (three sessions), and c) cyber-coexistence, guidelines for proper interaction in virtual environments (one session). At the end of the program, there was an improvement in the behavior of the students in the experimental group in terms of their online interpersonal relationships and, in turn, a decrease in cyberbullying. However, cyberbullying prevalence rates as measured before the intervention had been low. No significant reduction in perpetration levels was achieved.

The interventions outlined above were carried out with small samples in a single country or region, and it is unclear whether the positive effects are sustainable in the long term. Future studies should analyze the intervention effects in larger samples, randomizing such samples to gain an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the measures taken. It will also be important for Latin American research to identify which aspects of the interventions have been effective and how they can be combined to obtain better outcomes in future prevention and intervention programs.

Africa

To date, legislations and measures concerning cyberbullying also vary by country and region in Africa. Although there are no specific policies that deal with cyberbullying, there are several government policies and acts in South Africa that are designed to keep children safe from exposure to harmful content on social media (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012). However, codes of conduct or school policies that specifically address cyberbullying need to be developed and implemented in South African schools (Popovac & Leoschut, 2012). In the case of Nigeria, attempts have been made by the government to curb the negative effects of computer and internet use, which includes introducing legislation, initiatives, policies, and so forth to address the problem of cyberbullying (Adediran, 2021). Cyberbullying in Nigeria is criminalized by the Cybercrime Act of 2015 of which Section 24(a) stipulated that any individual who sends a message via computer systems or network that is offensive pornographic, obscene, or menacing committed an offense (Adediran, 2021). In Ghana, the Cyber Security Authority (CSA) has been established by the Cybersecurity Act of 2020 (Act 1038), which is aimed at regulating cybersecurity activities (CSA, 2022). The CSA provides information to young people on cyberbullying and how to deal with the incidence of cyberbullying, including incident reporting to the CSA (CSA, 2022). In Tanzania, the Cybercrimes Act was enacted by the National Assembly of Tanzania in 2015, which makes provisions for addressing child pornography, computer fraud, and cyberbullying (Cross, 2019). In Kenya, the Cybercrime and Computer-Related Crimes Bill was passed in 2014, which contains sections on computer-related offenses, such as hate speech and cyberstalking (Section 18). The Bill also provides a framework for sanctioning cyberbullying and harassment (Kamau, 2016).

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND POLICY

In some of the world regions analyzed, the actions against cyberbullying are framed within the general actions against school bullying, without specific protection measures against cyberbullying. This fact can lead to several problems that should be solved to effectively intervene in cyberbullying. In this regard, when laws, regulations, or programs are developed against bullying, it is important to include a specific definition of cyberbullying. Despite the increased knowledge about the problem, legislators should not assume that those involved to stop bullying, whether in schools or other contexts, know exactly what cyberbullying is. For example, research has shown that teachers are concerned about cyberbullying and recognize it as a serious problem that affects students' health. However, they do not always know how to recognize it or do not feel confident to intervene (Yot-Domínguez et al., 2019). Including a specific definition of cyberbullying will allow us to adequately identify which behaviors should stakeholders observe, stop or change, as well as the sanctioning measures that must be applied when a case of cyberbullying is identified. Additionally, whether legal initiatives have substantial effects or how they are implemented at both the local and national levels is not always clear, as no studies have been carried out to analyze the impact of the measures provided for by law. Future research should analyze how laws or regulations about cyberbullying are implemented and their impact on tackling cyberbullying at different levels: societal, community, organizational and individual. Given that many national initiatives have taken the form of school-based interventions to prevent and intervene in school bullying, more research is needed to understand the impact of these initiatives on preventing and stopping cyberbullying. For example, while the research effort on cyberbullying has indeed grown exponentially in Latin American countries in the space of a decade (Garaigordobil et al., 2018), studies analyzing the impact of programs

developed and implemented for cyberbullying prevention and intervention have been few, and far between, going by the results of the available systematic reviews (Gondim & Ribeiro, 2020; Herrera-López et al., 2018; Tristão et al., 2022). In addition, given that much cyberbullying happens beyond the school gates, there is a need for actions, programs, and legislative initiatives to protect victims away from the school setting and to involve other educational stakeholders, such as families and the technology industries.

Overall Summary

A few countries in the EU and European countries have adopted legislation specific to cyberbullying, such as Italy, Albania, Sweden, Spain, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Other countries, such as Hungary, have no legislations to address cyberbullying but signed up for European initiatives, such as the European Network Against Bullying in Learning and Leisure Environments. Moreover, interventions, such as the Viennese Social Competence Program, KiVa program, Medienhelden, TEI, Noncadiamoin-trappola! Programs have been implemented in several European countries.

Laws to address cyberbullying vary by country and region in Asia-Pacific. In China, strategies for addressing cyberbullying are limited. South Korea mandated a policy that requires internet users to provide their real names when communicating in chat rooms. In Singapore, lawmakers focused on education and prevention efforts for cyberbullying. In Taiwan, the “Regulation on the Prevention of School Bullying” includes an anti-cyberbullying measure. Moreover, few countries in ASEAN have laws and strategies for combatting cyberbullying including Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam (the Penal Code of 2015).

In the United States, states respond to the issue of cyberbullying by enacting laws on bullying and cyberbullying. In Canada, nine provinces have passed Bill C-13 “Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act”, which addresses children and adolescent cyberbullying. In Mexico, a legislative initiative on cyberbullying was proposed by the National Action Party, and the cyberbullying regulation was approved in 2013, although it was limited to defamation.

In Central/Latin America, the laws vary within the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The most frequent way of addressing cyberbullying in Latin America are (1) legislative intervention, (2) the adoption of national or local action plans, and (3) the implementation of prevention and intervention programs in school districts.

In Africa, laws concerning cyberbullying vary by country and region. To date, there are no specific policies for addressing cyberbullying; however, in South Africa, there are policies that are aimed to keep children safe from harmful content on social media. In Nigeria, attempts have been made including introducing legislation, initiatives, etc. to address cyberbullying. Legislations regarding cyberbullying were also enacted in Nigeria (Cybercrime Act, Section 24[a]), Ghana (Cyber Security Authority), Tanzania (Cybercrimes Act), Kenya (Cybercrimes Act), and Kenya (Cybercrime and Computer-Related Crimes Bill).

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Much of the literature reviewed in this chapter is cross-sectional. Consequently, it is difficult to determine longitudinal changes in prevalence rates of cyberbullying across various age groups or the effectiveness of various prevention and intervention programs for reducing cyberbullying and associated negative outcomes. Furthermore, the lack of longitudinal studies make it difficult to identify whether public policy

and legislation implemented to protect children and adolescents from cyberbullying have been effective. Longitudinal research is necessary to shed light on the developmental trajectory of prevalence rates of cyberbullying, temporal ordering of predictors of cyberbullying, and the effectiveness of prevention and intervention programs and public policies.

One important direction for future research is to provide more in-depth investigations into emotional and behavioral outcomes in the reciprocal relationships among perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. Such a focus would help with developing conceptually appropriate taxonomies for understanding behavioral patterns exacted by perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. In addition, many studies focus on a single type of participation role in cyberbullying, making it difficult to understand the unique dynamics associated with the reciprocal nature of various roles. Examining the multiple, interacting roles in bullying can also help shed light on the often blurry lines between cyberbullying in various contexts.

Social and technological factors are often unexamined in cyberbullying research. Future research should study the effects of social and technological factors on the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of adolescents involved in cyberbullying. Research on this topic is important because there is no single factor that might explain why perpetrators, victims, and bystanders think, feel, and behave concerning cyberbullying. The setting and interpersonal relationships of the individuals involved in cyberbullying could further impact thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as psychological adjustment. Different technologies that can be used for cyberbullying might alter the period in which cyberbullying might be accessible, and the duration could further alter responses (e.g., coping strategies) to witnessing or being victimized by bullying and associated negative consequences. The anonymity associated with different technologies has been understudied in the cyberbullying literature. Future research should further examine the role of anonymity in the perpetration of cyberbullying and how different levels of anonymity could impact the psychological adjustments of victims and bystanders.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to review definitions and prevalence of cyberbullying around the world, how cyberbullying is addressed around the world, solutions and recommendations for practice and policy, and future research directions. It is unlikely that ICTs will disappear, and attention should be given to finding ways to help children, adolescents, and adults deal with negative situations via ICTs instead of abstaining from them. Although various intervention programs have been developed, cyberbullying continues to affect children, adolescents, and adults. Efforts are underway to determine the effectiveness of various intervention programs and how such programs might reduce cyberbullying involvement and the associated negative outcomes.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Bullying: Unwanted aggressive behavior occurring between children and adolescents and their peers, which is repeated and involves a real or perceived imbalance of power.

Cyberbullying: A type of bullying that occurs through digital devices such as cell phones and computers. Cyberbullying occurs through apps, SMS, text, or online via social media, forums, or gaming where the viewers can see, participate in, or share content.

EU: European Union; political and economic union consisting of 27 member states in the European continent.

ICT: Information communication technology.

School Violence: Violence involving youth that occurs within school property, on the way to or from school property or school-sponsored events, or during a school-sponsored event.

Social Media: Technologies that enable the development and dissemination of information: ideas, interests, and other types of expressions through virtual networks.

Youth Violence: Young people's (age 10-24) use of force or power to coerce, threaten or harm others. Examples of youth violence are bullying, fighting, threats with a weapon, and gang violence.