

Article Review #2: Cyberbullying, Social Sciences, and How It All Connects

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Introduction

In the world we live in today, social media has become an essential to not just teens and young adults, but to all age groups. Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, it has all become a tool for society to connect with friends and family, and to present their lives to everyone on the platform. However, as social media continues to rise in popularity so does the frequency of bullying, in the form of cyberbullying. The article *Cyberbullying on Social Media: Definitions, Prevalence, and Impact Challenges* by Ray, McDermott, and Nicho (2024) takes a deeper look at how cyberbullying develops and affects people across different age groups.

Relation to Social Sciences

With cyberbullying being such a complex social problem, this article abides by core social science principles to further enhance the study. Instead of relying on personal opinions about cyberbullying, the authors apply objectivity by collecting data from 71 different papers and letting the evidence guide their conclusions. Their work is grounded in empiricism, because everything they discuss, definitions, cause-and-effect patterns, and mental health outcomes, it all comes from observable research rather than assumptions. The article also reflects the idea of determinism, since the authors show that online behavior is shaped by factors like personality traits, social environments, and online group dynamics. Overall, the article is decently aligned with the social science principles we've studied, due to it treating cyberbullying as a patterned behavior influenced by measurable social and psychological factors.

Research Question, Hypothesis, Independent Variable, and Dependent Variable

The authors center their review around a handful of big questions, like how cyberbullying is defined across different studies, what causes it, how personality traits influence who gets involved, the kinds of roles people take online, and how cyberbullying affects victims emotionally. Because they're reviewing existing research rather than running their own experiment, they don't create a single hypothesis. Instead, they pull together the results of many studies to answer these questions. In the research they looked at, the independent variables were things like the big five personality traits, how often and how people use social media, peer pressure, and demographic details such as age or gender. The dependent variables were usually behaviors like whether someone was a bully or a victim and mental health outcomes like anxiety, depression, or low self-esteem. These findings tie in with what we learned in class, especially the idea that traits like neuroticism or low agreeableness can make someone more likely to take part in cyberbullying.

Research Methods, Data, and Analysis

Ray et al. (2024) uses PRISMA criteria to guarantee their review is methodical and unbiased. In their research, they scanned major databases and narrowed down thousands of articles to 71 that fit their requirements. The studies used methods such as surveys, interviews, meta-analyses, and longitudinal data. The majority of the research was quantitative, utilizing psychological measures and questionnaires to assess cyberbullying experiences and mental health symptoms. This demonstrates ethical neutrality by presenting the data without attempting to promote a moral agenda. The authors also emphasize issues with inconsistencies in definitions and measurement instruments, which is a common theme in social science when debating the significance of explicit operational definitions.

Connections to Course Concepts

This article connects really well to the theories we covered in Module 5. Ray et al. (2024) repeatedly shows that personality plays a major role in cyberbullying, which mirrors the big five personality traits like neuroticism, low agreeableness, and low emotional stability. The article also fits with behavioral theories because a lot of the studies they reviewed suggest that people learn cyberbullying from peers, online culture, and the way certain platforms reward negative behavior. Cognitive theories show up too, since many offenders justify or downplay what they're doing, which relates to biased thinking and the neutralization techniques we learned about—like denying harm or blaming the victim. Even parts of psychodynamic theory show up in the sense that emotional conflict or early experiences might influence aggressive online behavior. Finally, the article strongly supports what the victimization slide said about mental health consequences, since many victims in the reviewed studies experienced anxiety, depression, sleep issues, and social withdrawal.

Connection to Marginalized Groups

One of the most meaningful parts of the article is how it highlights the unequal impact of cyberbullying on marginalized groups. Ray et al. (2024) show that adolescents, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people experiencing low self-esteem or body image issues are more likely to be targeted and more likely to suffer serious emotional consequences. This connects directly to Module 5's discussion of how psychological consequences can vary by demographic background. Marginalized groups often don't have a lot of support systems, which makes the impact of cyberbullying even more serious. By addressing the issue head on, that can help bring more attention to the conversation and support the idea that cyberbullying isn't just a youth problem, it's a social issue that disproportionately harms vulnerable communities.

Contributions to Society

The authors contribute important insights to society by proposing a more consistent and unified definition of cyberbullying. Their review shows that inconsistent definitions and measurement tools make it harder for researchers and policymakers to respond effectively to the problem. They also highlight the surprising lack of research on adults, even though cyberbullying affects people throughout their lives. The article gives educators, psychologists, and policymakers a clearer understanding of how cyberbullying develops, who is most at risk, and what kinds of interventions may help. This kind of evidence-based approach mirrors the goals of social science and reinforces the importance of grounding cybersecurity issues in research rather than assumptions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe this article fits well through the lens of social science. It connects empirical research to psychological theories, social structures, and real-world outcomes. Additionally, it shows how cyberbullying is influenced by personality traits, learned behavior, cognitive patterns, and environmental factors, which aligns with the psychological theories of cyber offending. It also reflects social science's core principles and the importance of objectivity, empiricism, and determinism. Overall, the article makes it clear that cyberbullying is more than just an online conflict, but also a complex social behavior that requires careful research and targeted interventions to protect vulnerable populations.

References

- Ray, G., McDermott, C. D., & Nicho, M. (2024). *Cyberbullying on social media: Definitions, prevalence, and impact challenges*. *Journal of Cybersecurity*, 10(1), tyae026.
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