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## Book Review of Cyber Bullying Approaches, Consequences and Interventions

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*Cyberbullying: Approaches, Consequences and Interventions* (2016). Lucy Betts, Palgrave Macmillan UK, London. Pages 146. eBook ISBN 978-1-137-50009-0/ DOI: 10.1057/978-1-137-50009-0.

The book, *Cyber bullying Approaches, Consequences, and Interventions*, was written by Lucy R. Betts, a Reader in Social Developmental Psychology of Nottingham Trent University. Her research interests focus on adolescents' cyber bullying, the importance of children's peer relationships, and the school adjustment of students. The author has studied the cyber bullying of young people for a while, and recently the author wrote the book to promote public understanding of the importance of this issue. The author considers recent academic studies, theories, and news about the cyber bullying of young people and summarizes them to provide us with a deeper understanding of cyber bullying. The author expects that the public's awareness for the cyber bullying of young people can be raised by this book.

We can comprehend cyber bullying via five important themes of this book: its unique nature, definitions, prevalence, consequences, and preventions and interventions. The author notes that digital technology has enabled young people to complete day-to-day activities in a more efficient and effective manner. Moreover, cyberspace can provide young people with a positive nurturing environment in which to promote social responsibility and encourage self-expression. However, an unintended consequence of digital technology has emerged: cyber bullying.

The term *cyber bullying* first appeared in academic literature in 2003. Since then, the number of studies regarding cyber bullying has increased gradually. The author points out that although there are growing concerns in the academic community and society in general about this phenomenon, further exploration is needed as most people do not fully understand this relatively new phenomenon.

The first and second themes of the book are the *definitions* and *unique nature* of cyber bullying. Although there is a lack of consensus and consistency within the academic literature concerning these two aspects, the author summarizes the existing debates and

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provides comprehensive definitions and explanations of the nature of cyber bullying. Existing debates on the definitions and the nature of cyber bullying mainly concern whether or not cyber bullying is an extension of face-to-face bullying. Some scholars argue that cyber bullying is the same as face-to-face bullying and include the same characteristics (e.g., Slonje, Smith, & Frisé, 2013; Smith, 2009; Olweus, 2013), such as intention, repetition, and power imbalance. The only difference is that cyber bullying is bullying involving media, such as mobile phones and the Internet. Moreover, Vandebosch and van Cleemput (2009) suggest that cyber bullying can be divided into two categories: direct cyber bullying and indirect cyber bullying. This categorization is similar to that of face-to-face bullying. Direct cyber bullying includes physical (e.g., purposely sending a virus-infected file), verbal (e.g., using the Internet or mobile telephone to insult or threaten), non-verbal (e.g., sending threatening or obscene pictures or illustrations), and social (e.g., excluding someone from an online group). Indirect cyber bullying includes *outing* of entrusted information, masquerading (e.g., deceiving someone by pretending to be someone else), spreading gossip via the media, and other similar actions.

However, in contrast to the scholars who argue that cyber bullying is an extension of face-to-face bullying, other scholars argue that cyber bullying is a distinct and unique phenomenon (e.g., Dempsey, Sulkowski, Nichols, & Storch, 2009; Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014; Pieschl, Kuhlmann, & Prosch, 2015). They think that it should not be confused with face-to-face bullying. Some point out that although cyber bullying includes the same characteristics as face-to-face bullying, they do not have the same meaning. Considering repetition, for example, repetition in face-to-face bullying is when a bully uses different types of bullying to attack a victim repetitively; however, repetition in cyber bullying can take various forms. For instance, a victim may experience repetitive bullying from a bully; a single bullying behavior can be viewed repetitively by different online audiences; the same victim may be bullied by an individual who is not the original bully because cyber bullying is not limited by physical space and time.

Additionally, considering power imbalance, power imbalance in face-to-face bullying is often associated with the differences in physical and social network resources between bullies and victims; however, power imbalance in cyber bullying emphasizes the differences in technological knowledge and the influence of anonymity between bullies and victims. For example, the ability of a bully to remain anonymous makes the cyber bully more powerful, and it enables him or her to hide his or her identity and freely attack the victim. Moreover, some victims, such as young people, often do not have enough technological knowledge and the authority to delete harmful or defamatory messages or videos online.

In addition to the above-mentioned characteristics, based on the unique characteristics of digital technology, some scholars argue that cyber bullying is different from face-to-face bullying. First, in contrast to face-to-face bullying, cyber bullying can be rapidly spread and easily preserved (e.g., harmful defamatory messages or videos can easily be saved and downloaded to computers, and then spread via the Internet) (Li, 2006). Second, cyber bullying is not constrained by geographical limitations (Surgarman & Willoughby, 2013). It can occur without the bully and victim being in the same physical environment. Third, it is easy to identify those who are bullies and victims in face-to-face bullying, and bystanders or others can provide support or supervision and inhibit bullying incidents in the real world. However, one unique characteristic of cyber bullying is its anonymity

(Huang & Chou, 2010; Slonje et al., 2013). Bullies hide in the virtual world or use fake accounts on certain websites when they attack their victims. Therefore, victims cannot easily tell who is bullying them. Significantly, no type of supervision can effectively inhibit cyber bullying on the Internet.

In summary, the author points out that the above characteristics are not similar to face-to-face bullying and that these characteristics may make cyber bullying more harmful to victims. For instance, the online disinhibition effect appears when bullies believe two things. First, they believe cyberspace is an impersonal environment. Second, they believe that their online behaviors can be dissociated from their actions in face-to-face settings. When behavioral dissociation occurs, bullies' cognition also will be dissociated, and these dissociations will result in changes such as moral disengagement. These aforementioned conditions will encourage more extreme bullying behavior in cyber bullying than in face-to-face bullying.

Although the definitions and the nature of cyber bullying are still being debated, the author suggests that we need to pay more attention to the perspectives of the victims who are suffering from cyber bullying. For this concern, I also agree with the above suggestion that one can indeed have a deeper understanding of the characteristics and definitions of cyber bullying through the exploration of victims' perspectives. However, in addition to victims' perspectives, I propose that because parents, teachers, and peers often are in the important role of assisting victims, their perspectives on cyber bullying, such as their definitions of and attitudes toward cyber bullying, also warrant exploration. Notably, comparing their perspectives on cyber bullying with the victims' is important. Such a comparison may assist us in understanding whether parents, teachers, and peers can properly identify cyber bullying and then provide appropriate intervention immediately.

The third theme of the book is the prevalence of cyber bullying. The author suggests that investigating the prevalence of cyber bullying is important for three reasons. First, this investigation can raise awareness of the true extent of cyber bullying. Second, it will enable the comparison of prevalence rates between various samples and populations. Third, this investigation will ensure the effectiveness of anti-cyber bullying interventions.

The author collected 82 empirical studies related to cyber bullying (e.g., Brewer & Kerslake, 2015; Lapidot-Leffler & Dolev-Cohen, 2015; Olweus, 2012; Smith et al., 2008). The author then constructed a table that compares the background variables, such as age, country, number of participants, and cyber bullying prevalence rates, and the results of these studies. These studies were conducted from 2004 to 2016. They were mainly conducted in Europe, the U.S., Australia, China, Hong Kong, and other developed countries. Among these studies, most were conducted in Europe and the U.S., the age range of the participants of these studies was 9 to 30 years, and most participants were secondary school students.

Most importantly, the studies indicated the prevalence rates ranged from 1.5% to 72% for experiencing cyber bullying as a victim and ranged from 0% to 60.4% for experiencing cyber bullying as a bully. However, it is worth mentioning that the disparity between prevalence rates was great. For this reason, the author proposes some factors that may influence the prevalence rates: definitions of cyber bullying provided in surveys, methodology of surveys, time point of experiencing cyber bullying of samples, the beliefs and attitudes of samples for cyber bullying, and the characteristics of samples, and others.

In exploring the reasons for variations in prevalence rates, the author considers that it is helpful to consider the definition of cyber bullying and the beliefs of the participants as significant factors. Moreover, the author argues that the variation in prevalence rates still exist because the definition of cyber bullying provided across studies may not be consistent. Furthermore, the author points out that many studies adopted self-report measures to assess the prevalence of cyber bullying (e.g., Hinduja & Patchin, 2008); however, some bullies may underreport their cyber bullying because they do not regard cyber bullying as an illegal action; therefore, this will influence the prevalence rate. To sum up, the author suggests that researchers need to note the influences of the above factors when conducting studies on the prevalence rates of cyber bullying. However, in my opinion, I think the author not only should propose her suggestion as above but also should use her professional research experience and knowledge of cyber bullying to further propose some useful solutions for solving the problem that some factors may influence measuring the prevalence of cyber bullying. For example, the prevalence of cyber bullying may be influenced by self-report measures; however, researchers can adopt the measures of peer or teacher nomination (Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002; Wei, Jonson-Reid, & Tsao, 2007) or parental reports (Nordhagen, Nielsen, Stigum, & Kohler, 2005) in order to solve the problem of self-report measures.

The fourth theme of the book is the consequences of cyber bullying. The author points out that the researchers have begun to explore the risk factors that predict involvement in cyber bullying. Additionally, researchers have begun to assess the consequences for the victims and bullies who are involved in cyber bullying.

According to the summaries of empirical studies related to the above aspects, the author found that time spent online and exposure to media violence have been identified as the most consistent risk factors. These factors can predict individuals' involvement in cyber bullying (Mark & Ratliffé, 2011; Fanti, Demetriou, & Hawa, 2012). Other risk factors also have been identified, including being a victim of face-to-face bullying, risky online behavior, social anxiety, moral disengagement, lower empathy, and hyperactivity (Álvarez-García, Núñez Pérez, Dobarro, González, & Rodríguez Pérez, 2015; Erdur-Baker, 2010; Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014).

As to the consequences of cyber bullying for victims and bullies, through the review of some studies, the author found that cyber bullying will influence their psychosocial adjustment in areas such as mental health, self-esteem, and social relationships. In respect to social relationships, for example, the results of the study conducted by Crosslin and Crosslin (2014) indicated that young victims of cyber bullying may become reticent in social situations and withdraw from interactions with others. Most importantly, cyber bullying may influence victims' trust in their social interaction partners because they want to avoid potentially possible harm from their partners (Rivituso, 2014). Moreover, cyber bullying will affect an individual's reputation, academic performance, cognition, and attitude towards school. In the case of an individual's reputation, for example, cyber bullying may have a lasting impact on an individual's reputation because of the permanent digital footprint (O'Keefe, Clarke-Pearson, & Council on Communication and Media, 2011). This means that people's interactions in the digital world can be viewed by users for years to come. Therefore, if a bully spreads defamatory information about the victim, it may be preserved on the Internet. This will harm the reputation of the victim.

Moreover, notably, cyber bullying may result in victims' somatic symptoms, substance abuse, and suicidal ideations (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014).

In summary, the author suggests that the public should not underestimate the consequences of cyber bullying and needs to pay more attention to this phenomenon. Moreover, because some relevant studies were conducted using the cross-section approach (e.g., Li, 2007), the author also suggests that researchers should conduct longitudinal studies in the future to support the causal relationship between cyber bullying and its consequences. For this concern, in my opinion, although the author summarizes the relevant consequences of cyber bullying from previous studies, we find few differences between the consequences of cyber bullying and those of traditional bullying. Therefore, in addition to the summaries of the consequences of cyber bullying, I propose that the author or future studies can further explore the following issues. First, what are the specific consequences caused by cyber bullying? Second, are the consequences of cyber bullying more serious than those of traditional bullying? Third, in addition to the consequences caused by footprint, what are other consequences related to the unique characteristics of cyber bullying such as anonymity, easy spread, etc.? The answers to these questions might provide evidence to support that the characteristics of cyber bullying are different from those of traditional bullying.

The fifth theme of the book is the prevention of and intervention in cyber bullying. On this theme, the author reviews some relevant studies and summarizes the content and effectiveness of these interventions (e.g., Garaigordobil & Marinez-Valderrey, 2015; Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008; Merrell, Jacobs, Völlink, Dehue, & Lechner, 2014).

The author points out that the current interventions can be divided into different forms. These forms include interventions for students, teachers, the whole school, and the classroom. These current interventions also can be divided into two types according to the form of the instruction: technological instruction and face-to-face instruction. Various approaches, such as case studies, book reviews, role playing, brainstorming, and others, are adopted by these interventions to educate participants to understand and face cyber bullying.

As to the contents of these interventions, the author notes that these interventions focus on the following: definitions and characteristics of cyber bullying, characteristics of roles involved in cyber bullying, risk and protective factors of cyber bullying, consequences of cyber bullying, coping strategies for cyber bullying, identification of cyber bullying, and the importance of Internet safety. The author also points out that some interventions may inhibit cyber bullying by improving the participants' empathy, moral engagement, and beliefs and attitudes about cyber bullying.

However, the author suggests that if we want to enhance the effectiveness of interventions, public awareness of cyber bullying needs to be raised. To address this, the author summarizes the perspectives of relevant scholars (e.g., Genta, Brighi, & Guarini, 2009; Marczak & Coyne, 2010) and then suggests that we need an integrated perspective as a base for developing the guidelines for the public to know how to inhibit cyber bullying. For instance, relevant scholars suggest that schools, teachers, and parents must cooperate to inhibit cyber bullying (Papatraianou, Levine, & West, 2014). Schools need to take responsibility and develop policies to confront cyber bullying (Darden, 2009). Teachers need to discuss with their students about the characteristics and impacts of cyber bullying, and the coping strategies for cyber bullying (Gardinger, Yanagida, Strohmeier, & Spiel, 2015). Most importantly, parents need to pay more attention to their children.

Furthermore, parents need to develop positive relationships with them, and they need to know how their children use the Internet (Robinson, 2013). Eventually, countries must enact laws for tackling cyber bullying. Finally, the author argues that, if the above guidelines are followed, this will contribute to the reduction of cyber bullying. For this concern, in my opinion, I also agree with the argument proposed by the author. Based on Bronfenbrenner's (1994) idea of ecological systems, which states that an individual's behaviors are greatly influenced by different parts of the whole system where he or she is, in order to effectively prevent cyber bullying, the relevant agents of the entire system should work together in assisting the victims or intervening with the bullies. Furthermore, I also suggest that the author should pay more attention to the importance of parents' and teachers' education on cyber bullying because currently this education is still limited in access. However, previous studies found that providing this education to teachers is effective in enhancing their professional knowledge of school bullying and gives them strategies for helping students who suffer from victimization (Dedousis-Wallacea, Shuteb, Varlowa, Murrihya, & Kidmana, 2014; Inhat & Smith, 2013; Pytash, 2013). Therefore, regarding the contents of this education, in order to effectively prevent cyber bullying, I suggest that the following content should be included in education for parents and teachers: (i) the unique characteristics and definition of cyber bullying; (ii) the consequences caused by cyber bullying; (iii) the responsibilities of parents and teachers for preventing or intervening in cyber bullying; (iv) clarifying misunderstandings about cyber bullying; (v) how to identify cyber bullying accurately; (vi) how to properly discuss cyber bullying with their child or student and how to assist them in preventing or coping with cyber bullying; (vii) the resources that can be used to prevent or intervene in cyber bullying; (viii) the appropriate attitudes or beliefs toward cyber bullying.

In conclusion, relevant books for exploring cyber bullying are still limited; however, this book is the newest one summarizing recent empirical studies for deeply exploring the phenomenon of cyber bullying. Through the author's clear, fluent, and logical writing style, this book is systematically organized to introduce and summarize the definitions and characteristics of cyber bullying, the prevalent rates of cyber bullying, the consequences of cyber bullying, the interventions for cyber bullying, and the differences between traditional bullying and cyber bullying. Therefore, this book is suitable for readers such as public who are interested in exploring the phenomenon of cyber bullying. Moreover, notably, after each theme discussed in this book, the author summarizes the current and future research trends for cyber bullying at the end of each chapter; this can provide a clear direction for relevant researchers to further conduct studies regarding cyber bullying. In addition, for the theme of cyber bullying intervention, the author summarizes in detail relevant results of empirical studies regarding intervention in cyber bullying and its effectiveness. This can be provided to parents, teachers and relevant educational institutions as a reference.

However, this book still has some parts that warrant improvement. First, this book has few tables and no pictures. Tables and illustrations would have made this book more accessible. Second, this book is still highly academic. The author could have used more relevant materials to enhance the readability of this book for the public; for example, the author does not provide real cyber bullying examples or true stories to increase the reading motivation of the public, and the author seldom analyses examples or stories. Cyber bullying is a common phenomenon today, and relevant examples of cyber bullying occur

incessantly; moreover, the public needs to become more aware of cyber bullying so that interventions can be promoted smoothly. Including such examples would help the public more quickly understand the relevant characteristics and consequences of cyber bullying. Third, the theme of intervention for cyber bullying is an important part of this book. However, although the author introduces some approaches to prevent or intervene in cyber bullying, these approaches have not been well reviewed and summarized. For instance, the author only mentions who can use these approaches; nevertheless, it is important to systematically categorize these approaches by role, such as parents, teachers, victims, peers, and administration, so that each role can understand which approach is suitable for him or herself in coping with cyber bullying. In addition, regarding the theme of intervention for cyber bullying in this book, the author just broadly introduces the contents of these approaches rather than further providing practical teaching examples or guidelines for assisting parents or teachers in understanding how to educate their child or students to cope with cyber bullying. For example, the author only mentions that teaching students to know the definition and consequences of cyber bullying should be parts of the contents of the anti-cyber bullying intervention; however, the author does not provide guidelines for teachers or parents to know how to effectively educate their child or students to understand them. Therefore, I suggest that for the future books exploring cyber bullying, the above caveats be taken into account to increase the value of these books. To sum up, although this book has some limitations as above, this book still provides useful information and valuable contribution to cyber bullying.

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