Chapter 14
Addressing Cyberbullying Using a Multi-Stakeholder Approach: The Flemish Case

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Contents

14.1 Introduction

Cyberbullying is a common phenomenon amongst youngsters,[1] which is often connected to traditional (school) bullying.[2] Therefore, many scholars plea for an "integrative" anti-bulllying approach.[3] In this chapter, we argue that to address cyberbullying effectively, it is necessary to take into account the specific characteristics of this type of bullying.

First of all, these specific characteristics have consequences for the different actors that should be involved. Because cyberbullying is mostly initiated at home,

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[1] Kowalski and Limber 2007; Tokunaga 2010.
[2] Juvonen and Gross 2008; Li 2007; Vandebosch and Van Cleemput 2009.
[3] Agatson et al. 2007; Mason 2008.

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is only directly observable online, and often done by a perpetrator who takes advantage of the relative anonymity provided by ICT, school staff is probably less aware of this type of bullying and less able to react immediately. Therefore, other types of actors—i.e. parents, Internet Service Providers and the police—should also be engaged in actions aimed at the prevention, detection and solution of cyberbullying. Mass media too, may play an important role, by putting cyber-bullying on the general public's and policy makers' agenda.

Second, addressing cyberbullying requires adjustments in the contents of anti-bullying programs. To prevent, to detect and to solve cyberbullying, all parties involved should be aware of what cyberbullying actually is, which students are at risk of becoming a perpetrator or a victim, what causes cyberbullying and what can be done to prevent or solve it. Hence the importance of (academic) research in this field, that provides the necessary input for evidence-based interventions.

In this chapter, we will illustrate the role of students, school staff, parents, the police, Internet Service Providers (ISP's), e-safety organisations, the mass media, policymakers and academics with regard to cyberbullying by referring to research findings and concrete intervention initiatives (especially in Flanders—Belgium).

14.2 Cyberbullying and Traditional Bullying: A Story of Differences and Similarities

Research on cyberbullying is from a relatively recent date. Based on the obser-vation that information and communication technologies (such as the internet and the mobile phone) had become very popular amongst youngsters, researchers started to investigate some of the negative side-effects or risks of these new media. In line with a well-known form of offline peer-to-peer-aggression, scholars iden-tified cyberbullying as an important issue. The 24/7 character, the anonymity, the lack of cues, the mediated form, the replicability and the potentially worldwide audience of (some of) the technologies, were hypothesised to distinguish cyber-bullying from traditional or offline bullying.[4]

These technological attributes led, for instance, to discussions about the defi-nition of cyberbullying (how can the typical characteristics of traditional bully-ing—i.e. repetition, power imbalance, intention to hurt—be translated to the cyber context?),[5] and to the identification of new forms of bullying (such as 'masquer-ade' and 'outing').[6] With regard to the prevalence of cyberbullying, it was hypothesised that the high penetration of ICT amongst youngsters, together with its (perceived) anonymity and mediated character (often regarded as potential

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[4] Patchin and Hinduja 2006; Heirman and Walrave 2008; Dooley et al. 2009.

[5] Vandebosch and Van Cleemput 2008; Menesini and Nocentini 2009; Menesini et al. 2011; Langos 2012.

[6] Vandebosch and Van Cleemput 2009.

triggers for bullying),[7] might lead to high(er) perpetration and victimisation rates. The profile of the cyberbullies and the cybervictims, too, was predicted to be different from that of offline bullies and victims. Given the fact that ICTs were especially popular amongst older children and adolescents (who had the skills to go online), the average age of those involved in cyberbullying was expected to be higher than that of those involved in traditional bullying.[8] Moreover, the anonymity of the internet and the mobile phone was hypothesised to empower some categories of students (e.g. girls and victims of traditional bullying), who were less involved as perpetrators in (some types of) traditional bullying, to become cyberbullies (i.e. the 'revenge of the nerds' hypothesis).[9] Furthermore, the fact that the internet allows youngsters to communicate with people they have only met online seemed to broaden the scope of bullying. Instead of being bullied by or bullying peers known from offline contexts (e.g. school), the internet also made it possible for youngsters to become involved in cyberbullying incidents with people they had never met in person. Finally, the impact of cyberbullying was thought of as being different from that of traditional bullying.[10] The 24/7 character of the internet and mobile phones could make cyberbullying almost inescapable (while the home was considered a safe place for those who were, for instance, being bullied at school). The (potential) worldwide audience was considered to be another worsening aspect.

The studies on cyberbullying that tested these hypotheses were mainly quantitative in nature, with a focus on cross-sectional, online or school surveys. The results of these studies seem to indicate that cyberbullying is a common problem (although the prevalence rates differ significantly amongst studies, because of different conceptualisations and operationalisations of cyberbullying,[11] but is still less prevalent than traditional bullying. The fact that most youngsters spend relatively more time with peers in offline contexts, such as school, where they—unlike in online environments—can less easily avoid individuals they actually do not like, might explain these findings. With regard to the most common forms of cyberbullying, it is clear that verbal, direct forms of cyberbullying (such as insulting or threatening somebody) are popular.[12] Studies on the platforms or applications that are most frequently used to cyberbully, reflect the shifts in popularity of technologies. For instance, while Instant Messaging was a very popular place to cyberbully in some of the earlier studies,[13] more recent research indicates that much of the cyberbullying takes place on Social Network Sites (such as Facebook).[14] With regard to the profile of cyberbullies, the following trends

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[7] Heirman and Walrave 2008.

[8] Salmivalli and Pöyhönen 2010.

[9] Vandebosch and Van Cleemput 2009.

[10] Campbell 2005.

[11] See for instance, Kowalski et al. 2008; Tokunaga 2010.

[12] Wegge et al. 2013.

[13] Kowalski and Limber 2007.

have been observed: perpetrators of cyberbullying are also often more involved as perpetrators in traditional bullying,[15] and as victims or bystanders in cyberbullying; they often make more use of the internet or certain types of applications; they report less parental supervision (on their online activities)[16]; and they are more often involved in other problematic behaviours, such as substance use and delinquent behaviour.[17] Perpetrators often cyberbully anonymously,[18] and most of their actions are targeted towards victims they know in person. With regard to the age and the gender of the cyberbullies, the findings are less clear-cut. Nevertheless many of them seem to indicate a peak in cyberbullying behaviour between the age of 12 and 15,[19] and—compared to traditional bullying—a relatively high involvement of girls as perpetrator (who often seem to draw level with or even outrun boys in cyberbullying). Perpetrators report they cyberbully because it makes them feel powerful, popular, better than other students[20]; for fun, because they feel bad about themselves[21]; to redirect feelings, out of boredom, to protect themselves from being picked on by others[22]; to vent anger and frustration[23]; to get back at someone they are mad at[24] and out of jealousy.[25] Victims of cyberbullying have often been observed to be: more often involved as victims in traditional bullying[26] and as perpetrators and bystanders of cyberbullying; and more frequent users of the internet (or certain types of applications).[27] Again, the findings with regard to the age and the gender of the victims are less clear-cut, but (also) seem to point to a relatively high victimisation degree amongst early adolescents of both genders (although there are some indications that girls—like in traditional bullying—report more victimisation).[28]

The evidence on the precise impact of cyberbullying is still scarce. Cross-sectional studies reveal that cyberbullying is related to similar types of health- and school-related problems as traditional bullying.[29] The severity of the impact (compared to traditional bullying) might, however, be highly dependent on the

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[14] Livingstone et al. 2011.

[15] Dehue et al. 2008; Li 2007; Raskauskas and Stoltz 2007; Smith et al. 2008.

[16] Vandebosch and Van Cleemput 2009.

[17] Ybarra and Mitchell 2004.

[18] Patchin and Hinduja 2006; Wegge et al. 2013.

[19] Slonje and Smith 2008; Williams and Guerra 2007.

[20] Mishna et al. 2010.

[21] Raskauskas and Stoltz 2007.

[22] Varjas et al. 2010.

[23] Hinduja and Patchin 2009.

[24] Raskauskas and Stoltz 2007.

[25] Varjas et al. 2010.

[26] Dehue et al. 2008; Juvonen and Gross 2008; Li 2007; Vandebosch and Van Cleemput 2009.

[27] Ybarra 2004; Juvonen and Gross 2008.

[28] For an overview see Tokunaga 2010.

form of cyberbullying that was used. In the study of Smith et al.,[30] for instance, picture or video clip bullying was perceived by students as having more impact than traditional bullying, while chatroom bullying was perceived as having less impact (all other kinds of cyberbullying, e.g. text message bullying or e-mail bullying, were thought to have a similar impact as traditional bullying). Research on the coping strategies of victims distinguishes four subcategories: confronting a bully, doing nothing or ignoring, technical strategies, and seeking instrumental and emotional support. Preliminary results (again based on what victims perceive as helpful) seem to indicate that technical solutions such as "blocking" the perpetrator[31] and (especially) "telling someone" are most effective.[32]

The above-mentioned findings seem to indicate, on the one hand, that there is a considerable overlap between traditional bullying and cyberbullying (e.g. regarding the profile of bullies and victims, the type of consequences, et cetera), but, on the other hand, that cyberbullying also has some distinctive features (e.g. its 24/7 character, potentially worldwide audience, mediated form and anonymity). This observation also has consequences for interventions aimed at tackling cyberbullying.

14.3 Tackling the 'Bullying' and the 'Cyber' Part of 'Cyberbullying'

Since many cases of cyberbullying are an extension of traditional school bullying (with the same pupils bullying the same other pupils offline and online)[33] and also have an influence on students' functioning at school,[34] many researchers[35] as well as legal experts[36] argue that schools have an important responsibility in addressing this problem. Schools are also considered central actors, because they have experience with traditional anti-bullying programmes. Scholars, therefore, often suggest that schools should adapt an integrated anti-bullying programme, which aims at tackling both traditional and new forms of bullying. Starting from what has proven to be most effective in tackling traditional bullying, that is a "whole school approach",[37] such a programme should rely on the cooperation of different types

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[29] For an overview see Tokunaga 2010.

[30] Smith et al. 2008.

[31] Price and Dalgleish 2010.

[32] Price and Dalgleish 2010; Machmutow et al. 2012.

[33] Juvonen and Gross 2008; Smith et al. 2008; Mishna et al. 2010; Erentaite et al. 2012; Wegge et al. 2013.

[34] Beran and Li 2007; Marsh et al. 2010.

[35] Agatston et al. 2007; Diamanduros et al. 2008.

[36] Lane 2011.

of actors (students, school staff, parents and the wider community) and include different types of actions (preventive, detective, reactive).

However, to address cyberbullying effectively, it is necessary to take into account the specific characteristics of this type of bullying when developing such an integrated anti-bullying approach. First of all, these specific characteristics have consequences for the different actors that should be involved. Because cyberbullying is mostly initiated at home, is only directly observable online, is often done by a perpetrator who takes advantage of the relative anonymity provided by ICT and aimed at a victim who does not know how to adequately protect him or herself online, school staff (and parents) alone are not always able to prevent, discover and react to this type of bullying. Therefore, other types of actors—e.g. Internet Service Providers, the police, e-safety organisations—should also be engaged. Second, the (preventive, detective and curative) actions should take into account the specific characteristics of cyberbullying. For instance, to prevent cyberbullying, it is not only important to inform pupils, parents and teachers about the general social mechanisms that underlie bullying behaviour, but also on the ways in which features of the online environment (e.g. the perceived anonymity, and the mediated character) might facilitate these. Likewise, students can be taught how to decrease the chance of being victimised online (e.g. by using privacy settings on SNS) or how to react appropriately to online bullying (e.g. by reporting incidents offline and online). In other words, to address cyberbullying adequately, insights from traditional bullying programmes should be complemented with insights from e-literacy programmes (as, for instance, created by e-safety organisations, and/or implemented in schools).

Figure 14.1 gives an overview of all the actors that should be involved to adequately tackle cyberbullying (amongst youngsters). These actors are situated at different levels. The first level consists of students, staff and parents (together constituting the school environment). At the second level, we can find actors such as mental-health organisations, and (especially relevant for cyberbullying) the police, ISP's and e-safety organisations. On an even higher level, mass media may play an important role in creating awareness about (cyber)bullying and setting the public (and policy) agenda. Policymakers, in turn, may undertake several types of actions (based on the scientific knowledge about the problem), such as: creating laws against cyberbullying, stimulating education about e-safety, demanding actions from ISPs to decrease the prevalence and the impact of cyberbullying amongst youngsters. Together with these traditional and 'new' actors, two types of expertise—on bullying and on the 'cyberworld'—are combined. We will describe the role of the different actors at each level in the following sections, and illustrate these with examples stemming from Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium).

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[37] Samara and Smith 2008.

Fig. 14.1 Overview of stakeholders needed to address cyberbullying

Youngsters, schools and parents

Police and ICT actors

News media, experts and policymakers
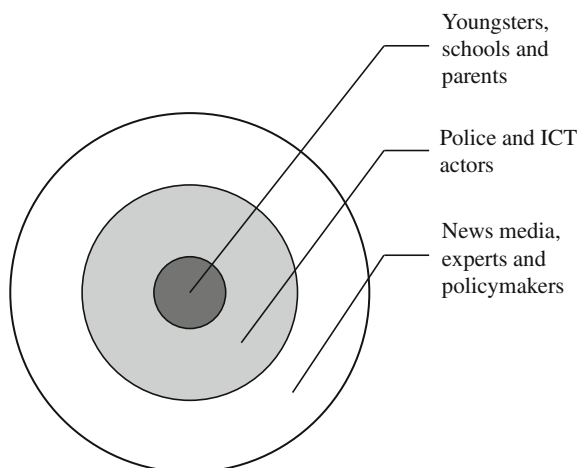
14.4 The School Environment and Cyberbullying: Involving Students, Staff and Parents

The ultimate goal of anti-cyberbullying programmes is to reduce the prevalence and the impact of cyberbullying amongst youngsters. This goal can be reached by targeting youngsters themselves, but also by targeting important actors in youngsters' direct environment (such as their parents and teachers), who—through their own behaviours—affect the likelihood of youngsters being involved in and suffering from cyberbullying.

1. Youngsters

Youngsters can be addressed in their role(s) of (potential) victims, bystanders and perpetrators of cyberbullying.[38] (Potential) perpetrators should be made more aware of the negative impact of cyberbullying on the victim and of the possible negative consequences of the cyberbullying behaviour for themselves (e.g. rejection by peers, punishments by parents and teachers, exclusion from online services by ISPs when Users Terms are violated, or legal consequences when their cyberbullying constitutes criminal behaviour). They should also be taught what is socially acceptable behaviour on the internet and what is not (e.g. 'netiquette'), how to ventilate possible negative emotions (which may underly the cyberbullying behaviour) in a different way and how to restore their past bullying behaviours. (Potential) victims should be informed about the possible negative consequences of internet-related risk behaviour (such as sharing passwords, and putting very personal information online). They should also be taught how to use adequate

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[38] Vandebosch and Poels 2012.

coping strategies. Victims, for instance, should get a more realistic picture of the size and the attitude of the audience witnessing the bullying behaviour online (cognitive component). They should also learn how to act appropriately to cyberbullying behaviour (e.g. by seeking support from friends, parents, teachers or professionals, rather than taking (online) revenge). Bystanders should be persuaded that they can (and should) play an important role in cyberbullying situations. If they overtly condemn the cyberbullying behaviour and defend the victim, the bully will be less inclined to display this negative behaviour in the future and the victim will feel supported.

In Flanders, an evidence-based game against cyberbullying is currently being developed within the Friendly ATTAC project (www.friendlyattac.be). The main goal of this game (which is aimed at 12–15 year olds) is precisely to modify the above-mentioned determinants (e.g. attitudes and knowledge) of behaviours related to cyberbullying, by means of highly personalised virtual experience scenarios, providing players with immediate feedback in a safe computer-mediated environment. This game can be incorporated in (school-based) programmes against cyberbullying.

2. Schools

As indicated in the section above, schools are thought to be important actors in anti-cyberbullying programmes. They can undertake several actions to promote a positive school climate and reduce (the prevalence and impact of) negative social behaviours, such as traditional bullying.[39] Indirectly—since bullying through the internet or through mobile phones is often an extension of traditional bullying— this may also affect the prevalence of cyberbullying amongst pupils. However, as argued above, the specific characteristics of cyberbullying, also require specific attention. Schools should raise awareness about cyberbullying (what is it?, what are its causes and effects? and what can be done about it?) amongst their pupils (and the parents of their pupils), promote reporting cases of cyberbullying to the school staff, and try to adequately deal with cyberbullying incidents that occur. However, according to some authors, "schools have been slow to respond to the increased incidences of cyberbullying"[40] and are now only "beginning to extend their bullying policies to include the Internet".[41] The study of Vandebosch, Poels and Deboutte amongst principals of primary and secondary schools in Flanders, partially confirms this.[42] Compared to the initiatives on traditional bullying (aimed at students, teachers or parents), the number of activities specifically dealing with cyberbullying is still rather limited. This study also shows that this is not due to an underestimation of the cyberbullying problem by schools, nor to the fact that they do not feel responsible for bullying that takes place outside school (hours). The

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[39] Samara and Smith 2008.

[40] Aoyama and Talbert 2010.

[41] Sharples et al. 2009.

[42] Vandebosch et al. 2011.

main reason for this relatively limited attention for cyberbullying is—according to the principals—the lack of professional support and concrete materials in this area. Schools are looking forward to evidence-based intervention programmes that are appealing for their students.

These results seem to indicate that the existing initiatives of anti-bullying and e-safety organisations on cyberbullying (see infra), are not well-known or considered insufficiently by school principals. They also suggest that the current policy of the Flemish Ministry of Education—which has undertaken some anti-cyberbullying initiatives, but leaves the main responsibility to tackle (cyber)bullying in the hands of schools—has serious shortcomings. A more directive policy approach, which gives clear instructions to schools on how to handle (cyber)bullying without suppressing (additional) local initiatives, might be more effective in dealing with this important issue.

3. Parents

Apart from schools, parents should be involved in anti-cyberbullying pro-grammes. Given the fact that cyberbullying often takes place outside school (hours), their role is even more important than in traditional bullying programmes. Parental-mediation styles with regard to their children's ICT use may lower the chance of involvement in and the impact of cyberbullying and other online risk behaviours. In the literature, several forms of parental mediation have been dis-tinguished, such as active co-use, interactional restriction, technical restriction and monitoring.[43] The mediation styles that parents apply seem to be dependent on, amongst others, gender, Socio-Economic Status (SES) and their perception of the risks associated with the use of ICT. With regard to cyberbullying, it appears that parents do consider cyberbullying a serious problem.[44] Their (consequential?) parental involvement with their children's ICT use is also associated with a lower risk of cyberbullying perpetration[45] and victimisation.[46] Research furthermore shows that when youngsters—perhaps despite precautionary measures of their parents—become the victim of cyberbullying, they not always tell their parents,[47] for instance, because they have the feeling that their parents will not be able to help them. This "not reporting" may also explain why parents underestimate their own children's involvement in cyberbullying as a victim (and as a perpetrator).[48] Creating awareness amongst parents about how to prevent their children from being the perpetrator or victim of cyberbullying, about how to decode signals of their children being involved in cyberbullying incidents and about how to solve these problems adequately is thus a crucial aspect in anti-cyberbullying strategies.

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[43] Livingstone and Helsper 2008.
[44] Livingstone et al. 2011.
[45] Vandebosch and Van Cleemput 2009.
[46] Mesch 2009.
[47] Li 2006.
[48] Dehue et al. 2008.

In Flanders, examples of such (research-based) advices aimed at parents can, for instance, be found on the website of the Internet Observatory.[49]

14.5 The Role of the Police, ISPs and e-Safety Organisations

On the second level (see Fig. 14.1), three other categories of actors are important to tackle cyberbullying amongst youngsters: the police, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and e-safety organisations. As will be demonstrated below, these actors often already cooperate on this issue.

1. The police

Although there are a number of arguments that would plea against the involvement of the police in cyberbullying amongst youngsters (e.g. the fact that (cyber)bullying is to some degree "normal" in the social development of youngsters and that offenders should thus not be criminalised, and the fact that not all forms of cyberbullying (e.g. massively defriending someone) constitute a criminal offence), there are also some arguments that plea in favour. As mentioned before, since most cyberbullying takes place outside school and outside school hours, it may not always be so evident for schools to mediate between, for instance, the victim and the perpetrator (and their respective parents). Hence, the (local) police might fulfil this role. The involvement of the police is also necessary in those cases where cyberbullying does represent a serious threat to the mental and/or physical health of the victim, and fast cooperation with the ISPs is needed to identify the perpetrator and to stop the crime. To summarise: the police should be contacted when cyberbullying is (expected to constitute) a criminal offence,[50] and could be contacted for more ambiguous cases (and for tips on how to prevent all types of cyberbullying).

In Belgium, both the federal police (more in particular, the Federal Computer Crime Unit (FCCU)) and the local police are involved in cyberbullying prevention, detection and solution.[51] The FCCU and (some) local police departments (especially those in large towns with a considerable amount of young people, such as Antwerp and Leuven) have first-hand knowledge on cybercrime (in general), which they can draw upon in their prevention activities. During their information sessions (often in collaboration with schools), and in their brochures and radio

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[49] www.internet-observatory.be/internet_observatory/pdf/faq_cards/parents/Cyberharcelement_parents_web_nl.pdf.

[50] For more information on the legal qualification of different types of cyberbullying in different countries, see Walrave et al. 2009; Kowalski et al. 2008; Stefkovich et al. 2010; Shariff 2008; Campbell et al. 2008.

[51] For an extensive overview, see Vandebosch et al. 2012.

programmes, the police refer to concrete examples, make suggestions on how to behave safely, and give tips on what to do and whom to contact in case of victimisation. Besides preventive actions, the police are also involved in detecting instances of cyberbullying. Crucial for the detection of this (and other online criminal) behaviour are user notifications. The FCCU is often informed about cyberbullying by bystanders or victims using the online reporting system, eCops (www.ecops.be). On this online platform, users can report crimes (but not officially file complaints) committed on or through the internet. Additional notifications (on serious abuses) reach eCops via Child Focus (an e-safety organisation, cf. infra) and Netlog (a social networking site), who also have their own "reporting systems". To officially file a complaint (which requires a signed declaration and is necessary for some types of crimes), cyberbullying victims have to contact their local police department. Law enforcement officers then first have to evaluate whether (and how) the reported behaviour can be qualified as an offence. If the reported cyberbullying behaviour is indeed an offence, the police can continue their work. Often, they will have to try to identify the perpetrator by relying on evidence from the side of the victim (e.g. records of the abuse: dates, times and virtual places, the content of the message(s), user names, e-mail addresses and phone numbers). Starting from these traces, the police then usually have to cooperate with (different types of) Internet Service Providers (i.e. access providers, who provide a link from the customer to the internet, and content providers, such as social network sites, photo sharing sites, messaging services, who both offer and receive (user-generated) content). Cooperation with content providers is also necessary to mitigate the problem (i.e. to remove certain (illegal) contents).

2. Internet Service Providers

Content providers, however, do not only rely on notifications from the police to remove illegal and harmful content (cf. the Notice and Takedown regimes[52]). Many of them (like Facebook, for instance) also provide possibilities to their users to (directly) report abuses to them. Furthermore, they often actively screen the (public) contents themselves (by using human or automatic monitoring). On the basis of these reports and detections, they can remove certain content (which represents illegal content or breaches of the terms of use), and/or take other measures, such as excluding the offender from further use of their services (based on the same terms of use).[53] Content (and access) providers also undertake many preventive actions. By creating specific technical features (such as privacy settings), they allow their users to better protect themselves. Furthermore, these ISPs (and their associations, e.g. ISPA Belgium) are also very active in awareness-raising campaigns about cyberbullying (and other online risks).

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[52] See Ahlert et al. 2004; Lievens et al. 2006.
[53] Walrave et al. 2009; Durrant 2010.

3. e-Safety organisations

Apart from the industry, other (non-profit or governmental) organisations are involved in promoting e-safety. In Belgium, Child Focus (Foundation for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children) is the Belgian Safer Internet Center since 2000. It has a website (www.clicksafe.be/splash/nl_BE) with information on e-safety for children, adolescents, parents and professionals; developed a course package on cyberbullying (that teachers can use in their classes); and (since June 2011) operates a specific helpline for questions regarding internet safety. Only recently, Child Focus and the six most important content and access providers in Belgium (Belgacom, KPN Group Belgium/Base, Microsoft, Mobistar, Netlog and Telenet) signed the "E-safety charter". This e-safety charter is a self-regulatory instrument (cf. the "Safer Social Networking Principles", developed by the social networking sites in consultation with the European Commission) to enhance the safety of children and young people using their services.[54] In this charter, these content and access providers commit themselves, amongst others, to raising awareness about Internet-related risks, and empowering users through tools and technology (e.g. privacy settings).

14.6 The Role of News Media, Policymakers and Researchers

1. News media

News media, too, may play an important awareness-raising role. The amount of attention that they pay to cyberbullying, and the ways in which they frame the issue may influence the general public's and policymakers' perceptions (and concurrent actions).

Content analyses reveal that news media pay considerable attention to stories on internet-related risks and children, especially those involving sex (e.g. grooming) and aggression (e.g. cyberbullying).[55] A recent study on Flemish newspapers' reporting on cyberbullying[56] shows that the first stories on bullying through ICT appeared in 1998. The media attention for cyberbullying increased significantly in 2005, when a large-scale study on cyberbullying amongst Flemish youngsters, which was commissioned by the Flemish government, was conducted. Since that time, the attention for the issue has remained high. Newspapers mostly pay attention to Flemish or Belgian news with regard to cyberbullying. Stories on "cases", "research" and "policy" are equally present.

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[54] Child Focus 2011.

[55] Haddon and Stald 2009; Mascheroni et al. 2010.

[56] Vermeulen and Vandebosch 2012.

With regard to the way news media portray ICT-related risks, it is clear that there are some indications of a "moral panic framing".[57] News media often focus on youngsters, not only in the role of victims but also as perpetrators (e.g. in the case of "sexting" or "cyberbullying"). Furthermore, the news stories on cases often refer to those with very severe consequences (e.g. cyberbullying cases associated with suicide, or suicidal attempts of the victim).[58]

With regard to the potential effects of the amount of news media coverage on cyberbullying, the agenda-setting theory suggests that the media determine what people think about. Issues that are high on the media agenda will also be high on the public's agenda (and—consequently—on policymakers' agenda, cf. infra). The way the media frame the issue (by selecting information, mentioning certain causes, "effects" and solutions) may also have an impact on how people think about the issue, on their knowledge, attitudes and actions with regard to the "problem". As mentioned by Haddon and Stald parents, for instance, might be influenced by the news media: "For something as new and challenging as the Internet, it is likely that news stories and media values will be particularly important in contextualising how parents reflect on the issues that arise for their children and influence any decisions to monitor and mediate their children's use of the Internet, which in turn could have a bearing on children's behaviour online."[59]

2. Policymakers

The media's attention for cyberbullying might not only influence the public's agenda, but also policymakers' agenda. Policymakers may use the so-called "stick", "sermon" and "carrot" instruments to tackle a societal problem, such as cyberbullying. Their actions determine the general framework within which the other actors (e.g. schools, the police and ISPs) have to operate. They can, for instance, create new criminal laws (e.g. "anti-cyberbullying" laws), fund awareness-raising initiatives and stimulate the implementation of cyberbullying programmes in schools.

In Flanders, the Commission for Culture, Youth, Sport and the Media of the Flemish Government commissioned the first large-scale study on cyberbullying amongst youngsters in Flanders (funded by viWTA, and conducted by the University of Antwerp) in 2005. Since that date, actions against cyberbullying (and other online risks or health problems amongst youngsters) have become a priority on the policy agenda of several Ministries. For instance, the Ministry of Education has formulated ICT-related learning objectives for both primary and secondary education in Flanders. One of these objectives is that: "Pupils are able to use ICT to communicate in a safe, sensible and appropriate way."[60] Currently, the policy initiatives in the field of education focus on three aspects: (1) Strengthening the ICT-policy and infrastructure of schools, (2) Improving teachers' expertise and

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[57] Lynn 2010.

[58] Thom et al. 2011.

[59] Haddon and Stald 2009, pp. 379–380.

[60] De Craemer 2010, p. 7.

providing teaching resources and (3) Monitoring ICT infrastructure and education. The Department of Education also provides some supporting activities, such as KlasCement (an educational portal site that functions as an electronic knowledge centre, with teaching aids and software and exchanges of good practices), and the E-safety guide and website.[61] With regard to cyberbullying, specifically, the Department of Education has financed the publication and the distribution of the course pack on cyberbullying (developed by ChildFocus), and organised a colloquium (aimed at teachers). The Flemish Minister for Innovation, Government Investments, Media and Poverty, on the other hand, has announced the creation of a knowledge centre for media literacy ('Kenniscentrum Mediawijsheid'). Dealing with mental health issues amongst youngsters (such as depression, possibly caused by (cyber)bullying) is, furthermore, a key issue for the Flemish Minister of Wellbeing, Health and Family.[62] One notable similarity in the policy plans and initiatives of the three above-mentioned Ministries is their intention to stimulate the use of digital games for learning and health amongst youngsters (an idea that is also present in the above-mentioned Friendly Attack project against cyberbullying).

3. Researchers

Finally, the role of researchers should be acknowledged. To address cyberbullying adequately, thorough knowledge of the problem is necessary (cf. the idea of "evidence-based interventions"). The first scientific publications on cyberbullying appeared around 2004 (see for instance the article of Ybarra on "internet harassment").[63] Since that date, there has been an explosive growth of research in this field. International cooperation between scholars working in this domain has also been promoted by initiatives, such as the European COST action IS0801 "Cyberbullying: coping with negative and enhancing positive uses of new technologies, in relationships in educational settings". The knowledge on the phenomenon of cyberbullying should, of course, also be disseminated beyond the academic borders. Researchers have the duty to inform policymakers (and inspire the measures they undertake), and to help create awareness on cyberbullying amongst the general public (for instance, by operating as a media source or giving presentations about their research topic to the general public).

14.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we focused on cyberbullying, which is a common phenomenon amongst youngsters (especially early adolescents) and may have a serious impact on the victim's school functioning and (mental and physical) health. Since

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[61] Vlaams Parlement 2009a.

[62] Vlaams Parlement 2009b.

[63] Ybarra 2004.

cyberbullying is often an extension of traditional bullying in schools, the typical "whole-school approach" on bullying (involving different types of activities (prevention, detection and solution) and actors (students, school staff, parents and the wider community) is often considered to be a good starting point for addressing cyberbullying. However, the specific features of cyberbullying also ask for an adjustment of this traditional approach, both with regard to the content of the activities, as well as with regard to the actors involved. Knowledge on "bullying" has to be combined with knowledge on "e-safety", and apart from traditional partners, a cooperation with "new", ICT-related, actors (such as the (cyber)police, Internet Service Providers and e-safety organisations) is necessary.

Starting from an ecological view, we described in this chapter that when we ultimately want to reduce the prevalence and the impact of cyberbullying amongst youngsters, we should not only focus on modifying the knowledge, (internet) skills, attitudes, norms and (eventually) the behaviours of youngsters themselves, but also of actors constituting their (social) environment (which—through their own behaviours—modify the chances of youngsters being involved in and affected by cyberbullying).

We described what should be done on each level (by different actors) as to address cyberbullying adequately, and also mentioned what is already being done or being prepared (in Flanders). As is clear from this overview, there is still a contrast between the ideal situation and the current situation. For instance, in many schools the number of activities specifically being organised on cyberbullying prevention, detection or solution is (still) quite limited compared to the activities with regard to traditional bullying. A main reason for this is the (perceived) lack of professional support for schools in this area. A second observation holds to effectiveness and efficiency of the initiatives that are already being undertaken (in Flanders and elsewhere). Many of the awareness-raising activities (from, for instance, schools, e-safety organisations and ISPs) are not always based on (scientific) knowledge on the problem, nor evaluated in terms of their effectiveness (do they reach the goals they are designed for, i.e. increase awareness, and (in this way) influence the behaviours of the target groups?). The current shift in academic cyberbullying research from problem-focused research to research on the development and evaluation of "evidence-based" programs against cyberbullying may help to solve this problem. With regard to efficiency, it is clear that the multitude of actors involved in addressing cyberbullying has also led to a proliferation of activities. These activities often overlap with each other (e.g. several schools developed their own—but in fact a quite similar—anti-cyberbullying strategy), in other cases they are not tuned into each other (e.g. when students are being advised in a campaign to tell their parents they are being victimised, this requires that parents know what to do about cyberbullying) and sometimes even contradict each other (e.g. the police may recommend victims to "save the evidence", while school psychologists might, for instance, advice the victim to delete the hurtful contents they received). Although there is already (some) cooperation between (some) large actors (e.g. ISPs, e-safety organisations, such as Child Focus, and the

police) in the field, this cooperation should be extended (to other actors and other levels) and coordinated (e.g. by policymakers).

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