Chapter 9
Using Mixed Methods to Understand the Positive Correlation between Fear of Cyberbullying and Online Interaction

Szde Yu
Wichita State University, USA

ABSTRACT
This study examines the relationship between online interaction and fear of cyberbullying. A mixed method approach is adopted to explore not only the statistical correlation between them, but also the qualitative meaning behind this correlation. The quantitative analysis reveals a positive correlation between these two constructs, suggesting a higher level of fear of cyberbullying is associated with more frequent online interactions. Although seemingly fear of cyberbullying does not reduce online interaction, the qualitative analysis reveals how fear of cyberbullying might still impact online interaction.

INTRODUCTION
Cyberbullying can be defined as bullying that takes place using electronic technology (StopBullying.gov, n. d.), but the nature and impact of cyberbullying could be much more complex than traditional face-to-face bullying (Menesini & Nocentini, 2009; Smith, 2009). Since the case of Megan Meier in 2006 (“The Tragic Megan Meier Story,” 2015), cyberbullying has gained growing attention in the media, research, and legislation. Tragic incidents involving teenager suicide as a result of cyberbullying are not exactly rare events anymore. For instance, Jessica Logan, an 18-year-old high school student in Cincinnati, hung herself as a result of cyberbullying on social media in 2008; in 2009 13-year-old Hope Sitwell also hung herself following cyberbullying on social media; 18-year-old Tyler Clementi committed suicide due to cyberbullying after his college roommate used a webcam to stream footage of Clementi kissing another

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man; In 2012, Amanda Todd committed suicide after posting a video on YouTube entitled “My story: Struggling, bullying, suicide, self-harm.” The use of social media evidently is strongly related to the occurrence of cyberbullying as social media offer an ideal platform for bullies to target their victims (Zweig, Dank, Lachman, & Yahner, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2013). However, research suggests the use of social media is becoming more and more popular and people seem to be sharing even more personal information online nowadays (Pew Research Center, 2013). Does this mean people are not afraid of becoming a victim in cyberbullying?

To date, very little research has been directed to understand how people perceive the risk of becoming a victim in cyberbullying. Most research on cyberbullying is focused on the characteristics/predictors of the bullies and the victims, or its nature and impact (Hinduja, & Patchin, 2008; Smith et al., 2008; Schneider et al., 2012; Kowalski, & Limber, 2013; Knowalski et al., 2014). Fear of cyberbullying has not seemed to grasp many research interests. Studying fear of crime is important because it helps us understand how and why potential victims partake in risky behavior in spite of fear, and it sheds light on how such fear may or may not alter online interactions. In a recent study on fear of cybercrime (Yu, 2014), it was reported that fear of cyberbullying can be predicted by a few factors, including the perceived risk of becoming a victim, prior victimization experience, and participation in certain online activities on social media, such as online interactions and online publishing. It is noteworthy that fear of cyberbullying was found to be positively correlated with online activities on social media (Yu, 2014). This correlation suggests that frequent engagement in online interaction with others may induce a higher level of fear in terms of cyberbullying. This appears to be sensible, but conversely this correlation also suggests that a higher level of fear does not seem to deter people from engaging in online interaction. Why is that? Are people simply willing to take the risk or they are not aware of the risk? This question obviously cannot be answered by a simple quantitative approach. To date, very few studies are focused on understanding fear of cybercrime, not to mention mixed methods studies.

Accordingly, this present study was aimed to provide a more in-depth answer as to why fear of cyberbullying does not reduce online interaction. To this end, a mixed method approach was adopted. More precisely, sequential triangulation was used. As defined by Morse (1991), in sequential triangulation the results of one approach are necessary for planning the next method. In the present study, a quantitative study was conducted, followed by a qualitative study that was predicated on the results gathered from the quantitative study. In the quantitative part, a regression model was built to predict online interaction so as to confirm whether fear of cyberbullying is indeed associated with online interaction. To validate the relationship found between online interaction (i.e., the dependent variable) and fear of cyberbullying (i.e., the independent variable), several control variables were introduced, including gender, race, and age. Moreover, perceived risk of victimization, perceived seriousness of cyberbullying, and prior victimization experiences were also included in the model. These three constructs were included because research has suggested they could be confused with fear of crime, in that, they are highly related to fear of crime but conceptually they are not exactly the same as fear of crime (Lane & Fox, 2012; Chadee, Austin, & Ditton, 2007; Ferraro, 1995; Ferraro & LaGrange, 1987; Hale, 1996; LaGrange, Ferraro, & Supancic, 1992; Warr, 2000; Warr & Stafford, 1983; Yu, 2014). Including them can ensure that the relationship found between fear of cyberbullying and online interaction is not due to conceptual confusion.

Even if a statistical relationship can be found, it still does not answer the questions of why. Therefore, in addition to the quantitative part, qualitative follow-up interviews were conducted to explore the
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