Cyberbullying: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

The internet has become an integral part of modern education. Indeed, the internet has made education more approachable and ubiquitous than ever before. Despite all of the benefits that the online world has provided to children, parents, and instructors, some people exploit it for evil purposes. Cyberbullying is on the rise all over the world. In recent years, the term "cyberbullying" has gained popularity in the media, and it has been linked to several high-profile adolescent suicides. This article outlines the comprehensive overview of cyberbullying.

Keywords: anonymity; cyberbullying; cyber aggression; psychological effect; victimization

INTRODUCTION

Innovations in digital technologies facilitated communication between all parts of the world and have enabled the world to continue functioning as many jobs and services moved online, allowing people to work from home, shop online, communicate with distant family members and even attend doctors' appointment through telehealth. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed various aspects of human daily lives globally. With lockdown measures leaping around the world, our new "normal" now relies even more on digital platforms. Since March 2020, global internet usage has climbed by 50-70%. With increased connectivity, the world has also faced an escalation of the negative side of the digital space - cyber harassment as some individuals are abusing the utility of social media and use it as a fraudulent medium to bullying.

Bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. Bullying can take the form of physical contact, words or subtler actions. Cyberbullying is the use of technology to repeatedly and intentionally harass, hurt, embarrass, humiliate, or intimidate another person. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through text and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else, causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behaviour (Hinduja,2019).

According to the Second Youth Internet Safety Survey, cyberbullying among preteens and teens has increased dramatically in recent years as young people spend more time socializing online. Cyberbullying is on the rise all over the world. In recent years, the term "cyberbullying" has gained popularity in the media, and it has been linked to several high-profile adolescent suicides (Tokunaga RS 2010). In today's world, all technology produces both positive and negative outcomes. The internet is becoming an increasingly good example of this concept. While the internet has helped to better connect the world and democratize information, it has also allowed people to hide behind anonymous masks. Teens are increasingly vulnerable to the internet's "faceless evil," particularly when it comes to cyberbullying. Despite recent increases in awareness campaigns, the following cyberbullying facts and statistics show that the problem is far from over. In fact, recent research suggests that the problem may have worsened during the pandemic. E-mail, instant messaging, text messaging, social networking sites like Facebook or Tumblr, and other websites are used as platform to carry out these tasks (Pieschl, Porsch, Kahl & Klockenbusch, 2013).

Prevalence of Cyberbullying
It's difficult to estimate the prevalence of cyberbullying and cyberbullying victimization. According to the National Center for Education Statistics and the Bureau of Justice's 2019 School Crime Supplement, 16 percent of students aged 12 to 18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year were bullied online or via text. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention's 2019 Youth Risk Behaviour Surveillance System, approximately 15.7 percent of high school students were electronically bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey.

According to a study conducted in the United States involving nearly 4000 students in grades 6 to 8, 11 percent of the students had been cyberbullied victims in the previous two months, 4% had been cyberbully perpetrators, and 7% had been both a cyberbully and a cyberbully victim (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). In a 2010 Canadian study involving over 2000 students in grades 6, 7, 10, and 11, 25% said they had been the victim of cyberbullying in the previous three months. 8% said they had been a cyberbully, and 25% said they had been both a cyberbully and a cyberbully victim. The authors theorized that the rates were higher in their study because they didn't refer to the activity as "cyberbullying," but rather asked about specific behaviours (calling names, threatening, spreading rumours, and so on) (Mishna, Khoury-Kassabri, Gadalla & Daciuk, 2012).

According to the "Responsible Digital Parenting" poll conducted by cybersecurity firm Kaspersky, cyberbullying is a top concern for 51 percent of Saudi parents. This is unsurprising, given that the internet has harmed children's academic performance (40 percent), led to social isolation (36 percent), contributed to persistent stress (33 percent), and resulted in low self-esteem (31 percent), depression (28 percent), and even anorexia (14 percent) (22 percent). The survey indicated that 47 percent of children in Saudi Arabia had come across at least one kind of cyberbullying, whether they were bullies, watched their peers being tormented or were bullied themselves (Arab News, 2022)

Cyberbullying victimization by Age
Although some research has found that cyberbullying victimization can continue to rise in late adolescence, there is a curvilinear relationship among youth, with the highest participation rates occurring between 12-15 years of age Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder & Lattanner, 2014 & Tokunaga, 2010). In 2021, we discovered that cyberbullying peaks around the ages of 14 and 15, then declines through the adolescent years. With social media and gaming platforms

requiring users to be at least 13 years old, it's worth noting that one in every four (25.1%) of those very young teenagers has been cyberbullied recently (within the last 30 days) (Pichel, Foody, Norman, Feijóo, Varela & Rial, 2021).
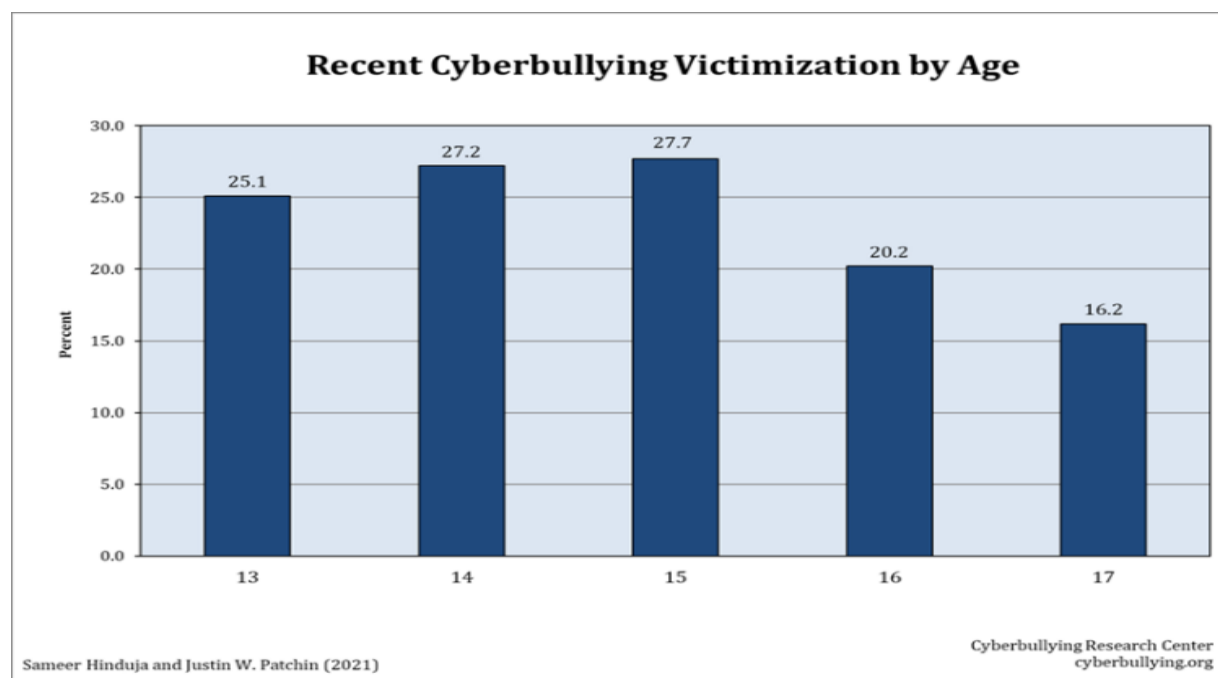
Cyberbullying and traditional bullying
In several ways, cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying. The most obvious is that it necessitates some level of technical knowledge – children who are not 'plugged in,' whether via computer, cell phone, or video games, do not engage in cyberbullying as bullies or victims. Cyberbullying also allows the bully to remain anonymous, which is not possible with traditional bullying. Bullies are unable to see their victims' reactions as a result, and studies have shown that they feel less remorse (Slonje, Smith & Frisén, 2012). Cyberbullying is opportunistic because it causes harm with little or no physical interaction, planning, or risk of being caught. Despite this, between 40% and 50% of cyberbully victims claim to know who their tormentor is (Kowalski & Limber, 2007).

Cyberbullying has the potential to be more common than traditional bullying. While traditional bullying occurs mostly at school and at home, victims of cyberbullying can be targeted anywhere, at any time, and the apparent audience is enormous. The fact that there is no supervision adds to the problem. Teachers are seen as enforcers in traditional bullying. There is no clear authority when it comes to cyberbullying, and youngsters are hesitant to tell adults for fear of losing online access or being labelled as an informer (Cassidy, Jackson & Brown, 2009). Although the connection between traditional bullying and cyberbullying is not fully known, it is clear that children who are victims of cyberbullying have a high prevalence of Internet use. Cyberbully victims were much more likely than non-cyberbully victims to be strong Internet users (>3 hours per day), according to Juvonen and Gross (2008).

Common characteristics of cyberbullies (Heaton)
• They are more likely to be introverts, underachievers, and misfits.
• They may have low self-esteem.
• They may believe they are victims themselves.
• Has a hard time expressing anger in a healthy way.

- Would prefer not to say to a person face to face what they can anonymously say online.
- Makes use of the Internet to exact revenge on others.
- Has a hard time accepting responsibility for his actions.

Types of Cyberbullying
There are many types of bullying, and the same is the case with cyberbullying, according to EndCyberBullying.org:

Harassment/Annoyance: This entails a person sending hostile and offensive content to a person, which is frequently repeated. This is also known as cyberstalking, and it entails sending threatening and insulting messages on a regular basis, which can lead to physical harassment.

Flaming: This is similar to harassment, but it more specifically refers to online fighting and disputing that takes place through messaging, email, and chat. Bullying in the public eye takes place on the internet, and it frequently comprises derogatory language and imagery.

Exclusion: This is the act of single-outing a person and excluding them from internet forums and chat rooms. The group then makes derogatory remarks about the person who has been left out.

Outing: When a cyberbully shares extremely sensitive and private information about a person, this is known as cyberbullying. It can also contain graphics and videos. An example is when an ex-boyfriend emails hundreds of people a naked picture of his ex. Alternatively, the bully may inform a large group that the victim is gay.

Masquerading: This is when a cyberbully develops a fake identity in order to harass someone anonymously. In addition, the bully may impersonate another individual and send the victim threatening texts.

Signs of being cyberbullied
There are numerous indicators that a child or adolescent is being bullied online. It is critical to recognize the warning indicators in order to take action. Bullying is something that many young people will not inform their parents about.
- When she's/he's on her phone or computer, she/he becomes furious or upset; when she gets an email or IM, she appears nervous; and when she's/he's not on her/his phone, she/he avoids talking about it.
- Withdraws from activities, hobbies, friends, and family members.
- Grades tumble for no discernible reason
- Refuses to attend school or particular lessons.
- Mood, sleep, appetite, or behaviour changes quickly (Hinduja,2019).

Psychological effects of cyberbullying
For the most part, cyberbullying has the same harmful consequences as traditional bullying. Cyberbullying, on the other hand, has its own set of impacts, sensations, and consequences for victims.

Overwhelmed: Because many people may participate in cyberbullying, being the object of it may be devastating to children and teenagers. It may appear to the child that their entire world is collapsing around them.

Vulnerable and powerless: Victims may find it difficult to feel safe. This is due to the fact that cyberbullies can virtually infiltrate a home via an electronic device or computer. They may believe that there is nowhere they can go. The fact that bullies are typically anonymous and hide behind bogus online identities and handles can compound this. It's possible that the children or teenagers have no clue who has chosen them as a target.

Humiliation: Because the nasty remarks are preserved online, cyber bullying has a sense of permanence. Negative articles, photos, and comments can also be quickly disseminated with a broad audience. Because of the accessibility of sharing, practically everyone in a school can be made aware of a nasty post or photo.

Dissatisfaction/Displeasure: Cyber bullies frequently target a person's most vulnerable region. As a result, victims may begin to believe they are worthless. It's possible that they'll hurt themselves. For example, if a teen girl gets mocked for being "big" on Facebook, she may starve herself to lose weight.

Anger/Rage: Victims may become enraged and begin plotting vengeance and reprisal. This is rarely suggested because it might be a terrible experience for the victim.

Lack of interest: Victims of cyberbullying may no longer be able to relate to others in the same way. Many of them may feel as if their lives are meaningless, and they may have lost interest in family, friends, and hobbies. Suicidal ideation and depression are both possibilities.

Anxiety and depression: Because cyberbullying damages victims' self-confidence and self-esteem, they may become sad and nervous.

Physical Illness: Cyberbullying's stress can have a physical impact. Headaches, nausea, insomnia, stomach ulcers, and acne are all possible side effects. They may also experience nightmares, which can cause insomnia and other health issues.

Suicide: Cyberbullying has the potential to lead to suicide in the worst-case scenario. Children who are often bullied online or through text messages may feel compelled to take dramatic measures to escape the agony and shame (Gordon, 2017).

Cyberbullying Prevention
Teens can protect themselves against cyberbullying by taking a few basic measures. You can protect yourself and others from cyberbullying by adhering to these guidelines (Hinduja, 2015).
- Be aware of the dangers of cyberbullying and educate yourself on the subject. It is critical to have a thorough understanding of what constitutes cyberbullying and how it spreads. A smart place to begin is by reading this article. It's time to educate your pals on what cyberbullying is and how to avoid being a victim of it. Emphasize the dangers of cyberbullying.
- Keep track of all the passwords you use. In order to protect your social media and e-mail accounts, you must safeguard your passwords. Your passwords should never be exposed by leaving them in plain sight. Never divulge your password to a third party.
- Take only clear photographs. Unless you'd be fine with the rest of the world seeing it, don't email seductive or nude photographs of yourself to someone else. Nude images are frequently used by bullies as the centrepiece of their cyberbullying, which may be quite upsetting for the victim.

- Never respond to unwanted email. Emails, texts, and other communications from strangers should never be opened. Do not keep or read them. They could contain a virus that steals your personal information by infecting your electronic equipment.
- Make sure you log out of your internet accounts. On a phone, tablet, or PC, you don't want anyone else to be able to impersonate you. On a public computer, it's typical for people to forget to log out of their Facebook accounts.
- Consider your words carefully before you post them. Make sure that you don't post anything online that could harm your reputation. People form opinions about you based on information that is publicly available.
- Make sure your privacy is protected. If you want to keep your social media accounts private, you should only allow your closest friends to see them. Most popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, allow you to limit who can see your private information. But you'll need to spend some time configuring these privacy restrictions to get the most out of them.
- As a general rule, don't post or discuss any personal information about yourself or your family members on social media.
- Do your own Google search. Cyberbullies may utilize information about you that can be found by conducting regular searches for your name on Google. Remove it before it gets out of hand.
- Do not engage in cyberbullying. Learn to treat others the way you would like to be treated.
- As one of the most crucial measures to eliminate cyberbullying, it's also important to refuse to pass along any communications that bully others. Tell your friends to avoid cyberbullying, and if they are being bullied, contact an adult.

Current initiatives taken in Saudi Arabia to raise awareness on cyberbullying
With the help of more than 70 partners from the governmental, corporate, and non-profit sectors, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has started a campaign to increase awareness about cyberbullying and strategies to prevent it. The goal of the program is to educate parents about cyberbullying and how their children are exposed to it in the digital environment. Bullying's impact on a child's mental health will also be highlighted in the program. It also aims to promote awareness of cyberbullying in the context of the growing use of electronic platforms, such as video games and social media. The campaign aims to influence bullies' behaviour by educating youngsters about the different types of cyberbullying and sending out messages to parents about the benefits of video games. (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2022).

CONCLUSION
Cyberbullying is both a people and behaviour issue that requires action from all main stakeholders, including parents, adolescents, children, school authorities, and other accountable persons in positions of responsibility and influence. Education and public intervention are frequently the most effective ways to lessen and even eliminate the plague of cyberbullying in society. Cyberbullying must be understood by all parents, children, and teenagers, as well as the costs and consequences, as well as who is most likely to partake in it and become a victim. Cyberbullying is immoral, and there are ways to combat it. Parents must always be on the watch for cyberbullying among younger generations in their family and community, and school administrators and politicians must take appropriate action when possible to curb bullying conduct. We can prevent cyberbullying by working together to make the internet a positive force and uniting people together.

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