

Cyberbullying: unraveling the motives of a cyberbully and its impact on the victim

Asmita Sharma^{1*}

ABSTRACT

Internet and information technology systems are becoming a normal part of daily life for children, teens, adults, and even the elderly. Hence, we all have started living in a world that is technologically driven, not just teens, but adults too are addicted to the use of mobile phones and the Internet. The Internet has played a significant role in connecting the entire world and even people who live across continents. Today's era has been shaped differently by technology, new age issues have emerged, and therefore it gave rise to cyberbullying also. Simply put, cyberbullying refers to the abuse of information technology which aims at the harassment of other individuals. Cyberbullying consequently takes several forms; this does not necessarily mean hacking or posing of someone else's profiles. It also involves sharing derogatory remarks or spreading rumors about someone. Also, cyberbullying has risen dramatically over the last ten years (Kyriacou & Zuin, 2016). Hence the present research will be supported by previous researches on cyberbullying and will also delve deeper into the motives of cyberbullies and how the victims are affected by cyberbullying.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Internet, Digital, Mobile Phones, Online

***M**y pain may be the reason for someone's laughter. But I would never laugh when someone is suffering.*

- Charlie Chaplin.

Today's generation is growing up in a world that gives instant access to a massive amount of information almost everywhere. All is possible with a single click. People have access to a wide variety of internet and social media that allow them to communicate develop and interact with each other. Internet and mobile technologies have provided teenagers with new forms of socializing, but have also made possible new types of negative encounters known as cyberbullying (Tokunaga, 2010; Palermi et al., 2017). Hence cyberbullying means insulting, intimidating, threatening, or otherwise harming others by sending or uploading offensive or humiliating messages, pictures, or videos on the Internet without permission (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Cyberbullying can be more dangerous than traditional forms of abuse due to a much broader online audience (Strom & Strom, 2005).

¹B.A, Department of Psychology, DAV College, Chandigarh, India

*Responding Author

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In the initial periods of cyberbullying, conventional bullying has long been a profoundly rooted issue in schools around the world (Roland & Isdoe, 2001). Bullying is a form of harassment, both verbal and physical, often leading to self-doubt, depression, and suicide. Therefore, bullying is not a new phenomenon, but with the advent of the Internet, it was just a matter of time before the bullies made their way to this newer and opportunistic platform. With devices such as smartphones and laptops, bullies were able to do their evil deeds with anonymity at a huge amount of space between them and their victims. A study found that 32% of students were victims of both cyberbullying and traditional bullying, while 26% of students harassed others in both the digital world and the natural environment. (Erdur-Baker's, 2010)

Cyberbullying has become so common for several different reasons, one of which is that it provides a convenient way to harass others, as the victim's reactions remain hidden (Shariff, 2010). The other explanation is that bullies are usually instigators in nature and virtual space, that the anonymity of cyberbullying leads students to become cyberbully but in reality, they would not harass anyone by traditional bullying (Poland, 2010).

In the Indian context, the possibility of cyberbullying is worrying and the evaluation and prevention of cyberbullying become even more urgent due to growing access to technology, cheap internet plans, and politicians actively pursuing and promoting the "Digital India" dream. Today, the vast majority of the population has access to the Internet from a computer, or mostly from mobile devices. The most vulnerable in this demographic are children and teens, who are brought into cyberspace before they can even properly make psychological sense of it. In 2012 Microsoft's Global Youth Online Behaviour Survey ranked India third in cyber-bullying, with 53% of respondents, mostly children admitting having faced online abuse, dropping behind only China and Singapore.

Cyberbullying is an online problem that needs to be dealt with offline, and as Theodore Roosevelt popularly said, "Knowing what's right doesn't make a big difference unless you do what's right," simply recognizing cyberbullying as a problem isn't enough. It is also crucial that mental health practitioners use their vital experience in formulating and implementing school and community-wide approaches to cyberbullying prevention.

REASONS BEHIND A PERSON TO BECOME CYBERBULLY

Several studies have indicated that increased bullying of others is motivated by self-reported objectives of high status, dominance, and popularity, particularly among teenagers and adolescent males (Ciucci & Baroncelli, 2014). Besides, this has been found that proactively aggressive individuals, such as bullies, are more likely to be characterized by a lack of empathy and guilt (Ciucci & Baroncelli, 2014). Furthermore some of the main motives are as follows:-

Cyberbullies are out for vengeance - Cyberbullying may be motivated by vengeance (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Sanders, 2009). When people are bullied, they frequently seek revenge instead of dealing with the situation in healthy ways. The motive for these victims of abuse is to retaliate for the trauma they have experienced. As an action in response to any perceived harm or wrongdoing by another group or individual intended to inflict damage, injury, pain, or retribution on the party judged to be responsible (Aquino, Bies, & Tripp, 2001). Cyberbullies want someone to know what they have felt and later feel justified in doing so. And they also attack who they consider being weaker or more vulnerable than they are. Hence, revenge is a retaliatory measure in which people seek satisfaction and try to restore justice (Govier, 2002; Gollwitzer, 2009).

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Anonymity - One of the main factors for cyberbullying is the anonymity of the crime, which can be committed in front of a wide audience and at the same time allow the perpetrator to remain anonymous (Sticca & Perren, 2013, von Marées & Petermann, 2012). This is a central aspect of cyberbullying, which can be harmful to the victim, and promotes a sense of inhibition of the victim since there is a greater probability that they can escape from the punishment (Snakenborg et al., 2011). This was stated by Ybarra & Mitchell (2004) that anonymity associated with online communications would replace many aspects of socially acceptable roles, allowing the Internet to serve as a possible equalizer of violent acts. Indeed, one study by Mishna et al. (2009) showed that students assumed that the Internet has generated opportunities for everyone to be a bully and that students who are too hesitant to be bully in real life " they might be a cyberbully.

Anger/frustration - Anger is a common emotion shared by victims and bullies, both in physical and electronic forms of violence. While cyber-bullying and conventional bullying are taking place in a different and unique setting, there is a general agreement among researchers that they work in very similar ways, including the aggressiveness that characterizes online and offline harassment, and the disparity of physical, social, emotional, or psychological power between the bully and the victim. Also, the behavior is consistently shown to harm another person (Olweus, 2013). Grading, Strohmeier, & Spiel (2012) found indignation to be the most common motive for cyberbullying. Children with highly psychologically manipulating parents will also participate more frequently in aggressive and socially abusive activities such as gossip, undermining the social credibility of others, and attempting to end friendships (Soenens et al., 2008), activities that are common to cyber-bullying.

EFFECTS ON THE VICTIM

Cyberbullying and social experiences - As Chadha, Fernandes, & Sanyal (2015) have noted, "Cyberbullying can be a traumatic experience for children who are targeted. In reality, misery, hurt and agony victims are subject to almost every outlook of their lives, leaving them to feel lonely, isolated, threatened, depressed, and anxious". The impact of cyberbullying on victims can be seen differently from one survivor to the next. Furthermore, even after the abuse has stopped, victims have been struggling for a long time to recover (Chadha et al., 2015). Cyberbullying literature also indicates that victims typically have psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, isolation, low self-esteem, social alienation, school phobias, and poor academic performance (DeHue et al., 2008; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Grene, 2003; Juvonen et al., 2003; Rivituso, 2012; Varghese & Pistole, 2017; Akcil, 2018), among others. Hence low self-esteem, family issues, school violence, and delinquent conduct (Webber & Ovedovitz, 2018), causes them to experience suicidal thoughts as a means of escape from torture (Ghadampour, 2017).

Cyberbullying and academic achievement - The consequences of cyberbullying also apply to the classroom. From an academic point of view, cyberbullying may have detrimental consequences on the victims due to the social nature of the school (Kaur & Kaur, 2016). Besides, empirical studies have shown that cyberbullying causes emotional and physiological harm to defenseless victims (Faryadi, 2011) as well as psychosocial issues, including improper conduct, consuming alcohol, smoking, depression, and low academic commitment (Walker et al., 2011). Therefore higher levels of cyber victimization are worsening students ' self-esteem and academic achievement (Kaur & Kaur, 2016). As

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victims of cyberbullying are already under great emotional stress and are unable to focus on their studies, thus their academic success is adversely affected (Faryadi, 2011).

Cyber-bullying and suicide - "Words scar, rumors ruin, and bullies kill" there are many people who die as a result of bullying, and the victims are usually from the age group 8 to 18 years old. Students who have encountered bullying or cyberbullying are almost 2 times more likely to commit suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018). The experience of bullying and cyberbullying is also linked to the development of low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, family issues, academic problems, delinquent behavior, school violence, and suicidal thoughts/attempts (Hinduja, 2018). The findings of the study showed that victims of cyberbullying and school-based abuse had a substantially higher risk of suicidal ideation, intentions, and attempts compared to those who had not witnessed such threats (Sampasa-Kanyinga, Roumeliotis, & Xu 2014).

Suggestions

As Individuals:-

- Under no conditions should you post any of your details on the Internet. This includes your name, address, telephone number, or any other personal details, such as where you work or attend school.
- Do not send pictures of yourself to someone on the Internet unless they are a personal friend or family member.
- Never unveil or submit any of your passwords online.
- You should report or block the bully.
- If you want to meet someone you've met on the Internet, take a friend or family member with you, and meet in a public location. At the very least, make sure your friends and family know where you're going and by what time you'll be coming back home.
- Do not open email attachments from unknown sources. They can contain viruses that could damage your machine.

By the Government:

There is no specific law dealing with cyber-bullying as a crime in India, but some sections of the Information Technology Act, 2000; the Indian penal code, 1860, and the Child Protection from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 deal with similar issues and may fall within the scope of cyber-bullying.

- Section 66A of the revised IT Act deals with such offenses. Sending any message (through a computer or a communication module) that is grossly offensive or has a threatening character — any communication that he/she knows to be false, but to cause anguish, discomfort, and criminal intimidation under the current Indian IT / Cyber / Criminal Laws — is punishable by a fine and the person is in prison for up to 3 years.
- Section 67: Publication or transmission of indecent images in digital platform
- Section 67A: Publication or transmission in electronic form of content involving sexually explicit acts, etc.
- Section 66E: Punishment for invasion of privacy

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act) protects children under the age of 18 from all types of sexual abuse, sexual harassment and pornography,

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including any form of sexual cyber-bullying that is punishable under the provisions of this Act.

Examining the laws that are prevalent in tackling this rampantly growing cyber-bullying crime, there is an urgent need for 'relevant legislation' to be in effect. In this regard, it is important to note that the Ministry of Human Resources, having recognized the seriousness of cyber-bullying, has instructed all schools and colleges to create anti-ragging committees.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has also issued special regulations called the 'UGC Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions 2009'.

The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has also developed a comprehensive set of guidelines. The content of the guidelines notes that students are expected to report "immediately on-line abuse" to teachers, parents, or anyone they trust. In addition to this, the guidelines also clearly states that academic institutions must use built-in filters to control and prevent cyber-bullying/harassment.

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Conflict of Interest

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