

Cyberbullying in the 21st Century: A Rising Threat to Youth in Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

In the modern time, where anything can be accessed with a single click, social media has become more and more important in today's environment. The Internet has had a significant influence on everyone's life, and it goes without saying that young people make up the majority of internet users. The youth of the present time are living a digital life with the internet technology. It provides various comforts to its users. No doubt internet technology has provided us lot of benefits; however, it also operates as a breeding environment for certain undesirable behaviours, one example of such undesirable behaviour is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is the misuse of technology with the intention to harass and harm others. Due to the fact that it is a common problem among youngster and has more harmful effects than expected. It has many negative consequences on its victims such as stress, anxiety, social dissatisfaction, negative school attitude and in some cases substances abuse, depression, physical harm, mental strain and in extreme cases suicide also. That is the reasons why it is treated as the disease in the 21st century. The tragic events and increased incidence of this new kind of bullying have therefore made researchers, educators, government officials, and parents aware of its severe ramifications. The main aim of this paper is to highlight cyberbullying and its expected consequences on the youngsters in the present digital age.

Keywords: *Internet, Youngster, Cyberbullying, Consequences, Depression, Digital age, and Self esteem*

The modern era is characterized by science and technology, and the Internet has grown immensely popular on a global basis. Each user will be able to receive information with a single click, thereby eliminating the requirement to visit a particular site to do. In the past few years the use of internet and cellular phones has grown rapidly. Individuals may now connect with one another easily, efficiently, and affordably because of the widespread use of these electronic communication technologies. Many people now spend large portion of their social lives using these electronic gadgets. Since the introduction of cell phones and the ability to access the internet from anywhere in the world, human technology has improved and become more modern than ever. Children have been reported to use the internet more than 30 hours each week. They therefore see the internet as a necessary component of their daily lives (Bourassa, 2012). However, there are both

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advantages and disadvantages to digital culture. Cyberbullying and other forms of cyber violence are such unfavourable effect. Internet is thus extremely dangerous.

The youth of the present times frequently use digital platforms as an extension of their offline life, using them to check up with friends and discuss school, homework, or weekend plans. Internet forums can give young people a place to talk about subjects that might be more difficult in real life. One of the main forces behind globalisation is the internet, which enables all forms of communication and keeps everyone connected. One advantage of this is the fact that the internet's infrastructure may be used in several ways. For instance, following lessons online, communicating with some distant cousins, or purchasing online. Yet, anything that has a beneficial side can also have a detrimental side. Being online is one of the drawbacks of the digital world and its anonymity thereby making other people's lives miserable. This phenomenon is called cyberbullying.

Defining Cyberbullying

Several researchers define cyberbullying as bullying that occurs when someone or a group of individuals purposefully causes the target of the bullying to suffer physical or emotional harm on a regular basis while using a computer, smartphone, or other electronic device (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Shariff & Gouin, 2005, Willard, 2006). Cyberbullying is subject to various misconceptions. The age range during which cyberbullying occurs is the first one. To be clear, in this paper the researchers is going to talk about only cyberbullying, not cyberstalking or cyber harassment. According to Aftab (2011), there is a distinction between these phrases since cyberbullying involves minors, whereas cyber harassment or cyberstalking involves an adult. According to Dooley et al. (2009) & Van de Bosch & Cleemput (2009), cyberbullying entails the power of being anonymous, the power of assuming a false identity, the power of spreading rumors and lying to a wide audience, and the power of 24/7 accessibility to harass a victim anywhere and anytime.

The second misconception is that there are two types of cyberbullying: direct and indirect. Sending messages to the victim directly is how Aftab (2011) defines direct cyberbullying. Using someone else to carry out your malicious deeds on your behalf is referred to as indirect cyberbullying or cyberbullying via proxy (Aftab, 2011). According to Aftab, cyberbullying by proxy poses a greater risk because it can involve adults. Indirect cyberbullying, on the other hand, is possibly more closely tied to cyber harassment than genuine bullying because, as the researcher just mentioned, based on Aftab (ibid), regard cyberbullying as something occurring primarily between children.

Willard (2007) identified seven basic types of typical cyberbullying: **Flaming** is the act of sending venomous, crude, and offensive words about someone to a group online or directly to them via email or other text messaging. **Online harassment:** sending a person nasty emails or other text messages on a regular basis. This behaviour could place someone in a challenging predicament or perhaps result in really embarrassing circumstances. **Cyberstalking:** Online harassment or intimidation that makes direct threats of harm. The victim's defenses may become less effective with ongoing cyberstalking. **Denigration** (put-downs): sending hurtful, false, or vicious remarks about someone to others or publishing such information online. **Masquerade:** it means sending or uploading something that disparages a person while posing as that person. **Outing:** sending or publishing content — including sharing private messages or photographs — about someone that contains delicate, private, or embarrassing information. **Exclusion:** Ruthlessly eliminating someone from a

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group on the internet. A person who is shut out of the communication environment experiences emotional harm and a sense of isolation.

Cyberbullying: An Internet Assault

The act of hurting someone or a group through the use of information or communication technologies is known as cyberbullying. It was once a topic of conversation in Europe and North America, but it is now a global problem. Bullying is not a recent phenomenon, but "traditional bullying" is now being supplanted with cyberbullying. In the twenty-first century, there are more people who are vulnerable to cyberbullying due to the rising usage of the Internet, mobile devices especially, social media. Cyberbullying in this sense can include attempts to spread private information through fictitious identities, angry or disrespectful communications, mocking, teasing, intimidating, or other behaviors. Cyberbullying is a form of bullying where technology is used to send hated messages, mean jokes, threats, embarrassing and inappropriate images, aggressive and rude texts, with the intention of hurting, harassing, or upsetting someone else. Because it can happen anywhere there is a phone and internet connectivity, it is also referred to as online bullying or internet bullying.

Cyberbullying is bullying using technology. It occurs when someone is purposefully and repeatedly embarrassed or harmed over an electronic medium, like the internet or a cell phone. It is widespread, particularly among young people and adolescents. Cyberbullying can involve taunting, calling someone names, making threats, offensive remarks, put-downs, and rumors. In fact, it can encompass anything done with the intent to humiliate, shock, frighten, or exclude the target of the bullying. Together with words, cyberbullies frequently employ pictures and videos. They may operate covertly, keeping their identity a secret. Technology is accessible to everyone and is pervasive in the world of today and the twenty-first century. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have made these forms of bullying common to all.

According to many organisations, India is one of the world's most rapidly developing nations. The IT sector, which is continuously expanding, ranks India second in the world in daily internet usage. Cybercrimes are on the rise, along with the cyber network. People have the ability to threaten, extort, and intimidate others online while remaining anonymous since the internet and social media are so easily available. Everyone is aware of the latest cyberbullying incident involving P.V. Sindhu. It is unimaginable that the two-time Olympian medallist, Khel Ratna winner, and one of the strongest women in the world are victims of cyberbullying. Every day, many women suffer as a result of this crime. This is sometimes used as harassment against students by their own family members. Those in need of assistance must be made aware of this important issue. When online harassment is not addressed and is not punished, it can lead to a culture of cyberbullying that encourages victims to seek retaliation and turn become bullies themselves, which exacerbates the issue.

Cyberbullying: A Disease of the 21st Century

The constant increment in the cases of cyberbullying is a glaring example of how modern technology is double-edged and constantly balancing hazards and potential (Walrave & Heirman, 2011). Although there was no such thing as cyberbullying ten years ago, the issue is now widely recognised as the disease of the twenty-first century. Cyberbullies did not need to be physically fit or quick; all they need is a cell phone or computer and the urge to intimidate others. Cyberbullies can be anyone, and they typically have little concern for confronting their victims in person. In fact, students who ordinarily wouldn't bully in the

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traditional sense might start cyberbullying due to the anonymity of the practise (Poland, 2010). With over 66% of ninth grade students were able to access the Internet from their bedrooms, the number of kids and teenagers who use the Internet at home is fast increasing, from pictures shared online to cloud-stored records. Young people are currently the most connected age group, with one in three internet users worldwide being a child or adolescent. Due to their parents' and/or families' online sharing of images, many children already have digital footprints before they can walk or talk.

The terrible by-product of adolescent hostility and technological communication is cyberbullying, and its increase raises alarming issues (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Adolescents have begun receiving their own personal phones from their parents at a fairly young age—around 11 or 12. The parents' justification is that their children have to travel to distant parts of the city for lessons and tutoring. By providing them with a phone, they may easily communicate with their children. Nevertheless, this made the children phone addicts and being targets of cyberbullying. It is now challenging to tell the youngsters to stop using the internet and phones because of their increased usage. Cyberbullying can still be controlled, though. Numerous educational institutions, including schools, have started taking action to combat cyberbullying. The teachers' increased online presence is one of the simplest strategies schools have used to stop cyberbullying.

Modalities for Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a behaviour that can take place in a variety of ways. Social networking sites are currently the most widely used platforms for cyberbullying (Kowalski, Limber & Agatson, 2012). By sending angry or threatening texts or embarrassing pictures or videos to other people, bullies can instantly reach a large audience. Cyberbullying affects teenagers more frequently than it does the elderly. 10.3% of 15 to 18-year-olds reported experiencing one or more forms of cyberbullying in 2012, according to the Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), compared to fewer than 1% of those over the age 65 (CBS, 2013). Teenagers use the internet more frequently and are more involved on social media platforms. Social media is used by almost all people aged 15 to 18, while only one in six people over 65 have access to it (CBS, 2013). For those aged 15 to 18, cyberbullying has climbed to 11.4% (CBS, 2016).

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The most effective predictors of cyber victim were externalising behaviours. Parents, educators, and psychologists will be able to implement intervention and preventive measures if they are more aware of how technology is being used as a tool for bullying and can identify any possible issues related to cyberbullying and victimization. (Calvete, et al. (2008) found a substantial correlation between cyberbullying and proactive aggression, exposure to violence, justification of violence, and perceived social support from friends. Envy, prejudice towards others and intolerance for people with disabilities, religion, gender, shame, pride, guilt, and wrath are other causes of cyberbullying. (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009). Another significant factor contributing to cyberbullying is peer pressure. In these situations, teens attempt to intimidate others in order to blend in with a friend group. They frequently become motivated to copy what those around them are doing and start doing the same. In addition, youths who are power-hungry may engage in cyberbullying to demonstrate their dominance over others as a means of demonstrating social status. Cyberbullying unquestionably causes students' and teenagers' stress levels to rise. According to a study, 32% of children who have been the targets of cyberbullying say they have had at least one

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stress symptom. Teenagers experience feelings of embarrassment, alienation, rage, and helplessness in addition to stress.

Cyberbullying and Digital Risks: Digital technology has a huge potential to help young people with some of their developmental issues. On the other hand, the negative effects of the digital wave put young people's privacy at risk since they can lack the levels of digital literacy that was needed to evaluate and implement protective measures. As a result, children are exposed to digital threats including cyberbullying, sexting, and hazardous user-generated content whenever the more time they spend online. To better protect them, it's critical to determine which child are most susceptible to online dangers and compulsive browsing. Young people's lives are also changed by the threats and pressures brought on by the digital world. However, peer bullying is still widespread, and because social media is so pervasive, bullying can continue outside of schools and can even be done in secret. The rapid creation and dissemination of offensive messages or comments, the spreading of rumors, the exclusion of victims from online groups, and other forms of cyberbullying are similar to traditional forms of bullying. They can lead to a variety of negative outcomes, such as depressive symptoms, substance use, ideation, and suicide attempts (Bottino et al., 2015).

Victims of cyberbullying may experience depression, anxiety, or other conditions associated to stress. The additional burden of dealing with cyberbullying on a regular basis might steal their feelings of happiness and joy. It could also increase your feelings of loneliness and anxiety. Depressive mood is accessed through feelings of anger, confusion, tiredness, tension, and mood states of fury. Depression is a serious illness that affects daily life, academic performance, and social interaction (Miller, 2007). Also, research has shown a correlation between the severity of depression in young people who encounter cyber victimization and the volume and intensity of cyberbullying. On the other hand, youths who reported being victims of traditional or cyberbullying to any degree also showed higher levels of depression than those who did not Wang & colleagues (2019). Also, the frequency and seriousness of cyberbullying episodes have endangered the mental and physical well-being of minors and adolescents. Negative effects such as psychosomatic problems (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006), antisocial actions (Low & Espelage, 2013), and suicide thoughts have been described by victims.

Many victims of cyberbullying will become agitated over what is occurring to them. Actually, studies show that wrath is the most typical response to cyberbullying (followed by being upset and worried). Some abused minors might even plot their retribution and take revenge. This tactic is dangerous not just because of the difficulties they could encounter, but also because it could keep them mired in the bully-victim cycle. When minor experience cyberbullying, it might occasionally be too much for them to even contemplate attending school. Children frequently skip class or behave in ways that result in suspension as a result. People who had experienced cyberbullying said they had two or more suspensions or detentions the year before.

CONCLUSION

Technology has enabled the internet to cross all geographical boundaries. The internet is used for good, but also for bad. As discussed throughout this article, one of its bad aspects is cyberbullying. Nowadays, sharing private data and images online is standard practice. Because they make people more vulnerable to cybercrimes like identity theft, cyberbullying, and stalking, these online activities put people at serious risk. Researchers, academics, and

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professionals need to thoroughly investigate the area because offenders have access to this material online at any time and from any location. Investigation and punishment of cyber offenders can be fairly challenging, which is a significant obstacle in the research of internet crimes. Due to the persistent lack of protection rules in the domain of cybercrime, victims of such crimes may also choose not to report the incidence or may fail to receive assistance. This can be linked to the fact that policy makers and law enforcement officials frequently wrestle with how to enforce these laws and the associated punishments.

Cyberbullying needs to be taken seriously, and involving the community can assist to prevent more serious problems. Both victims and abusers should have access to counselling services. To assist the victims, the police, schools, parents, and psychologists can all work together. Cyber hooligans prey on other people's personalities, and it is challenging to carry out this type of crime without internet connection. Due to fear and embarrassment, victims of cyberbullying typically avoid discussing it with their parents, teacher's, or even friends.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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