

## Prevalence of Cyberbullying and Cyber Victimization among Students in Jammu

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out the extent of cyberbullying and cyber victimization perceived by the students. It also aims to examine the differences between cyberbullying and cyber victimization among college and school students. Using a purposive sampling technique, data were collected from 450 students (225 each from colleges and schools) in Jammu. The Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey Instrument was used. In addition, demographic details and information regarding internet usage were obtained. Independent samples t-test, mean, frequency, and percentage were calculated. The results indicate significantly higher cyberbullying and cyber victimization among school students than college students. Cyberbullying and cyber victimization are perceived and reported by students from colleges as well as schools. Implications for the school management, parents, and counsellors are discussed.

**Keywords:** *Adolescents, Cyberbullying, Cyber Victimization, Social Media, Students*

Cyberbullying has become an increasingly important topic in academic research due to its rising frequency and serious problems. Thakur (2025) has reported that in India, the highest global rates (37%) for cyberbullying are in the age group 13 to 17 years. According to Hinduja and Patchin (2024a), nearly 10 to more than 40% of young people, depending on age, experience cyberbullying. At the global level, children and adolescents have been reported to have experienced cyber victimization between 13.99% to 57.5%, and cyberbullying perpetration between 6.0% and 46.3% (Zhu et al, 2021). Within India, Maurya et al. (2022) reported an increase in the incidence of cyberbullying victimization, too. Ranjith et al. (2023) have reported a high prevalence of cyber-victimization and cyber-offending among adolescents in India. It is evident that cyberbullying influences not only adolescent school students but also the academic, social, and emotional development of students in higher education (Peled, 2019). Recently, scholars have focused on defining, assessing, and exploring the complex aspects of cyberbullying, highlighting its features, prevalence, and effects, particularly among adolescents (e.g., Ranjith et al., 2023; Vijayarani et al., 2024).

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Cyberbullying denotes willful and repeated harm done to a person usually via computers, phones, and other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2024b). Cybervictimization is defined as targeting a person using negative comments in a cyber context as a result of adolescent aggression and electronic cooperation (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Cyber victimization can be manifested in different ways, viz, visual, oral-written, social exclusion, and impersonation. Cyberbullying behaviour includes posting rumors, threats, sexual remarks, revealing the victim's personal information, or pejorative labels, including hate speech, etc. Anonymity, strength differential, and power imbalance are the main characteristics of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is a host to mental health concerns and is hazardous (Vijayarani et al., 2024). Hinduja & Patchin (2024b) revealed that cyberbullying victimization develops psychological distress and negative feelings such as anger, frustration, shame, fear, increased anxiety, depression, emotional problems, stress, loneliness, and moral disengagement. The consequences of cyberbullying victimization among adolescents include psychological distress and negative feelings such as anger, frustration, shame, and fear (Hinduja & Patchin, 2024b). Furthermore, being a perpetrator has been linked to poor psychological well-being (Santre, 2021). The victims of cyberbullying are at risk of self-harm and suicidal tendencies (Pooja & Vats, 2023). They may also experience physical health problems. Adolescents who have been cyberbullied exhibit greater displaced aggression, which in turn has a long-term effect on the mental health of adolescents (Lee et al., 2025).

Numerous factors have been associated with cyberbullying, such as time spent online, having few friends, and poor parental education (Farrington et al., 2023). Extant research shows that as children and adolescents age, their increased use of computers, integration into social media, and exposure to digital devices heighten their cyberbullying risk (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). Extant research indicates that those who are cyberbullied often retaliate and become bullies themselves (Ding et al., 2025). In a similar vein, Jankowiak et al. (2024) reported that victims are more likely to engage in cyberbullying. While victimization can lead to perpetration, other contributing factors include personality traits (Schade et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020), loneliness (Fang et al., 2022; Iorga et al., 2022), and low self-esteem (Azami & Taremian, 2021). Notably, cybervictimization becomes a vicious cycle that affects emotions that further develop the risk of victimization (Morea & Calvete, 2022).

The prevalence of cyberbullying in India provides an alarming picture (Vijayarani et al., 2024). A study by Child Fund India in five Kerala districts highlighted the rise of online blackmail, coercion, bullying, and sexual exploitation, highlighting a need for urgent intervention (D'souza, 2025). However, so far, only a few steps to curb the menace of cyberbullying have been implemented in educational institutions in India (Kaur & Saini, 2022). Hence, it should be dealt with urgency. Despite a lot of research on cyberbullying having been done, it still appears to be developing (Strohmeier & Gradinger, 2022). Thus, more research should be undertaken on cyberbullying. As such, it is a problem of import and requires a thorough understanding. Therefore, we have designed this study to understand the scenario of cyberbullying and cybervictimization among young students and adolescent students studying in schools and colleges in Jammu (a city in North India).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### *Objectives*

1. To assess the prevalence of cyberbullying and cyber victimization among students in Jammu.
2. To examine the differences between school students and college students with respect to cyberbullying and cyber victimization.

### *Hypotheses*

- **H1.** Cyberbullying and cyber victimization do exist among school and college students in Jammu.
- **H2.** There is a significant difference in cyberbullying between school students and college students.
- **H3.** There is a significant difference in cyber victimization between school students and college students.

### *Participants*

A total of 450 students formed a final sample of the study. The sample comprised 380 (84.4 %) female and 70 (15.6 %) male participants. There were 172 (76.4%) females and 53 (23.6%) males from schools. Two hundred and eight females and 17 males (92.4% and 7.6 % respectively) were from the colleges. The age range of the overall sample was 16 to 31 years (mean age = 20.51 years). In case of college students, the age range was 20 to 31 years (mean age=24.46 years), whereas it was 16 to 18 years (mean age=16.56 years) for school students.

Regarding the use of the internet, 157 (70%) college students reported using it for educational purposes, 34 (15%) for shopping, and 34 (15%) for social interaction via social media. On the contrary, only 122 (54%) school students use it for educational purposes, 27 (12%) for shopping, and 60 (34%) spend time on social media. Thus, the school students are at higher risk of cyberbullying others and experiencing cyber victimization because they are more likely to come in contact with others through social media.

### *Procedure*

This study used a cross-sectional explorative design. The data were collected from 450 students from Jammu. We used purposive sampling and obtained a sample of 225 participants from higher secondary schools and 225 from the colleges. The participants were required to respond to the questionnaires, provide demographic information (age, gender, and whether they were studying in a college or school), and provide information for the purpose of internet usage. The permission for data collection was obtained from the head of the respective school and college. Thereafter, on the designated day and time, the researchers approached the students while they were in the institution. The rapport was established, and the purpose of the study was explained. In addition, the ethical concerns were explicated. The students were told that their responses would be kept confidential and that privacy would be maintained. Thereafter, an informed consent form was given to the students. Choice was given to exit from the study at any time without penalty. Hence, voluntary participation was secured. The following day, the questionnaires were administered. The instructions were given clearly. Care was taken that the students did not copy the responses from others. Before collecting the questionnaires, they were checked for completeness. Overall, we received 470 filled questionnaires, of which 20 were removed for the inconsistent responses.

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### Materials

To assess the cyberbullying behaviour and cybervictimization among students, the Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey Instrument developed by Hinduja and Patchin (2024b) was used. This scale is divided into two parts. The first part measures cyber victimization, comprising 9 statements. The first statement is global in nature, assessing the subject's experience of cyber victimization. The other eight statements measure various forms of cyber victimization that occur. The second part of the scale measures cyberbullying behaviour, comprising 9 items, with the first global and the other eight addressing different patterns of cyberbullying behaviour. It is a four-point scale {Never (0); Once (1); A few times (2); Many times (3)}. High scores indicate high levels of cyber victimization and cyberbullying. The scale has been shown to have excellent reliability in this study. For cyberbullying, we obtained Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha=0.87$ ) and McDonald's Omega ( $\omega=0.89$ ). For cybervictimization, it came out to be  $\alpha=0.90$  and  $\omega=0.92$ .

## RESULTS

### Data Analysis

We utilised SPSS version 26 for the calculations and Microsoft Excel for generating graphs. Data were subjected to analysis by applying descriptive statistics (Mean, frequencies, percentages) and inferential statistics (independent samples t-test). The results are given in three parts. Part 1: Prevalence of Cyberbullying among Students, Part 2: Prevalence of Cyber Victimization among Students, and Part 3: Comparison of School Students and College Students.

### Part 1: Prevalence of Cyberbullying among Students

Next, we calculated the prevalence of cyberbullying in school and college students (See Table 1 and Figure 1). It shows that the students are largely engaged in posting mean or hurtful comments about someone online ( $n=61$ , percentage=13.56). This was followed by a threat to hurt someone online ( $n=60$ , percentage=13.33) and also posting mean or hurtful picture about someone online ( $n=54$ , percentage=12).

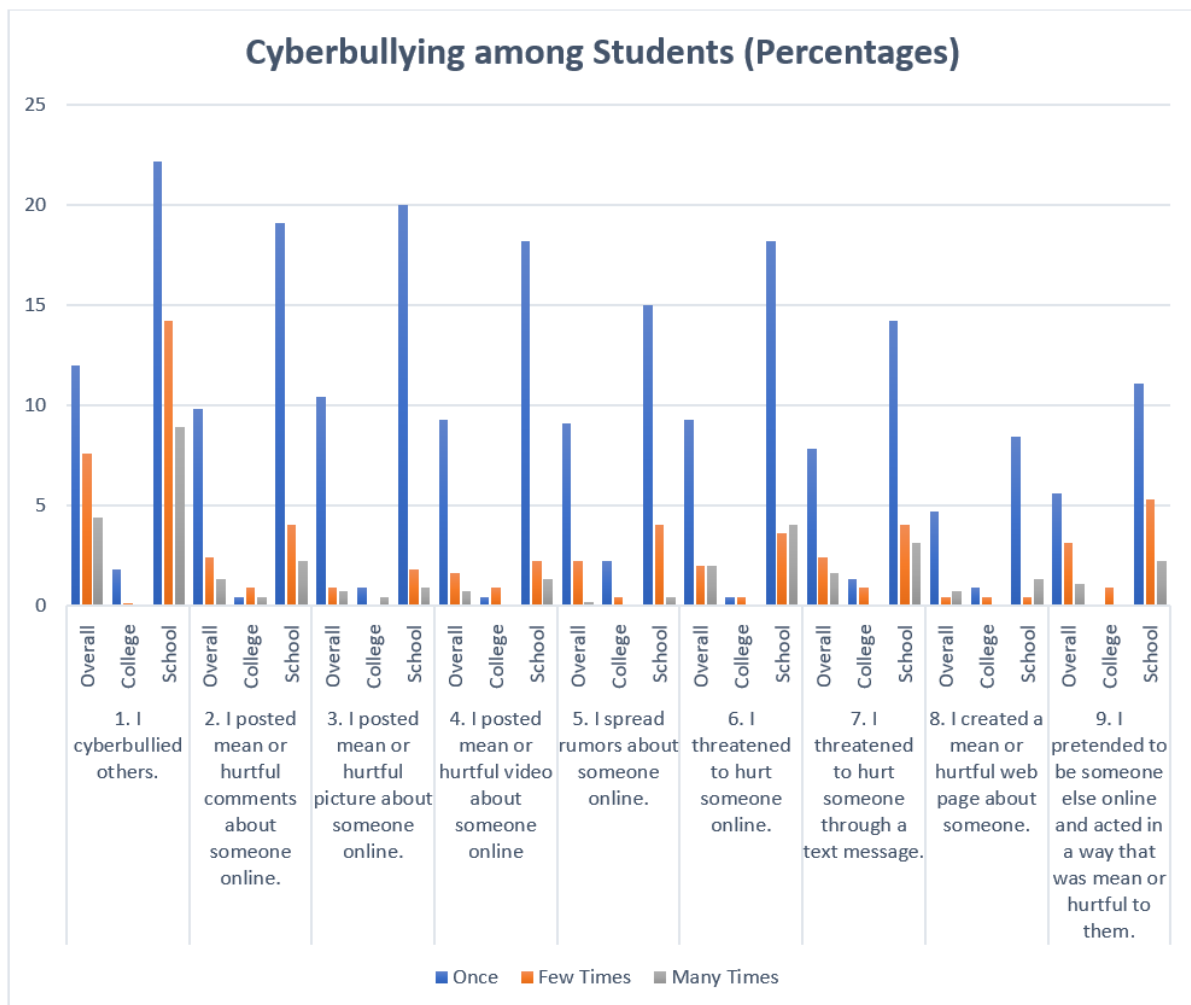
Figure 2 shows that 24% of the students reported that they have engaged in cyberbullying others. That is nearly a quarter of the sample.

**Table 1. Prevalence of Cyberbullying among Students (Frequencies and Percentages)**

Statements	Students	Never		Once		Few Times		Many Times	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>1. I cyberbullied others.</b>	Overall	342	76.0	54	12.0	34	7.6	20	4.4
	College	219	97.3	4	1.8	2	0.09	0	0
	School	123	54.7	50	22.2	32	14.2	20	8.9
<b>2. I posted mean or hurtful comments about someone online.</b>	Overall	389	86.4	44	9.8	11	2.4	6	1.3
	College	221	98.2	1	0.4	2	0.9	1	0.4
	School	168	74.7	43	19.1	9	4.0	5	2.2
<b>3. I posted mean or hurtful picture about someone online.</b>	Overall	396	88.0	47	10.4	4	0.9	3	0.7
	College	22	98.7	2	0.9	0	0	1	0.4
	School	174	77.3	45	20.0	4	1.8	1	0.9
<b>4. I posted mean or hurtful video about someone online</b>	Overall	398	88.4	42	9.3	7	1.6	3	0.7
	College	222	98.7	1	0.4	2	0.9	0	0
	School	176	78.2	41	18.2	5	2.2	3	1.3

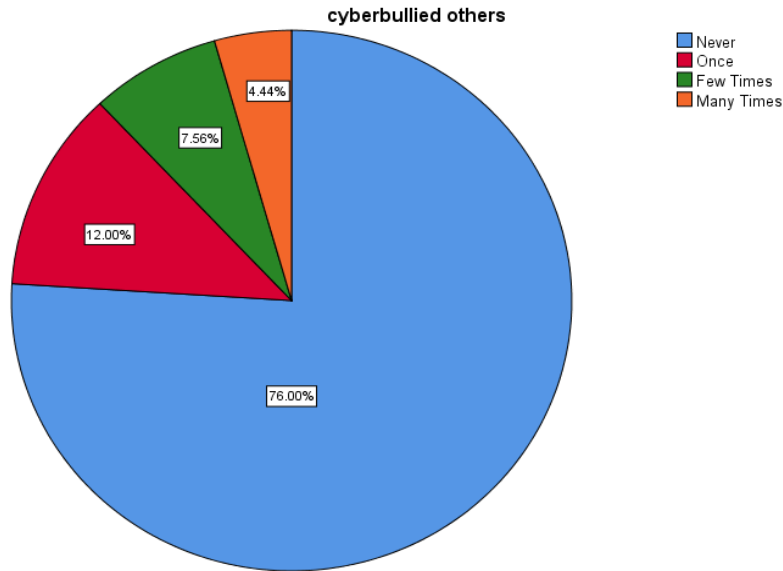
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<b>5. I spread rumors about someone online.</b>	Overall	398	88.4	41	9.1	10	2.2	1	0.2
	College	219	97.3	5	2.22	1	0.4	0	0
	School	179	79.6	36	15.0	9	4.0	1	0.4
<b>6. I threatened to hurt someone online.</b>	Overall	390	86.7	42	9.3	9	2.0	9	2.0
	College	223	99.1	1	0.4	1	0.4	0	0
	School	167	74.2	41	18.2	8	3.6	9	4.0
<b>7. I threatened to hurt someone through a text message.</b>	Overall	397	88.2	35	7.8	11	2.4	7	1.6
	College	220	97.8	3	1.3	2	0.9	0	0
	School	177	78.7	32	14.2	9	4.0	7	3.1
<b>8. I created a mean or hurtful web page about someone.</b>	Overall	424	94.2	21	4.7	2	0.4	3	0.7
	College	222	98.7	2	0.9	1	0.4	0	0
	School	202	89.8	19	8.4	1	0.4	3	1.3
<b>9. I pretended to be someone else online and acted in a way that was mean or hurtful to them.</b>	Overall	406	90.2	25	5.6	14	3.1	5	1.1
	College	223	99.1	0	0	2	0.9	0	0
	School	183	81.3	25	11.1	12	5.3	5	2.2



**Figure 1. The percentage of cyberbullying among students**

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*Figure 2. The percentage of students (overall sample) reported cyberbullying others*

### *Part 2: Prevalence of Cyber Victimization among Students*

A closer look at the results for the prevalence of cybervictimization (Table 2 and Figure 3) reported by the students reveals that the largest chunk finds someone had spread rumors about them online (n=150, Percentage=33.33). The second largest manner in which the students also reported to have been victimized is 'Someone threatened to hurt me through a cell phone text message' (n=144, Percentage=32). The students also reported that 'Someone threatened to hurt me online' was the third most common way in which they were victimized (n=122, Percentage=27.11). As such, 41.55% of the students reported that they have been cyber victimized (see Table 2 and Figure 4).

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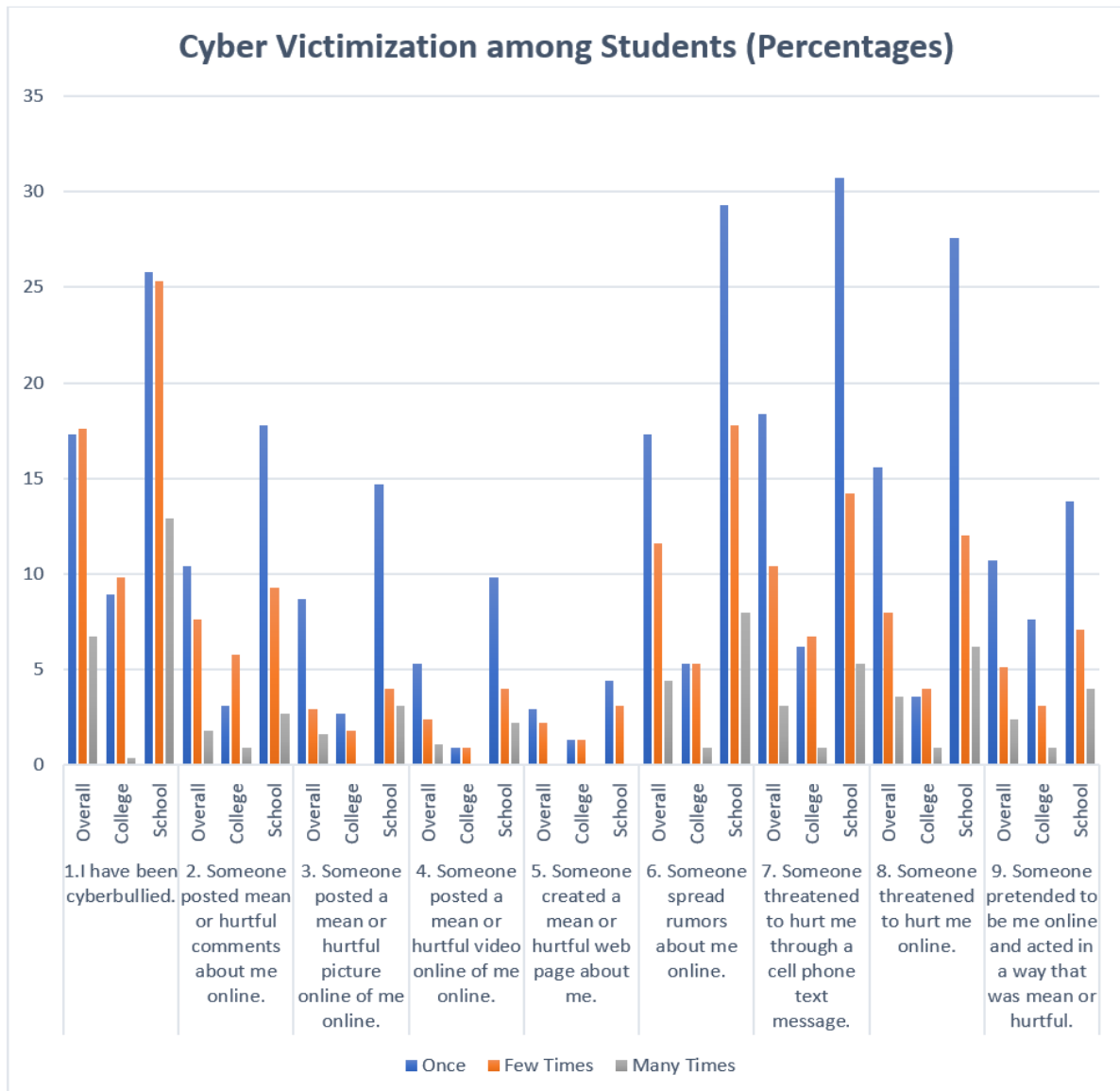


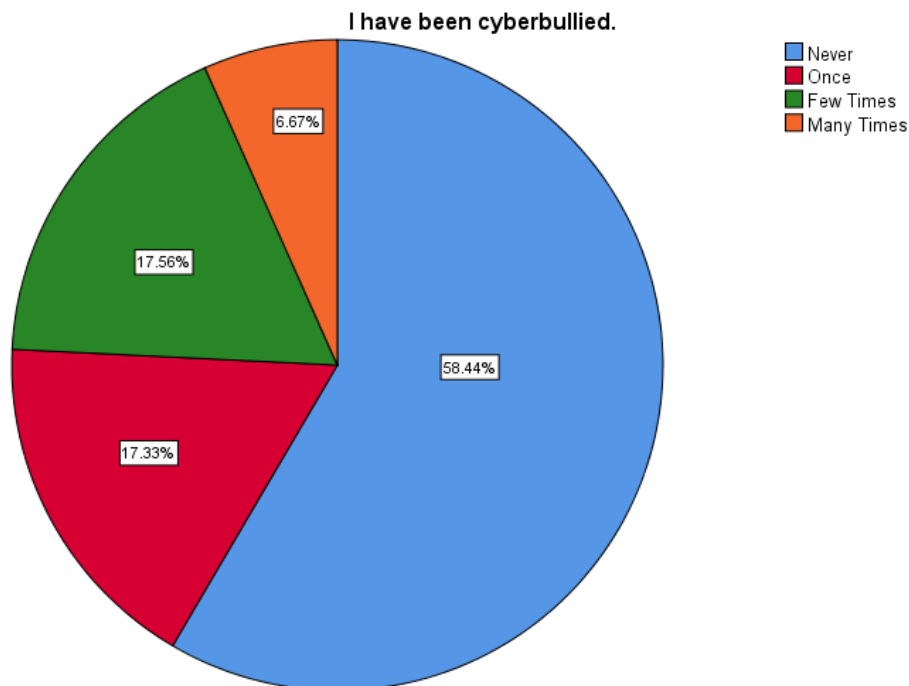
Figure 3. The percentage of cyber victimization among students

Table 2. Prevalence of Cyber Victimization among Students (Frequencies and Percentages)

Statements	Students	Never		Once		Few Times		Many Times	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>1. I have been cyberbullied.</b>	Overall	263	58.4	78	17.3	79	17.6	30	6.7
	College	182	80.9	20	8.9	22	9.8	1	0.4
	School	81	36.0	58	25.8	57	25.3	29	12.9
<b>2. Someone posted mean or hurtful comments about me online.</b>	Overall	361	80.2	47	10.4	34	7.6	8	1.8
	College	203	90.2	7	3.1	13	5.8	2	0.9
	School	158	70.2	40	17.8	21	9.3	6	2.7
<b>3. Someone posted a mean or hurtful picture online of me online.</b>	Overall	391	86.9	39	8.7	13	2.9	7	1.6
	College	215	95.6	6	2.7	4	1.8	0	0
	School	176	78.2	33	14.7	9	4.0	7	3.1

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<b>4. Someone posted a mean or hurtful video online of me online.</b>	Overall	410	91.1	24	5.3	11	2.4	5	1.1
	College	221	98.2	2	0.9	2	0.9	0	0
	School	189	84.0	22	9.8	9	4.0	5	2.2
<b>5. Someone created a mean or hurtful web page about me.</b>	Overall	427	94.9	13	2.9	10	2.2	0	0
	College	219	97.3	3	1.3	3	1.3	0	0
	School	208	92.4	10	4.4	7	3.1	0	0
<b>6. Someone spread rumors about me online.</b>	Overall	300	66.7	78	17.3	52	11.6	20	4.4
	College	199	88.4	12	5.3	12	5.3	2	0.9
	School	101	44.9	66	29.3	40	17.8	18	8.0
<b>7. Someone threatened to hurt me through a cell phone text message.</b>	Overall	306	68.0	83	18.4	47	10.4	14	3.1
	College	194	86.2	14	6.2	15	6.7	2	0.9
	School	112	49.8	69	30.7	32	14.2	12	5.3
<b>8. Someone threatened to hurt me online.</b>	Overall	328	72.9	70	15.6	36	8.0	16	3.6
	College	206	91.6	8	3.6	9	4.0	2	0.9
	School	122	54.2	62	27.6	27	12.0	14	6.2
<b>9. Someone pretended to be me online and acted in a way that was mean or hurtful.</b>	Overall	368	81.8	48	10.7	23	5.1	11	2.4
	College	199	88.4	17	7.6	7	3.1	2	0.9
	School	169	75.1	31	13.8	16	7.1	9	4.0



**Figure 4. The percentage of students (overall sample) who perceived cyber victimization**

The frequency distributions presented in Tables 1 and 2 and percentages in Figure 1 and 3 also show that the majority of the students have reported cyberbullying and cyber victimization at least once a year. Therefore, H1 stating “Cyberbullying and cyber victimization do exist among school and college students in Jammu” is accepted.

**Part 3: Comparison of School Students and College Students**

Next, we examined the differences in school and college students with respect to cyberbullying and cyber victimization. Table 3 clearly shows that the students from schools have significantly higher self-reported cyberbullying scores than the college students ( $t=9.396, p<.01$ ). Similarly, the score for cyber victimization is also higher in the case of the school students in comparison to the college students ( $t=9.562, p<.01$ ). Thus, school students engage in cyberbullying and are cyber victimized more in comparison to college students. This leads to acceptance of H2 and H3.

**Table 3. Differences between College and School Students on Study Variables**

Variable	Students	N	Mean	t value	P value
Cyberbullying	College	225	0.258	9.396	.000
	School	225	3.408		
Cyber Victimization	College	225	1.316	9.562	.000
	School	225	5.001		

**DISCUSSION**

The present study aimed to tap into the prevalence of cyberbullying behaviour and cyber victimization among the students. Further, an attempt was made to find differences in the school and college students with respect to cyberbullying behaviour and cyber victimization.

Our results reveal that the school students have reported higher cyberbullying behaviour than their college counterparts. This could be because the students in the school are adolescents. Our findings are in line with Zhu et al. (2021), Gohal et al. (2023), and Ranjith et al. (2023), who also reported a high prevalence of cyberbullying among adolescents. The students in colleges are set out to make their careers. Further, with age, they become more stable, mature, and responsible. Thus, students in colleges refrain from indulging in cyberbullying. However, during adolescence, there is a likelihood of experimentation and struggle for independence. Thus, adolescents resort to high-risk-taking behaviours.

Regarding the prevalence of cyberbullying among students, the most common behaviour reported was engaging in posting mean or hurtful comments about someone online. They also threatened to hurt others online as well as post mean or hurtful pictures about someone online. All these behaviours reflect aggression. Probably at the spur of anger, they readily resort to social media and post such comments. This could be because nowadays young students have more access to the internet and they tend to spend most of the time on social media platforms such as Facebook, WeChat, WhatsApp, etc (Nagata et al., 2025), where one-to-one communication while maintaining anonymity is possible. In our sample, the school students have reported using the internet for social media. They might post aggressive content that hurts other people without being recognized. The availability of social media and a gadget in hand facilitates venting out feelings immediately. This results in impulsive and aggressive behaviour.

In addition, we found that the school students also perceived more cyber victimization than the college students. Our findings corroborate Ranjith et al. (2023), who reported that high frequency of cyber victimization in school-age adolescents. One possible explanation for this is given by McLoughlin et al. in 2022. According to them, adolescents are vulnerable to cyber victimization as they are not aware of the risks involved in internet usage. Hence, they

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are not able to secure themselves. Another reason could be poor emotional regulation in adolescents (Dai et al., 2024).

The students in our study reported that they had been cyber victimized. According to them, someone had spread rumors about them online, threatened to hurt them through a cell phone text message, and also threatened to hurt them online. These self-reported instances show a high risk to the mental health of the students. According to Lee et al. (2025), cyber victimization results in long-term mental health problems. We contend that the cyber victims might feel insecure, lose self-confidence, and develop a feeling of revenge. Also, they might experience spiralling of aggression (Wright, 2025). In addition, the students could resort to avoiding school. It is likely for such students to experience high stress, resulting in ego depletion. No doubt, all these factors are precursors to mental health problems. Cyberbullying has severe psychological effects on victims (Vijayarani et al., 2024).

The majority of the students experiencing cyberbullying and cyber victimization at least once a year present a worrisome scenario. If not addressed in a timely manner, the problem of cyberbullying and cyber victimization could get monstrous with manifold ill effects.

As such, the school students seem to be potentially at higher risk of engaging in cyberbullying behaviour. Ranjith et al. (2023) recommended that a school-based cyberbullying intervention program should be applied. It is essential that parents keep a check on the cyber behaviour of adolescent students (Kaur & Saini, 2022). Parents should control their children's unprecedented access to and usage of the internet (Dai et al., 2024). Within schools, more time should be spent on those activities that foster good peer relationships. Particularly, engaging students in socially useful and productive work, sports, co-curricular activities, study circles in small groups, etc. Not only will it facilitate students to know each other well, but it will also result in less screen time, which nowadays has increased due to excessive internet use. We believe that this will also promote pro-socialness, leaving a little room for aggressive actions. Furthermore, the schools may also adopt practices to ensure cybersecurity and mitigate cyber risks. For example, not giving the work to students, requiring them to surf the internet quite often, giving deadlines for completion of work during late nights, asking students to post content via social media platforms, etc.

A large number of students who reported having been cyber victimized should not be ignored further. Timely steps could mitigate the harm from the throes of the cyber world. The students who have been cyber victims should be provided with psychosocial support. In addition, the school counsellors might train the students in constructive anger management techniques. They may also hold sessions with the young students to provide counselling regarding fostering cyber hygiene. Awareness programmes should be held in the institutions so that students are familiar with the policies for the reduction of cyberbullying.

Despite its implications, our study suffers from some limitations. Firstly, the limited demographic information becomes a barrier to the generalization of our findings. Secondly, we have examined only the differences between college and school students. Future researchers might consider investigating the precursors and consequences of cyberbullying behaviour and cyber victimization.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, we compared college and school students with respect to cyberbullying behaviour and cyber victimization. Our work has shown the extent of cyberbullying behaviour and cyber victimization among students. We conclude that cyberbullying and cyber victimization do occur among students in schools and colleges, and it is higher among school students. This study highlights the need to intervene and take measures to reduce the extent of cyberbullying in the first place and also mitigate its harm. The implications for the school management, counsellors, and parents have been suggested.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

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