Review Article

NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE: UNDERSTANDING CYBERBULLYING, ITS IMPACTS, AND STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION

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Abstract

While the Internet has revolutionized modern communication and connectivity, it has also given rise to cyberbullying, a real type of misconduct among young people. With the development of technology, cyberbullying has become a widespread global problem. Cyberbullying is the act of repeatedly and purposely hurting others using electronic means like the internet or mobile phones. Although research on the prevalence, predictors, and consequences of cyberbullying is growing, existing literature remains scattered and lacks a theoretical focus. This article provides a conceptual exploration of cyberbullying by reviewing current evidence, highlighting the research gaps, offering recommendations for further study, and providing practical solutions, with a particular emphasis on the Indian context. Understanding the complexities of cyberbullying requires defining the term, tracing its trends, identifying contributing factors and consequences, exploring the various ways that it occurs, and discussing effective ways to combat cyberbullying. Effective strategies to combat cyberbullying include reporting instances, monitoring online behavior, teaching digital skills, and seeking legal action. Future studies need to examine how education programs can alter reporting rates, how frequently cyberbullying occurs, and how it influences social media behavior.

Keywords: Cyber-bullying, Cyber-victimization, India, Mental health, Prevention strategies, Youth

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements have transformed daily life and communication. Today, nearly 60% of the global population uses the Internet, with rates reaching 95% in some developed countries.[1] In India, a significant portion of users are youth, with a notable presence in the 12-29 age group.[2] The Internet offers many benefits, including increased social interaction and strengthened interpersonal bonds. Despite its benefits, online interaction also exposes individuals to harmful behavior, such as cyberbullying.[3]

Cyber-bullying refers to deliberate, repeated harm using digital means such as messaging platforms, e-mails, or social networks by an individual or group.[4] Cyberbullying can happen in many ways on the internet. It ranges from passive acts like ignoring, excluding someone from social networking, to active acts like trolling, hateful name-calling, spreading rumours, and threatening to attack.[5] In contrast to traditional bullying, cyberbullying can happen anywhere at any time.

Cyberbullying is widely recognized as a public health issue[6] due to its detrimental effects on

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mental health and well-being, such as low self-esteem, frustration, anger, depression, academic decline, substance addiction, loneliness, and a rise in suicidal thoughts.[7, 8] In India, the risk of cyberbullying is high since a greater number of individuals have access to technology, affordable internet connections, and politicians are strongly promoting the idea of "Digital India". Despite India's large youth population and rapid digital growth, there is a lack of research on cyberbullying. This review helps readers understand cyberbullying, trace its trends, explore its causes, consequences, and the means used, understand why it's so damaging, and discuss different ways to combat it, with an emphasis on the Indian context.

METHODS

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using databases such as PubMed, Scopus, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, and Web of Science to identify relevant studies on cyberbullying. Articles published from 2004 to 2025 were considered. The search employed a range of keywords used, such as 'cyberbullying', 'cyber victims', 'cyber victimization', 'cyber bullies', 'online bullying', 'cyber aggression', 'electronic aggression', 'internet harassment', and India. Both international and Indian studies were reviewed to develop the content for this study, with a focus on its aims and on various aspects of cyberbullying.

DEFINITIONS AND FORMS OF CYBERBULLYING

There is no agreed-upon definition of cyberbullying, and many authors have given it varied meanings.[9-14] (Table 1) Although there is no agreed-upon definition, many agreed on some components of traditional bullying, which include a deliberate aggressive act to cause harm, between people with unequal power, and is often repeated [15,16] along with the use of electronic media, anonymity, and public exposure.[9]

Table 1: Definitions of Cyberbullying

Author	Definition
Hutson E[9].	Cyberbullying is defined as "an indirect way of bullying involving technology."
Peter IK, Petermann F.[10]	Cyberbullying means "using information and communication technologies (ICT) to repeatedly and intentionally harm, harass, hurt, and/or embarrass a target."
Smith PK, et al..[11]	Cyberbullying is "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend themselves."
Patchin JW, Hinduja S.[12]	Cyberbullying is defined as "wilful and repeated harm inflicted through computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices."
Kowalski RM, Limber SP. [13]	Cyberbullying is "the use of electronic communication technologies to bully others."

As it occurs on virtual platforms, many question its aggressive nature. Cyberbullying can take various forms,[17-22] (Table 2) though classifications vary among researchers.[18,19, 23-30] [Table 3], which can occur through various platforms, such as Chat rooms (55%), Flickr (44%), Tumblr (40%), other instant messaging app (40%), live gaming (33%), Twitter (33%), Facebook (32%), Snapchat (32%), YouTube (31%), Instagram (31%), and WhatsApp (27%).[31] Technological evolutions now enable not just direct hostile messages, but AI-mediated abuse, such as algorithmically generated deepfakes. Deepfakes are artificial intelligence (AI)-generated content that may be identified as authentic and can appear as pictures, videos, text, or audio. Although deepfakes were initially used for amusing purposes, they are now severely misused in pornography, political propaganda and disinformation, financial fraud and marketplace deception, and academic dishonesty.[32]

Table 2: Different forms of cyberbullying

Forms	**Definition**
Flaming	Sending angry, impolite, or obscene texts or emails privately or in a group.
Harassment	Sending disrespectful or threatening messages frequently.
Dissing	A type of cyber harassment in which harassers post nasty, inaccurate material about the victim online to damage their reputation or relationships.
Cyberstalking	A form of internet harassment in which the perpetrator stalks and threatens the victim by using electronic means to cause harm or fear.
Impersonation	It means making oneself look like someone to target them online. Creating fake accounts or profiles to harass victims is the most popular form of impersonation.
Frapping	It is a form of impersonation, impersonating a victim by gaining access to the victim's social media account to post harmful content about them.
Catfishing	A type of impersonation in which individuals assume another identity to pretend to be someone else.
Phishing	Phishing entails manipulating, convincing, or tricking victims into giving over personal or financial information.
Denigration	Sending hurtful or false information to damage someone's reputation.
Masquerading	Combines harassment and denigration, where the cyberbully assumes a false identity and broadcasts or distributes threatening or damaging material about one person to others.
Trickery and outing	Tricking a victim into disclosing private, sensitive, or embarrassing information, then sending or uploading the material for public viewing without consent.
Exclusion	Intentional exclusion of a person from an online group or activities.
Happy slapping	Intentional physical attack and later disseminate it online
Cyber racism	It involves making racist and discriminatory comments about a community in posts, photos, texts, blogs, etc. Among all the types, cyber racism may be most relevant to the pandemic.
Doxing	Doxing is the intentional public release of personal information online by a third party to embarrass, threaten, intimidate, or punish the identifiable individual.
Dogpiling	When many users directly message an individual, it can make the target feel vulnerable, even if it's not intended as harassment.
Revenge porn	Non-consensual intimate image sharing (or "revenge porn"), a form of doxing in which former partners share sexually graphic pictures and videos without consent.

Table 3: Authors' contributions to cyberbullying classifications

Author(s)	Classification/Contribution
Williard[23]	Categorized cyberbullying into various types, such as flaming, online harassment, cyberstalking, denigration, masquerading, outing, and exclusion
Nocentini et al[19]	Organized cyberbullying by modality- written verbal (sending messages), visual (sending photos), impersonation, exclusion
Menesini E, et al.[24]	Emphasized content-based dimensions- Nasty messages, violent images, intimate images, unpleasant images, and silent phone calls
Kowalsi et al[25]	Expanded Willard's classification and included happy slapping and sexting (Non-consensual sharing of intimate images).
Langos C[26]	Distinguished between direct cyberbullying (Repeated, intentional, hurtful messages directed to the victim); indirect cyberbullying (single or repeated unwanted electronic communications directed to intentionally harm the victim)

Gahagan K, et al [27]	Categorized cyberbullying based on social networking sites- negative words (name-calling), messages, photos (embarrassing visuals), comments (derogatory remarks), posts (mean content), posting without permission, continual (repeated posting of mean comments), public (posting videos online), and private messages.
Jhaver S, et al.[28]	Outlined 12 different forms of cyberbullying- Brigading (group attacks by posting together on other's online spaces), Concern trolling (disrupting opposing sites under guise of support), Dogpiling, Dog whistling (sending messages that sounds harmless but were meant for specific groups or individual), Doxing, Identity deception (falsely representing one's gender, race, etc. to gain advantage), Multiple SNSs (Using multiple social network sites to gain information about targets), Sealioning (politely questioning targets repeatedly), Sock puppeting (posting anonymously using alternate accounts appear supportive), Subtle threats (hints to intimidate or reveal personal information), Swarming (group attack to a person often spontaneously, through comments or messages on online platforms), Swatting (tricking law enforcement to get target's address)
Peled Y[18]	Expanded Watts' classification. Additional types include- Fraping, Dissing, Trolling (insulting an individual online to provoke them enough to get a response), Catfishing, phishing, stalking (sending personal messages, unexpected gifts to someone's home, and more using social media information), blackmail (People with secrets regularly receive anonymous emails, calls, and messages), Photographs & video (Threaten to release them publicly until the victim comply; text or email them, prevent the victim from controlling who sees them; let anyone access images online), Shunning (avoiding, ignoring, or rejecting someone from participating in social networks)
Aizenkot D, et al[29]	Identified WhatsApp-specific typology- Verbal violence, group violence (forming a group to reject or target someone), visual violence (sharing offensive photos and videos, tagging them), group selectivity (excluding or removing someone from a group).
Özgür HA[30]	Identified most prevalent types- cyber-harassment, cyberstalking, denigration, masquerade, flaming, exclusion, impersonation, outing & trickery, and sexting

Common forms of cyberbullying in India

Some of the common methods of cyberbullying in India includes, stalking, spreading rumors, fun-making, sending, harmful messages, electronic releases of photographs and videos, unauthorized sharing of personal information, name-calling, trolling, threatening to harm, death threats, rape threats, online polling to body-shame, sharing sexually explicit offensive messages without permission, hacking for personal gain, and broadcasting private photographs and videos. It has been conducted through some common digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and online gaming sites.[32, 33, 34]

CYBERBULLYING TRENDS AND INCIDENCE

The exact prevalence of cyberbullying is unclear due to inconsistent terminology, time periods, survey methods, and study replication used by the researchers. Standardization would allow for investigating the differences in incidence across subgroups- age, race, urban versus rural, electronic media usage frequency, and victim status. Furthermore, longitudinal studies are necessary to track changes as technology evolves. Early Research on cyberbullying in India and other countries has traditionally focused on school children, with relatively few studies taking place at the college level.[7, 36] Studies have debated whether cyberbullying is on the rise or stabilizing. Some argue that technological advancements have increased its occurrence[37], while others suggest relatively constant rates.[15, 38] Prevalence ranges from 10% to 40%;[39, 40] with subsequently higher rates shown based on broader definitions of online harm.[41] Recent larger sample size studies estimate 14%–21% annual cybervictimization. [42]

More recent international and Indian studies suggest comparable or higher rates, with substantial variability across regions, age groups, and educational settings within India.[43-45.] Studies also indicate that cyberbullying often continues from high school to college, with prior victimization substantially increasing future risk of being victimized again.[46] While international studies have reported an increased rate of cyberbullying during the COVID-19 pandemic, though Indian data remain limited, a few studies reported that the pandemic has affected susceptibility to cyberbullying,[47, 48] underscoring the need for longitudinal research in this context. Despite high prevalence rates, underreporting remains a key challenge. Many adolescents did not disclose their experience with cyberbullying to their parents or teachers, often due to limited discussion or awareness of it.[49] A summary of empirical evidence on cyberbullying across populations and contexts is presented. (Table 4)

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CYBERBULLYING

1. Person factor

- Gender: Gender-based findings remain inconsistent across studies. Several studies found girls to be more involved as victims and perpetrators,[50] whereas others indicate no gender differences.[51,52] In contrast, some studies indicate that boys more frequently engage in cyberbullying, and girls are more likely to be targeted. [53,54] Platform-specific trends show girls face more email bullying and boys face more text-based bullying.[37, 51, 52] These findings may suggest that cybervictimization harms women more than men, but additional research is needed to determine the cause.[36]
- Age: Research on cyberbullying's age-related trends varies as well. Several studies report that cyberbullying rises after fifth grade, with the highest rate in eighth grade.[51,55] However, age disparities also depend on the type of cyberbullying, as younger teenagers are less likely to engage in text messaging, picture bullying, or instant messaging compared to older age.[52] In contrast to school-based findings, cyberbullying is also examined among college students, with more than 30% reporting it for the first time in college.[56]
- Motives: Cyberbullying fulfils several motives- aggression, power, attention-seeking, jealousy, and retaliation, with minimal chance of detection.[57] Fun, boredom, laughter, popularity, and power are the other motives.[15,36,58] Unlike external motives (nonconfrontation), students often internalize motives (such as rerouting emotions).[58] Cyberbullying has also been conceptualized to navigate social situations, most notably in matters of sexuality and popularity.[59]
- Socioeconomic status and technology use: Higher socioeconomic status is linked with more cyberbullying perpetration, due to greater exposure to technology.[60] Technological expertise also correlates with cyberbullying,[61, 62] based on time spent online.[63] Ybarra and Mitchell[61] found that cyberbully/victims spend more time online (longer than 3 hours per day), whereas others found they spend less time.[64] Daring online behaviors, including posting personal information or passwords, increase cyberbullying involvement.[16, 61]
- Values and perceptions: Involvement in traditional and cyberbullying is related to moral acceptance of bullying.[55] Perpetrators often morally justify their aggressive acts as less damaging or downplay the consequences, and may

Table 4: Studies and their key findings

Author (year)	Country	Population	Type of study	Key findings
Juvonen & Gross [40]	USA	12–17 yrs	Survey	Victimization up to 72% using broad definitions of cyberbullying, like "mean things done online.
Kowalski RM, et al.[25]	Multiple	Youth	Meta-analysis	Cyberbullying perpetration prevalence ranged from 3%–20%; variance in the cybervictimization rates. Most studies focused on middle and high school students. Cyberbullying is strongly linked with traditional bullying and victimization, though effect sizes vary by age group and measurement approach. Gender differences were inconsistent for both perpetration and victimization.
Shakir et al. [41]	USA	Adolescents	Cross-sectional	Annual cybervictimization prevalence ranged from 14–21%.
Beran TN, et al. [45]	USA & Canada	University students	Longitudinal	High School cyber victims were more than 3 times as likely to be revictimized in college
Bacher-Hicks et al. [46]	USA	children/adolescents	Meta-analysis	Traditional bullying reduced, while the overall cyberbullying rate remained steady pre-pandemic vs during COVID (16% vs17%). Cyberbullying increased among boys, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, multi-racial, and White youth, but decreased for transgender/non-binary youth.
Jain O, et al.[47]	India	15-25 years	Pre–post COVID survey comparison	Increased susceptibility of cyberbullying during the lockdown period.
Vijayarani M, et al.[42]	India	Adolescents	Review study	The rates of cyberbullying among adolescents in India vary according to different studies. The country's various regions have distinct prevalence rates.
Sharma D, et al. [43]	India	Middle graders	Survey	This study reported that 8% of participants engaged in cyberbullying, while 17% reported as being victims.
Gupta S, et al.[44]	India	Medical students	Cross-sectional study	In this study, 60.6% of participants were victims, 58.2% were perpetrators, and 48.4% experienced as both victims as well as perpetrators.
McAfee Survey (2022)[46]	India	Children/Adolescents	Industry survey	Cyberbullying was reported by 85% of Indian youngsters, and 1 in 3 children experience sexual harassment and cyber racism. There was a notable underreporting of cyberbullying, with 45% of teenagers failing to inform their parents.

morally disengage.[61] Moral disengagement correlates with cyberbullying involvement, though victimization does not predict moral justification.

- Other maladaptive behavior: Cyberbully/victim and bullies reported using alcohol and tobacco more frequently in the past year and were also engaged in property damage, calling the police, being physically attacked, and stealing.[62] Similarly, truancy, poor academic performance, and fighting have been associated with cyber victimization.[51]
- Personality: Traits like empathy and narcissism are associated with cyberbullying perpetration. Individuals with low affective and cognitive empathy reported greater involvement in cyberbullying. Among girls with high affective empathy, cyberbullying levels were similar regardless of low and high cognitive empathy. Exploitativeness- a narcissistic trait- is linked to both traditional and cyber bullying.[65] Lower social intelligence and hyperactivity are associated with both traditional and cyber victimization.[66] More research is required to identify other personality factors involved.
- Psychological states: Victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying often report having lower self-esteem, poorer academic performance, and higher levels of anxiety and depression.[57] However, depression and anxiety may be both predictors and outcomes of cyberbullying.[36] It has been found that perpetrators have reported difficulties with concentration.[67]

2. Situation factor

- Provocation & perceived support: Provocation, in the form of insults and verbal and/or physical aggression, is related to perpetrating cyberbullying.[62,68] Conversely, perceived social support from others and peers, respectively, is also associated with a lower risk of involvement in or being a victim of cyberbullying.[69]
- Parental involvement: Studies indicate that cyberbullies often report less parental control, frequent discipline, less emotional connection with their parents,[62] and greater parental support reduces bullying, whereas some found that punishment can deter cyberbullying.[70] Other evidence reports that open discussions and parental control over technology reduce cyber-victimization. [71]
- School climate: Students are less likely to engage in bullying or cyberbullying if they perceive a sense of belonging to their school and view it as a fair, pleasant, and trustworthy place.[48] Conversely, hostile school environments can lead to annoyance and discomfort, contributing to cyberbullying.
- Perceived anonymity**:** Nearly half of middle school victims were unaware of who had harassed them. [50] More people engage in cyberbullying due to anonymity, which likewise has the effect of disinhibition of getting people to do something they may otherwise not do if they were doing it in public.

In India, the factors that lead to cyberbullying seem to be different because of the country's diverse cultural and demographic background.[35, 36, 43, 72,] (Table 5)

Table 5: Factors and motives associated with cyberbullying in India

Category	Variables
Factors associated with cyberbullying in India	Greater access to the internet and social media platforms
	Less awareness regarding digital safety and responsible use
	Lack of digital literacy among users
	Low level of parental monitoring
	Anonymity of offenders with no fear of consequences
	Lack of an effective legal framework and enforcement
	Limited awareness of reporting mechanisms of cybercrime
Motives associated with cyberbullying in India	Jealousy,
	Revenge taking
	Acting out of boredom as entertainment
	Enjoying such behavior with fear of repercussions
	Peer pressure
	Desire for dominance and control
	Pursuit of social status or notoriety

CRUCIAL DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN TRADITIONAL BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING

Researchers have found some of the significant distinctions between non-cyberbullying and cyberbullying: [37, 57, 73, 74] (Table 6)

Table 6: Crucial distinction between traditional bullying and cyberbullying

Dimension	Traditional bullying	Cyberbullying
Level of inhibition	Greater inhibition	Greater lack of inhibition
Anonymity and accountability	Limited anonymity; clearer accountability	Higher potential for anonymity and reduced accountability
Power and control	Power is connected to physical or social factors	Power dynamics altered by the flattened virtual environment
Avoidance	Possible by leaving the physical setting	Difficult to avoid due to 24/7 access through technology
Role of bystanders	Bystanders may intervene directly	Diminished role of bystanders
Feedback	Immediate verbal and non-verbal feedback present	Lack of immediate verbal and nonverbal feedback
Sharing of harmful acts	Limited spread	Increased potential for sharing because of technology's instant accessibility and connectedness
Ease of perpetration	Requires physical presence	Convenient through technology
Age-related patterns	Less dependent on technology use	Different age trends influenced by patterns of technology use
Reporting by young people	More willingness to report	Fear that adults will overreact or refuse access to technology makes people less inclined to report
Adult awareness	More visible to adults	Less visible to adults
Evidence	Limited or transient evidence	More evidence left behind (texts, photos, emails, and social networking sites can all be tracked)

WHY DOES CYBERBULLYING CAUSE SIGNIFICANT PAIN?

Cyberbullying causes significant pain because harmful online content can be repeatedly viewed, which intensifies the damage. This impact is exacerbated by the fact that victims are exposed to large audiences through digital platforms, and the anonymity of the offender exacerbates the situation. Furthermore, social networking services enable group-based targeting, while

dangerous content spreads rapidly across networks.[52]

CONSEQUENCES AND CORRELATES

Cyberbullying can significantly affect emotional and mental well-being. The consequences can range from mild distress to serious consequences.[7] Research has demonstrated many negative outcomes of cyberbullying, including anxiety, anger, frustration, decreased concentration, poor grades, absenteeism, drug abuse, fear, somatic complaints, low self-esteem, depression, and heightened suicidal tendencies. Social withdrawal is one of the worst effects of cybervictimization.[7, 75] Studies from India have also noted additional outcomes for cyber-victims such as sleep disturbances, somatic complaints, feelings of powerlessness, and changes in eating patterns, which can lead to weight loss or gain.[35] In severe cases, experience of cyber-victimization can lead to broadcasting death through live streaming, named cyber suicide.[75] Cyber victimization has also been linked to COVID-19 diagnosis or knowing individuals who were infected. [77]

Some forms of cyberbullying cause severe mental health and social consequences. Non-consensual sharing of intimate images (NCII) leads to increased depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.[78] Deepfake-related abuse raises additional risks. The intention of deepfakes was influenced by perceived accuracy, fear of missing out, poor self-regulation, low cognitive ability, and heavy social media use.[79] Victims of deepfake abuse experience multiple harms, including concerns and worries, deception consequences (false memories, attitude shifts, sharing intention, and false investment choices), mental health harm (distress, anxiety, reduced self-efficacy, and sexual deepfake victimization), and media distrust. Similarly, Image based sexual abuse (IBSA) causes distress, hopelessness, embarrassment, powerlessness, objectification, violation, degradation, and stigmatization; avoidance behavior; increases distrust, depression, anger, shame, and guilt; a suicide attempt; psychosomatic symptoms like vomiting and high blood pressure; insomnia; loss of appetite; inability to work; and intrusive memories and nightmares.[80] Irresponsible and sensationalized media coverage of suicides, especially online suicide, can amplify the Werther effect.[81, 82]

Cyberbullies have been shown to target individuals with physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and chronic illnesses, leading to self-harm, sadness, anxiety, and physical health problems.[81] Cybervictimization is also more likely to occur in those with cognitive impairment, poor internet use, impulsivity, and memory issues.[81, 82]

Youth who bully others online are likely to violate rules, experience aggression, and have higher levels of substance abuse and mood disorders.[3, 61] Offenders are also found to be at risk for suicidal tendencies.[81] Based on the nature and type of cyberbullying, victims of cyberbullying can be affected differently. More studies are required to determine whether certain aspects and types of cyber-victimization are linked to worse mental health outcomes.

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT CYBERBULLYING

Studies suggest that victims of cyberbullying often do not report cyberbullying.[84, 85] To make the victims feel supported, educators, parents, and victims must receive cyberbullying education to increase knowledge and promote effective prevention.[86] Increasing this sense of support might lead to fewer instances of cyberbullying.[87]

Recommended actions for parents

Parents should practice authoritative parenting by providing emotional support and creating a safe environment. They need to stay up to date with the latest platforms, apps, and terms that young people use online. Beyond monitoring their

children's digital activities, parents should play a crucial role in fostering moral growth by promoting virtues such as empathy, accountability, and respect for others online. Privacy and location settings on the child's phone should be adjusted accordingly. Parents should keep an eye on their child's online accounts and internet history to track online activity. They should also make sure that the child's phone's privacy and location settings are set correctly. [88-91]

Recommended actions for teachers and institute authorities

All employees should receive training in online safety and digital literacy to promote appropriate online conduct and digital etiquette. Institutes must take efforts to raise awareness among students and train personnel to identify and deal with gender-based cyberbullying. There should be an easily accessible, anonymous reporting system (such as report boxes) to ensure reporting without fear of retaliation, and witnesses should also be supported in reporting incidents. The institution must establish strict internet safety policies, including monitoring online conduct, blocking offensive content, and providing supportive counseling. Furthermore, institutes need to implement antivirus software, secure operating systems, and robust network security solutions to prevent cyberbullying. [87, 90,91]

Recommended actions for youth

The first step to stop cyberbullying is creating a respectful and positive online environment. Before posting online, individuals should consider the potential consequences, as shared content could be misused; therefore, content that may cause harm should be avoided. Strong, unique, and confidential passwords should be used and updated regularly. Privacy settings should be adjusted to control profile visibility, post commenting, and texting, thereby minimizing cyber threats. Communicating only with known and trusted people online further reduces cyber risks. [88, 90,91]

Managing one's digital footprint is also crucial and includes reporting and requesting the removal of offending content, restricting visibility of posts or comments to selected audiences, hiding posts from specific people, checking accounts for unauthorized activity, and periodically searching one's name across platforms to detect data misuse. Maintaining respectful, non-offensive communication, valuing diversity, and taking responsibility by apologizing for hurtful interactions helps create a healthier online environment. When responding to cyberbullying, keeping screenshots as evidence and reporting to the appropriate authorities of the platform or websites is helpful. In case of cyberbullying, approaching a trusted adult and reporting cyberbullying to any Indian cyber cell is recommended. In India, local resources like Tele-manas and cybercrime helplines (1930) can also be contacted for help. Ignoring and blocking the bully to stop further provocation, establishing emotional resilience, and realizing that harsh comments reflect the aggressor rather than the recipient can help manage negativity. [88, 90,91]

In addition to the aforementioned recommendations, additional actions are required to address cyberbullying and to minimize its consequences. Legal actions may be necessary for defamation, emotional harassment, or exploitation. A civil suit against harassers is suggested in such situations. Furthermore, assault, coercion, harassment, hate or bias crimes, child pornography, exploitation of sexuality, or intrusion into private matters should be reported to the authorities.[91]

Beyond all the measures, digital platforms must have and promote anti-cybercrime policies, like quizzes and polls on recent encounters. Furthermore, promoting prosocial conduct should be the responsibility of all online platforms. Every healthcare provider, particularly

mental health experts, will make every effort to inform patients and their families about online safety and to report instances of cyber victimization.

CONCLUSION

As digital engagement continues to grow, understanding and addressing cyberbullying becomes increasingly critical. A collaborative approach involving educators, parents, policymakers, and youth is necessary to reduce incidents and support the victims. India-specific research, especially among college populations, is crucial for exploring evolving trends and developing culturally appropriate interventions.

Conflict of Interest: None

The author(s) attest that there was no use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology in the generation of text, figures, or other informational content of this manuscript.

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