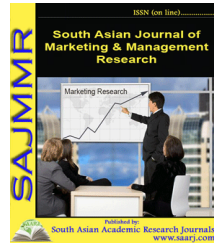




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PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF ONLINE BULLYING AMONG TEENAGERS

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ABSTRACT

Bullying and cyber bullying are prevalent across the globe, and they have severe ramifications for both people and communities. Despite the fact that the quantity of research papers on the subject has grown dramatically throughout the course of history, many concerns about the phenomenon remain unresolved today. In spite of the fact that technology offers many advantages to young people, it also has a dark side, 'in that it may be exploited to do damage not just by certain adults, but also by young people themselves. Email, texting, chat rooms, mobile phones, mobile phone cameras, and online sites may all be used by young people to harass their classmates, and in fact, they often are. It has now become a worldwide issue, with many instances recorded in the United States, Canada, Japan, Scandinavia, and the United Kingdom, as well as in Australia and New Zealand, among other countries. Although it is becoming more prevalent, this issue has not yet gotten the attention it deserves and is practically missing from the study literature. This article examines definitional problems, the prevalence and potential effects of cyber bullying, as well as various preventive and intervention methods, all of which are discussed in detail.

KEYWORDS: *Bullying, Cyber bullying, Symptom, Teenagers, Victims.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying has not traditionally been seen as an issue that required treatment, but rather as a basic and natural aspect of childhood that must be tolerated. The perception of schoolyard bullying has shifted in the past two decades, and it is now seen as a serious issue that requires attention and intervention. In our society, bullying has been around for a long time, starting in the playground and often continuing to the boardroom. It may be described as the harsh treatment of a person via the use of force or compulsion to get their consent. It is characterized by violent behaviour that is repeated over time, is deliberately destructive, and happens without prompting or provocation. In addition to physical acts such as striking, punching, and spitting, bullying may take place via verbal attack, taunting, mocking, ridiculing, sarcasm, and scapegoating. Bullying can also take

place through social media platforms. It necessitates the presence of a minimum of two individuals, one of which is the offender and the other the victim.

A huge number of individuals, on the other hand, may be engaged in an indirect way, such as an audience. These bystanders may be other kids who are present during the bullying incident but do not participate. They are often fearful of being the next victim if they intervene in the situation. They often express a sense of helplessness and a lack of self-respect and self-confidence[1]. Nevertheless, in recent years, a new kind of bullying has developed, one that takes advantage of the wide variety of technological resources that are now accessible. Cyberbullying, as defined by Canadian Bill Belsey, is defined as bullying that takes place via the use of technology. It is a phenomenon that children and teenagers are increasingly using to do damage to others. Bullies are increasingly turning to modern mediums such as email, text messages, chat rooms, mobile phones, mobile phone cameras, and online sites to harass their victims.

Examples of methods include texting disparaging messages on mobile phones, with students displaying the message to others before sending it to the target; sending threatening emails; and forwarding a private email to all address book friends, thus publicly shaming the person who sent it. Others form a group around a single kid and send him or her a barrage of threatening emails. Another method of cyber bullying is to create a disparaging web site devoted to a particular student and then send out the web URL to other students, encouraging them to comment. Additional websites may be created to allow people to vote on who they think is the biggest nerd or the sluttiest female at their school[2].

In one well publicized instance, a self-produced video of a 15-year-old Quebec kid imitating a Star Wars battle was uploaded to the Internet by his peers and quickly went viral. The video was downloaded by millions of people, and the media dubbed him "the Star Wars Kid" as a result. Another instance occurred in which an overweight kid was photographed in the school changing room using a mobile phone camera and the image was then uploaded on the Internet. Chat rooms are another venue where cyberbullying may take place, with members disparaging a targeted student or excluding them on a regular basis. The Internet has been characterized as changing society since it allows for person-to-person contact, similar to that provided by the telegraph and telephone, as well as serving as a mass media medium, similar to that provided by radio and television prior to its introduction. A variety of studies have shown that human behaviour on the Internet and associated technology, such as mobile phones, may have both good and harmful effects[3].

Several positive features, such as the ability of socially nervous persons to speak more effectively and deeper self-disclosure between people, have been asserted. However, there have also been reports of negative effects of this technological usage, such as the promotion of antisocial behaviour and an increase in loneliness. Faster communication and easier access to information are seen as positive attributes, but the Internet also has a "dark" side, with the availability of child pornography as well as the use of technology to harass children.

1.1 Incidence:

Face-to-face bullying by classmates in school has been shown to be a common occurrence for many youngsters, according to a number of student surveys. One in every six youngsters' reports being bullied at least once a week, but the number may be as high as 50 percent if the bullying is considered to have lasted for just one week. Similarly, in another research, 40 percent of teenagers said that they had been bullied at some point throughout their school years. On the

other hand, the proportion of children who have experienced longer-term bullying of six months or more falls to between 15 and 17 percent, depending on the school.

In recent years, young people have become more reliant on technology, with Australians regarded as early adopters and young people referred to as "the digital generation." Children and teenagers in the United Kingdom have utilized the Internet at rates ranging from 7 percent to 16 percent, with young people indicating that they combine online and off-line contact in order to keep their social networks alive[4]. In a study conducted by the National Children's Home in the United Kingdom in 2002, one in every four children reported being bullied via mobile phone or the Internet, and in an Australian study of 120 Year 8 students, more than a quarter stated that they knew someone who had been bullied using technology. Interestingly, when students in England were asked if they had received threatening email or text messages while at school, the numbers were somewhat lower (6 percent). Researchers in the United States found that 15 percent of their sample described themselves as Internet bullies, while 7 percent said that they had been targeted on the internet by bullies themselves.

This contrasts with the Brisbane kids, who described themselves as cyber bullies and almost 14 percent as targets, with 11 percent of them identifying themselves as bullies. In both the United Kingdom and Australia, research found that texting was the most common form of bullying, followed by chat rooms and finally email. It seems that cyberbullying is becoming an increasingly prevalent issue. A report from the United States Attorney General to Vice President Al Gore in 1999 suggested that instances of online harassment were becoming an increasing issue for law enforcement authorities. Australian principals have also said that it is becoming an increasingly serious issue in schools, and there is a great deal of anecdotal evidence to support this, but no study has been conducted to yet. In light of the fact that the number of teenagers who have access to the Internet and mobile phones is projected to increase from 745 000 to 1 million by 2005, it is reasonable to assume that the number of instances of cyber bullying will similarly increase. Indeed, more than half of the students who participated in the Brisbane research said that they believed cyber bullying was on the rise[5].

When it comes to face-to-face bullying, the majority of research have shown that both boys and girls experience comparable levels of victimization. However, other studies have shown that males are more likely than girls to be bullied. In the instance of cyber bullying, it seems that females are more likely than boys to be engaged since they are more likely to interact on a daily basis through email and text message. However, there is no evidence to support this claim at this time. In addition to the fact that younger children in primary school report more face-to-face bullying by peers than teenagers in secondary school, it seems that cyber bullies are older, since younger children do not utilize technology to communicate with their classmates to the same extent as older students.

1.2 Consequences:

Victims of face-to-face bullying have been found to have higher levels of sadness, anxiety, and psychosomatic symptoms as a result of the experience. Additionally, bullied children report higher levels of social ineffectiveness and greater interpersonal problems, along with higher rates of absence from school and poorer levels of academic ability. However, it is still unclear if these symptoms are caused by bullying or are the result of bullying. As a result, the direction of causation may be either positive or negative. Despite the fact that the effects of cyber bullying have not yet been thoroughly investigated, it seems that they may be even more severe than the consequences of face-to-face bullying in certain cases. Despite the fact that technology can only threaten physical harm, not actually perpetrate it, research has shown that verbal and

psychological bullying may have more severe long-term consequences. Furthermore, compared to schoolyard bullying, cyber bullying has the ability to reach a far larger audience, increasing the likelihood that the event would be seen[6].

Examples include forwarding emails to all of the student's connections and creating web pages that are accessible to millions of people at the same time. In addition, there is the power of the printed word to consider. Unlike verbal bullying when the victim may not recall every word, bullying via emails and text messages, chat rooms, or websites allows the targeted student to read what the aggressor has said again and over again. In comparison to spoken words, written words seem more solid and "real." Furthermore, since bullying may occur anywhere and at any time, there is less opportunity to get away from it. Furthermore, since the online bully may sometimes remain anonymous, some kids may feel encouraged to cyber bully when they would not harass face-to-face in other situations.

1.3 Causation:

Because of the common law view that the plaintiff must demonstrate that his or her harm would not have happened but for the particular breach of duty by the defendant, state and territorial civil liability legislation has adopted the common law position. As a result, simply identifying a breach of duty by the school, such as a failure to monitor school computer equipment, would be inadequate if the failure to supervise did not contribute significantly to the plaintiff's damage. An additional complication is that many of the symptoms of the types of psychiatric injury that can be caused by cyber bullying, such as mood swings, depression, anxiety, and poor academic results, may be experienced by an adolescent as a result of a variety of causes, including simply those associated with growing up or as a result of unrelated upheaval in the family situation, such as a divorce or separation[7].

In certain cases, whether conscious or unconscious, a minor plaintiff or his or her family may be inclined to ascribe all psychiatric or psychosomatic illnesses to the cyber bullying that has occurred. The child is placed within a family that is otherwise beset by depression, to the point where he or she may even be genetically predisposed to depression or other psychological disorders¹³⁶. It will also include cases where the child's family consciously or subconsciously encourages him or her to adopt a "sick role" in the hope of attracting monetary compensation. As a consequence, a court will be confronted with the difficult job of differentiating between psychological or psychosomatic damage caused by the breach of duty and those caused by other factors. Instead of being the only or dominant cause of psychological damage, it will be acceptable if the plaintiff can demonstrate that the school's failure to prevent cyber bullying as a consequence of its failure to exercise reasonable care was one of the substantial reasons of the ensuing psychological harm[8].

2. DISCUSSION

Internet and mobile phones, as new information technologies, offer a number of advantages for teenagers, including improved communication and more self-disclosure, as well as the development of social connections. On the other side, teenagers and young adults use the internet and mobile phones for bad reasons such as spreading rumors, sending humiliating messages, or threatening someone while hiding behind fictitious names and identities. In fact, it was shown that adolescents exhibited more violent behaviors in cyberspace than they did in real life, and they sought vengeance in an anonymous setting, perhaps because the cyber world is regarded as a safer location for destructive acts. The term "cyber bullying" refers to such online actions that are described as the intentional, repeated, and destructive use of information and communication

technology. Several nations, such as Australia, Canada, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States, have reported that cyber bullying is a common occurrence, according to the available research.

According to the cyber bullying literature, there are some differences in the frequency of cyber bullying experiences among secondary school students, with some being more prevalent than others. The percentages fluctuated from 4.1 percent and 62 percent throughout the years. Despite these differences, all of the research agreed that cyber bullying has become a widespread problem that needs to be addressed with caution. More importantly, the frequent use of information technologies was found to be positively associated with cyber bullying experiences, and schoolchildren have access to a variety of tools for conducting cyber bullying, including mobile phone messages, instant messaging, chat rooms, and e-mail, among others[9]. Gender and age seem to be important determinants in cyber bullying as far as demographic characteristics are concerned. In terms of gender, there is a difference of opinion among the researchers. Although some have said that females are more likely than men to engage in cyber bullying since cyber bullying includes relational or verbal violence, others have argued that males are more violent when they are in cyber space.

Another set of researchers, on the other hand, asserted that gender was not a factor in cyber bullying since both men and girls participated in cyber bullying activities on an equal basis. In addition to gender, age was believed to be a significant element influencing the behaviors of people who engage in cyber bullying. Middle school, high school, and undergraduate university students were all studied, and it was shown that middle school students exhibited much more cyber bullying behaviors than the other groups. When children are subjected to cyber bullying, they experience a variety of harmful psychological consequences. It was discovered that, in addition to emotions of irritation and sorrow, children can suffer depression, bewilderment, guilt, humiliation, self-harm, anxiety, and separation from peers as a consequence of being exposed to cyber bullying. Depression seems to be the one of these effects that academics are paying the most attention to at the moment.

In fact, according to the findings of the study, victims of online harassment exhibited depressive-like symptoms three times more often than non-victims of cyber harassment. While there has been some progress in the field of empirical research, the body of evidence demonstrating the harmful psychological consequences of cyber bullying is still in its infancy. In summary, the available research shows that parents are becoming more concerned about their children's encounters with cyber bullying[10]. Despite the fact that many research has been conducted on the nature and effects of cyber bullying, the number of such studies is still insufficient. As a result, in light of the current literature, the purpose of this research is to find out how the experiences of Turkish secondary school students (both as victims and bullies) with cyber bullying connect to demographic factors (age and gender) and depressive symptoms.

3. CONCLUSION

Several court decisions in the United States have ruled that even the most inflammatory Internet message boards cannot be held responsible for their content if the site is not attempted to be edited. As a result, web site owners cannot be sued for what appears on their websites. What role should schools play when cyber bullying occurs in private homes on weekends and evenings? Does the school have a responsibility to intervene? When students' mobile phones have been provided to them for safety concerns, may schools take them away from their possession? Schools have the authority to deny a student access to the Internet or a computer if they believe it would interfere with the kid's learning. Another barrier is the anonymity that kids may enjoy while bullying others via the use of technology. Students may use another person's phone

number or email account, create an alias, or make contributions to a website anonymously. As a result, the offenders are often unable to be recognized. Finally, it seems that cyberbullying is becoming an increasingly prevalent issue among young people, with potentially much more severe effects than schoolyard bullying. When it comes to preventive methods, they may be comparable to those used in face-to-face bullying reduction; however, intervention techniques may need to be revised.

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