ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 4| April 2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

CYBER BULLYING AND ITS EFFECT ON MENTAL HEALTH

Khushpreet Kaur
Assistant Professor of Sociology, RR Bawa Dav College for Girls, Batala

ABSTRACT
Cyber bullying or online harassment is different from traditional bullying because it can happen at any time and be viewed by many people at the same time, making it more psychologically worse. This article discusses what common cyber bullying is and how it is impacting the mental wellbeing of the people, especially young people. It is crucial to understand the psychological effects of cyber bullying in order to formulate effective prevention programs, legislation, and mental health treatment to make the web more secure.

INTRODUCTION
The 21st century is rightly described as the age of technology. The internet and social media sites has become a powerful tool of communication and making online connections. However, along with their benefits, these platforms have drawbacks also and thus give rise to harmful practice called cyber bullying. Cyber bullying unlike traditional bullying can occur 24/7 and can reach an individual even in the safety of their home. It has become a wide-reaching and destructive trend with significant mental health implications. Worldwide, 22% of 12-17 year olds and 37% of Indian adolescents have experienced cyber bullying in 2025.

Statistical Data and Prevalence
Global and U.S statistics: - About 46% of U.S adolescents (13-17 years) have been victims of cyber bullying at some time, with 26.5% reporting in the year 2023. Around 59.2% of girls and 49.5% of boys in that age group. (Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J.W, (2023)

Indian context: - In Kerala prevalence is as low as 3.3%, as much as 60.565 among nursing students; 30% among college students; 17.2% among teens aged 11-15 in small surveys. (The Hindu, 2023)

In Jaipur, 1 in 3 children online reported being bullied and 70% of children reported some types of cyber threat. (The Times of India, 2023)

Concept of Bullying: Bullying is the use of power, threat, and abuse, humiliate or dominate the other person. Such behaviour, words or actions are repeatedly and intentionally used against someone to cause distress or harm to their mental wellbeing. Bullying is divided into four types, namely verbal, physical, and emotional and cyber. Verbal bullying is the use of demeaning language to taunt, insulting or embarrass another person. Physical bullying is the use physical or bodily actions to exert power or gain control over others. Emotional bullying is intentional attempt to hurt someone by teasing, mocking, threatening, lying, name calling. Cyber bullying is intentional way to harass or threat someone by sending derogatory messages using electronic devices. American psychological Association defined bullying as;

"Persistent threatening and aggressive physical behaviour or verbal abuse directed toward other people, especially those who are younger, smaller, weaker, or in some other situation of relative disadvantage."

Concept of Cyber Bullying
According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Cyber bullying refers to "the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature." American National Crime Prevention Council defines cyber bullying as, "the process of using the internet, cell phones or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person."

Cyber bullying we can say, is the deliberate use of digital platforms- social media, messaging apps, email, gaming networks- to harass, degrade or humiliate individuals. Its unique feature of anonymity, permanence and unrestricted 24/7 access make cyber bullying particularly harmful to target the individual's mental well-being.

Types of Cyber Bullying
- Cyber harassment: - Cyber harassment is a specific form of cyber bulling that involves repetitive or offensive messages sent to a target (Kowalski, Limber & Agatson, 2012). Harassment usually takes place via private messages but can also be seen in public forums.
- Denigration: - Denigration is the spreading of information about that is derogatory and untrue, including spreading gossip or rumours about someone in an effort to damage reputation and friendships (Willard, 2006)
- Exclusion: - Exclusion refers to intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group (Willard, 2006). Deliberately excluding someone from digital groups such as WhatsApp, Facebook or other social networking sites or messages.
- Impersonation: - Impersonation is a method of cyber bullying in which the perpetrator poses as the victim and either send or posts negative, cruel, or inappropriate information in an attempt to damage that person's reputation9willard, 2006). It refers to taking someone's identity to post harmful, sensitive content without victim's permission.

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 4| April 2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

- Flaming: - Flaming is a form of cyber bullying that refers to an argument or brief exchange between two or more people involving vulgar or rude language, threats and insults (Chibbaro, 2006)
- Cyber stalking: - Cyber staking involves using digital platforms to intimidate or control someone by continuously monitoring or harassing them online, they can track the victim's online activity. It includes sending unwanted messages, hacking accounts, or spreading lies online (geeksforgeeks.org)

Table-1: Some Cases Showing Cyber Bullying in India

City wise case location	Victim	Nature of abuse	Legal status/Response	Source
Bhopal	5-6 schoolgirls (aged 12-13 years)	Fake person threats with morphed photos.	FIR registered; IP tracking	The Times of India (2023)
Chandigarh	NSUI student leader	Misuse of private photos, defamation.	Complaint filed; account suspended	The Tribune India (2022)
Rajkot	Female influencer(5.7l followers)	Threats from ex-boyfriend.	Suicide attempt; logged file under BNS after recovery.	Hindustan Times(2023)

Table-1 shows three cases of cyber bullying, showing the location of case, victim details, nature of abuse, and legal actions taken.
1. Bhopal: The victims were 5-6 school girls in the age group of 12-13 years. This was a threat by a fake online person using morphed photos. An FIR has been registered, and IP tracking has started to identify the culprit.
2. Chandigarh: The victim, a student leader of NSUI, reported a case of private photographs being misused and defamatory online content. A formal complaint was submitted and the account was suspended.
3. Rajkot: A female influencer received suicide threats from her ex-boyfriend, having a count of 5.7 lakh followers. After recovery, the case was registered under the new Indian criminal law BNS.
Overall, this table details cyber harassment across children, students and the influencers and the legal response in terms of FIRs, complaints, digital tracking and case registrations under updated laws.

Impact of Cyber Bullying on Mental Health: - The impact of cyber bullying on an individual's mental health can be severe and long-lasting. Its impact is more severe than the traditional bullying because it is hard to escape, constant and anonymous.
IMPACT ON VICTIMS: - Victims are 42 times more likely to be suicidality and had considerably increased depressive symptoms (33% in females, 16.6% in males) in 2022.
Impact on mental health include: -
1. Anxiety and Depression: - Victims frequently feel depressed, hopeless and afraid. Clinical depression or anxiety disorders may result from this, affecting day-to-day functioning, academic performance.
2. Low Self-Esteem: - Frequent cyber-attacks can harm person's confidence and respect. As a result, of internalising the abuse, victims may start to feel ashamed or unworthy.
3. Social Withdrawal: - Targeted victims of cyber bullying may isolate themselves to avoid further harassment. This social withdrawal leads to loneliness and a collapse in support networks.
4. Suicidal thoughts and Self-harm: - If the victim believes there is no way out, the suffering may become unbearable. In severe cases, the victim tries to harm himself or commit suicide.
5. Academic or Work related problems: - Student's academic performance frequently suffers as a result of cyber bullying. It can also affect an adult's ability to focus, perform well at work and maintain professional relationships.

IMPACT ON PERPETRATORS

Particularly those who are also victims- have impact on their mental health, behavioural, social, legal consequences such as; heightened level of depression, anger, guilt, lack of empathy, drug abuse, antisocial behaviour, damaged reputation, social rejection, criminal record, hindered social growth and suicidal tendencies.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Educational initiatives: - Schools need to promote awareness sensitivity and responsible internet behaviour in addition to trauma- sensitive counselling models.
- Institutional support: - Cyber help centres like – Jaipur's CSC provide free psychological, legal and technical assistance particularly for children and women.
- Parents: - Parents are urged to supervise digital activity of their children, reduce their screen time and speak freely about cyber bullying.
- Policy Action: - Platforms and institutions require strong anti-harassment policies and suicide prevention tool.
- Open Communication: - Victims should talk openly without any fear to their friends, parents, counsellors and someone who they trust.
- Block and Report: - Most of the social media sites provide the option to block and report the offensive site, content, links and many more. This helps people to maintain their privacy.

CONCLUSION

Cyber bullying is light matter it dramatically affects mental health across all demography's. Victims are at high risk for PSTD, depression, suicidal thoughts and disruption of schoolwork. Perpetrators and bully-victims also experienced serious psychological consequences. Successful prevention depends on concerned educational action, available mental

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 4| April 2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

health services, tighter policy enforcement and shared digital responsibility.

REFERENCES

1. *National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) (2023). Crimes in India 2023.*
2. *Willard, N.E (2006). Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats: Responding to the challenge of online social cruelty, threats, and distress. Research press.*
3. *https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/cyberbullying*
4. *https://definitions.uslegal.com/c/cyber-bullying/*
5. *Hinduja.S & Patchin, J.W. (2023). Cyberbullying identification, prevention, and response. Cyberbullying Research Centre.*
6. *American Psychological Association (APA). (2021). Bullying and Cyberbullying.*
7. *Pew Research Centre, (2022)*
8. *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2022).*
9. *The Hindu, 2023.*
10. *The Times of India, 2023*
11. *The Tribune India, 2022.*