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CYBER BULLYING PERSPECTIVES FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The usage of internet technology explodes and becomes more a favorite method of contact. While most online encounters are neutral or positive, the Internet provides children and young people a new kind of bullying. The aim of this grounded theory method was to explore technology, virtual relationships and cyber intimidation from a student viewpoint. Seven focus groups were conducted with 38 children between the fifth and eighth grades. Because of the anonymity involved, cyber bullying was found to be a significant issue and online bullying was sometimes characterized as more intense than traditional bullying. While the students portrayed anonymity as the key to cyber intimidation, the findings suggest that most cyber intimidation occurred in their social circles. In the results, five important topics were identified: younger technology, the primary medium for communication; cyber bullying ideas and perspectives; cyber bullying causes; cyber bullying kinds; and adult information. The findings indicate that the Internet is difficult to assume anonymity and how cyber bullying may influence it. The study gives children and teenagers a better grasp of the implications of online connections.

KEYWORDS: *Anonymity, Bullying, Cyber Bullying, Harassment, Information.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Individuals' social experiences, learning techniques, and entertainment preferences have all been significantly changed as a result of the fast development of electronic and computer-based communication and information sharing over the past decade. As a result of the increasing access and usage of electronic communication resources such as e-mails, websites and instant messaging, webcams and chat rooms, social networking sites such as Facebook and Myspace, blogs and text messages amongst other things, there has been an exponential increase in social networking on the Internet. It has been suggested that these electronic networking technologies are seen as "essential instruments for their social life" by the majority of young people, which has been supported by research.

For children and young people, the Internet provides a plethora of opportunities for development. These include social support, identity exploration, and the development of interpersonal and critical thinking skills, as well as educational benefits resulting from widespread access to information, academic support, and cross-cultural connections around the world. The majority of encounters are seen as good or neutral; nevertheless, as young

people spend more time online than ever before, more recent emphasis has focused on detecting cyber dangers and the possibility for violent behaviour on the internet[1].

In contrast to conventional bullying, which is primarily a problem in schools, electronic communication technologies are moving bullying from schools to a broader audience on a global scale through the electronic information highway. Cyberbullying, also known as electronic bullying or online social cruelty, is a kind of bullying that is similar to traditional bullying in that it includes "willful and repetitive damage inflicted" on another person. In contrast to other forms of bullying, cyberbullying is distinguished by the use of electronic communication technology as a tool to frighten, irritate, embarrass, or socially exclude others.

A kind of cyber bullying that includes the distribution of unsolicited sexually explicit text or pictures of a sexual nature or the demand for sexual activities, whether conducted online or offline, is referred to as cyber sexual harassment. Recent increases in the amount of academic literature dedicated to this new form of bullying, including large-scale studies to evaluate normative data on the frequency and nature of cyberbullying, have been seen in recent years.

In this article, we contribute to the body of literature by describing the experiences of kids in a large metropolitan center in grades 5 through 8 (10-13 years old), as well as their in-depth perspectives on cyber bullying. In contrast to large-scale studies, qualitative research provides a study methodology that is capable of uncovering significant cyber bullying discourses and complexity that may be less apparent in smaller studies. In light of prior research, which indicates that youngsters may find it difficult to discuss sensitive issues such as abuse and bullying, this is especially essential. As a result, Livingstone and Haddon argue that "we have less understanding of the experiences or perceptions of children themselves, nor do we have a better understanding of how online activities are contextualized within their daily lives" because "less research is qualitative or multi-method in nature"[2].

Young people are more exposed to social media, which is becoming more prevalent in their life. According to reports from 2012, 95.0 percent of American adolescents use the Internet, with 81.0 percent of them using social networking sites like Facebook. More than half of teenagers were logging on to a social networking website more than once per day in 2009, with 22.0 percent going on to a favorite website more than 10 times each day, according to surveys at the time. This kind of website provides a platform for users to connect, interact, get access to information, and improve their learning possibilities.

Despite the many benefits of social media, its usage has been connected to a number of negative consequences. It is at this stage of adolescent development when they are most susceptible to peer pressure and have a limited ability to self-regulate that they are most engaged to social media. In this way, the prosocial advantages of online interactions are often associated with exposure to possible dangers and safety concerns associated with social media usage, such as cyberbullying, online harassment, and data privacy concerns for some[3].

Bullying on the internet has lately garnered a great deal of attention in the media and in legislative proceedings. Cyberbullying is defined as "an aggressive, intentional act or behaviour carried out by a group or an individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time, against a recipient who is unable to easily defend himself/herself." It provides individuals with the means to extend face-to-face bullying to an online environment where actions can have immediate, widespread, and permanent consequences, according to the National Cyberbullying Resource Center. Cyberbullying is seen to be more intense than conventional bullying because it has the potential to be propagated by others and to continue online, as well as because bullies may be able to retain a larger degree of anonymity than they would in face-to-face confrontations.

Despite the fact that cyberbullying is a relatively young area, research to date indicates that exposure to and perpetration of cyberbullying are linked with depression, poor self-esteem, behavioral difficulties, and drug addiction. A further source of worry is the possibility of a link between cyberbullying and intentional self-harm. Recent meta-analysis showed that, when compared to traditional bullying, online bullying was much stronger in terms of association with suicidal thoughts, but there was insufficient evidence to determine the connection between online bullying and attempted suicide. This conclusion is based on three studies that utilized a wide definition of cyberbullying and covered peer bullying via all kinds of technology; as a result, it serves as an essential basis for specialized research that is focused on cyberbullying on social media platforms such as Facebook.

Because of their developing developmental and maturity levels, as well as their considerable exposure to social media platforms, children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the dangers associated with social media usage and should be monitored closely. The American Academy of Pediatrics has released guidelines to evaluate the impact of media on children and adolescents, but research indicates that more needs to be done to address this problem in the future. Therefore, the goal of this scoping review was to assess current publications that investigated the health-related consequences of cyberbullying via social media among children and adolescents[4].

1.1 Bullying on the Internet:

The prevalence of cyberbullying has been reported to range from about 10 to 35 percent in various studies, with some finding much greater prevalence rates than others. Cyberbullying has significant psychological and intellectual ramifications, according to recent research, which describes these effects. Students who were cyberbullied expressed emotions of despair, worry, and dread, as well as a difficulty to concentrate, all of which had an effect on their grades. Young people who were bullied online were more likely to skip school, get detentions or suspensions, or bring a gun to school, according to the research. Depression, drug usage, and criminal activity are much higher among young individuals who report being bullied online. Evidence indicates that young people who engage in cyberbullying are more likely to engage in rule-breaking and violence-related activities at the same time as they are bullied.

It is estimated that a large percentage of children and adolescents do not tell their parents about their experiences with cyberbullying. In addition to being worrisome, this result is consistent with the fact that a significant percentage of children who are harassed by traditional methods do not tell adults of their harassment. The purpose of this study was to obtain a better understanding of children and young people's perceptions of cyberbullying, as well as the variables that either supported or hindered their parents and other adults from educating them about cyberbullying[5].

1.2 Types of Cyberbullying:

1.2.1 Posting, Coercing, And 'Backstabbing':

Many participants discussed how children and teenagers, particularly girls, use webcams to take photos of themselves that they then put on the internet, generally for the benefit of a friend or lover, and frequently with various degrees of pressure on their side. The kids went on to say that once the photos are uploaded, "anyone may take them." Many participants reported instances in which a guy usually scares a girl into taking a photo on her webcam or else risk having her secrets revealed by someone else. According to one of the children, the threat is that "if you don't flash, I'll reveal your secrets." According to a remark from a 13-year-old kid, "guys who have threatened females would say things like, 'turn on your webcam' or anything like that and then they will flash or do other things like that and if you don't, they will tell others that you did this and other things like that." It's similar to blackmail."

The following is what another 13-year-old girl claimed of her friend: "They were on MSN and one of the individuals they believed were friends, who was a guy, was the one to whom they had revealed their secrets. They had pals over who said, 'if you don't flash us, we'll tell people your secrets.'" Because they don't want others finding out their secrets, anything like that will compel them to act." "I think a huge problem is webcams, making people flash each other, it's really scary, and there's a virus that can come into your computer and the person who has sent you the virus has the power to turn the webcam on and off, so if your computer is in your room, they can watch you sleep and stuff like that," says one young girl (13 years old) who is concerned about webcams.

1.2.2 Masquerading:

Students addressed various forms of cyberbullying, such as disguising one's activities by impersonating a peer's identity (usually that of a friend), or uploading derogatory photos while staying anonymous on social media sites, among other things. As stated by the participants, hiding one's identity is often done in order to cause anguish or dread in the kid who has been abused. By staying "hidden behind the keyboard," the participants thought that aggressors were able to intimidate and enhance their authority by remaining "hidden behind the keyboard." Several covert actions were reported as happening on a regular basis on the Internet, through email, MSN, social networking sites, and gaming websites, according to the participants. "Cyber bullying is when bullies have previously mistreated someone, but have been in trouble with a teacher, so they want to make it quiet, so they get on a computer and they attempt to be hidden and covert, but they are still hurting," said a 12-year-old girl[6].

2. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to get insight into kids' views on cyberbullying from grades 5 through 8. Following the analysis of the data, it became apparent that cyber bullying can only be really understood and addressed in the context of today's cyberspace world. Cyber bullying, although it is a different kind of bullying from traditional bullying, must be examined in more than just the traditional meaning of the term. Instead, it is necessary to consider the meaning of the virtual world in order to comprehend cyberbullying. Communication technology has emerged as an essential component of children's experiences and interactions with one another. In order to connect with one another, the participants described themselves as being heavily reliant on communication technology. They also reported spending a significant amount of time each day on their computers and mobile phones. All of these findings are in agreement with the research, which shows that young people prefer to utilize the Internet as an entertainment medium rather than watching television.

According to the findings, children are not only using technology at an increasing pace, but they are also having access to it at a younger age, which is consistent with the findings of previous research on the subject. A recent American survey of parents of children aged six months to six years found that 21 percent of children under the age of two were reported to be using a computer by their parents, with 14 percent of these very young youngsters reporting that they did so on a regular basis[7]. It is critical that parents, teachers, professionals, and researchers do not overlook or undervalue children's understanding of computers and the Internet, since this may lead to negative consequences. Creating a technological gap in knowledge between generations is made possible by an underestimation of the amount of computer usage among youngsters and the critical importance of communication technology for children and young people. Because of this gap, it is possible that adult caregivers may be unable to safeguard children and young people from the potential dangers of technological advancement.

It was discovered via analysis of the focus groups that the perceived anonymity of cyber bullying is distinct from other forms of bullying. The interviewees described cyberbullying as

being anonymous in general, with severe consequences as a result. Bullying others online and keeping their identity hidden while harassing others, according to the researchers, was made possible by the feeling of anonymity that youngsters and young people were given when bullying others online. According to the participants, anonymity may sometimes heighten the fear of abused children and can serve as a barrier to alerting parents or instructors about online victimization because they believe that confirming the event or identifying the aggressor is difficult under the circumstances. The student accounts of the effects of this anonymity serve to illustrate the literature in which online communication anonymity is defined as encouraging people to feel free to behave in violent and inappropriate ways in the cyber world, even though they may not be doing so in the "real" world, according to the definition provided by the authors. This apparent anonymity, in fact, has been recognized as a significant distinction between online bullying and traditional bullying in many studies[8].

Children would not contact their parents about online bullying, according to almost all of the participants. This result is consistent with the troubling finding that traditional bullying is underreported by parents and authorities, as well as evidence that cyber harassment is similarly underreported by parents and authorities, both of which are concerning. In contrast to conventional bullying literature, some of the reasons given by participants for withholding cyber bullying disclosure were unique to the cyber environment, such as fear of retribution and escalating bullying, or the belief that informing adults would not help, while others were similar to conventional bullying literature[9]. According to the participants, one of the most significant barriers to telling adults about their cyber victimization experiences was the fear that their parents might restrict their Internet or mobile phone access in order to 'protect them' from online victimization. The interviewees were convinced that being denied access to computers or mobile phones felt like punishment since it represented a loss of connection with their social surroundings[10].

3. CONCLUSION

Adults are described under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as those who are responsible for safeguarding children from all forms of physical and mental abuse, harm, or attack, as well as from sexual assault. In light of the frequent and intense presence of children and adolescents in the cyber world, as well as the fast development of cyber bullying, an urgent call to action for the protection and safety of children and adolescents is issued. When it comes to today's young wired generation, the Internet and other forms of technology are increasingly being utilized for entertainment, information, personal help and guidance, and most importantly, for social connections and interactions. It is critical that adults recognize, understand, and embrace the Internet and communication technology as a legitimate and genuine method of contact for children and young people in order to offer the necessary guidance and security and to keep children safe.

In accordance with the findings, children are not only using technology at fast rising rates, but they are also accessing this technology at earlier ages, which is consistent with the findings of other recent research. A recent American survey of parents of children aged six months to six years found that 21 percent of children under the age of two had used a computer, with 14 percent of these very young children reporting that they did so on a regular basis; this is in contrast to the national average of 14 percent. In order to ensure that children's understanding of computers and the Internet is not overlooked or underestimated, parents, teachers, practitioners, and researchers must take the following steps: Underestimating the regularity with which children use computers, as well as the significance of communication technology for children and adolescents, results in a technical gap in understanding across generations. Adults may be unable to safeguard children and adolescents from the possible hazards of this technology as a consequence of this gap in understanding.

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