Cyber Bullying in Higher Education Classrooms: Causes, Effects and Solutions

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Abstract

Instances of Harassment are increasing in our society day by day. Cyberbullying is one of the most disastrous of these harassments, which has ruined thousands of lives in our surroundings. The current study is intended to explore the causes, and effects of cyberbullying in higher education classrooms. For this purpose, the study used a qualitative research design. An interview protocol was developed and data was collected from a conveniently selected sample of 20 respondents from undergraduate programs. The collected data was read and re-read. Thematic analysis was carried out to identify the causes and effects of cyberbullying. It was revealed that the majority of the respondents are not known about the cyberbullying policy or helpline introduced by the government of Pakistan. One of the leading causes identified by the majority of the respondents related to cyberbullying is the use of digital technology generally and social media apps particularly. The study recommended the steps that might be taken up for policy and planning to minimize cyberbully among students.

Keywords: Cyber Bully, Harassment, Technology, Social media Apps, Cybercrime

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Introduction

We are living in the age of cyberspace; we cannot be farther from this commodity. The internet has made this world a global village, it is doubtlessly the origin of online connection. As the frequency of online connection is increasing diurnal, identically the ill-use of it is also increasing more and more. We unwantedly and with our will are involved in it. So, it's up to us how we can educate our young blood to use it wisely. It is our first liability to teach our children how to act positively online. No matter how much someone is social and participating in online activities, it's your responsibility to respect their private life, perspectives, and choices (Subaramaniam, er al, 2022). While scrolling online, sometimes we all forgot about our personal life, and probably every time we forgot about that person, his\her private life whom we are stalking online at that time (Meter et al., 2021).

It is the misuse of technology. When we forgot about these two aspects, at that time we just got highly involved in harassing people online (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). The most catastrophic part of this online crime is, it leaves an unforgettable impact on the life of the person who is cyberbullied. The person unconsciously gets enrolled into the worst kind of anxiety and melancholy, that he\she feels that he is alone in the world (Kim et al, 2021). The reason why we need to take some rigid steps against this scourge is to save our young generation and all humanity. Because people are so connected with the internet and also on the internet (Hudson, 2016). Before that time, when online harassment became out of control, we need to make strict policies, rules, and regulations regarding the positive use of the internet (Notar, Padget & Roden, 2013).

Cyberbullying or online blackmailing term is a pre-owned subject of discussion. Lots of scrutinizes have been done in this discipline to have a deep look at its root causes and effects. Online happening of the bullying can be felt as if everywhere you're being attacked by, even it is same feeling inside home. It seems like no survival anywhere (Hoff & Mitchel, 2009). Long lasting effects of being cyberbully has many impacts on the person: Mentally – anxiety, uncomfortable, unwise, even scared or irritated, Emotional – feeling embarrassed or lost attention in the things you prefer before, physically drained, sleep apnea, or feeling stomach and headaches and breathlessness. The feeling of being mocked of or stressed by others can push people from not to speak or deal with problem rationally. In more extreme cases, cyberbullying can even lead to people taken step for suicide.

Cyberbullying can affect us in many ways. But these can be overcome and people can regain their confidence and health (Strom & Strom, 2006). Previous research related to this rising problem has found lots of devastating effects which have just happened because of the

depression caused by this kind of indirect harassment. Cyberbullying is not only impacting the different perspectives of the life of the one who is being bullied but it also has impact on the victim's family and story do not end here there is also evidences that it impacts the ones who do not get bullied but they are the witness of the instances of cyberbullying. However, at the same time it is evident that the effect of is detrimental to the victim of cyberbully and, of course, as a result of this all, the victim and his/her surrounding people may experience emotional issues that results in impacting their psychological health, social life and academic performance or overall wellbeing of the individual (Craig etal, 2020).

As one generation before, they may not have ever get into cyberbully so it may be hard to imagine that only sharing few words can lead to a trauma for another person. It is evident from the literature that avoiding physical bully is somewhat difficult from that of cyberbully where only turning off device and blocking the bully can save you in getting involved more emotional, physical and social trauma (Brady & Vangelisti, 2017). But, unfortunately, it's not that simple as reported in the literature at places. While, it is pertinent to mention that the effects of physical bullying behavior is not to be ignored but if it is compared with cyberbully impacts, it is noted that cyberbullying can actually be much worse for the overall wellbeing of the individuals.. As a parent, it is needed to recognize a change in your child's behavior and it is also up to you to understand the true impact of cyberbullying, so that you may find a way to guide your child in a supportive manner reacting to cyberbullying (Blmenfeld & Cooper, 2010).

The use of the internet is a part of everyday life. In present era people are so dependent on soft technology. Students, teachers, parents, and all professionals and job holders are bound to use cell phones for their online and physical work also. During Covid 19, the physical and social life of people was totally stopped. At that time, online classes for students and working from home was the last option for people. At such times, no one can avoid the internet or the use of the internet. Same as we cannot stop the misuse of a thing when it comes in touch with the common man. The same is the case with the internet and technology, as we are so much depending on tech, people are more interested in the online routine of other people and so they are interested in each other online more as compared to their physical social life.

The Internet has been the most useful technology of modern times, which has enabled entirely new forms of social interaction, activities, and organizing. This has been possible because of its basic features such as widespread usability and access worldwide. However, it also causes undesirable behaviors that are offensive or threatening to others, such as cyberbullying. This is a relatively new phenomenon. According to Belsey (2006), "Cyberbullying includes the

use of ICTs mainly e-mail, cell-phone gadgets, text and instant messaging, offensive content on web sites, personal blogs, online game rooms, video content platforms that provide facility to post any sort of message and also facilitate copying the image, content to bully later on" (p.1). The current study was carried out to explore the causes, effects and suggest possible solutions to the cyberbullying in higher education.

Method

Study is qualitative in nature and interview protocol was developed to carry out the in-depth interviews of conveniently selected twenty (20) students. Interviews were taken in written script form that after reading and re reading thematic analysis was carried out three main themes were developed keeping in view the nature of the study. This includes causes, effects and solutions related to cyberbullying.

Results

Under the theme of cause and effects, respondents answered that there are following main causes of cyberbullying as mentioned in themes.

Classroom Groups

After Covid 19 WhatsApp groups in classrooms for the exchange of materials and discussion were created, one respondent (10) responded that "in formal group settings teacher was included and there was no problem but classroom informal groups sometimes caused disturbing messages exchange and it might be harassing".

No Reporting

> Another respondent (20) responded that "the cause of harassment was no reporting at any forum and therefore it kept on increasing".

Ignoring

> One respondent (13) said that "when there is harassing messages or clues were shared it is usually ignored by the person who ass being harassed and even if reported people ask and they were suggested to ignore to ignore that cause the increase in the repetition of such issues"

Possible Solutions

> Likewise, Under the theme of possible solutions respondents stated that

Table 1

possible solutions of bullying

Strategies against Cyberbullying	Frequency
Know how to respond cyberbullying	9 (45%)
inform family	3 (15%)
Should block/ignore the bully	2 (10%)
Should call the cyber helpline	2 (10%)
Bully should be punished	10 (50%)
Should identify bully	3 (15%)
Should involve police	10 (50%)
Cyberbullying is worst	9 (45%)
Physical bullying is the worst	1 (5%)

Table 1 depicts that 45% respondents claimed that they know how to respond the cyberbullying, 15% stated that family might be informed, 10% respondents stated that cyberbullying should be ignored, 10% said helpline should be called, 50% expressed that police should be involved and bully should be punished, 15% said bully should be identified, 45% respondents declared cyberbullying as worst thing whereas 5% said physical bullying was worst. The data of table is presented in graphical form as under.

Figure 1 *Bar chart, showing Strategies against Cyberbullying*
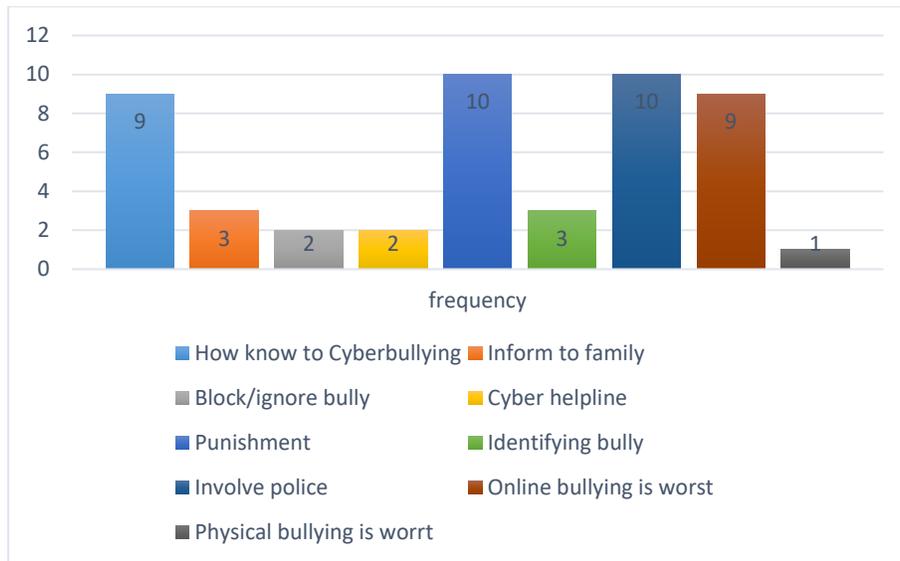
Moreover, many respondents expressed differently such as one respondent (11) responded that "hmmmmmm whenever I felt someone was trying to bully me, I instantly informed my parents that about the person who was cyber bullying me. Next time when call came my father handled the case"

Another respondent (19) focused on "reporting to the police they said that the only solution to cyberbullying was the involvement of police in the case so that you might stay safe from bully"

Discussion

The research was carried out to explore the causes, effects and solutions to cyberbullying and it was found that mostly people were unwilling to give information that they have once or twice became the victim of cyberbully. They were not feeling comfortable sharing their point of view in detail. This is in line with the finding of the research carried out by Price and Dalgleish (2010) who reported that people avoid reporting the events of cyberbullying. Cyber Bullying is one of the reasons of lots of depression, and anxiety attacks while being bullied online, and they feel hesitant while sharing this issue with anyone (Rad et al, 2019). Online bullying is happening through the excessive use of the internet or you can say indirectly, by

the misuse of the technology. The study reported that platforms which are the main source of online bullying are social media apps like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube.

Recommendations

Further, the study made the following recommendations on the basis of findings that awareness might be given to students, and youngsters about cyber bullying or mobile harassment at schools, colleges, and universities, the findings of the study made recommendation that in educational institutes in cooperation with Pakistan telecommunication authority may have mechanism to detect such cases and discourage the use of apps for bully purpose.

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