Review Article   Open Access

Cyberbullying Marks More than Feelings

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ABSTRACT

Due to its ongoing evolution and adaptation to new concepts, technological advances, and cultural changes, society is always changing. Many significant changes have occurred in many facets of society in recent years. Technological developments, shifting demographics, environmental consciousness, social and cultural movements, the labor and economy, globalization, and internet connectivity are a few of them. These are but a few illustrations of the changes that are occurring in society. Our ability to think, act, and see reality has changed due to innovative technology, which has also led to incorrect assumptions about young culture and the societal impacts on it. Our goal in doing this research is to examine, theoretically, the effect that cyberbullying has on young people's communication. We can undoubtedly maintain that several forms of communication have changed since 2000 as technological advancements have progressed. The majority of the early research on cyberbullying took a top-down approach in defining the phenomenon, basing it on Olweus's traditional definition of bullying, which states that an individual is bullied when they are subjected to negative actions from one or more people on a regular basis. Few of them are often acknowledged and mentioned. This study examines how cyberbullying affects young people's use of innovative technology for communication with one another and with society at large. The literature study is on how young people perceive various forms of cyberbullying and how this phenomenon is viewed by them in various contexts, including the internet or social groups.

Introduction

Adolescent cyberbully usually refers to forms of aggressive behavior that are "intentionally and repeatedly committed in an electronic context […] against a person who cannot easily defend themselves" [1]. "Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support intentional, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group intended to harm others" [2]. or "is an intentional and repeated behavior with a high frequency in time through the means of technological communication by an individual or a group aimed at a victim who cannot easily defend himself." [3].

A particular "attraction" to cyberbullying in adolescence can be found in the use of digital media, which have become persistent friends in the lives of teenagers today. Several studies have already shown different aspects of online communication and how these relate to involvement in cyberbullying [4]. Smartphone communication technologies enable teenagers to constantly communicate and instantly exchange deviant and (sexually) inappropriate content or texts under the radar of adults and other authorities. "These exchanges have developmental significance, as they help young people learn, explore, and experiment with both their sexuality and their social interaction skills" [5]. This type of communication has changed the balance of parental control, language and online safety methods. As online communication continues to evolve, it "shapes" the way we interact, work, learn and share information. It offers convenience, speed and a global reach, but it also comes with challenges related to privacy, security and effective communication.

Simple Vocabulary of Cyberbullying

There are several terms that have been developed in recent years related to the language of bullying and cyberbullying. This type of language and terminology continues to grow and evolve day by day, we collected some of the most common and used in the latest literature:

a) **Cyberbullying:** The act of using digital communication tools, such as social media, email or texts, to harass, threaten or intimidate someone [6].

b) **Harassment:** Persistent unwanted online behavior intended to annoy, annoy or upset an individual.

c) **Trolling:** mythological figure in Scandinavian legends but also a presence, user of a virtual community, usually anonymous, who obstructs the normal flow of a discussion by sending provocative, irritating or off-topic messages [7].

d) **Flaming:** "Engaging" in hostile and aggressive online interactions, often involving insults and abusive language [8].

e) **Doxing:** short for DOCS but is a practice of searching, publishing and/or sharing an individual's personal or private information without their consent [9].

f) **Impersonation:** Pretending to be someone else online to deceive, manipulate or harm others [10].

g) **Outing:** Sharing private, sensitive or embarrassing information about someone without their permission.

h) **Exclusion:** Deliberately leaving someone out of online activities, groups or conversations with the intention of isolating or hurting them.

i) **Cyberstalking:** Repeated and targeted actions on the Internet, such as threats or monitoring, to instill fear or distress in a person.

j) **Hate Speech:** public speech that expresses hatred or encourages violence against a person or group based on

something such as race, religion, sex or sexual orientation [7].

k) **Online Shaming:** Publicly criticizing, mocking or ridiculing someone online for their actions, often leading to humiliation.

l) **Flaming Wars:** Prolonged and intense exchanges of hostile comments between individuals or groups on the Internet.

m) **Empathy:** Understanding and sharing another person's feelings, which is essential to creating a positive online environment [11].

n) **Digital Drama:** Conflicts or disagreements that arise online, often involving emotional reactions and escalating tensions.

o) **Cyberbullying Bystander:** Someone who witnesses cyberbullying but does not take action to intervene or report it.

p) **Supporters:** A person who opposes and actively intervenes in cases of cyberbullying, offering support to the victim.

q) **Block/Unfriend:** Taking steps to prevent further communication from a cyberbully by blocking or removing them on social media.

r) **Report:** Notifying platform or website administrators of cyberbullying behavior for removing content or reprimanding the user.

s) **Digital Footprint:** The online information trail left by an individual, which may include posts, comments and interactions.

t) **Privacy Settings:** Configurable options on online platforms that control who can view a person's posts and personal information.

Current Study

This study attempts to analyze, through a consultation of European and American literature, the impact that cyberbullying has had on young people, on their online and offline behaviors. Let's start by saying that there is a difference between the two continents; some of the US states do not legally cover cyberbullying, on the other hand in Europe there is a Law 17/ 2017 EU Directive that legally covers cyberbullying. The use of the term "cyberbullying" became more common in the early 2000s, when concerns about cyberbullying and the negative effects of aggressive and harmful online behavior began to receive greater attention. With increased access to the Internet and use of social media, the need arose to specifically define and address the phenomenon of cyberbullying. The scientific material consulted is PubMed (4326 articles) and Google scholar (33,100 articles), on scientific articles from 2017 - 2022 on "cyberbullying among young people" as well as recent studies and statistics in Albania [12,13]. Some data from recent studies, estimates show that between 15% and 35% of young people have been victims of cyberbullying and between 10% and 20% of individuals admit that they have bullied others online" [14].

The Way Cyberbullying has Impacted into Online Communication

Interaction with friends – one of the most important motives for adolescents to access the Internet– was found to generally reduce their concerns about the potential costs of engaging in risky behavior in favor of approval and immediate rewards a mode of approval, approval, immediate reward [15,16]. This is considered since the year 2000 with the birth of online networks, as new ways of communication, by generation Z.

By definition, cyberbullying can be defined as "social behavior" that always occurs between at least one bully and one victim [1]. It has significantly changed the way of communication in the digital age. It has introduced new challenges, considerations and

dynamics that shape the way people interact online. Here are some of the ways in which cyberbullying has affected communication, author analyses, in 10 points:

1. **Anonymity and Distance:** The digital environment allows individuals to communicate anonymously and remotely, making it easier for cyberbullies to target their victims without revealing their identity. This anonymity can embolden bullies and make it more difficult to identify and address their actions.

2. **24/7 accessibility:** Online platforms and social media provide constant access, enabling cyberbullying to happen at any time. Victims may also be targeted outside of traditional school or work hours, leading to increased stress and anxiety.

3. **Durability and amplification:** Digital communications are often ephemeral and can spread quickly. Hurtful messages, images or videos can be shared, stored and archived, and their impact.

4. **Audience Size:** Unlike traditional bullying, which can be witnessed by a limited audience, cyberbullying can potentially reach a much larger audience. This increased visibility can magnify the embarrassment and shame experienced by victims.

5. **Reduced face-to-face interaction:** While cyberbullying occurs online, it can also affect offline relationships. Victims may be more reluctant to engage in face-to-face communication due to fear of ridicule or harassment. This can affect social interactions, self-esteem and mental health.

6. **Impact on mental health:** Cyberbullying has been linked to a number of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety and even suicidal thoughts. This impact on mental well-being can hinder effective communication and healthy social interactions.

7. **Involvement of parents and the school:** Schools and parents should be more proactive in monitoring online behavior and educating children about responsible digital communication, here an important role is played by the school, where the preparation of teachers in dealing with cases simple and cyber bullying would be optimal.

8. **Online Self-Presentation:** Due to the prevalence of cyberbullying, some individuals may become more cautious about how they present themselves online. People can be more selective about the information they share and the platforms they engage with, changing their online personas.

9. **Legal and Regulatory Changes:** The rise of cyberbullying has prompted legal and regulatory responses aimed at curbing cyberbullying. These changes can affect the way individuals communicate and express themselves online.

10. **Positive responses:** In response to the negative effects of cyberbullying, there has been an increasing focus on promoting positive online behavior, empathy and digital citizenship. Efforts to combat cyberbullying have led to campaigns promoting kindness and support in digital spaces.

Conclusion

In the digital age, communication has become a double-edged sword for young people, enabling unprecedented connections and social interactions that were previously unimaginable. However, it often brings about instant and unsafe communication, facilitating the exchange of personal data or images. The phenomenon of cyberbullying has cast a dark shadow over the potential of online communication, emphasizing the urgent need for awareness, education, and intervention from parents, school structures, the educational system, and the legal framework.

In Albania, to date, aside from reports and minimal efforts by state police directorates for cybercrime, there has been no political initiative in the field of awareness. However, the ratification of conventions by the Albanian state, such as the "Action Plan for Children 2012 - 2015," "Albania's Digital Agenda," and Law No. 18/2017 "On the rights and protection of the child," Article 3, p. 11, presents a further impetus in the protection and realization of a safer internet, though not a secure measure for punishing cyberbullying.

Necessary practices often do not solely consist of prevention or providing information about potential risks; everything begins with defining the phenomenon and its continuous monitoring. A preventive action and ongoing monitoring of the problem step by step. Some good practices are offered by programs followed in Europe, such as the KiVa program, Universita 'degli studi di Firenze, the Elisa program for teaching staff, the alliance among parents from Portalishkollor, and parental control regarding online games.

To address this relatively new and unfamiliar phenomenon, a multidimensional approach is required, involving all stakeholders [17-27].

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