

## A STUDY ON CYBERBULLYING AMONG SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CHENNAI

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### Abstract

This study on the topic ‘Cyberbullying Among School Students in Chennai’ determines the activities of the bullies in children’s life effects them throughout their life in the form of fear. Students under 18 seem to be the main target group for the cyberbullies as their maturity is lower compared to the adults. The adolescent age gets effected as it is the growing age. This paper details about the impacts of traditional bullying compared with Cyberbullying. About twenty years from now, we were unaware of the term called Cyberbullying. This term has come into existence with the development of the technology. It will also deal about the awareness program for school students in the form of education by parents and as well as teachers.

### KEYWORDS

Cyberbullying, Internet, fear, identity, technology, cybersmart, traditional bullying, electronic communication, smartphones.

### INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying has been a serious issue for the past two decades in India. This issue kept increasing due to the increased development of technology and their impacts on the teenagers. Cyberbullying is defined as a willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cellphones and other electronic devices (Justin, 2010). Cyberbullying can happen anytime day or night which leads to victims feeling trapped on when they will receive the next call or message (Kimberly, 2010). Electronic communication allows cyberbullying perpetrators to maintain anonymity and give them the capacity to post texts to a wide audience (Shari Kessel, 2012).

Cyberbullying activities can be subcategorized into text messages, bullying, pictures, videos clips and phone calls (Ibiwani Alisa, 2017). The main advantage bullies take in cyberbullying is that they cannot be identified as compared to traditional bullying (Ashna Mehta, 2013). Unlike a traditional bullying, cyberbullying allows the offender to mask his or her identity behind the computer and it makes it easy for the offender to strike blows against victims without seeing their physical response (Richard Donegon, 2012). Primary acts of cyberbullying includes threats, name calling, social isolation, spreading rumors, sharing other's private information and exclusion (Lakitta, 2016). The two main aspects of cyberbullying are repetition aspect and aspect of power imbalance (Slonje, 2012). The cyberbullying victims are predisposed to (Trishala A , Lakshmi T and Rajeshkumar S )experiencing mental health problems, drug abuse and suicidal ideation (Triantoro Safaria, 2016). Potential victims should be taught how they can protect themselves and what they must do when they are cyberbullied (Heidi, 2014).

In India, cyberbullying has been more experienced by female school going students. This is due to women being more likely to communicate using text messages and email than men (Julian, 2009). The offline fear is generated through online threats and harassment which results in preoccupation with focus on guarding oneself from encounters at cost of responsibilities, family matters and academics (Domanjit Sandhu, 2016). The cyberbullying happening whether inside or outside school, challenges the whole education system including teachers, students, parents and policy makers (Najah, 2016). The impacts differs in each person which might include negative, physical health, academic performance, isolation and interpersonal relationships as trust and loss of friendship (Wanda, 2017). These impacts are commonly faced in the adolescents which includes depression and lower self-esteem (Rajita Kota, 2014). The absent of adult supervision allows perpetrators free reign to pick on students who may not fit their definition of cool because of their weight, accent and appearance (Shaheen Shariff, 2007).( Dr.Lakshmi T and Rajeshkumar S2018) The impact where cyberbullying involves suicide directly or indirectly is known as Cyberbullicide (David D., 2012). It is a serious threat to humanity and affecting the younger generation. In this context, it is essential to study about cyberbullying in India and the present study aims to discuss about cyberbullying in Chennai, one of the metropolitan cities of India and to analyze the effectiveness of IT Act, 2000 in controlling cyberbullying.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS –**

The study used both primary and secondary information. The secondary information was collected from books, journal articles, research papers and websites. The primary information was collected from 300 randomly selected students through a well structured questionnaire. The first set of questions deal about the personal information and their views on Cyberbullying and its impacts. It also deals with the activities of the school students and the amount of time they spend on social media. The second set of questions deal about the affected group and their friends being the victim of any cyberbullying incidents. It deals with the legislation governing cyberbullying and general education to be provided by the parents and teachers to the children about cyberbullying.

## **RESULTS –**

The results of the study revealed that 63% of students aged between 16-18 years responded the survey studying in grades 10<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> where 60.5% were female and 39.5% were male respondents. Whereas the other 27% were aged 14-16 years old. According to the study, 58% students report that cyberbullying happens when a student bullies another student on internet; 55% believe that it happens when a person threatens or embarrasses another on internet 63.2% respondents believe that cyberbullying happens too often and 44.7% have been cyber-bullied. 36.8% teenagers spend 4-8 hours ago day on internet where 68.4% view Facebook through smartphones (97.4%). 63.2% spend their online time in texting and chatting with friends and 15.8% meeting new people online. Out of those who were cyber-bullied, 60.6% did not report the reason being 34.8% embarrassment and 26.1% as fear. They believe the impact of cyberbullying as depression and fear, 26% each.

They have experienced cyberbullying incidents at school (50%) and 57.9% have had their friends being cyber-bullied. If there was any cyberbullying incidents at school, 31.6% students reported to inform school authorities to help them and 31.6% involved themselves for help. 55.6% are aware about what to do during any incident of cyberbullying. 51.4% suggest that parents must communicate more often with their children to understand their issues and 50% suggest that there must be moral education by schools. According to the report, 52.6% suggest that teachers at school are the best to get help from.

## **DISCUSSION**

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass or target another person. By this statement, it is clear that it occurs among young people. If adults are involved

in it, it would be termed as cyberstalking. This happens mostly in teenagers who are school going students and according to the data collected, it has occurred mostly in students of grade 10<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>. Female are the most affected ones here by cyberbullying as they tend to attract feelings towards everything. Female become the main target for the bullies also for personal pleasure and they think that women are weak and they can be harassed easily. Cyberbullying is when a person bullies another on internet and threatens or embarrasses on social media (Görzig and Frumkin 2013). Due to this, the affected ones find it difficult to disclose this fact. Due to the development of the technology, a smartphone or a tablet is made as an inevitable need in many teenager's life. They engage themselves mostly in social networking area like Facebook and Instagram which has now become a doorway for the cyberbullies.

Nowadays, every teenager has experienced cyberbullying, either as a minor case or a major one. Many of the cyberbullied victims prefer not to report, the reason being fear, threat and embarrassment while others prefer to share their incidents with their friends than parents or teachers. The impacts of cyberbullying are fear, lower concentration on academics, depression, loneliness and isolation (Camacho, Hassanein, and Head 2018). The fear here refers to the fear of parents. Every child thinks that once their parents come to know about them being cyberbullied, they might seize their phones and restrict their social network. This is the main cause for not disclosing the fact of cyberbullying. In schools there are many incidents of cyberbullying that go unnoticed. In other cases, students bully their friends as a prank just for fun but the victims take it too serious. Some respondents also faced it by their password being stolen and hacked. If there were any cyberbullying activity at school, most of the students prefer helping the victims by informing the school authorities and involving themselves to help the victims. Talking about fear, the victims do not expose their cyberbullying incidents. Many if the students suggested that parents must have a friendly talk with their children and understand their issue instead of shouting at them. This will strongly help in children sharing their issues with parents. An awareness program for this can include moral education by schools and general education by parents. The IT Act, 2000 does not give a clear concept of cyberbullying. A separate legislation must be passed on by the government with regard to cyberbullying and punishments pertaining to it.

## **CONCLUSION**

Cyberbullying means a behavior to cause harm or discomfort to other through the internet. Cyberbullying in our society has been performed in many forms:- flaming, harassment, cyberstalking, impersonation, outing, exclusion, trickery and denigration. Thus,

these impacts differ from the traditional bullying which discloses the cyberbullies identity. Engaging to social network is not dangerous unless we are aware of our activity on internet and do not perform any negative activity. As many students do not report about their cyberbullying incidents, a kids helpline must be located in every locality where the identity of the victim must be unknown. Parents must educate their children about the awareness of cyberbullying and there should be a separate legislation passed to govern cyberbullying incidents.

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