



VIRTUAL VICTIMS: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY OF HOW CYBER BULLYING ERODES SELF-ESTEEM OF YOUTH IN PUNJAB

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Abstract

Because of the growing use of the internet and social networking sites among adolescents, cyberbullying is becoming a serious problem. Cyberbullying has been shown in studies to create mental health problems in victims, leaving them feeling lonely, sad, and rejected. The goal of this research was to find out how cyberbullying is negatively affecting youth. The study will look at the causes of cyberbullying in youth and the consequences of cyberbullying on youth's self-esteem. This was a qualitative study and the in-depth interviews were conducted, with the help of interview guide. The sample was collected by following snowball sampling. The inclusion criterion for this research was the people who have experienced cyberbullying between the ages of 18 to 24. The study employed thematic analysis to analysis the data. Study found that in the age of internet and social media, victims get threatened by social media as they do not want to viral their certain pictures and videos. It is getting trendy in new generation to get involve themselves in illegal relationships. Lack of parental supervision is also a leading cause of cyber bullying. The study also found that one's self-esteem is greatly affected because of people cold and harsh treatment towards the victims, depression, isolation, and being left out adds up to the insecurities as they are already going through.

Key Terms

Cyberbullying, Self-Esteem, Social Media, Harassment, Blackmailing.

Introduction

Cyberbullying and abuse have become one of the most pervasive issues in the digital age. It have affected and still affecting many people who are engage with social media and other online platforms. Cyberbullying includes a vast range of activities including the act of sending malicious messages, sharing manipulative information, intimidation and threatening, blackmailing, hacking accounts of social media, etc. It would be correct to say that cyberbullying is an extension of traditional bullying behaviors but with modern means. Traditional bullying involved offensive behaviors such as aggressive, actions to exploit a power imbalance, forcing someone and leaving the victim unable to defend himself or herself (Whitney & Smith, 1993; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2002; Ringrose, 2008). With the advancements of the internet and modern electronic equipments, young people have gained new platforms for social interaction. On the other hand, it unfortunately also includes new forms of interactions that are dangerous. These types of negative behaviors and interactions are collectively named as cyberbullying (Palermi et al., 2017). Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying occurs through electronic means of communication including mobile phones and computers. The use of such modern technology makes it more pervasive and sometimes more dangerous due to its constant connectivity and potential anonymity provided by technology (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).



Cyberbullying can impose severe and lasting impacts on victims, such as mental health issues, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts etc (Gradinger et al., 2015). Research study by Bauman (2013) unfolded that young people who experienced cyberbullying express higher levels of emotional distress and were more likely to act out. Additional researches have also highlighted that cyberbullying adversely affects concentration, attendance, and academic performance (Beran & Li, 2007). It is directly linked to various emotional, social, and cognitive problems. Victims of bullying experience low level of self-esteem, feelings of isolation and loneliness, introvert behavior and finding it hard to make friends (Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli, 1998). The victims may develop feelings of insecurity, emotional distress, and a sense of loneliness (Olweus, 1993). Hunt (2017) and Modecki et al. (2013) in their studies found that cyberbullying persistently harms victims' self-esteem. Bullying victims, according to Salmivalli (1998), have low self-esteem because they blame themselves for being attacked and failing. Students with low self-esteem have a hard time making friends and often feel isolated and lonely at school (Olweus, 1993). People with low self-esteem, according to Olweus (1993), are insecure, ignored, and have unbalanced emotions. Modecki et al. (2013) revealed that cyber bullying had a detrimental impact on victim's self-esteem. This research aims to explore the lived experiences of young women who have gone through cyberbullying, providing a cultural context to this widespread phenomenon. By having an in-depth insight into the stories of victims, one can gain a deeper understanding of the adverse impact of cyberbullying on self-esteem among the youth in Punjab.

Literature Review

Cyberbullying is described as repeated, violent, cruel behaviour designed to damage others by establishing a power imbalance (Dehue, 2013). "Explicit" cyberbullying occurs in private, such as when the attacker sends the victim a private communication, such as an SMS or an email (Langos, 2012). It is also possible to participate in "indirect" cyberbullying when the attacker enlists the aid of others to abuse the victim (Sleglova & Cerna, 2011). It also comprises the spreading of defamatory information regarding the subject on the internet (Willard, 2007). Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that has received much attention in recent years.

The majority of studies on cyberbullying and online harassment have focused on adolescents (Lenhart, 2007). Measures over the last 20 years, academics in psychology, education, and sociology have paid much attention to cyberbullying. According to Patchinand Hinduja (2010), cyberbullying is "planned and repetitive harmful behaviour toward others using solely electronic communications". Patchin and Hinduja (2010) developed the Cyberbullying Offending Scale (CBOS), which correlates a high score to a high frequency of bullying, allowing bullies to be quantitatively differentiated from others. After getting a better knowledge of general cyberbullying, Erdur-Baker and Kavsut (2007) created the Cyberbullying Inventory (CBI). A higher CBI score implies that cyberbullying is more common. According to Smith and colleagues (Smith et al. 2006), cyberbullying is a pattern of recurrent violent aggression with electronic messages intended against individuals who are unable to protect themselves.

Rosenberg (1965) described that one's complete assessment of oneself is known as self-esteem. In addition to it, he also became more worthy. Furthermore, self-esteem refers to the individual's awareness about himself and the evaluation of his value, respect, worth, and the degree to which an individual holds affirmative and negative views about himself (Sedikides &



Gress, 2003). Everywhere in this modern age and developed society, the notion of self-esteem is present in colleges, universities, classes, sport and offices (Orth & Robins, 2014). Various researches have shown that self-esteem usually rises in childhood but decreases during puberty, although a more significant decrease in self-esteem has been seen in girls. In addition, evaluating your self-concept is also known as self-esteem (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985) or self-assessment attitude (Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989).

Self-esteem is often characterized as a standard self-evaluation measure including the appraisal of his life and choices during his life, whether they positive or negative, and all these life experiences are related to universal assessment and approval (Murphy, Stosny, & Morrel, 2005). Similarly, Wang and Ollendick (2001) further explained that it also includes assessing a person's emotions and feelings about oneself. Specific experiments have found that poor self-esteem would induce depression, which would induce positiveness (Manning, Bear, & Minke, 2006). The level of self-esteem generally decreases during the transition period, especially during adolescence and at the time of puberty. Furthermore, its level also declines during the era of retirement and old age because of the decrease in psychomotor activity and movements (Orth, Trzesniewski, & Robins, 2010).

As we all know from different researches, self-esteem decreases during puberty, especially in girls, but it also increases during the period of young adulthood (Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2001). Some studies also identified the essential importance of the family, community and environment in forming the personality of an adult, especially during the early adolescent stage (Talib, Mohamad, & Mamat, 2011).

Children who have been bullied on the internet are likely to engage in less social contact, which reduces their potential to build a positive self-perception. They also develop sentiments of powerlessness, inferiority, and hatred (Ortega et al., 2012). We can therefore conclude that peer cyberbullying has a detrimental effect on adolescent self-esteem. Adolescents are badly affected by cyberbullying, with low self-esteem as a concern (Lei et al., 2019). As a result of cyberbullying, adolescents' psychological health and well-being have suffered, as evidenced by a study conducted in recent years (Kowalski et al., 2014). In general, the study emphasizes the need of developing and implementing particular didactical programs to avoid aggressive behaviour and raise parental knowledge of the dangers of cyberbullying (Palermi et al., 2017).

As well as being associated with a higher risk of traditional and cyberbullying, Alexithymia has also been linked to a lower sense of self-worth and a higher level of internet addiction (Dalbudak et al., 2013). According to Guzzo et al. (2014), Alexithymia mediates the association between bullying victimization and adverse psychological health, traumatic events and internet addiction, and bullying victimization and internally/externally manifested symptoms. The whole subjective emotional appraisal determines one's feeling of self-worth (Rosenberg, 1965). People who have low self are unaware of their own emotions and desires, and they have a pessimistic worldview.

Social support and relationships are critical for teens' personal development, especially throughout youth (Tetzner and colleagues, 2020). Young adults who have been cyberbullied that is, have been separated, assaulted, and disrespected on numerous occasions, are more likely to be removed from dropbox from parents and community (Ortega Barón et al., 2019); those who also face a greater risk of social isolation than young adults who have not been cyberbullied (Wright



and Wachs, 2019). Alexithymia secondaries may be associated with cyberbullying victimization for several reasons. Victimization via cyberbullying can be seen as traumatizing to adolescents (Baldry et al., 2019). According to some research, Alexithymia is a symptom of victimization and a mediator of adverse outcomes. In a study of 325 secondary school adolescents, Alexithymia partially moderated the relationship between peer victimization and deliberate self-harm (Garisch and Wilson, 2010).

In some instances, cyberbullying can even lead to suicide (Schenk and Fremouw 2012). According to the research on bullying and self-esteem, victims of bullying frequently have lower self-esteem than non-victims (Wild, Flisher, Bhana & Carl, 2004). The exact causes of this link are less well-understood and comprehended. It is likely that being a victim decreases one's self-esteem or that those who have poor self-esteem are more prone to be victims (Egan & Perry, 1996). According to research, bullies have higher and worse self-esteem than nonbullies (Yang, Kim, Kim, Shin & Yoon, 2006). According to research, there is also evidence suggesting there is no substantial difference in self-esteem between bullies and nonbullies (Seals & Young, 2003). As a result, it is critical to continue to investigate this phenomenon.

Several researchers have emphasized the link between self-esteem and cyberbullying in their studies of cyberbullying's influencing components. In several studies, cyberbullying has been linked to emotional, social, and academic issues (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). In the past, age, gender, and the purpose of accessing the internet were all used to predict cyberbullying and victimization. People's internet usage frequency has also been identified as a risk factor for being susceptible to cyberbullying. Previous researchers have discovered a link between cyber victimization and bullying in high schools. So Overall, it is concluded that cyberbullying not only lowers self-esteem but also cause harmful effects on psychological health, depression, suicidal ideation and substance use.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature since it examines the self-esteem through a social constructivist lens and helps a researcher to gain insight into the participants' inner thoughts. The researcher in qualitative research is tasked with creating patterns and interpretations of many explanations. Qualitative research is better suited to delicate subjects. People are able to build and explain their own beliefs and realities as a result of this (Leo, 1993).

Target Population and Sampling Technique

The study's participants were victims of cyberbullying. The age of all participants had to be between 16 and 22 years old to be included in the study. For the purpose of selecting research participants, the researcher chose the theoretical snowball sampling method. The saturation rule was used in the qualitative sampling technique. The first objective was to gather extensive and relevant data in order to investigate and comprehend the subject.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the qualitative data analysis technique. The coding procedure was broken down into three phases. To begin, the researcher examines the data using an open coding technique to condense it into a preliminary analytic category or codes. The researcher then employed axial coding to organise the codes, link them together, and identify crucial analytic categories. Finally, selective coding was completed. In this stage, the researcher

examined prior codes and seeks out data that backs up the conceptual coding categories that have been created.

Thematic Data Analysis

Because the study's focus was on understanding the impact of cyberbullying on self-esteem, data was organized using theme analysis. Themes were generated using an inductive recursive assessment of the data, which meant that future follow-up interview questions were formed around the themes that arose from the completed interviews. Themes were established based on links between the data through continual observation, interviews, and thought. Following are the themes and sub themes that were extracted by coding of in-depth interviews:

Reasons of Cyber Bullying

This theme symbolically represents the reasons of cyber bullying. All participants reported that what were the reasons or cause of the cyber bullying. Following were the main reasons mentioned by the participants:

- **Mobile phone**

As in this era one does not need to make physical contact or to be in close proximate range to harass someone. One can harass sitting inside their house through mobile phone. This type of harassing is more of a threat than physical one. It can come in many forms i.e. messages, media posts, videos and images that are altered through cell phones. As all the members reported that they were bullied or blackmailed through mobile phones. In this context, participants told that they were contacted through their cell phones and the pictures and videos were also taken through mobile phones, As one of the respondent said that:

“As they were in relationship she sends her photos to him on various occasions. His cousin edited those picture on his phone and spread it our internet and on social media across his relatives.” (Participant 1)

Another respondent mentioned that:

“She was taking a shower and that person peeked at her from their roof and made a video of her while she was showering using his mobile phone.” (Participant 2)

She again mentions use of mobile phone when she was harassed again:

“He then physically harassed her and took unbefitting pictures of her using mobile camera.”

- **Illegal relationships**

In this research, three out of the sixth participants mentioned that the cause of the harassment was they became friends with the said accused person and got into illegal relationships with them. One of the respondents said that:

“One day that girl takes her out and introduced her guy friend to her. That boy was also very nice like her and they became friends. Their friendship deepened to the point it was like they were dating” (Participant 4)

Another respondent said that similar thing that she how she was in a relationship with the accused person and that they both talked about marrying each other:

“They become friends. He was very nice person. Their friendship deepened and soon they started going out. She said he promised her that he will marry her. They would go eat out or go to different places too.”(Participant 5)

- **Parents were kept unaware of relations**

In this research the three participants who got into relationship kept their parent unaware about it. None of them told their parents about how they have a male friend and they go out with them. They kept their relationship secret from their parents. As one of the respondent said that:

“She said she kept this relationship secret from her parents” (Participant 5)

The other respondent said:

“She added that she kept their friendship secret from her parents.” (Participant 4)

One of the respondents was forced to have relationship with accused person. She said:

“She said she didn’t tell her parents about this in fact she didn’t told anyone at her home about this relationship and about anything at all.” (Participant 2)

- **Lack of parental supervision**

Uninvolved and neglectful parenting has severe consequences on the child. The child may involve into illegal activities. Absence of parents causes distance between both parent and the child. Absence of home supervision is also a major cause in increasing of illegal activities. One of my respondents said that:

“She said she kept this relationship secret from her parents. She added it was easy to keep it secret from her parents as they would let her to go anywhere with her friends and wont much ask about her daily routine” (Participant 5)

Trusting on your child and neglecting from your parental duties are complete different things. One should trust their child but not neglect in keeping check and balance on them. One of the participants mentioned this as:

“She added her parents trusted on her even though they were religious they won’t question her on using too much cell phone or going out with friends.” (Participant 4)

One of my respondent said when she told her mother about that she was blackmailed by her cousin her mother didn’t took it serious and believed at her words she said:

“She sighed, and as she looked down on floor as she replied that yes she told her mother about it when he showed her the pictures and asked for money. Her mother in the start didn’t take it serious as she thought he wouldn’t do that.” (Participant 1)

Impacts of Cyberbullying

This theme illustrate that what are the impacts of cyber bullying on the victims. What consequence’s and from challenges they went through because of cyberbullying. We then classified this occurrence under the theme ‘Impacts of cyber bullying’. The six main groups were mentioned here, which were the impacts of cyber bullying as they are; Stress and depression, victim of blackmailing, fear of family and society, isolation, marriage issues, workplace stress

- **Stress and Depression**

Cyber bullying doesn’t only have impact on person’s life style or affect the victim physically. Effects of cyber bullying also includes increases stress, mental illness, low self-esteem, anxiety. Cyber bullying also has long lasting effects on one’s mental. Many researches have shown that cyber bullying indirectly affects depression. Every participant reported stress and depression they faced cause of cyberbullying. As one of my respondent said

“She said she was torment”



She further added:

“I was in great pain and traumatized and mentally tortured.” (Participant 2)

One of other respondent said the similar thing:

“It was a mental suffering for her. She said she felt very shameful, guilty, stressed. She added there wasn't a single hour she would feel relax.” (Participant 6)

The other respondent described her stage as she said:

“She said she was tired and exhausted to the point that she doesn't care anymore. Every second was a torture to her. She couldn't bare it anymore” (Participant 3)

One of participant said:

“She replied that she was very hurt and felt very ashamed” (participant 1)

The other participant reported that:

“She said she thought she would go mad if she won't tell anyone” (Participant 5)

- **Victim of blackmailing**

One of the respondents who was married and her husband lived abroad said:

“His cousin edited those picture on his phone and spread it our internet and on social media across his relatives. This caused her grave deal of problems in her married life”

“He blackmailed her and wanted money in exchange that he won't spread those pictures.”
(Participant 1)

Another respondent said:

“He started to blackmail her to have a relationship with him”

“. He sneaked into their house and tried to rape her. He even brought his friend and they took unbecfitting photos of her. He also then threatened her that if he tries to tell anyone he would spread these pictures and videos over the social media and to her family and friends.”

“He one day called her to his house in the promise that he would delete my videos and photos. With the hope that he may would she went to his house. He forced her to drink some alcoholic liquid. He then physically harassed her and took unbecfitting pictures of her using mobile camera” (Participant 2)

One of the respondents who was a journalist stated:

“She said she didn't know how he somehow managed to get some of her photos and then he edited which were unbecfitting to look at. He sent it on her phone number and started blackmailing her with those photos and said he would spread them on the internet and would send it to my family and relatives too.”

She further added:

“He then one day forced her to go with him somewhere and he brought his one friend that she didn't know off. He took her to deserted place and tried to rape her. She said with pained look that he took inappropriate pictures of her and locked her into a storage room there. She said she somehow a managed to get out of there and ran home. She said she didn't even reach home that she got a call from him. He spoke with cold tone and threatened her that if she tells any of this to her family she will reveal those photos around the social media”

“. She said that after few days passed he took her on gun point with him to unknown place and forced her to throat down alcoholic drug. He then did unspeakable things and took photos again and blackmailed her to give him money and gold chain” (Participant 3)



The other participant said:

“She said they tricked her and made her drink alcoholic drug. They took inappropriate pictures for her and after that they started blackmailing her that they would spread those pictures across the internet and also share to her family and friend. And asked her for money in exchange that they would delete those pictures”

“After few days she said they called her again to which she declined but they brought up the pictures and blackmail her and after she went they forced her to drink that thing again took inappropriate pictures. This time they asked for more money and give her threats to not tell anyone else”

” She said they started harassing me in public and mocked me even during class.” (Participant 4)

One of the other respondents stated:

“She said one day he asked her to meet in a certain park. As she went there she said he sexually assaulted her and took her inappropriate pictures with his mobile phone and he showed her other pictures that he had taken of her that he edited and blackmailed her and said to give him the gold chain she had. She said she did as told then he started asking to have physical relation with him she kept begging and declining.”

“ . He would call her at different places and forced to do inappropriate things with her and would mock her and tell her that he won't marry to her and that nobody wants to marry girls like her. And threaten her that if she disobeyed he would tell her parents.” (Participant 5)

The other one spoke in a sad tone:

“ . She said as they were chatting her husband entered the room with two glass of juice. She drank and after a while she felt she was losing conscious as they have mixed some alcoholic drug in it. She said she her husband locked the door and he did unspeakable things to her and his wife took lewd pictures of her.” (Participants 6)

• Isolation

Cyber bullying leads to isolation as many of the respondents that when they came out or were discovered by people around them their family or friends there reaction toward the incidence were cold and harsh. They said they all left them. Their friends cut them off. They said they felt completely alienated. Isolation alone leads to many other symptoms such as depression, stress, being left out. One of the respondents said.

“She said as she mentioned before her friends cut off from her and her cousins give her cold shoulders and wouldn't talk to her the same as she was some trash. The neighbors don't pay attention to her” (Participant 2)

“Her neighbors would look at her with disgusted eyes. They started avoiding their family” (Participant 5)

• Workplace stress

As I mentioned before victims of cyber bullying reported that they were sexual harassed and raped. They said they were traumatized and their self-esteem suffered. It's not easy for people who went through traumas to start new things; moreover they were harmed by the people around them. The people they trusted the most. One of the respondents, who was journalist reported that:

“She said after incidence she doesn't feel like working again and going out.” (Participant 3)



The other participant said:

“She doesn’t have any life goals now. She is afraid to start anything new or to socialize with new group of people” (Participant 2)

Self-Esteem

This theme shows how cyber bullying effects on one’s self-esteem. All the participants were at the age of adolescence. It’s the age of formation of self-identity and ones self-esteem. When the participants were asked how cyber bullying affected their self-esteem. Every of the respondent gave a negative response. This theme is divided into these sub categories as: Lack of Self-Confidence, Low Social identity, Low self-identity

- **Lack of self-confidence**

Cyber bullying greatly effects one’s self confidence if not directly but through indirect ways. Victims of cyber bullying reported that they lost confidence on themselves. They weren’t proud themselves anymore as they were before the incidences. All of the 6 respondents reported negatively when they were asked that how their self-esteem is effected by cyberbullying. One of the respondent replied:

“She said in cold tone that what confidence? She doesn’t have any confidence on herself anymore.” (Participant 5)

- **Low self-identity**

As I mentioned before adolescence is a time period where building one’s self identity is very important. The victims of cyber bullying reported that the incidence tear down their self-identity. As one of the respondents reported:

“She said she was tired and at one point wanted to give up and doesn’t want to care more. She looked at herself with guilt and shame.”(Participant 1)

The other participant said:

“She said she has lost worth in herself. She doesn’t feel herself as pride woman.” (Participant 2)

One of my participants was a journalist she stated:

“She replied that she was a journalist so she had lot of proud on herself and her social friends her relatives were also proud of her. But after the incidence it all drifted away” (Participant 3)

- **Low social identity**

The respondent of the research reported as with their self-identity, social identity also suffered. A respondent reported:

“She said no one looked at her with respect after seeing those pictures” (Participant 2)

One of the respondents who were a journalist and had large social circle:

“She replied that she was a journalist so she had lot of proud on herself and her social friends her relatives were also proud of her. But after the incidence it all drifted away. They don’t look at her with respect anymore. Instead it was replaced by cold glares and disgusted eyes”

(Participant 3)

Conclusion

This research has studied the impact of cyberbullying on the self-esteem of youth. Lack of parental supervision is the main reason for the increase of illegal activities in youth. The study found that excessive and misuse of mobile phones also lead to cyberbullying, and people record and edit stuff against the victim to blackmail him or her. Also, in the age of the internet and



social media, victims get threatened by social media as they do not want to post specific pictures and videos. It is getting trendy for a new generation to get involved in illegal relationships. Lack of parental supervision is also a leading cause of cyberbullying. As parents less or ignores their ward's activities. Parents or guardians need to keep a check on their children. Whom their child interacts with through social media or which type of company their child keeps. Most importantly, parents do not keep an eye on the financial expenditures of children when they were getting blackmailed by the abusers.

Discussion

Being a victim of cyberbullying has been related to social, physical, and mental health issues (Palermi et al., 2017). Several studies have found several significant predictors of cyberbullying victimization (Chen et al., 2020; Van Geel et al., 2014; Tsaousis, 2016). This interpretative investigation investigates the primary causes of cyberbullying, the social reactions to cyberbullying, and how it affects mental health in teenagers. Furthermore, this study discusses the causes of poor self-esteem in children.

Not fitting in and falling out with a family, relative, friend, or other society, according to the respondents, was the cause for becoming a victim of cyberbullying. According to Walrave and Heriman (2011), the three most prevalent motivations for cyberbullying cited by teenagers who cyberbully are retaliation for the victim, the victim deserved it, or simply for fun. The topic of not fitting in is consistent with the research findings conducted by Hinduja and Patchin (2008). They discovered that bullies frequently choose their victims based on their peculiarities. Bullies will seek out different people, whether it be a handicap, appearance, or how they act. Bullies will pick up on those distinctions and taunt the victim as a result (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

According to studies, persons who have been victims of cyberbullying report feeling unhappy, sad, and depressed more commonly than those who have not been victims (Bauman, Toomey & Walker, 2013; Gimenez, 2015; Sahin, 2012). The transcription of the qualitative data in this question indicated two primary themes of how respondents who were victims of cyberbullying were affected: negative emotional effect and poor self-esteem. The individual expressed negative emotional consequences such as dejected, sad, disturbed, wounded, and nervous. This is consistent with prior research findings that abused teenagers might have poor emotional experiences (Bauman, Toomey & Walker, 2013; Dredge, Gleeson, & Garcia, 2014; Gimenez, 2015; Sahin, 2012).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Cyberbullying is a rising concern in today's culture, affecting teenagers' quality of life. The results extend to current studies indicating that cyberbullying is a rising issue that should be addressed.

- Future studies should look at any gender disparities in the effects of cyberbullying victimization. Due to the gender imbalance in the sample, this study was unable to investigate any gender differences. Future studies should investigate how cyberbullying affects teenagers who consider as homosexual, transgender, or of another gender. According to existing research, teenagers who identify as a gender other than male or female have more negative emotional consequences than those who identify as male or female.



- Future studies should also look at the relationship between cyberbullying victimization and suicide thoughts. Although the present data and prior literature imply a correlation, no research has identified a significant and direct association between the two.
- Finally, future studies should investigate the incidence of prior mental health issues, such as anxiety, sadness, and poor self-esteem, among teenagers who have been victims of cyberbullying. Studies should be conducted to determine whether cyberbullying caused these issues or if they existed before the bullying and were exacerbated to respond to it.

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