

DETAILED STUDY ON CYBERBULLYING AND ITS IMPACT ON ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated cyberbullying and its social, emotional and psychological impacts on adolescents. Its objective is to provide additional data and understanding of the influence of cyberbullying on various variables affecting adolescents. These days, adolescents have access to a wide range of social media that offer them the opportunities to connect, create and collaborate with each other. The down-side of these growing opportunities is that they also create more possibilities for negative experiences such as online bullying. Over the last 10 years, many studies have been published about cyberbullying that have provided increased insight into the prevalence, determinants, coping strategies, and (health-) consequences related to cyberbullying (cyberbullying: from theory to intervention). This study will give a thorough overview of the state of the art concerning cyberbullying research (e.g., what is cyberbullying, cyberbullying vs. traditional bullying, its consequences and mediums of cyberbullying.)

For this research paper to have a global scale relevance, both primary and secondary data were used. A sample survey consisting of data from 800 adolescents of Bharatpur district was taken among whom 570 of them admitted to being cyberbullied at least once in their lifetime. Furthermore, in the case of 231 adolescents, there was no action taken against the bullies. The main conclusion of this research is that although cyberbullying existence has been proven, effective measures against it have not been fully developed yet.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Adolescence, Psychology, Actions

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INTRODUCTION

Internet and Cyberbullying:

The internet is a globally connected network system facilitating worldwide communication and access to data resources through a vast collection of private, public, business, academic, and government networks (Technopedia, 2020). Internet usage by today's adolescents is omnipresent, ranging from completing schoolwork to listening to music, gaming, and socially engaging with peers (Anderson & Jiang). However, the Internet being a double-edged sword, it has also become a platform for bullying, especially among teenagers these days.

When thinking of bullying, people usually think of physical altercations. Cyberbullying is a relatively new term that deals with a completely different type of bullying than physical bullying. Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that occurs through electronic technology including texting, email, messaging online, over social networking sites, or through any other electronic device (US Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). This may include sending harassing messages (via text or Internet), posting disparaging comments on a social networking site, posting humiliating pictures, or threatening/intimidating someone electronically.

Despite the potential damage of cyber bullying, it is alarmingly common among adolescents and teens. According to Cyber bullying statistics from the i-SAFE foundation: Over half of adolescents and teens have been bullied online, and about the same number have engaged in cyber bullying. More than 1 in 3 young people have experienced cyberthreats online. Over 25 percent of adolescents and teens have been bullied repeatedly through their cell phones or the Internet. Well over half of young people do not tell their parents when cyber bullying occurs.

Traditional Vs. Cyberbullying:

What differentiates cyber bullying from traditional bullying? The difference is mainly attributed to some specific aspects that are believed to distinguish cyberbullying from

traditional bullying: an increased potential for a large audience, an increased potential for anonymous bullying, lower levels of direct feedback, decreased time and space limits, and lower levels of supervision. Unlike traditional bullying, in which displays of aggression may be evident to bystanders, the ramification of cyberbullying occurs through unconventional strategies (e.g., text messaging, online Web logs, video sharing) (Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2011). As a result, episodes of digital aggression may be camouflaged by the advancement in technology. Nonetheless, the effects of this digital form of peer aggression can be as detrimental as face-to-face bullying. (Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2011).

According to a study released by the University of British Columbia, cyberbullying is a big problem and even more common than traditional bullying. About 25 to 30 percent of the young people surveyed admitted experiencing or taking part in cyberbullying, but only 12 percent said the same about traditional bullying.

Medium to Perpetrate Cyberbullying:

The following are the most commonly used media through cyberbullying occurs:

Social networking sites (SNS): an online platform that allows users to create a public profile and interact with other users. People can use social networking websites like Twitter and Facebook to degrade someone's personality in the form of image, audio, video or texts.

Electronic mail (email): a means or system for transmitting messages electronically (as between computers on a network). Harassing and threatening messages can be sent through email.

Web sites: a platform that provides service for personal, commercial, or government purposes. Cyberbullying can take place through the use of websites belonging to certain groups to effectively request the targeting of another individual or group.

Online forums: a situation or meeting in which people can talk about a problem or matter especially of public interest. Cyber-bullying can occur when two people have arguments in a certain thread and throw insults and rude comments to each other.

Mobile Phones and Smartphones – Mobile phone users can spread viral texts to virtually bully someone. Smartphone users can participate in internet bullying such as leaving insulting comments, posting images, video and audio.

Types of Cyberbullying:

Harassment: a broad category under which many types of cyberbullying fall. It involves repeatedly sending offensive messages, and cyberstalking moves harassment online, with the offender sending threatening letters to his or her victim

Outing/Doxing: the act of openly revealing sensitive or personal information about someone without their consent to embarrass or humiliate them. This can range from spreading personal photos or public figures' documents to sharing an individual's saved personal messages in an online private group without consent from the victim.

Masquerading: the cyberbully pretends to be someone else and sends or posts threatening or harmful information about one person to other people. the bully tends to be someone the victim knows quite well.

Cyberstalking: a severe form of cyberbullying that can extend to threats of physical harm to the targeted child. It can include monitoring, false accusations, and threats, and is often accompanied by offline stalking. It is a criminal offense and can result in the perpetrator's restraining order, probation, and even jail time.

Exclusion: the act of leaving someone out deliberately in an online group, thereby automatically denouncing the excluded individuals.

Trolling: an act where a bully will seek to intentionally upset others by posting inflammatory comments online. Trolling may not always be a form of cyberbullying, but it can be used as a tool to cyberbully when done with malicious and harmful intent.

Trickery: similar to the outing, with an added element of deception. In these situations, the bully will befriend their target and lull them into a false sense of security. Once the bully has gained their target's trust, they abuse that trust and share the victim's secrets and private information with a third party or multiple third parties.

Catfishing: steals one's online identity to re-creates social networking profiles for deceptive purposes. Such as signing up for services in the victim's name so that the victim receives emails or other offers for potentially embarrassing things such as gay-rights newsletters or incontinence treatment.

Psychological Impact of Cyberbullying:

Cyberbullying invites numbers of psychological problems to a victim such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, social exclusion, and delinquent behavior. The US Department of Health and Human Services found that kids who are cyberbullied are more likely to use drugs and alcohol, skip school, suffer from school phobia, receive poor grades and not focus on their academics properly. Teens who are victimized often hide their feelings from adults and submerge deeply in self loathe. Teens who are victimized often don't feel safe in their home, school, or at extracurricular activities.

Prevalence of Cyberbullying:

According to Bullying Statistics (n.d.) only 1 in 10 adolescents victimized by the cyberbullying report to a parent or trusted adult when they have been cyberbullied. Adolescents who are bystanders to cyberbullying on social media often don't report what is happening to an adult either. According to Lenhart et al., (2011), 88% of adolescents have witnessed other people being mean or cruel to another person on social media sites. Although both genders are at risk

of cyberbullying, Female adolescents have a 22.1% greater chance than males to be a victim of cyberbullying (Meier, n.d.)

METHODOLOGY

Both primary and secondary data were taken for global scale relevance. We thought the best approach would be to include at least the countries with the highest cyberbullying case in each continent. So, we inculcated statistics from different journals, federal institutions, surveys, and schools about the average rates of online bullying, the medium to perpetrate cyberbullying, and its psychological impacts on adolescents. Furthermore, we conducted our own personal survey.

Primary data collection:

We conducted our own personal survey in a city of Nepal called Bharatpur. About 820 students from classes 9-11 participated in this survey. The participants were asked questions about the medium, basis and perpetrators of cyberbullying. Furthermore, we questioned them about the actions taken by the educational institutions and the effect of cyberbullying in their academics and mental health. To our surprise, 570 adolescents among 800 admitted to being cyberbullied once in their lifetime. The sample was 55% female and 45% male. 95% of the total participants had access to their personal electronic gadgets. 91% of them had their personal social media accounts, 3% did not have access to social media and 6% used their parent's social media accounts. 70% of the participants were from urban areas and 30% from rural areas.

For the survey questions regarding mental health, we took the following terms into consideration:

Anxiety: A measure of clinical anxiety, focusing on common affective, cognitive, and physiological symptoms.

Depression: A measure of clinical depression, focusing on common affective, cognitive, and physiological symptoms.

Suicidal Ideation: A measure of the extent of recent ideation reflecting suicide, including thoughts of suicide and hopelessness.

Self-esteem Problems: A measure of global self-esteem which taps negative self-evaluations and dissatisfaction with personal achievement.

Family Problems: A measure of difficulties experienced in relationships with family members.

RESULT

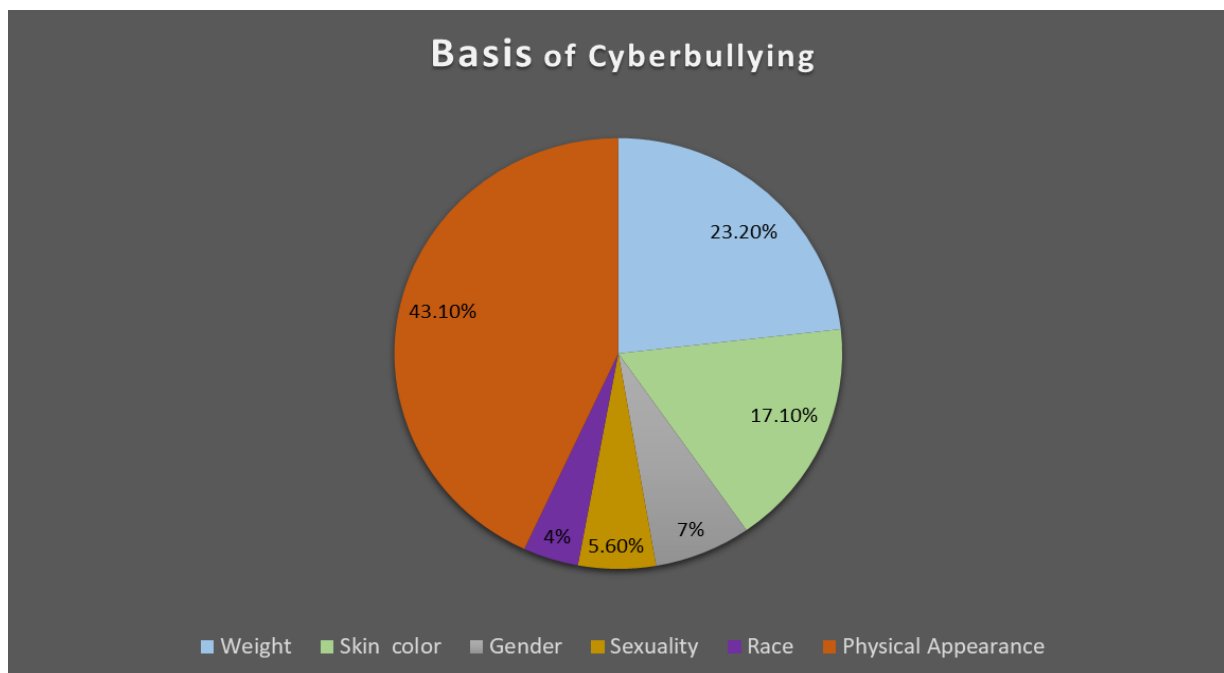
When surveyed on what basis adolescents experienced cyberbullying, 246 students reported they were bullied on the basis of their physical appearance and 132 students on the basis of weight. Similarly, 97 students reported they were bullied because of their skin color, 40 students because of their gender, 32 students according to their sexuality. 23 students reported they were cyberbullied on the basis of their race.

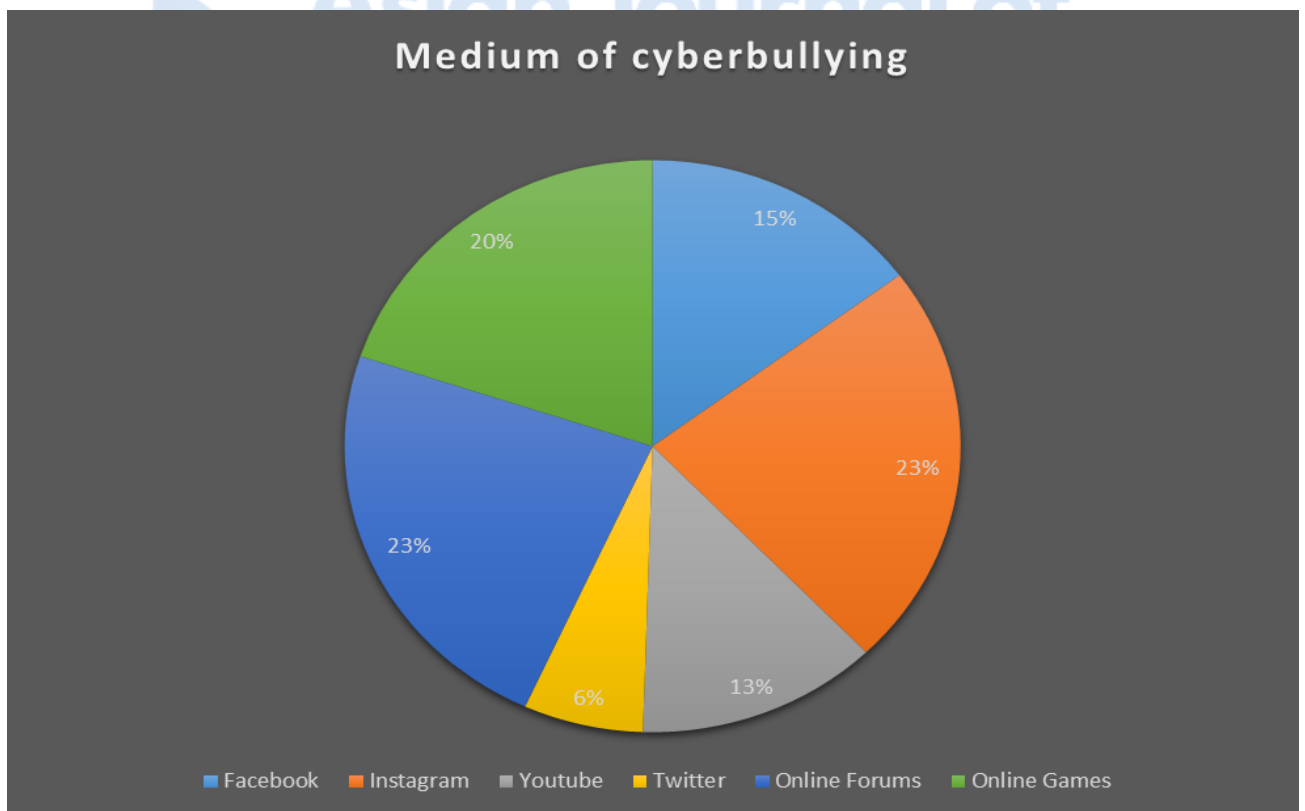
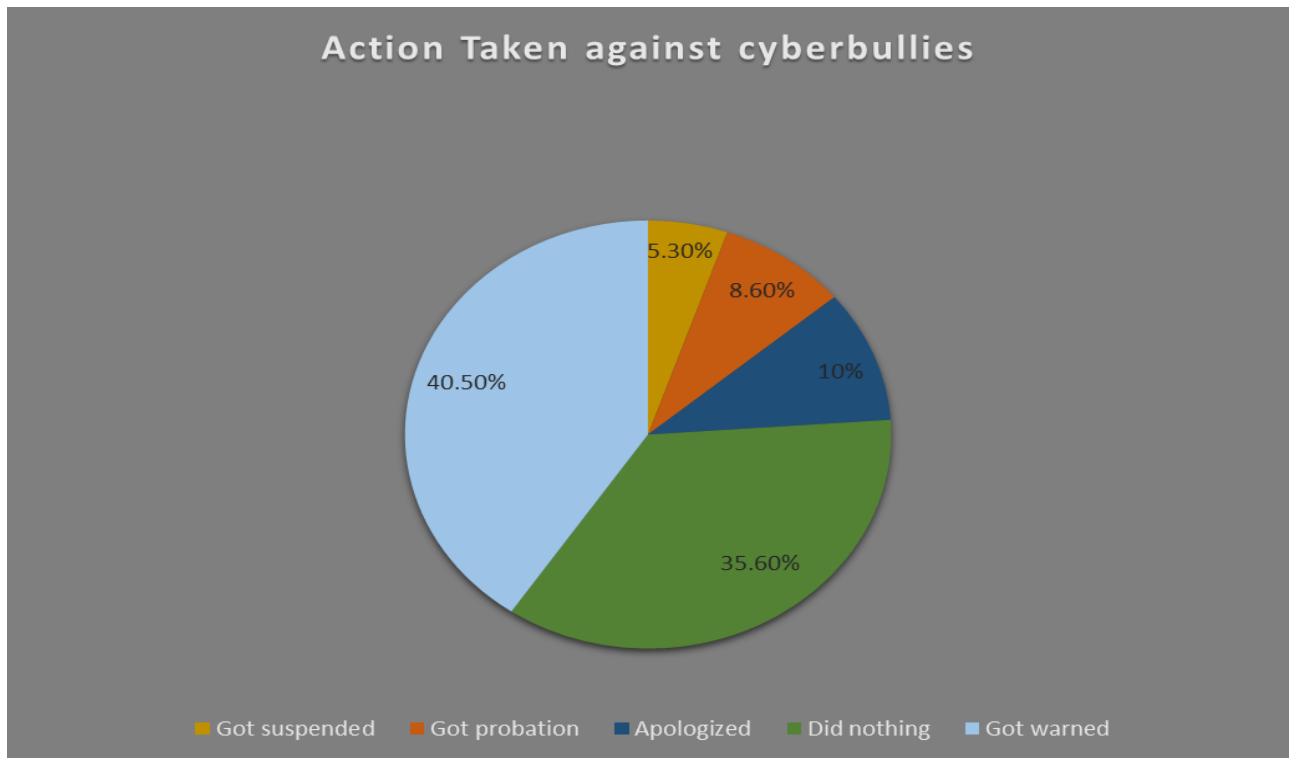
30 bullies were suspended from their school while 50 got probation. 202 bullies were warned whereas for 57 bullies' meetings were organized and they were made to apologize publicly. We were shocked to find out that for 231 bullies no action was taken.

It was observed that online forums were the media most accountable for cyberbullying with 133 adolescents bullied on it. Close enough was Instagram accountable for the bullying of 131 students. 113 students were bullied in the different online games whereas 84 were on Facebook. 72 students confirmed they received harsh comments on their Youtube channel whereas 37 adolescents said they experienced cyberbullying on Twitter.

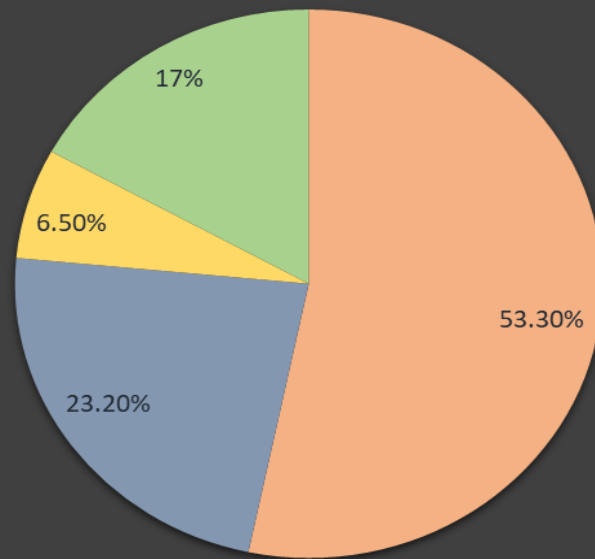
Furthermore, 275 adolescents confessed they were cyberbullied by complete strangers. 133 adolescents were bullied by their school friends whereas 128 were bullied by their online/gaming friends Similarly, 34 were cyberbullied by other students.

Out of 570 surveyed, 244 adolescents were not diagnosed with any mental condition. 174 adolescents fell into depression whereas 21 suffered from trauma. 76 got panic attacks occasionally and 55 were diagnosed with severe anxiety.



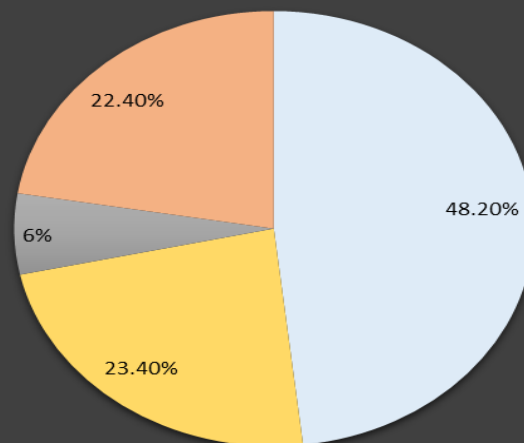


Mental Health problems caused by cyberbullying

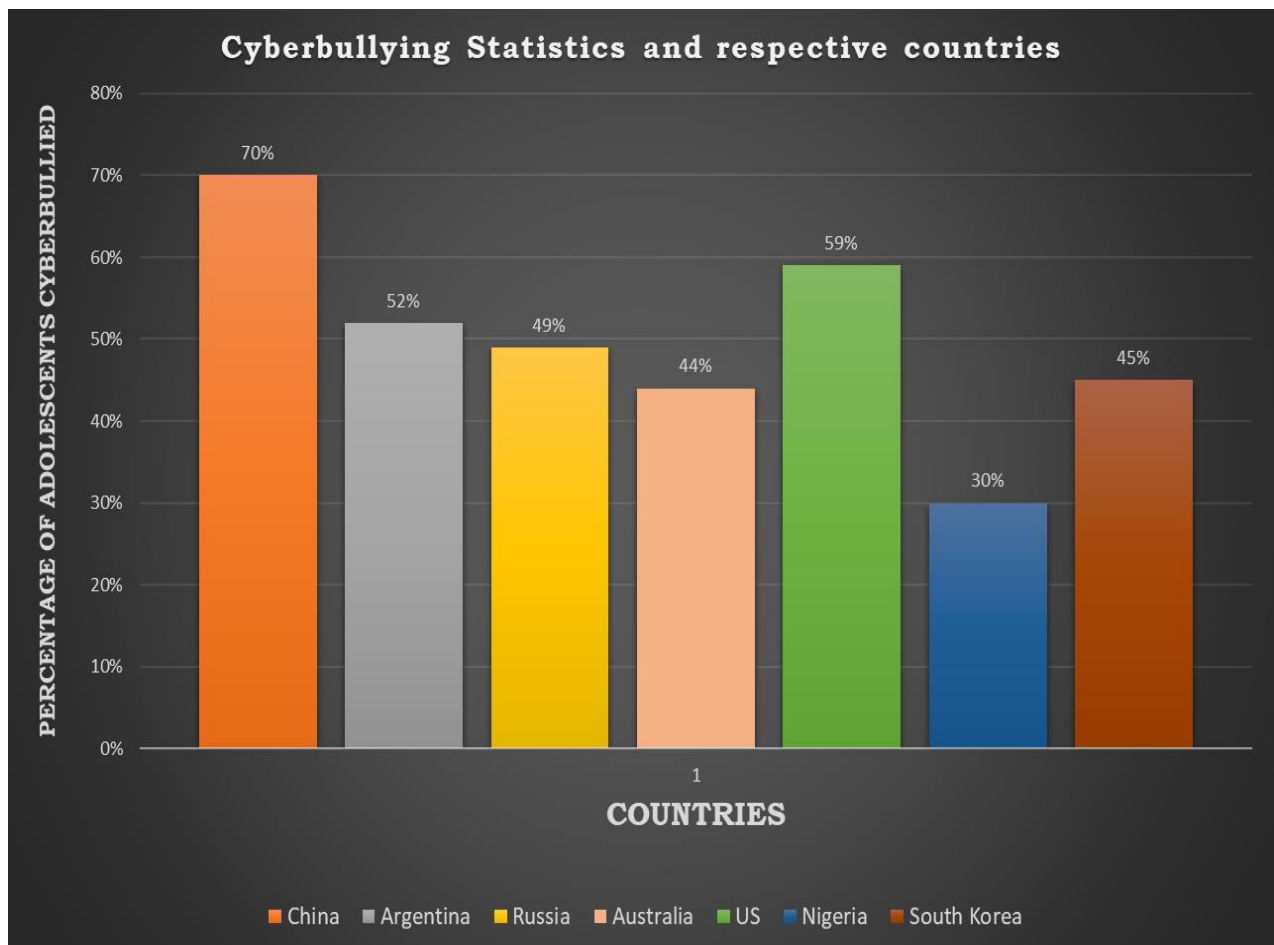


■ Depression ■ Panic Attack ■ Trauma ■ Anxiety

Types of bullies



■ Stranger ■ Friends ■ Students ■ Gaming/Online friends



CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that cyberbullying is as serious an issue as physical bullying and it has a huge impact on social, emotional and academic development in adolescents.

It was shown that cyberbullying is perpetrated through multiple electronic media such as email, instant messaging, chat rooms, text messaging, and social networking sites. Also, it was demonstrated that students exposed to cyberbullying experience academic problems, interpersonal problems, depression, anxiety, and self-esteem problems.

The Internet has become a part of our lifestyle and adolescents have to use it with great frequency for their academic as well as entertainment purposes. As more and more aspects of

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adolescents' daily activities are conducted online, and with the knowledge of the negative impact internet can create if used excessively, it is of great importance to study the phenomenon of cyberbullying in a detailed way.

Cyberbullying is associated with psychological problems in young people. It is important to support children to reduce as much as possible and even eliminate these negative effects of cyberbullying through educational and psychotherapeutic programs. Furthermore, clear guidelines should be drawn to deal with the problem of cyberbullying, part of it should be a safe and if needed anonymous report system as well as clear punishing policy

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