



THE DARK SIDE OF CYBERBULLYING

**ITS IMPACT ON STUDENT SUICIDES AND MENTAL
DISORDERS**





CYBERBULLYING AND ITS PREVALENCE IN TODAY'S DIGITAL AGE:



Cyberbullying is a pervasive issue in today's digital age, involving the use of electronic devices and online platforms to harass, intimidate, or harm others. It occurs anonymously, making it easier for bullies to target victims without limitations. Studies show a significant number of children and adolescents have experienced cyberbullying. The anonymity provided by the internet emboldens cyberbullies, leading to more frequent and severe cases. Victims suffer psychological effects like stress, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Cyberbullying also has tangible consequences, such as academic struggles and difficulty forming relationships. Raising awareness and taking action is vital to combat cyberbullying and create a safe digital environment.

Introduction to the alarming connection between cyberbullying and student suicides and mental disorders

In an era where social media platforms have seamlessly integrated into the lives of billions, the global digital landscape witnesses a staggering influx of users. As of July 2021, an astounding 4.80 billion individuals worldwide have found their way onto social media platforms, constituting nearly 61% of the global population—an exponential growth of 5.7% annually. This digital evolution, however, has not been without its darker repercussions.

Global population
active on internet

61%

5.7%

Exponential growth
in internet users



A disconcerting trend has surfaced alongside the meteoric rise of social media: cyberbullying. As new users join these platforms at a rate of 7 lakh per day, the world witnesses an alarming surge in online harassment, particularly affecting the younger demographic. Disturbingly, a UNICEF poll conducted across 30 countries reveals that over 33% of youths have fallen victim to the perils of online bullying. This revelation shines a stark light on the adverse impact of digital interactions on the mental well-being of the world's youngsters.

EFFECTS OF CYBERBULLYING ON MENTAL HEALTH:

In essence, the effects of cyberbullying on mental health extend far beyond the digital realm, infiltrating the emotional fabric of victims' lives.

Depression: The unrelenting barrage of hurtful messages, public humiliation, and malicious comments that accompany cyberbullying often takes a severe toll on the emotional equilibrium of its victims. Continuous exposure to demeaning content and the sense of powerlessness can trigger feelings of sadness and hopelessness. Individuals subjected to cyberbullying frequently grapple with persistent sadness, loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed, and an overwhelming sense of isolation. The virtual nature of the attacks further exacerbates these feelings, as the victim can feel cornered and unable to escape the relentless onslaught of negativity.

Anxiety: The threat of being targeted or exposed to further cyberbullying can trigger intense anxiety among victims. The constant worry about when the next attack might occur and the dread of encountering hurtful messages can lead to heightened stress levels. This perpetual state of anxiety can significantly disrupt daily functioning, impairing concentration, sleep patterns, and overall emotional stability. The fear of judgement and humiliation in the digital realm can leave individuals feeling perpetually on edge, causing them to withdraw from both online and offline interactions.

Low Self-Esteem: Cyberbullying attacks often revolve around demeaning an individual's appearance, abilities, or personal characteristics. These targeted assaults can erode self-confidence and self-worth, leaving victims struggling with feelings of inadequacy. Prolonged exposure to such negative reinforcement can create a distorted self-perception, leading individuals to internalise the hurtful messages and perceive themselves as unworthy. This erosion of self-esteem can have far-reaching implications, influencing how individuals perceive themselves in various aspects of their lives.



Recognizing signs of cyberbullying in students

Recognizing the signs of cyberbullying is crucial for early intervention and providing the necessary support to students who may be silently struggling.

Emotional Changes:

- **Sudden Mood Swings:** If a student displays unexplained shifts in mood, going from happy to visibly upset or withdrawn, this could be indicative of cyberbullying.
- **Increased Irritability:** If a student becomes easily agitated or exhibits irritability that seems disproportionate, cyberbullying might be a contributing factor.

Social Withdrawal:

- **Avoidance of Online Activities:** A noticeable reluctance to engage in online activities or a sudden drop in social media usage might be a sign that the student is avoiding potential cyberbullying situations.
- **Loss of Friends:** If a student's social circle appears to be shrinking or if they're withdrawing from friends and social events, it might be a response to online harassment.

Academic Performance:

- **Decline in Grades:** A sudden drop in academic performance could indicate that the student is preoccupied with cyberbullying, affecting their ability to focus on schoolwork.
- **Loss of Interest:** If a student once showed enthusiasm for school but suddenly loses interest, cyberbullying might be impacting their motivation.

Self-Esteem Issues:

- **Negative Self-Talk:** Listen for self-deprecating comments or expressions of feeling worthless. Cyberbullying can significantly impact a student's self-esteem.
- **Comparing Themselves:** Students who constantly compare themselves to others online might be facing the effects of cyberbullying, leading to a distorted self-perception.

Avoidance of Technology:

- **Fear of Going Online:** If a student avoids using technology altogether or becomes anxious at the thought of going online, it could be due to experiences of cyberbullying.
- **Hesitancy to Share:** A sudden reluctance to share their online experiences or interactions could be a sign that something negative is happening online.

Changes in Behavior:

- **Changes in Eating and Sleeping Patterns:** Cyberbullying-induced stress can lead to changes in eating and sleeping habits. Look out for signs of insomnia, nightmares, or changes in appetite.
- **Frequent Complaints of Illness:** Some students may complain of physical ailments like headaches or stomach aches as a result of the stress caused by cyberbullying.



Hints for Effective Parenting to Combat Affects of Cyberbullying



Vigilance and open communication are key. If you notice any of these signs or have concerns about a student's well-being, it's important to engage in a supportive conversation. Create an environment where students feel comfortable discussing their online experiences without fear of judgement. By proactively addressing cyberbullying and providing the necessary resources, we can work towards fostering a safer and more inclusive digital space for students.

