Cyberbullying: How does it happen & its Impacts

In this case study, we are reviewing how cyberbullying can happen and how it impacts youth and adults. Cyberbullying is developing day by day in different patterns. Our purpose is to identify those and help youth to be safe from this. This article engages a review concerning the mental health impact of online harassment for adult victims to understand their experiences and the effects these have on their lives.

The term "cyberbullying" can be a bit of a misnomer. Unlike the traditional definition of bullying, which involves a difference in power or strength between the perpetrator and the target, a lot of the activities that adults would label as cyberbullying happen between people of roughly the same status. It's also sometimes difficult to distinguish clearly between the target and perpetrator in a cyberbullying scenario. Finally, much of the abusive behavior that takes place within offline relationships may also take place in online spaces or be abetted by digital technology [1].

Cyberbullying includes posting or sharing harmful, mean, or false content, and sharing personal or private information about someone else. This also causes embarrassment or humiliation. It takes place over digital devices like smartphones and computers. Cyberbullying can occur across Text, apps, and SMS, social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok. It causes psychological, financial, and physical harm.

<u>Psychological impact</u>

The impact of cyberbullying is related to mental health issues, depression, increased stress, anxiety, acting out violently, and lack of confidence. Cyberbullying can also result in long-lasting emotional effects, even if the bullying has stopped [2]. Exposure to cyberbullying is associated with psychological distress like depressive symptoms, self-injurious behavior, and suicidal thoughts. Cyberbullying is thus a major challenge for public health. This study examines the prevalence of cyberbullying and explores the psychological characteristics of adolescents who have experienced cyberbullying. The sample consisted of 4531 Norwegian graduates in high school, age 18–21. The following psychological characteristics were investigated: self-harm, suicide attempts, antisocial behavior, anxiety, and depression [2].

Financial impact

"If you don't pay, we will share your pics" -this type of threat is called 'sextortion' [3]. Sextortion, a portmanteau of "sexual" and "extortion," is the threat to distribute intimate, sexual materials unless a victim complies with certain demands [3].
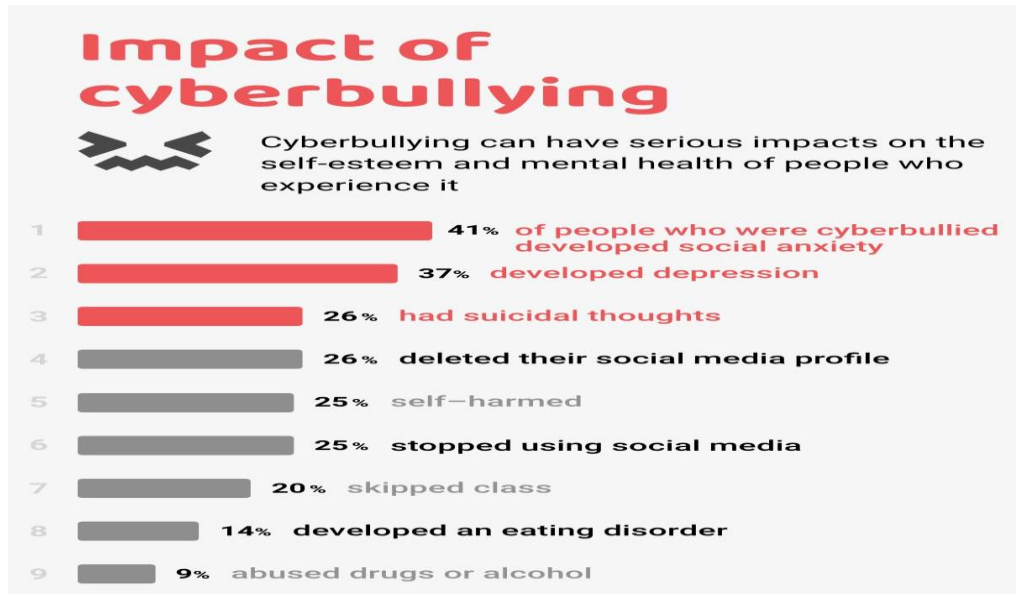
It happens by hacking personal devices and accounts. Weak passwords and malware attack is also responsible for this.

Sextortion is a crime that involves blackmailing a victim. The extorter threatens to share images, videos, or information about the victim's sexual preferences unless the victim pays up or engages in more sexual acts. Usually, the perpetrator will threaten to share sexual content with the victim's family, colleagues, friends, and other acquaintances. Alternatively, the content might be uploaded to a large (pornographic) online platform [4].

Physical impact

Behavioral and mental changes aren't the only effects of cyberbullying. There can be physical effects also. Strong feelings of stress and anxiety due to cyberbullying can result in physical issues such as insomnia, gastrointestinal issues, harmful eating patterns, nausea, lack of appetite

Creating fake online content that presents someone in negative ways, Sending pornography or other offensive graphic content, Spreading rumors intentionally to humiliate the victim, Sending viruses, malware, and ransomware by e-mail, Hacking personal devices and leaking private images, Sending abusive messages on social media sites, creating a fake social media account and pretending to be someone else, Blackmailing with sensitive information- these are cyberbullying. Device security issues like Viruses, malware, ransomware attacks, Third-Party Exposure, and Password attacks are very common ways of cyberbullying.

Impact of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can have serious impacts on the self-esteem and mental health of people who experience it

1	41%	of people who were cyberbullied developed social anxiety
2	37%	developed depression
3	26%	had suicidal thoughts
4	26%	deleted their social media profile
5	25%	self—harmed
6	25%	stopped using social media
7	20%	skipped class
8	14%	developed an eating disorder
9	9%	abused drugs or alcohol

The difference between being bullied in person and being bullied online is that in person someone can avoid certain situations in which they are around a bully. Cyberbullying is worse because even when the victim is alone a cyber bully can still interact with them. Cyberbullies post things online anonymously; they do this so they cannot be tracked down easily. With the internet being so large, it is impossible to delete a harmful post quickly. Therefore, anyone being cyberbullied cannot get away from their bully [5].

While it is well established that harassment victimization is harmful to children, the impact is not well known among older adolescents and young adults. In the present study, university students reported a wide range of responses to being cyber harassed. Anger was the most commonly reported, followed by sadness, embarrassment, and anxiety. They also reported academic consequences including poor concentration, low achievement, and absenteeism. Children in middle school who completed the same questionnaire reported similar effects (e.g., 57% felt angry, 18% felt anxious, and 22% had impaired concentration) (Beran & Li, 2005). Thus, it seems that university students are as much at risk of psychological problems and academic hardship from harassment as are children [6].

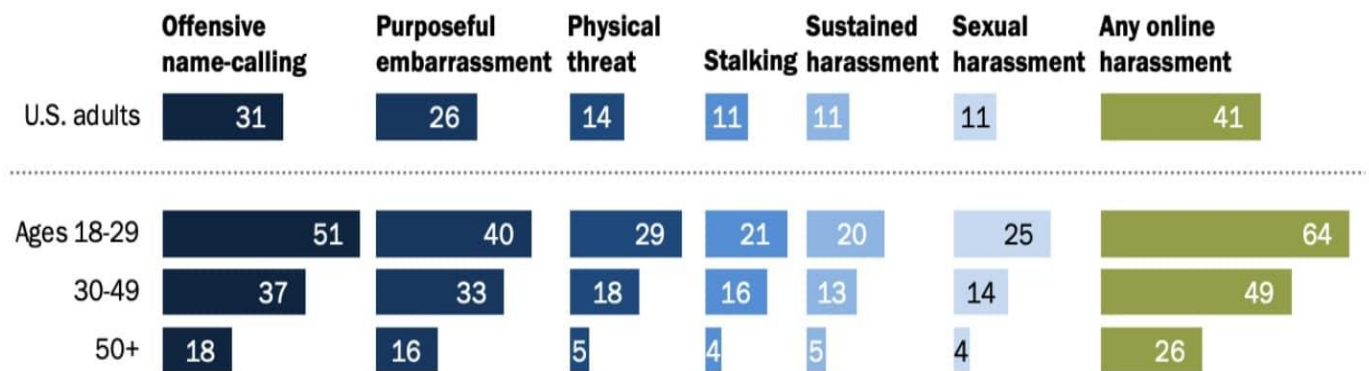**The most common specific types of cyberbullying include: [7]**
- Offensive name-calling (31%)
- Purposeful embarrassment (26%)
- Physical threats (14%)

- Stalking (11%)
- Sexual harassment (11%)
- Sustained harassment (11%)

Adults under 30 are more likely than any other age group to report experiencing any form of harassment online

% of U.S. adults who say they have personally experienced the following behaviors online

	Offensive name-calling	Purposeful embarrassment	Physical threat	Stalking	Sustained harassment	Sexual harassment	Any online harassment
U.S. adults	31	26	14	11	11	11	41
Ages 18-29	51	40	29	21	20	25	64
30-49	37	33	18	16	13	14	49
50+	18	16	5	4	5	4	26

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 8-13, 2020.
"The State of Online Harassment"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: PEW research center

How should you respond if someone is harassing you on the internet?
- If you could recognize the harasser, tell them that you do not want them to contact you again.
- Once you have told a familiar harasser not to communicate with you again, or if you are receiving harassing & abusive e-mails/texts from someone you do not know, block or filter messages from the harasser.
- Do not reply to inappropriate, harassing e-mails if you do not know the harasser. By responding, you are confirming that your e-mail address is valid and active.
- Take a screenshot/ screen record of your harassment, repost it, and let others know that you are the victim. Expose their real identity if possible. Report the harasser's post/social media account. Save all evidence, both electronically and in hard copy (print).

- Seek help from someone you trust. Tell a friend or family member. Go to a cybercrime support community.

From this report, this is very clear that cyber harassment does great harm to mental health than any other harm. Victims of cyberbullying can experience wide-ranging effects, including mental health issues, poor academic performance, a desire to drop out of school, and even suicidal ideation. As technology is advancing day by day, cyber harassment is growing too. Women are considered the core victims of cyber harassment, although men are also not an exception to it. Women are more victims of harassment and pornography in social media while men are more victims of mobile banking and ATM card hacking.

A significant proportion of children and adolescents (20%–40%) have been victims of cyberbullying, with females and sexual minorities seemingly at higher risk. Perpetrators are more likely to be male [8].

What is your responsibility to prevent cyber harassment?
- Keep personal information private, including your address, date of birth, phone number, school, credit card number(s), and passwords.
- Without necessity, do not turn on the locations.
- Log out of your accounts when you are not using them, especially when using a public computer or device.
- Always have in mind before you post – is this information or this photo something you want everyone to see? Do not share private photos/videos with anyone.
- Use recommended privacy settings provided by the site.
- Use strong passwords and Two-factor authentication (2FA)
- Do not post anything that might get you into trouble with the law.

A very effective way to avoid cyberbullying is to know the mediums. Don't reveal identifying details about yourself—address, phone number, school, credit card number, etc.—online. Passwords exist for a reason; sharing them with friends is like you are giving access to your personal life to friends and strangers. These are some basic safety rules of the internet. By maintaining these, cyberbullying can be reduced.

To protect yourself from cyber harassment, you have to know the internet safety rules. If you become the victim of severe cyber harassment which you cannot solve by yourself, such as sextortion, identity theft, and getting threatening messages then you must take professional help.

Go through this link to get your country's helpline number for cyberbullying.

List of helplines

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