**Reduction of Cyberbullying**

The pervasive use of emerging technologies has escalated the prevalence of cyberbullying. Raising awareness of the growing trend of cyberbullying is critical to mitigating its implications. Cyberbullying is a goal-driven attitude that occurs on online platforms and is recurrently targeted at instigating malice towards victims to emotionally, mentally or even instill physical harm (Marzano 2019). Bullying is intentional thus tends to induces goal-directed attitudes where the attacker opts to send harmful, disturbing, and repetitive messages to gain false status, vengeance, or other ill-driven intentions. Cyberbullying can be portrayed as malicious intent to persistently harass other individuals by propagating hate and causing spite via online and electronic channels. The ill practices can range from defamation, deliberate emotional torture, and public divulgence of private information (Barlett et al. 2020). Cyberbullying often bears unique consequences given the nature of digital media. Reducing the prevalence of cyberbullying and the victimization that it tags along is fundamental to creating a secure society grounded in morality and shuns spite. As such, this paper explores various elements of cyberbullying and the strategies that be used in reducing the practice.

Notably, the role of social media in perpetrating and impeding cyberbullying trends is indispensable since it affords perceived anonymity to the users and pertinent parties. According to Barlett et al. (2018), the anonymity that these social platforms offer to users can facilitate the inception of spiteful behavior that rallies for checks and means to alleviate the negative effects that stem from their use. Cyberbullying counters the conventional confines of face-to-face bullying which can append the distress of victims. For instance, cyberbullies can reach their potential targets by trumping either geographical or chronological boundaries through remote means or social media platforms (Marzano 2019). Bullying tendencies are perceived to be dire when the bullies are anonymous and concealed behind an unknown identity than when the perpetrator is known to the targeted victim.

People should be informed of the characteristics of cyber bullies as a strategy towards reducing the practice. Anonymous bullying can heighten the targeted individual’s fear, insecurity, and stress since the bullies’ identities are undisclosed and mysterious. Hence, this results in cyber victimization which threatens the well-being of an individual as well as increases their frustration and depression. Furthermore, since the targeted parties are unaware of the perpetrators’ motives and goals behind their unwarranted aggression, it propels a wave of uncertainty and distress in the victims (Barlett et al.. 2018). Significantly, these mediated avenues promote anonymity and escalate a victim’s precariousness in digital platforms. Bullying augments various potential imposing goals such as experimenting with a foreign concept or persona, navigating boredom or idleness, propagating hate and envy, or attaining loftier mobility in a social network. Targets of bullying must discern the motives behind a bully’s attack since goals and objectives are cognitive illustrations of desired results (Campbell 2019). A bully’s goals can be driven by relationship-specific targets when the victim is familiar with the offender.

Verifying social media accounts to prevent anonymity can help in preventing cyberbullying. The interpersonal connection often provides the means to reduce uncertainty between the victim and the abuser. The goals driving the abuse are often associated with specific relationships and the interpersonal dynamics which determine the proximity of victims and their abusers (Barlett et al., 2020). The awareness and recognition of an individual’s identity often translate to the associated goals since they offer an avenue to understand others and what drives their actions. The varying levels of identity uncertainty influence the consequent reaction in victims and their perception of the meted bullying. Uncertainty is a mental state in which there is a desire for additional information, due to the disparate levels of the information acquired and the relative quality of the information. The identity uncertainty induced and the subsequent motive uncertainty underpin the extent of anonymity and the reasons driving those cases.

Screening of posts by social media companies can help in mitigating cyberbullying. The rapid evolution of social media since its inception has seen a drastic change in information acquisition and sharing. From the earlier restrictions that delineated these platforms and the non-friendly user interfaces, the advanced nature and affordability that has come with ameliorated social media services have cultivated the propensity of individuals to adopt social networking sites for communication (Campbell 2019). Social sites allow individuals to form their own user identities that could be accessed through online systems to enhance digital communication with other users globally. The growing popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram became central to online communication and delineated the changing outlook of the online landscape. Similarly, the inception of smartphone technology merged with the widely accessible Internet Communication Technology prompted users to adopt the use of these social platforms at the convenience of their mobile devices (Marzano 2019). Consequently, the ease of posting unchecked messages and content escalated and online communication was made easier.

The ubiquity of social media networks allowed its pervasive spread and embrace. Perceived anonymity consequently stemmed from the creation of social media accounts and increased the probability of cyberbullying perpetration. As a result, social media companies and stakeholders have had a vast responsibility to enforce stringent measures and a code of conduct to check and curb these aggressive tendencies. Baldry, Sorrentino, and Farrington (2019) contended that despite these agencies not being solely mandated to curb cyberbullying, they hold a key stake in ensuring that these communities are hate-free and secure for users to navigate. Additionally, Campell (2019) postulated that the users of these networks, parental guidance, antibullying campaigns, individual ethics, and other avenues should be explored and concurrently paired to seek the attainment of a common objective in curtailing these issues. However, social media remains central to aiding the reduction of cyberbullying perpetration and trends (Barlett et al., 2020). The unique nature of online environments can impose liberating on most individuals, especially young adults, due to the unrestricted degree of freedom that they bear.

The ability to express oneself when the perception is that no one is watching motivates the numerous cases that trigger these abusive attacks. Several studies have indicated that these platforms can enable positive impacts such as augmenting social relationships which may be a difficulty for the majority of people (Barlett et al., 2018). The anonymity that social platforms and the internet pose to users enable them to adopt a more belligerent persona than in conventional life settings. The ease for people to hide behind phony screen identities, or conceal their true names by using other people’s screen names makes it an attractive venture for cyber bullies to thrive. Moreover, the cyber environment can be a foundational ground for victims of traditional bullying to pursue vengeful resorts.

Involving policymakers in instituting policies to prevent cyberbulling is of great importance. For instance, peer bullying stretches beyond traditional bullying and has become an extensive concern that requires policymakers and stakeholders as well as the general community to take up the responsibility to hinder this unbecoming behavior. Impostors hiding behind the anonymity that online platforms provide tend to feel secure and diminish their perceived notion of any action being taken against them (Baldry, Sorrentino, and Farrington 2019). Traditional bullying contrast with cyberbullying since the former involves physical traits whereas the buttress of cyberbullying is mostly having computer proficiency. The deemed power that cyberbullying exerts such as disseminating defamatory information, posting inflammatory messages, and controlling conversations is a causative concern that nourishes this unbefitting behavior. Gender is a pivotal element in discerning the characteristics of cyberbullying. The individual disparities that gender tags along can be a crucial motivation for inciting online hate. Ranging from spiteful comments aimed at specific gender groups to trolling their values and characteristics, hate is engendered based on gender identity.

Cyberbullying can further be mitigated by preventing risky and excessive internet use also increases the likelihood of cyberbullying and cyberstalking. Individuals with malicious intentions roaming the internet are likely to take up actions that jeopardize the safety and well-being of others (Barlett 2017). Vulnerable and unsuspecting users are prone to be affected by these acts that threaten and discredit their online participation. Notably, children and young adults are highly susceptible to falling victim to these orchestrated attacks channeled by strangers on the internet. Resultantly, most cases of online abuse are unreported either to parents or the pertinent authorities in charge (Baldry, Sorrentino, and Farrington 2019). Often, the fear and insecurity that are induced in the targeted person outweigh their resolve to seek advice or appropriate measures. Reducing the escalating cases of cyberbullying rallies the extensive and collective effort from all parties involved. The case of Brandy Vela, a seventeen-year-old girl who shot herself in front of her family after being cyberbullied and victimized concerning her appearance is one outstanding incident of the tragic consequences of cyberbullying. As Barlett et al. (2018) informed, the perpetrators of the online attack that targeted the victim who consequently committed suicide were arrested and charged with crimes pertinent to creating fake Facebook accounts to bully the victim. The incitement and aggression that the attack posed led to the death of the teenager. Such cases that bear tragic endings depict the extent of harm that cyberbullying bears and the detrimental effects that such ill-suited behaviors result in.

Social media platforms are pivotal in putting in place the necessary strategies to filter through online bullying. Social networks have a huge mandate to ensure that they sift through indecent language, control and regulate messaging and interactive capacities, block perpetrators of these attacks, and establish a firm code of conduct and the penalty for such violations (Patchin and Hinduja 2015). Further, the enabling of users to report impersonations, fake accounts, harassment, and self-harm underscores the key mitigation techniques that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter adopt to battle cyberbullying. The measures posit that user-directed attitudes on these social media platforms give individuals the ability to moderate their social interactions and experience.

Critically, social media and other online platforms can urge other parties and stakeholders to step in in the event of an online attack. Bystanders or third parties witnessing these cyberbullying incidents can intervene in these situations to aid the victims of such targeted attacks. However, most people viewing these perpetrated abuses online often do not directly intervene or get involved in those interactions (Patchin and Hinduja 2015). Social media sites similarly should deploy means for indirect intervention through content removal or automatic detection of unfit posts and messages. Moreover, social media sites should have a framework that discourages anonymity and ensures a non-anonymous experience to reduce such cases of cyberbullying. Such platforms could compel an individual to divulge their legitimate credentials rather than phony and ambiguous identities (Pennell, Campbell, and Tangen 2022). Similarly, social networking sites make users reveal their location addresses and telephone details to decrease the level of anonymity and the resultant cyberbullying.

Combating and curbing cyberbullying is impractical when the context of the attack is unclear. The vastness of the internet and its ubiquitous nature makes it strenuous to probe information that is constantly evolving (Barlett 2017). As such, understanding the borders of young adults and children in dealing with the wide-ranging presence of online interactions and virtual reality is necessary. Cyberbullying engenders cyber victimization which affects the well-being of individuals. Numerous approaches to reducing the effects of cyberbullying encompass training children, teenagers, and their parents or guardians in e-safety and embracing technological initiatives to negate the behaviors of cyberbullies by blocking abusive behavior online. Educating the relevant parties on the negative consequences of cyberbullying is essential and an intervention strategy that is largely effective and necessary (Pennell, Campbell, and Tangen 2022). Moreover, the criminalization of cyberbullying is likely to propagate a rise in ill-directed actions instead of reducing its impact. Empowering the masses with practical strategies is profoundly important and efficient in understanding the concept of cyberbullying. Internet safety education is also indispensable in ensuring that the far-reaching impacts of cyberbullying are mitigated. Fundamentally, peer education programs and forums are key to promoting a culture that shuns abuse, violence, and bullies.

**Conclusion**

Online platforms have become an integral component of the global society. Social media sites and the internet have enhanced the ease of communication among people from various parts of the world. However, despite the positive impacts that these platforms bear, some of these communication channels induce serious ravaging implications to multiple innocent users. Consequently, many people fall victim to the harmful and malicious actions that are promoted by ill-driven persons lacking a moral compass. Cyberbullying causes extensive psychological harm, such as heightened anxiety, depression, seclusion, suicidal thoughts, physical harm, and behavioral concerns. Therefore, devising means and strategies for alleviating these negative effects and curtailing cyberbullying tendencies is paramount in ensuring a safe threat-free digital society.

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