

## CYBER BULLYING AND ITS GENDER WISE IMPACT ON THE WELL-BEING AND MENTAL HEALTH OF ADOLESCENTS

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### ABSTRACT

Recent decade has witnessed a massive communication expansion due to the excessive use of Internet and mobile phone with latest features. It has spread like a wildfire among adolescents and has crosses all geographical boundaries of the world. Although technology provides several benefits to the teenagers but at the same time, it can be misused. Media provides a platform to communicate with anyone at any time, which eventually can results in cyber bullying. As technology evolves, cyber bullying also flourish among all the male and females. Today teenagers take bullying as an unbeaten survival tactic for success. This technique can be dangerous because when a person realizes its efficiency, he or she may become habitual bully. Cyber Bullying is growing very fast and experts believe that it can be more responsible to cause mental and emotional disturbances, such as anxiety, tension and restlessness etc. In addition, it can cause many well-being and mental health related problems, irrespective of gender, cast and creed. Unfortunately this unpleasant practice is spreading all over the world, predominantly among teenage boys and girls. Cyber bullying is the deplorable face of communication technology as it tends to have an injurious impact on one's psychological and somatic health. It has far reaching negative impact on one's overall well-being. We need deep understanding of this issue before drawing any conclusion. For that purpose, researched conducted this research to understand the Cyber Bullying and its Gender wise impact on the Well-being and Mental Health of Adolescents. So that the innocent mind of adolescents can be exposed to the positive aspects of the media.

**Keywords:** Bullying, Cyber Bullying, Well-being, Mental Health, Communication Technology.

### INTRODUCTION

In the present era, the electronic media has become the necessity of life. It is uncontrollably used to stay in touch with family, friends and colleagues. Computers, mobile devices and many new information and communication technological tools – such as websites, instant messages, webcoms and images are widely utilized by the young people for learning, entertainment and social interaction. The Internet also provides various advantages of communication among children to boost up their social integration needs, identity formation, thinking skills and liberty etc (Boyd, 2008).

Adolescents do not find technology as complex edition but rather an integral part of their daily routine. On the other hand, the excessive and uncontrolled use of this

technology has given birth to cyber bullying. The strong passion, growing addiction and expertise in computer and electronic media, the youth culture had made cyber bullying possible.

Cyber bullying is intentionally performed with the help of modern technology, in order to humiliate the other person. Experts like Hinduja and Patchin (2007) described cyber bullying as repeated premeditated damage, imposed with the help of electronic media. Shariff and Gouin (2006) defined cyber bullying as hidden psychological bullying done with electronic devices like mobile phones, websites and other forms of electronic media. Similarly, Worldwide Online Dictionary and Thesaurus (2019) define cyber bullying as the prevalent use of the Internet and mobile technologies to bully, especially amongst adolescents.

As per Hinduja & Patchin (2007) cyber bully involves malicious attackers repeatedly enjoying harassing others, through electronic devices. Aricak and collaborator (2008) called cyber bullying as power imbalance of technological proficiency between bully and victim. Because of its virtual potential, Mishna, Saini, and Solomon (2009) found cyber bullying behavior to be more responsible in spreading rumor or video clips etc. In other words, cyber bullying can be defined as an aggressive act of a group or an individual intending to harm his defenseless victim repeatedly through electronic forms of communication. It is found to be executed mainly through electronic mail (e-mail), live chat, instant messages, websites, blogs, online voting, social networking site, pictures, videos and phone calls etc.

### **ADOLESCENTS AND CYBER BULLYING**

As per Feinberg & Robey (2009) frequent use of Internet by the adolescents, expose them to the acts of cyber bullying. They also upraised that with the increase of Internet use by the teenagers, the acts of cyber bullying also increased. Blair (2003) and (Kowalski & Limber, 2007) noted that the teenagers even at the age of nine, have a natural inclination towards cherishing their technological abilities, consequently they are also found getting engaged in the cyber bullying activities.

The digital media tools, with the help of latest software, provide options to the user to see whether the messages have been received, read or responded back by the respondent. These modern technological options can develop anxiety, stress and depression in its users. On the other hand, recipient also comes under pressure to respond swiftly and therefore can develop feedback stress and depression, tell-upon their well-being and mental health related issues.

## **WELL-BEING**

Well-being means the absence of negative emotions like tension, anxiety, restlessness and anger whereas the presence of positive emotions like being in good spirit, interested in life, feeling cheerful, having good health, satisfied and progressive in life. It is a positive outcome of the activities which are meaningful and successful for people and society. Broad fundamentals of well being are better living conditions, prosperity, euphoria, sanity, satisfaction, good health, strength and best use of it for the betterment of society and nation. In simple words, one's general outlook on life, confidence, physical condition and happiness is described as well-being.

World Health Organization says that well-being and mental health are closely related to each other as well-being protects against the development of mental disorders on the other hand mental disorders can increase the threat of poor well-being condition. A person can have higher risk of psychological well-being if he has an excess of negative affects dominating over positive ones.

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

Mental health is important for everyone to maintain at every stage of life. It determines how we handle stress and maintain balance between life activities, responsibilities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. Taking care of mental health can preserve a person's ability to enjoy life positively.

Mental health is more than just an absence of mental disorders or disabilities. It is defined as the state of being mentally and emotionally sound, having no mental illness and feeling comfortable about oneself positives, about others and also having the ability to meet the demands of daily routine life. However the mental functioning is fundamentally interconnected with physical and social functioning and health outcomes. Mental health problems like anger, anxiety, tension etc. may result in mental health disorder, which is a serious issue.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

National Telecommunications and Information Administration (2002) found that in the United States of America 90% of the adolescents (12 to 17 years old) use computers. Tokunaga (2010) found in United States that 97% of the youngsters are connected to the Internet and over 66% of the adolescents are able to go online from their residences at any time. They also enjoy chasing anyone at any time. An online service provider, America Online (2003) having more than 35 million users, state that members participate in more than 16,000 chat sessions, send more than 2.1 billion instant messages and make 1.9 billion phone calls across their network, per day. Li

(2005) while examining the nature and extent of teenagers' cyber bullying experiences found that almost 54% of the students were bully victims and more than half of the students knew someone being cyber bullied by others. At the same time more than 40% cyber bully victims did not know, who cyber bullied them. Hinduja & Patchin (2009) pinpoint social ills to have direct effect on cyber bullying behaviour which is connected to various social malpractices such as drug abuse, alcohol consumption, crimes, school firings murder etc. Mesch (2009) explained cyber behavior as the result of Internet or social networking sites. It when increased, there is greater possibility for cyber bullying to happen more. A renowned scholar, Li (2007) on the bases of his earlier research of 2005 found close relation among bullies, cyber bullies, and cyber bully victims, in this study. As per Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) cyber victims suffer three times more depression in comparison to non-victims. Ortega and his team (2009) found the most common emotional response among teenager victim is having excess anger. In addition, others symptoms of victimization include stress, being upset, depression, and loneliness etc. The root cause of anger, frustration, sadness and depression among adolescents is cyber bullying victimization (Patchin and Hinduja, 2006). Hinduja and Patchin (2009) did a study of 1378 students under the age of 18 having equal number of male and female and found that 32 % of male and 36% of female reported being victims of cyber bullying, while 18% male and 16% of female reported harassing others online. C N Hase *et al.* (2015) found that both traditional bullying victimization and cyber bullying victimization were associated with negative outcomes, but traditional bullying, if controlled, the cyber bullying will not be a predictor of negative mental health outcomes. On the other hand if cyber bullying is controlled the traditional bullying will remain a significant predictor of negative mental health outcome. Well being ranges from negative state of stress worries to favourable self esteem and success etc. Warr (1978) stated that feelings may range from negative mental state like disperse, nervousness, unhappiness, frustration to a state comprising favourable esteem and success to recognize as a positive state of well-being. Lucie Corcoran *et al.* (2013) found that depressive symptoms are positively co- related with victimization by cyber bullying and victimization is associated with reduced psychological well-being. Navarro *et al.* (2015) examined that cyber bully victims face negative impact to their psychologies and control well-being. As per Rienke Bannink *et al.* (2014) cyber bullying and traditional victimization was linked with mental health problems of adolescent's. In his study traditional and cyber bullying victimization of boys was not related to mental health problems after controlling for baseline mental health whereas, among girls such victimization was associated with mental health problems even after controlling for baseline mental health. In 2014, Charisse Nixon established through

his study that cyber bullying victimization and feeling of responsibility have a remarkable detrimental influence on the physical health of teenagers.

### **NEED OF THE STUDY**

While doing research work on 'cyber bullying prevailing among adolescents' certain appealing facts relating to cyber bullying have been noticed by the researcher which are enumerated in this research paper entitled 'cyber bullying and its gender wise impact on the well-being and mental health of adolescents' is common especially among teenagers, as the digital sphere has expanded and technology advanced. The menace of cyber bullying is creating havoc which inspired and motivated the researcher to conduct this investigation.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To carry on this study a total number of 1000 adolescent respondent students of the age group of 14 to 18 years were selected from private and Government schools of Chandigarh (both genders in equal numbers). The primary data was collected from the respondent students through survey method by using a questionnaire which transpired their individual demographic information, online behaviour and opinion on well-being and mental health and issues and processed the same through SPSS software. This data was collected after explaining them the concept of cyber bullying so as to enabling participants to know what is required from them. This questionnaire was divided into sub-parts such as students Demographic Information, Internet Use, Online Behaviour, PGI well-being Measures, Mental Health Checklist etc. Further, both mathematical and statistical tools are used to analyze the data.

In the present study the explanatory and descriptive method was divided to grasp the concept of cyber bullying among adolescents. The review of the literature and other allied aspects was done on the bases of secondary data collected from various Journals, Magazines, Newspapers, Library and Internet sources.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

- To determine the gender wise relationship between cyber bullying, well being and mental health of adolescents.

### **HYPOTHESIS**

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference between gender and cyber bullying.
- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference between gender and well being.
- H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference between gender and mental health.

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

On the basis of primary data collected through 1000 adolescent respondents, their Demographic Information, Internet Use, Online Behaviour, PGI well-being Measure, Mental Health Checklist was found as under. 61% were having computer with an Internet access, 88 % possess smartphone, 21% of them spend 3-4 hours per day using social networks, 12% of them send 100 or more text messages on each day and 12% of them did not feel safe at school.

**Table-1: Online Behavior of Respondents**

Statements	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Someone has spread rumors, embarrassing jokes, and gossips about me online.	68.0	32.0	41	27
I have spread rumors, embarrassing jokes, and gossips about other online.	81.0	19.0	42	39
Someone has posted mean or threatening statement/ content about me online.	71.0	29.0	43	28
I have posted mean or threatening statement/ content about another, online.	82.0	18.0	44	38
Someone has sent me threatening or aggressive instant messages online using an instant messenger (live chat) for chat, text, video, audio, images or e-mail etc.	68.0	32.0	40	28
I have threatened or bullied another person online using an instant messenger (live chat) for chat, text messages, video, audio, images or e-mail etc.	80.0	20.0	42	38
I know someone who was a cyber bully victim.	66.0	34.0	38	28
I know someone who used to cyber bully others.	74.0	26.0	42	32
I have been cyber bullied by another person (once or many times).	80.0	20.0	45	35
I have threatened or cyber bullied other persons (once or many times).	85.0	15.0	46	39
A cyber bully can easily detect my location by using software/ sites such as Google Earth, MNS live, or other programs based on the information I have posted online.	52.0	48.0	26	26
If I were contacted by some unknown (cyber bully) via instant messenger (live chat), I would tell an adult (parent, teacher etc.).	48.0	52.0	22	26
I sometimes say hurtful things to others online that I would not say in person.	61.0	39.0	36	25
Online threats or conflicts can get me into trouble even at school.	57.0	43.0	31	26

Source: Data collected through a questionnaire, the SPSS output.

In this section (table-1), the researcher studied the gender wise relations between cyber bullying and wellbeing and mental health of adolescent respondents:-

On the bases of various statements of the respondents about cyber bullying it has been observed that there is a relation between gender and cyber bullying, as male respondents are found more involved in cyber bullying both as a bully and a victim. The rate of acceptance of male candidates is higher yet the females are also found nearby to their male counterparts.

**Table-2: PGI General Wellbeing Measure' response**

How do you feel these days?	No	Can't say	Yes	Mean	S.D.	Sk	K	Chi	P-value	Male %	Female %
Quite happy in personal life.	19.2	16.4	64.4	2.45	0.79	-0.99	-0.69	435.48	.000	35	29
Sleeping fairly well.	22.1	24.2	53.7	2.32	0.81	-0.63	-1.19	187.32	.000	31	23
Feeling cheerful most of the time.	20.3	29.6	50.1	2.30	0.78	-0.57	-1.15	139.47	.000	30	20
Not easily irritated most of the time.	30.4	31.1	38.5	2.08	0.82	-0.15	-1.52	12.08	.002	25	13
Being in a good health.	16.2	22.9	60.9	2.45	0.75	-0.94	-0.61	348.69	.000	40	21
Feeling troubled by nervousness.	33.2	32.6	34.2	2.01	0.82	-0.01	-1.51	0.39	.822	23	11
Feeling worried by anxiety.	30.8	36.1	33.1	2.02	0.79	-0.04	-1.43	4.23	.120	24	09
Feeling depressed or unhappy.	30.8	24	45.2	2.12	0.86	-0.28	-1.59	70.30	.000	30	15

**Source:** Data collected through a questionnaire, the SPSS output.

The table-2, deals with the PGI measure of General Well-being measures, in which various statements have been asked from the respondents about their well being. Especially, how do you feel these days? (during the period of research study). The responses related to this particular question have been collected by the researcher in terms of 20 statements given in the table-2, the data thus collected has been analysed by using SPSS statistical software. All these statements have been explained as follows: -

Results of well-being section show that the majority of the male respondents claim to be quite happy in personal life, sleep fairly-well, feel cheerful and possess good health in comparison to female respondents. At the same time, female respondents assert to

have less nervousness, anxiety, depression in compare of male respondents. It is concluded that overall both genders have nearly same well-being condition and there is no noteworthy gender difference observed.

### MENTAL HEALTH

As regards the mental health in the gender wise investigation of the statistics, it was observed that both genders have nearly same approach toward overall mental health conditions. The majority of the female participants are seen suffering more from anxiety, restlessness, nervousness and anger in comparison to male respondents. .

**Table-3.1: Mental Health Factors' response**

	Male (% among 500 respondents)		Female (% among 500 respondents)	
	Always	Most of time	Always	Most of time
Anxiety & Tension	3	6	5	8
Restlessness	3	10	4	12
Nervousness	3	8	4	9
Anger	6	10	5	12
<b>Average Percentage</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>

**Source:** Data collected through a questionnaire, the SPSS output.

**Table-3.2: Somatic Health Factors' response**

	Male (% among 500 respondents)		Female (% among 500 respondents)	
	Always	Most of time	Always	Most of time
Headache	3	5	4	9
Disturbed sleep	5	6	4	11
Indigestion	1	3	4	4

**Source:** Data collected through a questionnaire, the SPSS output.

In this section gender wise mental health factors are divided into two parts, i.e., psychological health factors and physical health factors. The discussion of various statements related to mental health is given below:-

The table-3.1 presents the opinion of respondents towards suffering from psychological health factors. In the gender wise investigation of the statistics the result of mental health factors state that female respondents are suffering more from anxiety, restlessness, nervousness and anger in comparison to their male counterparts, but the difference is meager.

The table-3.2 reflects the results of this section show that female respondents suffer more form somatic health factors such as headache, disturber sleep and indigestion in



comparisons to male respondents. Though the difference is minor yet the male responders claim better physical health in comparison to females.

## CONCLUSION

The act of cyber bullying has become a complex problem in India like any other technology savvy country of the world. But there is no specific law in India to prevent or curtail cyber bullying activities among teenagers. Today, both male and female are found involved in cyber bullying. But the male respondents are found more involved in cyber bullying activities as cyber bully and victim as well in comparison to female counterparts. Both male and female possess computers, Internet, social media accounts and use computer mediated communication. But at the same time they can easily disguise their gender on Internet. So it can be said that male and female respondents (because their identities could be masked) are equally likely to be bullied as there is not much noteworthy gender difference possible to observe on the cyberspace. A major reason for this can be the facility of 'masquerading', which means to hide the real identity with the help of technology and pretending to be someone else.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- To apprehend the cyber bullying from the root itself, time to time counseling session social awareness programs and awareness camps are recommended to be organized under the guidance of experts.
- To prevent the deadly effects of cyber bullying, specific bullying laws with appropriate punishments and penalties are strongly recommended.

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