"Cyberbullying Perpetration and Its Significance in Adolescents' Lives: A Systematic Review"

Ms. Suman, Research Scholar., Dr. Sarla Rani, Professor

Dept. of Education, B.P.S.M.V. Khanpur Kalan, Sonipat, Haryana

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ABSTRACT

The increasing use of social media, smartphones, online gaming, and digital platforms has made cyberbullying an important concern in adolescents' lives. This systematic review examines the **significance of cyberbullying perpetration** studies conducted between 2026 and 2016, with particular focus on its psychological, behavioural, social, and well-being-related consequences. Research shows considerable variation in reported cyberbullying prevalence due to differences in definitions, measures, and research procedures (Brochado et al., 2017; Camerini et al., 2020). Evidence indicates that cyberbullying perpetration is associated with behavioural and externalizing difficulties, while cybervictimization is linked with anxiety, depression, and reduced well-being (Fisher et al., 2016; Marciano et al., 2020). Adolescents involved as both perpetrators and victims appear particularly vulnerable to depressive symptoms and lower subjective well-being (Hellfeldt et al., 2020). Coping strategies and support from parents, teachers, and peers may help reduce the negative effects of cyberbullying (Mallmann et al., 2018; Hellfeldt et al., 2020). Recent review also connects cyberbullying with self-esteem, psychological distress, and well-being among higher-education students (Vishwakarma, 2026). Overall, cyberbullying perpetration should be viewed as a broader educational and psychosocial concern rather than simply inappropriate online behaviour. The review highlights the need for digital citizenship education, supportive relationships, counselling, coping-skills development, and consistent measurement. Longitudinal research is also needed to understand its long-term effects and inform effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Keywords: Cyberbullying perpetration, adolescents, cybervictimization, psychological well-being, psychological distress, systematic review

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technology and internet accessibility has transformed the way individuals communicate, learn, and socialize. Social networking sites, instant messaging applications, online gaming platforms, and virtual learning environments have become integral parts of daily life, particularly among adolescents and young adults. While these technological advancements offer numerous educational and social benefits, they have also created new opportunities for harmful online behaviours, among which **cyberbullying perpetration** has emerged as a significant global concern (Kowalski et al., 2014).

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. **Cyberbullying** refers to the use of electronic communication technologies to deliberately harm, intimidate, or harass someone. This includes:



- **Harassment:** sending offensive, threatening, or derogatory messages repeatedly.
- **Flaming:** Engaging in online fights using aggressive and vulgar language.
- **Exclusion:** Deliberately excluding someone from an online group or activity.
- **Outing:** Publicly sharing someone's private or sensitive information without consent.
- **Cyberstalking:** Continuously monitoring, tracking, or intimidating someone online.
- **Impersonation:** Creating fake accounts to impersonate someone and spread malicious content.

The 2022 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice) indicates that, nationwide, among students ages 12-18 in grades 6-12 who reported being bullied during school (19.2% of all students), about 21.6% reported being bullied online or by text, including nearly twice as many girls (27.7%) as boys (14.1%). The 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) indicates that an estimated 16% of high school students were electronically bullied in the 12 months prior to the survey. Cyberbullying perpetration and cyberbullying victimization are two interconnected but distinct forms of online bullying. Cyber-victim experiences of being targeted, harassed, threatened, humiliated, or emotionally harmed through digital communication platforms. Where as an individual who experiences online harassment may sometimes respond aggressively and become involved in perpetrating cyberbullying. However, not all victims become perpetrators, and not all perpetrators have previously experienced victimization. Both behaviours can have serious implications for psychological well-being, interpersonal relationships, academic performance, and social adjustment.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

In this review of the literature, studies conducted between 2026 and 2016 were looked at and analyzed to ascertain if cyberbullying had an impact on teens' psychological, behavioural, social, and well-being. Please see the table below for a more detailed explanation:

Table-1: "Systematic Literature Review"

Authors & Year of Publications	Study Design & Measures	Country	Outcomes
Schulz, et.al. (2025)	**Longitudinal panel study** (six-wave survey conducted before and during the COVID-19 pandemic among middle school students)	**Switzerland (Canton of Ticino)**	Cyberbullying perpetration and victimization increased with greater exposure to violent media and internet access. High-quality parent–child

	Cyberbullying perpetration (6-item scale), **Cyberbullying victimization** (6-item European Cyberbullying Intervention Project Questionnaire), Exposure to Violent Media Content, Parental Communication Quality, Internet Access, Age, Gender, and Sibling Relationships		communication significantly reduced both perpetration and victimization, with a stronger protective effect during COVID-19. Adolescents with siblings were less likely to become cyberbullies or victims. Age and gender differences were also observed in cyberbullying involvement.
Bista et al. (2024)	**Systematic literature review** based on studies identified through Google Scholar and EBSCO indexing databases. The review synthesized existing evidence on the association between problematic social media use (PSMU), cyber victimization (CV), cyberbullying perpetration (CBP), and mental health among adolescents and young adults were reviewed.	**International**	Social media networking is increasing at an alarming rate among adolescents and young adults and with it comes the risk of PSMU. Excessive spending of time on social media networking sites increases the risk of cyber victimization experiences and cyberbullying perpetration behaviours. There appears to be a significant need to explore the complex relationships between PSMU. CV, CBP, and mental health conditions.
Grover & Raju (2023)	**Narrative literature review.** The authors searched literature through **PubMed and Google Scholar** and synthesized existing research on cyberbullying. The review examined **types of cyberbullying, cyberbullying victimization and perpetration, prevalence, risk and protective factors, psychological effects, conceptual models, and preventive strategies**. No primary questionnaire or scale was administered because it was a literature review.	**India**	The review found that cyberbullying has become an important concern among adolescents and young people. Reported prevalence varied according to the definition and assessment period, with **cyberbullying victimization generally ranging from 10%–40% and perpetration from 3%–20%**. The review highlighted that cyberbullying can produce substantial **negative psychological consequences** for victims. Individual, family, peer, and online environmental factors may influence involvement in cyberbullying. The authors emphasized **parental guidance, school-based prevention, and support from health-care professionals** as important approaches for prevention and intervention.
Araujo, et.al. (2023)	**Scoping review** of existing research examining the relationship between **bullying perpetration and depression** among children and adolescents. The review focused on **bullying perpetration** and **depressive symptoms/depression** among children and adolescents. The included studies used different instruments and assessment procedures; therefore, no single	**Brazil**	The review examined evidence linking **bullying perpetration with depression** among children and adolescents. It highlighted the importance of considering the psychological well-being of young people who engage in bullying, rather than viewing them only as perpetrators. The findings support the need for **early identification, psychological support, and school-based prevention**

	standardized measure was applied by the review authors.		**programmes** addressing both aggressive behaviour and mental-health difficulties.
Antonio, et.al. (2023)	Examined the bidirectional longitudinal associations between bullying and cyberbullying perpetration and victimization during 18-month period over four time points. A total of 2835 participants, aged 11 to 16 years in time 1 (50% girls; $M_{age} = 13.13$, $SD = 1.06$) were surveyed. Random intercept cross-lagged analyses revealed the stability of bullying perpetration and victimization.	**Portugal**	Cyberbullying victimization predicted inversely bullying and cyberbullying perpetration. The results indicate spirals of positive long-term associations between bullying (perpetration and victimization) and cyberbullying perpetration but no long-terms spirals of victimization.
Polanin et al. (2022) **(2022)**	**Systematic review/meta-analysis**, using data extracted from empirical studies that employed standardized measures of bullying/cyberbullying and associated psychosocial and educational outcomes.	**International / Multiple countries**	A total of 50 studies and 320 effect sizes spanning 45,371 participants met the review protocol criteria. Results indicated that programs significantly reduced cyberbullying perpetration ($g = -0.18$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [−0.28, −0.09]) and victimization ($g = -0.13$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [−0.21, −0.05]). Moderator analyses, however, yielded only a few statistically significant findings. It interprets these findings and provides implications for future cyberbullying prevention policy and practice.
Kumar and Goldstein (2021)	**Review study** examining the epidemiology, health consequences, clinical presentation, screening, and interventions related to cyberbullying. The review considered physical and psychological effects, including headaches, abdominal pain, sleep difficulties, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and reduced well-being.	**United States**	Cyberbullying was found to have significant **bio psychosocial effects** on victims. Victims may remain silent about their experiences; therefore, routine screening in healthcare, school, family, and other support settings was recommended. The study emphasized interventions involving victims and perpetrators, families, schools, healthcare providers, and wider support networks.
Marciano et al. (2020)	**Systematic review and meta-analysis** of **56 longitudinal studies**, comprising 40 meta-analyses examining cyberbullying perpetration (CP), cybervictimization (CV), traditional bullying/victimization, person-related, Internet-activity-related, and contextual factors. Moderator	**International / Multiple countries**	The study found **reciprocal longitudinal relationships** between CP, CV, traditional bullying, and victimization. CP predicted externalizing problems, while CV was associated with internalizing problems such as **depression and anxiety**. Conversely, behavioural problems and increased Internet use predicted CP,

	analyses considered study design, sample characteristics, and study quality.		whereas depression, anxiety, and Internet use predicted CV. The authors highlighted the need for further longitudinal research.
Camerini et al. (2020)	**Systematic review of longitudinal studies**, identifying **76 original longitudinal studies** published between 2007 and 2017. Most studies involved middle-school students assessed at two time points, approximately 6 or 12 months apart. The studies examined **cyberbullying perpetration (CP) and cyberbullying victimization (CV)** along with person-related, media-related, and environmental factors.	**International / Multiple countries**	Cyberbullying perpetration rates ranged from **5.3% to 66.2%**, while victimization rates ranged from **1.9% to 84.0%**. Traditional bullying and internalizing problems were among the most frequently studied person-related risk factors. Evidence concerning causal relationships with **problematic Internet use, parental relationships, and peer relationships** was limited. The review highlighted important gaps and the need for further longitudinal research on cyberbullying among children and adolescents.
Hellfeldt et al. (2019)	**Cross-sectional study** involving **1,707 young adolescents** (47.5% girls, aged 10–13 years) from community and private schools. Data were collected through a **self-report web-based questionnaire** assessing cyberbullying roles, depressive and anxiety symptoms, subjective well-being, and perceived social support from family, friends, and teachers.	**Sweden**	The **cyberbully-victim group** reported the highest levels of depressive symptoms and the lowest levels of subjective well-being and family support. Cyber-victims and cyberbully-victims also showed higher anxiety symptoms. **Family and teacher support appeared protective**, reducing the likelihood of depressive and anxiety symptoms, while stronger family support was associated with higher subjective well-being among cyber-victims and cyberbully-victims. The findings highlight the importance of social support in cyberbullying prevention and intervention.
Mallmann et al. (2018)	**Cross-sectional study** involving **273 adolescents** (boys and girls; M = 14.91 years, SD = 1.45) from the state capital and a countryside town in Rio Grande do Sul. Data were collected using measures of **cyberbullying involvement and coping strategies**, including self-control, social support, avoidance, and confrontation coping.	**Brazil**	Approximately **58% of adolescents** were involved in at least one category of cyber-aggression. Victims reported significantly higher levels of **self-control, social support, and avoidance coping** than non-involved adolescents. Victim-aggressors showed higher use of **confrontation coping strategies**. The findings indicate a high prevalence of cyberbullying and suggest that adolescents adopt different coping strategies depending on their role in cyberbullying.
Barochado et al. (2017)	**Scoping review** of **159 studies** examining the prevalence of cyberbullying. The review compared different methodological approaches,	**International / Multiple countries**	Most studies were conducted during the preceding four years, particularly in **North America (n = 77)** and **Europe (n = 65)**. Considerable methodological

	including assessment of **cybervictimization, cyberperpetration, and both victimization and perpetration**, along with differences in recall periods and measurement procedures.		heterogeneity was observed, contributing to substantial variation in reported prevalence rates. Cybervictimization was the most frequently assessed experience. Even when studies used similar perspectives, countries, and recall periods, prevalence estimates varied considerably. The study concluded that **methodological choices strongly influence the estimated prevalence of cyberbullying**.
Fisher et al. (2016)	**Systematic review and meta-analysis** of **55 reports**, comprising **239 effect sizes** and data from **257,678 adolescents**. The study used **random-effects meta-analyses with robust variance estimation** to examine relationships between peer cybervictimization and internalizing and externalizing problems.	**International / Multiple countries**	The findings revealed **positive and statistically significant associations** between peer cybervictimization and both internalizing and externalizing problems among adolescents. The strength of associations ranged from **Pearson's *r* = .14 to .34**, indicating that cybervictimization is meaningfully associated with various psychological and behavioural difficulties. The study emphasized the implications of these findings for **research, prevention, and intervention practices**.

DISCUSSION

According to the literature study, cyberbullying has grown to be a serious issue in children's and teenagers' digital lives. Cyberbullying is not a single, consistent activity, but rather a variety of behaviours that might entail victimisation, perpetration, or both. The large range in prevalence seen in different research also implies that the definition and measurement of cyberbullying have an impact. According to Brochado et al. (2017), changes in definitions, measuring tools, reference periods, and research methods can all contribute to variances in the way in which the prevalence of cyberbullying is estimated is influenced by methodological research options. In a similar vein, Camerini et al. (2020) pointed out significant discrepancies across research and stressed the significance of using more methodical and comparable ways to comprehend cyberbullying.

One finding is mostly constant across the research despite these methodological variations: cyberbullying is strongly linked to psychological issues. According to Fisher et al. (2016), young people's internalising and externalising issues were substantially correlated with cybervictimization. Similarly, Marciano et al. (2020) showed that whereas cyberbullying is more strongly linked to externalising and behavioural issues, cybervictimization is specifically linked to internalising challenges such depression and anxiety. When considered collectively, these results imply that cyberbullying is more than just an unpleasant online experience. Adolescents' conduct, relationships, emotional health, and day-to-day functioning may all be impacted.

According to the research, adolescents who play the roles of both offender and victim may have particularly severe psychological repercussions. According to Hellfeldt et al. (2019), victims of cyberbullying had worse subjective well-being and more depressive symptoms than other groups. At the same time, some of these detrimental impacts seemed to be mitigated by parental and educational assistance. This result emphasises how crucial it is to take into account the social environment in which cyberbullying takes place. The availability of supporting connections at home and at school may have a significant impact on young people's capacity to deal with online victimisation. Therefore, solid peer interactions, emotional support from instructors, and positive communication with parents may serve as crucial protective resources.

In the analysed research, variations in coping strategies also show up as a significant topic. Mallmann et al. (2018) discovered that the coping mechanisms employed by victims, victim-aggressors, and teenagers not engaged in cyberbullying varied. This implies that there isn't just one way to deal with cyberbullying. While some teenagers might ask their parents, instructors, or friends for help, others could ignore the circumstance, keep quiet, or react violently. These variations have significant effects on intervention. Programs for prevention should assist kids in developing emotional control, problem-solving, communication, coping, and help-seeking skills in addition to detecting and penalising cyberbullying activity.

Another important concern emerging from the literature is that the consequences of cyberbullying may extend beyond psychological distress. Kumar and Goldstein (2021) associated cyberbullying involvement with anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, sleep disturbances, headaches, and other health-related difficulties. The fact that many young people may hesitate to disclose their experiences makes the problem even more challenging. Fear of embarrassment, retaliation, parental restrictions on technology use, or a belief that adults may not understand online experiences can prevent victims from seeking help. Consequently, parents, teachers, counsellors, and other professionals need to create an environment in which students feel comfortable discussing their digital experiences without fear of blame or punishment.

The reviewed studies collectively indicate that cyberbullying perpetration and victimization are complex behaviours influenced by psychological, social, familial, and environmental factors. Polanin et al. (2022) demonstrated the effectiveness of prevention programmes in reducing both perpetration and victimization, while Grover and Raju (2023) highlighted the prevalence, risk factors, psychological consequences, and preventive strategies associated with cyberbullying. Antonio et al. (2023) further established longitudinal associations between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, indicating the interconnected nature of offline and online aggressive behaviours. Similarly, Araujo et al. (2023) emphasized the relationship between bullying perpetration and depression, highlighting the importance of addressing perpetrators' psychological well-being. Bista et al. (2024) identified problematic social media use as an important factor associated with cyberbullying perpetration and victimization, whereas Schulz et al. (2025) highlighted the protective role of parental communication and the influence of environmental factors.

A comparison of these studies reveals that cyberbullying cannot be understood solely as an individual behavioural problem; rather, it emerges through the interaction of psychological vulnerabilities, online engagement, peer relationships, and family and environmental influences. While Polanin et al. (2022) emphasized the effectiveness of prevention programmes, Antonio et al. (2023) highlighted the longitudinal relationship between traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Araujo et al. (2023) drew attention to the association between bullying and depression, whereas Bista et al. (2024) emphasized the role of problematic social media use. Similarly, Grover and Raju (2023) and Schulz et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of protective factors and preventive measures, particularly parental involvement and supportive communication.

Overall, the reviewed literature supports the view that cyberbullying is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by individual, interpersonal, technological, and environmental factors. Its consequences cannot be understood solely in terms of the online behaviour itself. Factors such as self-esteem, coping strategies, parental and teacher support, peer relationships, psychological distress, and patterns of Internet use may influence both involvement in cyberbullying and its outcomes. Although existing research provides substantial evidence regarding these associations, important questions remain concerning the direction and long-term development of these relationships. More longitudinal research using reliable and consistent measures is therefore needed to clarify how cyberbullying develops over time and how its effects interact with psychological and social factors.

CONCLUSION

The present review concludes that cyberbullying represents a serious challenge to the psychological, behavioural, social, and overall well-being of young people. Although prevalence estimates differ across studies because of variations in definitions and measurement approaches, the literature consistently demonstrates that involvement in cyberbullying is associated with negative outcomes. Cybervictimization is particularly linked with depression, anxiety, psychological distress, and reduced subjective well-being, whereas cyberbullying

perpetration is more often associated with behavioural and externalizing difficulties (Fisher et al., 2016; Marciano et al., 2020).

The findings also show that the experiences of young people cannot be understood independently of their social environment. Support from parents, teachers, and peers may reduce the negative psychological effects associated with cyberbullying and encourage victims to seek help (Hellfeldt et al., 2019). Similarly, the ways in which individuals cope with harmful online experiences can influence their adjustment and response to cyberbullying (Mallmann et al., 2018). Therefore, effective prevention requires more than simply controlling or monitoring students' online behaviour. It requires the development of supportive relationships, healthy communication, emotional resilience, digital responsibility, and appropriate coping skills.

Finally, the review highlights the need for greater methodological consistency in future research. Researchers should use clearly defined concepts and reliable instruments so that findings can be compared more meaningfully across studies. Longitudinal research is particularly important for understanding whether cyberbullying contributes to later psychological difficulties, whether existing psychological vulnerabilities increase the likelihood of cyberbullying involvement, or whether both processes influence each other over time. A stronger evidence base can support the development of more effective prevention and intervention strategies and contribute to safer, healthier, and more responsible digital environments for students.

Educational Implications

The findings of the reviewed literature have several important implications for education. First, cyberbullying prevention should be integrated into the broader educational environment rather than treated as an isolated disciplinary issue. Schools need to develop a culture in which respectful online communication, empathy, responsible digital behaviour, and awareness of the consequences of cyberbullying are regularly promoted. Digital citizenship education can help students understand not only how to use technology effectively but also how to behave responsibly and ethically in online spaces.

Second, teachers play an important role in the early identification and prevention of cyberbullying. Since students may be reluctant to disclose online victimization, teachers should be trained to recognize possible signs of emotional distress, social withdrawal, behavioural changes, and peer conflicts that may be associated with cyberbullying. However, identification should be followed by supportive and confidential intervention. Students are more likely to seek help when they believe that adults will listen to them, take their concerns seriously, and respond without unnecessarily blaming or punishing them.

Third, parents should be considered important partners in cyberbullying prevention. The literature suggests that parental support and communication can serve as protective factors. Educational institutions can therefore organize awareness programmes, workshops, and parent–teacher interactions focusing on healthy technology use, open communication, online safety, and appropriate responses to cyberbullying incidents. Rather than relying only on surveillance or restrictions, parents should be encouraged to develop trusting relationships in which children and adolescents feel comfortable discussing their online experiences.

Fourth, educational interventions should strengthen students' psychological resources. Programmes aimed at improving self-esteem, emotional regulation, resilience, coping skills, and help-seeking behaviour may be particularly valuable. The inclusion of self-esteem and psychological distress in many studies suggest that attention should be given to the psychological factors that may influence students' well-being in the context of negative online experiences. Counselling and mental health support should therefore be incorporated into cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts, particularly for students who experience repeated victimization or show signs of significant distress.

Finally, cyberbullying policies should involve a collaborative approach that includes students, teachers, parents, school administrators, counsellors, and, where necessary, mental health and cyber-safety professionals. Clear reporting procedures and timely support mechanisms should be established so that students know where and how to seek help. At the higher education level, universities should also recognize that cyberbullying and harmful

digital interactions may affect students' well-being and academic engagement. Thus, support systems should not be limited to schools alone but should extend across different levels of education.

In this way, educational institutions can move from a primarily reactive approach—responding only after cyberbullying occurs—to a more preventive and supportive model. Such an approach has the potential not only to reduce cyberbullying behaviour but also to promote students' psychological well-being, healthy relationships, resilience, and responsible participation in an increasingly digital world.

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