

A Case Study on Cyberbullying among Senior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying, which predominantly occurs on private social media platforms, often remains concealed from school authorities due to its covert nature and the reluctance of victims to report incidents. This issue has become increasingly concerning for senior high school students, who frequently face emotional, social, and academic challenges as a result of online harassment. To explore these experiences in depth, this study employs a qualitative case study design focusing on victims of cyberbullying within a selected educational institution. Participants were purposively sampled, and data were gathered through in-depth interviews to capture their personal accounts and perceptions. Data analysis followed Yin's six-stage approach, consisting of planning, design, preparation, data collection, analysis, and sharing of findings. Several significant themes emerged from the analysis, including emotional withdrawal, shame, and social isolation. These themes highlight the profound impact of cyberbullying on students' emotional well-being and interpersonal relationships. Many participants described feelings of vulnerability and distress, which often extended into their academic performance and overall school engagement. The study concludes that cyberbullying remains a covert yet serious concern that requires sustained and targeted intervention. Given its hidden nature, traditional disciplinary approaches are often insufficient. Therefore, it is recommended that schools implement comprehensive awareness programs, strengthen student support systems, and cultivate a culture of empathy, openness, and digital responsibility. Such measures are essential to effectively prevent, identify, and address cyberbullying, ultimately fostering a safer and more supportive learning environment for all students.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, senior high school students, emotional impact, academic performance, student well-being.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, cases of cyberbullying among senior high school students have become increasingly alarming in the Philippines (Maranan et al., 2025). Incidents of students being mocked, humiliated, or threatened through social media platforms, messaging applications, and other online spaces have surged, often leaving victims feeling isolated, anxious, and unsupported (Noel, 2021). A national survey revealed that nearly 49% of Filipino adolescents aged 16–17 have experienced cyberbullying one of the highest rates globally (Shannen et al., 2021; Respicio & Co.). Further, the Department of Education's TeleSafe helpline reported 178 cases of bullying between November 2022 and January 2024, with 27 incidents classified as cyberbullying (Philippine News Agency).

International assessments further underscore the gravity of the issue. According to the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), approximately 43% of Filipino girls and 53% of boys reported experiencing bullying at least a few times per month significantly higher than the OECD average of 20–21% (Abrigo et al., 2024). These findings highlight not only the widespread nature of traditional bullying but also the growing concern of online harassment, which often extends beyond school boundaries and into students' personal lives (Li et al., 2024). Such experiences can have serious consequences on students' mental health and academic performance. Therefore, it is crucial to implement comprehensive measures involving schools, families, and communities to effectively address and prevent bullying.

To address this, Philippine lawmakers have enacted policies such as the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 (R.A. 10627), which mandates all schools to adopt anti-bullying policies that cover cyberbullying, create Child Protection Committees (CPCs), and establish clear reporting mechanisms (Caingcoy & Libertad 2020). The Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 (R.A. 10175) penalizes online threats, identity theft, and cyber libel, while the Safe Spaces Act of 2019 (R.A. 11313) tackles gender-based online harassment. Recent initiatives by the Department of Education such as the CPC Functionality Assessment Tool, enhanced counselor training, and the integration of digital safety modules into the K–12 curriculum starting SY 2025–2026 reflect ongoing efforts to strengthen institutional responses (DepEd; PNA) (KaRae'NMK et al., 2023). Meanwhile, legislative proposals under EDCOM 2 aim to close implementation gaps, including the shortage of guidance counselors and the persistent underreporting of cyberbullying cases.

Despite efforts to address bullying, there remains a limited body of research specifically examining the lived experiences of senior high school students with cyberbullying (Chan et al., 2020). While broader studies on Filipino youth exist, they often generalize findings and overlook how this particular age group, facing unique academic pressures, social transitions, and emotional challenges, experiences and responds to digital harassment (Mishna et al., 2020; Maranan et al., 2025). Additionally, contextual factors such as family dynamics, school environment, and cultural expectations play a significant role in shaping how cyberbullying occurs, how students cope, and how institutions intervene. Understanding these nuances is essential for developing targeted interventions that effectively support senior high school students.

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature, experiences, and impacts of cyberbullying among senior high school students within a selected educational institution. By focusing on their personal accounts and the school's contextual environment, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how cyberbullying occurs, how students respond to it, and what factors contribute to its persistence (Mishna et al., 2022). Through this case study approach, the research seeks to generate insights that can guide educators, administrators, and policymakers in developing more effective preventive measures, intervention strategies, and support systems for learners who may be affected by cyberbullying. While numerous studies have explored cyberbullying across various age groups and educational settings, there remains a contextual gap in understanding how this phenomenon unfolds within the specific environment of senior high schools in the local community (Pichel et al., 2021). Existing research often presents broad, generalized findings that may not fully capture the unique digital behaviors, social dynamics, and school culture shaping the experiences of learners in this particular setting. Given that patterns of online interaction differ across locations and institutions, localized evidence is needed to better understand the nature, forms, and impacts of cyberbullying among senior high school students in the area (Given that patterns of online interaction differ across locations and institutions, localized evidence is needed to better understand the nature, forms, and impacts of cyberbullying among senior high school students in the area. Et al., 2024). This study addresses this contextual gap by examining cyberbullying within one selected senior high school, providing insights that are directly relevant to the school's stakeholders and applicable to its specific environment.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study uses a qualitative case study approach and design to explore the experiences and perceptions of senior high school students regarding cyberbullying. The case study method allows for an in-depth examination of students' lived experiences within their real-life academic and social contexts, providing a holistic understanding of how cyberbullying occurs and is managed in school settings. The research was conducted in a senior high school in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, an educational hub with diverse learners and increasing exposure to digital platforms, making it an appropriate setting for examining cyberbullying-related issues.

The study involved five (5) senior high school students who have personally experienced bullying within the school environment. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, based on the criteria that they are senior high school students, have experienced bullying, and voluntarily agree to participate. To strengthen the credibility and depth of the data, each student participant was supplemented by insights from a class adviser/teacher and a peer or close friend, allowing multiple perspectives to support the case analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the results, the main types of cyberbullying in senior high school students are being done in the form of severe comments, body shaming, name-calling, and also sharing or spreading private content and rumors. The mentioned actions have a great emotional impact that goes along with fear, shame, and helplessness, mainly because of the rapid online circulation of sensitive information or false accusations (Blitvich, P. G. C. 2022). These findings are in line with previous ones that stated that social media verbal abuse and privacy violations increased the level of the adolescents' emotional distress and, at the same time, social stigma. The emotional distress sometimes drives the victims to withdraw socially, keep quiet, and experience a drop in their school performance (Engel, B. 2023). The students talked about not going to school, creating physical distance between themselves and their friends, family members as well, and losing interest, which corresponds with the studies that show a relationship between cyberbullying, absenteeism, and less engagement. The silence as a way to cope was supported by the fear of being judged and the lack of trust in the help provided by institutions, even though the peers were considered as the most immediate source of comfort (Shahaf-Oren et al., 20021). The results of the study underline the importance of having stronger school-based programs, easy-to-access reporting systems, and raising the level of digital literacy as a means to better protect and support the students who are affected.

Harassment through Negative Comments and Name-Calling

For senior high school students, cyberbullying often comes in the form of degrading and insulting remarks attacking personal traits like physical appearance and personality. They are frequently subject to body shaming, teasing, and insulting nicknames on mainstream social media sites like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. This constant negative criticism not only destroys their self-esteem but also causes them emotional suffering, social isolation, and falling grades. The research brings to light how such verbal attacks are often felt, emphasizing the importance of increased awareness and intervention within the school setting. Most senior high school pupils go through cyberbullying in the form of insults and name-calling on social media. These range from body shaming, which is insults based on one's physical appearance, and are hurtful and damaging to one's self-esteem. Others experience more extreme forms of harassment in the form of death threats, indicating that the bullying can go beyond mere verbal insults. The constant tagging on memes or posts that are insulting and personal leads to sustained emotional distress. Those who witness such bullying comment on how the victims hide their pain, and others may not fully appreciate the extent of it. This illustrates how virulent and corrosive name-calling and abusive comments can be online, impacting students' emotional lives as well as their social relationships. These are evident in the responses of the participants during the interview conducted.

“I continue to experience different forms of cyberbullying such as name-calling, death threats, and body shaming, all of which stemmed from a Facebook comment I made about flooding.” (Victim 2)

“They bullied me because of my looks, calling me ‘tambok’, some named me ‘maui’ because they said I looked like him... calling me on social media as if I don’t have an Ego.” (Victim 3)

“Every day, during my free time. I get tagged in memes on Facebook that I find insulting or too personal.” (Victim 5)

“The most common cyberbullying I have observed is body shaming. Emotionally, they are hiding the pain...” (Teacher 3)

Harassment through negative remarks and name-calling is one of the most common forms of cyberbullying experienced by senior high school students, particularly on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. These attacks often target personal traits—especially physical appearance making body shaming and verbal insults prevalent. Such hurtful comments inflict significant emotional harm, reducing victims' self-esteem and prompting social withdrawal, which may eventually affect academic performance. Because many students hide their suffering out of fear or embarrassment, it becomes difficult for teachers and school authorities to detect early warning signs and intervene promptly. Although some victims attempt coping strategies such as blocking

offenders or modifying online habits, the persistence of harassment underscores the need for stronger awareness and support systems.

Existing literature reinforces the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying through derogatory comments. Research shows that social media serves as a major space for body shaming and verbal aggression, exposing victims to public humiliation and repeated attacks due to the anonymity and wide reach of these platforms. Studies consistently associate online name-calling with increased anxiety, depression, and social isolation among adolescents, which in turn negatively affects academic engagement and school participation. Scholars emphasize that early intervention through school-based awareness campaigns, digital citizenship programs, and accessible counseling can help mitigate these harmful effects and encourage safer online behavior.

The findings of the present study demonstrate that online harassment via derogatory comments deeply affects the emotional well-being and academic functioning of senior high school students. Victims often experience shame, loneliness, and social withdrawal, which hinder their overall development and disrupt their educational progress. Because these incidents frequently occur in secrecy, many students endure the emotional impact alone, making timely identification and intervention by teachers and parents challenging. To address this issue, schools must adopt comprehensive strategies that promote online empathy, educate students about responsible digital behavior, and provide readily accessible psychological support. Additionally, there is a pressing need for stronger policies and monitoring measures to ensure safer online spaces for learners.

Spreading of Personal or Private Content and Rumors

The dissemination of intimate or confidential content and gossip presents itself as a destructive type of cyberbullying that is prevalent among older high school students where private, confidential, and sensitive information is shared without one's approval. Victimization in the form of the sharing of nudie videos or baseless lies concerning monetary debt burdens brings about profound emotional suffering on the part of victims who experience shame, embarrassment, and social exclusion. These behaviors not only mar the reputations of the victims but also stretch their relationships with peers and family. Social media's speed and reach amplify the effect, rendering it hard for victims to regulate the story or contain negative information. This calls for greater sensitization and prevention in schools and neighborhoods to ensure the privacy of students and promote a civil online culture. The dissemination of personal information and rumors via social media makes victims feel powerless and vulnerable. The transmission of confidential materials, including nude videos, has the potential to worsen the situation rapidly, with widespread social stigmatization and emotional trauma. Rumors and false allegations on personal issues such as debts further tarnish the victim's image and relationships, usually resulting in isolation and withdrawal from social contacts. This type of cyberbullying exploits the speed and uncontrollable quality of online dissemination so that victims cannot recover their control or clear their reputations. Such episodes underscore the need for supportive intervention and education in responsible online behavior to safeguard individuals against the permanent damage of digital rumor-mongering and invasions of privacy. These are evident in the responses of the participants during the interview conducted.

"I remain quiet because I feel powerless, knowing that a video exists, and in today's generation it can easily spread." (Victim 1)

"I was bullied through spreading rumors about me having a debt of someone, I was accused of not returning money from a friend which I already paid but delayed, people calling me 'mangutangay' or 'bagag nawong'." (Victim 4)

"However, when posts began circulating about my friend, particularly after an explicit video of hers went viral, everything changed." (Classmate 1)

The dissemination of private content and gossip is a common and harmful form of cyberbullying that involves sharing confidential, sensitive, or fabricated information without the victim's consent. This includes the distribution of intimate photos or videos, screenshots of private conversations, and the spread of false allegations or malicious rumors. Such actions inflict significant emotional distress, often resulting in shame, embarrassment, social isolation, and damaged reputations. Because social media platforms enable rapid and far-reaching

dissemination, victims struggle to control or contain the harmful content, intensifying the emotional and relational consequences. This form of cyberbullying contributes to a toxic digital environment and underscores the importance of fostering digital literacy and privacy awareness.

Existing research consistently affirms that the unauthorized sharing of private information and online rumor-spreading can severely impact victims' mental health and social well-being. Studies reveal that these forms of harassment can damage reputations, strain peer and family relationships, and lead to long-term emotional effects such as anxiety, depression, and diminished self-esteem. The viral nature of social media further amplifies these harms, making it difficult for victims to recover control or seek timely support. Scholars highlight the need for educational initiatives focused on digital ethics, privacy rights, and intervention strategies to help mitigate the damaging impact of this type of cyberbullying.

The findings of this study indicate an urgent need for strengthened protection mechanisms against the spread of private content and gossip among senior high school students. The emotional and social burden borne by victims underscores the importance of creating safe spaces where students feel supported and empowered to report incidents without fear of judgment or retaliation. Schools should integrate digital literacy programs into the curriculum to teach responsible online behavior, respect for privacy, and the consequences of sharing sensitive information. Collaboration among schools, families, and social media companies is essential to developing effective prevention and intervention strategies that reduce the harmful effects of cyberbullying and promote a culture of respect, empathy, and accountability in online environments.

Emotional Impact and Withdrawal

Emotional Impact and Withdrawal is the severe sense of fear, shame, and hurt that victims of cyberbullying go through, leading them to withdraw from online and offline social interaction. According to the study, most victims feel helpless and embarrassed and end up being silent and keeping off from friends, family, and even school settings. This emotional suffering greatly decreases their self-confidence and self-esteem levels, making it hard for them to freely disclose their problems or ask for assistance, thereby increasing their solitude and loneliness even more.

“I have experienced fear, pain, and shame especially towards my parents and the people who know me personally and are now aware of my situation... I find myself withdrawing, even from my family. I walk around with my head down, avoiding others, until everything passes into silence. I remain quiet because I feel powerless” (Victim 1)

“The situation is emotionally draining, and it affects not only me but also my relationships with my partner and my family. I often choose to hide the issue from them out of shame.”(Victim 2)

“I was so down and felt disappointed... I am embarrassed to go to school, cutted connections of some of my friends, and failing some of my quizzes.”(Victim 4)

“I lost my motivation to study and became afraid to interact with others... I didn’t tell my family because I didn’t want to worry them.”(Victim 5)

“She has become distant even with me, her confidante and constant companion. She now feels embarrassed, even in my presence.”(Classmate 1)

“She has lost his motivation to study, often not attending classes and being distant to us her friends.”(Classmate 4)

Cyberbullying inflicts significant emotional distress on victims, often causing feelings of fear, shame, embarrassment, and helplessness. These strong emotions frequently lead students to withdraw from social interactions, even with close family members and friends, as they attempt to avoid judgment and further humiliation. The psychological burden of cyberbullying can also manifest in academic decline, including reduced motivation, higher absenteeism, tardiness, and declining performance. Many victims cope by remaining

silent and concealing their experiences, which exacerbates their isolation and intensifies the negative effects on both their social and academic lives.

Research consistently highlights the severe emotional and social consequences of cyberbullying. Studies show that victims commonly experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, which drive them to withdraw from home, peers, and school activities. The shame and humiliation associated with online harassment often discourage reporting, leaving victims to endure distress alone. Academically, these experiences correlate with reduced focus, lower grades, and increased truancy. This combination of emotional withdrawal and academic challenges illustrates how cyberbullying disrupts multiple aspects of a student's life, reinforcing the urgent need for timely support and intervention.

Academic Decline and Social Isolation

Academic Deterioration and Social Withdrawal are the observable decline in academic work and the withdrawal from peers and social interaction that characterize many cyberbullying victims. According to the research, targeted students indicated that they lost the desire to study, skipped classes, and flunked quizzes as a consequence of emotional distress. Socially, victims became secluded, withdrew from interactions with classmates and friends, and chose to remain quiet due to shame or fear. These changes in behavior indicate how cyberbullying goes beyond emotional distress, having a direct impact on a student's capability to succeed at school and engage in healthy social relationships.

“I find myself withdrawing, even from my family. I walk around with my head down, avoiding others, until everything passes into silence.”

“It has only affected my family as well because one of them is a government employee.”(Victim 1)

“I quit from being a class representative, I started being tardy, often cutting classes... I became distant since that incident happened.”(Victim 3)

“Yes, it had a big impact on my studies. I lost my motivation to study and became afraid to interact with others...”

“I didn't tell my family because I didn't want to worry them.”(Victim 5)

“Since the incident, I have observed significant changes in her, especially in her academic performance... She usually leaves immediately after class, as though she is too ashamed to face others.”(Teacher 1)

“Their academic performance sometimes suffers due to absences... They tend to hide and don't want to open up about how they feel.”(Teacher 3)

“She has become distant even with me, her confidante and constant companion. She now feels embarrassed, even in my presence.”(Classmate 1)

“I observed that she has lost his motivation to study, often not attending classes and being distant to us her friends.”(Classmate 4)

Victims of cyberbullying commonly experience a decline in both academic performance and social engagement due to the emotional strain caused by harassment. Many students withdraw from their normal school activities, abandon leadership roles, skip classes, and show disinterest in their studies. The fear of further judgment or ridicule often leads them to isolate themselves not only from peers but also from family members, becoming distant, ashamed, and reluctant to share their experiences. This silence reinforces poor classroom participation, lower grades, and strained relationships with friends.

These patterns are consistent with existing literature, which establishes a strong link between cyberbullying, academic difficulties, and social withdrawal. Studies by Kowalski, Limber, and Agatston (2012), Schneider et al. (2012), and Patchin and Hinduja (2010) confirm that emotional turmoil resulting from online harassment disrupts concentration, motivation, attendance, and peer interactions. Victims often avoid school, show reduced

participation, and isolate themselves as a protective mechanism, leading to feelings of loneliness and diminished social support. These findings illustrate that the effects of cyberbullying extend far beyond the digital environment, significantly influencing students' school involvement and emotional development.

Given these consequences, the findings highlight the urgent need for school-based interventions that can identify and support students exhibiting signs of academic decline and social withdrawal. Educators, parents, and mental health professionals must collaborate in providing counseling, peer mentoring, and strong anti-bullying policies to ensure early detection and prevention of further harm. Creating a safe and inclusive school environment where students feel secure reporting incidents is essential to protecting their academic success, emotional well-being, and long-term development.

Withdrawal and Silence as a Coping Mechanism

Silence and Withdrawal as a Coping Method defines how students cope with the emotional strain of cyberbullying by withdrawing and opting not to report their ordeals. According to the research, most victims preferred remaining silent since they felt ashamed, feared the consequences, or did not expect that reporting the incidents would benefit them. They retreated from social activities, stayed away from school, and emotionally disconnected even with close friends and family. This silence frequently functioned as a means of protecting themselves from further judgment or humiliation, but also left them isolated and unsupported.

"I remain quiet because I feel powerless, knowing that a video exists, and in today's generation it can easily spread."

"I find myself withdrawing, even from my family. I walk around with my head down, avoiding others, until everything passes into silence."(Victim 1)

"I didn't tell my family because I didn't want to worry them."(Victim 5)

"Her coping mechanism seems to be silence, and she usually leaves immediately after class, as though she is too ashamed to face others."(Teacher 1)

"Many stay silent out of fear or shame..."(Teacher 4)

Silence and withdrawal are the coping strategies that most of the cyberbullying victims use, and these are the main reasons for their behavior: guilt, fear, and lack of control. The students prefer not to reveal their stories more so, when their privacy has been invaded and false stories about them circulated thinking that being silent will spare them the humiliation or prevent their relatives from worrying. Sometimes, the silence expresses itself in the form of behavioral changes like avoiding friends, being distant with relatives, and not participating in school activities. People who watch and that already notice the emotional suppression patterns of the victims are teachers, which in turn, the victim's feeling of isolation is further increased. The results of this research confirm the assertion made in the literature that victims of cyberbullying very often resort to silence and withdrawal as their main reactions. For instance, Hinduja and Patchin (2013), Tokunaga (2010), and Navarro, Yubero, and Larrañaga (2015) insist that in most cases adolescents do not report incidents because they are afraid of revenge or being embarrassed, hence, they trap themselves in their distress. Moreover, this type of behavior is noticed by the researchers, who categorize such as avoidance and withdrawal that are similar to social media staying away, reducing interaction with peers, and emotional suppression. Present study showing again that the victims draw back socially and emotionally in an attempt to cope with their experiences as these are the established patterns already seen in the literature. What has been found reveals the necessity for safe, nurturing, and supportive environments where the students can express themselves and share their experiences without the fear that these would lead to their being judged or that there would be an escalation of the situation. Trying to be quiet and self-protecting, unfortunately, that will still limit their access to assistance and, thus, prolong their emotional suffering. It is essential for schools, families, and communities to recognize the signs of these situations early.

Engagement in Distraction and Positive Personal Activities

Students manage cyberbullying by doing distraction and positive individual things, like hanging out with friends, concentrating on interests, or being involved in extracurricular activities. These actions serve to shift students' attention away from unpleasant situations and give them a feeling of normalcy and relief. This management enables students to regain control of their feelings and uphold their well-being in spite of the difficulties presented by cyberbullying.

"While I remain silent, I appreciate the support of my friends..." (Victim 2)

"I keep myself busy with schoolwork and join extracurricular activities to take my mind off the bullying." (Victim 4)

"Whenever I feel down, I play basketball or listen to music to help me relax and forget the hurt." (Victim 5)

"She spends more time with her close friends and focuses on her art to cope with the stress." (Classmate 2)

"Some students engage in sports or creative hobbies to distract themselves from cyberbullying incidents." (Teacher 2)

Others deal with cyberbullying by enjoying distractions and positive personal endeavors. They take solace in the solidarity of close friends, though they might opt not to speak of their ordeal. Staying involved in schoolwork and extracurricular activities aid in diverting their attention away from bullying's harmful impacts. Others resort to using recreational activities like sports, music, or arts to unwind and cope with their stress. These activities are a constructive release of feelings and also a means of getting back a sense of normalcy and control during challenging situations.

Involvement in distraction and positive personal activities is a good coping strategy for victims of cyberbullying. Supportive social networks like close friends are often resorted to by many students to seek emotional comfort and keep silent about the incidents. School-related tasks and extracurricular activities enable them to channel their energy into productive actions, which can ease distress brought about by bullying. Moreover, participation in sports, music, and creative activities offers a healthy vehicle for emotional release and stress management. Not only are they able to distract students away from the harmful effects of cyberbullying but also help create a sense of achievement, belonging, and self-enhancement, leading to enhanced emotional health.

Fear of Judgment and Stigma

Fear of judgment and stigma highly influences students to keep quiet about their experiences with cyberbullying. Most students fear that speaking up will result in labeling, teasing, or further harassment by peers, making them feel even more ashamed and embarrassed. It is usually this fear that discourages them from coming forward to seek assistance or to confide in parents, friends, or school officials. The fear of hurting their reputation or being misjudged forms a stalling blockage that prevents the victims from expressing themselves, thereby contributing further to their emotional anguish and inhibiting their coping process.

"I remain quiet because I feel powerless, knowing that a video exists, and in today's generation it can easily spread." (Victim 1)

"I often choose to hide the issue from them out of shame." (Victim 2)

"I didn't tell my family because I didn't want to worry them." (Victim 5)

"Many stay silent out of fear or shame..." (Teacher 4)

Fear of judgment and stigma is a significant deterrent that keeps students from coming forward about their incidents of cyberbullying. The threat of private material being shared far and wide on the internet makes the

victims feel helpless, exposed, and vulnerable. Shame also holds them back, as they fear others particularly family and peers judging them. In most situations, students prefer silence to revelation in an attempt to evade worry or drawing more attention. Such emotional weight, based on fear and social pressure, serves to maintain their isolation and hesitance to seek assistance.

The fear of judgment and stigma is a large hurdle for most students that prohibits them from reporting or talking about their experience with cyberbullying. The victims internalize shame in thinking that they will be blamed, misunderstood, or made fun of if they come forward. The likelihood of personal or sensitive information being released extensively throughout the social media makes them feel vulnerable, thus afraid of exposure in public and social humiliation. This anxiety is further exacerbated by worries over being stigmatized as "too sensitive" or being weak, such that many of them endure in silence to avoid further humiliation. The victimization stigma also impacts students' self-concept and interpersonal relationships, such that they are reluctant even to confide in close friends. Consequently, most students opt to repress their experiences, which may prolong emotional distress and postpone the required interventions or support.

Lack of Trust and Support

Absence of Support and Trust describes students' reluctance to report cyberbullying because they think that people around them like the school administration, peers, or even relatives might not believe, comprehend, or adequately support them. In the context of the research, a few students believed that their cases were too private or beyond the authority of the school, so they questioned reporting whether it would result in anything constructive. Others avoided sharing with family members so as not to worry or disappoint them. This lack of a strong support system makes students feel that they are on their own in their situation, supporting their decision to keep quiet.

"In my case, I do not believe the school can help, as this is a personal matter."

"It has only affected my family as well because one of them is a government employee." (Victim 1)

"I often choose to hide the issue from them out of shame." (Victim 2)

"I didn't tell my family because I didn't want to worry them." (Victim 5)

"Students often hesitate to disclose their experiences." (Teacher 2)

"Our challenge as teachers is that we can't always identify who the victims are since we're unaware of what happens on their social media." (Teacher 5)

A major reason students remain silent about their experiences with cyberbullying is the lack of trust and perceived support from their surroundings. Many victims view the issue as too personal or believe that schools lack the authority or capability to respond effectively, particularly when incidents occur outside school or on private online platforms. Others avoid disclosing their experiences out of fear of worrying their families, damaging relationships, or drawing unwanted attention especially in households with sensitive dynamics. The emotional weight of shame further discourages help-seeking, making victims feel that staying quiet is safer than risking embarrassment or misunderstanding.

Compounding this problem is the limited ability of teachers and school personnel to detect cyberbullying, since many incidents occur discreetly or on social media platforms not easily monitored. Without clear signs or direct disclosure, support systems fail to activate when students need them most. As a result, victims internalize their distress, believing they must endure the situation alone. This lack of reliable, visible support deepens emotional suffering and reduces opportunities for timely intervention, ultimately prolonging the harmful effects of cyberbullying.

Peer Support as an Immediate and Effective Source of Comfort

Peer Support as an Immediate and Effective Source of Comfort is the emotional and social support victims derive from their friends or classmates while undergoing cyberbullying. According to the research, most students drew comfort and courage through the peer support, which came in the form of listening, standing up for them in public, and advising them to remain strong. This type of support was frequently the first and most available response system, particularly when victims were too ashamed or fearful to go to adults or school administrators. Feeling understood and not judged by peers relieved emotional suffering and encouraged some victims to manage more constructively their experiences.

“While I remain silent, I appreciate the support of my friends...” (Student 2)

“Some students engage in sports or creative hobbies to distract themselves from cyberbullying incidents.”(Student 4)

“She spends more time with her close friends and focuses on her art to cope with the stress.”(Classmate 2)

“Some students engage in sports or creative hobbies to distract themselves from cyberbullying incidents.”(Teacher 2)

Peer support plays a an important role in helping cyberbullying victims cope with emotional distress. Many students find comfort and reassurance in the empathy offered by their friends, which helps ease feelings of isolation, fear, and powerlessness brought about by online harassment. Engaging in shared activities such as sports, creative interests, or other group pursuits provides victims not only with distraction but also with meaningful social connection and a sense of belonging. These positive interactions offer emotional validation and create an environment where victims feel understood and encouraged to open up, making peer support an essential coping strategy during periods of vulnerability.

Research reinforces the significance of strong peer networks in promoting resilience among cyberbullying victims. Scholars such as Smith et al. (2018), Juvonen and Gross (2008), and Hinduja and Patchin (2013) highlight that supportive friendships reduce loneliness, enhance emotional security, and foster constructive social engagement. These findings underscore the need for schools to cultivate inclusive peer communities and encourage group activities that strengthen interpersonal bonds. By promoting peer relationships and creating safe spaces for students to support one another, schools can complement formal interventions and help reduce the psychological burden of cyberbullying, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more supportive learning environment.

Limited Institutional Support and Challenges in School-Based Intervention

The research indicates that institutional assistance for cyberbullying victims is frequently limited, with schools struggling to intervene and respond effectively to such cases. Students were also skeptical about the school being able to assist, perceiving cyberbullying as a personal matter beyond school intervention. Teachers also confirmed challenges in the identification of victims due to the fact that cyberbullying takes place on private social media sites outside their direct view. These all contribute to a feeling that interventions in schools are not enough or are not working, and an insistence on more active, open, and available systems of support within schools to help the affected students better.

“In my case, I do not believe the school can help, as this is a personal matter.”(Victim 1)

“It has only affected my family as well because one of them is a government employee.”(Victim 1)

“I often choose to hide the issue from them out of shame.”(Victim 2)

“I didn’t tell my family because I didn’t want to worry them.”(Victim 5)

“Students often hesitate to disclose their experiences.”(Teacher 2)

“Our challenge as teachers is that we can’t always identify who the victims are since we’re unaware of what happens on their social media.”(Teacher 5)

The findings indicate that many victims of cyberbullying perceive limited institutional support, which heavily influences their reluctance to report incidents. Students often lack confidence in the school’s ability to address cyberbullying effectively, viewing it as a personal issue between themselves and the perpetrators rather than a problem that the institution can resolve. Feelings of shame, fear of judgment, or concern about worrying their families further discourage them from speaking up. The difficulty is compounded by teachers’ limited capacity to identify victims, particularly when harassment occurs privately or on social media platforms outside the school’s direct oversight. This disconnect between available support systems and students’ trust results in many cases going unreported or unnoticed.

Limited institutional capacity and ineffective school-based interventions are significant barriers to addressing cyberbullying among senior high school students. While schools are expected to provide a safe environment, many victims believe that the institution cannot intervene adequately, particularly when incidents happen online. Teachers report challenges in detecting victims who remain silent due to fear, embarrassment, or not wanting to burden their families. The absence of proactive monitoring, clear reporting channels, and professional counseling further diminishes students’ confidence in seeking help. Consequently, emotional, social, and academic consequences persist without timely institutional intervention, emphasizing the need for improved digital safety policies and student-centered support mechanisms.

The study underscores that schools may be inadequately equipped to address the complex nature of cyberbullying. The combination of unreported incidents, online anonymity, and students’ reluctance to disclose their experiences perpetuates a cycle of silence and unattended trauma. These findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive school-based strategies, including digital literacy education, clear reporting procedures, and staff training to recognize and respond to cyber abuse. By fostering a safer and more responsive environment, schools can empower students to seek help, break the cycle of silence, and mitigate the emotional, social, and academic impacts of cyberbullying.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This case study indicates that cyberbullying leaves a profound and long-term effect on high school seniors, influencing their self-esteem, academic performance, and social relationships. Shame, isolation, and loss of self-worth are the most common feelings experienced by victims, prompting them to isolate themselves from others and lose interest in studies. Though others get their support from close peers or reliable teachers, most go unheard out of fear or because they think schools cannot do much particularly when the bullying occurs outside school hours or on personal internet sites. Teachers recognize these dilemmas and try their best to give emotional support but feel crippled in intervening properly in internet affairs.

Based on the result, it is recommended that schools must put in place robust cyberbullying awareness programs and enhance mental health support services using trained counselors and secure reporting mechanisms. Prolific anti-cyberbullying policies need to be enforced, with education on digital citizenship to foster respectful behavior online. Schools should also control cellphone use during class and partner with parents and the community in monitoring students’ online behavior. Above all, developing an atmosphere of empathy, peer support, and open communication can enable students to talk back, seek assistance, and assist each other in resisting the negative impacts of cyberbullying.

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