

## REFLECTION OF CYBERBULLYING ON CINEMA: CYBERBULLY, SUICIDE ROOM AND CHATROOM FILMS<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the way cyberbullying, which takes place through computer use and the internet, is reflected in the cinema. Cinema also reflects the sociology of the period by carrying the social developments to the screen. This study evaluates the phenomenon of cyberbullying, which is one of today's individual and social problems, through the films Cyberbully, Suicide Room and Chatroom, and evaluates these films with qualitative content analysis method. The roles, types, consequences and precautions regarding cyberbullying will be analysed through three sample films. Each film selected as an example examines the interaction between individuals and environmental factors from different perspectives and highlights the consequences of cyberbullying. This study emphasises the importance of raising awareness about this issue in the society with the spread of cyberbullying. In addition, in line with the data obtained in the study, effective methods of combating cyberbullying and preventive strategies are also discussed. The findings show that individuals can be both cyberbullies and victims. In the sample films, it is noteworthy that cyberbullying leads to academic and social failure and suicide. In addition, the inadequacy of family, school administration and friendships were associated with suicide cases.

**Keywords:** Cyberbullying, Cinema, Sociology, Content analysis

### SİBER ZORBALIĞIN SİNEMAYA YANSIMASI: CYBERBULLY, SUICIDE ROOM VE CHATROOM FİMLERİ

### ÖZ

Yapılan bu çalışma, bilgisayar kullanımı ve internet aracılığıyla gerçekleşen siber zorbalık eyleminin sinemaya yansıma biçimini incelemektedir. Sinema toplumsal anlamda yaşanan gelişmeleri perdeye taşıyarak dönemin sosyolojisini de yansıtmaktadır. Yapılan bu çalışma günümüzün bireysel ve toplumsal sorunlarından biri olan siber zorbalık olgusunu, Cyberbully, Suicide Room ve Chatroom filmleri üzerinden ele alarak, bu filmleri nitel içerik analizi yöntemiyle değerlendirmektedir. Siber zorbalığı rolleri, türleri, sonuçları ve siber zorbalığa dair önlemler üç film üzerinden analiz edilecektir. Örnek olarak seçilen her film, siber zorbalığın bireyler ve çevresel faktörler arasındaki etkileşimi farklı açılardan ele almakta ve siber zorbalığın sonuçlarını ortaya koymaktadır. Yapılan bu çalışma, siber zorbalığın yaygınlaşmasıyla birlikte toplumda bu konu hakkında farkındalık kazandırmanın önemini vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca çalışma da elde edilen veriler doğrultusunda siber zorbalığa karşı etkili mücadele yöntemleri ve önleyici stratejiler de ele alınmaktadır. Bulgular, bireylerin hem siber zorba hem de mağdur olabildiğini göstermektedir. Örnek filmlerde, siber zorbalığın akademik ve sosyal başarısızlık ile intihara yol açtığı dikkat çekmektedir. Ayrıca, aile, okul yönetimi ve arkadaş çevresinin yetersizliği intihar vakalarıyla ilişkilendirilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Siber zorbalık, Sinema, Sosyoloji, İçerik analizi

<sup>1</sup> This study is based on the master's thesis titled "Cyberbullying and Cinema: Cyberbully, Suicide Room and Chatroom Films".

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of computer technologies and the widespread use of the Internet offer new communication opportunities by affecting the daily lives, personal relationships and identity formation processes of individuals in society. This change affects especially young people more and reveals negative forms of social communication and interaction such as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can be defined as a continuous, deliberate act of harming another person in the internet environment through computer technologies. This action can negatively affect the victims psychologically, physically, socially or academically. Cinema, on the other hand, can be a tool that deals with social problems and can raise awareness about these problems. Therefore, it is very important to examine the representations of cyberbullying in cinema, to address the social effects of this reality and possible solutions. In this context, the films Cyberbully, Suicide Room and Chatroom stand out as films that deal with cyberbullying and the consequences and measures against these actions. This study examines the distribution of roles in cyberbullying, the types of cyberbullying, the consequences for bullies and victims, and the measures that can be taken against this phenomenon through qualitative content analysis through three films selected as examples. This examination aims to contribute to raising social awareness while revealing the consequences of cyberbullying.

### 1. The Cyberbullying

The concept of cyberbullying was first introduced by Canadian pedagogue Bill Belsey, who defines it as deliberate, sustained and aggressive bullying using information and communication technologies. According to another definition, cyberbullying is sending damaging messages to the other party via telephone or digital tools (Willard, 2007, p. 1). Ybarra et al. (2007, pp. 42-43) define cyberbullying as an open aggression that is deliberately committed over the Internet. Similar to traditional bullying, sharing information or photographs on the Internet to embarrass the victims causes psychological damage to them. Li (2006, p. 166) states that cyberbullying emerged with new communication technologies and is the sending or publishing of damaging messages or images over the Internet. Hinduja and Patchin (2009, p. 11)

define cyberbullying as deliberate and continuous bullying with computers, mobile phones or other electronic devices with the aim of causing harm.

There are seven different roles involved in cyberbullying. The first role is the bully; the bully is the person who initiates the act of bullying and displays an aggressive attitude towards the victim. The bully's supporters participate in the process after the action starts and actively continue the bullying. Passive supporters, on the other hand, do not directly intervene, but support the action with their behaviour. The group that does not support both sides is called neutral bystanders. Those who do not approve of what is done to the victim, but hesitate to give direct support are referred to as potential supporters of the victim. The group that rejects the bullying and actively supports the victim is known as the victim's supporters. Finally, the person targeted by the cyberbully is called the victim (Baştürk, 2020, p. 54).

Willard (2007, pp. 5-11) categorises cyberbullying into eight types. The first type is the 'flamingo' (flare-up-fight) type, which usually flares up quickly in chat rooms or games. The second is the 'harassment' type, where the bully constantly sends offensive messages to the victim. Thirdly, there is 'denigration', in which the bully tries to undermine the social reputation of the target by false or cruel slander. The fourth type is 'impersonation', where the bully aims to disrupt social relations by impersonating someone else. The fifth type, 'outing and trickery', is the dissemination of private information without consent. The sixth type is 'exclusion', which refers to exclusion from the group. The seventh type, 'cyberstalking' (cyber harassment), involves constant threats and blackmail against the victim. Finally, 'cyberthreats' aim to cause physical or emotional harm to the victim directly or indirectly.

Yıldırım (2020) analyses the consequences of bullying under three main headings: psychological and physical health, social effects and academic consequences. In terms of psychological and physical health, bullying can lead to fear, anxiety, depression, sleep problems and lack of self-esteem in victims; the most serious consequence is suicide. Social consequences include cyberbullying, especially when young people are trying to build social relationships online. Bullies' anonymity can lead to victims' lack of trust in their environment, as well as aggression and lack of empathy. In terms of academic consequences, cyberbullying can decrease school

success and increase the tendency of victims to truancy; students who are exposed to bullying may also experience focusing problems (Yıldırım, 2020, pp. 210-218).

Yaman et al. (2011), Atik (2020) and Baştürk (2020) made various suggestions for families, schools and students within the scope of measures against cyberbullying. It is suggested that families should talk to their children about cyberbullying, raise their awareness about safe internet use and set certain rules. For example, they should guide their children on issues such as which sites to visit, with whom they can follow, and provide information about not sharing passwords. They should also support children to report cyberbullying when they experience it (Baştürk, 2020, pp. 130-132). Schools, on the other hand, emphasise that teachers should undertake the task of protecting and raising awareness of students against cyberbullying while providing a safe educational environment. In this context, focus group studies and in-class activities should be organised to raise awareness in schools; rules preventing cyberbullying should be developed in cooperation with teachers and school administrators. It is important for school psychological counsellors to create a positive climate in the school environment by providing social support to students (Yaman et al., 2011, p. 211; Atik, 2020, pp. 255-258). Students should also improve their digital literacy skills against cyberbullying. Basic digital security measures such as activating firewalls, not opening content from people they do not know, and accessing reliable sources help students protect themselves against cyberbullying (Baştürk, 2020, pp. 135-136).

## **2. Sociology of Cinema and Cyberbullying in Cinema**

Cinema is derived from the word cinematography. Cinematography means writing or detecting motion. Therefore, cinema divides the movement into certain parts at regular intervals, detects the pictures of these movements, and then recreates the motion through projection (Özön, 1984, p. 7). Unlike photography, cinema, which is technically an advanced stage of photography, is an artistic product in which the movement continues, the gaze continues, a narrative language is created in a fictional sense and the language is more in-depth (Bozkurt, 2022, p. 18). Cinema is an art form that provides narration through moving images (Onaran, 2012, p. 7).

Cinema sociology is concerned with how social reality is transmitted and reproduced through films by drawing attention to how film narratives are formed within the social bonds in society (Karakoç & Özgür, 2022, p. 1). Therefore, it is inevitable that there is an interaction between cinema and society. The changes experienced in society also change the structure of cinema and can affect the subjects that make up the content of films. These affected film contents are also reflected on the audience, changing the mindset of the audience, and this change is the source of the development in society (Kuyucak Esen, 2019, p. 186). This interaction between cinema and society shows us that films also give us clues about the region where they are produced and the history of their production. In addition, films present us abstract concepts in sociology by concretising them (Aslan, 2020, pp. 52-53). Cinema can deal with problems such as youth, family, sexuality, labour, property, etc. that exist in society in a positive way. However, sometimes cinema can also negatively address these problems and make suggestions that can contribute to their solution. However, while doing this, one-sided point of view, aims such as protecting a certain segment or group should not be adopted, but in Turkey, while doing this, the values of the upper class are generally reflected (Tezcan, 1972, pp. 174-175).

Cinema deals with the theme of bullying in many films and deals with this issue through social exclusion, being the other marginalisation in social relations (Turgut, 2023, p. 55). When we examine films addressing the issue of cyberbullying, it becomes evident that malicious individuals capture personal information and disclose it. Issues such as the inability to completely eliminate the data uploaded to the Internet, the easy access to personal data by malicious people using the vulnerabilities of the Internet are shown to the audience and warnings are given to the audience not to enter sites they do not know and not to click on links. In addition, those who share their personal information in films are usually severely punished (Bedir, 2022, pp. 408-409). Therefore, while cinema films deal with the issue of cyberbullying, they deal with cyberbullying in a negative way and warn the audience that this situation is out of the norm. In other words, cinema films often warn the audience about cyberbullying and create a negative perception of cyberbullying.

### 3. Methodology of the Research

In this study, Cyberbully, Suicide Room and Chatroom films are analysed and these films are evaluated by qualitative content analysis method. The films selected as a sample were analyzed by content analysis method. This method was preferred because it is thought that the films will be better handled by this method and more useful results will be given.

Content analysis method is an analysis method performed on written texts or other materials. However, in terms of reliability, it is very important that different studies conducted with the same data and method reach the same result. In short, it is necessary for the reliability of this study to be systematic and reproducible (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Content analysis is the holistic, systematic and purposeful analysis of the contents of interviews, field notes and written documents. Videos, photographs, written texts, voice recordings and the form of communication between people can be subject to this analysis method in which the contents are examined and interpreted systematically and in detail. Although written texts are generally used in the content analysis method, films, television programmes and photographs are also analysed (Bal, 2016, p. 258). Many definitions have been made about qualitative content analysis. Although there is no clear consensus on the definitions, there are some common points. These are; the category system is the basic basis for qualitative content analysis, there is an inductive processing method in qualitative content analysis (here it is meant to evaluate the data in its context), this method is a systematic method, the analysis must fulfil the conditions of reliability and validity (Gökçe, 2019, p. 49).

The study addresses the interaction of cyberbullying between individuals and environmental factors (family, peers and school administration) on different platforms (gaming, chat rooms and social media) and aims to reveal the consequences of cyberbullying. In this context, the selection of movies for the sample was based on (i) environmental factors related to cyberbullying such as family, peers and school administration and (ii) their reflections on different platforms such as social media, games and chat rooms. Based on these criteria, Cyberbully, Suicide Room and Chatroom movies were selected through purposive sampling method.

## **4. Summaries of Sample Films**

### **4.1. Summary of the Film "Cyberbully"**

The film tells the story of a young girl named Casey who constantly cyberbullies others through fake accounts and is subjected to cyberbullying by another person in response to this action. After the cyberbullying initiated by Casey, a peer named Jennifer Li was driven to suicide. Then, another cyberbully who hides his identity targets people who bully others on the internet and makes them victims. For this reason, Casey is also the target of this cyber bully. In this film about cyberbullying, all cyberbullying processes are reflected to the audience with both the victim and the bully and their supporters.

The film was released in the UK in 2015, directed by Ben Chanan. The film, written by Ben Chanan and David Lobatto, was rated 6.8 by IMDB.

### **4.2. Summary of the Film "Suicide Room"**

Dominik, the child of a successful and wealthy family, falls in love with Alex, a fellow student at school, and soon the whole school finds out. Dominik, who is then subjected to both cyber bullying on the internet and traditional bullying at school, becomes withdrawn and starts to spend time at home. During this time, Dominik meets Sylwia on the internet, becomes aware of a game room called Suicide Room and spends most of his time there. In the film, Dominik is completely cut off from social life and trusts people he knows only on the internet too much.

Directed by Jan Komasa, the film was also written by Komasa. Released in 2011 in Poland, the film was rated 6.6 by IMDB.

### **4.3. Summary of the Film "Chatroom"**

William, a young man who is not in a good psychological state and has problems with his family, opens a chat room on the internet. Eva, Jim, Mo and Emily join the chat room opened by William. These four young people have different problems in their own lives and William approaches them in a caring and sweet way, constantly giving them bad advice. The other members of the room, who do not see

William's real face at first, will gradually meet his real face and realise that he is a bully.

Directed by Hideo Nakata, the film was written by Enda Walsh. Released in 2010 in the UK, the film was rated 5.4 by IMDB.

## 5. Analysing the Findings

Content analysis technique is used to analyze the data obtained from the research. The researcher produces certain codes according to the emerging meaning or creates codes based on direct data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016: 246). In this direction, the codes and themes of the study were created by the researcher by taking into account the types of cyberbullying, cyberbullying roles, the consequences of cyberbullying and measures against cyberbullying. While finalizing the codes and themes below, support was received from two academicians who are experts in the field of cinema.

**Table 1**

Table of Codes, Categories and Themes

<b>CODES</b>	<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>THEME</b>
Bully, victim, bully supporters, victim supporters	Appearance of individuals	cyberbullying roles
Disclosure, anonymity, exclusion	Forms of cyberbullying	Types of cyberbullying
Anxiety, panic, fear, suicide, desire not to go to school	How the results appear	Consequences of cyberbullying
Family (mother, father, siblings), school environment (peers and teachers)	Steps for prevention	Preventive methods of cyberbullying

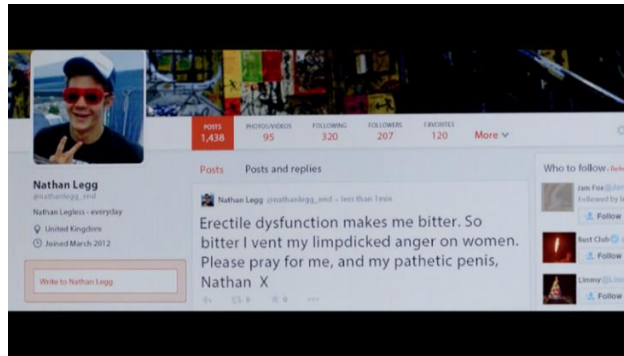


### 5.1. Appearances of Individuals through Roles in Cinema

In the film Cyberbully, Casey is a character who uses antidepressants and shares this situation only with her relatives. Her ex-boyfriend Nathan reveals on social media that Casey is on medication and that she is depressed after a night with him. Casey's friend Alex asks her if she wants to deal with Nathan. Casey says he wants to mess with Nathan, clicks on the link Alex sends him and posts on Nathan's profile implying that he has masculinity issues. However, it is later realised that the person who posted from Nathan's account is not actually Nathan and the person who sent the link is not Alex; another cyber bully has tricked Casey through their accounts. In this context, Alex and Nathan, whose accounts have been compromised, can be defined as cyber victims, while Casey is defined as both a cyber victim and a cyber bully, as he uses Nathan's account to take revenge and exposes him.

#### Picture 1.

Casey Hacked Nathan's Account and Made Embarrassing Posts on His Behalf



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gMIFnqPDd8>

The second film subject to the study is Suicide Room. In the film, a young man named Dominik kisses Alex at the prom at the insistence of his friends and enjoys it. Later, after a close encounter in judo class, Dominik experiences sexual pleasure and is ridiculed by Alex. Alex disclosed both the video of the moment they kissed and the moment of satisfaction Dominik experienced during judo by sharing it on his social media accounts and spread this situation to everyone. After Alex's posts, many of his friends made sarcastic comments and posts about Dominik and ostracised him. The character Alex can be defined as a cyberbully in cyberbullying roles. Those who made

sarcastic posts and comments about Dominik after Alex's posts are included in the group of bully supporters mentioned above in the definition of the concept of cyberbullying.

Dominik is then sent a link and meets Sylwia there. Later on, Dominik enters the game room called Suicide Room and states that he wants to be included there. Dominik wins a duel with a member of the game room and is included in the room, while the loser of the duel is expelled from the room due to his excessive objection. This person then finds a way into the room by hacking Sylwia's accounts and mocks the other avatars by telling them what they are really like. Dominik then kills this player's avatar. This character, who manages to enter the game by taking over Sylwia's accounts, becomes a victim because he was previously ostracised, and at the same time takes on the role of a bully by taking over Sylwia's accounts. He becomes a bully both by taking over the accounts and by fighting with other players after entering the game. The character Dominik is seen as a bully here because he damages the player's avatar.

In the film, Sylwia, the queen of the suicide room, encourages suicide by telling all the members of the room that suicide is a good thing. In addition, all other members support this idea by finding it positive. Sylwia tells Dominik that she wants to commit suicide and asks him to prescribe some medicines to her psychiatrist. When Dominik does not accept this offer, Sylwia and the others threaten to throw him out of the room and Dominik accepts this offer for fear of being ostracised. Here, Dominik is a cyber victim while Sylwia is a cyber bully due to her misleading efforts and threats of exclusion. The other members of the room who support Sylwia are included in the film as cyberbully supporters.

When we look at the characters in the third sample film, Chatroom, it is seen that William is a character who has problems in communicating with his family and has undergone a psychological treatment process. Eva is a character who cares about the perception of beauty and is ridiculed and bullied by her fellow models, while Emily is a character who is constantly forced by her family to be a strong woman and is shown as an example of the rich and powerful women of the world. Mo is in love with his best friend's 11-year-old sister and Jim is a character who was abandoned by his father at a young age, lives with his mother and uses antidepressants. William takes note of

the problems of these characters one by one and gives them wrong advice and makes their lives more difficult. When we look at the roles of cyberbullying, William is seen as a bully character, while others are seen as victims who fall into his network.

William notices a new room in the chat rooms, "Ultimo Quarto", where the members are constantly pressuring a younger person with phrases such as "confess, talk, you have no other choice". Director Hideo Nakata here tried to explain how young children are subjected to cyberbullying by older people in various chat rooms. The child, who could not withstand the pressure of the users who were constantly in the room, eventually committed suicide. Here, it is seen that social media users, whose names we do not know, are cyberbullies or cyberbully supporters, and it is understood that the young child who is exposed to cyberbullying is a cyber victim.

Eva tells William about her friend who makes fun of her in real life. Thereupon, William takes the photos of that girl on the internet, pastes her face on the face of another girl who shoots adult content videos and plays with the photos of that girl on the modelling page. Here, another act of cyberbullying by William to the girl takes place and William becomes a cyberbully again. While Eva's friend is a bully in traditional bullying roles because he makes fun of Eva, he is a cyber victim in cyber bullying roles. Eva, on the other hand, is a passive bully supporter. It was stated above that passive bully supporters do not actively support the action but support it with their attitudes, Eva is seen as a passive bully supporter by thanking William while not actively supporting the action here. As a result; William character tries to mislead his friends in the room and therefore becomes a cyber bully. Eva character, who supports William at first, becomes both a cyber bully and a cyber victim. Mo, Jim and Emily are cyber victims.

## **5.2. Investigation of Cyberbullying Types According to the Method Applied**

In the film Cyberbully, the situation of Casey, a young woman on antidepressants, is exposed on social media by her ex-boyfriend Nathan. Disclosure and deceit, two of the types of cyberbullying defined by Willard (2007), are seen here; Nathan tries to embarrass Casey by sharing that she is on medication. However, it is later realised that this person is not Nathan. Casey logs into Nathan's account from his

friend's account and makes a post on his behalf, implying that he has masculinity problems. This shows Willard's way of assuming a different identity. Casey realises that the person who sent him the link is not Alex and offers him a Skype video call, but the other person does not accept it. Thus, it is revealed that the person using Alex's account is a cyber bully. In the film, both types of disclosure and deceit and identity change are exhibited.

Casey sends Jennifer a message under the alias Moe Lester, offering her a deal under a fake producer identity. Jennifer responds by stating that she gladly accepts this offer. Casey and his friend Megan make a video mocking this situation. Casey deceives Jennifer by using the *impersonation* method defined by Willard (2007). However, Casey's behaviour leads her to become the target of a cyberbully. The bully threatens to force Casey to drink drugs and says that he will post her photos on the internet otherwise. He also claims that the publication of these photos will ruin Casey's life. Although Casey agrees to the bully's demands, the threats continue; the bully demands that Casey take a pill for each photo and admit that he killed Jennifer Li. Casey chooses to take the pills of his own volition, but the bully claims that this shows that he does not care about his friend. This incident is an example of cyber threats, one of the types of cyberbullying mentioned by Willard (2007). The bully tries to drag the victim into a psychological and physical predicament through direct threats using the victim's photographs.

While Casey is talking to the bully, her father comes home and invites Casey to dinner, but the cyber bully tells Casey to get her father out of there as soon as possible and that if he enters the room, he will spread naked pictures of Casey on the internet and show her sexually explicit videos that her father watches. Casey then tells his father that he doesn't want to eat and to leave, and when his father insists, he gets angry and starts yelling at him. Here, the cyberbully tries to isolate the victim by cutting off his/her relationship with his/her family. Here we see Willard's (2007) disclosure and deception and cyber threat cyberbullying types.

In our second example film, Suicide Room, we stated that the character Dominik was bullied by Alex and other schoolmates. His schoolmates uploaded Dominik and Alex's kiss to his social media account, and later Alex shared the sexual pleasure

experienced during judo on his social media account and mocked Dominik, here again we see the type of outing and trickery (Willard, 2007), which we mentioned under the types of cyberbullying.

After being bullied by his schoolmates, Dominik tries to join a game called "*suicide room*". However, the other members of the room tell him that it is not open to everyone and is a members-only area. Sylwia is revered as the queen of the room. Dominik offers to fight with a member to enter the room and this offer is accepted. The losing member gets angry, asking Sylwia, "*Will you let him in the room?*". Sylwia throws this person out of the room and tells him that he cannot enter again. This scene shows an example of exclusion, which is one of the types of cyberbullying defined by Willard (2007). Exclusion is usually seen within games and involves the punishment of members by ostracising them. Here, the former member is punished for opposing Sylwia and is kicked out of the room. Dominik, the winner of the duel, is brought into the room and made a member.

In the title above it was mentioned that the character Sylwia forces Dominik to take medication from his psychiatrist and then asks him to give her the medication to commit suicide. Dominik initially refuses, but Sylwia and the other players get angry and throw him out of the suicide room. Dominik then agrees to lie to the doctor and prescribe the necessary medication and is taken back into the room. Here again we see one of the types of cyberbullying: exclusion. Sylwia kicks Dominik out of the game and ostracizes him for not doing what he is told. Dominik, who has been ostracized at school before, is forced to do what he is told, albeit reluctantly, to avoid the same thing. It is understood that Sylwia cyberbullies Dominik through exclusion in order to get what she wants (Willard: 2007).

We have already mentioned that Eva was subjected to traditional bullying by fellow models and that Eva told William about it. Learning about this, William took the photos of the person who bullied Eva and added them to the photo of an adult movie actor and then placed this photo on the page of the modeling company where the girl worked. In terms of bullying types, here we see exclusion and deception, one of the types of cyberbullying mentioned by Willard (2007). Because William plays with the photos and spreads unreal photos.

William tries to convince Jim to commit suicide and Jim succumbs to William's persuasive efforts and agrees to commit suicide. Here we see cyberthreats, one of the types of cyberbullying mentioned by Willard (2007). Cyberthreat was divided into two as direct and indirect. In indirect cyberthreats, the bully gathers clues about the victim and harms him/her emotionally and wants him/her to harm himself/herself or commit suicide. Here, William, who is the bully, first makes Jim talk and learns that his father abandoned him, then tells him to stop his medication, and finally puts emotional pressure on him with the animation he prepared and the speech he made afterwards; at the end of all these, Jim's suicide attempt is a very good example of the indirect cyber threat mentioned by Willard (2007).

**Figure 2.** William's Inducing Jim to Commit Suicide



Source: (Nakata, 2010)

### 5.3. Evaluation of Realised Results

The cyberbully shows Casey a photograph of Jennifer hurting herself. In the photo, it is seen that Jennifer scratched her arm and shared this situation so that the trolls would not deal with her. Among the consequences of cyberbullying, there are negative effects on psychological and physical health, and victims can sometimes be driven to suicide. Although Jennifer has not yet reached the suicide stage, it is clear that she has started to damage her physical integrity. In the comments after she shared the photo, users told Jennifer that she was still bruised and that she should bleed her other arm. This shows that cyberbullying continues even after the victim self-harms.

It is clearly presented to the viewer that the bullying elements are continuous and deliberate.

After the increasing number of attacks, Jennifer Li shoots one last video and puts her experiences on paper. In the video, she expresses her family problems and the pain of losing her mother, and states that she is constantly singing. However, after the bullying she experiences, she writes "stop the hate" and sends a message to those watching the video that they should stop attacking. The cyberbully tells Casey that the attacks did not stop and continued to increase after he made Casey watch this video. Casey searches for Jennifer's name on the internet and learns that she committed suicide because she could no longer stand the bullying. Among the consequences of cyberbullying, it was emphasised that the victims were driven to suicide by not being able to withstand the bullying they experienced. It is seen that Jennifer committed suicide by not being able to bear it; Jennifer, who first harmed herself physically, chose suicide as an escape when the attacks did not stop.

Casey's father calls him to come downstairs and have dinner, but after the cyberbully threatens Casey to send his father away, Casey gets angry with his father and sends him downstairs and sits on the doorstep crying. At that time, the camera shows Casey from above and conveys his helplessness to the audience. In this scene, the helplessness of a victim of cyberbullying who cannot even share this situation with his father is seen and the director conveys this helplessness to the audience by showing Casey from above. In addition, in the psychological and physical consequences of cyberbullying, we mentioned that the victim feels anxious, hopeless and depressed. In this scene, Casey, who crouches on the ground and cries, shows all the emotions that can be felt as a result of being cyberbullied.

In the film Suicide Room, Dominik is forced to go to school under pressure from his mother. During this process, he sees a video of Alex making fun of him on social media and bursts into tears. Meanwhile, Sylwia makes a video call to Dominik and tells him that he is a coward but he should appreciate himself as a different and special individual. When Dominik asks what he should do, Sylwia replies "scare the hell out of them, become a terrorist". Under the influence of these expressions, Dominik takes his father's gun and goes to school and shows an attitude of indifference, attracting

attention with his different hairstyle and clothing style. When he returns home, he tells Sylwia about his experiences and expresses that he feels like both an animal and a murderer and that he is happy about it. Dominik's academic career is negatively affected by the fact that he does not go to school for a long time and when he returns, he deals with the bullies instead of focusing on his lessons. The fact that bullied individuals see school as an unsafe place and withdraw from school overlaps with Yıldırım's (2020) findings on academic outcomes. Dominik, who was a victim of both traditional and cyber bullying, distanced himself from the lessons and did not give the necessary importance to the exams. Through these events, the director aims to convey to the audience the destructive effects of cyberbullying on a young person's academic life.

Dominik's father disconnects his son from the online world by cutting the internet connection. Not knowing what to do in this situation, Dominik wanders uneasily in his room and leaves home in the middle of the night without his family's knowledge and goes to a nightclub. There he looks for Sylwia but cannot find her. In the toilet, he first decides to pour out all the pills he has, but then gives up and drinks the remaining pills. Dominik, dizzy from alcohol and drugs, comes out of the toilet and starts chatting to a couple kissing in the sink. He first videotapes the couple and then the couple record him. Meanwhile, Dominik mockingly imitates the bullying he has experienced and his problems with his family. However, as the effect of the drugs increases, he collapses and tearfully asks those around him to call his family. The film ends with Dominik, who is subjected to both traditional and cyber bullying and has communication problems with his family, ending his life. Suicide, one of the psychological and physical effects of cyberbullying, is emphasised in this story. The video of Dominik's death on social media and the followers wishing him peace with positive comments stand out as a criticism of the tragic events that occur after cyberbullying. In this context, the pessimistic ending of the film contrasts with the hopeful ending of the previous sample film.

### **Figure 3.**

Video of Dominik's Death Shared After His Suicide





Source: <https://mubi.com/tr/films/39507/player>

In the third example movie, Chatroom, we have already mentioned that the character William discovers a room called “Ultimo Quarto”. The members in this room were constantly pressuring someone younger than themselves with phrases such as confess, talk, you have no other choice. Unable to withstand these pressures any longer, the child eventually commits suicide. We mentioned that suicide is one of the physical and psychological consequences of cyberbullying. Here, we see that the young child committed suicide as a result of being constantly exposed to cyberbullying.

#### 5.4. Treatment under Precautions

In the film Cyberbully, the bully shares the video in which Casey says that Tamara is gay from Tamara's account and shows how serious he is with this action and tells Casey again that he will share nude photos if he turns off the computer. We have mentioned some points about the precautions that can be taken against cyberbullying, and under the heading of students, we have stated that students should be digitally literate and should not share their personal information, photos or videos in these environments. As it can be understood from the film, it shows that people in daily life like Casey need a good digital literacy education in order to overcome similar problems.

In her last video before committing suicide, Jennifer also states that her father discussed this issue with the school administration, but they could not get any results. When Atik's (2020) suggestions that school administration and teachers should be aware of cyberbullying are evaluated within the framework of the film, it is understood that a negative situation occurred as a result of the teachers at Jennifer's school not

showing enough interest in this issue or not having enough knowledge about the subject.

The second sample film, Suicide Room, starts in an opera house and as the artist reads the piece, we are shown one by one the lives and daily chores of the main character Dominik, his father and mother. So at the beginning of the movie we see what Dominik's family does and how hard they work. Dominik's family is a financially strong family, but a weak family in terms of communication. For this reason, it is revealed later in the movie that there is not enough communication within the family and that there are problems related to this.

After his family's indifference, Dominik, who is subjected to both traditional bullying and cyber bullying by Alex and his schoolmates, becomes more and more withdrawn. Just at this time, Dominik receives a message saying *"I got hurt and I live in silence"* in response to a comment he made on a video. Dominik writes *"I'm alive, silently crying blood"* in response to him in anger after the bullying he suffered. The user then sends Dominik a game link by saying "come to me", Dominik enters the game by creating his avatar. Here, Dominik, who does not receive the attention he expects from his family and says that he is silently crying blood, responds to the message of someone he does not know and communicates with him. Here, Dominik feels lonely and helpless due to reasons such as the indifference of the family, the fact that the students, his friends do not support him by bullying him and that all his friends are bully supporters, the school administration does not realise this bullying incident at school and does not take measures against it, which leads him to the virtual world and leaves him defenceless there.

During a business dinner, Dominik's mother makes harsh remarks against the minister and his wife, and his father, fearing that his business will be disrupted, comes home in a nervous state and unplugs the internet. At that moment, Sylwia tells Dominik that she will be at the pub all night and if he does not come back she will never see him again, but the internet is cut off without telling which pub she is at. Dominik fights with his family to get them to reconnect the internet. Dominik then raises his voice to his family and the next day he tells his family about all his experiences, the game and the players there. His mother even resents it when he says that the people in the play

are like family members to him. In fact, the director tries to show the audience that an individual who is bullied is pushed to different bullying as a result of his loneliness. As it is clear from the movie, his family is not on Dominik's side. This situation is detrimental to Dominik's recovery process. Dominik therefore fails both academically and socially. However, Dominik, who took refuge with the wrong people due to lack of family and regarded them as family, failed in social life and academic career and even attempted suicide.

Kuyucak Esen (2019) states that the changes in society also affect cinema and that the content and subjects of films can change. Therefore, the content changes the audience and provides social development. In this context, the fact that this film deals with the issue of cyberbullying, which is increasing with the developing technology, is an example of the reflection of a social reality on the screen. The fact that the film has a warning feature about cyberbullying, emphasising how the family should not behave, and the emphasis that young people should be more careful in this regard are conveyed to the audience. In this way, the audience can become more conscious about this issue by receiving these warning messages from the film. In this context, as Tezcan (1972) stated in his study, cinema can sometimes give suggestions for solutions by negatively processing the problems existing in society. In this film, the negative family theme, the group of friends and the suicide of the victim who was bullied at the end of it all were portrayed.

During a conversation in the Chatroom film, the sentence "*some children cannot make decisions and get depressed when they cannot find a place to escape*" shows that individuals who are cyberbullied sometimes use new media as a recipe for salvation and that younger individuals fall into these traps more easily. In order not to fall into these traps, especially the families of the younger ones, school administrations and peers at school are important.

## CONCLUSION

With the rapid development of the Internet and the increase in digitalisation, communication and information exchange between individuals has become easier than ever before. In the age of digital communication, individuals participate in a wide

communication network through social media, online games, forums and other digital platforms. However, this situation also brings some negative consequences. The widespread use of digital communication has given rise to new threats such as cyberbullying, which causes individuals to be negatively affected psychologically and socially. Cyberbullying is becoming more and more widespread with the effect of digital environments that provide anonymity and has serious effects especially on children, young people and vulnerable groups.

In this study, films such as Cyberbully, Suicide Room and Chatroom were analyzed to address different aspects of cyberbullying. When the effects of cyberbullying on individuals' psychological, physical and academic lives were examined in depth, it was concluded that victims of cyberbullying experience psychological health problems, lose their self-confidence, and this can lead to mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety in the long term. In addition, it was also observed that bullying acts reduce the academic achievement of the victims and damage their social lives. Through these films, it is understood that bullying is an important problem that can leave lasting effects on individuals' lives, break social ties and cause individuals to distance themselves from society. The art of cinema, which depicts the period in which we live, has recently frequently included films depicting the digital era. In this context, it is seen that the form of bullying, which has changed with digitalization, is reflected in the cinema in different ways. It is possible to say that the roles and types of bullying mentioned in the literature are included in all three films and that these roles and types are reflected in the cinema. Today, cyberbullying, which affects many people, especially young people, causes very serious consequences, including suicide. In this context, these consequences were included in the three movies selected as a sample. In addition, the importance of peers and educators, especially the family, is emphasized in the films about cyberbullying. In this respect, it is possible to say that the movies also present the audience with measures against cyberbullying, which is one of today's problems, and try to convey solutions to it.

Turgut (2023), in his study titled "Bilmemek Filmi" (The Film of Not Knowing), discussed the concept of bullying and stigmatization together, emphasized how bullying marginalizes people and drew attention to the limited traces of cyberbullying

in the film. Although this study shows similarities with Turgut's work, it offers a more detailed examination of the roles, types, consequences and measures of cyberbullying. Both studies reach similar conclusions about the negative academic, physical and psychological effects of cyberbullying. Gönülşen (2022) discusses the relationship between trolling and cyberbullying in his study titled "Cyberbullying, Trolling and the Reflection of Lynch Culture on Social Media". Gönülşen states that cyberbullying acts are caused by feelings of anger and revenge. In this respect, both studies are similar. Bedir (2021), in his study titled "Discourse of Cyber-Securitization in Cinema", focuses on internet risks from a social perspective and approaches issues related to cyber security from a pessimistic point of view. Moreover, while Bedir's study focuses on public consequences, this study deals with the roles involved in cyberbullying, the types of cyberbullying, its consequences, and measures against cyberbullying. Both Badr's approach and the films discussed in this study present a pessimistic perspective by showing the inadequacy of cyber security measures and in this respect, they show similarities. Pettalia et al. (2013) found that 8.7% of cyberbullying bystanders later shared their experiences with their friends. This study qualitatively examined the roles involved in cyberbullying and obtained results on roles in this way. Therefore, although both studies obtained similar results, they differ in terms of methodology. According to Skilbred-Fjeld et al. (2020), 65% of individuals involved in cyberbullying show symptoms of depression and anxiety and are more likely to consider suicide. In this context, when the results of this study are examined, it is possible to see that cases such as depression, anxiety and suicide were found in all three movies. Therefore, both studies show a similarity in this respect by including suicide, depression and anxiety among the consequences of cyberbullying.

The findings reveal that cyberbullying is not only an individual problem but also a widespread social problem. Another result of the study is that cyberbullying is an issue that needs to be raised awareness at the social level and it is of great importance for individuals to learn how to interact safely in the digital environment. Digital environments offer positive as well as negative content, especially for children and youth. For this reason, it becomes very important for all users, especially children and young people, to be more careful in the digital environment and to be selective in terms

of use. In this context, digital literacy shows the importance of the knowledge or experiences that users should have in this field (Kotanlı Kızıloğlu, 2023: pp. 927). In this context, one of the noteworthy results is that families, educators, children and young people should receive training on ensuring safe communication in the digital world. Making digital literacy trainings compulsory for these groups in the fight against cyberbullying is necessary for the safety of both individuals and society. With these trainings, individuals can recognize digital bullying, learn how to respond to bullying, and thus increase social awareness and develop a more protective attitude against bullying. In addition to these, we see that bullies create an anonymous identity in cyberbullying acts. Bullies feel psychologically more comfortable with this fake identity construction. In digital identity construction, Bilginer Erdoğan (2020) states in his study that users are more comfortable with their digital identities and therefore may prefer to construct fake identities. In this context, Bilginer Erdoğan also emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive study in the field of digital literacy.

In conclusion, this study aims to emphasize the importance of raising social awareness in combating cyberbullying. It is also thought that the study will contribute to the literature on this subject. Such studies draw attention to the importance of communicating the issue of cyberbullying to large masses through cinema; at the same time, it allows more data and information to be obtained about cyberbullying throughout the society. In this context, it would be useful for future research to further examine the relationship between cyberbullying and cinema and to evaluate the power of cinema to raise awareness and raise awareness on this issue. Thus, more effective strategies can be developed in the fight against cyberbullying and a more conscious approach to this important problem can be adopted throughout the society.

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