



## AN ANALYSIS OF FICTIONAL NARRATIVES ON CYBERBULLYING IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA

### SOSYAL MEDYA ÇAĞINDA SİBER ZORBALIK TEMALI KURMACA ANLATILAR ÜZERİNE BİR ANALİZ

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#### Abstract

As the social media platforms entered our lives with the WEB 2.0 era, two-way communication has become a reality. Unfortunately, this transformation in communication has also led to the emergence of problems such as disinformation or hate speech. Another problem is cyberbullying, which occurs when traditional bullying, which means repetitive behaviors aimed at harming others, is moved to online environments. Cyberbullying has begun to be included as a theme in fictional narratives in recent years. This research aims to study 50 cyberbullying-themed movies and TV series released between 2010 and 2025, in terms of the crime definitions and victim / offender portrayal by using the descriptive analysis method. According to the data obtained, it was seen that the victims were mostly presented as women. In the depiction of the offenders, the density of male characters is striking. Although adolescents are mostly presented as victims, it is seen that in narratives with a small number of adolescent offenders, the victim is also an adolescent. While the ratio of adolescents to adults among the victims is close to each other, the ratio of adults to adolescents among the offenders is considerably higher. It was seen that the most frequently mentioned crimes were invasion of privacy, blackmail, manipulation with a fake account, cyberstalking, distribution of explicit content and identity theft. Finally, it is possible to say that focusing on cyberbullying as a theme in fictional narratives is significant in terms of drawing attention to the destructive effects of the problem.

**Keywords:** Cyberbullying, Film, TV series, Social media.

#### Öz

Sosyal medya platformlarının hayatımıza girdiği WEB 2.0 dönemiyle birlikte çift yönlü iletişim gerçek anlamda hayat bulmaya başlamıştır. Ne yazık ki, iletişimdeki bu dönüşüm dezenformasyon, nefret söylemi gibi problemlerin ortaya çıkmasına da neden olmuştur. Bireylere veya gruplara zarar vermeyi amaçlayan tekrarlayan davranışlar anlamına gelen geleneksel zorbalık, online ortamlarda da yaşanmaya başlanmış, böylece siber zorbalık kavramı ortaya çıkmıştır. Siber zorbalık son yıllarda kurgusal anlatılarda da bir tema olarak yer almaya başlamıştır. Bu araştırma, 2010-2025 yılları arasında yayınlanan 50 siber zorbalık temalı film ve diziyi, suç tanımları ve mağdur/fail tasvirleri açısından betimsel analiz yöntemi kullanılarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Elde edilen verilere göre mağdurların çoğunlukla kadın olarak sunulduğu görülmüştür. Faillerin tasvirinde erkek karakterlerin yoğunluğu dikkat çekmektedir. Ergenler çoğunlukla mağdur olarak sunulsa da az sayıda ergen failin yer aldığı yapımlarda mağdurun da ergen olduğu görülmektedir. Mağdurlar arasında ergenlerin yetişkinlere oranı birbirine yakinken, failler arasında yetişkinlerin ergenlere oranı önemli ölçüde daha yüksektir. En sık bahsedilen suçların mahremiyetin ihlali, şantaj, sahte hesapla manipülasyon, siber taciz, kişinin özel görüntülerini yayınlama ve kimlik hırsızlığı olduğu görülmüştür. Son olarak kurmaca anlatılarda siber zorbalığın konu edilmesinin, sorunun yıkıcı etkilerine dikkat çekmek açısından önemli olduğunu söylemek mümkündür.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Siber zorbalık, Film, Dizi, Sosyal Medya.



## INTRODUCTION

The history of internet communication, which started to spread among individual users from the mid-90s, is divided into periods. The two-way communication opportunity had been emphasized in the early years of this new technology, but it has come to life in a real sense with the WEB 2.0 period with the emergence of social media networks and search engines which enabled users to be active in terms of interacting, sharing or producing. The increasing use of social media in the decade allows us to define the era we are in as the social media era. It would not be wrong to say that social media platforms have been used as a source of entertainment and information and they have started to replace many other media. However, internet technology, which also offers its users the opportunity to communicate without sharing their identities, has also brought with it some social problems despite all the opportunities it offers. The characteristics of internet communication distinguish this medium from traditional mass communication tools in terms of supervision. Unfortunately, the electronic communication medium, where centralized control is not fully possible, has prepared the ground for the malicious actions of some users. For example, communicating with anonymous identities allows some actions defined as crimes in real life to be transferred to the virtual environment. This situation has led to the emergence of the concept of cyberbullying today. Cyberbullying covers all negative behaviors directed at a person or group using internet tools. Malicious users can disturb others through various methods and even repeat these actions and cause psychological damage to the victimized person. The effect of cyberbullying on the victims can be extremely devastating, sometimes even resulting in suicide.

Cyberbullying, one of the most current problems of our era, has started to appear as a theme in movies and TV series in recent years. Cinema and television writers present the negative consequences of social media, which is widespread especially among young people, to the audience with cyberbullying stories they tell in different types of narratives. This research aims to examine a total of 50 movies and TV series from different countries, released between 2010 and 2025, in the context of the distribution of the types of crimes and the presentation of victims and offenders.

## CYBERBULLYING

Traditional bullying can be defined as repeated behaviors aiming to harm a person or group mentally or physically. Olweus (2003, s. 12) one of the first researches to define bullying, particularly focuses on the repetition of behaviors and the power imbalance between the parties. The victims who are exposed to bullying have difficulty in continuing their daily lives and are psychologically worn out as they cannot escape the situation, they find themselves in. The person or group becomes silent because they are verbally or physically intimidated, and this can lead to the problem remaining unresolved for a long time. The most important element in traditional bullying is that the person who is the offender of bullying interacts with the victim face to face. This situation allows the victim to be aware of the offender's identity. In other words, the culprit has no chance of hiding himself. Mobbing that adults encounter in their business lives or peer bullying, which is common among children of the same age, especially primary and secondary school students, can also be given as examples of traditional bullying. It is a known fact that children are much more vulnerable than adults when it comes to being subjected to bullying. Peer bullying is one of the most common problems encountered by educators in many countries. Some students can exhibit extremely cruel behaviors towards their friends, and when this situation becomes systematic, it turns into peer bullying. The factors that trigger peer bullying can vary. Bullying can often be observed among students who have a physical power imbalance. The stronger one may aim to control the weaker one by physically harming him. It is known that the economic status and cultural differences between peer children are also effective in the emergence of bullying. The gender factor is also seen to be effective in peer bullying. Boys are more likely to be offenders of bullying than girls. Bullying can also occur because of grouping among peers. The child may adapt to the negative behaviors of the group he/she wants to belong to and start bullying others. Finally, it is possible to say that children who think they have been subjected to injustice in their lives both at school and outside of school also bully their peers at school. In this way, the child, who has achieved justice in his own way, tries to get rid of the feeling of worthlessness he/she experiences (Kartal-Bilgin, 2012, s. 26-27).

In the era we live in, it is known that bullying does not only occur face to face. Internet communication, which has become a part of daily life, has begun to affect individuals' lives in every aspect, and the

cultural transformation that has occurred has also revealed the need to reorganize crime definitions. The Internet, which provides electronic-based communication, is a medium where it is not possible to fully control and supervise. This situation has allowed various crimes to be transferred to the virtual environment. Today, crimes committed using internet technology are defined as cybercrimes. Systematic and deliberately harmful behaviors against individuals or groups are referred to as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying often consists of victimizing behaviors such as insults, persistent stalking, theft of personal data, harassment, manipulation, hacking, blackmail, and discrediting.

The main reason why cyberbullying is one of the biggest problems of our era is that internet communication allows users to communicate with anonymous identities. Although the fact that users have the chance to remain anonymous was considered a liberating element in the early years of the internet, it has been experienced in later years that this has led to many negative consequences. In cyberbullying, the person or people in the victim position usually do not know the real identity of the offender. The offender may be someone they know, or someone they have never met in their life. It is possible to say that this situation encourages the offender to commit crimes even more. In fact, they can fearlessly carry out many behaviors in the virtual environment that they would not dare to do face-to-face (Aksaray, 2021, s. 410).

As it is known, in order to identify the offender of anonymous bullying, it is necessary to apply to official authorities. If such an identification is not made, the offender does not deal with the consequences of the action he/she has taken. The causes of cyberbullying include many factors, from the person's value judgements to his/her mental state. However, it is possible to say that the impunity of negative behaviors will encourage the offender to repeat the crime (Akgül, 2020, s. 152-153).

Another factor that paves the way for cyberbullying is the changing perception of privacy with social media. As a result of the transformation created by social media, individuals today share many details about their daily lives without hesitation. Especially the owners of public profiles are more exposed to cyberbullying. Individuals can become targets of malicious people due to the posts they share on social media. On the other hand, internet users provide data on different subjects with every move they make on this platform. In fact, some applications do not provide service without obtaining approval to access their users' data. Data recorded for various purposes, especially sales and marketing, creates a new form of surveillance (Deniz Anamur & Topsakal, 2019, s. 43). Even if all this recorded data is not accessible to the ordinary user, it is accessible by hackers. This situation makes everyone a potential victim of cyberbullying.

There are many points which make cyberbullying differ from traditional bullying. The first of these is the time period in which the bullying occurs. Since traditional bullying occurs face to face, the bullying occurs when the victim meets the offender. In cyberbullying, there is no time limit, and the victim is open to a new attack at any time. Another difference is that others witness the crime. While there are often witnesses to the incident in traditional bullying, usually there is no witnesses in cyberbullying. On the contrary, sharing of someone's personal data to harm his/her reputation causes a lot the number of witnesses but their number and identities remain unknown. While the presence of witnesses in traditional bullying allows the situation to be reported, but in the cyberbullying, it becomes difficult to prove the crime unless it is examined officially. This difference makes it easier for the traditional bullying offender to be punished in the first case but makes it more difficult in cyberbullying. Another point where the two bullying types differ is related to gender. While the victims of traditional bullying are usually men, the victims of cyberbullying are usually women (Dikmen & Tuncer, 2017, s. 677).

The effects observed in cyberbullying victims include a state of intense sadness and anxiety, a decrease or loss of self-esteem, a decrease or loss of trust in others, difficulty in making or maintaining friendships, hesitation to go to work or school, difficulty in working or learning, and decreased success (Yaman et al., 2011, s. 192).

### **Cyberbullying as a Theme in Fiction**

The film and television industries have always been precipitous to present current issues of the era to

the audience. It has been observed that the theme of cyberbullying has started to find a place in movies and series, especially in the last decade. In these narratives, which are mostly in the drama and thriller genres, the plot progresses through a non-physical chase between the victim and the offender. While the destructive effects of cyberbullying on the victim are revealed, sometimes there are stories in which the offender becomes also the victim of the darkness he/she has created.

In some examples, the identity of the offender is kept secret, and social morality is questioned through the eyes of the victim. Among the cyberbullying themed movies, the 2015 film *Cyberbully* stands out with this feature. The movie tells the story of a 17-year-old girl named Casey, whose personal computer is hacked and who is blackmailed through her private images. The young girl does not learn the identity of the person who blackmailed her throughout the movie. However, the offender accuses Casey about the bullying she made in the past and tries to make her confess. At this point, the movie makes the audience ask the question if who the real bully is. In the finale of the film, questions are not answered, and the motivation and consequences of the crime are left to the audience to evaluate (Novitasari & Hia, 2021, s. 51).

*The Hater* (2020) is an example of a narrative in which the offender also turns into a victim in the darkness he created. The main character of this Polish thriller is a young man named Tomasz. Tomasz, a law student, is expelled from school for plagiarism. While trying to attract the attention of the young woman he likes, he also tries to gain the respect of her family. Tomasz finds a job at a PR agency which manipulates public opinion by conducting negative perception studies on social media, especially against political figures. Tomasz, who further fuels the hatred among the public with his campaigns, is also affected by the chaos he creates. The movie, where themes of racism and hate speech are also at the forefront, shows the potential of social media to **“turn into a mass revenge tool for personal ambition and interests.”** At the same time, the psychological impact of individuals assuming different identities on the internet, an uncontrolled area, is discussed. The main character, a two-faced man, interprets the outside world through his own worldview and moral understanding, and influences the masses with cybercrimes such as smear campaigns, disinformation, and invasion of privacy (Gür et.al, 2022, s. 50-51).

Another example of a narrative about cyberbullying that affects the masses is the episode named *Hated in The Nation* from the TV series *Black Mirror*. This episode, which is included in the third season of the dystopian science fiction series *Black Mirror*, emphasizes the chaos caused by online hate speech and manipulation by anonymous accounts. People who are targeted by hate speech on social media begin to be killed, and it turns out that this situation was organized by a hacker. Hashtag campaigns determine who will be the next victim. In this process, it is emphasized that individuals can respond irrationally in masses by conforming to others. In other words, it is explained that **“technology has numbed, standardized and turned people into masses that act with a herd mentality by making them passive”** (Akgül & Şahin, 2022, s. 30).

One of the most popular cyberbullying-themed series is *13 Reason Why* (2017-2020). This Netflix original series is based on the revelation of the events that led a teenage girl to commit suicide. Adapted from the novel of the same name, the genre of this series is defined as a teen drama. While the problems experienced by adolescents are told through the young girl's four friends, cyberbullying is also prominent among these problems. The first episode of the series begins with an informational video voiced by the actors. In the speech addressed to the audience, it is recommended that people suffering from the problems mentioned in the series visit the website [13reasonswhy.info](https://13reasonswhy.info). This website is directed to another website called <https://www.wannatalkaboutit.com>, which is a service of Netflix. This site offers a kind of preliminary consultancy service on Netflix's productions about social crimes and psychological disorders and provides information on which official institutions the audience in need of help should consult. The brochure prepared for the TV series *13 Reasons Why* on the site includes explanatory guidance for people who have been subjected to harassment, violence, and cyberbullying as featured in the series, or who have relatives or friends who have been subjected to it.

Another Netflix series, *Baby Reindeer*, which is an adaptation of a well-known novel, also features



themes of cyberbullying. This psychological drama, which was released in 2024, has become quite popular due to telling a real-life story. It is known that a woman who followed a comedian man for three years sent “**approximately 41 thousand e-mails and hundreds of hours of voice messages**” (www.gazeteduvar.com.tr, 2024). It presents a narrative that begins with persistent stalking and then continues with crimes such as cyberstalking, manipulation with fake accounts, online defamation, and online shaming. There is also information on Netflix’s <https://www.wannataalkaboutit.com> website regarding this series that will guide viewers who are exposed to similar problems.

Cyberbullying has also started to take place as a theme in Turkish TV series in recent years. The series named *Etkileyici (Influencer)* was launched by the digital platform Gain in 2021, builds its entire story on this subject. It tells the story of a young woman named Leyla, an influencer with many followers, who becomes a victim of online shaming after a gossip in the tabloids and then starts cyberstalking by an obsessive man. In this detective series, the sudden reversal of the fan-celebrity relationship established on social media and the herd mentality are shown more than once.



**Figure 1.** Posters of Turkish Series *Etkileyici (Influencer)*

Another example of Turkish TV series with a cyberbullying theme is Netflix's *As The Crow Flies* (2022-2024). The first season begins with a young woman named Aslı, becoming obsessed with replacing the experienced journalist Lale, whom she admires. Aslı opens accounts with fake identities on social media, spreads negative news about Lale, runs hashtag campaigns and causes Lale to experience online defamation. After Lale is fired from her job, she takes her place, but she continues to bully her by sharing her private images. The series is about the competitive environment in the media industry and the effects of social media on the careers of celebrities.

## METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

This research aims to examine the movies and TV series about cyberbullying using descriptive analysis method to determine victim/offender portrayal and the types of crimes in the narratives. The research was conducted on 50 narratives in total including 30 movies and 20 TV series that were produced between 2010 and 2025.

Online databases such as IMDb (imdb.com) and Rotten Tomatoes (rottentomatoes.com) providing detailed information about movies and TV series were examined to list the narratives that could be associated with the theme of cyberbullying, and all narratives found were included in the research. In the next process, all movies and TV series were watched to identify the characters in terms of victim and offender, and the types of crimes that constitute the plots of the narratives.

First of all, the genre and country of the narratives, the age interval and gender of the victims and offenders, and the crimes mentioned in the narrative were listed. The age intervals of the victims and offenders were classified as ‘adolescent’, ‘young’ (18-25) and ‘adult’. The narratives with more than one offender or victim were defined as ‘multiple’. Crimes related to cyberbullying were classified as below:

- Invasion of privacy
- Distribution of explicit content
- Manipulation with fake accounts
- Blackmailing
- Hacking
- Cyberstalking
- Doxxing (revealing a person’s private information)
- Identity theft
- Identity fraud & Catfishing
- Online harassment
- Online hate speech
- Online exploitation
- Online defamation
- Online grooming
- Online shaming
- Promoting a suicide attempt

**Table 1.** Movies about Cyberbullying

	Movie / Country / Genre	Victim / Offender	Crime
1	<b><i>Trust</i> (2010)</b> America / Drama	Teen girl/ Adult man	Online grooming, Manipulation with fake accounts, Blackmailing, Cyberstalking, Online exploitation
2	<b><i>Chatroom</i> (2010)</b> England / Drama, thriller	Teen boy / Young man	Manipulation with fake accounts, Promoting suicide attempt, Online harassment
3	<b><i>Cyberbully</i> (2011)</b> America & Canada / Drama	Teen girl/ Teen girl	Manipulation with fake accounts, Doxxing, Blackmailing, Identity theft, Invasion of privacy, Hacking, Promoting suicide attempt
4	<b><i>Megan is Missing</i> (2011)</b> America/ Drama, thriller	Teen girl/ Adult man	Online grooming, Manipulation with fake accounts, Cyberstalking, Blackmailing, Online exploitation, Distribution of explicit content, Murder
5	<b><i>Disconnect</i> (2012)</b> America / Drama	Multiple/ Multiple	Cyberstalking, Identity fraud & Catfishing, Distribution of explicit content, Blackmailing, Invasion of privacy, Online exploitation, Promoting suicide attempt
6	<b><i>The Den</i> (2013)</b> America / Thriller, mystery	Young woman/ Adult man	Cyberstalking, Hacking, Identity fraud & Catfishing, Distribution of explicit content, Blackmailing, Murder
7	<b><i>Aquadro</i> (2013)</b> Italy / Drama	Young woman/	Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content, Online shaming

		indefinite	
8	<b>Unfriended (2014)</b> America / Horror, mystery	Multiple/ Teen girl	Cyberstalking, Identity theft, Hacking, Distribution of explicit content, Blackmailing, Online shaming, Promoting suicide attempt
9	<b>Men, Women &amp; Children (2014)</b> America / Drama, comedy	Multiple/ Multiple	Identity theft, Distribution of explicit content, Invasion of privacy, Manipulation with fake accounts, Online exploitation
10	<b>Open Windows (2014)</b> America & Spain/ Thriller	Young woman/ Adult man	Cyberstalking, Identity theft, Blackmailing, Manipulation with fake accounts, Invasion of privacy, Murder
11	<b>Her Own Justice (2015)</b> Canada / Drama	Young woman/ Adult man	Cyberstalking, Identity theft, Hacking, Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content
12	<b>Cyberbully (2015)</b> England / Drama	Teen girl/ Adult man	Cyberstalking, Identity theft, Blackmailing, Doxxing, Manipulation with fake accounts, Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content
13	<b>Ratter (2015)</b> America/ Thriller	Young woman / Adult man	Hacking, Blackmailing, Invasion of privacy, Identity theft
14	<b>#Horror (2015)</b> America/ Thriller, horror	Multiple (teen girls) / Adult man	Cyberstalking, Identity theft, Blackmailing, Online exploitation, Distribution of explicit content
15	<b>Nerve (2016)</b> America/ Thriller	Young woman/ Multiple	Cyberstalking, Identity theft, Blackmailing, Hacking, Invasion of privacy, Online exploitation
16	<b>LenaLove (2016)</b> Germany / Drama, thriller	Teen girl/ Young man	Identity Fraud & Catfishing, Manipulation with fake accounts, Online harassment, Online shaming, Promoting suicide attempt
17	<b>Friend Request (2016)</b> Germany / Horror, thriller	Young woman/ Young woman	Cyberstalking, Identity theft, Blackmailing, Distribution of explicit content, Online shaming, Online exploitation
18	<b>Like.Share.Follow.(2017)</b> America / Horror, thriller	Young man/ Young woman	Cyberstalking, Invasion of privacy, Blackmailing, Identity theft, Doxxing
19	<b>Searching (2018)</b> America / Thriller	Teen girl/ Multiple	Cyberstalking, Hacking, Identity theft, Doxxing, Identity fraud & catfishing, Invasion of privacy
20	<b>Ferrugem (Rust) 2018</b> Brasil / Drama	Teen girl/ Young woman	Invasion of privacy, Online exploitation, Distribution of explicit content, Online shaming
21	<b>Unfriended: Dark Web (2018)</b> America / Horror	Multiple/ Multiple	Invasion of privacy, Manipulation with fake accounts, Doxxing, Hacking, Blackmailing, Online defamation
22	<b>Dolcissime (The Sweeties) (2019)</b> Italy / Comedy	Teen girl/ Teen girl	Cyberstalking, Manipulation with fake accounts, Blackmailing, Invasion of privacy, Online shaming

23	<b><i>John Denver Trending</i> (2019)</b> Indonesia/ Drama	Teen boy/ Multiple	Invasion of privacy, Online shaming, Distribution of explicit content, Online harassment
24	<b><i>American Hangman</i> (2019)</b> America / Thriller	Multiple (Two adult men)/ Adult man	Hacking, Doxxing, Online shaming
25	<b><i>The Hater (Sala samobójców. Hejter)</i> (2020)</b> Poland / Drama	Multiple/ Young man	Identity theft, Doxxing, Blackmailing, Online harassment, Online shaming, Distribution of explicit content, Online defamation
26	<b><i>Search Out</i> (2020)</b> South Korea / Thriller	Young woman / Multiple	Invasion of privacy, Promoting suicide attempt, Manipulation with fake accounts, Blackmailing, Online hate speech
27	<b><i>Caught in His Web</i> (2022)</b> America / Thriller	Young woman/ Adult man	Cyberstalking, Identity theft, Identity Fraud & Catfishing, Blackmailing, Manipulation with fake accounts
28	<b><i>Jane</i> (2022)</b> America / Thriller	Teen girl/ Teen girl	Cyberstalking, Identity theft, Identity Fraud & Catfishing, Invasion of privacy, Blackmailing, Manipulation with fake accounts, Promoting suicide attempt
29	<b><i>Live</i> (2023)</b> India / Drama	Multiple (Two adult women)/ Multiple	Cyberstalking, Invasion of privacy, Catfishing, Blackmailing, Manipulation with fake accounts, Online defamation
30	<b><i>Budi Pekerti (Andragogy)</i> (2023)</b> Indonesia / Drama	Adult woman/ Multiple	Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content, Online shaming, Online defamation

**Table 2:** Series about Cyberbullying

	Series / Country / Genre	Victim / Offender	Crime
1	<b><i>Pretty Little Liars</i> (2010–2017)</b> America / drama, mystery	Multiple/ Multiple	Cyberstalking, Hacking, Blackmailing, Identity theft, Manipulation with fake accounts, Doxxing, Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content, Online shaming, Online defamation
2	<b><i>Eye Candy</i> (2015)</b> America / crime drama, thriller	Young woman/ Young man	Cyberstalking, Invasion of privacy, Identity theft, Hacking, Blackmailing, Manipulation with fake accounts
3	<b><i>Mr. Robot</i> (2015-2019)</b> America/ Drama	Multiple/ Multiple	Invasion of privacy, Hacking, Doxxing, Manipulation with fake accounts
4	<b><i>13 Reasons Why</i> (2017–2020)</b> America / Drama	Multiple/ Multiple	Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content, Online exploitation, Manipulation with fake accounts, Online shaming, Promoting suicide attempt



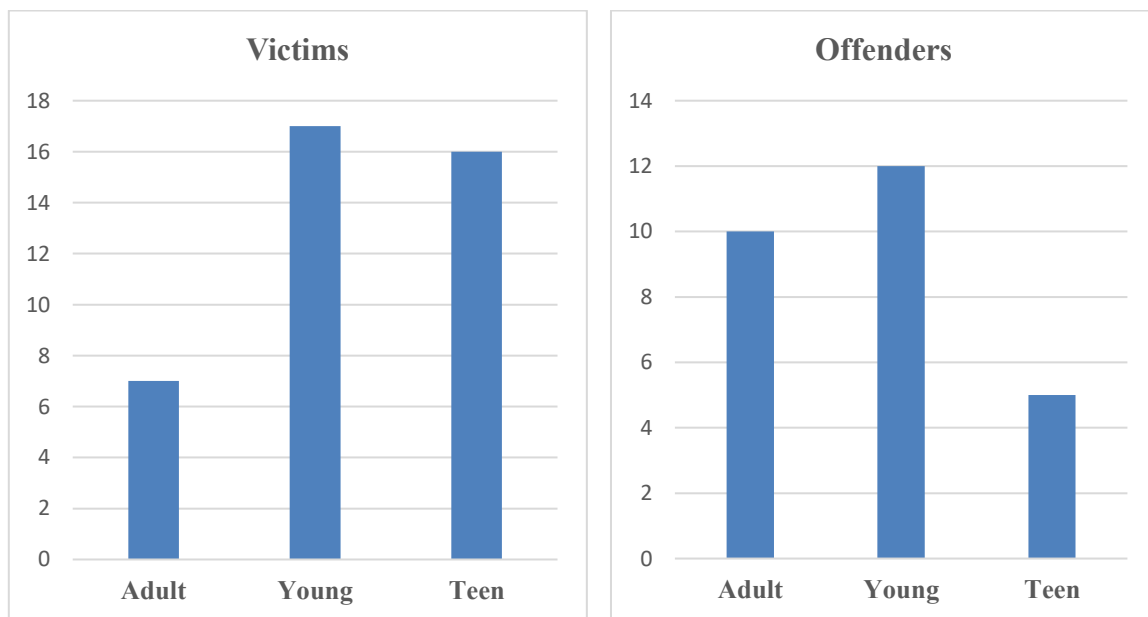
5	<b><i>The Bold Type (2017–2021)</i></b> America / Drama, comedy	Multiple (Two young women) / Multiple	Invasion of privacy, Online harassment, Online hate speech, Online defamation
6	<b><i>Baby (2018-2020)</i></b> Italy / Drama	Teen girl/ Young man	Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content, Blackmailing, Manipulation with fake accounts ,Online shaming
7	<b><i>The Hunting (2019)</i></b> Australia / Drama	Multiple (two young women)/ Multiple (two young men)/	Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content, Manipulation with fake accounts, Online shaming, Blackmailing
8	<b><i>Nudes (2019)</i></b> Norway / Drama	Multiple/ Multiple	Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content, Online shaming
9	<b><i>#martyisdead (2019)</i></b> Czechia / Drama	Multiple/ Multiple	Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content, Hacking, Blackmailing, Online harassment, Identity theft, Doxxing, Promoting suicide attempt
10	<b><i>Euphoria (2019-...)</i></b> America / Drama	Multiple (Teen girls)/ Young man	Invasion of privacy, Doxxing, Identity theft, Distribution of explicit content, Blackmailing, Manipulation with fake accounts
11	<b><i>Black Mirror (2016) “Nosedive”</i></b> England /Science-fiction	Young woman/ Multiple	Invasion of privacy, Online harassment, Manipulation with fake accounts, Online defamation, Online shaming
12	<b><i>Black Mirror (2016) “Shut Up and Dance”</i></b> England /Science-fiction	Young man/ Multiple	Invasion of privacy, Hacking, Blackmailing, Online harassment, Manipulation with fake accounts
13	<b><i>Black Mirror (2016) “Hated in the Nation”</i></b> England /Science-fiction	Multiple/ Multiple	Hacking, Online harassment, Manipulation with fake accounts, Doxxing, Online hate speech, murder
14	<b><i>You (2018-2025)</i></b> America/ Drama, thriller	Adult man/ Multiple	Cyberstalking, Hacking, Blackmailing, Identity theft, Manipulation with fake accounts, Invasion of privacy
15	<b><i>Control Z (2020-2022)</i></b> Mexico / Drama, thriller	Teen girl/ Multiple	Hacking, Doxxing, Invasion of privacy, Blackmailing, Identity theft, Online shaming
16	<b><i>Clickbait (2021)</i></b> America & Australia/ Drama	Young man/ Young man	Cyberstalking, Identity theft, Hacking, Blackmailing, Doxxing, Manipulation with fake accounts, Online defamation, Promoting suicide attempt
17	<b><i>Gossip Girl – remake (2021–2023)</i></b> America / Drama	Teen girl/ Teen boy	Cyberstalking, Invasion of privacy, Manipulation with fake accounts, Blackmailing, Distribution of explicit content, Online shaming, Online defamation
18	<b><i>Influencer (Etkileyici) (2021-2023)</i></b> Türkiye/Drama	Young Woman/ Adult man	Cyberstalking, Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content, Hacking, Blackmailing, Doxxing, Online

			harassment, Manipulation with fake accounts, Online defamation, Online shaming
19	<i>As The Crow Flies (Kuş Uçuşu) (2022-2024)</i> Türkiye/Drama	Adult woman/ Young woman	Invasion of privacy, Distribution of explicit content, Doxxing, Online harassment, Manipulation with fake accounts, Online defamation, Online shaming
20	<i>Baby Reindeer (2024)</i> England / Drama	Adult man/ Adult woman	Cyberstalking, Invasion of privacy, Manipulation with fake accounts, Online defamation

### Portrayal of Victim and Offender:

One of the most important elements for defining a crime as cyberbullying is the power inequality between the offender and the victim. This inequality can be age difference or knowledge on any subject. For example, people who do not have enough knowledge about using technology are more likely to be cyberbullied. The depiction of victims and offenders in the movies and series examined in the research was evaluated in terms of age interval and gender. The age interval was accepted as adolescents under 18, young people between 18-25, and adults over 25. As it is shown in Table 3, most of the victims are young or teen while most of the offenders are adult or young.

**Table 3.** Age Interval of Victims and Offenders

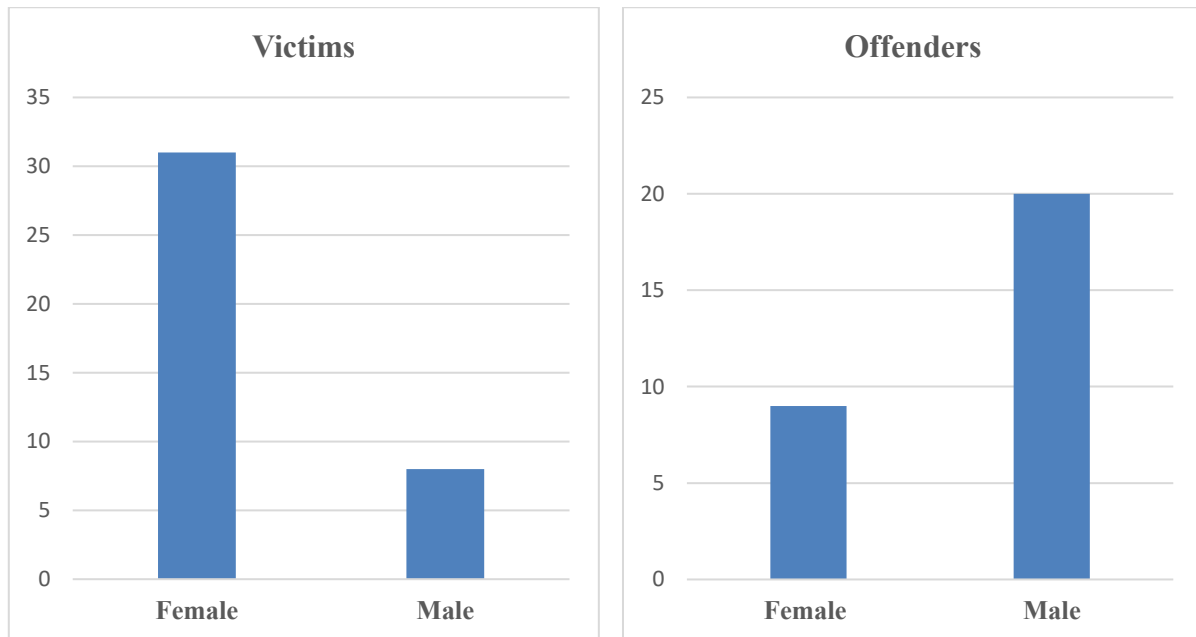


In the examples where the offender is an adult and the victim is an adolescent, emotional manipulation stands out. Although adolescent characters are mostly victims, there are narratives where adolescent characters are encountered as offenders. As it is known, uncontrolled internet use brings various risks for adolescents who are constantly connected to the internet with their mobile phones as well as their personal computers. In particular, access to violent games, pornographic content, publications that support discrimination, and criminals or people prone to crime negatively affects adolescents (Dalmaç Polat & Bayraktar, 2016, s. 116). In the examples where the offender is an adolescent, the victims are also adolescents. This situation shows that peer bullying continues in the cyber environment. The source of crimes among adolescents can be the end of their friendships, emotional reasons, jealousy towards each other, and prejudices created by economic and social differences (Yaman & Sönmez, 2015, s. 20) in real life. It is seen that, narratives with adolescent offenders have the similar motives for their crimes.

One of the important reasons for the increase in cyberbullying among adolescents is that victims tend to hide the problem they are experiencing. The reason of children's silence is often fear or shame. In some cases, they cannot predict the reaction of their families and think that the device they are using may be taken away from them. Since they do not want to experience this, it becomes difficult for them to get out of the situation they are in (Akbiyık & Kestel, 2016, s. 854).

The narratives having more than one offender or victim were defined as 'multiple' while determining the gender distribution and they were excluded. However, if all victims or offenders are of the same gender, they were added as one person to the total number.

**Table 4.** Gender of Victims and Offenders



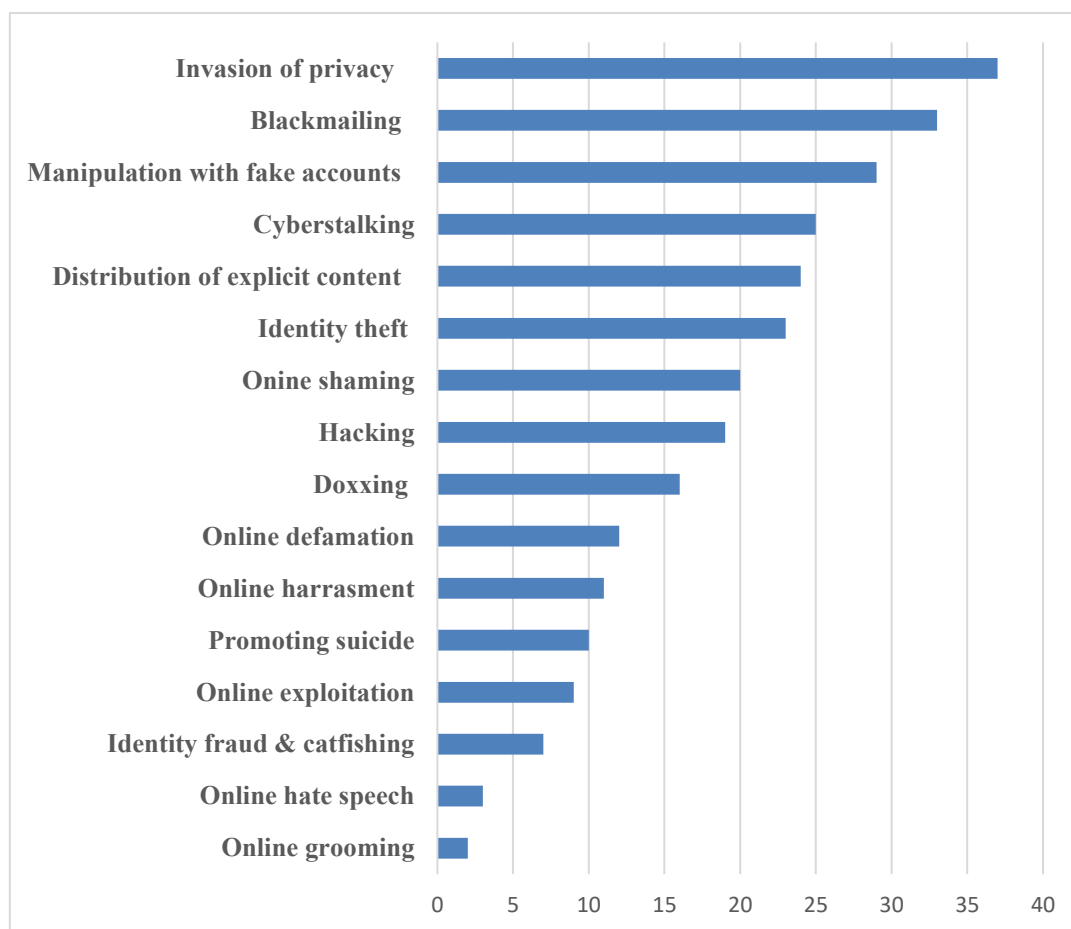
As it is seen above in Table 4, the victims are mostly women. The rate of female victims is almost four times that of male victims. The result for offenders is the exact opposite. In terms of perpetration, the rate of males is more than twice that of females. In most of the examples, if the offender is a woman, the victim is also a woman. If the offender is a teen girl, the victim is also a teen girl.

Studies on cyberbullying in real life also show that men are more likely to be offenders of bullying than women (Peker et.al, 2012, s. 214) (Korkmaz, 2016, s. 631). More detailed research is needed to explain the reasons for this situation. However, it can be assumed that, the inequality which women are facing in real life may impact their reactions in online communication. In the narratives studied, female characters' experience much more online shaming and invasion of privacy. For instance, women are subjected to bullying about their physical appearance on social media in real life. Especially overweight women are subjected to sarcastic comments from people they do not know. This situation causes many of them to experience psychological problems (Öksüzöğlu, 2021, s. 21).

### Cyberbullying Types

While specifying the distribution of crime types, movies and TV series were considered together. The results obtained from a total of 50 narratives are shown below in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Distribution of Bullying Types



In the cyberbullying themed movies and series, it is seen that the most mentioned crime is invasion of privacy with a rate of 74%. Accessing any information about someone without his/her consent is defined as invasion of privacy. The offender first accesses information and/or images belonging to the victim in order to scare him/her, which causes this crime to occur.

The second crime is blackmailing with a rate of 66%. This crime is committed by using information and images belonging to the victim as leverage. In order to talk about the existence of blackmail, the offender must pressure the victim to comply with his/her demands. Examples of these demands include gaining financial benefit from the victim and forcing the victim to do a behavior. Hacking crime may also accompany the crime of blackmail. Data belonging to the victims can be obtained in this way (Hussein et al, 2022, s. 123).

The third most mentioned crime is manipulation with fake accounts with a rate of 58%. The crime of cyberstalking is followed by a rate of 50%. Cyberstalking is the constant access and harassment of the victim by the offender through e-mail, social media accounts, etc. While doing this, they may also use different identities. It is known that this crime has similar negative effects on the victim as the crime known as persistent stalking in real life (Short et al., 2015, s. 29,30). In fact, unlike real life, since there is no space and time limitation in online communication, it becomes easier for the offender to reach the victim. In addition, cyberstalking frequently causes victims to worry about their safety (Novitasari & Hia, 2021, s. 46).

While the acquisition of private images belonging to the victim is defined as the crime of invasion of privacy, the sharing of these from different sources in a way that others can see constitutes the crime of distribution of explicit content. The rate of this crime, which ranks fifth, is calculated as 48%.

Identity theft, which ranks sixth, means opening accounts and creating profiles in the name of the victim

by obtaining their identity information. There is a difference between this crime and the crime known as identity fraud. Identity fraud, which ranks third from the last, means that the offender commits fraud by presenting himself as someone else, different from his/her own identity. This crime is often identified with the crime known as catfishing. Catfishing means using fake personas to obtain money or financial resources (Olckers & Hattingh, 2022, s. 94).

Identity theft is followed by online shaming with rate of %40. Online shaming generally involves humiliation and teasing to the victim due to her/his revealed information or images. It sometimes evolved to online defamation which is also on the list with the rate %24. Online defamation can be defined as any result which **“harms the reputation of the victim”**. Defamation can also be related with online hate speech which means using hateful expressions towards individuals or groups. Online hate speech (rarely observed in the researched data) can be divided into three according to the element of offenders’ motives and speeches’ potential impacts, such as **“content-based element, intent-based element, and harms-based element”** (Marwick & Miller, 2014, s. 9,16).

Doxxing mostly refer to the crime of sharing someone’s personal information - mostly documents-without her/his permission on the internet. Victim’s revealed official data may cause her/him legal troubles. Doxxing can be experienced by anyone on the internet. However, public figures are on high risk for this crime due to their rank in the society. Offender’s motive for doxxing may vary but **“it may be motivated by a desire to expose wrongdoing or to humiliate, intimidate, threaten, or punish the identified individual”** (Douglas, 2016, s. 199).

In some cases, victim may commit a suicide when she/he cannot cope with cyberbullying. Promoting a suicide attempt is used in %25 of the narratives that were studied in the research. It is followed by online exploitation with rate %22.5. Online exploitation and online grooming which is at the end of the list, used to target children for sexual abuse. Offenders often reach their victims through dating sites. And they use **“various techniques such as flattery, bribery or threats”** (Whittle et al., 2013, s. 2).

## CONCLUSION

As a result of internet communication taking over the vast majority of daily life, some crimes have now moved to online environments. Bullying, which refers to repeated behaviors that intentionally harm a person or group, has also begun to be carried out using the internet. These behaviors defined as cyberbullying are one of the most common problems of our era. However, committing a crime via the internet is not enough to define this crime as cyberbullying. Not all cybercrimes are considered cyberbullying. In bullying, the frequency of the crime and the motivation of the offender are the determining factors rather than the type of crime. A crime can be defined as cyberbullying if the offender aims to harm the victim psychologically or physically, there is an imbalance of power between victim and offender, and the crime is repeated more than once (Dursun et al., 2020, s. 469).

In this research cyberbullying-themed movies and TV series released between 2010 and 2025 were studied in terms of the crimes and the victim/offender portrayal. 50 narratives including 30 films and 20 series in different genres from different countries were examined. Although there are movies or series from countries such as Italy, Indonesia, India, Norway, and Turkey, the American dominance is noticeable. While the drama genre is dominant in narratives from countries other than America, the majority of American movies are in the thriller genre.

The research results show that the victim characters are mostly women, which is consistent with real life. The age interval of characters is classified under three headings as adolescent, young and adult. It is seen that adolescents are almost in equal proportion to young and adult. Almost a quarter of the victim characters are male. When the offender characters are examined, the male characters are more than twice as common as the female characters. In narratives where female characters are offenders, it is seen that the victims are usually women. In the offender characters, the abundance of young or adult characters is striking, regardless of gender.

All cyberbullying themed movies and series were evaluated in terms of the crimes that they include. The



results show that at least three cybercrimes were included in each narrative. The most frequently included crime is invasion of privacy. Almost three-quarters of the victims struggle with offenders who seize their personal data. The second crime is blackmail, followed by manipulation with a fake account, cyberstalking, and distribution of explicit content. In all of the narratives where the distribution of explicit content crime is included, the victim is seen to be a woman. These five top crimes are followed by identity theft, online shaming, hacking, doxxing, online defamation, online harassment, promoting suicide attempts, online exploitation, identity fraud & catfishing, online hate speech, and online grooming. Finally, most of the narratives, regardless of their genres, convey the problems they address with as realistic a perspective. Therefore, it is possible to say that the existence of fictional narratives with the theme of cyberbullying is significant in terms of drawing attention to the devastating effects of the problem as well as the importance of media literacy in combating the problem.

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