Derleme Makale ● Review Article

CYBER AGGRESSION: Impact, Awareness & Protection

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	In all categories of schools, whether state, private or grammar, minor incidents of fun and merriment do happen among same-age children. The naughty kids participate in funny jokes by mocking one another for the sake of amusement. Even conventional peer-to-peer pushing and propelling do not create hostility, but elbowing and jostling generate anger, whereas hitting and knocking down a classmate can lead to bitterness and hatred. These actions and reactions are various forms of physical bullying giving rise to aggressive behaviour. The free access to mobile devices has made teenager smarter for they now use disappearing snapchat messages and Finsta (fake Instagram) accounts without parents' knowledge. They move on to different apps and talk freely for the sake of freedom, independence and excitement. The supervisory and retraining power of a good mother has been penalised due to tremendous technological advancement in all spheres of mobile and cyber platforms. Exercising freedom without responsibility in the name of liberty and individual emancipation can be very risky for an orderly civilisation in which strong and weak, rich and poor live in peace and harmony.

Atıf Bilgisi / Reference Information

1. Introduction

In all categories of schools, whether state, private or grammar, minor incidents of fun and merriment do happen among same-age children. The naughty kids participate in funny jokes by mocking one another for the sake of amusement. Even conventional peer-to-peer pushing and propelling do not create hostility, but elbowing and jostling generate anger, whereas hitting and knocking down a classmate can lead to bitterness and hatred. These actions and reactions are various forms of physical bullying giving rise to aggressive behaviour. Playful activities such as throwing snowballs at each other during Christmas season and flinging paper-plains at other kids in the forecourts are harmless and inoffensive tricks for joy, thrill and delight. Yet, taunting, jeering and insulting remarks about another kid are provocative that fall in the domain of verbal bullying. In every school environment, bodily robust and socially loftier teenagers are customarily domineering and habitually aggressive in their outlook and assertiveness. They seek gratification by jeering and taunting others who are considerably unreceptive and meek. The docile nature of compliant and humble kids becomes their weakness among a group of belligerent mates. Even a few Loud-mouthed children tactfully get away with verbal bullying in the absence of witnesses who tend to side with the provoker rather than the victim. However, schoolteachers, administrators and counsellors do

take notice, adopt feasible measures for peer-to-peer reconciliation, offer training to both the aggressor and the victim and succeed in overcoming the bullying infection. The staff are personally present, well capable of taking appropriate measures to prevent future bullying incidents in their schools.

Nevertheless, during the last few decades, we have entered a new era of online, on-air communication, internet interaction and instantaneous messaging via social media sites, cell phones and emails. Consequently, cyberbullying has dramatically replaced the conventional forms of face-to-face bullying at schools and other institutes of education. Over 15 years ago, research scholar Marilyn Campbell (2005: 68-69) opined that "Cyberbullying is merely a new form of traditional bullying that has adapted to new technologies". Realistically speaking, cyberbullying is a dangerous endemic that causes immense emotional impairment to the victim, and yet, the perpetrator remains anonymous, unaffected and beyond the jurisdiction of legal, social and psychological accountability. In effect, the research scholars and academics have painstakingly conducted qualitative and quantitative studies throughout the past fifty years to inform the stakeholders and enlighten the decision-makers, resulting in meaningful initiatives undertaken globally by various government and semi-government bodies.

Research articles on this delicate theme have appeared in journals ranging from *Journal of School Violence*; Child Abuse & Neglect; Aggressive Behaviour; *Youth Studies Australia*; *Cyber/psychology & Behaviour*; *Aggression & Violence Behaviour* and *Sex Roles* to *Prevention Science* and several socio-psychology related professional periodicals. For instance, the PsycINFO database has cited 245 research articles which appeared from 1975-2000 in reputable professional journals. Between 2000 and 2010, 1458 articles were correlated to school violence and bullying. Several masters and doctoral thesis have comprehensively covered bullying studies. Crothers & Levinson (2004: 496-503) and Griffin & Gross (2004) have stressed the need for accurate assessment of the bullying situation.

Cyber victimisation is a deliberate antagonistic mindset with the intent of causing hurt to feeble teenagers by posting degrading and demoralising information. The helpless youngsters as young as 7-year old are capable of freely using smartphones, tablets and laptops for the sake of pleasure. Their online indulgence makes it easy for perpetrators to communicate anonymously, butter up, trap and tease the innocent. A cyberbullying victimisation study by Athanasiou et al (2018) of 14-17year-old kids across 7 European countries discovered that the bullying was the highest in Romania followed by Greece, Germany, Poland, Netherlands, Iceland and Spain. In this research, 13708 teenagers completed the questionnaire. The crucial questions asked were the parental educational level, marital status, monitoring of internet use and the time kids spent in front of the screen.

Likewise, Ortega et al., (2012: 342-356) studied cyberbullying intensity and emotional reaction of children age 9-16 in the U.K., Italy and Spain. It was inferred that online risks for the youth were far more significant than the positive side of thrill, new relationships and the unexplored bonds of love. Although kids despise any cyberspace supervision, a certain degree of parental digital use monitoring was necessary. As such, threatening messages and malicious rumours put an undue psychological strain on the victim that eventually affects his/her learning focus at school. To widen the geographical scope of cyberbullying and extrication the features of aggression, Gorzig and Olafsson (2012: 9-27) conducted the study of 25 European countries. Dr Goriz of the London School of Economics and Political Science and Dr Olafsson analysed a large sample of 12641 boys and 12501 girls asking questions about teasing, hitting, kicking and pushing of mates and also whether they have ever sent a photo or video to someone online. It was gathered that cyberbullying had the weakest relationships to risky online activities in Romania and the U.K., but strongest in the Netherlands. Also, girls are more prone to relational aggression than boys (Coyne et al., 2006: 294-307).

Professor Gokhan Atik (2012: 191-208) of Ankara University has emphasised the application of self-reported instruments for the collection of data. So far, tools used by Turkish scholars for measuring the

intensity and breadth of bullying include Bully Scale developed by Kutlu (2005) to calculate verbal, physical and relational forms of bullying. Another one is a Bullying Survey created by Kepenkci and Cinkir (2006: 193-204), which asks respondents explicitly about the frequency of bullying occurrence. Then, the Turkish version of Colorado School Climate Survey adapted by Kartal and Bilgin (2009: 209-226) which included a checklist of bullying behaviour. This list is in no way complete as new forms of bullying have been invented through the clever use of the latest electronic podiums. Gukltekin and Sayil (2005) brilliantly modified "multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale created by Mynard and Joseph in 2000". It has been used in Turkey for assessing victimisation of 11-16 years old pupils in school. It primarily covered bantering, trepidation and relational bullying. Dolek (2002) and Tipirdamaz-Sipahi (2008) produced a translated version of "Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (1983) to study the mistreatment and intimidation of pupils. A pupil is easily being bullied or victimised when he/she is exposed (Olweus 1996, p.9). Olweus produced a revised self-reported questionnaire to assess the forms, patterns and processes of bullying in Turkish schools. Another such instrument has been Calik (2007) School Bullying Inventory; also, School Relations Attitude Scale, Koc (2006) and then, developed by Piskin (2010) entitled "Peer Bullying Survey". Koc's Ph.D. thesis was entitled "Predicting bullying levels of high school students" submitted at Ghazi University, Ankara. Apparently, submissive and obedient pupils express themselves in a non-assertive manner (Alberti & Emmons, 1970: 109) and while remaining non-hostile, they mostly overlook their own needs. Atik et al. (2012: 202) reported that the main form of the bullying encountered by victims was verbal as the preys showed submissiveness which in itself was a risk factor for victimisation in peer groups. The kids possessing compliance and modest nature became soft targets for the perpetrators. A study in 2018 conducted by Van Geel et al. involving a larger number of students focused on a specific question, i.e., Does peer victimisation predict low self-esteem or does low self-esteem predict peer victimisation? The first part of the investigative question included 16230 students and the second part of the question comprised 16394 youth. Consequently, it was found that although both areas were related in a transactional manner, peer victimisation could have long-lasting negative effects on self-esteem.

Undeniably, Turkey is a collectivist society, and infrequently pupils join together for fun targeting a particular kid who might be misfit due to docile nature. His/her unassuming and meek character makes him the prime prey for the impish teenagers in the school. The children at 14+ appear in a nationwide exam for entrance into higher secondary schools. So, the best academic performers get a place in well-behaved career-oriented schools. In these selective schools, similar to the British Grammar schools, the discipline is admirable, and teaching is splendidly magnificent. The present researcher asked a teacher in Istanbul about overall kids' behaviour and bullying. He promptly replied, although a certain degree of bullying issue exists, it is in no way a serious matter. If occasional incidents occur, the teachers have the right training to contain unpleasant situations. Prior to choosing scapegoats for torment and anguish, the suspected bullies are reprimanded and discouraged. Usually, bully incidents are related to pupils who enjoy backbiting, name-calling, trash-talking. The Turkish girls, in particular, face psychological bullying when they do not fancy a pestering and stalking by an unlikeable boy. [https://www.quora.com. how-common-is-bullying-in-Turkey. 28 May 2018.]

As stated above, for the precise assessment of the gravity and magnitude of the nature, forms and types of bullying in schools. Instead of developing nationwide unified strategies to tackle the issue, it was proclaimed that individual peer-to-peer bullying should be dealt with by the school counsellors to recuperate any unpleasantness. If obnoxiousness prevails more widely, the school itself should prepare a bullying prevention programme to root out the undesirable evil. However, the present writer has visited Turkey half a dozen times (between 2012-2019), and curiously observed after-school pupils' behaviour, spoken to some parents, teachers, lawyers, bank officials, shop keepers and moved around shopping centres, open markets, spend some time in libraries, museums, parks and gardens; amazingly, the behaviour, manners, conduct and etiquettes of Turkish teenagers are admirable. Not everyone would

agree with my observations and reflections of Turkish kids as a whole, but comparatively, they are indeed, well-disciplined, meticulous and well-organised.

2. Intimidators' Conduct & Protocols

Naturally, bullies learn from the home, locality and social environment and then, act according to personal experiences within the family and youth practices in the area. They do what is observed and apply what is felt during interaction with the same age groups in the surroundings. For instances, if parents are separated, divorced, and a new partner appears on the domestic scene, the kid is likely to be perturbed and unsettled. If one of the spouses happens to be in custody for any legal procedures, the child will be nervous and distressed. If parents are out of a job for a long time due to redundancies, sickness or lack of new opportunity to earn a decent living, the adolescent will be disconcerted owing to socio-economic conditions. All these factors have an unpleasant impact on the tender brain, making him/her agitated, irritated and dismayed. While at school, internal restlessness turns into anger and that takes the form of aggressive conduct, teasing and bantering classmates. With a smartphone in hand, text messaging commences for initiating friendships, and if the response is not favourable, bully

becomes troubled. In effect, the rejection means the posting of threatening communication. This is called cyberstalking and yet, remaining anonymous and unreachable. Spiteful gossips on the cyberspace and false stories about others bring excitement and ego elation for the perpetrators. The girls and kids from broken families are vulnerable and soft targets for deceitful bullies. The cyberspace bullies are not only false-hearted but also devious who operate fake online accounts and conceal their real identity. Under the disguise of a decent person, they persuade innocent teenagers to open up, exchange flowery dialogue, receive photographs especially from girls, in a compromising position and then, blackmail by repeatedly rotating on cyber sites thus automatically seen by innumerable internet users. In the recent past, excessive use of digital technologies has made lives of innocuous young girls miserable since many of them are exposed to persistent online harassment which involves image-based sexual abuse, familiarly called revenge pornography, disseminated without victim's consent. Repeated retribution is a serious cause for great concern that makes it imperative for individuals and families to review cyber safety mechanism.

Moreover, parents should realise that the youthful years between 13 to 19 are a sensitive time of mental growth as the kids acquire perceptive skills in hikes and spikes. They are in the process of traversing social affiliations and simultaneously expect motherly love and care. They are entering into a complex world of countless hues, and as such, their common sense is undeveloped and incapable of making timely decisions. Throughout the teen years, parental guidance and consultation promotes maturity and boosts self-confidence. The limbic system in the brain links sensual information to emotional reactions that lead to temper, panic, eagerness and irresistible attractions.

Usually, children bullied online do not mention it to their parents, who might ban internet use or take away mobile phones. They prefer to remain silent for fear of losing parental trust. In Singapore, a teenage boy's trousers were pulled down in the school toilet, and a video film was made on the smartphone for widespread circulation. The victim did not report to the teacher as it would have provided more fuel for intimidation to the bully. The survey of over 3000 pupils aged 12 to 17 was conducted co-jointly by the Singapore Children's Society and the Institute of Mental Health in 2014 and narrated that one in nine adolescents had experienced cyberbullying. There are three specific methods of bullying in Singapore, a) posting an excruciating video of a mate on the net, b) making online demeaning annotations, c) calling them deleterious names. [https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/cnainsider/3-in-4-teens-singapore-cyberbullying-online-survey-10001480]

Some students rightly feel that complaining about bullying would be a sign of conceding defeat and a symbol of weakness for the youth. Families can prevent cyber-attacks by activating careful parental monitoring and time management for the home-based use of the internet by youngsters who might

despise strict rules and stringent supervision. However, a moderate approach with mother or father's amicable involvement, with the kid's selective use of cyberspace could produce encouraging sequels. Secondly, a kid's digital skills must be developed to confront challenging text messages.

3. Digital Media

Cyberbullying or cyberstalking is a behaviour presented through digital media to intimidate the target, trap the susceptible, entice the innocent into performing acts of vulgarity and use offensive language to hurt the recipient. The most dangerous aspect of the cyber resource is that the digital message stays online for an unlimited period, reaching the audience far away, recurring frequently and inflicting incalculable emotional damage to the victims. Quite often, the teenagers form social bonds for thrill and excitement, exchange intimate and revealing photographs, post fanatical memos and share highly personal details. If the relationship breakup occurs, their rapport is shattered, and the friendship is replaced with resentment. As such, the psychological bitterness is displayed on digital media platforms for causing hurt. For this perverse purpose, hitherto saved exposed photoshoots are posted on the media websites not merely for the innocent girl but for anyone to view innumerable times. A topless photograph of an adolescent girl on MySpace or Facebook could be enormously harmful, distressing and stressful. Mental torment is far worse than the physical pain and agony caused by bullies. Victims unintentionally become resentful, sober children turn indignant, and well-behaved kids sometimes assume the role of frightful bullies on account of inner indignation caused by fun-seeking, excitement-pursuing school mates.

4. School-Based Bullying

Bullying is undesirable belligerence with the intent of causing harm to another classmate. Normally nudging, striking and hitting takes place during school recess times or in the playing fields. There is a clear difference between playful joking and scornful taunting for pleasure. Research into kids' movements suggests that boys crack ignominious jokes, chat wildly and make fun of a noble chum. It upsets the victim but brings joy and laughter for other kids. If cracking hilarious gags are funny to a certain extent, such activities are treated as giggles, but repulsive titters are considered unpalatable. It is ridiculous to satirise an innocent youth possessing immaculate manners and virtuous qualities. Impersonating another youngster is irksome and offensive indeed. Girls are particularly sensitive with the exception of a few naughty who seeks delight in the process of teasing. The victim has three options namely, walk away without uttering a word, secondly, show courage to confront the bully with a firm stance, thirdly, Informing parents, teachers or school counsellors. The educational focus is disturbed, concentration wanes, and interest in lessons fades. In the classroom, naughty peers use bodily signs to distract the attention of other children. They might cross arms to convey a concealed message, roll eyes and make an obscene gesture with fingers. Family instability prevents girls from opening up and communicate bullying stress, and they rarely confide in parents and teachers. In stable families, girls feel secure and usually disclose school-based unpleasant episodes to parents in a subtle and supportive domestic environment.

A boy who gets hurt is induced to give a telling response resulting in bodily injury because an ostentatious touch can produce an unexpected obtrusive reprisal. When two or more friends inflict, severe pain as a punishment on a class fellow in order to compel him to use, buy or supply drugs, the situation gets worse due to no-cooperation of the cohort. His denial to become accomplice makes him vulnerable to bullies. In many countries, including Malaysia, physical bullying is indeed a crime that carries imprisonment and hefty fines. Several deadly corporal cases have been reported in Malaysia.

5. Cyberbullying Detection Clues

Signs, hints and traces of cyberbullying are both visible and invisible, apparent and veiled.

Online anonymity makes it much harder to uncover the perpetrator who can create a fabricated hate page, a fictitious name and false account for spreading gossip.

Observing cyberbullying but remaining quiet is to support the bully inadvertently. The Onlooker of this incident may be defined as a non-participant spectator, but nevertheless passively witnessing the manifestation without taking any action. Presumably, the bystanders view the intimidating episodes either with regret or amazement and yet, play virtually no role in the condemning the wrongdoing. Some observers may feel utterly remorseful for cyber victimisation but do little about it while others may not intercede on account of timidity and fearfulness for reprisal. They may not even highlight concern to the relevant parties such as teachers, families, mentors and counsellors. Courageous watcher can inform and help attenuate the cynical impact on the victim. An abettor is no less guilty than the co-conspirator.

Inaction is to urge the tormentor to mock the victim without the fear of culpability. Conclusively, thrill-seeker bystanders are as dangerous as the culprits of cybercrime. Cyber felons use abusive language, slang words, vicious verses, insulting jargon and waffle terminologies. The lingo and blather expressions online are meant to cause emotional damage, psychological impairment and mental despair. Regrettably, girl victims are pestered, sexually harassed and are intimidated not only by male culprits but by fellow female teenagers for vengeance and retaliation. The cyberstalking makes them nervous, scared and petrified when the depiction of innocent girls on the net as prostitute, bitch etc. demean their personality. Such language is disgraceful and insulting as it falls in the domain of character assassination. It is challenging to identify defamation and even more complex to verify slander. The impact of online interaction is different from the effect of school-based bullying, which the teacher can detect by observing the victim' face. A yellow face conveys several unhappy emotions and looks nervous, edgy and tense. On cyberspace, the victim is left with the feelings of sadness, focus disturbance, learning decline, academic frustration, low exam grades and low-self-esteem. Sadistic comments tarnish the thoughts and judgements of the kid. Usually, cyberbullies lack language skills for want of attention and focus on learning. Their online text is likely to reveal spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, broken sentences and use of cheap language, e.g. Bromance, 53X, Side Chick, Chill and Smash. Teens also use coded words to avoid parental attention, and on mobile phones, sneak texting acronyms are used to conceal cyber messaging from family members.

Reactions from victims can confirm the bullying narrative of unscrupulous and deceitful culprits. The parent-teacher collaboration and vigilance can apprehend the bullies by involving counselling and community services groups. Instead of punishing or detaining the youngsters, psychotherapy, and compassionate treatment of domestically disturbed children would be an ideal step to bring them into the mainstream school environment.

In some of the schools in Britain, the class teacher has to keep a record of the learning performance of each child. If anyone does not bring homework for a couple of weeks, the parents who come to collect the kids after school, are informed. The parents are required to follow up on the desired homework, which is a significant segment of learning. Those kids who do well are rewarded in various manners at school. In my recent question-answer session with granddaughter and grandson, I discovered how the procedure works in classrooms. My granddaughter says, "If I answer a particular question well, so my teacher gives me a privilege card, a raffle ticket; If I solved a difficult math sum quicker than other classmates, I get one more privilege card and another raffle ticket. More the raffle tickets, the more are the chances of winning a prize in the prize draw. The prizes include a strawberry jelly pen, a blueberry jelly pen and a sparkly pen. Other instances of gaining a raffle ticket are, listening attentively to the teacher during lessons, give a descriptive answer to a question, showing kindness to classmates and helping other kids in the class". [This short communication took place on 24 September 2019 at my Grandchildren's house]

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The supervisory and retraining power of a good mother has been penalised due to tremendous technological advancement in all spheres of mobile and cyber platforms. Exercising freedom without responsibility in the name of liberty and individual emancipation can be very risky for an orderly civilisation in which strong and weak, rich and poor live in peace and harmony.

It is the responsibility of parents to keep a check on night use of smartphones by kids in their adjacent bedroom. Good night's sleep is essential for a healthy mind and a happy child. According to a research finding in the United Kingdom, 9 out of 10 teenagers regularly access online resources that affect the wellbeing of youth. Mostly, the children use Instagram, Whatsapp, Twitter and Facebook regularly. Also, 51 per cent girls and 43 per cent of boys have online access three times a day. [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-49330254].

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