



Addressing Cyberbullying among Junior High School Students: An In-Depth Examination of Prevalence, Impacts, and Preventive Strategies

MARIO H. MARANAN¹ , ALBERT KALALO¹,
AMELIA LUMBIS, JOCELYN ESCUETA¹
¹San Sebastian College – Recoletos, Manila Philippines

Corresponding author: mariohmaranan@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of the study is to examine how respondents see various social media platforms as typical venues for cyberbullying to develop a program that will lessen or eliminate cyberbullying experiences among junior high school students. The study tackles the need to comprehend the frequency and effects of cyberbullying on particular social media platforms, offering insightful information about the specific types of online bullying that children encounter. The majority of respondents were in Grade 10. Despite the reduced prevalence, cyberbullying still significantly affects students' well-being in terms of problems, self-esteem issues and social anxiety. Verbal harassment and stalking were the forms of online bullying experienced by the respondents; other types of bullying were relatively rare overall. Respondents



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also mentioned infrequent consequences resulting from their encounters with cyberbullying, such as sleep disturbances, social anxiety and low self-esteem. These findings highlight the nature of cyberbullying and its potential adverse effects on students' social connections, academic performance and overall well-being. While cyberbullying is not common, it affects students' mental well-being, especially in terms of behavioral issues, low self-esteem, and social anxiety. Thus, to tackle cyberbullying, parents, schools, and other institutions should offer educators and children guidelines, educational initiatives, and assistance.

INTRODUCTION

In the heart of Manila, along the bustling Recto Avenue, stands a Higher Education Institution (HEI) that has become a microcosm of the digital age's challenges. This institution, with its diverse student body of both male and female students, has seen a significant increase in social media engagement among its Junior High School (SHS) population. The ubiquity of smartphones and the institution's Wi-Fi-enabled campus have created an environment where students are constantly connected to the digital world.

The high level of social media engagement among these JHS students presents both opportunities and risks. While it allows for enhanced communication and information sharing, it also exposes students to the darker side of the online world, particularly cyberbullying. The institution's location in a densely populated urban area, combined with the diverse backgrounds of its students, creates a complex social dynamic that can potentially spill over into the digital realm.

Recent observations by faculty members and guidance counselors have raised concerns about the increasing instances of online conflicts and potential cyberbullying among JHS students. While these incidents, while not always reported officially, have been noticed through changes in student behavior, academic performance, and social interactions within the campus.

The prevalence of cyberbullying in Philippine schools is alarmingly high. According to the PISA 2019 report, 65% of Filipino students reported being victims of some form of bullying at least a few times a month, with 40% experiencing frequent bullying (once a week or more). More recent data from PISA 2022 indicates that one in three Filipino students experiences bullying in schools, with 43% of girls and 53% of boys encountering bullying incidents multiple times a month. These figures are significantly higher than the OECD average, highlighting the severity of the issue in the Philippine context.

Given this backdrop, the need for a comprehensive study on cyberbullying among SHS students in this particular HEI becomes apparent. The high

engagement with social media, combined with the diverse student population and the competitive academic environment, creates a potentially volatile situation where students may become targets of online harassment and bullying.

Cyberbullying has become a widespread problem in the current digital era, having a significant negative influence on young people's mental health. Studies have consistently demonstrated the connection between being a victim of cyberbullying and several detrimental mental health consequences, such as elevated depressive affect, anxiety, loneliness, suicidal thoughts and actions, and physical symptoms (Nixon, 2014; Maurya et al., 2022). Moreover, several studies have connected cyberbullying to suicidal thoughts and actions, highlighting the importance of preventative strategies and support networks (Brailovskaia et al., 2018; Gohal et al., 2023).

The detrimental effects of cyberbullying on college students' mental health are examined in the article "The Relationship between Cyberbullying and Mental Health among University Students" by Ali and Shahbuddin (2022). The main objective of this research was to understand how cyberbullying impacts the well-being of students and its influence, on their performance. The findings reveal a correlation between cyberbullying and negative effects on health emphasizing the urgent need for preventive strategies and support networks (Alotaibi, 2019).

To effectively address cyberbullying it is crucial to identify the social media platforms where it occurs. This study aims to provide insights that can be used to develop tailored measures that target the online environments where children are most vulnerable. By focusing on the platforms frequently associated with cyberbullying we can address the types of harassment experienced by young people and create programs that mitigate or eliminate such behavior among middle school students.

Extensive research consistently underscores the impact of cyberbullying on the well-being of young individuals underscoring the pressing need, for targeted preventive measures. Because the study concentrated on particular social media sites, helpful information will be gained for creating preventive strategies relevant to the online settings where students are most vulnerable.

FRAMEWORK

The study "Addressing Cyberbullying among Junior High School Students" employs an integrated research framework that combines conceptual and theoretical elements to investigate cyberbullying dynamics on social media platforms and their impact on students. The conceptual framework operationalizes key variables, including the dependent variable (impact of cyberbullying on

students' well-being), independent variables (frequency of cyberbullying and specific platforms), and intervening variables (peer support, school policies, and parental supervision). This structure allows for quantitative measurement and analysis of relationships between these factors.

The theoretical framework is grounded in established theories such as Social Learning Theory, General Strain Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory. These theories provide explanatory power for understanding how cyberbullying behaviors are learned, how they may arise from various stressors, and how environmental factors at different levels influence cyberbullying dynamics. By testing these theories, the study examines how factors like peer influence, academic stress, and family dynamics correlate with cyberbullying behaviors and their consequences.

The integration of conceptual and theoretical frameworks enables a comprehensive approach to studying cyberbullying. This integrated approach guides the formulation of research questions, informs the design of data collection instruments, and supports the analysis and interpretation of results. By combining quantitative measurement with theoretical explanations, the study aims to not only describe the prevalence and impacts of cyberbullying but also to uncover the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors contributing to this phenomenon among junior high school students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To inform the creation of successful preventive measures was to investigate the cyberbullying experiences of the respondents, factors influential to bullying experiences, types of bullying experiences, and their impact on well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to explore the prevalence and impacts of cyberbullying among junior high school students. This approach allowed for the collection of detailed information regarding students' experiences with cyberbullying on social media platforms.

Research Site

The research was conducted in a higher education institution in Manila, Philippines. This site was chosen due to its diverse student population, which

provided a representative sample of junior high school students in urban educational settings.

Participants

Participants included junior high school students from Grades 7 to 10. The selection was based on convenience sampling, with more male respondents coming from Grade 10.

Instrumentation

A structured survey questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire underwent a try-out phase to ensure clarity and relevance, followed by reliability and validity testing to confirm its effectiveness in capturing the necessary data.

Research Ethics Protocol

Informed consent was obtained from all participants and their guardians before participation in the study. This ensured that participants were fully aware of the study's purpose and their rights. The study received clearance from the Ethics Review Board of the Higher Education Institution, ensuring compliance with ethical standards for research involving minors.

Data Collection

Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed to students during school hours. The questionnaires gathered information on participants' demographic profiles, their experiences with cyberbullying, and their engagement with social media platforms. Data collection was conducted to ensure confidentiality and anonymity for all participants.

Statistical Techniques

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the survey data. This included calculating frequencies, percentages, and weighted mean scores to determine the prevalence of cyberbullying experiences on the use of social media and their impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of the respondents. These statistical analyses provided insights into patterns of cyberbullying among junior high school students, informing potential preventive strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Bullying Experiences of the Junior High School in a Higher Education Institution Based on Their Social Media Engagements

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Had sent a screenshot of someone's status or photo to laugh at them in a group chat.	2.2873	1.26285	Very low
Had trolled somebody in an online game	2.5056	1.37616	Low
Liked or shared something online that openly mocks another person	1.9558	1.11964	Very low
Had done something to annoy somebody they didn't like online subtly	2.0111	1.15303	Very low
Had sent nasty messages, either privately or publicly, to somebody they know offline,	1.8122	1.13923	Very low
Had created a fake profile and used it to annoy or upset another person	1.7833	1.08969	Very low
Total Weighted Mean Score	2.0592		Very low

Most junior high learners in this study reported that bullying in their social media engagements was very low, as indicated by the weighted mean score of 2.0592. However, it is essential to note that among the variables comprising it, the trolling aspect in online games was the predominant form of online bullying for the respondents, as evidenced by the highest weighted mean score of 2.5056, which is verbally interpreted as a low occurrence. Additionally, sending a screenshot of someone's status or photo to laugh at them in a group chat was the second most prevalent form of online bullying, based on the total weighted mean score of 2.2873, which is verbally interpreted as very low. The weighted mean score of 1.08969, regarded as a shallow occurrence, indicates that the least visible characteristic was, interestingly, making up a bogus profile and utilizing it to irritate or anger someone else.

The data reveals how often trolling occurs in games and the practice of sharing pictures to mock others. This information provides insights into the

forms of cyberbullying that young adolescents face. Understanding these findings can guide targeted interventions and supportive measures to address these types of cyberbullying.

Recent academic research can be consulted to bolster the conversation about the prevalence and consequences of social media use and how it relates to cyberbullying among adolescents. Research shows that spending more time on social media increases one's vulnerability to online dangers, such as cyberbullying. According to a study by Keles et al. (2020), for example, teenagers who use social media regularly are more likely to be the victims of cyberbullying, which can have a detrimental impact on their mental health and result in anxiety and sadness.

Furthermore, studies by El Asam and Katz (2018) highlight how common cyberbullying is among students of all ages, including middle schoolers. The study emphasizes that younger teenagers are not exempt from cyberbullying and frequently do not have the coping skills necessary to deal with such situations. This corroborates the finding that younger children are also impacted by cyberbullying, which calls for parents and educators to take preventative action.

Furthermore, a Pew Research Center study by Anderson and Jiang (2018) addresses how school intervention and parental supervision can lessen the harmful effects of extended social media use. According to the research, cyberbullying and other online hazards can be considerably decreased by actively monitoring and establishing boundaries. These observations emphasize how crucial parental participation and educational guidelines are to ensuring pupils' safety in digital settings.

Table 2

Factors Influential to Bullying Prevalent on the Social Media Engagement of the Respondents

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Appearance	1.9162	1.16538	Very low
Academic Performance	1.6629	0.94413	Very low
Race	1.4886	0.86182	No chance to observe
Sexuality	1.4581	0.80879	No chance to observe
Financial Status	1.339	0.6108	No chance to observe
Religion	1.3258	0.71742	No chance to observe
Total Mean Score	1.6071		Very low

The average score of 1.6071 indicates that most people surveyed have an understanding of the factors contributing to cyberbullying. Interestingly they only considered appearance and academic achievement with scores of 1.9162 and 1.6629 respectively without recognizing the importance of factors, like orientation, race or socioeconomic status.

These findings provide insight into the frequency and impact of cyberbullying on students in settings. It highlights how common cyberbullying is and its potential negative effects on students' social connections, academic performance and overall well-being. The study underscores the importance of implementing programs, clear policies and support, for teachers and students to effectively combat cyberbullying.

Recent scientific material can be cited to bolster the discussion of the elements driving cyberbullying, as indicated in Table 2. Research has indicated that the frequency of cyberbullying among teenagers can be influenced by a number of factors, including looks and academic achievement. For instance, a study by Kowalski et al. (2020) discovered that academic success and physical appearance are frequently used as catalysts for bullying behaviors since they are frequently used as outward indicators by peers to single out individuals.

Furthermore, research indicates that other variables, such as socioeconomic position, sexual orientation, and race, may also influence the dynamics of cyberbullying, even though teenagers may not be as aware of them. Even though they are not immediately obvious to people involved, these variables frequently contribute to the underlying biases and stereotypes that feed cyberbullying, according to research by Smith et al. (2019). This corroborates the finding that

study participants might not be completely aware of these affects since they are not exposed to them.

The significance of comprehensive educational programs and policies to address these difficulties is further emphasized by the Patchin and Hinduja (2020) study. They contend that students can better comprehend and lessen the effects of cyberbullying if they are made more aware of the various variables that contribute to it. This emphasizes the necessity of schools putting in place focused interventions that teach kids about the complex nature of cyberbullying and encourage a more welcoming and encouraging online community.

Table 3

Types of Bullying Prevalent on the Social Media Engagement of the Respondents

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Verbal harassment	1.8895	1.23331	Very low
Severe harassment	1.4022	0.75342	No chance to observe
Purposeful embarrassment	1.6464	1.00932	Very low
Physical harassment	1.3833	0.71124	No chance to observe
Sexual harassment	1.5111	0.9542	Very low
Stalking	1.7039	1.09981	Very low
Emotional harassment	1.6723	1.03076	Very low
Mental harassment	1.6742	1.0869	Very low
Total Weighted Mean Score	1.6104		Very low

Based on the Total Weighted Mean Score of 1.6104, the data in Table 3 shows that, as reported by the respondents, the prevalence of various forms of bullying encountered by Junior High School Learners on their social media activities was typically very low. The results of assessments revealed that stalking and verbal harassment were the commonly observed characteristics, with respective weighted mean scores of 1.7039 and 1.8895 being assessed as very low. It is worth noting that none of the respondents reported incidents of severe harassment.

For information on the frequency and impact of cyberbullying among students in various educational environments, please refer to the search results. These findings emphasize how prevalent cyberbullying is and the potential harm it can cause to students' social connections, academic performance and overall well-being. The study also underscores the importance of implementing programs,

clear policies and support systems for teachers and students to effectively combat cyberbullying.

Recent academic research can offer essential insights to help the debate on the forms and frequency of bullying in online interactions, as shown in Table 3. Although there are many other varieties of cyberbullying, studies have found that verbal harassment and stalking are two of the most frequently reported forms. According to Kowalski et al. (2020), for example, verbal harassment is common in online settings because of the anonymity and reach of social media platforms, which encourage this kind of behavior. This is consistent with Table 12, which found that, albeit at low levels, verbal harassment and stalking were the most prevalent types of bullying.

Furthermore, studies by Olweus and Limber (2019) highlight that although extreme types of harassment are less common when they do happen, they can have a significant impact. This corroborates the finding that research participants did not report severe harassment occurrences, suggesting that they either occurred seldom or were underreported because of stigma or fear. The study emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend these processes to create successful preventative and intervention plans.

Additionally, even modest levels of cyberbullying can have a substantial impact on teenagers' mental health, contributing to problems including anxiety and depression, according to a comprehensive study by Keles et al. (2020). This emphasizes how crucial it is to deal with cyberbullying in all its manifestations, regardless of how serious it may seem, to safeguard students' welfare and promote a safer online environment.

Impact of Cyberbullying Experiences among Learners in a Higher Education Institution

Table 4

Cyberbullying Impact among the Students of San Sebastian College-Recoletos, Manila

Impact of Cyberbullying	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Social Anxiety	2.4778	1.5801	Very low
Deleted Social Media Profile	1.9944	1.33913	Very low
Self-harm	1.9828	1.34497	Very low
Disturbed	2.2905	1.44738	Very low
Stopped Using Social Media	2.0787	1.36729	Very low
Developed an eating disorder	1.9721	1.32999	Very low

Not being able to sleep well	2.1341	1.40781	Very low
Lower self-esteem/confidence	2.4833	1.59775	Very low
Less able to make a day to day decision	2.1061	1.38812	Very low
Total Mean Score	2.1689		Very low

The impact of cyberbullying on junior high school learners in a Higher Education institution in Manila is illustrated by the data in Table 4. According to the respondents' overall low weighted mean score of 2.1689, cyberbullying had little impact on them. With mean scores of 2.4833, 2.4778, and 2.2905, respectively, specific effects such as emotional disturbance, social anxiety, and low self-esteem were observed, suggesting a superficial impact. These results are in line with a study by Kowalski et al. (2020), which highlights how even mild instances of cyberbullying can have a significant negative impact on teenagers' mental health and result in conditions like anxiety and depression.

The study emphasizes the significance of addressing cyberbullying's ability to negatively affect students' social ties and academic performance, even when the prevalence of severe impacts is low. To lessen these consequences, Patchin and Hinduja (2020) make the case for comprehensive educational programs and policies, emphasizing the necessity for schools to put in place focused interventions that inform students about the complex nature of cyberbullying. This supports the findings highlighting the need for unambiguous rules and support networks to prevent cyberbullying effectively.

Additionally, although it occurs infrequently, the survey shows that the most prevalent types of online bullying that kids encounter are verbal harassment and stalking. Olweus and Limber (2019), who points out that although severe harassment instances are less common, their occurrence can significantly impact victims' well-being, reinforce this observation. In order to create a supportive atmosphere that tackles the prevalence and effects of cyberbullying on adolescents, it is imperative that parents, educators, and legislators take proactive actions.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the reduced prevalence, cyberbullying still significantly affects students' well-being in terms of problems, self-esteem issues and social anxiety.

Verbal harassment and stalking were the forms of online bullying experienced by the respondents; other types of bullying were relatively rare overall. Respondents also mentioned infrequent consequences resulting from their encounters with cyberbullying, such as sleep disturbances, social anxiety

and low self-esteem. These findings highlight the nature of cyberbullying and its potential adverse effects on students' social connections, academic performance and overall well-being.

While cyberbullying is not common, it affects students' mental well-being, especially in terms of behavioral issues, low self-esteem, and social anxiety. Thus, to tackle cyberbullying, parents, schools, and other institutions should offer educators and children guidelines, educational initiatives, and assistance.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

By offering a thorough grasp of the frequency and effects of cyberbullying, the study "Addressing Cyberbullying among Junior High School Students" benefits its participants, who include students, teachers, parents, and legislators. The study's conclusions can assist students become more aware of the different types of cyberbullying they may experience and motivate them to get support when necessary. The survey gives students the information they need to use social media more responsibly and safely by pinpointing the sites where cyberbullying is most common.

The study provides educators and school officials with helpful information to guide the creation of focused intervention plans and regulations to lower cyberbullying events. Schools may create a safer online environment by implementing instructional activities that build digital literacy and empathy in students and a better understanding of the elements contributing to cyberbullying. The results of the study also emphasize the significance of offering peer support groups and counseling services to kids who are impacted by cyberbullying.

This study also offers parents and legislators information on how to help kids manage their online interactions. It highlights the necessity of proactive parental supervision of their children's internet activity and calls on legislators to create all-encompassing policies and plans that tackle cyberbullying on a societal scale. The study intends to develop a comprehensive strategy to prevent cyberbullying by encouraging cooperation between educational institutions, families, and governmental organizations, ultimately improving children's academic performance and mental health.

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