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Cyberbullying: Legal scenario and Strategies for Prevention

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying is a big problem in the digital age because it can happen to anyone and anywhere on the internet. Harassment can happen anywhere, unlike regular bullying. This can have a big impact on victims' mental, social, and academic health. This article talks about how the law deals with cyberbullying in different parts of the world, with a focus on Bangladesh. It talks about some of the biggest problems with enforcing the law, like people not reporting crimes, not knowing where they are, and not being able to find the right people. The article stresses the importance of prevention strategies like teaching people how to use technology, getting people involved in their communities, using technology to keep people safe, and setting up mental health support systems. The study shows that to stop cyberbullying and make the internet safer, we need a full plan that includes strong laws, campaigns to raise awareness, holding institutions accountable, and support for families.

Key Words: Cyberbullying, Online Harassment, Digital Safety, Legal Responses, Prevention Strategies

Introduction

Digital technologies are growing quickly, and they have changed the way people talk to each other, interact, and make friends. Teenagers and young adults use social media, instant messaging apps, and online communities a lot in their daily lives. These platforms offer opportunities for education, networking, and self-expression; however, they have also enabled the rise of new forms of harassment, especially cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is when someone uses digital tools on purpose to hurt, scare, or embarrass someone else. Unlike regular bullying, it often goes beyond time and space, which makes it hard for victims to get away from its effects. Hurtful messages, defamatory posts, or the unauthorized sharing of private information can spread quickly and be seen by a lot of people, which makes the psychological and social effects worse. Cyberbullying is serious because it can hurt people's feelings, make them anxious, and lower their self-esteem right away. It can also have long-term effects, like making them feel alone, getting bad grades, and, in the worst cases, hurting themselves or killing themselves. Because they know how dangerous it is, governments, schools, and civil society groups have come up with different legal and preventative measures to deal with this modern problem.

Bullying

Bullying, as a manifestation of social unrest, has manifested in diverse forms over the years, with communication technologies employed to facilitate intentional, recurrent, and antagonistic conduct by an individual or collective, aimed at causing harm to others. P. K. Smith (2012)³. The Cyberbullying Research Center says that bullying is a type of harassment that is not provoked and is often aimed at the same person or group of people over and over again. M. Manning (1978)⁴.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a type of harassment that happens online and is defined by aggressive actions that are planned and done over and over again to hurt people. Cyberbullying is different from regular bullying because it happens online and in

person, while regular bullying only happens in person or in physical interactions. This lets abusers go after their victims on a lot of different online spaces, like social media, messaging apps, gaming environments, emails, and more. This makes it hard for people who have been hurt to get away from the abuse. Cyberbullying can happen in a lot of different ways, like spreading false rumors, insulting someone personally, sharing explicit content without their permission, pretending to be someone else, making threats, and other forms of digital harassment. The effects of cyberbullying on mental health and social life may last longer and be worse than those of traditional bullying because online content can spread quickly and stay available forever. Governments and international organizations have tried to define cyberbullying so that people know what it is and so that there are laws and rules to stop it. According to UNICEF, "cyberbullying is bullying that happens online." It can happen on social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, and mobile phones. People who are targeted by this behavior are supposed to be scared, angry, or embarrassed. The Canadian government also says that cyberbullying is "making someone feel bad, hurt, or threatened online using a computer, smartphone, or other connected device." Academics have defined cyberbullying as "an intentional aggressive act perpetrated by a group or individual, utilizing electronic means of communication, repeatedly and over time, against a victim who is unable to easily defend themselves." This definition makes three important points: (1) purposeful aggression, (2) the use of digital or electronic means, and (3) doing it over and over again, usually against people who are weak and can't defend themselves.

These definitions make it clear that cyberbullying is not just one case of online fighting; it is a pattern of harmful digital behavior that needs both legal action and ways to stop it from happening again. .

Objective of the study

1. To discover the nature and types of cyberbullying;
2. To find out the causes of cyberbullying;
3. To know about the laws for preventing cyberbullying;
4. To provide some advices for preventing cyberbullying.

Literature Review

The literature on cyberbullying highlights its diverse consequences, encompassing psychological, social, and legal ramifications. Hinduja and Patchin (2015) emphasize the correlation between cyberbullying and mental health disorders, such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. Kowalski et al. (2014) assert that anonymity and the permanence of digital content intensify its harmful effects compared to traditional bullying. UNICEF reports stress how vulnerable children are, while Canadian legal studies stress how important it is for the state to take responsibility for prevention and repair. Researchers agree that to fully stop cyberbullying, we need to use legal frameworks, educational programs, technological protections, and mental health support, even though different countries use different strategies.

Methodology

This study utilizes a descriptive and analytical research methodology to examine cyberbullying, its legal responses, and preventive measures. Data was collected from secondary sources, encompassing academic journals, books, government reports, and publications from international organizations such as UNICEF and the Canadian government. A comparative analysis methodology was utilized to assess the strategies of different countries in addressing cyberbullying through legislation, policies, and institutional frameworks. The study also examines research regarding the impact of cyberbullying on individuals' mental health, social interactions, and educational experiences. This approach integrates legal, social, and technological perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues and potential remedies associated with cyberbullying.

Causes of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a complex issue influenced by various social, psychological, and technological factors. There are a few main reasons that are usually found, even though the exact ones may be different for each person and situation:

Anonymity

People often do bad things online when they can stay anonymous because they don't worry about getting in trouble right away. This lack of responsibility can make harassment and aggression worse.

Social Media and Online Platforms

It's easy to find possible victims because so many people use social media, messaging apps, and other online platforms. Cyberbullying can get worse when people can quickly share and spread content.

Peer Pressure and Social Influence

People, especially teens, may cyberbully to fit in, get approval from others, or do what their friends or online groups do.

Revenge or Retaliation

Some people use online harassment to get back at people who they think have hurt their feelings, wronged them, or gotten into a fight with them. They turn private fights into public attacks on the internet.

Lack of Awareness and Digital Literacy

People who don't know much about how to behave online, the effects of cyberbullying, and how it affects people's minds may hurt others without meaning to or with empathy.

Standards for the Internet and Culture

Cultural and Online Norms

Some online groups think it's okay to troll, act provocatively, or be aggressive, which means it's okay for people to bully others online.

Accessibility of Technology

Cyberbullying happens more often and spreads more quickly because it's easier for people to bother others over and over again with their phones, computers, and the internet.

Recommendations

Addressing cyberbullying effectively requires a multi-pronged approach involving legal, educational, technological, and community-based strategies. Key recommendations include:

Strengthen Legal Frameworks

Governments should enact clear and enforceable laws against cyberbullying and online harassment, ensuring accountability while protecting freedom of expression.

Promote Digital Literacy

Educational institutions should incorporate digital literacy programs that teach responsible online behavior, empathy, and awareness of the consequences of cyberbullying.

Awareness Campaigns

Governments, NGOs, and media organizations should run campaigns to inform children, parents, and educators about the risks of cyberbullying and ways to prevent it.

Technological Safeguards

Social media platforms and messaging apps should implement strong reporting systems, content moderation, privacy controls, and AI-driven detection tools to identify and prevent harassment.

Parental and Community Involvement

Parents and guardians should monitor online activity responsibly, encourage open communication, and provide support to victims. Communities can foster positive online cultures and peer support networks.

Psychological Support

Victims of cyberbullying should have access to counseling services, mental health programs, and peer support groups to cope with emotional trauma and build resilience.

Research and Data Collection

Continuous research and data collection on cyberbullying trends can inform effective interventions and policy-making.

By combining these strategies, societies can create safer online environments and reduce the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying.

Conclusion

Cyberbullying is still a big problem in the digital age, and it affects people of all ages and backgrounds. We need to take a balanced and multi-faceted approach to this problem. This should include strong laws and proactive prevention measures like education, technological safeguards, and community support. This article talks about how important it is to know all the different things that cause cyberbullying, how it happens, and what it does to people. It also stresses how important it is for tech companies, parents, teachers, and policymakers to work together. By taking a lot of different steps, societies can make the internet a safer, friendlier, and more responsible place where people can talk to each other without worrying about being harassed.

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