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CYBERBULING: A HIDDEN DANGER FOR THE PEOPLE OF INDIA

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INTRODUCTION:

With India's growing population, it has one of the highest internet usage rates in the world. So, there are a huge number of cyberbullying cases across India, which have become a threat to the people of India. While traditional bullying is referred to as "a psychosocial problem of intentionally and repeatedly harming others and creating an imbalance of power between the victim and the perpetrator, with negative consequences for both parties", cyberbullying often shares a similar kind of threats but in the virtual world.¹ National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal addresses cyberbullying as "A form of harassment or bullying inflicted through the use of electronic or communication devices such as a computer, mobile phone, laptop, etc."²

Cyberbullying has become a significant global issue, now widely recognized as the most common form of cybercrime. In India, there has been a substantial increase in cyberbullying incidents since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to online learning, the move to remote work, and the heightened use of social media have all contributed to this troubling trend. This problem is not confined to urban centres or specific social classes. In rural India, where nearly half the population now has access to digital services, cyberbullying has become a common issue, impacting the lives of many. India has the highest rate of cyberbullying worldwide, with over 85% of children reporting it.³

¹ National Library of Medicine, National Centre for Biotechnology Information, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11376467/> (Last visited July 27, 2025)

² National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, <https://cybercrime.gov.in/webform/crimecatdes.aspx> (Last visited July 27, 2025)

³ Chandrashekhar Pandey, *Cyberbullying in India: A growing concern for parents and educators*, The Times of India (May 21 2023, 6:54 PM IST), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/cyberbullying-in-india-a-growing-concern-for-parents-and-educators/>

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

According to the NCPCR, “Bullying” is defined as harassing someone through unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behaviour. It also includes the use of intimidation, threats, or insults against another person. Cyberbullying is a form of criminal intimidation because the aim is to threaten someone. Bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour intended to hurt another individual. There is also a power imbalance between the bully and the victim. The victim is not in a position to defend themselves, and the behaviour is repetitive (Smith, 2016, p. 519). Repetitive, stressful events such as being bullied are linked to symptom clusters of ongoing traumas. Traditionally, bullying involved physical, face-to-face violence toward a person; however, with the development of technology, bullying has evolved. Social media has become a preferred method of social interaction and, consequently, the method of choice for many bullies to reach their victims. Although the method has changed, the outcomes remain the same.⁴

Cyberbullying is also a kind of bullying in which the mode of bullying is virtual. Here, computer resources and digital platforms are used to bully other people. Cyberbullying can happen through various platforms, including but not limited to text messaging, applications, social media, online gaming, and educational technology platforms. It encompasses the acts of sending, posting, or disseminating negative, harmful, false, or malicious content. It is crucial to recognise that cyberbullying can occur in any online environment where interpersonal interactions take place, and the continual evolution of technology may give rise to new platforms that facilitate such behaviour.⁵

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF CYBERBULLYING:

Cyberbullying may include a variety of activities- i) Sending obscene or vulgar messages; ii) posting any kind of humiliating content of the victim; iii) Hacking the victim’s account; iv) Sending or posting mean and vulgar messages online; v) Threats of violence; vi) phone calls by stalker; vii) Threats of child pornography; viii) Trolling, ix) Impersonation, etc.

⁴ Roelof Petrus Reyneke, *A Restorative Approach to Address Cyber Bullying*, JSTOR, 340-354, 341 (2019), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvpb3xhh.26>

⁵ National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Guideline on Cyber Safety https://www.ncpcr.gov.in/uploads/16613369326305fd6444e1b_cyber-safety-guideline.pdf
SAFETY AND SECURITY OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS (July 27, 2025)

In India, 48% of children understood the instances of cyberbullying they faced, compared to 21% of children worldwide, while 46% reported being bullied by a stranger.⁶ Maharashtra reported the highest rate of cyberstalking and bullying incidents against women and children in 2021, with approximately 62 cases filed with the police across the state.³

To effectively combat the growing issue of cyberbullying, it's crucial to understand its context and the associated risks. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying is harder to recognize and can happen anytime and anywhere. It can have severe consequences for children, including low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and even suicide in extreme cases. The alarming prevalence of cyberbullying in India can be largely attributed to insufficient awareness and guidance regarding online safety & laws related to these matters. It is essential to educate individuals and implement proper training to combat this issue effectively.

The IPC (Indian Penal Code⁷) (now replaced by BNS; Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita⁸) and the Information Technology Act, 2000⁹ are two critical frameworks that address the issue of cyberbullying. Some sections of the Information Technology Act govern cyberbullying, but there are no such laws specifically related to this issue in India. A few laws that can be used to combat cyberbullying are-

- Section 292A of IPC (Now, Section 294 of BNS)
- Section 354A of IPC (Now, Section 75 of BNS)
- Section 354D of IPC (Now, Section 78 of BNS)
- Section 499 of IPC (Now, Section 356 (1) of BNS)
- Section 66E of the IT Act,2000
- Section 67A of the IT Act,2000
- Section 67B of the IT Act,2000

These legal safeguards are essential for protecting victims within the judicial process. While it is imperative for the government to implement measures to prevent such crimes, it is equally essential for individuals to remain vigilant regarding the potential for cybercrimes. Promptly addressing these issues is crucial to mitigating the risk of future occurrences.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES:

⁶ Shivangi Gautam & Dr. Sapna Sharma, *Cyberbullying: Repercussions and Strategies for its Prohibition*, Vol. 1, Research Communication,172, 173 (2023), <https://research-communications.cmpcollege.ac.in/>

⁷ Indian Penal Code, 45/1860, Acts of Parliament, 1860 (India)

⁸ Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 45/2023, Acts of Parliament, 2023 (India)

⁹ Information Technology Act, 21/2000, Acts of Parliament, 2000 (India)

The Indian government has recognized the serious issue of cyberbullying and has taken proactive steps to address it comprehensively. In 2018, the Ministry of Home Affairs launched the Cyber Crime Prevention Against Women and Children (CCPWC) initiative. This initiative aims to create a safe and protective online environment for children. One of the key features of the CCPWC initiative is the provision of a dedicated helpline and an online portal that allows children and their guardians to report incidents of cyberbullying anonymously. This support system is critical in empowering young individuals to seek help without fear of retaliation or stigma. Furthermore, to enhance the reporting process, the Ministry of Home Affairs introduced the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP) in 2019. This user-friendly web portal serves as a centralized platform for citizens to report various types of cyber crimes, with a particular focus on those affecting women and children. The NCRP aims to streamline the reporting process, making it accessible and efficient. To submit a report, users must first register on the portal using their name and a valid Indian mobile number. Upon registration, they will receive a one-time password (OTP) via SMS, which is valid for only 30 minutes, ensuring that the reporting process is both secure and timely.¹⁰

These initiatives are designed not only to facilitate the reporting of cybercrimes or cyberbullying but also to ensure that the complaints are addressed promptly. By providing accessible resources and support, the Indian government is working towards creating a safer digital landscape for all users, particularly the most vulnerable segments of the population.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, Cyberbullying is a serious social problem that needs our full attention. It's crucial to understand both its causes and the wide-ranging impact it has on people and society. At its core, cyberbullying is driven by complex human motivations like the desire for power, a need for validation, or even a misguided sense of justice. This behaviour is often fuelled by a troubling tendency to enforce social hierarchies, which is especially damaging in our interconnected digital world.

¹⁰ National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, Ministry of Home Affairs, <https://cybercrime.gov.in/> (Last visited July 27, 2025)