

Mitigating Cyberbullying among Teens: The Crucial Role of Moral Education in School Curricula

Ashaba Collins

Department of Education Kampala International Uganda

ABSTRACT

The increasing prevalence of cyberbullying has become a distressing form of entertainment for bullies throughout history and today. Therefore, it is crucial to fully understand the complex dimensions of this issue. This analysis investigates the origins and growth of cyberbullying strategies, in tandem with the rapid advancement of communication technologies. The paper highlights the challenges of addressing cyberbullying due to its intricate nature, which is facilitated by devices like cell phones and social media platforms. Despite schools being centers for academic and moral development, cyberbullying continues to impact the emotional well-being of teenagers. The study promotes the implementation of thoughtful curricula that incorporate activities empowering teenagers to recognize and counter self-defeating ideas, ultimately reducing cyberbullying rates. The paper underscores the importance of researching the various forms of cyberbullying and discusses potential preventative initiatives, urging educators to design curricula that address the emotional and behavioral issues that contribute to cyberbullying.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Moral education, Teenagers, School curriculum, Emotional impacts, Preventative initiatives and Character education.

INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying has evolved into a disturbing form of entertainment for bullies throughout history. This phenomenon raises concerns related to meaningfulness, meaninglessness, verifiability, and functionality [1]. Schools and children have grappled with the persistent challenges posed by cyberbullying, with bullies deriving pleasure from embarrassing and toying with others [2]. The exact origin of cyberbullying remains unclear, but the strategies employed by cyberbullies have significantly expanded alongside the rapid growth of communication technologies [3]. Internet bullies often demand personal information, relentlessly repeating requests and attempting to embarrass those who refuse to comply.

The perilous and intricate nature of cyberbullying makes containment challenging. Technologies such as cell phones, social media sites, and chat rooms have allowed bullying to infiltrate cyberspace, becoming a major concern for both children and parents [4]. Despite schools being advantageous for academic and moral development, cyberbullying persists unabated. It involves intentional harm through the misuse of social media, causing emotional impacts on teens' academic and social lives [5]. This paper argues for thoughtful curricula that incorporate activities to help teenagers recognize,

assess, dispute, and counter their false, self-defeating ideas, which serve as motivation for cyberbullying. The high rates of cyberbullying can be mitigated or eliminated through moral education and an active-directive school program. Such programs would teach students to recognize irrational tendencies and empower them to emotionally dispute these tendencies, fostering more constructive, rational, and self-helping behaviours.

Regrettably, some children channel their frustrations through bullying others. In the past, antisocial actions were more controllable as they were limited to face-to-face interactions. The current high rate of cyberbullying and its emotional consequences, such as poor relationships, substance abuse, school skipping, lack of concentration, poor grades, low self-esteem, and overall poor emotional and social adjustment among kids, raise significant concerns for teachers and parents. The paper underscores the importance of genealogical research into various forms of cyberbullying, including flaming, harassment, cyberstalking, denigration, masquerading, and outing.

Providing background information on bullying, defining the issue, and focusing on its different problems and consequences, the study discusses potential preventative initiatives. [6] explores how

educators and other stakeholders in education can design and implement curricula and initiatives to address the emotional and behavioural issues that lead children to engage in cyberbullying.

In an era marked by technological advancements, the rise of cyberbullying has become a pressing concern. This form of harassment involves the use of technology to intentionally harm, embarrass, or intimidate others. As it continues to proliferate, understanding the causes and implementing effective preventive strategies become imperative. This comprehensive analysis delves into the multifaceted dimensions of cyberbullying, exploring its definitions, causes, consequences, and the roles of various stakeholders in curbing its prevalence.

Defining Cyberbullying:

Cyberbullying, a prevalent issue in the digital age, is a multifaceted form of online harassment that transcends age boundaries and leverages technology to inflict harm on individuals. At its core, cyberbullying involves the deliberate and premeditated engagement in hostile behaviours by individuals or groups, manifesting through various electronic devices such as computers, cell phones, and other digital platforms. The perpetration of harm in cyberspace is characterized by key elements that define the nature and impact of cyberbullying.

The first critical element is intractability, emphasizing the persistent and enduring nature of cyberbullying incidents. Unlike traditional forms of bullying, which may be confined to specific physical locations, cyberbullying exhibits a relentless quality that extends across various online platforms. This persistent nature amplifies the challenges faced by victims, as escaping or avoiding the harassment becomes increasingly difficult.

Recurrence stands out as another fundamental element, highlighting the repetitive nature of cyberbullying incidents. The reiteration of hostile actions compounds the emotional and psychological toll on victims, creating a pervasive sense of insecurity and distress. The recurring nature of cyberbullying intensifies its impact, making it a recurring threat to the well-being of those targeted. Crucially, the harm perceived by the target is a defining aspect of cyberbullying. The emotional, psychological, and sometimes even physical harm experienced by victims distinguishes cyberbullying from mere online disagreements. The perceived harm contributes to the overall detrimental effects on the mental health, self-esteem, and overall quality of life of the individuals subjected to cyberbullying.

Perpetration via electronic devices is a key characteristic, underscoring the role of technology in facilitating cyberbullying. The use of computers,

cell phones, and other electronic devices as mediums for perpetrating harm amplifies the reach and impact of cyberbullying. The digital landscape provides a conducive environment for bullies to execute their hostile intentions, reaching a wide audience and intensifying the negative consequences for the victims.

Importantly, the scope of cyberbullying extends beyond specific age groups, encompassing both teenagers and adults. Unlike traditional bullying, which may have been predominantly associated with school environments, cyberbullying infiltrates various aspects of life, affecting individuals across diverse age brackets. This inclusivity underscores the pervasive nature of cyberbullying in contemporary society.

Cyberbullying emerges as a complex and pervasive challenge that involves intentional harm through the use of technology. The defining elements of intractability, recurrence, harm perceived by the target, and perpetration via electronic devices collectively contribute to the nuanced nature of cyberbullying. Recognizing these key features is crucial for developing effective preventive strategies and fostering a safer online environment for individuals of all ages.

Forms and Platforms of Cyberbullying:

The methods and platforms through which cyberbullying manifests are diverse. It can take the form of threatening messages, harassment, denigration, masquerading, and other malicious activities. Social media sites, instant messaging, chat rooms, blogs, gaming sites, and even social networking websites like MySpace, Facebook, and Bebo serve as arenas for cyberbullying. The anonymity provided by these platforms often intensifies the severity of the attacks.

Consequences of Cyberbullying:

The repercussions of cyberbullying extend beyond the virtual realm, impacting victims emotionally and physically. Studies reveal alarming statistics, with rates indicating that 1 in 5 teens has been a victim, while 1 in 7 admits to having engaged in cyberbullying. Long-term exposure to cyberbullying increases the risk of anxiety, depression, and other stress-related disorders for both victims and perpetrators. The emotional toll on victims can lead to feelings of overwhelm, embarrassment, and a sense of isolation.

Causes of Cyberbullying

Delving into the causes of cyberbullying unveils a complex interplay of individual perceptions, attitudes, and internalized judgments that underscore the multifaceted nature of this pervasive issue. Human nature, with its intricate blend of

rational and irrational tendencies, emerges as a foundational element shaping the inspirational causes of cyberbullying. Understanding the psychological underpinnings sheds light on the motivations behind such harmful behaviours in the digital realm. Jealousy stands out as a potent catalyst for cyberbullying, as individuals may harbour feelings of resentment or envy towards others. The online environment provides a platform for expressing and acting upon these negative emotions, leading to intentional harm through cyberbullying. The anonymity afforded by digital platforms often emboldens individuals to act on their jealousy without facing immediate consequences. Envy, akin to jealousy, contributes to the causative factors of cyberbullying. The perceived success, achievements, or positive attributes of others can trigger feelings of inadequacy, prompting individuals to resort to online harassment as a means of levelling the perceived playing field. The virtual realm becomes a battleground for those grappling with envy, intensifying the emotional impact on both perpetrators and victims.

Frustration emerges as another influential factor fueling cyberbullying behaviours. Individuals experiencing frustration in various aspects of their lives may channel these negative emotions into harmful online actions. The digital landscape becomes a venting ground for pent-up frustration, with victims often bearing the brunt of unbridled and misplaced anger.

Intolerance, whether stemming from ideological differences, prejudices, or personal biases, significantly contributes to the perpetuation of cyberbullying. The online space becomes a breeding ground for intolerance, providing a platform for individuals to target others based on factors such as race, religion, gender, or differing opinions. Cyberbullying becomes a tool for enforcing conformity and silencing dissenting voices.

The pervasive nature of mobile technology acts as a crucial amplifier of cyberbullying, perpetuating its ongoing and relentless challenge. The ubiquity of smartphones and other connected devices ensures that individuals remain constantly immersed in digital interactions, blurring the boundaries between the physical and virtual worlds. This seamless integration of technology into daily life facilitates the quick dissemination of harmful content and intensifies the impact of cyberbullying.

Moreover, the anonymity provided by online platforms contributes to the persistence of cyberbullying. The perceived veil of secrecy emboldens individuals to engage in harmful behaviours without fear of immediate consequences.

This anonymity not only shields perpetrators from accountability but also hampers efforts to curb cyberbullying, as tracking and identifying anonymous harassers prove to be challenging.

The causes of cyberbullying are deeply rooted in human psychology, driven by emotions such as jealousy, envy, frustration, and intolerance. The widespread adoption of mobile technology further complicates the issue, creating an environment where cyberbullying can thrive. Addressing the underlying psychological factors and the role of technology is essential in formulating effective strategies to combat and prevent cyberbullying in the digital age.

Moral Implications and Ethical Dimensions:

The moral implications of cyberbullying have prompted discussions in various disciplines, including philosophy, law, ethics, and religion. It raises ethical concerns such as invasion of privacy, emotional harm, and the potential for physical violence. Recognizing the broader ethical implications of cyberbullying is crucial for the development of effective preventive measures.

Roles of Various Agents in Prevention:

Addressing cyberbullying necessitates a collective effort involving parents, educators, law enforcement, and the community. Parents play a crucial role in educating their children about responsible online behaviour, setting cyber safety rules, and maintaining open communication. Schools must implement educational policies and curricula that foster responsible internet use, creating an atmosphere where cyberbullying is not tolerated. Law enforcement officials are instrumental in responding to threats, harassment, or explicit content, enforcing regulations, and collaborating with service providers to curb cyberbullying.

Teenagers themselves are pivotal agents in prevention. They should establish positive relationships with trusted adults, adjust privacy settings on social media platforms, and exercise caution in their online interactions. Saving evidence of cyberbullying incidents and reporting them to relevant authorities is essential for legal intervention.

As cyberbullying persists as a formidable societal challenge, a proactive and collaborative approach is imperative. Recognizing the multifaceted causes, consequences, and ethical dimensions of cyberbullying provides a foundation for developing comprehensive preventive strategies. Through the concerted efforts of parents, educators, law enforcement, and the community, society can strive to create a safer digital environment for everyone.

The escalating issue of cyberbullying among teenagers has prompted a critical examination of remedial approaches. [7] asserts that integrating moral education into the curriculum can play a pivotal role in addressing and mitigating this pervasive problem. This revamped analysis explores the profound impact of moral education on adolescents, emphasizing the need for a proactive and instructional school program to foster positive values and behaviours.

The Role of Moral Education:

Moral education, conceptualized as a well-planned program, serves as a powerful tool for guiding teenagers in recognizing, evaluating, disputing, and transforming their illogical and self-defeating perspectives. The overarching goal is to equip students with the skills to replace negative tendencies with positive, logical, and self-helping ones, ultimately reducing or eliminating the prevalence of cyberbullying.

Acquiring Virtues and Moral Habits:

The primary aim of moral education is to facilitate the acquisition of virtues and moral habits that empower individuals to lead virtuous lives and develop good character. [8] argue that cultivating virtues helps students manage anger, frustration, and interpersonal relationships, fostering a balanced and respectful environment. The virtues encompass self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation, courage, honesty, respect, justice, tolerance, and caution.

Impact of Cyberbullying on Academic Life:

The detrimental effects of cyberbullying on academic life and human relationships cannot be overstated. Instances of cyberbullying create an atmosphere of insecurity, frustration, and instability within academic institutions, hindering effective learning and tarnishing human relationships. [9] highlight the correlation between cyberbullying and

Addressing the escalating issue of cyberbullying demands a collaborative and proactive approach involving parents, educators, law enforcement, and the community. The paper asserts the pivotal role of moral education, integrated into school curricula, in mitigating cyberbullying by instilling virtues and fostering positive behaviours. Recognizing cyberbullying's impact on academic life, the study highlights the importance of character education and Reinforcement Theory in school administration.

CONCLUSION

poor academic performance, as well as strained human interactions, leading to a cycle of frustration and underachievement.

Root Causes and the Importance of Character Education:

[3] identifies character and moral values as foundational elements in the genesis of cyberbullying issues among teenagers. Moral education aims to instill crucial principles such as self-discipline, compassion, cooperation, courage, honesty, respect, justice, tolerance, and caution. These values, supported by Reinforcement Theory, posit that behaviours reinforced by immediate reward or recognition are more likely to recur, while ignored behaviours gradually diminish.

Reinforcement Theory in School Administration:

Applying Reinforcement Theory in school administration serves as a powerful mechanism to reinforce positive behaviours and values. B.F. Skinner's behaviourist theory underpins this approach, suggesting that immediate rewards or recognition encourage the repetition of desired behaviour, while indifference leads to behaviour extinction. Positive reinforcement in school administration, therefore, plays a pivotal role in fostering discipline, academic excellence, character development, and the cultivation of moral values.

In confronting the complex issue of cyberbullying, the integration of moral education emerges as a comprehensive and proactive strategy. By instilling virtues, reinforcing positive behaviours, and addressing the root causes of cyberbullying, moral education equips students with the tools needed to navigate the digital landscape responsibly. The ultimate aim is to create an academic environment where respect, compassion, and positive interpersonal relationships flourish, fostering the holistic development of individuals.

In conclusion, the integration of moral education emerges as a comprehensive and proactive strategy to equip students with tools to navigate the digital landscape responsibly, fostering an environment where respect, compassion, and positive relationships flourish. The collaboration of parents, teenagers, and various agents is essential to address both rational and irrational tendencies contributing to cyberbullying.

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