

## **Impact of Cyber-Bullying on the Females**

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### **Abstract**

This paper attempted to explore the impact of cyber-bullying on the females. This study was conducted at Kushtia district in Bangladesh from June 2020 to February 2021. 60 females were selected from two upazillas, Kushtia Sadar and Kumarkhali (30 from Kushtia Sadar Upazilla and 30 from Kumarkhali Upazilla). Questionnaire and in-depth individual interview were used as the instruments for collecting quantitative and qualitative data adopting a mixed method approach (Both quantitative and qualitative). Quantitative data were collected from 60 females aged 15-25 years through a set of questionnaire and qualitative data of this study were collected from 6 females through in-depth face to face interview. Articles, journals and research papers were the sources of secondary data of this study. Quantitative data were first coded and analyzed, and then, qualitative data analysis was done through content analysis. After interpretation of data, the findings of this study were presented in tables and charts using numbers and percentages. The study revealed that cyber-bullying had negative impacts on the females.

**Key words:** Cyber bullying, Impacts, Females, Bangladesh

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, the epidemic of bullying at many parts in Bangladesh has received much attention in the news media. Many researchers like Athanasiades and Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, (2010) have defined bullying as aggression, intention, repetition and an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim. They have also defined bullying as direct, verbal, and indirect or relational with well-known long-term effects on those involved. Whitney & Smith, (1993), have defined bullying as an aggressive, intentional act or behavior, and to them, it is carried out by a group or an individual repeatedly. Smith & Sharp, (1994) have defined bullying as a form of abuse that is based on an imbalance of power, and they have defined bullying as a systematic abuse of power. Thus, cyber bullying is as an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself (Smith, et al., 2008). Kowalski et al. (2008), have stated that cyber-bullying is an electronic bullying or online social cruelty through email, instant messaging, chat room conversations, on websites or gaming sites, and through digital messages or images sent through cellular phones.

Cyberbullying may have social and psychological effects on the females as traditional bullying. Kowalski, et al. (2007), have stated that cyberbullying can decrease self-concept, increase anxiety and depression levels, and result in higher absences from school. Males and Meda, (2010), have claimed that female aggression is on the decline and that the attention given recently to female cyberbullying is a “hoax” that is causing “panic”. In a survey study, Hinduja and Patchin (2010) have found that 25.8% of girls report having been cyberbullied, compared to only 16.8% of boys. Werner, Bumpus, and Rock (2010) report that girls who are involved in relational bullying offline are more likely to participate in online bullying or to be victims of cyberbullying themselves. Girls are clearly at the forefront of this technological disaster (Favela, 2010, Hinduja and Patchin, 2010). Thus, cyberbullying has made an attention from the media and administrators in academic settings. Many researches have found that cyberbullying has negative effects on the females as traditional bullying, but additional research is needed to determine the social and psychological impact on the females. Thus, this research was determined to find out social and psychological impact on the females.

### **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Today’s young people are spending plenty of time accessing public life on social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook and bebo (Boyd, 2007). There are many advantageous qualities of the “online world” for youth today, which should not be overlooked. Kendall (2008) has opined that social networking sites are comparatively easy for the boys and girls to meet social and emotional needs that are not being met so easily anywhere else. The Internet allows people to maintain exciting friendships as well as a possibility of developing new ones (Kowalski and Limber, 2007). It is important, however, for young people to be aware of the bullying

activities that take place online and more importantly learn how to deal with these situations. K Parsonson, (2009) has stated that cyber-bullying behavior and activities are wide-ranging and they are linked to the rise in new technology.

The main objective of this study was to find out social and psychological impact on the females through primary and secondary sources. In that purpose, this study has made a review on related literatures. Research on social and psychological impacts of cyber-bullying on females is not available in the context of Bangladesh. Some researchers have attempted to explore the effects of traditional and cyberbullying on the children. Williams and Guerra (2007) have stated that internet bullying prevalence and predictors are likely to be comparable to verbal bullying than physical bullying as the bullies in both these forms of bullying can remain anonymous. However, Cameron et al. (2007) has stated that online communication systems encourage people to act aggressively and promote them to do things they would not dare to try in real life. He has added that there is now the ability to reach more people, and the “always-on” culture of the internet, means that cyber-bullying can have an even more detrimental effect on the victim than conventional playground bullying. Because perpetrators can remain hidden they may be more likely to say things that they would not say face-to-face.

Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, (2008) has stated that the emotions and facial expression of the bullies are hidden, and therefore, the bullying may seem harsher and can also be misunderstood by the victim. They have added that the reactions from the victims are concealed from cyber-bullies and they do not see the hurt they are causing. As a result, cyber-bullies may not experience the same regret as in traditional bullying therefore the bullying may be crueler and more vicious (Keith and Martin, 2005). In a study by Smith et al. (2008) found that specific types of cyber-bullying, such as picture video clip bullying and abusive images, are more detrimental to the victim than traditional bullying but the effects of other types of cyber-bullying were considered to be similar or less than traditional bullying.

Cyber-bullying has made a great attention in the world, and for this, many schools have introduced new policies to deal with cyber-bullying behaviors. David-Ferdon and Hertz (2007) have researched whether the considerable attention and intensified concern placed on cyber-bullying, through forms such as policies, is necessary or justified. They have found an association between electronic bullying and a range of psychological difficulties and risk factors, such as problems at school and emotional distress, validating this concern. In addition, Hussmann (2007) believes that communication technologies have exposed more young people to psychological threats but have not introduced any new threats. It is evident that there are many factors that require consideration in relation to the effects of cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying may be a bigger problem than the people are actually aware of. Kowalski and Limber (2007) have suggested that cyber-bullying behaviors may be difficult for students to recognize; students may not identify their experiences as a form of bullying. This may be a consequence of the lack of understanding and awareness (K Parsonson, 2009, Stuff, 2008; NZ Herald, 2009. Stuff, 2009). Furthermore, it is evident among the researchers that the young people are not as likely to report incidents of cyber-bullying (Agatston et al, 2007; Dehue et al, 2008; Slonje and Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008). Although the victims are being bullied through media technology these tools are also their means of communicating with friends and their online world. Belsey, (2005) has opined that there is a fear that these tools, such as computers and cell phones, will be taken away from them which may seem inconceivable to young people.

It is not surprising that the negative outcomes associated with cyberbullying victimization transcend into other settings, most notably the school (Favela, 2010, Beckman et al., 2012; Betts, Spenser, & Gardner, 2017; Latvala et al., 2014; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). In particular, victims of cyberbullying report feeling unsafe at school (Varjas, Henrich, & Meyers, 2009), feelings that can in turn lead to frequent absences (Katzer et al., 2009; Beran & Li, 2008; Ybarra, Diener-West, & Leaf, 2007) in an attempt to avoid facing their online bullies (Beckman et al., 2012; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Over time, the accumulation of these negative perceptions of school safety contributes to more unfavorable perceptions of school in general (Betts et al., 2017, Favela, 2010). Furthermore, due to the negative influence cyberbullying has on peer relationships, students can feel discouraged from engaging in the school environment (Betts et al., 2017, Favela, 2010); this lack of engagement in school, in turn, is associated with lower academic achievement (Li, 2007), and a greater risk of dropping out of high school (Fall & Roberts, 2012, Favela, 2010).

### **III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study were,

- i) To know the forms of cyberbullying.
- ii) To find out the number of female victims of cyber-bullying.
- iii) To explore the social impact of cyberbullying on the females.
- iv) To explore the psychological impacts of cyberbullying on the females.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted from June 2020 to February 2021 at Kushtia district in Bangladesh to assess the impacts of cyber-bullying on the females. The study was based on primary as well as secondary sources of data. The primary data were collected from female respondents through survey questionnaire and face to face interviews whose age lies between 15-25 years old. Secondary data sources were collected from different books, journals, reports, research works, and daily newspapers, e-books and relevant websites. 60 females were selected from two upazillas, Kushtia Sadar and Kumarkhali (30 from Kushtia Sadar Upazilla and 30 from Kumarkhali Upazilla). Questionnaire and in-depth individual interview were used as the instruments for collecting quantitative and qualitative data adopting a mixed method approach (Both quantitative and qualitative). Quantitative data were collected from 60 females aged 15-25 years by using a set of questionnaire and qualitative data of this study were collected from 6 females through in-depth face to face interview. Quantitative data were first coded and analyzed, and then, qualitative data analysis was done through content analysis. Using various software for example; Microsoft excel, data were computerized, analyzed and interpreted. After interpretation of data, the findings of this study were presented in tables and charts using numbers and percentages.

#### V. FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

This study has attempted to explore the impacts of cyber-bullying on the females by using questionnaire and interview. The findings of this study are presented and interpreted below.

##### 5.2 Findings from Survey Questionnaire

This study collected quantitative data by using survey questionnaire. The findings from questionnaire have been presented and interpreted below.

##### 5.2.1 Forms of Cyber-Bullying and the Number of Victims

There are a number of forms for cyberbullying like My Space, Facebook, texting, I Ming, and email which are all common and easily accessible methods for covert bullying for both genders. Girls are found to be more drawn to these methods of bullying for several reasons: girls are not as concerned with establishing their dominance physically (Athanasiaides and Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, 2010), girls prefer to utilize relational aggression (rumors, ostracizing one member, exclusion, etc..) as it fits better with female societal expectations, and girls prefer language use over other types of aggression, with is conducive to electronic means that rely on language use as the primary vehicle for the behavior (Favela, 2010, Chisholm, 2006). "Mean Girls" is in fact a sub-grouping of cyberbullies identified by Chisholm (2006) as specifically a group of females "targeting a victim" (Favela, 2010). Cyber-bullying can take many forms, and for this study we subdivided the concept of 'cyber-bullying' into seven sub-categories:

**Table 1. Sub Categories of Cyber-Bullying and the Number of Victims of sub-categories**

Number of Respondents	Categories of Cyber-Bullying	Number of Victims	Percentage (%)
60	Text message bullying	42	70
60	Picture/Video Clip bullying (via mobile phone cameras)	23	38
60	Phone call bullying (via mobile phone)	44	73
60	Email bullying	5	8
60	Chat-room bullying	36	60
60	Bullying through instant messaging	51	85
60	Bullying via websites	3	5

Field Data collected from Kushtia-Bangladesh, July 1-September 30, 2020.

The table 1 reflects that 70% respondents of this study were the victims of text message cyber-bullying, 38% respondents were the victims of picture/video clip bullying through mobile phones, 73% respondents were the victims of phone call bullying, 8% respondents were the victims of email bullying, 60% respondents were the victims of chat room bullying, 85% respondents were the victims of instant messaging bullying, and 5% respondents were the victims of website bullying.

##### 5.2.2 Victims of Cyber-Bullying

At present, using communication devices is easily reachable to the people from any ages involving children, teens and adults. And all these devices are used for cyber bullying for any aged people, but females of 15-25 years are the worst sufferer of this hazardous social issue. Cyber-bullying has very devastating socio

psychological impact on the females. In some cases, the victims of cyber-bullying suffer from extreme depression, obsession, anxiety & social and mental phobia, which leads them in suicidal ideations, planning and efforts to commit suicide.

**Table 2: Victims of Cyber-bullying**

Opinion	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	54	90
No	6	10
Total	60	100

Field Data collected from Kushtia-Bangladesh, July 1-September 30, 2020.

The table 2 reflects that 90% of the total respondents support the statement that they were the victims of cyber-bullying. Only 10% respondents were not the sufferers of cyber-bullying.

**5.2.3 Social Impact on the Females**

One of the most desiring target of cyber bullies is to degrade the victims social situation and with the basis of target the bullies intent themselves to do anything harmful to degrade the victims social basis, spread defamation over her, lick her personal image, videos or any kind of information that is harmful for her social status. Cyber victims have a weak peer interactions and sometimes refrain themselves from groups or society, again the bullies have a strong popularity over the groups but may show behavioral difficulties (Gleeson, March, 2014)

**Table 3. Social Impact of Cyber-Bullying**

Opinion	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	54	90
No	2	3
No answer	4	7
Total	60	100

Field Data collected from Kushtia-Bangladesh, July 1-September 30, 2020.

The table 3 reveals that 90% of the total respondents support the statement that cyber-bullying has social impact on females. Only 3% respondents did not agree with the issue that cyber-bullying has social impact on the females, and 7% respondents did not give any answer regarding the social impact of cyber-bullying on the females.

**5.2.3.1 Early Marriage for Cyber-Bullying**

In some cases, the electronic bullying escalates early marriage. The families being socially degraded want to get relief from the bullying by giving early marriage of their daughters.

**Table 4. Early Marriage for Cyber-Bullying**

Opinion	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	47	78
No	4	7
No answer	9	15
Total	60	100

Field Data collected from Kushtia-Bangladesh, July 1-September 30, 2020.

The table 4 reveals that 78% of the total respondents support the statement that the families give their daughters marriage early for cyber-bullying. Only 7% respondents did not agree with the issue that the families give their daughters marriage early for cyber-bullying, and 15% respondents did not give any answer regarding the issue that the families give their daughters marriage early for cyber-bullying.

**5.2.3.2 Drop out of Females from Educational Institutions for Cyber-Bullying**

In some cases, the electronic bullying increases drop out of the female students. For this cyber-bullying, the female students are bound to drop out from their educational institutes and are fancied with their own arena.

**Table 5. Drop out of Females from Educational Institutions for Cyber-Bullying**

Opinion	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	41	68
No	13	22
No answer	6	10
Total	60	100

Field Data collected from Kushtia-Bangladesh, July 1-September 30, 2020.

The table 5 reveals that 68% of the total respondents support the statement that the female students are bound to drop out from their educational institutes and are fancied with their own arena for this cyber-bullying. Only 7% respondents did not agree with the issue that the female students are bound to drop out from their educational institutes and are fancied with their own arena for this cyber-bullying, and 15% respondents did not give any answer regarding the issue that the female students are bound to drop out from their educational institutes and are fancied with their own arena for this cyber-bullying.

#### 5.2.4 Psychological Impact of Cyber-Bullying on the Females

One of the most desiring target of cyber bullies is to degrade the victims psychologically which leads the females to commit a number of things.

**Table 6. Psychological Impact of Cyber-Bullying on the Females**

Opinion	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	49	82
No	7	12
No answer	4	6
Total	60	100

Field Data collected from Kushtia-Bangladesh, July 1-September 30, 2020.

The table 6 reveals that 82% of the total respondents support the statement that cyber-bullying has psychological impact on the females. Only 12% respondents did not agree with the issue that cyber-bullying has psychological impact on the females, and 6% respondents did not give any answer regarding the issue that the cyber-bullying has psychological impact on the females.

#### 5.2.4.1 Cyber-Bullying and Suicidal Behavior

Marr and Field (2001) denoted to suicide caused by cyber bullying as "bullycide" (Marr & Field, 2001, p. 1). The victims affected with extreme mental depression may commit to suicide. This study reveals the possibility of suicidal behavior due to cyber bullying.

**Table 7. Cyber-Bullying and Suicidal Behavior**

Opinion	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	37	62
No	13	22
No answer	10	16
Total	60	100

Field Data collected from Kushtia-Bangladesh, July 1-September 30, 2020.

From the table 7, it is clear that cyber bullying increases the suicidal behavior among the females. The table reveals that 62% of the total respondents support the statement that cyber-bullying increases the suicidal behavior among the females. Only 22% respondents did not agree with the issue that cyber-bullying increases the suicidal behavior among the females and 16% respondents did not give any answer regarding the issue that cyber-bullying increases the suicidal behavior among the females.

### 5.3 Findings from Interview

Most of the respondents in interview sessions have told that cyber-bullying creates a sense of helplessness among the victims, and sometimes the friends and nearest do not tend to keep aside the victim, and for this a victim of cyber-bullying feels helplessness and insecure. Rakhi an eighteen years female has told in interview session that they are always in the risk of cyber-bullying which affects seriously and degrades them socially and psychologically. Another respondent has told that cyber-bullying and suicidal behavior are closely connected. All the respondents have told in interview session that cyber-bullying has a serious socio psychological hazards and it is clearly a sign of decadence of social values.

## VI. CONCLUSION

For rapid technological progress, cyber-bullying is increased because most of the people can easily use some technological devices. Through the access of evil side of technological devices, many people lose morality and they commit crime like cyber-bullying. One of the most dangerous impacts of cyber-bullying is that the victims has to carry out a serious mental hazard. Sometimes, a female faces cyber bullying alone and confines herself with her own circle avoiding family or friends for fear or being ashamed of if she is judged or claimed for this incidents, which brings a female with devastating psychological anxiety for which a victim may destroy herself, and even commit suicide. It can also affect the person academically because their lack of confidence prevents them from contributing and asking questions in class. Bangladesh is a developing country and trying its best to be a developed one. Cyber-bullying is now a social problem. As the females are the most agonized tools in any kind of harassment, they have to pay great sufferings for sharing or posting their photos, videos or information or sometimes just for prevailing in cyber world. This paper has attempted to explore social and psychological impacts of cyber-bullying on the females. Computer and technology is the fabricator of cyber bullying and it is believed that by computer and technology, this problem can be mitigated. A wide range of tactics and interventions are accessible but it needs more assessment for the application of the strategies.

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