

Cyberbullying Among Teenagers in China: From the Perspective of Major Factors and Coping Strategies

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ABSTRACT

“Cyberbullying” as well as “online harassment” and “electronic violence”, has become a serious public health concern in recent decades, particularly among Chinese youth. Cyberbullying among teenagers has many kinds of characteristics, such as strong concealment and great harm, which could not only be considered as an extension of school bullying. The 46th China Statistical Report on the Development of the Internet indicates that China's internet penetration rate was 67% as of June 2020, with 940 million internet users. Nonetheless, because of its unique and widespread nature, cyberbullying can further harm a victim's mental and behavioral well-being and well-being. In the current social context, it is critical to strengthen the research and practice of cyberbullying education to prevent and reduce the occurrence of cyberbullying among young people, safeguard their healthy development, and safeguard national security. To lessen the prevalence of cyberbullying and the harm it does to young people, it is necessary to first understand how cyberbullying occurs to identify effective remedies to the core causes. This study looks at the fundamental causes of cyberbullying, concentrating on the actual circumstances of young people and what motivates them to commit cyberbullying and victimize young people. Furthermore, coping strategies for reducing the prevalence of cyberbullying and psychological protection for teenagers are presented.

Keywords: *Cyberbullying; Major factors; Coping Strategies; Teenager*

1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying is defined as the persistent use of purposeful hostility by one person or a group of people against a person who is unable to protect himself or herself [1]. There is direct bullying (physical bullying, verbal bullying) and indirect bullying, according to the implementation classification (relationship bullying). There are two types of bullying based on their causes: proactive bullying and reactive bullying.

As of June 2020, China's internet penetration rate stood at 67% and the number of internet users reached 940 million, according to the 46th China Statistical Report on the Development of Internet [2]. While the Internet facilitates people's lives, a new type of bullying has also emerged, cyberbullying, also known as “online harassment” or “electronic aggression”, has emerged as a major public health issue with numerous negative effects in the past few decades, particularly among youth, with the incidence of cyberbullying ranging from 18.8 percent to 40.6 percent and victimization rates ranging from 10 percent to 40 percent. It comes after research revealed

nearly a quarter of teenagers have experienced cyberbullying and one in six treat others in this way.

There is currently no accepted description for this growing phenomenon. According to one definition, it is “a repetitive, purposeful act committed by a group or a person using electronic correspondence against a victim who cannot readily defend themselves” [1]. More recently, the term “cyberbullying” has come to mean “willful and persistent injury committed by electronic means such as computers and mobile phones” [3]. The previous study on cyberbullying has mostly focused on middle and high school children because these have historically been the typical venues in which bullying occurs. According to reports, the incidence rate ranges from 20% to 40%. Besides, cyberbullying can cause victims to become mentally deranged and even seriously affect their physical and mental health development. Needless to say, teenagers are one of the largest groups that are harmed or at least influenced by a cyberbully. According to 2017 survey data, suicidal ideas were 3.12 times higher among teens who had experienced cyberbullying than among those who had not. However,

there are prominent problems in coping strategies and anti-bullying education. Therefore, this study aims to improve public awareness of cyberbullying and increase public knowledge of coping mechanisms that will enable teenagers to protect themselves and prevent victims from further harm this article proposes strategies and suggestions on the clarification, impacts, and coping strategies of the cyberbully.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definitions of Cyberbully

In recent decades, cyberbullying, also known as “online harassment” or “electronic violence” has developed as a serious public health concern with multiple severe consequences, particularly among the young. Bullying behavior, according to Olweus, occurs when a student is repeatedly exposed to unpleasant activities by another person, resulting in an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and victim [4]. This definition, however, is confined to school samples and classic bullying conduct, such as physical threats (punching, kicking, and striking), verbal threats (e.g., name-calling), or psychological relationship bullying (eg. peer exclusion.). Tokunaga provided a more modern definition of cyberbullying as “any activity conducted through electronic or digital media by people or groups that regularly transmits hostile or violent messages intended to inflict pain or discomfort on others” [5].

However, in this article cyberbullying among teenagers is the internet-based extension of traditional school bullying. As well as the general characteristics of traditional school bullying, it is also characterized by objectivity, non-restrictiveness, concealment (anonymity of crime), technological dependency, and imperceptibility.

2.2. Major Causes of Cyberbullying

2.2.1. Adolescent Ontogeny-Related Factors

According to Eric Erickson’s developmental theory [6], Adolescent students are in the stage of rapid development, energy and physical strength are more vigorous, which renders a strong sense of independence and rebelliousness. To be more specific, these intentions arise from the rapid development of their physiology and the continuous improvement of their cognitive awareness, as well as their fluctuating moods.

Furthermore, with strong jealousy and an unstable mood, in adolescence, teenagers are more sensitive and suspicious and need to vent their excess energy externally, but with immature psychologically. Under this circumstance, they will vent their frustrations and dissatisfaction with others. With the development of the

Internet, its anonymity and concealment provide a good platform for such improper emotional catharsis.

2.2.2. Used to be Physically or Non-physically Disciplined by the Family Members in a Young Age

Identifying characteristics that indicate bullyings, such as interrelationships between the individual and the environment, is one component that must be thoroughly investigated [7]. According to ecological system theory, bullying victims and offenders are part of a complex, interconnected system that begins with them and extends to the numerous systems that influence them - micro, meso, exo, macro, and chronosystem levels [8]. Bullying causes problems in a variety of settings, including the home, peer group, school, and neighborhood/community. Because the family is a person's first school, parenting style, and mode are important variables in the development of healthy personalities in adolescents.

As blank papers that have not established a complete and correct concept of value and behavior, kids will observe and try to mimic the behavior of the people around them. Needless to say, parents are the people who latent shape their kids. Under these circumstances, suffering from verbal violence and physical violence as pressure output from their parents, teenagers could not only become more aggressive and indifferent but also have mental health problems, when they cannot adjust to negative emotions. According to the self-defense mechanism, people would transfer such negative emotions to others, who are more introverted and crowding in personality.

2.2.3. The Influence of Peer Groups

According to the ecological system theory, peer group could be another crucial aspect that facilitates cyberbullying formation [8]. In both present and virtual societies, blindness is the most fundamental feature of mass blindness. The main reason is a lack of self-confidence, personal experience, and awareness. Most people spontaneously rely on and trust information, followed by a different understanding of information such as personal opinions, which can be easily influenced by the opinions of authorities or leaders, especially in virtual societies where information is mixed and it is difficult to consciously differentiate from real opinions. For example, when people aren't sure if a star is cheating, they take to the corners of social media to verbally attack and hurl abuse. Maybe some people will judge this behavior negatively, always think it irresponsible and continue to be the best version of themselves. Especially in adolescence, adolescents have not yet developed a complete sense of educational values and independence, are susceptible to influence from

those around them and are prone to conformity due to their lack of life experience.

2.2.4. Macro-social Environments

Due to limited development time, standardization is rather low. In addition, the virtuality of cyberspace facilitates bullying by perpetrators. More specifically, the current Internet originated in 1969 with ARPANET ARPA in the United States. Although the internet is now a part of people's lives, the technology is only 50 years old. Moreover, the virtual society created by the Internet is almost as complex as the real world. On the contrary, the legal system in real life, after thousands of years of washing, has formed a relatively perfect system and mechanism

On the other hand, the virtual society has only experienced the development of a few short decades, it is impossible to regulate people's behavior by simple regulations and imperfect network legal system. In virtual space, many behaviors are in the blind spot of laws and regulations, and there is no accurate definition and definition of behavior. As a result, people can only rely on moral restraints to regulate their behavior, which has limited efficacy. In practice, the actual execution of the moral restraint function benefits not only from people's internal voluntary compliance but also from societal supervisory standards. The virtuality of cyberspace stems not only from the virtuality of society but also from the virtuality of identity. No one knows the name of the perpetrator or the coordinates of reality in an online world. Second, one person can play multiple roles at once. No matter what behavior is done on the Internet, it does not affect the social assessments people make in real life. The people here have no social morals at all. However, they cannot control or influence the behavior of others. Therefore, in the network society, only the intrinsic value orientation of the actor can influence the behavior.

2.3. Impacts of Cyberbully

2.3.1. Individual Impacts: Victim

For the psychological aspect of individuals. First, cyberbullying can affect the physical and emotional well-being of its victims. In teen studies, cyberbullying as a form of bullying has been found to lead to feelings of fear and anxiety, and depression, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, often accompanied by somatization problems, such as headaches, stomach pain, and sleep problems [9]. Second, cyberbullying can affect a victim's self-worth and can be accompanied by negative comments about others. To correct self-awareness, such negative comments can lead to the victim's cyberbullying becoming more and more negative about themselves as others. In the long run, cyberbullying can lead to low self-

esteem, low self-esteem, and low self-worth. Finally, cyberbullies have tremendous negative impacts on victims' social support. Traditional bullying research suggests that unicorn children are less accepting of their peers, more aware of social isolation, and also more likely to engage in aggressive social behavior. Cyclists deliberately exclude groups online, spreading rumors or denigrating others can damage their lives or relationships. The bullying undermines the victim's existing natural relationship and the victims' moral reputation [10].

2.4. The Coping Strategies Toward Cyberbully

2.4.1. Overview of coping strategies

Cyberbullying can be dealt with through a variety of coping strategies, but not all are equally effective. Caba and López categorize cyberbullying strategies into positive and negative approaches [11]. When it comes to positive strategies, they involve using assertive strategies in bullying conversations or seeking help from the community. Negative strategies include taking a negative attitude toward bullying (silence, ignoring aggression, etc.), and passive reciprocity in return for bullying, whether it is virtual or physical. This study presents three perspectives, which are considered to be the most direct effect method for gaining access and influencing a person who needed help, through positive coping strategies.

2.4.2. The Family

The majority of victims share cyberbullying only with friends, not their parents or teachers. Most children don't communicate with their parents or teachers because they fear that adults will not believe in them or will not be able to help them. The victim may also believe that they can solve the problem on their own. According to a previous study in Vietnam, the two most popular measures (58.8 and 54.6 percent, respectively) were ignoring such activities and locking violators' accounts [12]. Unfortunately, victims of cyberbullying are unable to deal with the issues unquestionably due to their rapid start and effects on a wide crowd swiftly [13], leaving them feeling stigmatized and alienated, exacerbating the consequences of cyberbullying. Providing adolescents with appropriate strategies to deal with cyberbullying is therefore critical and should be a priority in schools and at home.

Family support plays a protective role in mediating the correlation between cyberbullying experience and psychological observation. It has been proposed that parental support can mitigate the impact of bullying [14]. However, the psychological effects of cyberbullying can't be mitigated by support from friends and teachers. Teenagers perceive that informing teachers about their experience is ineffective, and telling parents may hinder

their ability to use the Internet freely [15]. Therefore, parents should be proactive in building strong bonds with their children [16].

Increasing the role of parents in addressing cyberbullying and its consequences is a critical component of community development. Parents' positive interactions with their children could be motivating for their adolescent children for lasting positive effects [17].

2.4.3. The school: Steps to Respect

To strengthen legal publicity and education, the school carries out legal publicity activities of various sizes every year [18]. In recent years, however, they have only shifted the focus to cybersecurity legal education, especially for weak campus cybersecurity, cyber fraud, personal information security, and so on. It is the indulgence of ordinary people that makes cyberbullying so rampant. Society as a whole must therefore change cyberbullying stereotypes. Strengthening the legal awareness of cyberbullying in all walks of life is the basic prerequisite for implementing the legal regulation of cyberbullying and reducing cyberbullying among young people. In addition, teachers play an irreplaceable role in the learning and development of students, so teachers should be trained in the basics of cyberbullying, improve intervention methods and provide timely and positive feedback to help young people avoid secondary transmission and further harm from bullying.

2.4.4. Improve the Real-name System and Cyberbullying Accountability System

Within a few years, all the major social networking software began to implement real names. So far, the real-name system is almost the basic requirement of network software and network community software, but the current real-name system measures seem to have some shortcomings. First, online accounts operate under a real-name system, but police can only obtain personal information from network operators if serious crimes are involved. This is to protect the personal information security of ordinary citizens and therefore cannot be used arbitrarily by other organizations. However, this provision significantly limits the deterrent effect of real-name registration and creates barriers to accountability for cyberbullying in general. Second, multiple accounts are allowed under the same identity, platform operators can take self-regulatory measures such as account closures, silencing bans for targeted users, and extending the original single account to all accounts of the same name. This means the platform has the power to restrict and manage all accounts registered with it if they engage in cyberbullying.

3. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Research on Cyberbullying on the description, causes, and effects of cyberbullying has made great progress. On this basis, we can summarize the characteristics of current cyberbullying research: the perspective tends to diversify, the depth of research continues to expand, and the scope of research continues to expand. However, there are still several issues that require further reflection, and here are the prospects for future research. First, the definition, identification, and differentiation of cyberbullying are still relatively vague and lack research. Secondly, there is a relative lack of coping strategies, particularly those based on protecting young people. Most studies investigate and analyze cyberbullying from a student's perspective, making it impossible to suggest better prevention strategies. It can be investigated and analyzed from many angles and put forward more effective countermeasures. Finally, in the research angle, the existing research mainly stands in the pedagogy, psychology, or law angle to analyze the schoolyard bullying question, may try from the multi-angle synthesis research, the cyberbullying itself collects the multi-disciplinary characteristic synthesis question.

4. CONCLUSION

The main aim of these studies was to determine the impact of cyberbullying on society as a whole, but it was teenagers who were most affected by cyberbullying, and who received the least attention. In addition, the definition and clarification of cyberbullying within contemporary research remain controversial, leaving teens vulnerable to non-physical bullying that has significant negative effects, both on their mental health development and their physical health.

This study examined the types of behavior considered cyberbullying. Moreover, the study looks at the underlying causes of cyberbullying, focusing on young people's actual experiences and what motivates them to engage in cyberbullying and victimize other young people. Furthermore, models such as the Ecological Development Theory and the Erik Erickson Developmental Theory were used throughout the study to investigate the key factors underlying cyberbullying, specifically adolescent cyberbullying, with a focus on self-development, peer groups, school mechanisms, parenting styles, social media, and even internet regulation. Simultaneously, the underlying reasons for cyberbullying and coping techniques are examined from two perspectives: micro-development circumstances and macro-social conditions. However, there are significant limitations to this study because the majority of students did not implement some of the measures. This research enhances our understanding of the importance of adolescent mental health by analyzing the genesis and

coping methods of adolescent cyberbullying. This study contributes to public understanding of the relevance of adolescent mental health by giving an overview of how adolescent cyberbullying is developed and coping methods are adopted.

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