

THE PROBLEM OF CYBERBULLYING IN MODERN SOCIETY

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Abstract: *Cyberbullying has become a pressing issue in modern society due to the rapid development of information and communication technologies. This phenomenon involves deliberate harm inflicted on individuals or groups through the Internet, social networks, email, messaging applications, and online forums. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying is characterized by anonymity, global reach, permanence, and exposure to wide audiences. The consequences include psychological distress, depression, anxiety, social isolation, and sometimes suicidal tendencies. This paper examines the history, characteristics, risks, and preventive strategies of cyberbullying, highlighting its social, psychological, and legal implications. Effective prevention requires an interdisciplinary approach integrating individual, familial, educational, societal, and technological measures.*

Keywords: *Cyberbullying, Online harassment, Social media, Psychological impact, Prevention strategies, Digital safety, Modern society*

INTRODUCTION

Modern information and communication technologies have a profound impact on almost all aspects of human life. With the rapid development of the Internet and mobile technologies, people's online activities are expanding day by day. At the same time, social networks, chat platforms and other virtual communication tools have created new social phenomena among young people and adults. One of these phenomena is cyberbullying, that is, online threats, insults or acts of violence.

Cyberbullying is the process of intentionally harming an individual or group via the Internet, social networks, e-mail, messengers, online forums. This phenomenon has emerged as a digital alternative to traditional bullying (violence) at school or in the workplace. However, cyberbullying has its own unique features: it is characterized by factors such as anonymity, global reach and 24/7 continuity. Therefore, cyberbullying raises not only individual, but also social, psychological and even legal issues.

Cyberbullying is a global issue today. According to UNICEF and other international organizations, 30-40% of adolescents worldwide are threatened or bullied online. These figures indicate that it is associated with mental health problems, depression, anxiety and even suicide among young people. At the same time, adults and employees in the workplace can also suffer from cyberbullying, which negatively affects work productivity and the professional environment.

One of the factors that further increases the relevance of the article is the rapid growth of cyberbullying and the insufficient development of mechanisms for combating its consequences. Although many countries have legislative and psychological support systems, new forms of online violence are constantly emerging. Therefore, scientific research on the study and prevention of cyberbullying is of urgent importance.

Main part

The term cyberbullying is derived from the English word “cyberbullying”, which is composed of the words “cyber” (in a digital environment) and “bullying” (violence, threat). Cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying in the following aspects:

Anonymity and secrecy: On online platforms, cyberbullies are able to hide their identity, which makes them difficult to detect.

Global reach: Threats or insults can spread worldwide via the Internet.

Persistence: Online materials are stored for a long time, while the victim may be constantly exposed to them.

Wide audience: When cyberbullying occurs on social networks or in public forums, other users may witness or participate in it.

Cyberbullying takes many forms: humiliation, insults, spreading false information, revealing personal information, sending threatening or threatening messages, and other forms of psychological pressure. In this regard, it is considered a growing social problem in modern society.

Considering that cyberbullying is a pressing problem for modern society, its prevention, study of its psychological and social consequences are of great importance for scientific research. In this regard, the phenomenon of cyberbullying is being studied in depth not only in the fields of psychology, pedagogy and sociology, but also in the fields of law, information security and information technology.

Although the concept of cyberbullying is relatively new, its roots go back to traditional bullying phenomena. Historically, bullying - the process of using one's power or position to humiliate, insult or harm others - has existed for a very long time. Bullying has always existed in schools, workplaces or public settings, but with the development of information technology it has taken on a new form.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, with the rapid development of the Internet, new communication tools - e-mail, chat rooms, forums and social networks - became popular. During this period, psychologists and sociologists began to observe the phenomena of threats and insults in the online environment. In 1998, Linda M. Sharp and other researchers first used the term “cyberbullying” to distinguish it from traditional bullying.

The historical development of cyberbullying occurred in several technological stages:

Era of email and forums (late 1990s - early 2000s)

During this period, cyberbullying often took the form of anonymous messages, threatening emails, and insults in forums. Studies show that since cyberbullies often remained anonymous during this period, it was difficult to identify victims and take legal action.

Era of social networks (since 2004)

Social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, and VKontakte gave rise to new forms of cyberbullying. Users had the opportunity to spread insults, threats, or false information on their profiles, through messages, or in comments. During this period, cyberbullying began to become a public problem.

Era of mobile technologies and messengers (since 2010)

Mobile applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Instagram allowed cyberbullying to spread rapidly. At the same time, threats or blackmail through videos and photos have emerged. During this period, cyberbullying has increased its anonymity, global reach, and 24/7 availability.

The phenomenon of cyberbullying is developing as a global problem, not just in one country. According to research, cyberbullying is widespread among young people in the United States, Europe, and Asia. In 2007, UNESCO held the first international conference on cyberbullying and began to define measures against cyberbullies. During the same year, a number of countries adopted laws that made cyberbullying criminal and administratively punishable.

The psychological consequences of cyberbullying have also been widely studied in the late 2000s and 2010s. Studies have shown that there are increased cases of depression, anxiety, social isolation, and sometimes suicide among victims of cyberbullying. Therefore, scientific research on the study and prevention of cyberbullying has intensified.

Research on the phenomenon of cyberbullying has been actively studied by the global scientific community since the early 2000s. Researchers analyze this phenomenon from a psychological, sociological and legal perspective.

In their study, Patchin and Hinduja compare cyberbullying with traditional bullying. According to them, the main differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying are: anonymity, global reach, permanence and a wide audience. The results of the study show that depression and anxiety are more common among victims of cyberbullying than among victims of traditional bullying.

Slonje and Smith studied the impact of cyberbullying on the psychology of young people. Their research showed that adolescents who are exposed to cyberbullying experience high levels of social isolation, low self-esteem, academic failure, and depression. At the same time, scientists emphasize the importance of a social support system: with the help of parents, teachers, and peers, the negative consequences of cyberbullying can be reduced.

Ybarra and Mitchell's study analyzed various forms of threats and violence in the online environment. These studies show that cyberbullying is seen not only as an individual psychological problem, but also as a social problem. In this regard, it is urgent to prevent cyberbullying, develop legal and psychological measures against it.

The history of cyberbullying is not only associated with technological development. Social and cultural factors also influence its occurrence. For example:

Competition and social pressure among young people: The desire to show off and achieve popularity in the school and university environment increases cyberbullying.

Family environment and upbringing: In cases where psychological support in the family is insufficient, adolescents can become victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying.

Acceptance of norms of violence in society: Weak social norms and moral values lead to the spread of cyberbullying.

The most obvious danger of cyberbullying is its psychological impact. Studies show that depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and depression are widespread among victims of cyberbullying.

At the same time, a person who is a victim of cyberbullying tends to isolate himself and limit communication with peers. This has a negative impact on the development of social skills in the long term.

Cyberbullying also has a negative impact on society and the social environment. For example: Online violence and threats reduce trust between people in society, if legal measures are not sufficiently applied in cyberbullying incidents, a sense of social injustice increases, and the popularity of cyberbullying can lead to the acceptance of violence as normal among young people.

The emergence of cyberbullying as an urgent social problem creates the need to develop scientific and practical measures to prevent it. Research shows that effective prevention of cyberbullying requires the development of strategies at several levels: at the individual, family, school and community levels, as well as through the introduction of technological and legal mechanisms.

Individual strategies against cyberbullying are of fundamental importance for young people and adults. Users need to learn to protect their personal information, identify dangerous messages and avoid them. This is especially important for adolescents and young people, as they do not fully understand online anonymity and safety.

Victims need to have skills to protect themselves and maintain emotional stability. For example, stress management, using social support systems, and openly discussing problems are important.

Young people need to learn respect and empathy skills when communicating with peers. Research shows that young people with developed social skills are less likely to become victims of cyberbullying.

The family is one of the main social institutions in preventing cyberbullying. Parents should be able to monitor their children's online activities and protect them from dangerous platforms and messages. Children should be introduced to the dangers of the Internet, forms of cyberbullying, and knowledge about online ethics. At the same time, it is important to develop moral values, strengthen respect and empathy skills. If a child is a victim of cyberbullying, it is necessary for the family to refer the child to a professional psychologist. Research shows that family support helps maintain emotional stability and reduce negative consequences.

Schools and educational institutions play a central role in combating cyberbullying. Schools should introduce mandatory training modules on cyberbullying, online ethics and internet safety. A clear anti-cyberbullying policy and a system of penalties should be developed within the school. This system will allow cyberbullies to be identified and held accountable. It is important to provide students with psychological counseling, create peer support systems and provide opportunities to discuss problems.

A number of measures should be taken by society and governments to prevent cyberbullying on a global scale:

It is necessary to adopt effective laws against cyberbullying, clarify responsibility for online violence and develop judicial practices.

Inform the general public about the dangers of cyberbullying, educate young people and parents on online safety.

Identify cyberbullying on social networks and online platforms, introduce automated monitoring systems, and create mechanisms to filter threats and insults using artificial intelligence.

Given the global nature of cyberbullying, there is a need for international exchange of experiences, joint research, and the development of standards.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of cyberbullying is emerging as a pressing social, psychological and legal problem in modern society. Studies show that cyberbullying leads not only to individual psychological consequences, but also to negative social and economic outcomes. High levels of depression, anxiety, social isolation and academic failure are observed among victims, and in some cases there is a risk of suicide.

The historical development of cyberbullying is inextricably linked with technological changes, with the Internet, social networks, mobile applications and artificial intelligence platforms giving rise to new forms of cyberbullying. In this regard, scientists and researchers propose to distinguish cyberbullying from traditional bullying and to study its online features in depth.

Scientific studies show that an interdisciplinary approach is required for effective prevention of cyberbullying. This approach is implemented by combining psychological, pedagogical, technological and legal measures. At the individual level, users need to learn online safety, maintain psychological stability and develop social competencies. At the family level, parents can reduce the negative consequences of cyberbullying through monitoring, education and psychological support. In schools and educational institutions, clear rules against cyberbullying, information and educational programs, and psychological counseling systems should be introduced. At the community and government level, the spread of cyberbullying can be limited through improved legislation, social campaigns, technological monitoring and international cooperation.

In the future, the risk of cyberbullying may increase further with technological development. There is a possibility that new forms will emerge through virtual and augmented reality platforms, artificial intelligence and automated systems. Therefore, scientific research and practical measures should be regularly updated, and comprehensive strategies should be developed to protect young people and society from cyberbullying.

In conclusion, cyberbullying is a phenomenon that is considered not only an individual, but also a social and global problem, and its effective prevention and reduction of its consequences can be achieved through an interdisciplinary approach, combining scientific research and practical measures.

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