



18. Cyberbullying Online Harassment against Women

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Abstract

In India, the rise in internet usage and smartphone accessibility has increased the number of cybercrime cases. Women are particularly vulnerable because of gender discrimination, social stereotypes, and lack of digital awareness. Cyberbullying not only harms an individual's confidence and mental health but also creates fear and insecurity in society.

This survey research aims to study cyberbullying and online harassment against women, understand its causes and impacts, analyze public opinions, and suggest preventive measures to create a safer digital environment.

Keywords- Cyberbullying, Online Harassment, Women, *internet usage*

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of the internet and digital communication has transformed the way people interact with one another. Social networking platforms, messaging applications, online gaming, and discussion forums have become a major part of everyday life. While technology has created opportunities for communication and self-expression, it has also led to new forms of abuse and harassment. One of the most serious problems emerging in the digital era is cyberbullying and online harassment.

Women across the world face various forms of online abuse including threatening messages, trolling, cyberstalking, body shaming, character assassination, spreading of fake information, sharing of private images without consent, and sexual harassment. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, X (Twitter), WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Telegram are commonly used for such activities. Online harassment affects women emotionally, mentally, socially, and sometimes physically.

Cyberbullying is not limited to teenagers or students. Women of all age groups, professions, and backgrounds experience online abuse. Female journalists, influencers, students, activists, professionals, and even ordinary social media users often become targets of harassment. Many women avoid expressing opinions online due to fear of trolling and abuse.

2. Meaning of Cyberbullying and Online Harassment



Cyberbullying refers to the use of digital technologies to harass, threaten, humiliate, or target an individual repeatedly. It may occur through social media platforms, emails, text messages, gaming platforms, or online forums.

Online harassment refers to offensive, abusive, or threatening behavior carried out through digital communication channels. It can include unwanted messages, stalking, spreading rumors, sharing personal information, and sexual harassment.

Cyberbullying and online harassment differ from traditional bullying because they can happen anytime and reach a large audience quickly. Harmful content posted online can spread rapidly and remain accessible for a long time.

Examples of cyberbullying and online harassment against women include:

- Sending abusive or threatening messages
- Posting humiliating comments or memes
- Spreading false rumors online
- Sharing morphed or private images
- Cyberstalking and tracking online activities
- Sexual harassment through messages or calls
- Trolling women for their opinions or appearance
- Creating fake social media profiles
- Recording and sharing private conversations without consent

3. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this survey research are:

1. To understand the concept of cyberbullying and online harassment against women.
2. To identify the common forms of online harassment faced by women.
3. To study the causes behind cyberbullying.
4. To examine the emotional, psychological, and social impact on women.
5. To analyze awareness regarding cyber safety and legal protections.
6. To collect public opinions through a survey.
7. To suggest preventive measures for reducing online harassment.

4. Need and Significance of the Study

Cyberbullying and online harassment have become major social concerns in modern society. Women often face discrimination and abuse in online spaces, which affects their freedom of expression and participation in digital platforms.

The significance of this study includes:

- Understanding the seriousness of online harassment.
- Creating awareness about digital safety.



- Highlighting mental health issues caused by cyberbullying.
- Encouraging women to report cybercrime cases.
- Promoting responsible social media usage.
- Supporting stronger laws and policies.
- Helping educational institutions spread cyber awareness. This study is important because many women remain silent due to fear, shame, or lack of support. Research can help society understand the challenges faced by women online and encourage safer digital practices.

5. Research Methodology

Type of Research

The present study is based on survey research methodology.

Sources of Data

The study uses both primary and secondary data.

Primary Data

Primary data was collected through an online questionnaire distributed among women and social media users.

Secondary Data

Secondary data was collected from:

- Newspapers
- Journals
- Websites
- Research articles
- Government reports
- Books related to cybercrime and cyber safety

Sample Size

A sample of 100 respondents was selected for the survey.

Sampling Method

Convenience sampling method was used.

Tools for Data Collection

- Online survey questionnaire
- Google Forms
- Interviews and discussions

Area of Study

The study mainly focuses on women using social media and digital platforms.

6. Review of Literature

Several studies have examined the issue of cyberbullying and online harassment against women.



A study by the Pew Research Center found that women are more likely to experience severe forms of online harassment such as sexual harassment and stalking. Young women are especially vulnerable.

Research conducted in India has shown a significant rise in cybercrime cases against women. Online abuse often includes threats, fake profiles, revenge pornography, and blackmail.

Another study highlighted that many victims do not report online harassment because they fear social judgment and lack confidence in legal systems.

Studies also reveal that cyberbullying negatively affects mental health and can lead to anxiety, depression, stress, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. The literature suggests the need for stronger laws, cyber awareness programs, parental guidance, and stricter social media regulations.

7. Types of Cyberbullying Faced by Women

Women face various forms of cyberbullying and online harassment. Some common types include:

1. Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking refers to repeatedly monitoring or following someone online. Harassers may send constant messages, track activities, or threaten victims.

2. Trolling

Trolling involves posting offensive comments to provoke or humiliate someone publicly.

3. Body Shaming

Women are often criticized online for their appearance, skin color, body type, or clothing.

4. Fake Profiles

Some offenders create fake accounts using a woman's identity to spread false information or damage reputation.

5. Revenge Pornography

Private images or videos are shared online without consent to shame or blackmail women.

6. Sexual Harassment

Women frequently receive unwanted sexual comments, explicit images, or abusive messages.

7. Doxxing

Personal information such as phone numbers, addresses, or photos is leaked online without permission.

8. Online Threats

Victims may receive threats of violence, rape, or physical harm.

8. Causes of Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

Several factors contribute to cyberbullying and online harassment against women.

Gender Discrimination



Patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes encourage disrespectful behavior toward women online.

Anonymity on the Internet

The internet allows people to hide their identity, making them feel powerful and less accountable.

Lack of Cyber Awareness

Many users are unaware of online safety measures and privacy settings.

Desire for Attention

Some individuals harass others online to gain popularity or attention.

Weak Enforcement of Laws

In some cases, delayed legal action encourages offenders.

Misuse of Social Media

Easy access to digital platforms increases the risk of misuse and cybercrime.

9. Impact of Cyberbullying on Women

Cyberbullying affects women emotionally, mentally, socially, and professionally.

Emotional Impact

Victims may feel fear, sadness, anger, embarrassment, and humiliation.

Psychological Impact

Continuous harassment can lead to stress, anxiety, depression, trauma, and low self-esteem.

Social Impact

Women may avoid social interactions or stop using online platforms.

Professional Impact

Online harassment can damage careers, especially for journalists, influencers, and professionals.

Academic Impact

Students facing cyberbullying may lose concentration and academic performance may decline.

Physical Health Impact

Mental stress may lead to sleep disorders, headaches, and health problems.

10. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The survey responses were analyzed to understand public opinion regarding cyberbullying and online harassment against women.

Use of Social Media

Most respondents stated that they use social media regularly. This shows that digital platforms are a major part of modern communication.



Experience of Online Harassment

A large number of respondents reported witnessing or experiencing online harassment. This indicates that cyberbullying is common and widespread.

Common Forms of Harassment

The survey showed that trolling, sexual harassment, and body shaming are among the most common forms of abuse faced by women online.

Awareness of Cyber Laws

Many respondents were unaware of cyber laws and legal protections available in India. This reflects the need for awareness campaigns.

11. Findings

The major findings of the study are:

1. Cyberbullying and online harassment against women are increasing rapidly.
2. Social media platforms are commonly used for online abuse.
3. Young women are more vulnerable to cyber harassment.
4. Many victims suffer from stress, anxiety, and emotional trauma.
5. Lack of awareness prevents women from reporting cybercrime.
6. Internet anonymity encourages offensive behavior.
7. Existing laws are not always effectively implemented.
8. Awareness programs and digital education are necessary.

12. Conclusion

Cyberbullying and online harassment against women have become major challenges in the digital world. While technology has improved communication and connectivity, it has also created spaces for abuse and exploitation. Women often face trolling, threats, stalking, body shaming, and sexual harassment online, which affects their mental health, confidence, and social participation.

The survey findings show that cyber harassment is common and many women hesitate to report such incidents due to fear and lack of awareness. There is a strong need for digital education, stricter cyber laws, faster legal action, and responsible social media behavior.

Government authorities, educational institutions, families, and social media companies must work together to create a safer online environment for women. Awareness, support systems, and effective implementation of laws can help reduce cyberbullying and protect women in digital spaces.

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