

Situation of Cyberbullying in schools: A quantitative study

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Abstract

Cyberbullying occurs using technological device and communication devices through internet and it is the current issue with technological enhancement all over the world. This quantitative study aims to explore the perception of students about cyberbullying, situation, and policy applied by selected schools to counter cyberbullying. This study explores the situation of cyberbullying in six secondary level schools inside Kathmandu districts. Findings of the study reveals that all schools have access of internet and most of the students have mobile phone access. Majority of respondents are aware about the concern of password protection including online safety. However, knowledge on cyberbullying within the online world it limited. Normally, secondary level students are victim of cyberbullying through harassment done using nasty texts messages, videos, social media hacking, fake profiles, etc. One out of three respondents reflected their experience of cyberbullying and most other reported about the cyberbullying faced by their parents. School representative respondent shows their agreement with cyberbullying as a major problem in schools and noted their dissatisfaction towards having no IT policy to counter and prevent such situations. Only 50 percentage schools conduct awareness program in their school about cyberbullying and cybersecurity. Further this study finds out the use of CCTV surveillance system as a major tool to prevent cyberbullying in school. Major challenges leading to limited understanding of cyberbullying in students is due to the lack of parent's awareness and standard curriculum that prioritize cybersecurity. Overall, this study highlights the urgent need for comprehensive and proactive strategies to combat cyberbullying in Nepali schools. And it advocates for integrated educational approaches, robust policies, and enhanced awareness.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Situation, IT policy, Prevent

Introduction

The research entitled with “*Situation of Cyberbullying in School*” describes the current situation, prevention techniques apply by school, and student opinions about cyberbullying. Cyberbullying occurs using technological device and communication devices through internet. Cyberbullying is the current issue with technological enhancement all over the world. The advent of affordable, personal computers and widespread use of web in the 1990s marked a shift in human interaction. Mainly, teenagers are facing cyberbullying from their classmates or strangers while using group chats or private messages. The anonymity feature of Internet is making it possible for people to harass others without facing any consequences (Barkblog, 2019). States have started

passing anti-bullying laws in the wake of Columbine school shooting during 1999 (The Bark Team, 2017).

However, some policies include cyberbullying as offensive activities and other did not. When many teen children started doing suicides the concern towards cyberbullying was brought into the mainstream. During 2007 13-year-old children named Tine Meier committed her suicide due to the reason that her neighbor created a fake profile with name “Josh Evans” in Myspace (The Bark Team, 2017). This unethical activity has been done to harass her which led to her death situation.

Unknowingly Internet is becoming the part of our daily life, and children are also becoming the part of this growth. During 2001 around 17 million adults within the age between 12-17 has been estimated of using internet heavily (Lenhart, 2005; Pierce, 2009). It was estimated that around 97% youth are connected to Internet is today’s era (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). While this use is educationally valuable but social medias and online chats is becoming the way of committing cybercrimes (Lenhart, 2005). Teenagers are using Internet excessively to get connected with their friends, relatives and new ones (Gross, 2004). Due to the reason of having accessibility to get connected with new friends and stay touch with old one, children are using this in regular basis (Bargh et al., 2002).

Despite having benefits, this unlimited use also leads to some negative situations as well. The reason behind loneliness and increased depression of students can be the unlimited time they spent on internet (Nie & Erbring, 2000). And they spent lots of their time in online space then they can lose their contact with social context which can lead to personal connections and emotions. Such emotional changes in young people can make them more vulnerable to online harms which is now called as cyberbullying (Dennehy et al., 2020; Meneses-Balahibo, 2022). Cyberbullying is defined as the use of technologies to do unethical behavior that can be harmful to others. (Basesly, 2004). It can be done using online medium like websites, messaging, mobiles, e-mails, etc.

The actual nature of cyberbullying is not identified yet which leaves the blur region between bully and victims (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Beran & Li, 2005). Even though cyberbullying normally takes place outside the classroom or school but it can have direct impact on students learning. One study conducted on grade four to eight student reported around half students had been bullied online, over one third has been threatened, and many have received harmful messages (Wiseman, 2011). A recent study conducted in Bhaktapur, Nepal has also revealed that around 58% of children between age eight to twelve were exposed to cyber risk (The Himalayan Times, 2018).

When we evaluate current situation of Nepal, students access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been increased in very high speed. They have faced cyberbullying, game addiction, and inappropriate online interactions. In our country around 65% of population with 84% from urban and 60% from rural have mobile phone access (Dhungana, 2014; CBS, 2012). Further, 51% out of them use different social medias, 7% have computers and 3% have internet access as their home (Republica, 2023). This is growing very fast and this will continue in the future. Nepal government has developed ICT in education master plan 2013-17 with the different mission, vision, goals, and objectives. The mission of the ICT Master Plan is to bridge the digital divide through infrastructural development, professional human source development, and through creation of digital contents for awareness (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Literature review

Cyberbullying is the use of online medias or technological tools to do unethical behavior that can be harmful for others (Basesly, 2004). An educator's guide to cyberbullying and cyber threats (Willard, 2004). Cyberbullying can be done through many ways as it can take different shapes and even in many locations as well. The UNSW (2014) in Australia conducted survey to explore awareness of cyberbullying and the cyber law among young people. Only around two-thirds of the respondent during that survey understood that cyberbullying can be considered as an offensive activity under existing laws (UNSW Australia, 2014). Most of the young people on that survey declared their unawareness about the law of cyberbullying.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts multiple theoretical frameworks to understand cyberbullying among secondary schools' students in Kathmandu. Social Learning Theory serves as the primary theoretical root for this study. It views cyberbullying as fundamentally learned behavior that can be acquired through observation, imitation and reinforcement (Barlett, 2023). Bandura's framework explains how students learn cyberbullying behaviors (Irmayanti et al., 2023). It can be done through observing parents, peers, media representations, and also by receiving positive and negative reinforcement that shapes their future behavior (Barlett, 2024).

Further, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory was also used for theoretical grounding of this study. It provides structural framework to understand cyberbullying as a complex phenomenon. And these phenomena can be influenced by multiple environmental systems (Analisah & Indartono, 2018; Gradinariu, 2021). This theory aligns with the study's examination of school policies. It also explores family involvement, and community awareness as interconnected factors. All of which together affects the prevalence of cyberbullying.

General Strain Theory further complements the theoretical frameworks explored earlier (Carter, 2024). It helps explain how academic pressures, social rejection, and failures to achieve goal can lead to the situation of cyberbullying (Li & Peng, 2022). This theory reflects the situation that the student who experience strain are likely to engage in cyberbullying activities. They might alleviate negative emotions or regain control (Al-Badayneh et al., 2024).

The integration those theories identify cyberbullying as the combination of personal learning, environmental system, and stressful situations (Patel & Quan-Haase, 2022). This combination guides understanding of how students learnt cyberbullying.

Methodology

This study follows a quantitative research methodology to understand the perception of students on cyberbullying. Selection of quantitative research helps find trends and patterns on the perception of cyberbullying and later that collected numerical data can be represented through graphs and charts (Ghanad, 2023). The study mainly focuses on "Situation of cyberbullying in school" with the source of questionnaire fillip by grade 11 and 12 students and school representative. The study carried out in Kathmandu district only. The research was carried out from six different schools of Kathmandu district. Purposive sampling was employed to select the research site for this study, which were six schools inside Kathmandu district. The respondents were students of class 11 and 12 students and representative of school. Primary data for this study were collected through closed questionnaire. Secondary data were also collected if there is any policy implemented in selected institution related to cyberbullying. And sampling is the procedure to select actual respondent from total population. All schools inside Kathmandu district can be my research site and all secondary students and principal inside those schools were the participant of

my study. Out of many schools in Kathmandu only six were selected using nonprobability's purposive sampling for this study. stratified sampling was used to select those schools. Among those school grade 11 and 12 students were selected based on active participation and each school principal were selected with purposive sampling method.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study provide a detailed overview of the situation of cyberbullying in secondary schools within Kathmandu district. It covers student access to technology, their awareness, experiences, reporting behaviors and measures taken by schools.

Student Access to Technology and Awareness of Mobile phone Access

This study reveals that the majority of students have access to mobile phones (89%). Only 11% students reported as having no access to mobile phones. This high rate of mobile access during secondary level education reflects the chance of being communicated with friends and others. They get chance to communicate often without significant restriction from family or school (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Students access to mobile technology

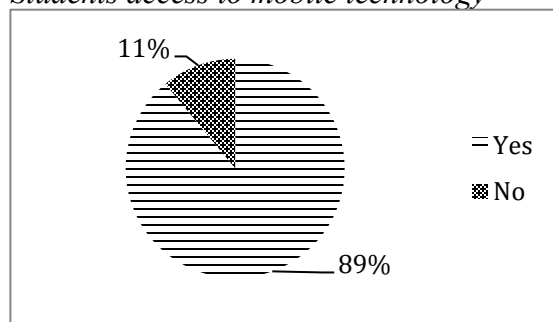
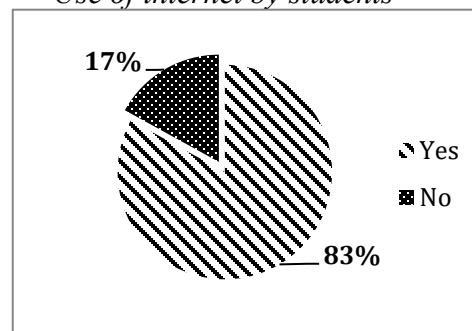


Figure 2

Use of internet by students



Internet Use

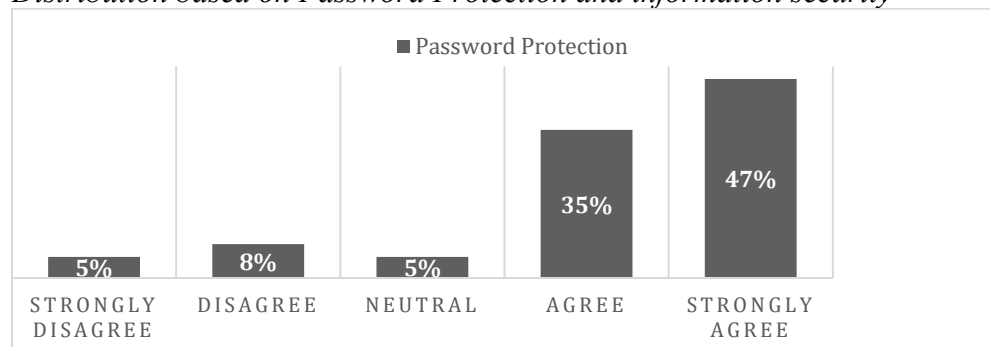
Internet usage is also widespread among the respondents. Only 17% students have no access to internet based on their response. However, most of the student with 83% ration have reported having access to internet at their home and school (Figure 2). This rate indicates a high potential for exposure to online activities. and activities conducted through online platforms leads to the situation of cyberbullying, in both environments.

Password Protection and Information Security

Questions related to password protection and information security awareness were also employed during survey. And large number of populations demonstrated positive attitude towards this. Total 47% respondents reflected their strong agreement with statement and 35% with moderate agreement. Their response shows the positive response towards importance of password protection, use of strong passwords, and avoiding shared passwords. Very small segment of students around 13% presented their disagreement and 5% remained neutral. This finding reflects that even though majority are aware about the security aspects but there are still some students who have not implemented security practices.

Figure 3

Distribution based on Password Protection and information security

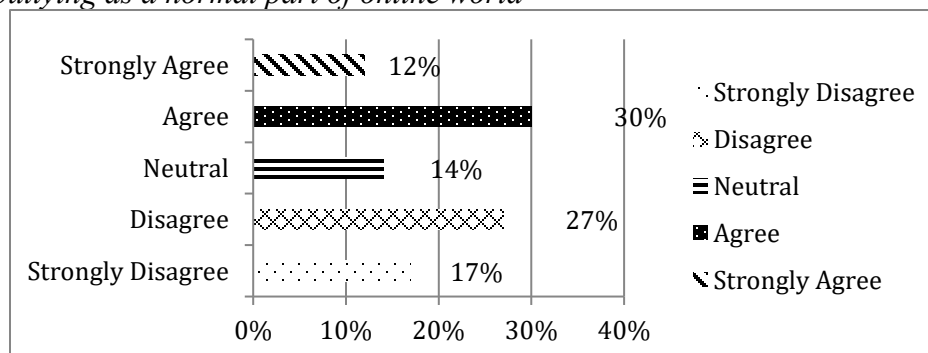


Perception of Cyberbullying as a Normal Part of the Online World

Students have further presented diverse viewpoint on whether cyberbullying is a normal part of online world or not. Total 42% (12% strongly agreed, 30% agreed) considered it as a normal aspect of online interaction. While a combined 44% (17% strongly disagreed, 27% disagreed) believe it is not the normal part of online world. And 14% has remained neutral. This diversity of opinion indicates varied understanding. Some students accept cyberbullying as part of digital space whereas others not.

Figure 4

Cyberbullying as a normal part of online world

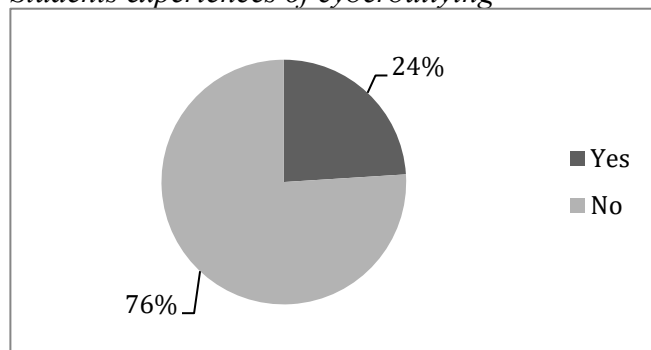


Experiences of Cyberbullying Among Students

The study found that 24% of respondents had received harassing, mean, or nasty text messages, including potentially sexually suggestive "sexting" messages, via cell phones or other telecommunication devices. The vast majority, 76%, had not. Among those who received such messages, friends (22 respondents) and classmates (21 respondents) were identified as the primary perpetrators. A smaller number of incidents involved neighbours (2 respondents), other individuals (6 respondents), and notably, one respondent reported receiving such messages from a school teacher (Figure 5).

Unauthorized Sharing of Videos or Photos

A smaller but significant percentage of students has reported that their photos or videos has been shared without permission. Total 11.50% students experience the embarrassing or degrading pictures or videos of them shared without permission. Their content was shared with others which embarrassment. The majority, 84.50%, had not experienced this.

Figure 5*Students experiences of cyberbullying****Victimization Through social media***

Among the 38 respondents who identified as victims of cyberbullying through social media, Facebook was the most common platform (34 respondents). Further, 10 respondents were through Instagram, and 5 thorough Viber and other social medias. Further, 4 respondents were victim from WhatsApp, 3 were of Snapchat and Twitter had 2 victims. This highlights the social media Facebook as the predominant platform for cyberbullying.

Table 1*Victimization Through social media*

Victim of cyberbullying	Social medias						
	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	WhatsApp	Snapchat	Viber	Other
Yes	34	10	2	4	3	5	5
No	4	28	36	34	35	33	33
Total	38	38	38	38	38	38	38

Creation of Fake Profiles

13% of students reported that someone had created their fake social media profile. Their photos, name, location, and other identifying information's were used to create Facebook, Twitter or Instagram profiles. The majority, 87%, had not experienced this situation. There is a gender disparity in experience of this situation. Male students (16) were having more fake accounts than that of female (7). It reflects the chance of male students being highly affected by cyberbullying.

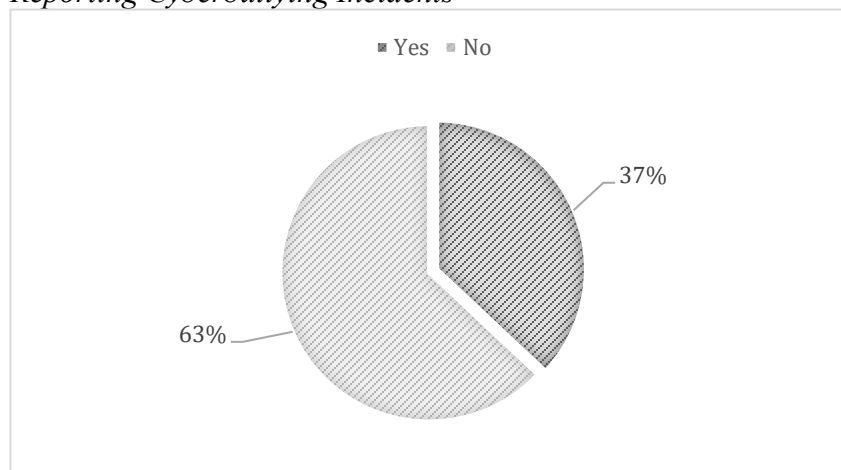
Unauthorized Access to Social Media Accounts

16% of respondents stated that someone had logged into their social media accounts without permission. And they have even sent messages, pictures, or videos to others. The large majority, 84%, had not experienced unauthorized access.

Reporting Cyberbullying Incidents

When faced with cyberbullying, only 37% of students reported the incidents. While the majority of students (63%) did not report it. Among those who did report (65 respondents in total), parents were the most frequently chosen confidants (33 respondents). This is further followed by class teachers (28 respondents) and principals (21 respondents). A smaller number reported to other individuals (9 respondents), and only one respondent has reported to the police. This indicates a strong preference for reporting to close adults and school authorities over law enforcement (Figure 6).

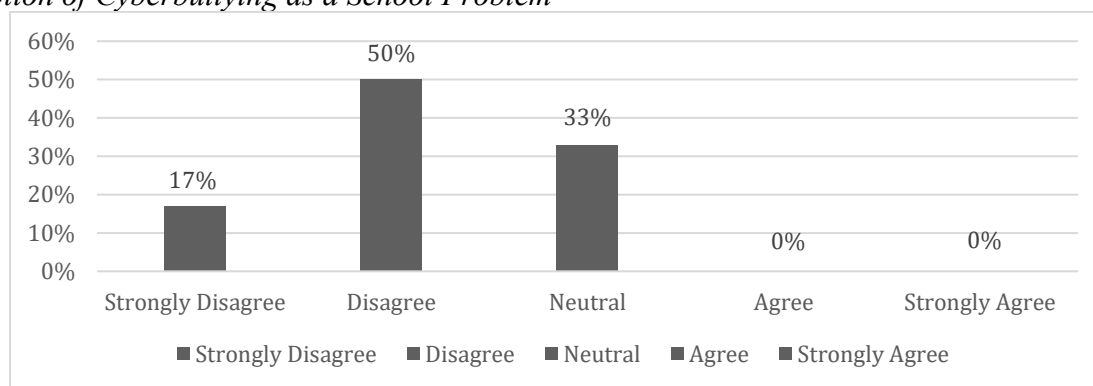
Figure 6
Reporting Cyberbullying Incidents



Prevention Technique Applied and Policy Related to Cyberbullying

All six surveyed schools (100%) in the Kathmandu district reported having internet access. Most of the school representatives generally agreed that cyberbullying as a major problem in schools. However, the student survey data on this specific question (Cyberbullying is the problem at school) shows a different distribution of student's opinions. Half of the respondents 67% of respondents were disagreed (50% disagree and 17% strongly disagree) on this statement as they don't think cyberbullying as a problem in school. And 33% have reflected their neutral response to that statement. Very few students show agreement towards cyberbullying as a problem at school based on the phrasing of this specific question. This suggests a potential disconnection between the administrations and student's perception.

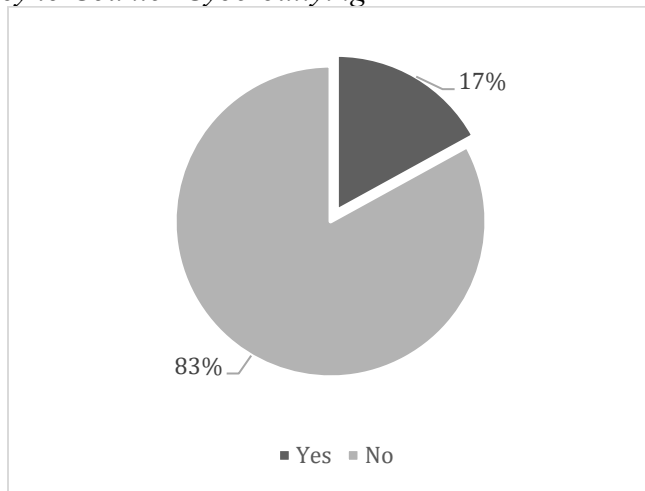
Figure 7
Perception of Cyberbullying as a School Problem



Lack of IT policies regarding cyberbullying is another major challenge in educational organizations. Total 83% schools do not have specific IT policy to counter cyberbullying. And only 17% have such policies implemented to minimize cyberbullying. School representative has expressed their dissatisfaction regarding this policy gap on cyberbullying.

Figure 8

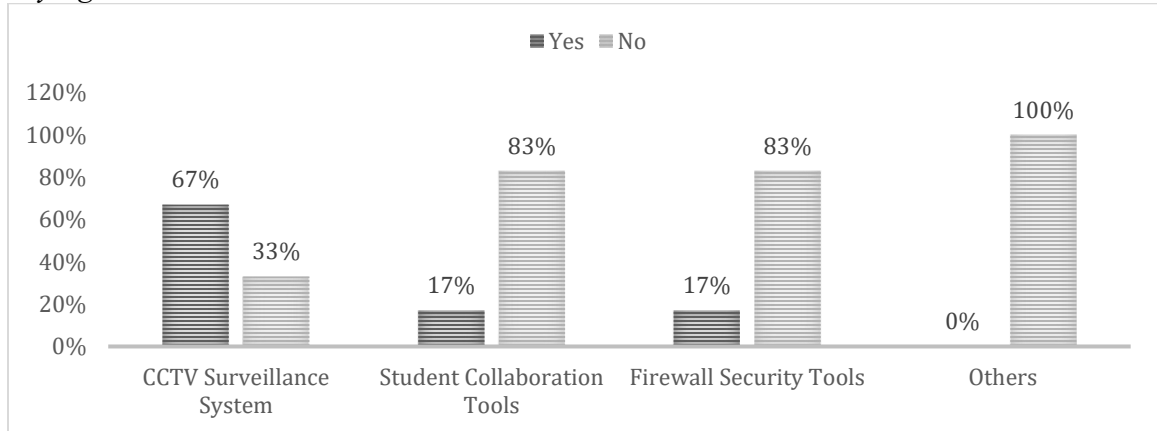
IT Policy to Counter Cyberbullying



Only 50% of the schools conduct awareness programs about cyberbullying and cybersecurity. Frequency is also limited among them as they conduct programs only 1-5 times. However, other 50% schools do not even conduct such programs. It highlights the gap is necessary effort to be taken place by educational institutions.

Figure 9

Cyberbullying Prevention Tools



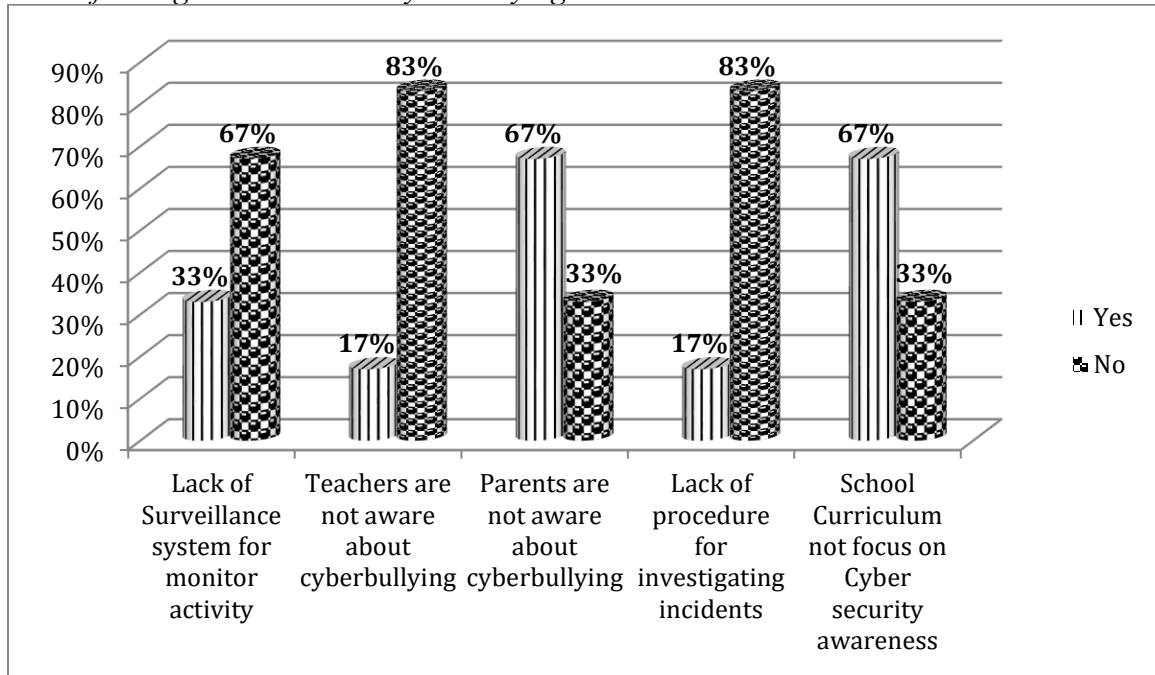
Further, the CCTV has been found as a major tool utilized for prevention of cyberbullying. It has been implemented by 67% of schools. Beyond that 17% schools utilizes collaboration tools and firewall security tools. Other tools were not reported as being used. This indicates a heavy reliance on a surveillance-based approach over more interactive or technical solutions.

Conditions Reflecting Limitations in Cyberbullying Prevention

This study has identified several aspects as the factor hindering the prevention of cyberbullying in schools. Lack of parental awareness and school curriculum was highlighted as the major challenges. This study demands the school curriculum which prioritize cybersecurity awareness. Total 67% of respondents cited both of these as major challenges. Further, 33% of respondents indicated a lack of surveillance systems for monitoring student and teacher activity.

This has been highlighted as another major barrier in prevention of cyberbullying. Finally, 17% teachers have responded as their unawareness of cyberbullying. This finding reflects external factors like parental engagement and curriculum design as major factor hindering prevention efforts.

Figure 10
Conditions Reflecting Limitations in Cyberbullying Prevention



Discussions

The findings of this study help understanding nature of cyberbullying in secondary school in Kathmandu district. It explores the area that requires targeted interventions. The extensive use of mobile phones (89%) and internet (83%) indicate the basic digital landscape that today's youth live in. Although this pervasive connectivity provides many educational, and social benefits to students, it also inevitably exposes them to a greater cyber risk including cyberbullying (Ma et al., 2024; Venkataraghavan, 2015). According to Hinduja & Patchin (2010) most of the students (98 to 96 %) show knowledge based on general password safety and online safety, with the real issue emerging as being "limited awareness of cyber bullying in the online environment". This discrepancy indicates a need for focused instruction that distinguishes between general online safety and the unique elements and risks of cyberbullying (Martin et al., 2022).

The students' experiences match the world-wide prevalence of cyberbullying. The results show that students in secondary level are suffering from different types of cyberbullying such as receiving mean text messages, videos, hacking of social media, and fake profiles (Suraseth & Koraneekij, 2024). The role of friends and peers as the most frequent source of the harassing text messages is of specific concern. This suggests that it is not just 'anonymous strangers' children have to worry about when it comes to cyberbullying but the people they establish and maintain friendships and relations with, and it is not the underclass that is disproportionately affected. The

finding that more males than females reported that they or someone else had created fake profiles indicates that certain types of cyberbullying might be more likely to target one gender over the other, similar to more general research on gender and cyberbullying victimization (Hanani & Piskin, 2020). That this is the case supports the centrality of Facebook as the predominant site of victimization not just due to its popularity but also because, like others before us, we suggest that it is a primary space where online social activity, and ultimately conflict, plays out and is central to how young people understand their online social worlds (Bularca et al., 2024).

One important discovery is the high proportion (63%) of students who did not report being cyberbullied. This is consistent with other research demonstrating that victims rarely report and presents a daunting challenge for intervention (Kumar & Goldstein, 2020). The causes of this reluctance are likely several, such as distrust over adult interference, fear of retaliation, or the belief that cyberbullying is “normal” or cannot be stopped in any case. The preference to report to parents and class teachers, rather than principals or police indicates the need to establish trusting, supportive relationships between students and this frontline support. If it is believed that parents and teachers are accessible and can offer assistance, the reporting rates may be higher.

At the institutional level, though the school systems are identified as accounting for cyberbullying a serious issue, the examination indicates that they are far behind readiness wise to deal with cyberbullying. Most schools (83%) do not have a dedicated IT policy to help protect students from cyberbullying. This lack of policy leaves a void of an official policy on identification, intervention and discipline and therefore no official framework upon which to base an appropriate response to the incidents (Hall, 2018). And, half of the schools only hold occasional cyberbullying and cybersecurity awareness programs at best people (Duman & Yilmaz, 2021). This severely constrains proactive educational efforts for students to develop an understanding about cyberbullying, internet safety practices, and places to go to for help opportunities.

The overwhelming use of CCTV surveillance systems as the pre-eminent prevention with the majority of schools (67%) was in contrast to the proactive recommended educational approach prevalent amongst campus-based schools in cyberbullying. CCTV might provide a deterrent for physical bullying and evidence of certain incidents, but cyberbullying, which is more complex, often subtler, and extends beyond the school boundaries, is much more difficult to deal with via CCTV (Adrijana, 2024). The fundamental issue contributing to lack of cognizance in students is the absence of parental awareness and the absence of standard curriculum emphasizing cybersecurity (Uludaşdemir & Küçük, 2024). These systemic problems highlight that working within schools may not be adequate and a comprehensive strategy to engage curriculum change with strong parent education is needed. That so few teachers (33% provide reminders regularly) remind students about online safety, and so few schools provide educational material for students and their parents point to particular areas where the school environment could become more supportive and informed (Martin et al., 2022).

For a meaningful response to online bullying, these results, echo its final comments, suggest that prevention is more necessary than punishment (Yurdakul & Ayhan, 2022). This requires a school environment where cyber bullying is absolutely unacceptable. And, it is not tolerated by school leaders, teachers and other staff. Assemblies, talks, anti-cyberbullying posters, and teachers being visible are all things that add to that climate. With incidents being reported prompt investigation is key and the knowledge of discipline and formalised processes is there to support. Intervention programmes cannot be about punishing people only (Kumar & Goldstein, 2020). As there needs to be a counselling for both the victims, and the perpetrators. Ultimately,

the objective of this study is to educate all involved, from students and parents to teachers and the entire community. It guides about what cyber bullying is, how it is executed and the depths of its effects. Also, communication of school policies and pathways to report cyberbullying is important. This enables victims to identify to whom and where to go for help.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal the critical gaps in cyberbullying prevention and response mechanisms in secondary schools of Kathmandu districts. Despite the widespread digital connectivity one quarter students experienced cyberbullying. And that was mainly through Facebook with their own friends rather than anonymous. The most of the alarming finding is that most of the victims around 63% never report incidents. This creates an invisible crisis. That student who brings courage to report the bullying they face then most of them choose parents and class teachers. But some student presented their perception about trust deficits in institutional responses.

This study the found the inadequate preparation on cyberbullying for students in school. 83% percentage of schools lack dedicated IT policies on cyberbullying. And 50% lacks hosting awareness program on cyberbullying but very few sessions in a year. Most of the schools (67%) rely on CCTV surveillance only for prevention of unusual activity. However, cyberbullying is the of digital nature that extends beyond physical premises. Few teachers form selected schools (33%) regularly provide online safety reminders. Also, this study highlights inadequate parent awareness and lack of curriculum focus as major issue.

Overall, the findings of this study identify school climate as major part that can enhance the confidence of cyberbullying victims. Collaboration between educational stakeholders and parents is essential to foster such environment. Schools should implement awareness programs and integrate cyberbullying education into curriculum. Also, schools can convey that cyberbullying is unacceptable through assemblies and classroom activities. Education about cyberbullying for students, parents, teachers, and the community is the key. Strong policies and counselling services for both victims and cyberbullies is vital for effective response.

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