

Patterns of Digital Misconduct: A Survey of Cyberbullying Behaviors in a High School Setting

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Abstract

This study examined the patterns of cyberbullying among high-school students using a quantitative, questionnaire-based survey design. Conducted at Geetanjali Secondary Higher School/College, the study targeted students aged 18 to 20 years, with a total of 201 respondents participating voluntarily through a Google Form questionnaire. The findings revealed that while the majority of students did not engage in direct cyberbullying behaviors, a significant minority admitted to various forms of online misconduct. For instance, 7% of respondents reported often stealing personal information, while 10.5% admitted to frequently stealing computer nicknames. Similarly, 7.5% reported always threatening others online, and 9.5% sometimes insulted peers in online forums. Subtler behaviors such as exclusion blocking or removing comments were reported by 13.4% of respondents, while 9% acknowledged sometimes sharing private conversations without consent. Mocking others' online comments was also relatively common, with 14.9% admitting to doing so sometimes. Severe behaviors such as sending threatening emails (11.5% sometimes) and stealing email access (10.6% rarely) were less frequent but still present. Overall, the results suggest that while cyberbullying is not a dominant practice among the surveyed students, a considerable portion of participants engage in harmful online behaviors at varying levels.

Keywords: cyberbullying, Online, Patterns, Students

Introduction

In an era dominated by digital connectivity, students access social platforms, instant messaging, and online forums virtually around the clock. Although such technologies offer unprecedented avenues for learning and socialization, they also facilitate new forms of aggression collectively known as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying refers to willful and repeated harm inflicted through digital devices, including computers, smartphones, and tablets (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can be continuous, anonymous, and pervasive, reaching victims regardless of time or place. The online disinhibition effect, where anonymity and asynchronous communication reduce empathy and accountability, further compounds the risk of mean or hurtful messages being shared without restraint (Suler, 2004).

Globally, the prevalence of cyberbullying varies widely. Comprehensive reviews report victimization rates among children and adolescents ranging from approximately 14% to 58%, with perpetration rates ranging from 6% to 46% (Kowalski et al., 2014). Recent cross-sectional investigations flesh out these ranges with more specific data. In Pokhara, Nepal, high-school adolescents (aged 16–19) showed a 30-day prevalence of 14.4% for cyberbullying and 19.8% for cyber-victimisation, with posting mean or hurtful comments online being the most common form (Sharma et al., 2024). Similarly, in Gurugram, India, 28.2% of adolescents (15–19 years) reported being cyberbullied at least once in their lifetime, with posting hurtful pictures (31.9%) and comments (24.2%) being predominant (Sankhla et al., 2024). Demographic and psychosocial factors also shape these patterns. For instance, males in Pokhara had significantly higher odds of both cyberbullying and cyber-victimisation compared to females (Sharma et al., 2023). In Gurugram, attending college, depression, and tobacco use were significantly associated with cyberbullying risk (Sankhla et al., 2024). Across contexts, risk factors include frequent social media use, poor mental health, urban environments, and impaired family or school relationships (Kowalski et al., 2014).

Consequences of cyberbullying extend well beyond momentary emotional distress. Internationally, cyberbullying has been linked to a range of adverse outcomes, including anxiety, depression, self-harm, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A recent U.S. study reported that over half of cyberbullied adolescents exhibited PTSD symptoms, regardless of the bullying type (Shetgiri et al., 2025). In Nepal, mental health experts have observed increasing depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation among youth subjected to persistent online abuse (Sharma, 2025). In particular, understanding local patterns is critical for developing trauma-sensitive, culturally appropriate strategies to protect student well-being and foster safer digital environments.

Research Methodology

A quantitative, questionnaire-based survey with a descriptive research design was employed to examine cyberbullying among high-school students. The study was conducted at Geetanjali Secondary Higher School/College, where the target population comprised students aged 18 to 20 years. A convenience sampling technique was used to recruit participants during regular

study hours. A total of 201 students participated in the study, most of whom were between the ages of 18 and 20. Participation was voluntary and free from coercion.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The instrument consisted of a demographic section and 20 items assessing experiences and perceptions related to cyberbullying. The Google Form link was shared with eligible students, who completed the questionnaire individually on their own devices. The responses were exported to SPSS, where descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic characteristics and cyberbullying-related responses. Informed consent was obtained electronically, and participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Although the study provided useful insights, the use of convenience sampling at a single institution may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Results

Demographic Analysis

The above table shows the total number of the gender and religious who participated on the study.

Table 1: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	101	50.2	50.2	50.2
Female	99	49.3	49.3	99.5
Other	1	0.5	0.5	100.0
Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 presents the gender distribution of the respondents. Out of the total 201 participants, 101 (50.2%) were male and 99 (49.3%) were female, while 1 respondent (0.5%) identified as other. This shows that the sample is almost evenly split between male and female participants, with only a very small proportion identifying outside the binary categories. The balanced representation of genders helps ensure that the findings reflect perspectives from both male and female respondents fairly.

Table 2: Religious

Religion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Buddhism	81	40.3	40.3	40.3
Christianity	12	6.0	6.0	46.3
Hinduism	86	42.8	42.8	89.1
Islam	21	10.4	10.4	99.5
Other	1	0.5	0.5	100.0
Total	201	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 presents the religious background of the respondents. Out of the total 201 participants, the largest group was Hinduism with 86 respondents (42.8%), followed by Buddhism with 81 respondents (40.3%). Smaller groups included Islam with 21 respondents (10.4%), Christianity with 12 respondents (6.0%), and Other religions with 1 respondent (0.5%). This distribution

shows that the sample was predominantly Hindu and Buddhist, together making up more than four-fifths of the respondents, while Islam, Christianity, and other religions were represented by smaller proportions.

Cyber bullying Inventory

Table: 3

Stealing of personal information from computer (like files, email, pictures, messages or Facebook info)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	6	3.0	3.0	3.0
	Never	163	81.1	81.5	84.5
	Often	14	7.0	7.0	91.5
	Sometimes	8	4.0	4.0	95.5
	Rarely	9	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		

Above table presents the responses related to stealing personal information from computers such as files, emails, pictures, messages, or Facebook details. Out of 201 participants, 200 provided valid responses. The majority, 163 respondents (81.1%), reported that they had never engaged in this behavior. However, a small proportion admitted to such actions, with 14 respondents (7.0%) reporting that they often did so, 9 respondents (4.5%) saying rarely, 8 respondents (4.0%) sometimes, and 6 respondents (3.0%) admitting to always stealing personal information. These results indicate that while cyberbullying through stealing personal data is not common among the respondents, a notable minority still engage in such harmful activities.

Table: 4

Stealing of computer nicknames or screen names				
Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	2	1.0	1.0	1.0
Never	156	77.6	78.0	79.0
Often	21	10.4	10.5	89.5
Sometimes	11	5.5	5.5	95.0
Rarely	10	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	200	99.5	100.0	

The table presents the responses regarding stealing computer nicknames or screen names. Out of 201 participants, the majority, 156 respondents (77.6%), reported that they had never engaged in this behavior. A smaller proportion admitted to doing it, with 21 respondents (10.4%) indicating that they often stole nicknames, 11 respondents (5.5%) sometimes, 10 respondents (5.0%) rarely, and only 2 respondents (1.0%) always engaging in this activity. 1 respondents miss the question to response. These results suggest that while most students do

not participate in stealing computer nicknames, a small minority occasionally or frequently engage in this type of cyberbullying behavior.

Table: 5

Threatening in online forums (like chat rooms ,Facebook, twitter)				
Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	13	6.5	6.5	6.5
Never	143	71.1	71.5	78.0
Often	15	7.5	7.5	85.5
Sometimes	16	8.0	8.0	93.5
Rarely	13	6.5	6.5	100.0
Total	200	99.5	100.0	

This table summarizes students' responses regarding threatening behavior in online forums such as chat rooms, Facebook, or Twitter. The majority of respondents, 143 students (71.1%), reported that they had never threatened anyone online. However, a smaller proportion admitted to engaging in this behavior at varying frequencies: 16 respondents (8.0%) sometimes, 15 respondents (7.5%) often, 13 respondents (6.5%) rarely, and 13 respondents (6.5%) always threatened others in online forums. 1 respondents miss the question to response. These findings suggest that while most students do not engage in online threatening behavior, a notable minority do, indicating that online forums can be a medium for cyberbullying among some students.

Table: 6

Insulting in online forums(like chat rooms, Facebook, twitter)				
Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	15	7.5	7.5	7.5
Never	135	67.2	67.5	75.0
Often	17	8.5	8.5	83.5
Sometimes	19	9.5	9.5	93.0
Rarely	14	7.0	7.0	100.0
Total	200	99.5	100.0	

This table presents students' responses regarding insulting others in online forums, including chat rooms, Facebook, and Twitter. Most respondents, 135 students (67.2%), reported that they had never insulted others online. A smaller portion admitted to engaging in this behavior, with 19 respondents (9.5%) sometimes, 17 respondents (8.5%) often, 14 respondents (7.0%) rarely, and 15 respondents (7.5%) always insulting others online. 1 respondents miss the question to response. These results indicate that while the majority of students refrain from insulting behavior in online forums, a noticeable minority still participate in such actions, reflecting the presence of cyberbullying through verbal harassment.

Table: 7

Excluding in online forums by blocking others comments or removing				
Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	13	6.5	6.5	6.5
Never	131	65.2	65.5	72.0
Often	16	8.0	8.0	80.0
Sometimes	27	13.4	13.5	93.5
Rarely	13	6.5	6.5	100.0
Total	200	99.5	100.0	

This table shows students' behavior regarding excluding others in online forums, such as blocking comments or removing participants. The majority, 131 students (65.2%), reported that they had never excluded others, while smaller proportions admitted to doing so at different frequencies: 27 respondents (13.4%) sometimes, 16 respondents (8.0%) often, 13 respondents (6.5%) rarely, and 13 respondents (6.5%) always. 1 respondents miss the question to response. These findings suggest that although most students do not engage in exclusionary practices online, a significant minority occasionally or frequently use blocking or comment removal, indicating a subtle form of cyberbullying behavior.

Table: 8

Slandering by posting fake photos on the internet				
Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	1	0.5	0.5	0.5
Never	168	83.6	84.0	84.5
Often	7	3.5	3.5	88.0
Sometimes	7	3.5	3.5	91.5
Rarely	17	8.5	8.5	100.0
Total	200	99.5	100.0	

This table presents the responses regarding slandering others by posting fake photos online. The majority of respondents, 168 students (83.6%), reported that they had never engaged in this behavior. A small number of students admitted to slandering others: 7 respondents (3.5%) often, 7 respondents (3.5%) sometimes, 17 respondents (8.5%) rarely, and only 1 respondent (0.5%) always posted fake photos to slander someone. 1 respondents miss the question to response. These results indicate that while most students refrain from this form of cyberbullying, a minority occasionally or rarely use fake photos to harm others' reputations online.

Table: 9

Sharing private internet conversation without the others knowledge				
Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	1	0.5	0.5	0.5
Never	148	73.6	74.0	74.5
Often	8	4.0	4.0	78.5

Sometimes	18	9.0	9.0	87.5
Rarely	25	12.4	12.5	100.0
Total	200	99.5	100.0	

This table summarizes students' responses about sharing private internet conversations without the knowledge of others. The majority, 148 students (73.6%), reported that they had never shared private conversations, while smaller proportions admitted to doing so at different frequencies: 18 respondents (9.0%) sometimes, 25 respondents (12.4%) rarely, 8 respondents (4.0%) often, and 1 respondent (0.5%) always. 1 respondents miss the question to response. These findings indicate that although most students respect privacy online, a notable minority occasionally or frequently share private conversations without consent, reflecting a subtle form of cyber misconduct.

Table: 10

Making fun of comments in online forms such as facebook, instagram				
Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	13	6.5	6.5	6.5
Never	126	62.7	63.0	69.5
Often	13	6.5	6.5	76.0
Sometimes	30	14.9	15.0	91.0
Rarely	18	9.0	9.0	100.0
Total	200	99.5	100.0	

This table presents the responses regarding making fun of comments in online forums such as Facebook or Instagram. The majority of respondents, 126 students (62.7%), reported that they had never mocked others' comments. However, a smaller proportion admitted to doing so: 30 respondents (14.9%) sometimes, 18 respondents (9.0%) rarely, 13 respondents (6.5%) often, and 13 respondents (6.5%) always made fun of comments online. 1 respondents miss the question to response. These findings suggest that while most students avoid this form of online teasing, a notable minority engage in it at varying frequencies, indicating the presence of cyberbullying through ridicule and mockery in social media interactions.

Table: 11

Sending threatening or hurtful comments through email					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	7	3.5	3.5	3.5
	Never	152	75.6	76.0	79.5
	Often	6	3.0	3.0	82.5
	Sometimes	23	11.4	11.5	94.0
	Rarely	12	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	200	99.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.5		
Total		201	100.0		

The table presents the frequency distribution of respondents who reported sending threatening or hurtful comments through email. Out of a total of 201 respondents, 200 provided valid responses while 1 response was missing. The majority of respondents, 152 individuals (76.0% valid percent), indicated that they never send threatening or hurtful emails. A smaller portion reported occasional behavior: 23 respondents (11.5%) admitted to sending such emails sometimes, 12 respondents (6.0%) indicated they rarely do so, and 6 respondents (3.0%) reported doing so often. Only 7 respondents (3.5%) reported always sending threatening or hurtful comments via email. Overall, this suggests that the practice of sending harmful emails is relatively uncommon among the respondents.

Table: 12

Stealing email access (username & password)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	1	.5	.5	.5
	Never	163	81.1	82.3	82.8
	Often	5	2.5	2.5	85.4
	Sometimes	8	4.0	4.0	89.4
	Rarely	21	10.4	10.6	100.0
	Total	198	98.5	100.0	
Missing	System	3	1.5		
Total		201	100.0		

The table shows the frequency of respondents who reported stealing email access (username and password). Out of 201 respondents, 198 provided valid responses, while 3 responses (1.5%) were missing. A large majority, 163 respondents (82.3% valid percent), reported that they never steal email access. Smaller proportions admitted to occasional misconduct: 21 respondents (10.6%) indicated they rarely do so, 8 respondents (4.0%) reported doing it sometimes, and 5 respondents (2.5%) stated they often steal email access. Only 1 respondent (0.5%) reported always engaging in this behavior. Overall, stealing email access appears to be very uncommon among the respondents.

Discussion

The current study provides a detailed behavioral portrait of cyberbullying among Nepalese higher secondary students. The primary outcome is that while the majority of students do not cyberbully, there is still a stable and significant minority who engage in varying degrees of online misbehavior, from weak taunting and exclusion to more overt threats and invasions of privacy.

The most common behaviors—teasing words, excluding classmates, and calling names—are consistent with international research indicating that relational aggression and verbal harassment are common forms of cyberbullying (Johansson & Englund, 2021). These "subtler" behaviors might be perceived by perpetrators as less bad or even simply "joking," but they have very negative impacts on victims' psychological well-being (Wingate, 2017). The

pervasiveness of these behaviors implies that interventions have to extend beyond the mere cessation of extreme behavior (e.g., threats) to addressing the general online social interactions in which harm occurs.

The lower rates of more serious behavior like stealing email passwords or forwarding manipulated photos are in line with the findings of previous research (Sharma et al., 2024) and confirm that while these crimes are a serious concern, they are not the most common entry points into digital malfeasance for most teenagers.

Placed in the Nepalese context, these trends suggest the necessity for culturally responsive digital citizenship programs. The findings suggest that educational interventions will need to address specifically concepts of digital empathy, the impact of online bullying, the ethics of sharing intimate information, and the negative consequences of exclusion in online communities. Schools are uniquely positioned to integrate these themes into curriculum and pastoral care systems.

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of this study's findings include various factors. The one-institution sample has the result limited in generalizability. Cross-sectional design provides a snapshot-in-time image and cannot establish causality. Furthermore, self-reported assessments of sensitive topics are subject to social desirability bias and can lead to underreporting of behavior.

Follow-up studies would be well served to employ stratified random sampling across a range of schools and areas of Nepal to achieve the greatest level of representativeness. Longitudinal studies could also be effective at capturing the longitudinal trajectories of cyberbullying behavior. Addition of mixed methods—using qualitative interviews to study the motivations and situations involved in these behaviors—would add valuable depth to the quantitative patterns drawn here. Lastly, exploration of the victim's standpoint would provide greater insight into the impact of these behaviors.

Conclusion

This study concludes rampant cyberbullying is not the frequency among the surveyed Nepalese students but there is a worrying trend of sporadic digital misbehavior. The behavior is more verbal and relational in nature, i.e., insult, ridicule, and exclusion. This pinpoints a major area where intervention needs to take place: development of positive digital communication and empathy among youths. Rather than focusing solely on punitive measures against hard-core bullying, educators and legislators need to put more into preventive study classes that instill civic online behavior and digital citizenship from early school years. These subtler forms of misconduct can be worked on to contribute to safer and more inclusive cyberspace for every teen in Nepal.

Transparency: The author declares that this manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent. No important aspects of the study have been omitted, and any deviations from the planned study have been clarified. This research was conducted in accordance with all applicable rules of writing ethics.

Competing Interests: The author declares that there are no competing interests.

Author's Contribution: The author conceived the study, designed the methodology, conducted the research, performed the analysis, and prepared the manuscript. The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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