

## A Review of the Characteristics of Cyberbullying and Cyber Sexual Harassment and the Challenges for Implementing Legal Strategies for their Prevention

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The increased usage of digital platforms for communication and networking, particularly after the pandemic has caused concern about exposure to bullying and sexual harassment, particularly among young children and adolescents. Cyberbullying (CB) and cyber sexual harassment (CSH), although considered less harmful by many, may cause graver psychological manifestations than their physical forms, due to their potential for wider reach, easier access to private and sensitive information, ability to conceal perpetrator identity and continuous exposure of the victim to the harmful acts. Among the various characteristics, there were differences between age groups and gender, as well as varied psychological and behavioral features among victims and perpetrators which included low self-esteem, low academic performance and interestingly, some victims who themselves, later engage in perpetrating CB on others.

The strategies for the prevention of CB and CSH are similar to that of the traditional forms, which predominantly include raising awareness among students, teachers and parents. This article reviews the characteristics of CB and CSH and discusses the limitations in existing laws and statutes in combating CB and CSH while highlighting the need for improving the policies and guidelines on CB and CSH among educational institutions and workplaces.

**Keywords:** Adolescent psychology; technology facilitated sexual violence; gender-based violence; cybervictimisation experiences.

### Introduction

Cyberbullying (CB) and cyber sexual harassment (CSH) are regarded as negative effects of the advancement of social media and social networking, where people misuse the online communication platforms to harass another. These have become major problems in society particularly among the younger generations and many studies have been done to investigate their prevalence, correlations, individual and organizational impact and methods of prevention.

While bullying continues to be a widespread problem affecting more than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of adolescents (Moore *et al*, 2017), cyberbullying (CB), which is a term that became popular around the early 2000s, reflects the expansion of this problem in proportion to the growth of electronic modes of communication causing intense emotional impact including deterioration of interpersonal relationships, academic performance and self-worth (Sourander *et al*, 2010; Esquivel *et al*, 2023). One notable feature that sets cyberbullying apart from traditional bullying is the role that technology plays in its implementation (Amalina *et al*, 2022). Similarly, while sexual harassment has been a persistent issue for quite a long time in society, cyber sexual harassment (CSH) has created a new dimension of violence, particularly against women, which has a much broader scope and impact (Reed *et al*, 2019). The commoner scenarios being females, usually adolescents, pressurised into sharing intimate or sexual images, receiving unwanted messages or videos of sexual nature and online solicitation of sexual activity (Salazar *et al*, 2023). In general, CB and CSH have been considered as two separate phenomena

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although CSH could also be considered as a subset of CB, given that there is a great degree of overlap in the modus operandi of the perpetrators to target and harass their victims (Ehman & Gross., 2019). CSH differs from CB mainly in the thematic elements of the harassment, the gender distributions among perpetrators and victims, as well as the psychological and behavioral consequences (Sanchez-Jimenez *et al*, 2023). However, even within CSH there exist several distinctly different phenomena and depending on the definition used to measure CSH the prevalence has been found to vary widely (Patel & Roesch, 2020; Snaychuck & O'Neill, 2020).

After the COVID-19 pandemic, many people who had never used social media previously began to do so, and studies have shown an increased risk of exposure to CB and CSH during the pandemic (Barlett *et al*, 2021). Yet, the level of awareness on CB and CSH and more importantly, strategies for prevention, are still inadequate, especially among young adults who engage in frequent social networking (Kavuk-Kalender & Keser, 2018). Most interventions involve raising awareness among parents, teachers, students and health professionals by building ideas or strategies and developing appropriate institutional policies and incident reporting frameworks (Chisholm, 2014; Patchin & Hinduja, 2012; Espelage & Hong, 2017). Salmivalli *et al*, (2011) found that interventions targeting traditional bullying also reduced the incidence of cyberbullying. However, given the alarming rise in CB and CSH, there is pressure on governing bodies to enact legislative strategies to mitigate the problem (Hazelwood & Koon-Magnin, 2013; Yang & Grinshteyn, 2016). Although several new laws have been introduced to criminalise

harassing online behavior, their impact in reducing the prevalence of CB and CSH is still unclear (Yang & Grinshteyn, 2016; El Asam & Samara, 2016).

Currently, most of the prosecutions against CB and CSH are carried out through other acts related to malicious communication, obscene publications or cyber misuse (El Asam & Samara, 2016). Many argue that legal provisions would only be an effective deterrent if such laws were to criminalise CB and CSH specifically (El Asam & Samara, 2016; D'Souza *et al*, 2021; Adams 2021). When drafting such reforms or institutional workplace policies and regulations, the emphasis on CB and CSH need to be clearer and more specific. This would require a clearer understanding of the definitions, victim and perpetrator profiles and the psychosocial consequences of CB and CSH (D'Souza *et al*, 2021; Kaur *et al*, 2021). Hence, this review was conducted with the aim of collating published information on the different aspects of CB and CSH, mainly focusing on the differences in conceptual definitions, the characteristics of victims and perpetrators, as well as the challenges of implementing legal strategies for prevention.

### **1.1 Definitions, types and characteristics of cyberbullying and cyber sexual harassments**

There are many studies which have analysed the definitions, concepts and standards of measurement in CB and CSH (Corcoran *et al*, 2015; Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015; Amalina *et al*, 2022; Patel & Roesch, 2020; Snaychuck & O'Neill, 2020) The general consensus is that CB and CSH cannot be confined to the mere use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or intimidate another individual, or to engage in any inappropriate sexual activity. With the

rapid technological advancement of digital devices and platforms, as well as changing trends in electronic communication, the manner in which CB and CSH occur evolves so rapidly that it is literally impossible to establish clear and acceptable definitions. The matter is further complicated by the introduction of several other similar and overlapping terms, both socially and academically.

Terms which have the same connotations as CB include “cyber harassment”, which has been described as the use of an electronic medium to “inflict humiliation, fear and a sense of helplessness” (Strom & Strom, 2006) and “cyberstalking” which involves repeated threats and/or harassment using electronic or computer-based communication that would make a reasonable person afraid or concerned for their safety (Finn, 2004). Tokunaga (2010) compared several conceptual definitions of cyber bullying published in literature and proposed the following: “Cyberbullying is any behavior performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others”. This definition incorporates three essential

elements that are common to CB and CSH; the use of technology, hostile intent and repetitiveness (Ferrara *et al*, 2018).

Tettagah *et al*, (2006) reported several examples of cyber-bullying and harassment which included, creating websites specifically to ridicule someone, posting pictures of classmates online and asking people to rate them based on different categories, breaking into an email account and sending embarrassing information or pictures to others, or forcing someone to reveal their personal information to other people. Several of these examples also contained elements of a sexual nature which highlighted the interconnectedness of CB and CSH as reported by other reviews (Leemis *et al*, 2019). In such situations, distinguishing between CB and CSH would be quite difficult. However, regardless of the intent of the perpetrator, CSH may be considered whenever the victim experiences feelings of being sexualised, sexually discriminated, sexually exploited, or being forced or coerced into sexual activity. Barak (2005) described four types of CSH based on whether the actions were active, passive, verbal or graphic (Table I) but used the term “*online gender harassment*” instead.

**Table I: Different forms of cyber sexual harassment (Barak, 2005).**

	Verbal	Graphic
ACTIVE	Offensive sexual messages (gender humiliating statements, sexual remarks or dirty jokes) sent actively targeting a particular victim.	Sending sensitive, erotic or pornographic pictures/videos through online platforms or posting them on a website/forum of a specific person or a group of people.
PASSIVE	Offensive sexual messages which are sent with no specific targeted victim but rather, to any potential receiver.	Posting of sensitive pictures or movies on publicly accessible websites or use of forced pop-up windows, redirected links to sexually explicit websites on unsuspecting online users.

In terms of actual experiences of the victims, CSH has been further classified into acts of sexual solicitation, receiving unwanted sexually explicit messages/material and non-consensual sharing of personal sexually related information (Barak 2005; Reed et al., 2019). Based on the pattern of behavior and motive, these acts have also been described as online sexual predatory behavior (Broome et al, 2018) and revenge pornography (Walker & Sleath, 2017).

It is clear that with the advent of complex social communication networks and the sophistication of electronic and web-based devices, the scope and dimensions of sexual harassment through online and digital platforms are rapidly expanding. Thus, the term “*technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV)*” has received broader acceptance in current scientific literature (Henry & Powell, 2018; Powell, 2022; Patel & Roesch, 2022). Table II describes four key dimensions identified by Powell and Henry which encompass TFSV (Powell & Henry, 2019).

**Table II: Four Dimensions of Technology Facilitated Sexual Violence  
Modified from Powell & Henry, 2019.**

Dimension	Description	Similar phrases or terms in common parlance
<b>Digital Sexual Harassment</b>	Uninvited behaviors that explicitly communicate sexual desires or intentions towards another individual (Barak, 2005)	Cyber harassment Cyberstalking
<b>Image Based Sexual Abuse</b>	The distribution or dissemination of sexual images or information of the victim against his/her will (Gamez-Guadix <i>et al</i> , 2015)	Sexting Revenge porn
<b>Sexual Aggression and/or Coercion</b>	Three forms; Pressurising the victim into sexual cooperation through threats or blackmail using online platforms Facilitating sexual contact through digital technology (eg. Online dating apps) Use of digital technology as an extension of the sexual assault (eg. Filming and distributing a non-consensual sexual act)	Sextortion Online predatory sexual behavior
<b>Gender and/or Sexuality-Based Harassment</b>	Use of online platforms to insult or degrade a person’s actual or perceived sexuality or sexual identity	Cyber harassment Online shaming Doxing

## 1.2 Differences between the traditional and cyber forms of bullying and sexual harassment

There is evidence to suggest that traditional and cyber forms of bullying and sexual harassment co-exist (Tokunaga, 2010; Sourander *et al*, 2010; Leemis *et al*, 2019) with one study reporting 42% of victims being harassed through both forms (Ybarra *et al*, 2012). However, it is not clear if the perpetration was done by the same person. Several differences and similarities have been identified between these two forms, both from the perpetrator's perspective, as well as the victim's.

Unlike in traditional forms of harassment where physical strength and authority play a key role, it is the extent and confidence in IT communication and tech-savviness that become the stronger factors in CB and CSH (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a; Amalina *et al*, 2022). In fact, it is common for cyberbullies to have lesser physical strength and authority than their victims (Strom and Strom, 2006). Traditional bullying typically happens in person, where the victim generally knows who the perpetrator is. In cyberbullying and cyber sexual harassment, the perpetrators are often anonymous and remain hidden (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a) which may increase the level of fear and anxiety in the victim. At the same time, since cyberbullies may not directly witness or perceive the distress that the victim is going through, they may not feel any remorse or guilt for their actions (Strom and Strom, 2006). Another major difference is that cyberbullying may occur continuously as long as the victim is connected to the internet (Reed *et al*, 2019) whereas in traditional bullying, which often occurs within a specific environment, such as the school or the workplace, the victim is usually able to gain some respite when he or she is away from that

environment (Raskauskas and Stoltz, 2007; Sourander *et al*, 2010). Due to these reasons, it is generally believed that cyber forms of harassment may cause more serious consequences to the victims than in the traditional forms although some studies have shown the opposite (Ybarra *et al*, 2012). However, because cyber-offenders can target multiple victims in multiple locations with no physical or geographic barriers, they are usually much harder to identify and control than the traditional forms (Henry & Powell, 2015).

## 1.3 Characteristics of victims and bullies in cyber bullying and cyber sexual harassment

Any cyber form of harassment may occur at the personal level, family level, social/environment level and the school level (Zhong *et al*, 2021). Both forms of bullying and sexual harassment share many common negative psychosocial characteristics at an individual level or within interpersonal or communal relationships (Leemis *et al*, 2019).

Ybarra and Mitchell found out that cyberbullies have numerous psychological, social and behavioral issues that increase the frequency of cyber-bullying (Ybarra and Mitchell *et al*, 2006). Cyber bullies tended to have overly authoritative and strict upbringing as children with poor emotional bonding with their caregivers (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b). They were generally more aggressive towards peers, as well as adults and often displayed rule-breaking behavior (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004a). Interestingly, half of the cyberbullies reported being victims of traditional bullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b). The characteristics of victims and bullies broadly cover three themes in relation to age, gender, as well as psychological and behavioral effects.

### 1.3.1 Age related findings

Most studies have not established any significant age-related associations in CB and CSH although it clearly predominates among teenagers and young adults (Tokunaga, 2010). However, this is more likely to be an effect of higher internet usage in these populations. College students who are usually between the ages of 21 and 27, have been found to be at higher risk of cyberbullying than high school students who are usually between the ages of 14 and 18 (Yan, 2009). This is possibly because college students often meet new classmates and interact with a lot of new acquaintances, as well as engage in social media which can increase the chances of being cyberbullied. Parents typically reduce the level of parental supervision as they progress through their teenage years, where there is also a higher tendency to engage in risky behavior. Approximately, one in ten college students have experienced repeated harassment, insults or threats via e-mail or instant messaging (Finn, 2004). Contrary to popular belief, college students do not have a greater knowledge about safety measures on the internet in comparison to high school students (Yan, 2009). Furthermore, the latter group are exposed to fully filtered well-protected internet environments unlike college students who do not have that level of protection. Possessing a mobile phone also appeared to increase the risk of victimisation among young adults when compared to teenagers (Lenhart *et al*, 2010).

In a survey among 10-17-year-olds, Ybarra and Mitchell (2007) found that at least one in three youths had harassed someone online during a period of one year. The frequency of perpetration increased with age and there was a higher likelihood of older youth

engaging in cyber bullying than in traditional bullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007). The majority of these perpetrators stated that their behavior was in response to harassment initiated by someone else. Powell & Henry (2019) in their online study among Australian adults, found that the 18–24-year age group has the highest risk of exposure to TFSV compared to the other age groups while those in the 45–54-year range had a significantly lesser risk.

Most of the above studies, however, are before the onset of many of the social media sites in existence today. Modern day social networking sites, like Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok which have higher graphical interfaces, faster image and video transfer including live streaming and artificial intelligence (AI) based automated decision-making platforms (Grandinetti, 2021), have a much higher potential to be misused for CB and CSH, particularly through transfer of sensitive and private audio-visual material (Montag *et al*, 2021). There is much evidence to show that these sites are predominantly embraced by pre-teen and early adolescent age groups (Bossen & Kottasz, 2020), (Hellemens *et al*, 2021), particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is possible that the age-related characteristics of both perpetrators and victims of CB and CSH may have shifted to younger age groups during recent years.

### 1.3.2 Gender related findings

In traditional forms of bullying, studies have generally shown that males are more likely to bully and be bullied than females (Griezel *et al*, 2012). Early studies showed very little gender differences among victims of cyberbullying although there was a higher tendency for males to be the perpetrators (Li, 2006).

Recent cross-national studies show that males are at a higher risk for victimisation in traditional bullying than girls but have a higher tendency to perpetrate both traditional and cyber forms of bullying (Cosma *et al*, 2022). Williams and Guerra (2007) found out that males were more likely to report physical bullying than females, but no significant gender differences were found for internet and verbal bullying. Interestingly, Ybarra & Mitchell (2007) found a higher percentage of females who reported that they had engaged in some form of online harassment although males tended to be more frequent harassers. Griffiths (2000) reported the finding of a British survey that 41% of regular internet female users had been sent unsolicited pornographic materials or been harassed or stalked on the internet. Finkelhor *et al* (2013) stated that females experienced more cyber-harassment than males. However, there has been a significant increase in the rate of victimisation in both genders since 2008. Interestingly, in another meta-analysis of cyberbullying, regional and cultural factors were found to affect the results where studies from Asian populations showed the highest gender difference while studies from European or Australian populations showed little or no difference (Sun *et al*, 2016).

Empirical evidence generally supports the view that females and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community (LGBTQ) individuals are more often victimised in both the traditional and cyber forms of sexual harassment (Henry & Powell, 2016; Gamez-Guadix *et al*, 2023). Youth with LGBTQ orientations reported higher rates of CSH during the school years compared to their heterosexual peers (Gruber & Fineran, 2008) and higher rates of cyberbullying

ranging between 10.5% and 71.3% were also found among LGBTQ youth (Abreu & Kenny, 2018).

However, using the more updated definitions on technology facilitated sexual violence, recent reviews and meta-analyses have shown mixed results on gender differences (Henry & Powell, 2018; Patel & Roesch, 2022). Powell and Henry (2019) did not find a significant gender difference in the overall lifetime prevalence in victimisation but found that females were significantly more likely to report the incident if the perpetrator was a male and were more likely to be psychologically affected by the incident.

Therefore, gender disparities in CB and CSH appear to be more complicated than age related characteristics. While males tend to be more frequent perpetrators of both CB and CSH, females and LGBTQ individuals are more at risk of being CSH victims and these disparities may be more pronounced among Asian populations.

### **1.3.3 Psychological and behavioral effects**

Both CB and CSH are well-known to have severe psychological and behavioral impacts on victims with high levels of extreme emotional distress (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2006; Abreu & Kenny, 2018). According to Patchin and Hinduja (2012), the majority of victims said that they were frustrated and angry, while more than a quarter felt sad and more than one third said that it affected their school performance. Bannink *et al* (2014) found that both traditional and cyber bullying had a significant relationship with mental health problems among girl victims but not among boy victims. Similarly, traditional bullying was associated with suicidal ideation while cyberbullying was not

(Bannink *et al*, 2014). Interestingly, cyber bullying victims had higher levels of anger rumination which also led them to be cyber-aggressors (Camacho *et al*, 2021). Bullies showed lower academic performance and poorer skills in organising and planning studies than victims or uninvolved students (Aparisi *et al*, 2021; Morales-Arjona *et al*, 2022). Victims who showed higher adaptation to university environment were less likely to engage in cyber bullying later while bullies with a history of victimisation showed significantly lower adaptation to university and social relationships than non-victimised bullies (Aparisi *et al*, 2021).

Responses of cyber-victims have varied from actively confronting the perpetrator and/or reporting the incident to more passive measures such as changing the communication channels, contact details, staying off-line or being non-reactive. While the majority of victims revealed the cyberbullying to an online friend, a small percentage (2.7%) also stated that they bullied others (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). In a more recent study, however, the percentage of CB victims who carried out bullying on others was as high as 60% (Morales-Arjona *et al*, 2022).

Cyber-sexual violence was significantly associated with symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, lower levels of self-esteem including suicidal ideation and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Cripps & Sternac, 2018; Reed *et al*, 2019; Snaychuk & O'Neill, 2020). Guerra *et al* (2021) found that the depressive symptoms were higher among girl victims especially when the perpetrator was another female. In fact, the highest level of depression was noted in boys when they were harassed by an adult male. Over 50% of

female undergraduates did not disclose their cyber-sexual violence experience (Cripps & Sternac, 2018) and those who did so had higher rates of depression and anxiety along with alcohol and drug use (Reed *et al*, 2019). In a study on sexual abuse victims there was a significant association between the use of digital technology and severe forms of abuse such as recurrent abuse, involvement of multiple offenders and violent acts (Say *et al*, 2015).

These psychological and behavioral consequences of CB and CSH are comparable to the effects of PTSD seen in other forms of social and family violence (Gillikin *et al*, 2016; Marshall *et al*, 2019). Thus, there is a strong justification for punitive actions through legal enactments or institutional disciplinary procedures against those engaging in CB and CSH.

#### 1.4 Challenges of implementing legal strategies for prevention of CB and CSH

The use of legislative reforms against cyber forms of bullying and harassment has been recognised as an important deterrent to these crimes (King, 2019; Putri & Adhari, 2021; Pennell *et al*, 2022). However, there are several challenges and obstacles that have been identified in interpreting and implementing laws on CB and CSH (Citron, 2009; Campbell *et al*, 2010; Lievens, 2012; El Asam & Samara, 2016; King, 2019), some of which are summarised in Table III. It is generally reported that most jurisdictions do not have legal provisions that directly address CB and CSH and often, they are prosecuted through other forms of offences related more to cybercrime or mass communication than harassment. There is continued debate on whether legislative enactments against CB and CSH would unduly restrict the rights to freedom of



speech which would not be an issue when the acts are non-consensual, repetitive, or clearly offensive, but in some instances, especially where only comments

or written exchanges are involved, distinguishing harassing behavior, or proving intention to harm could be extremely difficult.

**Table III: Challenges in implementing legal provisions to mitigate CB and CSH.**

<b>AMBIGUITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of clear definitions for the different forms of harassment and their consequences.</li> <li>● Unsuitability of existing laws and lack of legal provisions to directly address CB and CSH.</li> <li>● Lack of clear complaint mechanisms and points of contact to report the incidents.</li> </ul>
<b>TRIVIALIZATION OF ACTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Characterising CB and CSH as a “norm” or frivolous social media usage or “harmless teasing”.</li> <li>● Tendency to see cyber forms of harassment as less harmful than physical forms of violence.</li> <li>● Lesser punishments are given for perpetrators of cyber harassment than physical harassment.</li> <li>● Attitude that the victims could simply “ignore” the comments or “delete” the images.</li> </ul>
<b>PERPETRATOR IDENTIFICATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use of fake profiles and anonymous channels.</li> <li>● Lack of online surveillance systems.</li> <li>● Reluctance of web operators to furnish information on their web portal users.</li> <li>● Masking or misdirection of Internet Protocol (IP) addresses.</li> <li>● Administrative and logistical problems in tracking and apprehending perpetrators operating from outside the jurisdiction of the local law enforcement agency.</li> </ul>
<b>PROVING HARM OR INTENTION TO HARM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Most laws require actual harm rather than perceived harm to prosecute offenders.</li> <li>● Difficulties in establishing criminal intent, especially in perpetrators who are young children or adolescents.</li> </ul>
<b>THE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Difficulties in distinguishing between expression of opinions and harassing behavior.</li> <li>● Used as a form of defense to decriminalise the act and to prevent legislative reforms from being developed.</li> </ul>

From a practical standpoint, the filing of defamation lawsuits against perpetrators of online harassment has had better success than criminal prosecution (Marwick & Miller, 2014). However, due to the high financial burden of civil lawsuits this avenue is taken up only by a small percentage of victims and such lawsuits mostly end up in settlements rather than condoning or mitigating the act (Henry & Powell, 2016). Addressing the issue through stronger internet regulations has been another approach that has shown some promise although most regulations do not specifically address CB and CSH per se (Jurasz & Barker, 2021). The use of automated detection methods of hate-speech, doxing, sexually offensive comments on some social media sites has shown much promise (Van Hee *et al*, 2018; Abarna *et al*, 2022). However, their applicability is still limited, especially due to their inability to detect offensive communications in non-textual content, mixed language, or slang use (Kumar & Sachdeva, 2019).

Despite these shortcomings, most authors are of the opinion that legal reforms and regulatory measures are necessary to cater to the evolving nature of these crimes. It is clear however, that they alone would not be sufficient to combat this complex social problem. The strategies and interventions used against traditional forms of bullying and sexual harassment are generally acceptable to the cyber forms as well. They mostly involve awareness programmes that generate ideas and strategies among parents, teachers, students and health professionals which could be incorporated into institutional policies and incident reporting frameworks (Chisholm, 2014; Patchin & Hinduja, 2012; Espelage & Hong, 2017). Reviews

on blended learning programmes and school-based psycho-educational programmes have generally shown positive results both in mitigating the occurrence of CB and CSH, as well as strengthening victim response (Espelage & Hong, 2017; Santre & Pumpaibool, 2022). Preventive interventions targeting traditional bullying have not only reduced the incidence of cyberbullying but modified normative ideas on the acceptability of bullying and improved trust and support among peers (Salmivalli *et al*, 2011; Williams & Guerra, 2007).

### 1.5 Conclusion

Cyberbullying (CB) and cyber sexual harassment (CSH) have become a major issue in today's advancing digital and technological environment, especially among younger generations. Compared to traditional forms of bullying and sexual harassment, perpetrators of CB and CSH have the potential to cause greater traumatisation to victims due to their ability to have a wider reach, conceal their identity and misuse digital technology to obtain sensitive and personal material. Research on these areas shows that there are multiple different forms of CB and CSH which need clearer definitions and better understanding to improve future research, as well as develop useful strategies for management and prevention. For CSH, the term "technology facilitated sexual violence" is now preferred.

Studies have mostly shown both perpetrators and victims of CB and CSH to be in the adolescent to young adult age group, although this age trend may have changed in the post COVID-19 context. While both forms appear to be common among both

males and females, there is a higher likelihood for females and LGBTQ genders to be targeted in CSH. Common psychological consequences associated with this phenomenon include depression, anger, low self-esteem, low academic performance and internet addiction. Interestingly, studies have shown that victims themselves may engage in CB or CSH later.

Considering the post-COVID expansion of internet usage and social media communication, there is a clear need for structured educational programmes targeting schools, universities, and workplaces on detecting, reporting and managing incidents of CB and CSH. Concurrently, there is also a need to improve the legislative provisions and the responsiveness of law enforcement personnel to ensure that perpetrators of CB and CSH are held accountable for their actions.

Criminal lawsuits against CB and CSH are challenging mainly due to ambiguity in definitions, trivialization of the acts, difficulties in perpetrator identification, proving malicious intent, and overriding the right to freedom of speech. Stronger regulations on internet usage coupled with better reporting mechanisms and facilitation of civil lawsuit procedures are recommended if this issue is to be addressed through legal strategies. Holistic prevention strategies involving educational programmes, attitudinal changes and behavioral modification especially targeting children, teachers, institutional administrative staff, and law enforcement officials coupled with awareness on safe cyber usage, personal data protection and recognising cyber threats are equally important to mitigate the considerable negative impact of CB and CSH on the psychological health of future generations.

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