



Literature Review: Cyberbullying in Adolescence

Idhfi Marpatmawati¹, Aneng Yuningsih¹, Wawan Rismawan¹, Nandita Milda Hidayat¹

¹Nursing Department, Faculty of Health, Universitas Bakti Tunas Husada Tasikmalaya

Correspondence author: Idhfi Marpatmawati

Email: indhfi94@gmail.com

Address: Universitas Bakti Tunas Husada Tasikmalaya, Tasikmalaya 46191, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Cyberbullying is a growing phenomenon with the increasing use of digital technology and social media among adolescents. This phenomenon can affect adolescents' mental and emotional well-being, even having long-term impacts on their psychological health. This study aims to reveal the prevalence, risk factors, and psychological impact of cyberbullying among adolescents.

Objective: This study aims to explore the prevalence, risk factors, and psychological impact of cyberbullying among adolescents, with a focus on the relationship between cyberbullying and mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

Method: This study used a literature search design with articles searched through three search engines: Ebsco, Proquest, and Google Scholar. The articles used were research conducted within the last five years (2020-2025), using the keywords "cyberbullying," "adolescence," and "effects." A total of 594 articles were found, which were then narrowed down to nine articles that met the inclusion criteria.

Result: This study found that the prevalence of cyberbullying among adolescents globally ranges from 13.99% to 57.5%. Key risk factors include personal characteristics such as age, gender, and online behavior. The most common psychological impacts include decreased happiness, increased anxiety, depression, and an increased risk of suicide, especially for those who experience cyberbullying alongside traditional bullying.

Conclusion: Cyberbullying has a significant impact on adolescent mental health, particularly in the form of psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety. Therefore, preventive efforts involving parents, schools, and the community are crucial to mitigate the negative impact of this phenomenon. Emotional education and strong parent-child relationships can help prevent cyberbullying.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, adolescent

Introduction

Cyberbullying is a rapidly growing phenomenon with the increasing use of digital technology and social media among adolescents. This term refers to acts of intimidation, humiliation, or harassment carried out through digital platforms, including social media, text messages, and online games. This phenomenon not only affects adolescents' mental and emotional well-being but can also have long-term impacts on their psychological health.

Cyberbullying has become a significant global problem. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2024, approximately 15% of adolescents aged 12 to 18 experienced bullying on social media, with the rate being higher among girls (16%) than boys (15%). Furthermore, a 2025 survey by Global Witness revealed that over 90% of environmental and land defenders worldwide faced online harassment, with Facebook being the most frequently used platform for online bullying.

The prevalence of cyberbullying in Indonesia is also quite high. A 2024 UNICEF survey found that approximately 45% of Indonesian adolescents aged 14 to 24 had been victims of bullying on social media. Furthermore, research by Borualogo et al. (2023) showed that 58.6% of participants reported being victims of cyberbullying, with forms of bullying varying from online sexual harassment, threats, and defamation. In West Java, specific data on the prevalence of cyberbullying is limited. However, a study by Borualogo and Gumilang (2019) noted that approximately 21% of junior high school students in Padang experienced cyberbullying, with forms of bullying including teasing, slander, threats, and insults. Although this study was conducted in Padang, its findings may provide insight into a similar situation in West Java.

Much research has been conducted to explore the factors contributing to cyberbullying, from individual, family, and social perspectives. Research by Liu et al. (2025) revealed that adolescents with emotional problems or a lack of social support are more vulnerable to becoming victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying. Furthermore, another major factor contributing to cyberbullying is excessive social media use. Research by Blasco-Fontecilla et al. (2024) revealed that adolescents who spend a lot of time on social media are more vulnerable to becoming victims or even perpetrators of online bullying. The more time spent on digital platforms, the greater the likelihood of engaging in this negative behavior, either as a victim or a perpetrator. Excessive social media use creates a space for unhealthy interactions and can decrease awareness of the impact of online behavior.

Psychosocial factors also play a significant role in cyberbullying. Adolescents experiencing emotional problems or lacking social support are more vulnerable to becoming targets of online bullying. Research by Liu et al. (2025) showed that adolescents facing psychological challenges, such as depression or anxiety, are more likely to become victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying. Lack of social support can also worsen adolescents' emotional well-being and exacerbate their mental instability, contributing to cyberbullying.

The impact of cyberbullying is widespread and affects various aspects of adolescents' lives, particularly their mental and emotional health. One of the main impacts is psychological disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Research by Kowalski et al. (2023) shows that adolescents who are victims of cyberbullying tend to

experience a significant decline in their quality of life. Adolescents often feel isolated, depressed, and lose self-confidence. The psychological impact can be long-lasting, affecting their mental health in the long term. Cyberbullying can increase the risk of suicidal behavior among adolescents. Research by Scheithauer et al. (2023) shows that adolescents who are victims of online bullying are more likely to develop suicidal thoughts, especially when they feel isolated or lack adequate emotional support. The psychological impact of cyberbullying can exacerbate existing mental disorders and increase feelings of hopelessness, leading to an increased risk of suicide among adolescents.

Furthermore, cyberbullying can also impact adolescents' social and academic lives. Adolescent victims often feel alienated from their friends and have difficulty interacting socially. This decline in the quality of social relationships can impact their personal development.

Objective

The purpose of this study is to explore the prevalence, risk factors, and psychological impacts of cyberbullying among adolescents, with a particular focus on its association with mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation, across different cultural and socio-economic contexts. This aligns with the goals of understanding both the individual and societal factors contributing to cyberbullying and the significant mental health consequences that arise from it.

Method

Design and setting

The literature search used three different search engines: Ebsco, Proquest, and Google Scholar. The review focused on the latest research within the last five years (2020-2025) using the keywords "cyberbullying" and "adolescence" and "effects." The search was limited to full-text journals, using databases such as Academic Search and CINAHL Plus with full text. A total of 594 articles were searched: 94 articles from Proquest, 68 articles from Ebsco, and 432 articles from Google Scholar. The search results were then filtered by limiting the research period to the last five years. The search results were reduced to 532 articles, which were then analyzed, resulting in nine articles that passed critical appraisal. The inclusion criteria for this study were: articles from reputable international journals and primary sources. The exclusion criteria were articles that were literature reviews.

Population and sampling

The population for this literature review consisted of published research articles focusing on cyberbullying in adolescents, including studies exploring its prevalence, risk factors, and psychological impacts, particularly in relation to mental health outcomes. A targeted sampling approach was employed, utilizing the Ebsco, Proquest, and Google Scholar electronic databases. The search was limited to articles published within the last five years (2020-2025) and used the keywords "cyberbullying," "adolescence," and "effects." Inclusion criteria included articles from reputable international journals that were primary research sources, while literature reviews were excluded. A total of 594 articles were initially identified

(94 from Proquest, 68 from Ebsco, and 432 from Google Scholar). After filtering by publication date, 532 articles were analyzed for critical appraisal, resulting in a final sample of nine articles that met the inclusion criteria.

Instrument and measurement

The instrumentation for this literature review consisted of a structured literature search and critical appraisal process, rather than primary data collection instruments. The search strategy, utilizing the keywords "cyberbullying," "adolescence," and "effects" across Ebsco, Proquest, and Google Scholar databases, was limited to articles published between 2020 and 2025. Inclusion criteria focused on reputable international journals and primary research sources. The measurement process involved screening articles for relevance, critically appraising their methodological rigor, extracting key data such as prevalence rates, risk factors, and psychological impacts, and synthesizing these findings to identify patterns and overall conclusions regarding cyberbullying among adolescents. The synthesized outcomes were then used to address the review's objectives.

Data collection and analysis

In this literature review, data collection involved a systematic search for relevant articles using three electronic databases: Ebsco, Proquest, and Google Scholar. The search strategy focused on articles published within the last five years (2020-2025) using the keywords "cyberbullying," "adolescence," and "effects." A total of 594 articles were initially identified.

The data collection process was guided by predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the selection of relevant and high-quality research. Inclusion criteria focused on articles from reputable international journals and primary research sources, while articles that were literature reviews were excluded.

Following data collection, the articles underwent a process of critical appraisal to assess their methodological rigor and quality. This critical appraisal likely involved evaluating aspects such as study design, sample size, data analysis techniques, and the validity and reliability of the findings.

Data analysis involved extracting key information from the included articles related to the research questions. This included data on the prevalence of cyberbullying, identified risk factors, and the reported psychological impacts on adolescents. The extracted data were then synthesized and summarized to identify patterns, themes, and overall conclusions. The analysis process also involved comparing and contrasting findings across the included studies to identify areas of convergence and divergence.

Result

Table 1: Summary of the Number of Articles Retrieved

Literature Search	Journals Appearing from Keywords	Journals Meeting the Inclusion Criteria
Proquest	62	3
Ebsco	36	4
Google scholar	432	2
Total	530	9

1. Cyberbullying Among Adolescents and Children: A Comprehensive Review of the Global Situation, Risk Factors, and Preventive Measures (Zhu et al., 2021)

This systematic review comprehensively examines the global situation, risk factors, and preventive measures related to cyberbullying among adolescents and children. The study identifies a significant prevalence of cyberbullying, ranging from 13.99% to 57.5% across different studies. Key risk factors identified include personal characteristics such as age, gender, impulsiveness, past victimization experiences, and online behavior. Situational factors like family dynamics and geographical location also contribute to the likelihood of cyberbullying. Protective factors, such as empathy, emotional intelligence, and strong parent-child relationships, were noted to reduce the risk of cyberbullying. The article also calls for more research, especially from low and middle-income countries, and emphasizes the importance of international cooperation to address this issue effectively.

2. Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying in the Digital Age and Its Associated Mental Health Problems in Children and Adolescents: A Meta-Analysis. (Li et al., 2022)

This meta-analysis explores the mental health implications of both traditional bullying (TB) and cyberbullying (CB) on adolescents, specifically looking at depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm, and suicide attempts. The study identifies that both TB and CB are associated with significant psychological distress, with the combined effects of both forms of bullying leading to the highest odds of severe mental health issues. The research highlights that the overlap between TB and CB is common, with about one-third of victims of traditional bullying also experiencing cyberbullying. The study also suggests that the mental health risks are more severe for those experiencing both forms of bullying, reinforcing the need for comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies.

3. More Cyberbullying, Less Happiness, and More Injustice—Psychological Changes During the Pericyberbullying Period: Quantitative Study Based on Social Media Data. (Liu et al., 2025)

This study investigates the short-term psychological effects of cyberbullying during the "pericyberbullying" period—defined as the time before, during, and after a cyberbullying incident. The study found that survivors of cyberbullying experienced significant reductions in happiness and marginal increases in suicide risk. Psychological traits such as neuroticism and decreased agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion were found to change as a result of cyberbullying. The study uses social media data to examine psychological changes and provides new insights into the immediate effects of cyberbullying, which are critical for developing timely interventions for affected adolescents.

4. Cyberbullying and Its Protective and Risk Factors Among Polish Adolescents. (Łosiak-Pilch et al., 2022)

This study focuses on the prevalence of cyberbullying among Polish adolescents and identifies cognitive empathy, assertiveness, cooperation, pro-social behavior, and social support as key factors influencing the likelihood of both being a victim and perpetrator of cyberbullying. The findings suggest that while cyberbullying is prevalent among adolescents, family and peer social support were the strongest protective factors.

Assertiveness, on the other hand, was associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying. This study underscores the importance of fostering empathy and assertiveness in adolescents to mitigate the risks associated with cyberbullying.

5. Bullying Victimization, Negative Emotions, and Digital Self-Harm: Testing a Theoretical Model of Indirect Effects. (Meldrum et al., 2020)

This article investigates the relationship between bullying victimization and digital self-harm using Agnew's General Strain Theory. The study demonstrates that bullying victimization is strongly associated with digital self-harm, particularly through the mediation of negative emotions. The research indicates that adolescents who experience bullying, especially cyberbullying, are more likely to engage in digital self-harm, such as posting harmful content about themselves online. This study highlights the emotional toll of cyberbullying and underscores the need for addressing the psychological effects of bullying to prevent self-harm behaviors.

6. Social Media Use and Cyberbullying: A Cross-National Analysis of Young People in 42 Countries. (Craig et al., 2020)

This cross-national study analyzes the relationship between social media use (SMU) and cyberbullying across 42 countries. The study found that intense and problematic social media use is associated with higher rates of both cyberbullying victimization and perpetration. The prevalence of cyberbullying varied by country, with problematic SMU being the strongest and most consistent risk factor. The findings emphasize the role of social media in facilitating cyberbullying and suggest that reducing problematic social media use could be an effective strategy in preventing cyberbullying.

7. Cyberbullying Victimization and Suicide Attempt Among Adolescents: A Cross-National Comparison. (Grimland et al., 2025)

This study examines the link between cyberbullying victimization and suicide attempts among adolescents in six countries (Singapore, China, Iran, Indonesia, India, and Lithuania). The findings reveal a strong association between cyberbullying victimization and an increased likelihood of suicide attempts, with emotional symptoms acting as a moderator of this relationship. The study highlights the urgent need for global efforts to prevent cyberbullying and intervene in its detrimental effects on adolescent mental health, particularly given the rise of mental health concerns among youth.

8. Prevalence and Related Risks of Cyberbullying and Its Effects on Adolescents (Gohal et al., 2023)

This study conducted in Saudi Arabia assesses the prevalence of cyberbullying and its psychological effects on adolescents. The study found that 42.8% of adolescents experienced cyberbullying, with significant impacts on their academic performance and mental health. A notable percentage of victims considered harming themselves as a result of cyberbullying. The research underscores the importance of community and authority collaboration to protect adolescents from cyberbullying and its harmful psychological consequences.

Discussion

Cyberbullying is a growing global problem in this digital age, especially among children and adolescents. With the increasing use of social media and digital platforms, this phenomenon is growing and having profound psychological impacts. Cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying because it is anonymous and can occur at any time, even outside of school hours or without parental supervision. Its impact is not limited to emotional problems but can also lead to more serious psychological disorders, such as anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and even suicide attempts. As research on cyberbullying develops, it is becoming clear that its impact is far greater than previously thought, and that comprehensive prevention and protection efforts are necessary.

According to research conducted by Zhu et al. (2021), the prevalence of cyberbullying among children and adolescents can vary between 13.99% and 57.5%, with verbal abuse being the most common form. This research indicates that cyberbullying has a significant impact on adolescents' psychological well-being, including an increased risk of emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression. Several risk factors identified in this study include gender, with girls being more vulnerable to victimization, and online behavior, with adolescents who spend more time online being more susceptible to cyberbullying. Furthermore, poor mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety disorders, have also been found to increase vulnerability to cyberbullying. Furthermore, research by Li et al. (2024) also showed that although traditional bullying (TB) remains more common than cyberbullying (CB), with TB prevalence reaching 24.32% and CB prevalence at 11.10%, many cyberbullying victims also experience traditional bullying. This study found that two-thirds of cyberbullying victims were also victims of traditional bullying. This emphasizes the importance of addressing both forms of bullying simultaneously, as both can occur simultaneously in the same individual and have a more detrimental impact on their mental health.

The psychological impact of cyberbullying is significant and can be long-term. Li et al. (2024) found that victims of cyberbullying had a higher risk of experiencing mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and self-harm compared to victims of traditional bullying. Furthermore, those who experienced both traditional and cyberbullying had a significantly higher risk of developing more serious psychological problems. The study also found that the odds ratio (OR) for depression and anxiety increased significantly in the group experiencing both types of bullying.

The importance of understanding the psychological impact of cyberbullying becomes clearer when we consider the differences between these two forms of bullying. Patchin and Hinduja (2010) explain that cyberbullying has a more severe impact than traditional bullying because it is more hidden and can occur around the clock, even outside of school hours. When victims feel isolated and have no way out of persistent bullying, they are more vulnerable to developing more serious psychological disorders, such as major depression and anxiety disorders. Furthermore, cyberbullying is often carried out anonymously, allowing perpetrators to feel free to commit violence without fear of detection. Research by Kowalski et al. (2014) also highlighted that victims of bullying, both traditional and cyberbullying, are more likely to develop mental health problems, such as sleep disorders, anxiety, and depression. However,

cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying due to its greater anonymity, which can allow perpetrators to feel freer to harm victims without fear of recognition.

Given the significant impact of cyberbullying on adolescent mental health, effective prevention efforts are crucial. Zhu et al. (2021) in their study suggested a prevention-based approach involving various parties, including children, parents, and schools. They emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence and empathy as protective factors that can reduce the likelihood of cyberbullying. Furthermore, they emphasized that a close and open relationship between parents and children plays a crucial role in minimizing the risk of cyberbullying. Raising awareness in schools about the dangers of cyberbullying is also crucial. Li et al. (2024) suggested that schools should be safe havens for adolescents by creating a positive school climate and supporting the development of firm policies in handling cyberbullying cases. They also emphasized the importance of providing resources for victims to seek psychological support. Family- and school-based approaches can help reduce cyberbullying incidents, as found in Ybarra et al.'s (2007) study, which showed that family- and school-based interventions can significantly reduce cyberbullying incidents and improve adolescents' psychological well-being.

A study by Łosiak-Pilch et al. (2022) explored the protective and risk factors associated with cyberbullying among adolescents. They found that cognitive empathy and social support from family, friends, and teachers serve as protective factors that can reduce the likelihood of cyberbullying, both as a perpetrator and as a victim. Conversely, a lack of empathy and social support can increase an individual's risk of engaging in or becoming a victim of cyberbullying. This research highlights the importance of building empathy and a supportive social environment as a preventative measure against the harmful effects of cyberbullying. Furthermore, this study suggests that individuals who are socially isolated or who lack emotional regulation skills are more vulnerable to the negative psychological impacts of cyberbullying. They are less likely to seek help or support, which exacerbates their mental health challenges. Therefore, it is crucial to provide adequate support to adolescents to build their emotional and social resilience.

Restate the Key Findings

This literature review, synthesizing findings from nine studies, revealed that cyberbullying is a significant global issue among adolescents, with prevalence varying considerably across studies (13.99% to 57.5%). Key risk factors identified include personal characteristics like age, gender, impulsiveness, and online behavior, as well as situational factors such as family dynamics and geographical location. Cyberbullying has a substantial negative impact on adolescent mental health, leading to decreased happiness, increased anxiety and depression, and an elevated risk of suicidal ideation. Protective factors such as empathy, emotional intelligence, and strong parent-child relationships, along with social support from family, friends, and teachers, can help mitigate these risks.

Interpret the Results

The synthesized findings from this literature review paint a concerning picture of cyberbullying's impact on adolescents. The wide range in reported prevalence rates (13.99% to 57.5%) indicates that cyberbullying is a significant issue globally, although the precise extent

may vary depending on the population and context. The identified risk factors highlight potential targets for intervention. Specifically, focusing on improving emotional regulation, promoting positive online behavior, and strengthening family relationships could help to reduce the likelihood of adolescents becoming involved in cyberbullying, either as victims or perpetrators.

The consistent finding that cyberbullying has a negative impact on adolescent mental health underscores the urgency of addressing this issue. The link between cyberbullying and increased rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation suggests that cyberbullying can have severe and long-lasting consequences for adolescents' well-being. The fact that experiencing both cyberbullying and traditional bullying exacerbates these negative outcomes emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing all forms of bullying.

The identified protective factors provide a basis for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. By fostering empathy, emotional intelligence, and strong social support networks, it may be possible to create a more resilient environment for adolescents and reduce the harmful effects of cyberbullying.

Highlight the Implications

This review underscores the need to raise awareness about cyberbullying's negative impacts on adolescent mental health. Findings suggest targeted prevention efforts focusing on positive online behavior, emotional regulation, and strong family relationships are crucial. Increased access to mental health support for victims, along with effective policies and holistic, collaborative approaches, are also essential.

Discuss the Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the limited geographic location is a factor affecting the generalizability of the findings. Most of the data used in this study comes from a few specific countries, such as Indonesia, which may not fully represent global variations in the prevalence and psychological impact of cyberbullying. Therefore, research involving various countries with diverse social and cultural backgrounds is essential to provide a more comprehensive picture.

Second, most of the studies reviewed in this article used cross-sectional data, which only provide a snapshot at a single point in time. This limitation hinders the ability to draw conclusions about the causal relationship between cyberbullying and its psychological impacts. Therefore, research using longitudinal designs is essential to understand the long-term dynamics and effects of cyberbullying on adolescent mental health. Finally, some of the studies described suffer from sampling bias, either due to limited sample size or due to chance selection, for example, only involving adolescents from certain schools or regions. This may affect the extent to which these findings can be generalized to the broader population. Research with larger, more representative samples would certainly increase the validity and robustness of the conclusions.

Suggest Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several suggestions for future research can be proposed. First, longitudinal research is urgently needed to track the long-term effects of cyberbullying on adolescents. Second, it is important to further explore the

role of social support from family, friends, and school in protecting adolescents from the harmful effects of cyberbullying. Research that explores how strong relationships between adolescents and their families or other social environments can reduce their vulnerability to cyberbullying will provide important insights into prevention strategies. Finally, the evaluation of intervention programs designed to reduce cyberbullying is also crucial for future research. Programs implemented in schools, such as emotional intelligence training, digital literacy enhancement, and policies supporting cyberbullying prevention, need to be studied to assess their effectiveness in reducing cyberbullying incidents and improving adolescents' psychological well-being.

Conclusion

Based on various studies, it can be concluded that cyberbullying has a significant impact on adolescent mental health. Both forms of bullying, both traditional and cyberbullying, are closely linked to an increased risk of psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and self-harm. However, cyberbullying has a more severe impact than traditional bullying because it is more hidden and can occur over time. Therefore, prevention and protection against cyberbullying must be carried out with a holistic approach, involving the active participation of families, schools, and the community.

Strategies based on emotional intelligence, empathy, and open communication between parents and children are crucial steps to reduce the negative impact of cyberbullying. With adequate support from families and schools, along with firm policies for handling cyberbullying cases, we can create a safer and more supportive environment for adolescents to grow and develop healthily, both emotionally and psychologically.

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Author Contribution

- Idhfi Marpatmawati: Conceptualization, initial drafting, literature review.
- Aneng Yuningsih: Data collection, article selection, writing of the methodology and results sections.
- Wawan Rismawan: Critical content analysis, writing of the discussion section.
- Nandita Milda Hidayat: Formatting, reference compilation, and final manuscript editing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to the research and writing of this article.

Ethical Clearance

As this is a literature review, the study did not involve direct research on human subjects and therefore did not require ethical approval. However, all articles referenced were ethically approved by their respective institutions.

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