

## Experience of Cyberbullying among Nursing Students

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### Abstract



**Background:** Cyberbullying is a form of bullying or harassment repeatedly with intent to harm others by using internet and electronic devices mainly from social media sites. It is a burning issue among the students of school and university level and affecting their psychosocial health and academic performances considerably. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify the cyberbullying experience among nursing students.

**Methods:** Descriptive cross-sectional study design was used in this study. Ethical approval was obtained from Institutional Review Committee of Nepalese Army institute of Health Sciences (IRC, NAIHS). Permission for data collection was obtained from the principal of the Norvic Institute of Nursing Education and informed written consent was taken from each participant. Census method was used in the study, out of total (360) students 213 students participated in this study. Data was collected using self-administered, semi-structured questionnaire through online google form. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS 16.

**Results:** In this study, more than one third (34.7%) of the participants experienced cyberbullying during last one year and highest proportion (44.6%) of them bullied through repeated harmful/teasing/threatening text messages. Most (70.3%) of the participants faced problems from the cyberbullying; among them, 61.5% participants faced academic problems, 57.7% faced psychological problems and 48.1% faced social problems.

**Conclusions:** Based on the study findings, cyberbullying experiences was common problem among the nursing students and most of them suffered from academic, psychological and social problems. Therefore, it is important to aware the students and their parents about rational use of internet, cyber bullying and its impact in health and academic achievement.

**Key words:** Cyberbullying Experience, Nursing Students, Mental and Social Health, Academic Activities

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## INTRODUCTION

The internet as online technology has become one of the most popular communication channels among university students worldwide.<sup>1</sup> An internet-use survey revealed that 95% of young adults [18-29 years old] were active users of the Internet, therefore they are likely to get exposed to cyber-bullying behavior.<sup>2</sup> Cyberbullying is intentional repetitive action carried out with the aim of harming others through use of technologies such as e-mail, cell phone messaging, social networks, websites, chat rooms and instant messaging.<sup>3</sup>

Cyberbullying at the university level can be seen as a bridge in the continuum of this behaviour from childhood and youth into adulthood.<sup>4</sup> Its trend is increasing in the developing country with access of internet facilities and its use.<sup>5</sup> The study conducted in Fayoum University showed that 27.3% of the nursing students and 27.5% of the non-nursing students reported online harassment victimization during their past year.<sup>6</sup> The number of cases of cyberbullying has begun to rise as the use of social networking sites.<sup>7</sup> Students who were cyberbullied, more likely to skip school, received poor grades, and had lower self-esteem.<sup>8</sup> They were also likely to suffer from great stress, inability to concentrate on their studies, resulting in their academic progress being adversely affected.<sup>9</sup> Similarly they also faced more emotional and psychosomatic problems, which further leads to social difficulties and feeling of being unsafe.<sup>10</sup>

Cyberbullying is one of the darkest and troubling aspects of the growing technology. Young generation spend many hours in internet and suffer from many problems after victimization of cyberbullying. Limited studies were available in this area among nursing students; therefore, this study was conducted to identify the cyberbullying experience among the nursing students.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at Norvic Institute of Nursing Education in Kathmandu. The total 360 nursing students from PCL Nursing, B.Sc. Nursing and Post Basic Bachelor in Nursing programs were study population and census method was used for this study. Out of total (360) students 213 students participated in the study. A semi structured self-administered questionnaire was developed by the researcher in English language, which consisted of

three parts: first part included socio demographic information, second part included pattern of internet use and third part included cyberbullying experiences and its consequences. The instrument was pretested among students of Nepalese Army Institute of Health Sciences, college of nursing and finalized on the basis of result of pretest. After finalization of instruments, informed written consent and questionnaire were prepared in Google form. Informed written consent was kept in first section and questions related to cyberbullying experience were kept in second section of the questionnaire. Participants who were willing to participate in this study gave written informed consent, and they filled questionnaire in Google form and submitted to the researcher.

Research proposal was approved by Institutional Review Committee of Nepalese Army Institute of Health Sciences. Permission for data collection was obtained from the principal of the Norvic Institute of Nursing Education. Data was collected from 2077/6/1 to 2077/6/15 (17<sup>th</sup> Sep to 1<sup>st</sup> Oct, 2020) by posting the URL of questionnaire in their virtual classroom. Finally, there were 213 students gave informed written consent and participated in this study. The data was kept in Microsoft office excels then in Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) program version 16. Data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics and interpreted in the tables.

## RESULTS

The highest proportions (45.1%) of the participants were from Post Basic Bachelor of Nursing Programme. Majority (59.6%) of them belong to age of 21 – 25 years. The mean age and SD were 22.4 years and  $\pm 3.3$ . Highest proportions (81.7%) of the participants were unmarried (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Socio- Demographic Information

Variables	Number	Percentage
<b>Programme</b>		
PCL Nursing	40	18.8
B.Sc. Nursing	77	36.2
Post Basic Bachelor of Nursing	96	45.1
<b>Age in years</b>		
<= 20	57	26.8
21 – 25	127	59.6
26+	29	13.6
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	39	18.3
Unmarried	174	81.7

Mean age = 22.42 SD = ±3.3

**Table 2:** Pattern of Internet Use

Variables	Number	Percentage
<b>Purpose of internet use *</b>		
Academic activities	188	88.3
Social networking site	154	72.3
Watching videos	115	54.0
Playing games	53	24.9
<b>Hours spent in internet</b>		
1	3	1.4
2	21	9.9
3	43	20.2
4	51	23.9
> 4	95	44.6
<b>Having active social network account</b>		
Yes	213	100.0
<b>Use of social network site*</b>		
Viber	160	75.1
Facebook	151	70.9
E-Mail	141	66.2
Youtube	130	61.0
Messenger	129	60.6
Instagram	126	59.2
Whatsapp	33	15.5
Twitter	21	9.9
IMO	14	6.6
<b>Hours spent in social network site</b>		
1	31	14.6
2	49	23.0
3	28	13.1
4	35	16.4
>4	70	32.9

\* Multiple responses

Table 2 shows that most (88.3%) of the participants used internet for academic activities and one fourth (24.9 %) of them used for playing games. Highest proportion (44.6%) of them spent >4 hours in internet within 24 hour. All of the participants had active social network account. Likewise highest proportion (75.1%) of the participants used viber and lowest proportion (6.6%) used IMO. One third (32.9 %) of the participants spent >4 hours in social networking site and least proportion (13.1%) of them spent 3 hours within 24 hours.

Table 3 shows that more than one third (34.7%) of participants experienced cyberbullying during last one year. Among them, highest proportions (44.6%) of participants were bullied through repeated harmful/teasing/threatening text messages and only 4.1% of the participants were bullied through spreading rumors. Regarding the reasons and perpetrator of cyberbullying, 56.8% of the participants were not known the reasons of their cyberbullying and majority (77.8%) of them did not know the perpetrator of cyberbullying. Similarly, action taken after its victimization, 63% of the participants were blocked the people who perform cyberbullying and 6.8 % of the participants informed to their teachers.

Table 4 reveals that most (70.3%) of the participants faced problems from the cyberbullying. Among them, 61.5% participants faced academic problem followed by 57.7% psychological problems and 48.1% social problems respectively.

Among the participants who experienced academic problems, all of them had lack of concentration in study i.e., in class and / self-study and minimum (6.3 %) participants had absenteeism in classes more frequently. Similarly, among the participants (57.7%) who experienced psychological problem, 66.7 % of them felt angry and 6.7 % low self-esteem. Likewise, participants who experienced social problems, majority (52%) reported withdrawal from social contacts and the desire to stay alone by 20% participants.

## DISCUSSION

This study identified the cyberbullying experiences and its consequences among the nursing students. In present study, most (88.3%) of the participants used internet for academic activities and majority (72.3%) of them used for social network. The study in Canada mentioned that all respondents (98% or more) used the internet for their school work and for email.<sup>4</sup> In this study, all of the participants had active social network account and highest proportion (75.1%) of the participants used Viber, followed closely by Facebook (70.9%). The study in Greece reported that 87.9% of the participants had at least one profile in social network, mainly Facebook, and another study in Philippines

mentioned that 83 % students used social network profile, mainly Facebook.<sup>11,12</sup>

**Table 3:** Experience of Cyberbullying Victimization

Variables	Number	Percentage
<b>Experience of cyberbullying (n = 213)</b>		
Yes	74	34.7
No	139	65.3
<b>Types of cyberbullying experience * (n = 74)</b>		
Receiving repeated harmful/teasing/threatening text messages online	33	44.6
Embarrassing photos/ video clip sent to you online	14	18.9
Repeated online phone calls	14	18.9
Sending you sexually suggestive text messages, photos or videos online	14	18.9
Hacking your social media or email account	13	17.6
Shared yours personal secrets information or images online to others without permission	5	6.8
Spreading rumors about you	3	4.1
<b>Reasons of cyberbullying (n = 74)</b>		
Don't know	42	56.8
For entertainment	16	21.6
To take revenge	13	17.6
Spreading rumors	11	14.9
Careless to maintain safety precautions on internet	10	13.5
Failed love affaires	5	6.8
<b>Perpreators identity (n = 74)</b>		
Don't know	56	77.8
Friends	13	18.1
Neighbour	2	2.8
Relatives	2	2.8
<b>Action taken after cyberbullying (n = 74)</b>		
Block the people who perform cyber bullying	46	63.0
Taken safety precaution on internet	21	28.8
Shared with friends	18	24.7
Informed parents	12	16.4
Closed the account	10	13.7
Ignore or get away from such incident	8	11.0
Never tell anyone	6	8.2
Informed teachers	5	6.8

\*Multiple responses

**Table 4:** Consequences of Cyberbullying Victimization

Variables	Number	Percentage
<b>Problems faced after cyberbullying victimization (n =74)</b>		
Yes	52	70.3
No	22	29.7
<b>Types of problems faced after cyberbullying victimization* (n= 52)</b>		
Academic	32	61.5
Psychological	30	57.7
Social	25	48.1
<b>Details of problems after cyberbullying victimization</b>		
<b>Academic problems (n= 32)</b>		
Lack of concentration in study, i.e., in class and / self-study	32	100.0
Decrease marks/score in examination	6	18.8

Absenteeism in class more frequently	2	6.3
<b>Psychological problems (n= 30)</b>		
Feeling angry	20	66.7
Feeling sadness	13	43.3
Feeling of fear	8	26.7
Feeling of insecurity	7	23.3
Loss of confidence	6	20.0
Low self-esteem	2	6.7
<b>Social problems (n= 25)</b>		
Withdrawal from social contacts	13	52.0
Feeling of hated by others	7	28.0
Desire to stay alone	5	20.0

\*Multiple responses

In this study, highest proportion (44.6%) of the participants spent >4 hours on internet and one third (32.9 %) of the participants spent >4 hours in social networking site within 24 hour. The study in Greece reported that almost all (90.5%) participants used internet up to 4 hours per day which was higher than this study.<sup>11</sup> The study findings in Vietnam was in contrast to this study, i.e., 57.3% of the respondents using of internet devices for less than 1 hour per day.<sup>13</sup>

More than one third (34.7%) of participants experienced cyberbullying during last one year. The study in Fayoum University indicated that 27.3% of the nursing students and 27.5% of the non-nursing students reported online harassment victimization during their past year.<sup>6</sup> The study in Singapore reported that 59.4% of the participants suffered from cyber bullying at least once in the past year.<sup>14</sup> The studies in Norway, Thailand and Kolkata reported contrasting findings than this study i.e., only 16%, 15.1% and 10.5% participants were cyberbullied.<sup>15,16,5</sup>

Highest proportion (44.6%) of participants were bullied through repeated harmful/teasing/threatening text messages. Equal proportion (18.9%) of the participants were bullied by sending embarrassing photos/ video clip, repeated online phone calls and sending sexual suggestive text messages, photos or videos respectively. Similar finding reported from the study in Hong Kong i.e. 42.4% participants told cyberbullying by sending threatening, harassing, humiliating, insulting and teasing messages, images, or videos.<sup>2</sup> A study in Philippines reported that sending and receiving text message by 89.29% participants and posting photo online for cyberbullying by 67.36% participants which was higher than this study.<sup>12</sup> The study in midwestern university in the United States indicated that 21.2% reported that someone had sent them harassing or threatening text messages.<sup>17</sup>

Regarding the reasons of cyberbullying, more than half (56.8%) of the participants were not aware of the reasons of their cyberbullying and 21.6% mentioned for entertainment. The study in Kolkata reported that majority (53.1%) of the participants done cyber bullying for fun.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding the perpetrator of cyberbullying, majority (77.8%) of the participants did not know the perpetrator of cyberbullying and 18.1% reported by their friends. The study in Kathmandu indicated that 22.9% respondents recognized their friends from locality as the most active perpetrators followed by the senior students and their classmates.<sup>7</sup> Another study mentioned 11.2% did not know the person bullied them and 9% reported by one student from his/her school.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, the action taken after cyberbullying victimization, 63% of the participants reported that they blocked the offender, 24.7% reported sharing with friends, 13.7% mentioned closed the account, 8.2% never told the incident to anyone and 6.8 % of the participants informed to their teachers about the event. Study in Canada reported that 40.9 % victims chose to get away (e.g., closed the account) from it, 39.4% never told anyone, 23.5% told with friends and 11.7% told to the adult.<sup>18</sup> Other study findings mentioned that they closed the account, and they were preferring to tell their friends to their parents, teachers and concerned authority.<sup>7, 5,12</sup>

In present study, most (70.3%) of the participants suffered from various problems after its victimization. Among them, majority (61.5%) of the participants reported academic problem and more than half (57.7%) of the participants reported psychological problem and 48.1% reported social problem. The study in Malaysia reported that 85% participants stated that cyberbullying caused them emotional and psychological stress.<sup>9</sup> Among the participants, who had academic problems, cent

percent of them reported lack of concentration in study. Participants who had psychological problems, 66.7% had feeling of anger, 43.3% had feeling of sadness, and 6.7 % had low self-esteem. The study in Fayoum University reported that participants experience mainly anger (74.4%), followed by hatred (15.1%), fear (12.8%), and sorrow (12.2%).<sup>6</sup> The both studies indicate the potentially harmful long-term impacts on psychosocial development, self-esteem, academic achievement and mental health.<sup>19,8</sup> The study in China indicates that a significant correlation existed between mental and physical health, and cyber victimization.<sup>20</sup>

Likewise, among the participants who had experienced social problems, majority (52.0%) of them withdrew from social contacts. One of the

important effects of cyber-bullying was withdrawal from social contacts and experiences.<sup>3,8</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Cyberbullying experiences was found as common problem among the nursing students and most of them suffered from academic, psychological and social problems. Therefore, this study finding might be helpful to administration of nursing college mainly principal and teachers and parents to create awareness among students regarding cyberbullying and its impact in education and health. It would also be helpful to parents and teacher to counsel students for prevention of cyberbullying.

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