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Exploring the Prevalence, Gender Dynamics, and Age-Specific Trends of Bullying Behaviours in School Environments: A Case Study from Lalitpur, Nepal

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Abstract

Bullying is a critical issue in schools, deeply affecting students' physical health, emotional stability, and academic performance. This research explores the prevalence, gender differences, and age-specific trends of bullying among students in private schools in Lalitpur, Nepal. Based on data collected from 154 students aged 10-16 through survey questionnaires, the study provides insights into the forms and patterns of bullying. The findings indicate that boys are more frequently subjected to physical, verbal, and cyberbullying, whereas girls experience higher rates of indirect bullying, although less commonly. Younger students (10-12 years) are found to face more physical and verbal bullying, often driven by impulsive behaviour and struggles for social dominance. In contrast, indirect and cyberbullying are more prevalent among older students (16 years and above), linked to greater use of digital platforms and a tendency towards non-confrontational methods of harassment. The study highlights the influence of societal factors, including gender expectations and access to technology, in shaping bullying behaviours. Addressing these issues requires age-appropriate interventions, such as promoting empathy, inclusivity, and digital responsibility, alongside tackling systemic challenges like toxic masculinity and peer pressure. These measures aim to foster a safer and more inclusive school environment, ensuring the overall well-being of students.

Keywords

Bullying, Gender dynamics, Cyberbullying, School environment, Nepal.

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1. Introduction

Bullying has long been endemic to education and has changed over time in response to shifting cultural values and advances in technology which have brought about new variants and mechanisms of harassment. Although physical and verbal aggression (the conventional type of bullying) still dominates, the arrival of digital technologies has allowed the emergence and diffusion of cyberbullying, thereby enhancing the range and strength of these acts (Meyer, 2016). Understanding the complexities of bullying today requires not only a clear definition of the term but also a comprehensive examination of its prevalence, its evolving nature, and the factors that influence who becomes a target.

Bullying is generally defined as the intentional and repeated infliction of harm on another individual, whether physically, verbally, or psychologically (Meyer, 2009). Physical bullying, by which one punches or kicks another, is the most overt and therefore generally the easiest to spot. Verbal bullying, such as teasing and threats, is also well-recognized. Nevertheless, psychological bullying, which is, insidious but causes great suffering behaviours such as social isolation and manipulation, is frequently disregarded by the principals and has a terrible negative psychological effect on the victims. Meyer (2016) points to the stealthy aspect of psychological bullying, the fact that it is traumatic and difficult to pick up in school institutional settings.

Furthermore, the advent of cyberbullying presents an additional layer of the problem. Cyberbullying is the use of technology to attack, torment or injure another person and cyberbullying exploits social media, email and mobile phone applications to attack victims. In comparison to traditional types of bullying which are limited to the school environments, cyberbullying

expands its threat beyond the physical environment to infiltrate the personal and private lives of its victims. Social media, above all, is the main communication channel for such behaviours, intensifying its effect and creating ubiquitous threats (Horn, 2006). These processes also highlight the changing character of bullying and the growing emphasis on tackling the technological aspects of bullying.

The occurrence and type of bullying are greatly affected by social identities, including gender and sexual orientation. Studies have shown that LGBTIQ+ youth are overrepresented in the targets of comparisons, with others who are straight youth, and that metaphors derived from the works are misused (Kasula, 2023; Ojha, 2024). Horn (2006) has shown that sexual minorities in adolescence are more likely to suffer from bullying, not only traditional bullying but also cyberbullying. Moreover, individuals who deviate from conventional gender norms, regardless of their sexual orientation, face heightened levels of victimization. Cyberbullying statistics also demonstrate these patterns with Meyer (2016) reporting that 41% of LGBTQ+ youth had experienced cyberbullying, including frequently sexualized and biased ways. These patterns also show the interaction of bullying behaviour with societal stereotypes of gender and sexuality, and it is clear that it is important to target both societal and intrapersonal biases.

Gendering does not only dictate the target of the bullying behaviour but who bullies. Research shows that males more frequently are labeled perpetrators of both traditional and cyberbullying compared to females (Meyer, 2009). This trend may be explained by the cultural values that ascribe masculinity to aggression. Moreover, men are typically held to a higher standard of conforming to the socialization of traditional gender roles while deviating from traditional gender roles is met with harsher social disapproval. According to Horn (2006), heterosexual men who did not conform to stereotypical masculine characteristics were punished more severely than homosexual men who conformed to gender norms. These results illustrate the ubiquity of toxic masculinity that metastasizes aggressive behaviours and reproduces binary gender stereotypes that inflict harm on offenders and victims.

The impact of bullying has been drawn to attention for several decades, and that has formed the basis of current research into the phenomenon. Olweus (1993) also noted that bullying frequently arises as the result of an uneven power balance, whereby a powerful

peer exerts control over a perceived powerless peer. behavioural, and emotional factors like anger, jealousy, and fear are especially strong during childhood and drive the development of bullying behaviour. Over time, scholarly attention to bullying has grown exponentially. A search in the PsycINFO database of keywords such as bully and schools produced 1,703 publications of which 1,458 dated from 2000 to 2010 (Atik, 2011). This upsurge in academic interest stems from a greater awareness of the extent and effects of the problem on educational institutions.

Bullying occurs in diverse forms, such as physical violence, verbal aggression and relational victimization. Physical bullying, such as hitting or pushing, is categorized as direct bullying due to its overt nature. Verbal bullying involves taunting and name-calling and relational bullying involves rumor and gossip as well as social isolation (Rothon et al., 2011). Past studies, such as Olweus (1993) and Rivers and Smith (1994), have classified the different types of bullying, including physical, verbal, and indirect forms, emphasizing their multifaceted, negative effects. The physical and social spaces within schools also play a significant role in the occurrence of bullying. Classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, restrooms and even school buses are all known to be locations where bullying behaviours occur (Karkara et al., 2006). Although, for instance, physical bullying in classrooms is typically accompanied by covert behaviours (e.g., pinching, hair-pulling), overt actions (e.g., pushing, hitting) are more frequent in poorly supervised environments. Cyberbullying, facilitated by mobile phones and the internet, extends the problem beyond physical spaces, making it even more pervasive. Underlying causes include insufficient teacher training mobilization, poor training, and poor social awareness of bullies' and antisocial behaviour's consequences.

School bullying leaves effects that extend far beyond victims' physical and mental state. Victims frequently suffer depression, lack of self-worth, health problems, poor academic performance, and lasting psychological consequences (Rana, 2008). A school culture tolerant of bullying negatively impacts the entire educational environment, emphasizing the need for proactive and comprehensive interventions (Rothon et al., 2011). Conventional methods based on making only the infrastructure or teacher's abilities have failed. On the other hand, the creation of a positive and anti-bullying context has become, in itself, of primary importance to improve the teaching-learning experience (Olweus, 1993).

Tackling the underlying systemic nature of bullying requires coordinated action among the school, community, and policymakers. Efforts toward breaking down the ideology of toxic masculinity, dismantling rigid gender roles, and embracing inclusivity can lead to healthier environments that are safe for all students. Moreover, integrating empathy training, conflict resolution skills, and digital literacy into school curriculums can help mitigate the prevalence of bullying in both physical and virtual spaces. Such holistic methods are important for enabling the creation of a context in which students can learn happily and free of fear and bullying.

In this context, the purpose of this study is to investigate the incidence and pattern of child bullying and victimization among school-aged students in Lalitpur, Nepal. It aims to describe the kinds of and the nature of bullying behaviour, to define the main victims of bullying according to their gender and age, and to identify the main districts in schools where bullying happens. By addressing these aspects, the study endeavors to understand the factors contributing to victimization and provide insights into the cultural and behavioural patterns of bullying in schools. It has the ultimate goal of shedding light on the root causes of bullying and leads towards the design of specific interventions to promote a safer and more inclusive school atmosphere.

2. Literature Review: Sociological Perspective on Bullying

Bullying continues to be an endemic issue in schools all around the world, which expresses itself in different ways that change according to cultural and technological development (O'Higgins Norman, 2020). A global study conducted between 2003 and 2015 found that approximately 30.5% of children aged 12 to 17 experienced bullying at school within the previous 30 days (Biswas et al., 2020). In the US, a national survey found that 22.2% of students reported school victimization during the current academic year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). Good solutions to this problem have been difficult to find, as most anti-bullying programs have only seen small decreases in the prevalence of bullying (Evans et al., 2014; Gaffney et al., 2021). A promising strategy is a whole-school strategy that involves parents, teachers, administrators, and members of the community working together to prevent bullying (Gaffney et al., 2021).

The whole-school model is based on the social-ecological model, which investigates processes at the individual, micro, meso, and macro levels of investigation and intervention as a way to understand and combat bullying (Bronfenbrenner, 1975). This model approach analyzes the influence of peers, families, teachers, and societal relations and focuses on the ways and means that power disparities and social expectations underlie bullying. Nevertheless, although the social-ecological model is overall adequate to account for the dimensionality of these multiple levels, the model does not account for the mechanisms parallel to them that directly connect these levels with bullying incidents (Hong et al., 2014; Shafer Silverman, 2013). Complementary theories, like social learning theory, provide further explanations as they identify how people learn bullying behaviours by observing and being reinforced by others in their social world (Bandura, 1969; Espelage et al., 2008).

Sociological frameworks of the topic of bullying enhance these models, by considering the relationship between structural disadvantage and group processes. Bullying often reflects broader societal patterns of inequality, such as those related to race, gender, class, and sexual orientation (Pascoe, 2013). For instance, marginalized identities can amplify power imbalances leading to particular students being at risk of victimization. Sociological points emphasize the importance of tackling these systemic problems to build a school climate that encourages inclusion and equity.

An analysis of social networking also reveals the reasons why bullying occurs and the consequences it has on school communities. It is known that some degree of bullying is adaptive, and used by adolescents to consolidate social hierarchies. Aggressive behaviours can increase an individual's status within their peer network, particularly for those occupying central positions in social groups. Nevertheless, social network studies challenge many conventional notions regarding bullying, demonstrating that even peers with high social status can be bullies and victims of aggression with dramatic social and health implications (Faris, 2012). Moreover, bullying between friends illustrates the inherent complexity of friendship interaction as it can lead to aggression despite friendship (Callejas & Shepherd, 2020).

The cultural factors of school bullying further complicate the responses to diminish them. Schools can become a site for the expression of wider, societal expectations (heteronormativity, CIS

normativity, gender roles). These expectations can build upon and/or deepen stereotypes and inequalities of power as students learn and enact discriminatory actions. For instance, students who are members of the LGBTQ community could be more victimized because of gender control or because of the acceptance of heterosexual norms in school environments (Pascoe, 2013). Efforts to protect marginalized groups can sometimes backfire, as overly protective measures may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes or isolate these students further (Payne & Smith, 2016).

All of these hurdles notwithstanding, sociological work highlights that cultural change through students and small peer clusters is rife with potential. Interactionist theories illustrate how youth can affect school norms by repeatedly excluding aggressive behaviours and rewarding inclusivity (Shepherd, 2017). A dynamic social-ecological model that includes these interactionist perspectives has the potential to yield a more adequate description of the bidirectional influences that bind individuals to their environment, and as such, has greater practical value for anti-bullying interventions.

Bullying is a multilevel problem originating from a complicated social and cultural system. Although current methods, for example, the whole-school model, provide useful options, sociological theory relevant to power, inequality, and social networks, can increase what is known and what is done in terms of bullying. When educators and policymakers focus on addressing systemic inequities and building inclusive school-wide climates, students with existing vulnerabilities are less likely to experience bullying and may also benefit from improved well-being.

3. Research Site and Methodology

The research was conducted in Lalitpur, Nepal, with an emphasis on private schools. These schools were selected because they have a mixed student and have relatively recent facilities that make a special and changing environment for study of the bullying behaviours. The research aimed to explore the prevalence, types, and causes of bullying, along with identifying specific locations within school premises where bullying incidents are most likely to occur. To accomplish such objectives, a descriptive research design was adopted. The study used a purposive sampling method to select 154 students aged 10-16 years from classes 5 to 10. This methodology

made representation among different genders, age cohorts, and school sizes, thus directing a holistic view of the nature of bullying dynamics. The data collection included a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology.

Students were instructed to respond to validated survey questionnaires, all of which contained questions regarding their personal experiences with different types of bullying, including physical, verbal, indirect bullying, and cyberbullying. The collected data were systematically examined with the simple statistical techniques. The analysis was centered around the detection of patterns and trends in victimization, comparing male and female/age differences and pinpointing the physical school areas where bullying was most common. Achieving through a blend of strong data collection techniques and focused analysis, the study offered some interesting findings about the multifaceted character of bullying behaviours among Lalitpur's private schools.

4. Data Presentation and Interpretations

4.1 Physical Bullying by Gender

Physical bullying, also known as direct bullying is the use of physical force to gain control of others. This refers to behaviours, including striking, kicking, punching, or forcefully taking another person's property. Such behaviour is usually found in situations where the power of one over the other are unbalanced, where the power holder uses the victim's assumed vulnerability for their own advantage. Boys tend to participate in physical bullying more often than girls due to more involvement in outdoor activity and sports game, which in turn may lead to disputes or the negative information transferring into an aggressive situation. Table-1 provides a comparative analysis of male and female students based on the frequency of physical bullying they experienced in a month, categorized as no experience, occasional experience (1-5 times), and frequent experience (6 or more times) on the next page.

The above mentioned table-1 data shows the statistical evidence of gender differences with respect to physical bullying experiences. A higher percentage of females (68%) did not report any physical bullying incidents than males (40%). This implies that girls may be less prone to receive such an attention, probably because of their temperamentally typified lower tendency to aggressive and

impingement. Conversely, boys exhibited a higher frequency of occasional bullying, with 32% reporting being bullied 1-5 times in a month, compared to 23% of females. This discrepancy might be explained by the high levels of involvement in competitive activities of boys, in which, confrontations and physical dominance often occur.

Table-1 : Victims of Physical Bullying by Gender

Frequency of Being Physically Bullied	Female (%)	Male (%)
Nil	46 (68)	34 (40)
1-5	16 (23)	28 (32)
6 and above	6 (9)	24 (28)
Total	68	86

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

While only 9% of females reported experiencing frequent physical bullying, a substantial 28% of males faced repeated victimization. This suggests an inclination for boys to be victimized by physical bullying for extended periods of time, which may be a product of group dynamics or the attempt to gain a level of social or athletic dominance. General, the data helps to clarify that boys are exposed to physical bullying more readily, meaning the behavioural patterns are related to their involvement in physically demanding activities as well as to their tendency for competitive aggression.

4.2 Physical Bullying by Age

Physical bullying is a typical issue in grade school children, which is usually triggered by the natural behavioural maturation of the young. Adolescents, especially in the 10-12 years old range, are prone to engaging in physical bullying due to its impulsive and restless character. This population has a tendency to express, through behaviour that included striking out physically, rather than verbally or indirectly. The adolescents, between 13-15 years and older than 15 years, can be considered relatively less constrained, this may be attributed to their greater-age maturity as well as emotional restraint

Table-2 explores the relationship between age groups and the frequency of physical bullying, categorized as no experience, occasional experience (1-5 times), and frequent experience (6 or more times) in a month on next page.

Table-2 : Victims of Physical Bullying by Age

Age Group	Frequency of Being Physical Bullied			Total
	Nil (%)	1-5 (%)	6 and above (%)	
10-12 years	26 (40)	24 (37)	15 (23)	65
13-15 years	43 (63)	13 (19)	12 (18)	68
16 years and above	11 (52)	6 (29)	4 (19)	21

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

Data contained in the above table show differential patterns of physical bullying among age groups. In children (10-12 years) 40% reported no experience with physical bullying, meaning most this age group experience at least some form of physical bullying. This is also corroborated by the number of victims of occasional bullying (37% (1-5 times) or frequent bullying (6 or more times) (23%). These figures indicate not only the increased risk level of younger children for victimization, but also of being bullies themselves because of their energy and reactive tendency to act impulsively.

By contrast, the 13-15-year age group does not report significant physical bullying (only 18% reporting being bullied 6 or more times. The majority (63% reported no physical bullying events, implying that children progressively withdraw from physical fighting as they mature. Similarly, among those aged 16 years and above, 52% reported no experience of physical bullying, while only 19% faced frequent incidents. This set shows the greatest degree of self-control, probably a consequence of greater age and their tendency for using the non-physical resolution of conflicts.

On the whole, the table shows that physical bullying decreases over the age. Physical types of bullying are more prevalent in younger children, both as perpetrators and as victims, and in elder children, who are less prone to perpetrate it and demonstrate their increasing emotional and social maturity. This trend emphasizes the necessity to respond to physical bullying at the youngest age so that healthier relationships can be created while children move from the younger to elate age groups.

4.3 Verbal Bullying by Gender

Verbal bullying, which includes the use of cruel language, insults, and offensive nicknames and jokes, is a common bullying

phenomenon in the school years. This type of bullying is often influenced by societal norms and language practices, where children imitate the informal or insensitive language they hear from adults or media. From an aggressor and competitive viewpoint, the boys are much more likely to be verbal bullies, while girls tend to be more restrained in their verbal interaction.

The following table provides a detailed comparison of verbal bullying experiences among male and female students, categorized into three groups: no experience, occasional experience (1-5 times), and frequent experience (6 or more times) in a month.

Table-3 : Victims of Verbal Bullying by Gender

Frequency of Being Verbally Bullied	Female (%)	Male (%)
Nil	38 (56)	20 (23)
1-5	17 (25)	36 (42)
6 and above	13 (19)	30 (35)
Total	68	86

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table data present a remarkable gender difference of experience in the verbal bullying. Among female students, 56% reported no experience of verbal bullying, suggesting that over half of the girls are not subjected to this form of mistreatment. Conversely, among male students, only 23% reported no experience, highlighting that boys are more likely to encounter verbal bullying. In addition, verbal bullying (1-5 times per month) was reported by 42% boys and 25% girls, thus boys are the subject of verbal harassment more often in the category of verbal bullying too.

The biggest difference appears in the category of frequent victimization (6 or more times per month). While 35% of boys reported being frequently bullied verbally, only 19% of girls faced such incidents. This pattern indicates that boys are more likely to be exposed to chronic verbal aggression and, perhaps, as a result of their early engagement in competitive and aggressive activities, derogatory language is tolerated more often.

Overall, the table highlights that boys' verbal bullying is much higher than that of girls. Boys are not only a more likely victim, but also a perpetrator of verbal bullying, which correlates with their aggressive traits and social relations. However, girls seem to be much

less affected, which might be due to their more passive attitude and stronger emotional tolerance. This data highlights the importance of specific strategies in the management of verbal bullying in order to promote a more acceptable and friendly school climate.

4.4 Verbal Bullying by Age

Verbal bullying, which is often fueled by age-related behaviours and group interactions, refers to the act of inflicting painful nicknames, teasing, or impugning insults on victims, in order to control or purposely embarrass them. Verbal bullying for the younger children (age 10-12 years) with special vulnerability makes it a main and obvious means for the children to join other social groups. With the increasing age span of the children, their mode of interaction alters and verbal bullying is less common in the older age groups as a result of greater maturity and self-regulation. The following table analyzes the prevalence of verbal bullying across three age groups: 10-12 years, 13-15 years, and 16 years and above, categorized by the frequency of bullying experiences in a month.

Table-4 : Victims of Verbal Bullying by Age

Age Group	Frequency of Being Verbally Bullied			Total
	Nil (%)	1-5 (%)	6 and above (%)	
10-12 years	18 (28)	30 (46)	17 (26)	65
13-15 years	31 (46)	15 (22)	22 (32)	68
16 years and above	9 (43)	8 (38)	4 (19)	21

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table reveals obvious age-related trends in verbal bullying-related experiences. Limited to 28% of participants in the 10-12 years age range reported no prior experience with verbal bullying, meaning that the majority of children within this age group experience verbal abuse in some form. This includes 46% who experienced occasional bullying (1-5 times) and 26% who faced frequent verbal bullying (6 or more times). These results are in line with the impulsive and aggressive behaviour of preschoolers, as more verbal aggression is likely to be employed by preschoolers in order to gain social dominance.

In 13-15 years, age range, 46% respondents claimed ignorance of verbal bullying, which is an improvement when compared with

12-15 years age group. Nevertheless, 22% still reported episodic bullying as well as a high number of 32% reported frequent bullying. This shows that although verbal bullying is reduced somewhat in adulthood, a considerable proportion of adolescents in this population, even still typical of disruptive peer relationships, both are victims of, and/or engage in verbal harassment, often resulting from peer pressure and group effects.

For the oldest group, aged 16 years and above, the data shows a marked decline in verbal bullying, with 43% reporting no experience and only 19% facing frequent bullying. In this age group, self-control and maturity are extreme, making them less prone to verbal harassment. Nevertheless 38% still described bullying occasional, which indicates that verbal abuse still happens even among older students.

Under the conclusion, the table shows that verbal violence is most frequent among 10-12 year-old age group, and it decreases with age. These patterns draw attention to the necessity for early intervention against verbal bullying in order to reduce the consequences of early-life bullying and to foster healthier social interactions as children develop.

4.5 Indirect Bullying by Gender

Indirect bullying, which includes behaviours such as spreading rumors, excluding others from social groups, and making mean gestures, is a subtle yet harmful form of bullying. Indirect bullying tends to be overlooked by teachers and adults, and as a result is more difficult to intervene against. Gender differences are at work in the ways in which this kind of bullying occurs, boys and girls are likely to use indirect bullying tactics in different ways depending on their social networks and personality.

Table-5 compares the experiences of male and female students with indirect bullying, categorized by frequency : no experience, occasional experience (1-5 times), and frequent experience (6 or more times) in a month on next page. The data presented in this table show some interesting sex differences in the proportion of indirect bullying. Among female students, 65% reported no experience of indirect bullying, indicating that the majority of girls are not exposed to this form of harassment. However, 26% of girls experienced occasional indirect bullying, and 9% faced frequent incidents. These statistics clarify that although indirect bullying is less prevalent in

girls, it occurs and is frequently characterized by such forms of bullying as rumor-spreading or exclusion-inducing social exclusion, both of which are in line with prevalent traditional gender-based (non-confrontational) patterns of conflict.

Table-5 : Victims of Indirect Bullying by Gender

Frequency of Indirectly Bullied	Female (%)	Male (%)
Nil	44 (65)	45 (52)
1-5	18 (26)	29 (34)
6 and above	6 (9)	12 (14)
Total	68	86

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

It may also be observed that only 52% of male students reported they have not been exposed to indirect bullying, which isolates male students as being slightly more likely to be a victim of this type of mistreatment. A higher percentage of boys (34% reported occasional indirect bullying compared to girls, and 14% of boys experienced frequent incidents, which is also higher than the percentage for girls. That although indirect bullying is less apparent, boys are not immune to it and may engage in it as a means of achieving competitiveness or group cohesion.

In summary, the table reveals that indirect bullying is more frequent in boys than girls even if the difference is less than for physical or verbal bullying. Because of the latent quality of indirect bullying, it can be disguised and harder to notice and deal with, which emphasises the necessity for raising awareness among both students and staff of its consequences. Promotion of inclusive behaviour and formation of positive peer relations may be able to decrease the incidence of this type of bullying in boys and girls.

4.6 Indirect Bullying by Age

Indirect bullying (e.g., rumor spreading, social exclusion, and personal insults) is somewhat different across age groups. Young pupils may exhibit such behaviour as an instrument of social power doing this because such is the prevailing culture in English schools, and older pupils whose emotional maturity is more advanced may employ what is termed indirect bullying as a non-aggressive, asserting, way of power or of attempting to resolve conflicts.

The following table examines the frequency of indirect bullying across three age groups-10-12 years, 13-15 years, and 16 years and above-categorized into no experience, occasional experience (1-5 times), and frequent experience (6 or more times) within a month.

Table-6 : Victims of Indirect Bullying by Age

Age Group	Frequency of Being Verbally Bullied			Total
	Nil (%)	1-5 (%)	6 and above (%)	
10-12 years	41 (63)	20 (31)	4 (6)	65
13-15 years	42 (62)	15 (22)	11 (16)	68
16 years and above	6 (29)	11 (52)	4 (19)	21

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

Data in the above table show age-related variations in experience of indirect bullying. For the youngest age group (10-12 years), 63% of participants claimed to have never experienced indirect bullying, 31% reported sporadic exposures (1-5 episodes), and 6% reported repeated exposure (6 or more times). This suggests that although a large proportion of younger students do not partake in indirect bullying, a considerable number do participate in or suffer from this behaviour (presumably as a result of a social hierarchy struggle).

For the 13-15 years age group, the percentage of students with no experience (62% is similar to the younger group, but the percentage experiencing frequent bullying (16% is notably higher. This indicates that in early adolescence students may be increasingly moving to indirect bullying as an adaptation to academic conflict or to obtain dominance that is more sophisticated and covert.

The oldest age group (16 years) is a clear exception. Only 29% reported no experience of indirect bullying, indicating that this behaviour becomes more common in terms of exposure as students grow older. The large majority (52% suffered from some form of occasional bullying incidents, with 19% with regular bullying. This trend is consistent with the maturity and tactical behaviour of older students, previously opting for indirect bullying instead of direct confrontation.

Overall, the table points out that indirect bullying changes with maturity, decreasing the frequency of bullying among the youngest, and increasing, but less aggressive, frequency among older school

students. This trajectory highlights the importance to consider interventions with differentiated approaches according to the age involved and aims at providing educators with methods to teach empathy and active ways to handle conflict escalation in all age-groups and thereby to prevent indirect bullying.

4.7 Cyberbullying by Gender

Cyberbullying, characterized by the use of electronic communication to intimidate, harass, or demean others, has become increasingly common with the proliferation of technology. This form of bullying often takes place through emails, social media, text messages, or gaming platforms. Gender differences in cyberbullying relate to differing access to technology and to varying ways in which boys and girls experience digital worlds. The following table compares the frequency of cyberbullying experienced by male and female students, categorized into no experience, occasional experience (1-5 times), and frequent experience (6 or more times) within a month.

Table-7 : Victims of Cyberbullying by Gender

Frequency of Cyberbullied	Female (%)	Male (%)
Nil	58 (85)	55 (64)
1-5	8 (12)	24 (28)
6 and above	2 (3)	7 (8)
Total	68	86

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

It may be seen from the above table that there is significant gender-related differences in the cyberbullying prevalence. A high proportion of female students (85% reported no history of having been cyberbullied implying girls are less susceptible to cyberbullying in the online environment. However, 12% of girls reported occasional bullying (1-5 times), while only 3% faced frequent cyberbullying (6 or more times). These values suggest that although cyberbullying is less frequent in girls, it continues to be an issue, particularly when dealing with repeated harassment.

In male single students, the percentage of students with no experience for cyberbullying is smaller, i.e., 64%, which indicates that boy is more often victim of cyberbullying than girl in the cyberspace. Among the boy population, a significant 28% of the boys

reported cyberbullying some time, and 8% of the boys reported cyberbullying often. These higher rates in men may be due to the more intense role of men in that domain (i.e., making use of the internet for online games and social networks, where violence and competition are more commonplace).

In conclusion, the table shows that boys are at greater risk for cyberbullying than girls and that they experience both occasional and frequent incidents at a greater share. This difference illustrates the importance of digital literacy and cyber safety training for boys in preventing dangers related to online experience. Attempts to develop safer online environments and campaigns to raise awareness on the psychological effects of cyberbullying can be instrumental in reducing its occurrence in both genders.

4-8 Cyberbullying by Age

Cyberbullying, a modern form of harassment facilitated through digital platforms such as social media, messaging apps, and gaming networks, impacts students differently across age groups. Children under the age of the internet may receive no exposure to technology, thereby making them less likely to be cyberbullying victims. Nevertheless, with the maturity of the students and the technological access, the number of cyberbullying tend to increase. The following table explores the frequency of cyberbullying experiences among three age groups-10-12 years, 13-15 years, and 16 years and above-categorized into no experience, occasional experience (1-5 times), and frequent experience (6 or more times) within a month.

Table-8 : Victims of Cyberbullying by Age

Age Group	Frequency of Being Cyberbullied			Total
	Nil (%)	1-5 (%)	6 and above (%)	
10-12 years	58 (83)	7 (11)	4 (6)	65
13-15 years	54 (79)	12 (18)	2 (3)	68
16 years and above	4 (19)	13 (62)	4 (19)	21

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

Data presented in the table above amply demonstrate a trend of consistent cyberbullying prevalence by age. Among the youngest group (10-12 years), 83% reported no experience of cyberbullying,

reflecting their limited exposure to technology and online platforms. Only 11% reported occasional cyberbullying and 6% reports per day cyberbullying. These small figures point to the fact that toddlers have less of a 'website' to be targeted in the digital space, given their limited activity online.

Specifically, in the 13-15 yrs. age group, the proportion of students reporting no prior experience of cyberbullying drops to 79%, and 18% admitted to some experience of cyberbullying. Daily cyberbullying is infrequent in this population (3% of participants experienced cyberbullying). This suggests that, as the adolescents age and start to use technology in a more active way, the likelihood of coming into contact with cyberbullying increases, although it remains relatively low at this age.

The eldest one (16 years) is characterized by a dramatic change where only 19% did not report any experience with cyberbullying. A majority (62% reported occasional cyberbullying, and 19% experienced frequent harassment. This phenomenon is an indication of the increased digital exposure of senior students who are heavily involved in social media and other online activities, thereby making them more vulnerable to cyberbullying. The heavy use of technology in conjunction with the hiddenness and pervasiveness of digital communication may be responsible for the increased prevalence of cyberbullying in this age group.

In conclusion, the table illustrates that cyberbullying becomes more prevalent with age, as older students have greater access to and reliance on digital technology. These results highlight the imperative for proactive preventative strategies, such as digital literacy education and cyber safety education, to shield learners from cyber bullying on the internet. Early intervention and responsibility in the digital world for students, to reduce the consequences in all age groups, should be addressed.

5. Major Findings

- ▶ Boys experience significantly more physical bullying than girls, with 60% of boys reporting incidents compared to 32% of girls, and frequent bullying (6 or more times) being notably higher among boys (28%) than girls (9%).
- ▶ The highest rate of physical bullying occurs from the ages of 10-12 years, with 37% reporting occasionally bullying and 23% reporting frequently bullying, but declines in older students.

- ▶ Boys are more vulnerable to verbal bullying than girls, with 77% of boys reporting incidents compared to 44% of girls, and frequent verbal bullying being higher among boys (35%) than girls (19%).
- ▶ Verbal bullying occurs with highest prevalence among 10-12-year-old children, 72% reporting verbal bullying, of whom 26% reported repeated verbal harassment.
- ▶ Boys experience indirect bullying somewhat more than girls (48% of boys versus 35% of girls as targets of bullying incidents, primarily occasional instances).
- ▶ Indirect bullying is the most common among (age group) students aged at least 16 years (71% reporting incidents) which indicates younger students' tendency to prefer more covert, non-confrontational approaches of bullying.
- ▶ Boys are a much greater target of cyberbullying than girls (36% of boys report incidents while only 15% of girls report incidents), probably because boys are more active in online environments.
- ▶ Cyberbullying is most common among students aged 16 years and above, with 81% reporting incidents, including 19% who experienced frequent harassment, due to increased access to technology in this age group.

6. Conclusion

Bullying in its various forms—physical, verbal, indirect, and cyber—is a pervasive issue that affects students across gender and age groups. Boys appear to have a higher susceptibility to physical, verbal, and cyberbully compared to girls, offering evidence of boys participation in competitive and aggressive social interaction. However, girls instead suffer from less obvious types of bullying, e.g., indirect bullying, slightly though less frequent than the case for boys. Age is another important factor, younger students (10-12 years old) are more vulnerable to physical and verbal bullying from their impulsive nature and relatively immature social behaviour. With age, online and cyberbullying are observed to be increasingly on the rife scale, especially for adolescents 16 years and older, as they rely more on technology and often seek non-encountering forms of harassment.

Results also raise the need for age- and gender-specific interventions to prevent bullying in schools. It is important to teach

younger children how to handle their energy and emotion effectively, in order to prevent physical and verbal bullying. For mature students, digital literacy development and cultivation of ethical and responsible online behaviour for counteracting cyberbullying is important. In any age, fostering empathic, inclusive and pro peer relationships can be used to decrease bullying in all its versions. Teachers and parents need to cooperate in order to establish a protective and positive climate in which bullying is explicitly discouraged, and victims are made to feel able to access support.

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