THE IMPACT OF CYBERBULLYING ON THE INFORMATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SECURITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN UZBEKISTAN: PROBLEMS AND MECHANISMS FOR THEIR PREVENTION

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Abstract. This article analyzes the impact of cyberbullying on the information and psychological security of young people, its main forms, contributing factors, and prevention mechanisms. The relevance of the study is determined by the growing likelihood of young people being exposed to cyberaggression, insults, threats, unauthorized use of personal data, fake accounts, and defamatory content alongside the expanding use of digital communication tools, social networks, and messaging platforms. The study employs systematic analysis, comparative analysis, content analysis, and scientific literature review methods. Based on international scholarly sources and materials published by UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Health Organization, the psychological, social, and educational effects of cyberbullying were examined. The findings substantiate the need to view cyberbullying not merely as a technical or ethical problem, but as a complex threat emerging at the intersection of information, psychological, social, and educational security. To protect young people, recommendations were developed to improve media and digital literacy, introduce early detection mechanisms in educational institutions, strengthen cooperation among parents, educational institutions, psychologists, and digital platforms, and establish accessible systems for reporting and recording cyber incidents.

Keywords: cyberbullying, youth, information security, psychological security, digital environment, social networks, cyberaggression, media literacy, digital security.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technologies has significantly expanded young people's opportunities for education, information exchange, and the formation of social relationships. At the same time, the risks emerging in the digital environment are becoming increasingly complex. One of these risks is cyberbullying, which can have adverse effects on young people's psychological well-being, social adaptation, educational activities, and personal safety.

UNICEF defines cyberbullying as repeated behavior carried out through digital technologies with the intention of intimidating, angering, or humiliating another person [1]. It can occur through social networks, messaging platforms, online games, and mobile devices. Cyberbullying includes such actions as spreading false information, posting humiliating photos or videos, sending threatening messages, and using fake accounts created in another person's name [2].

One of the key differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying is its ability to spread widely and persist in the digital environment. For example, even after negative content posted on the Internet has been deleted by the person who originally posted it, it may still be copied or redistributed by other users. Consequently, the pressure experienced by the victim is not necessarily limited to a particular educational institution or specific social environment.

According to UNESCO, school violence and bullying are widespread globally, while the increased use of digital devices has further intensified the problem of cyberbullying. The organization identifies cyberbullying as one of the forms of bullying occurring in online environments, including forms involving psychological or sexual harassment [3, 4].

Analyses published by the World Health Organization in 2025 indicate that the impact of the digital environment on the mental well-being of young people is not uniform, and that negative consequences may be more pronounced among certain age groups and more vulnerable populations. Cyberbullying is identified as one of the important components of these digital risks [5, 6].

From this perspective, ensuring the information and psychological security of young people in Uzbekistan requires a comprehensive examination not only from the perspective of information technologies, but also from the perspectives of pedagogy, psychology, law, and social governance.

The aim of the study is to systematically analyze the impact of cyberbullying on the information and psychological security of young people and to propose practical mechanisms aimed at preventing cyberbullying and reducing its negative consequences.

Research objectives:

1. To clarify the scientific meaning of the concept of cyberbullying;
2. To classify its main forms;
3. To analyze the impact of cyberbullying on the psychological and social security of young people;
4. To identify the characteristics of its manifestation in educational institutions;
5. To propose prevention and protection mechanisms applicable to the conditions of Uzbekistan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is theoretical and analytical in nature and examines scientific literature on cyberbullying and the information and psychological security of young people, analytical materials published by international organizations, and relevant scholarly sources.

The following research methods were employed [7]:

Systematic analysis was used to examine cyberbullying not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a system interconnected with the information, psychological, and social security of young people.

Content analysis was employed to identify definitions of cyberbullying, its forms, and its consequences presented in scientific literature and materials published by international organizations.

Comparative analysis made it possible to identify similarities and differences between traditional bullying and cyberbullying.

The generalization method was used to synthesize findings reported in various scientific sources and to develop preventive mechanisms adapted to the conditions of Uzbekistan.

The methodological basis of the study is a systemic approach to information and psychological security. Within this approach, the security of young people is considered through the interaction of three principal components:

digital environment → psychological state → social and educational activity.

In this framework, negative influences in the digital environment may affect an individual's psychological state, while changes in psychological state may, in turn, influence social relationships and educational activities.

RESULTS

1. Main Forms of Cyberbullying

Based on the analysis, cyberbullying can be classified into the following main forms:

Form of Cyberbullying	Description	Potential Consequences
Insults and threats	Sending insulting or threatening messages through messaging platforms or social networks	Fear and stress
Defamation	Spreading false or negative information	Social isolation
Disclosure of personal information	Distributing photos, videos, or other information without the person's consent	Shame and anxiety

Form of Cyberbullying	Description	Potential Consequences
Fake accounts	Creating an account impersonating another person	Damage to reputation
Online harassment	Repeated messages, comments, or unwanted monitoring	Psychological pressure
Digital mockery	Sharing photos/videos or personal situations with the intention of mocking or humiliating the person	Decreased self-confidence
Exclusion from online groups	Deliberately excluding a person from a social digital environment	Feelings of loneliness

UNICEF identifies the dissemination of false information, the posting of humiliating materials, the sending of threatening messages, and the use of false identities as typical forms of cyberbullying [1].

In addition, the use of images and videos created or manipulated using artificial intelligence in the contemporary digital environment is increasingly regarded as an emerging risk. This may complicate the process of detecting and verifying cyberbullying compared with its traditional forms.

2. Impact of Cyberbullying on Information and Psychological Security

The analytical findings of the study indicate that the consequences of cyberbullying can be divided into three main groups.

The first group — psychological consequences.

These include anxiety, fear, shame, decreased self-confidence, avoidance of social interaction, and a persistent feeling of psychological pressure. UNICEF notes that cyberbullying can negatively affect mental and emotional well-being, as well as sleep and physical health [2].

The second group — social consequences.

Young people exposed to cyberbullying may avoid communicating with their peers, withdraw from social groups, or develop negative perceptions of their social status.

The third group — educational consequences.

Psychological pressure may lead to decreased interest in educational activities and reduced concentration. UNESCO notes that school bullying can have long-term effects on students' safety, mental and physical health, and educational outcomes [3].

Thus, the impact of cyberbullying is not limited to "conflicts on the Internet." It can also extend beyond the digital environment and affect real-world social relationships.

3. Factors Contributing to the Spread of Cyberbullying

Based on the analysis, the factors influencing the spread of cyberbullying can be systematized as follows [8]:

Technological factors:

- use of anonymous or fake accounts;
- the ability to distribute content rapidly and widely;
- long-term persistence of digital traces;
- transfer of content between different platforms.

Psychological factors:

- low levels of empathy;
- impulsive behavior;
- insufficient awareness of the consequences of digital communication;
- peer influence.

Social factors:

- insufficient parental supervision and communication within the family;
- peer-group pressure;
- lack of clearly established mechanisms for addressing cyberbullying in educational institutions.

Factors related to information literacy:

- inadequate skills in protecting personal information;
- difficulties in identifying harmful content;
- failure to use reporting and blocking functions provided by digital platforms.

DISCUSSION

Reducing cyberbullying cannot be achieved solely by deleting inappropriate messages from the Internet. The complex nature of the problem requires cooperation among multiple stakeholders to prevent and address it.

UNICEF recommends that young people experiencing cyberbullying seek support from a trusted adult, block the relevant user on digital platforms, and use available mechanisms for reporting incidents [2].

The World Health Organization also considers the impact of the digital environment on the mental well-being of young people as an important factor and emphasizes the need for comprehensive measures in public policy aimed at reducing risks associated with the digital environment [5].

Based on these considerations, it is appropriate to apply a **"early detection – reporting – psychological support – digital safety – monitoring"** model for cyberbullying prevention within the education system of Uzbekistan.

Proposed Model

Stage 1. Early Detection

Teachers and psychologists in educational institutions should receive appropriate training to identify the early signs of cyberbullying.

Stage 2. Reporting

An electronic reporting channel should be established through which pupils or students can report incidents either anonymously or with identification.

Stage 3. Preservation of Evidence

In cases of cyberbullying, individuals should be informed about procedures for preserving messages, screenshots, links, and other forms of digital evidence. UNICEF also identifies the existence of a digital trace as an important characteristic of cyberbullying [1, 2].

Stage 4. Psychological Support

A mechanism for providing psychological support should be developed, while avoiding a blaming or accusatory attitude toward the victim.

Stage 5. Digital Prevention

Regular training should be organized for young people on media literacy, personal data protection, secure passwords, two-factor authentication, identification of suspicious links, and the use of privacy settings on social networks.

Stage 6. Monitoring

The collection of anonymized statistical data on cyberbullying incidents in educational institutions can contribute to assessing the dynamics of the problem.

This approach makes it possible to view cyberbullying not merely as a personal conflict between a victim and an aggressor, but as a complex problem involving educational institutions, families, digital platforms, and society.

The automatic detection of cyberbullying presents a particular challenge for low-resource languages and dialects. Therefore, the development of national language corpora and local digital databases for detecting cyberbullying content in the Uzbek language represents one of the promising research directions [9].

When developing technologies for cyberbullying detection, it is necessary to consider not only general linguistic characteristics but also the cultural and communicative features of a particular society. Contemporary studies conducted in the context of Muslim societies also demonstrate the importance of culturally adapted artificial intelligence models [10].

CONCLUSION

The theoretical and analytical findings of the study indicate that cyberbullying constitutes a complex digital threat affecting the information and psychological security of young people. Its principal characteristics include the rapid dissemination of harmful content, its ability to reach a large number of users, and its persistence as a digital trace.

In addition to its psychological consequences, cyberbullying has social and educational consequences. Therefore, addressing the problem solely through technical means is insufficient. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been developed:

1. To develop internal preventive mechanisms for preventing cyberbullying in educational institutions;
2. To systematically improve young people's digital and media literacy;
3. To develop methodological guidelines for teachers and psychologists on identifying cyberbullying;
4. To introduce electronic systems that enable anonymous reporting and submission of complaints;
5. To organize practical seminars on digital safety for parents;
6. To expand practical training for young people on safe use of social networks, protection of personal information, and documentation of cyber incidents;
7. To establish a regular system of anonymous statistical monitoring of cyberbullying.

Overall, ensuring the information and psychological security of young people requires technological, pedagogical, psychological, and social mechanisms to operate as an integrated system.

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