

EXPLORATION OF CYBERBULLYING BEHAVIOUR  
AMONG STUDENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DHAKA  
DURING COVID-19

By

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A thesis submitted to the BRAC Institute of Educational Development in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my original work while completing degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate citation and referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain any material that has been accepted or submitted for any other degree program or diploma at a university or similar institution.
4. I have acknowledged all major sources of help properly.

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## Approval

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## **Ethics Statement**

I, Md. Tanvir Rahman Bhuiyan, hereby consciously assure that for the manuscript titled “Exploration of Cyberbullying Behaviour among Students of Secondary Schools in Dhaka during Covid-19” the following is fulfilled.

1. This material is my own original work, which has not been previously published or submitted elsewhere.
2. All sources used in this manuscript are appropriately identified and cited. Text that is literally copied must be identified as such by using quote marks and providing suitable references.
3. All the participants of this research willingly participated in this research.
4. The participants’ identities who have participated in this research are confidential, protected and will not be revealed at any point.
5. The findings are suitably contextualized in relation to previous and present research.

## **Abstract**

Cyberbullying is attracting widespread attentions of academic interests globally as an emerging issue. A challenging aspect to understand this phenomenon in Bangladeshi context is inexistence of enough literature despite the global prevalence and local tension around the topic due to development of online class during covid-19. This study aims to seek the prevalence of cyberbullying and its relationship to the time spent online among secondary grade school going children in Dhaka in light of covid-19 period. Besides, it intended to understand the influencing capacities of power-driven social group-based hierarchy on cyberbullying and how society as a whole is sustaining an institutional discriminatory environment providing hegemonic control through cyberbullying. A mixed method research approach has been adopted to find the generalized answers while understanding the phenomenon closely based on the new theory. As far as the research is concerned, social dominance theory is being used for the first time in this context to understand cyberbullying as the result of a societal and structural discriminatory process nurtured through power based social hierarchies. The study finds strong prevalence of cyberbullying behaviour among the respondents comparable to the scenario of North American region. Moreover, there are significant relationship between time spent online and the cyberbullying experiences. It has also been originated that socially structured powerful groups dominate less powerful group through institutional discrimination where family, school and society have important role to sustain that discrimination resulting a hegemonic control. Thus, to establish the hegemonic control cyberbullying has been weaponized by the dominating groups by inflicting fear inside the victim's mind. Hence, the author recommends a comprehensive structural ecological process to be considered to strategize and implemented to prevent cyberbullying to provide safe learning environment and virtual space to the children.

## **Dedication**

I primarily dedicate this thesis to my younger self, who despite facing constant bullying, survived and embraced all his God-gifted shortcomings and working to make himself a good human being. I also want to dedicate this thesis to my beloved wife for her continuous effort in providing me strong emotional support while I was completing this thesis.

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## List of Acronyms

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| ASK    | Ain o Salish Kendro  |
| CAQDAS | Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software                 |
| ERIC   | The Education Resources Information Center                           |
| EU     | The European Union   |
| GoB    | The Government of Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh                    |
| ICT    | Information Communication Technology                                 |
| IMO    | In My Opinion (it is an instant messaging platform)                  |
| SDO    | Social Dominance Orientation   |
| SDT    | Social Dominance Theory  |
| UK     | The United Kingdom   |
| UN     | The United Nations   |
| UNESCO | The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | The United Nations Children's Funds                                  |
| US     | The United States of America   |

**Note:** The list of acronyms is alphabetically ordered rather than order of appearance.

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction and Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

A study on secondary school going children of Bangladesh in 2018 has shown that 43% of the respondents faced cyberbullying (Sarker and Shahid, 2018). UNICEF Bangladesh has expressed concerns in 2019 about Bangladeshi children being prey of cyberbullying and urged to take actions. Has it been increased from that time during the school closure with increased interaction through ICT devices and communication technologies? Any solid conclusion remains vague due to lack of the existence of enough shreds of evidence. Global lockdown due to the covid-19 pandemic brought school closure across the world. Though several countries already opened schools with limited access including Bangladesh, changes have come to the life of school going children. The covid-19 school closure embedded use of technology in the life of secondary school students as well as students from other education levels such as primary, higher secondary and university level. These online spaces are so open that less can be defined as private. From waking up in the morning to bedtime or even in the time of sleep we are somehow connected to the internet and the consequence of one activity can go on (Monni and Sultana, 2016). It creates wide opportunities for aggressive behaviour and crime such as cyberbullying. The dependency on ICT devices and online communication tools during covid-19 time made it more critical due to unavailability of usually used communication medium (Utemissova et al, 2021). The prevalence of cyberbullying has emerged as a new phenomenon and increased during this lockdown in many countries. The Wuhan state of China has faced the lockdown first in the world and Yang (2021) has found that through studying a large sample (n=5608) that people adopted many strategies to cope up with the lockdown stress and cyberbullying attack is one of them. As a result, the ideation of this study has been initiated

to explore cyberbullying among pandemic schooling settings in Dhaka megacity of Bangladesh. Sarker and Shahid (2018) focused on the pre-covid-19 situation of Chittagong city, but I through this study aim to find out the covid-19-time cyberbullying prevalence in Dhaka megacity along with the perception of the students and teachers about cyberbullying. Many studies have tried to underpin the cyberbullying behaviour with theories, but few has been studied based on power dynamic existing in the social structure that might impact cyberbullying behaviour. I hence aim to find out if any asymmetrical behaviour as a result of socially constructed group-based hierarchies invokes cyberbullying behaviours. The continuous flow of news and information related to cyberbullying in the country makes it crucial to study this phenomenon and the findings might help the policy makers, legislators, and educational institution in addressing this issue. The following chapter contains the research topic, problem statement, research questions, purpose of the study and its significance. The second chapter contains literature review and conceptual frameworks that guided this research followed by third chapter discussing the research methodology. The fourth chapter documented the findings of the study, and the final chapters conclude the study with discussion and recommendations around cyberbullying.

## **1.2 Research Topic**

The topic of the study is cyberbullying in secondary level students at Dhaka megacity's school during the covid-19 pandemic. Bullying is a common problem schools are dealing with and being researched for quite a long time, while cyberbullying is a newly emerged problem within bullying that has more complex dynamics due to anonymity, online presence, technological flourishment, and now added scenario covid-19. Cyberbullying impact the victim and often found that the bullies are also dealing with issues both leading to physical and mental harms not mentioning the harm to education. The increasing cyberbullying also impact the teaching-learning environment by making school and learning space unsafe especially to the victim. The

study will revolve around the prevalence and perception of teachers and student on cyberbullying during the school closure due to the covid-19.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The schools have been closed due to the covid-19 for a long time, and children are now more used to spending most of their time with digital devices at home. Experts warned the parents globally that the children are now at higher risk of online sexual exploitation and cyberbullying on virtual platforms due to the school closure (The Economic Time, 2020). UNESCO attributed the increased risk of cyberbullying to the covid-19 pandemic since more students are now learning and socializing online, mentioning that one in every three children face cyberbullying (UN News, 2020). The UN agency not only found that peers are responsible for bullying, but also in some cases, teachers and others are responsible. It raises the question that what is our condition in terms of cyberbullying? Bangladesh government closed all the school on March 18, 2020. However, govt initiated television broadcasted classroom shortly after that and instructed school and college to start online classes (GoB, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, 2020). UNICEF Bangladesh conducted a study in 2019 on 1281 young student and, via a press release, asked for actions to prevent cyberbullying and harassment (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2019). With the given scenario of the increasing presence of children in online spaces and the conduction of classes through online platforms during the pandemic, the prevalence of cyberbullying in Bangladesh must be increased, and it is now essential to understand the dynamics of this phenomena, what influencing it, and how are we addressing it? Even though school has been reopened recently the newspapers are full of cyberbullying news. Study has shown that cyberbullying victim tends to avoid and drop out school, perform lower academically and it distresses their interpersonal relationship (Kowalski et al., 2008). Study on Ontario Teachers College in 2007 put that 24% of the teacher expressed that the cyberbullying leads to dropout and creates problems in teaching (Choucalas, 2013). Only two



research have been found that have been conducted in Bangladesh, and those are assessing the mental impact of cyberbullying and the activities that victimize students for cyberbullying. However, the prevalence of cyberbullying based on intergroup relationship hierarchy created through socially attributes aspects such as physical appearance, gender difference and religious identity and student and teachers' opinion and perspectives about cyberbullying victimization and offensive behaviour has not been yet explored strongly. Hence, I project to explore more about the cyberbullying among secondary school going children during the covid-19 pandemic through the social hierarchy based intergroup relationship alongside exploring its numeric prevalence.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The objective of the study is to find out the prevalence of cyberbullying among the students at secondary schools in Dhaka during the Covid-19 and the perception of students and teachers on cyberbullying hereafter I will pursue the answers to the following questions,

Key Question 1:

What is the prevalence of cyberbullying among students at secondary schools and its relationship with their time spent online?

Research Sub-questions:

- 1.1) To what extent cyberbullying is prevalent among student of secondary grades in Dhaka megacity?
- 1.2) To what extent online presence of the secondary grades' students during covid-19 increased their cyberbullying behaviour?

## Key Question 2:

What are the perceptions of students and teachers about the relationship between social dominance and cyberbullying and how family, school and society sustain that?

## Research Sub-questions:

- 2.1) What is the linkage between group based social hierarchies and cyberbullying behaviour as perceived by students and teachers?
- 2.2) What is the role of school, family, and society in establishing social hierarchical control of one group over another through cyberbullying?

## **1.5 Purpose of the Study**

This study intends to understand the prevalence of cyberbullying among students of secondary level grades (8, 9 and 10) in Dhaka city during the pandemic lockdown and the perception of students and teachers on cyberbullying behaviour based on social dominance. The study proposes to find out the commonness of cyberbullying among secondary-level students during the covid-19 lockdown, time spent online and its relationship with cyberbullying behaviour, influence of social hierarchical groups in cyberbullying and how family, school, and society is supporting that behaviour.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

An exploratory study by Sarker and Shahid (2018) based on 21 respondents of secondary grade 8, 9 and 10 have shown that almost 43% of the respondents have experienced cyberbullying and an almost similar percentage of the respondents have cyberbullied others once or more. However, less studies about cyberbullying in Bangladesh is available. Ain O Salish Kendro

(ASK) press briefed about their survey report that found that 30% of the respondent faced harassment during the covid-19 lockdown (The Daily Star, 2021). The report mentioned several amendments and implementation of the legal framework in the country to prevent it. However, less structured research has been found on this issue in Bangladesh that also hinders to understand the problems and take measurement to prevent it. There is a gap about scope of generalizing the cyberbullying victimization and offense statistically, whether social dominance has contribution in cyberbullying or not, how students perceive cyberbullying and teacher's perception. In light of these findings, I, through this study, in a limited manner, will try to explore cyberbullying in the secondary level schools of Dhaka city by using mixed method studies to extract in-depth insights about the problem that might potentially help future researchers to study it further broadly or draw the attention of policymakers, practitioners and stakeholders. The prevalence information and the teacher-students perception would also help relevant policymakers and authorities to take necessary steps to prevent cyberbullying and make schools, learning environment and online space safe for children.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

This section of the study elaborates the information from several secondary sources including books, published journal articles, reports and documents that have been synthesized in order to understand the cyberbullying among school going children. Not only the cyberbullying as a topic of discussion will be presented but also the global and national situation in terms of prevalence, perspectives, and policies along with the correlation with instable time such as covid-19 pandemic will be entailed. Hence, this chapter will be flown by cataloguing it in the following areas a) cyberbullying and its impact, b) prevalence of cyberbullying in global and local context, c) the impact of covid-19 on cyberbullying, d) construction of cyberbullying and impact of different role, and e) policies and legal framework to prevent cyberbullying in both the global and local context. The conceptual framework based on the theoretical aspects considered for this research will be illustrated at the end of the section.

#### **2.1 Cyberbullying and its Impact**

In context of contemporary generation of media reports, academic and organizational research, documented institutional incidents in school, distinct anecdotes and observation of behaviors support the happening of cyberbullying as well as traditional bullying in school premises occurs long before it has been noticed through empirical research (Rigby, 2002). The pioneer in considering the school based aggressive behaviors for empirical study is Dan Oloweus started back in early 1970's (Gredler, 2003). Sharp increase of the number of the researches in academic arena has been observed recently to interpret the bullying behaviors through the usage of new communication technologies (Patchin and Hinduja, 2006). Remarkably, research are interpreting cyberbullying as school safety issues having short and long term impact on students, school environment and community (Li, 2006; Mason, 2008; Newey and Magson,

2010). With the expansion of the modern technologies, bullying has found its new resting place in the virtual world, termed as cyberbullying (Newey and Magson, 2010).

As referred in the study of Aune (2009) and Belsey (2004) defined cyberbullying as the intentional, persistent, and holistic behavior by individual or group of individuals against individual or group of individuals to cause physical, mental or social harms using ICT based platforms. These ICT based platforms entails email, messaging, blogs, social medias such as Facebook, and Instagram, instant messaging platform including but not limited to WhatsApp, IMO, Viber, Messenger, online entertainment-based platform such Likee, Tiktok, and YouTube audio and video-based platform such as zoom, Microsoft team and other platforms. Scholarly definitions have argued that the intention of cyberbullying is to invoke dread, distress or hurt by the use of communication technologies and includes pejorative and destructive messaging using text, image, or videos (Manson, 2008; Smith et al., 2008). Though there are several similar definitions of cyberbullying defining at from the notion traditional bullying is difficult due to location, anonymity of the bully and the complexity in identifying reputation pattern. Even if the content creation to bully may be one time but it harms the victim with every succeeding reach redistributed among peoples without time limitations (Hasse et al., 2019). Measuring intention of harm is also complicated as some may intend to harm but some might not be aware of the consequences of their action as well as some might do it due to peer pressure as argued by Offman (2013). Nevertheless, considering definitional criteria of bullying a) intentional, b) repetition and c) inflicting harm Menesini et al. (2012) concluded through the reflection of youth and adolescents that intentions or one-time act might not be essential to operationalize the bullying act, but the reaction of the victim should be paramount if it creates negative impact. Resonating to that finding, Jeffrey and Stuart, (2019) and Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) defined that in comparison to offline bullying simply one time act of creating content that with or without intentions of harm constitute cyberbullying. However, if

cyber aggression is differentiated from cyberbullying, repetition should be considered as opposed in the work of Corcoran et al., (2015).

Newey and Magson, (2010) categorized cyberbullying into nine types by analyzing different studies. Flaming or flame war occurs targeting victims through rude and angry message usually involves discourteous language (Willard, 2011; Hinduja and Patchin, 2009). Online harassment is the continuous and recurring aggressive messaging especially targeting specific individual also known as text war (Kowalski et al, 2008). Pretending to be another person by hacking or gathering another individual's information in order to spread hurtful information against the target to others is identity theft and a frequent cyberbullying case nowadays (Willard, 2011). Outing is leaking sensitive and personal information of the victim that should remain secret while ostracism occurs when the target is purposively excluded from a group or deleted or blocked from a forum or intentional unresponsiveness towards the victim (Kowalski et al., 2008; Willard, 2011). Spreading damaging information known as misinformation argued by the same authors. Li (2006) brought another type of harassment to attention known as cyber stalking where bully repeatedly terrorize or prowls the victim such as "I am watching you." Another comparatively new form is happy slapping where intentional bullying take place against the victim for the solitary purpose of leaking the evidence if bullying online for entertainment (Willard, 2006). A very recent identification of cyberbullying is sexting where perpetrator intentionally send sexual message including text, naked or partially naked photos (Battersby, 2008).

Traditional bullying has its impact physically, mentally, and socially on the victims and those who are related. However, cyberbullying being different in terms of usage of media has its impact in similar way. In right or wrong way, victims are able to deal with the consequences of cyberbullying, but research have shown its long-term impact significantly on mental health (Rivers and Noret 2010). It is well evidenced that cyberbullying often put victims experiencing

anxious and loneliness, difficulties in adjusting school environment and leads to physical complex in long terms such as headache and nausea (Juvonen and Schacter, 2017). Experiencing single events of being bullied or cyberbullied can increase the level of anxiousness. Due to the anonymity of the bully and lack of identification cyberbullying creates another new level to the consequences on the victim (Mitzner, 2011).

Mishna et al. (2009) found that many victims would not report or take actions against cyberbullying as choice out of fear of being deprived of privileges to use internet or ICT devices that creates vacuum for long term negative impact. These diversified reactions to cyberbullying can lead to devastating events such as committing suicide reported widely in press and researches (Ang et al., 2011, Camp 2016). Low self-esteem, feeling of shame, weakened self-respect, depression takes place as a result of cyberbullying as argued by Garbarino and deLara in 2002 (Herzick, 2004). Cyberbullying issues not only limited among the adolescent's victims but also their families and little empirical exploration has taken place regarding this. Fnaty et al., (2012) found through longitudinal study that the family support act as vital protective element in reducing negative impact of victimization of cyberbullying hence concluding that the opposite impact family stresses too. Gorzig and Machackova (2015) analyzed prevalence of cyberbullying and indicated that parental concerns, internet use and involvement of parents, restraining mediation reduce cybervictimization. Empirical literature review by López-Castro & Priegue, (2019) jotted down surprising results that cybervictimization is associated with victim's single parent household, and separated parents. The study has also amassed that domestic conflict, intimate companion violence influence role of cyberbully. It can easily be concluded that families are also impacted by the cyberbullying issues.

## **2.2 Prevalence of Cyberbullying among Children and Adolescents: Global and National Context**

Since, cyberbullying is an emerging global phenomena and more empirical exploration is being conducted across the world leading to findings of increased prevalence, it is still confined mostly in the developed countries. This section of literature will review the prevalence of cyberbullying in global context and Bangladesh context. Study by Patchin, (2019) found that usually 28% youth in the US have experienced cyberbullying while 16% admitted involvement in cyberbullying. The study also depicted that 115 of the participants experienced cyberbullying in the previous 30 days during the conduction of the study. Patchin and Hinduja (2015) conducted several researches from 2007 to 2019 that supported their definition of cyberbullying to echo youth's perception and shown these results based on responses of more than 21000 participants from age range 12-17. Their exploratory study on available literature has shown that cybervictimization in the US range from 2.3% to whopping 72% and involvement of adolescents as cyberbully ranging from 1.2% to 44.1% (Hinduja and Patchin, 2015). Heirman et al., (2015) posited that the vast expansion of prevalence occurs due to usage of platforms, research methods, direct and indirect assessment of cyberbullying and due to self-report mechanism.

In Canada, a study found that almost 25% of the respondents (n=432) from grade 7 to 9 faced cyberbullying (Beren and Li, 2005). Another research in Australia by Cross et al., (2008) have shown that 20% of the respondents were the victim of cyberbullying and 10% were cyberbullies (n=10000). Mitzner (2011) has found by analysing several research pieces in the North American context that 10% to 35% of the respondents in several studies have either been cyberbullied or acted as a cyberbully.



Livingstone et al., (2014) conducted study in seven European country and found that in 2010 8% and in 2014 12% of the participants were victim of cyberbullying. Suter et al., (2018) found by analysing responses of 1200 Swiss adolescents age ranging from 12-19 that 23% have been cyberbullied. Hasse et al., (2019) referred that Blaya,(2013) found 6% victim by studying 3200 adolescents age ranging from 11-16 in France, Bevilacqua et al., (2017) found 6.4% victim by conducting research on over 6000 adolescents from 11-12 years old in the UK. Research has found that older participants age ranged from 15-17 and girls were more prey to cyberbullying in comparison to younger respondents. Latin America is not lagging behind at all to see such increase in cyberbullying around the other parts of the world. Brazilian Internet Steering Committee (2018) found that 39% of the respondents or around 9.7 million children faced some sorts of cyber space complication entailing cyberbullying.

A nationally representative study in Ghana found that around 33% (n=2000) youth of ages from 9-17 faces cyberbullying (IPSOS Ltd Ghana, 2017). Study of Palfrey and Gasser, (2016) found in South Africa by conducting survey on 900 youth of 9-17 years old that 27.1% have been victimized in prior one-year timeframe. Olumide et al., (2016) found in Nigeria that 39.8% of the respondents (n=653) have been victimized of cyberbullying.

Research by Tarabulus et al., (2015) found that 8.9% (n=458) Israeli adolescents aged from 11-13 have been victimized by cyberbullying. Different multi country studies in Middle East and Asian region by Microsoft in 2012 on adolescent from the age of 8-17 found responses that 28% in Qatar and 27% in Egypt have been bullied on cyber space (Hasse et al., 2016). Jaghoory et al., (2015) conducted study on adolescents of age 10, 13 and 15 in Iran and Finland (n=630 and n=620) found that adolescents in Iran is comparatively more prone to be cyberbullying victimization. A comprehensive study of Rao et al (2019) explored that in China 44.5% of the respondents (n = 2590) studying in grade 7-10 have been cyberbullying victim within the last 6 months period. In Japan 22% of high school student participants (n=899) responded that they

faced cyberbullying from elementary school (Udris, 2015). Another study on 1487 adolescents age ranging from 15-16 postulated that 52.2% of the respondents faced cyberbullying in the last year (Marret and Choo, 2017). Another multi-country study found that Indian adolescent (n=480) faced greater victimization than Japan and China (Wright et al., 2015). Microsoft found that 26% in Pakistan faced cyberbully (Hasse et al., 2016).

Much have been done in global cyberbullying research context, however, in Bangladesh, several studies are available on traditional bullying focusing on school going adolescents but handful on cyberbullying. Even combined number of research on cyberbullying are few. Through intensive search in online repositories such as ERIC, SCOPUS, Sage, Taylor and Francis Online, Semnatic Scholar, Springer link and google scholar, only three studies on cyberbullying issues among adolescent have been found. Monni and Sultana, (2016) have shown through exploratory descriptive research on adolescent and young girls age ranging from 10-20 years found that 90% of the participants (n=50) have been victimized due to cyberbullying. 80% of the respondents in the study responded that their experience of cyberbullying is frequent. The online communication platforms where the participant faced cyberbullying is Facebook and instant messaging app. Interestingly the author only have focused on the male perpetrator only. The most alarming information of the study was that 100% of the respondents agreed that cyberbullying is increasing tendencies to commit suicide. Among participants, 20% were secondary school going girls. Sarker and Shahid (2019), conducted survey research on participants age ranging from 13-18 studying from grade 8-10 depicts that 43% (n=21) of the respondents have been cyberbullied inside the school premise. 19% of the participants expressed that they have cyberbullied others inside the school premise and 9.5% is frequently involved in cyberbullying. 43% of the respondents shared the incidents with a friend while 33% of them have chosen to react to the bully and asked to stop and only 5% of them reported to the school authority. 14.5% of the participants think that reporting does

not help and sometimes make the situations worse. Only 14.29% get family supports and almost 5% of them do not get any supports. Most of the hurtful message involves commenting on self-worth, appearance, and intelligence. Less than half of the participants think that cyberbullying is fun to the bullies and almost a quarter think that they do it as a defence mechanism while few others believe it is because of their family issues. The study also concluded that most of the students are not aware of safety strategy and only 4% responded that teachers teach about safety measures. Mallik and Redwan (2020) found that 27.3% of the respondents have been victimized with a higher percentage of boys. 27.3% of them suffered from a psychiatric disorder of significance. However, emotional distress and behaviour was higher and 9.1% of them experienced major depression. The study found an interesting aspect that 60.87% of the bullies who have bullied were virtual friends.

The horrific and devastating evidence of prevalence of cyberbullying in different corners of all the continents prove that even though it is an emerging phenomenon in terms of empirical research it is not new, but an existing evil adopted with the time. All these evidences surprisingly explored victimization of cyberbullying mostly and less information about cyberbullies creating a vacuum for further research. In addition to that, the less exploration of the issues in Bangladesh creates urgency to explore this issue more.

### **2.3 Covid-19 and Cyberbullying**

Covid-19 has disrupted the regularity in our life and from 2020 school closure during the lockdown period took the classrooms to online platforms increasing the scope of cyberbullying (Mkhize and Gopal, 2021). Mkhize and Gopal, (2019) found in their study that the use of social media platforms by children has been increased during lockdown and many are facing cyberbullying. Bangladesh is not different and followed the example of other countries lately. Though Bangladesh is lagging in internet speed, it is not lagging in internet usage and

cybercrime (Kamal et al., 2012). During the school closure, due to the covid-19 pandemic, 42 million students are not able to attend classes till now (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2020). However, schools' initiation of the online classes as an order of the government directly engages students online for learning and socializing (Farhana et al., 2020). As a study in Bangladesh found high level of students' presence in online platforms is bringing them under the risk of cyberbullying (UNICEF, 2019a; Sarker and Shahid, 2018). Another report by World Childhood Foundations and several other organizations indicated that online sexual exploitations, self-generation of sexual content, spreading misinformation, harmful contents, widely sharing of private information could increase (World Childhood Foundation et al., 2020). Ducharme (2019) indicated that one time cyberaggression may increase cyberbullying regarding to comparison and appearance.

Vaillancourt et al., (2021) assessed that bullying has been increased during covid-19 period (n=6500) in Canada but there was a decrease in cyberbullying during covid-19 at 11.5%. Bacher-Hicks et al., (2021) explored google trend and found that with the school reopening during covid-19 the trend of cyberbullying issues got increased. Utemissova et al., (2021) found in Russia by conducting survey on 32 adolescents that 25% of them faced cyberbullying and 50% of them was bystander during covid-19. Though bullying victimization during school closure has decreased sharply, cyberbullying has increased to 22.6% in the US (Patchin, 2021). However, the author noted that the finding was not clearer due to surprising result that only 4.9% reported that they cyberbullied others. It was also first time in the long period of bullying study of the research duo that respondents reported facing bullying online rather than offline. Patchin, (2021) concluded that school bullying has been reduced significantly by school closure but cyberbullying slightly increased and with the more involvement of adolescents in technology the scope of incidents is still valid. Lobe (2021) conducted research on 6195 adolescents from 11 years old to 18 years old in 11 countries in Europe and found that on an

average 49% of the participants experienced cyberbullying. Research of correlation between online presence during covid-19 and cyberbullying have not been conducted much hence the trend still remain unclear and needs more attention in academia.

## **2.4 Construction of Cyberbullying and Impacts of Different Roles**

People often tends to believe that bullying is a normal part of being grown up and the same goes for cyberbullying (Camp, 2016). They also perceive it as a ritual of growing up that, children must cope up with. The perception of school and community to accept or reject cyberbullying be it positive or negative has noteworthy impact on the children. The consequences are also negative as Garbarino and deLara in 2002 indicated that normative behavior of accepting emotional cyberbullying and bullying create unsafe environment to learn (Herdzik, 2004). This belief and attitude create normalization of not getting support and inflict more fear in the mind of victim as they do not have control over it. It leads to less willingness to report and increase the incidents. Williams and Guerra (2007) argued that environment where all types of bullying such as physical, oral and cyberbullying creates due to implicit acceptance of bullying and cyberbullying, response-less bystander behavior, adverse support mechanism and capricious school environment. However, Morin et al., (2015) argued that improved relationship among students and teachers helps to internalize the negative impact of cyberbullying. Thapa et al., (2013) found that schools become unsafe to students as a result of broken interpersonal relations between school staffs and students. This combined that unsafe school environment, teachers and community perception creates nurturing playground for cyberbullying.

Olweus (1993) identified the role in bullying and categorized in eight types. Among them notable for the literature analysis of this study are a) bully who starts the bullying and b) victim who is the target of the bullying or being bullied (Gredler, 2003). Another role in bullying is

bystander who are present at the time of bullying but take no actions and research found that almost 80% of the time bystanders are there when any forms of bullying take place (Polanin et al., 2012). Olweus differentiated them as “disengaged onlookers, followers, and defenders. These three roles bully, victim and bystanders are vital to understand the perception and the process of construction of bullying. Olweus (1993) has shown that power imbalance used by the perpetrator to insert fear, pain through repetitive aggression construct the bullying behavior. If it is done by the use of communication technologies then the same happens for cyberbullying (Baldry and Farrington, 2000).

Social dominance influences the role of bully and bystanders in bullying and the disruptive behaviors of bully in adolescent and youth age. Studies has shown that, being powerful and in control motivates bully to inflict fears in other (Bartini and brooks, 1999; Sisema et al., 2009; Slmivalli et al., 2005). Demonstration of power creates social hierarchies and effective to be in the group in control as shown in several studies (Hawley, 1999; Hinde 1994). Status can be gained through belonging to such groups for instances as seen in the study of Baumeister et al., (2004) has shown that spreading rumors indicates that engagement in such activity convey the understanding of rules that direct the collective mostly related to arbitrary attributes such as behaviors, physical appearance and fashion choice. Juvonen and Schacter (2017) pointed that those who are in power bully others and label them if gender norms derivate from them. It often relates to male and female sexuality. The authors also brought distinctive notions of bystander role entailing that they show reluctant behavior to defend the victim due to self-protection and staying away from stress but defending victim by the bystander known as upstander when defend can occur when the upstander hold higher social status and direct their actions based on empathy and self-efficacy. If fails to protect then the bystander often joins the bully to be in the higher power group than the victim through approving the behavior or supporting actively (Juvonen and Schacter, 2017). However, such behaviors increase creation of more bullying

behavior as approval of bullying allow pluralistic ignorance to grow as depicted in the study of Sandstorm et al., (2013).

Based on the aforementioned evidences it can be easily indicated that often the victims are those who do not fit in the power group exist on the cyber space (Juvonen and Schacter, 2017). Hodges and Perry (1999) have shown that specific social characteristics of the targets are advantageous for bullying such as physical appearance (overweight, skinny, hairy), disabilities, different sexual orientation (Pearce et al., 2002; Son et al., 2012; Katz-Wise and Hyde, 2010). Moreover, anonymity in cyberspace, lack of monitoring by parents and school community, absence of social cues increases the complexity in cyberbullying aspects (Mishna et al., 2009). Smith et al., (2008) found that involvement of usage of pictures and videos in cyberbullying enhance negative experience of victim.

Since, the prevalence of cyberbullying became higher schools and educators needs to focus on higher cyber safety however slow responsiveness to emphasis on that because of lack of required knowledge in addressing the issue (Kowalski et al., 2012). Moreover, schools and educators every so often presumes that cyberbullying is an issue pertinent to home-based intervention rather than school. In contrast to this notion, Cassidy et al., (2009) has shown by conducting survey research on students aged from 11-15 that cyberbullying initiates at school and carried on home. Brown et al., (2006) has also argued similarly that cyberbullying starts at the school setting and followed by the cyber retaliation at home. Both the study depicts that cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying at school and home take place as complimentary to each other in terms of absence of one or another. Nevertheless, it is still a topic of debate in deciding the intertwined relationship of cyberbullying occurring at school and home.

Kowalski et al., (2008) have shown that not all forms of the cyberbullying occur at schools but text messages to bully is higher in usage at the school setting. Though schools' reaction to the

usage of technology devices and cyberbullying threats generally ends at banning mobile devices, researchers found it is more related to the inappropriate content and volume of calls and messages in staffs' viewpoint (Ybarra et al., 2006). This results in less reporting of cyberbullying since the students does not want the privileges of using mobile phones being taken away by the authority. Cassidy et al., (2009) has shown that, less reporting of cyberbullying also happens because school staffs does not considered cyberbullying as their mandate to address. So, it can be concluded that the bystander position of school environment is also conducive to the cyberbullying. Bryce and Klang (2009) has postulated that multi-stakeholder responses including school, students, parents, and community is obligatory to prevent cyberbullying. Cross et al., (2012) has shown through research conducted in the UK that most of the teachers who dealt cyberbullying issues spends roughly six hours weekly to deal with these and it is easier when child to child incidents happens but if the bully is an adult that brings new level including harassment or exploitation. The author has also found that 10% of the educators stated cyberbullying as a problem if harassment or hate groups against the victim is present. Moreover, the study explored that, educators found it effective to advice students to take control of their privacy settings, involving parents and reporting to police in case of incidents. Surprisingly, all of the actions are reactive rather than preventive (Johnson, 2012).

Parents also plays encouraging role in creating opportunities of cyberbullying. Liao et al., (2008) has shown that parents undervalue children's involvement in internet usage and the degree to which they are engaged in cyberbullying as victim or bully. Dehue et al., (2008) found by studying 1211 children in the Netherland that while 17% of the respondents reported their engagement as cyberbully, only 4.8% parents agreed to that. Likewise, 22.9% participants reported about cybervictimization while only 11.8% parents agreed to that. Cassidy et al., (2012) argued that misunderstanding arises due to lack of knowledge of parents with the



cyberbullying, unfamiliarity with the communication technologies. Keith and Martin, (2005) have found that adults perceive internet mainly for information and low level of communication while children perceive it as lifeline of the communication with their peers. Parents communication process with the children also impact the cyberbullying behaviors. Mesch, (2009) pointed out that mediative behavior of parents is better than restrictive behavior to reduce bullying and victimization. Dehue et al., (2008) has also argued that authoritarian parents' children often bully more while authoritative parents' children show less tendency to be a cyberbully.

## **2.5 Policies and Legal Framework to Prevent Cyberbullying**

Policies and legal frameworks to prevent cyberbullying play important role in minimizing cyberbullying incidents. However, in depths of legal aspects of cyberbullying is vast issues entailing freedom of speech, sexual exploitation laws, child rights laws and frameworks and cyberbullying warrant (Camp, 2016). Willard. (2007) hypothesized that legal issues regarding to cyberbullying creates the middle ground to protect the safety of one while providing freedom of speech to another. Hinduja and Patchin, (2016) have shown that all fifty states in the USA have anti-bullying laws while 48 of them considered cyber issues and only 23 of them specifically provide legal aspects of cyberbullying. 49 states strictly impose the requirement of school related policy against cyberbullying while only 14 of them emphasize on policy related to off-campus cyberbullying behavior. Woda (2021) referred that the USA has several laws in several states ranging fine from \$100 to \$2500 or expulsion or jail time from 3 months to 12 months. Canada has a strict clause under Education Act to suspend cyberbullying, and the UK has six months or more prison time under the Malicious Communication Act.

Australia's penal code includes punishments against cyber space related crime with imprisonment ranging from 2 years to 7 years for offence, stalking, threatening, stirring suicide,

defamation, and hacking (Mitry & Rademeyer, 2018). The crime act 1900 in Australia specifically imposes measures against school-based crime updated to address cyber space related issues. Polish penal code imprisons accused of stalking, infringing personal space and encouraging suicide from 2 to 10 years if proven (Ćmiel, 2014). Even though EU does not have specific cyberbullying laws, several directives can be implemented to prevent cyberbullying. Spain is the only country that included cyberbullying issues in their legislative process and Italy, Greece, Finland, Croatia, and Belgium have policies regarding teachers' responsibilities to oversee cyberbullying incidents (Morgan, 2016). Hall (2017) analysed 489 literatures to understand effectiveness of the policy implementation to address school bullying issues concluded that any form of anti-bullying policies can be effective in minimizing bullying if the content and implications of the policies are based on evidence and implemented reliably.

Cyberbullying has not been specifically defined by any existing laws in Bangladesh hence the legal framework cannot undoubtedly bring allegation against a bully within the framework. However, several authors argued that if the cyberbullying actions constitute any offensive actions under the existing regulations and laws then legal actions can be taken. In contrast to other countries that have common law, civil lawsuit cannot be filed rather criminal activities and cases can be filed directly at court in Bangladesh. The ICT act 2006 is the pioneer legal policy that addresses the issues of cybercrimes legally. Provision of punishment for defamation, faking and spreading misinformation provides 7 years jail time. A cybercrime Tribunal has also been founded based in the ICT act to reduce time for providing verdict and make the legal process easier. Another law regarding cyber space known as Digital Security Act has also been enacted.

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

Though mostly it has been seen that cyberbullying studies are atheoretical, there are examples of studies that tried to underpin the behavioural traits of cyber bullies and victims through the lens of theories (Oblad, 2012a). The author of this study will use social dominance theory primarily to understand the cyberbullying phenomena for this study.

Social dominance theory (SDT), invented by a group of researchers led by Sidanius and Pratto (1999), combined several other theories to understand people's intergroup relationship to understand the hierarchical process of oppression in human behaviour. It tries to explain the mechanisms that keep hierarchy and dominance stable and perpetuate. The theory stated that institutional discrimination, behavioural asymmetry, and aggregated individual discrimination or totality of small and paradoxically normal/ trivial acts of individual discrimination are the main mechanisms of hierarchical dominance of one group or individual over the other (Roccatò, 2014). The hierarchy, as described by Sidanius and Pratto (1999), has three bases which are 1) age (older are more powerful), 2) gender (patriarchal oppression), and 3) arbitrary sets (culturally defined and based on social constructionism theory. Cyberbullies try to use these hierarchical bases through aggregated or repeated individual discriminatory or aggressive behaviour over the target or victim. Sidanius and Pratto (1999), explained that the sources of creating and nurturing oppression are very complex including willingness of human, mindset and the agency-ship towards a particular group or ideology. Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) argued that dominion of certain socially constructed groups over other socially constructed group irrespective of their definition can be categorized based on several ideologies of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, skin colour, nationalist, regions, disability, age, caste, physical appearance, heredity, minority, majority or any other group division that human brain and mind can theorize mostly informally and or formally (pp. 61-102). Even different individual can hold different degree to which they express their eagerness to dominate

other group making the issue complex and multidimensional. This hegemonic control over the subordinate group by the dominant group is sustained through a) threat or exercising power and b) controlling ideologies or contents that provide legitimacy of the dominance (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). However, as the author put, unwarranted force can delegitimize the dominance of powerful in the eyes of subordinates hence, the most effective and innocuous way of exercising power is to control the discourses and ideologies (pp. 103-126). Institutional discrimination plays very powerful role by overtly or covertly supporting such discrimination by assigning positive social value to some group and negative social value to other groups via the means of public or private institutions such as education system, government, and corporations (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Individual working for such organizations with the mindset of belongingness to different social dominance related group spread the discrimination like cancer. For instance, Dutta and Smita, (2020) have shown that, adoption of online classes in Bangladesh during covid-19 without consideration created discrimination in learning due to unavailability of internet, devices, and high cost. Finally, Sidanius and Pratto, (1999) argued on group based social hierarchy that it is not because of the different qualities among people. Rather, in societies, group-based hierarchy makes the life of dominant group easier, and it has been expressed by using circle of oppression to express that. The group-based hierarchy and asymmetrical behaviour of dominant group is the prime concerns of this study. The author wants to know both in quantitative and qualitative way whether group based social hierarchy invoke cyberbullying or not. For this reason, hierarchical groups to be analysed are listed below.

1. Age (older or younger)
2. Gender (male or female)
3. Arbitrary Attributes
  - a. Physical Appearance (Skin color dark/ fair; short/tall or fat/ skinny or normal body shape)
  - b. Religious Identity
  - c. Other Social Dominant Groups

Though it is difficult to assess the different dominant groups' relationship with cyberbullying and assessing them in one method the author has designed the theoretical framework based on social dominance theory as illustrated below.

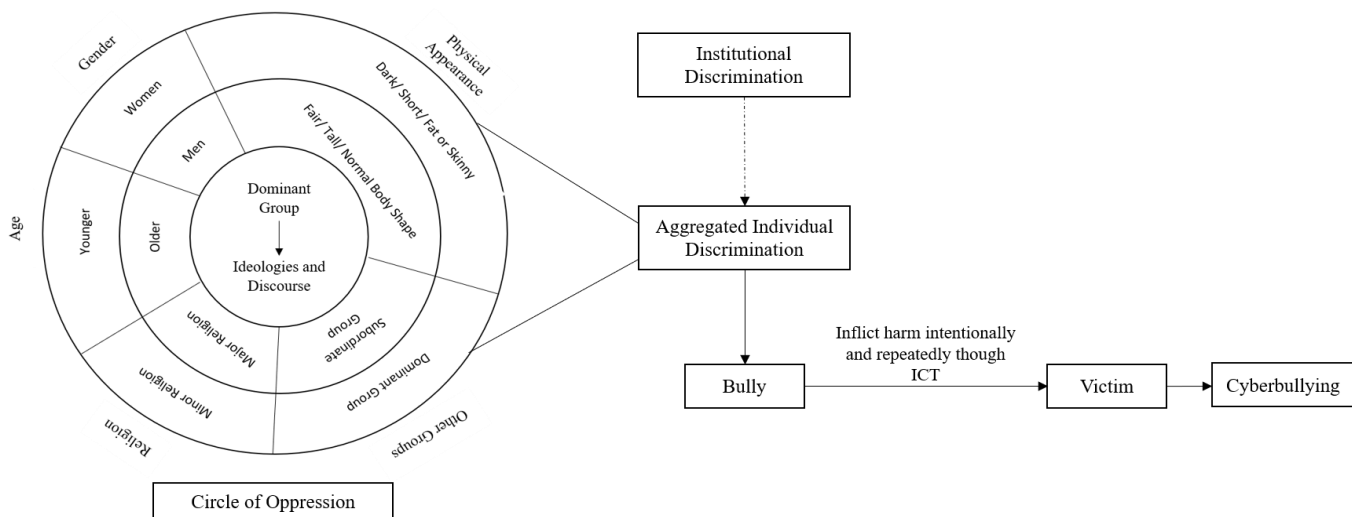


Figure 1: Cyberbullying through Aggregated Individual Discrimination based on Social Hierarchical Groups

The above figure describes the cyberbullying through aggregated individual discrimination based on hierarchy given by socially constructed groups. At the core of the circle of oppression, dominant groups' control over ideologies and discourse has been shown. The inner circle then shows the dominant groups based on socially constructed hierarchical aspects considered for this study. Subordinate groups exist in the outer circle. It shows that male dominates female in gender group, older dominates younger in the age group, majority religious group dominates minority religious group in the religion group and fair or tall or normal body shape people dominate dark skinned or short or fat or skinny people or vice-versa. The domination totals into aggregated individual discrimination and gets institutional supports to establish the domination and control the ideologies. Cyberbullies' goal is to insert feelings of distress, vulnerability, hurtfulness in the victim's mind or, in a nutshell, harass the victim and coerce them into submission (Pellegrini and Bartini, 2000). The cyberbullies do not see the victim's

immediate reaction hence become more aggressive to ensure dominance over the target (Oblad, 2020b). So, cyberbullies with sense of belongingness to dominant group then inflict intentional harm in the mind of bully repeatedly resulting into cyberbullying.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Approach

I adopted mixed method research approach for this study, and it follows the explanatory sequential design. I explored the prevalence of cyberbullying and perception of students on cyberbullying behaviour along in the quantitative part using a survey instrument. In the qualitative part, I examined the perception on cyberbullying further to expand or explain the broader themes of cyberbullying perception from both students' and teachers' perspectives. Moreover, the perception cannot be easily explained through quantitative information hence I felt the needs of both approaches to compensate drawbacks of both methods. I have chosen explanatory sequential method to understand the prevalence of the cyberbullying, platform of cyberbullying, medium used in cyberbullying, time spent online and its relationship with cyberbullying behaviour and then to explore the arbitrary sets of the behaviour in cyberbullying as well as general overview about cyberbullying from the student and teachers. Qualitative part of the study has taken place after analysing the quantitative data to explain the in detail specially to understand the social hierarchy and choice in cyberbullying and response to cyberbullying. Data from both approaches then analysed to present sequentially. The findings interpret the phenomena of cyberbullying by reporting quantitative and supporting expansion of quantitative data through qualitative result. A diagram for the process is as follows,

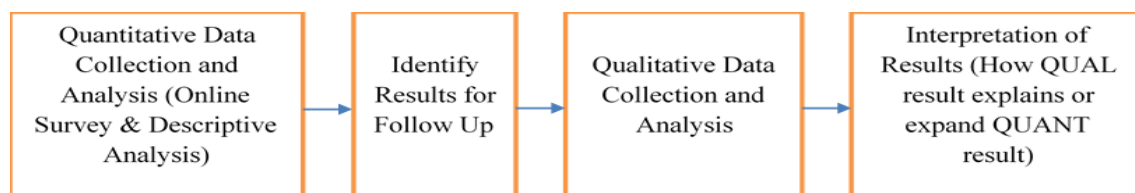


Figure 2: Research Flow

### **3.2 Research Site**

The intended research site is the Dhaka megacity focusing on the capital area. I selected this site to observe a small number of the population due to limitation of time, easier access through my network, proper utilization of resources as well as assuming the higher level of online class conduction in this area due to higher level of internet access and facilities both by students and teachers.

### **3.3 Research Participants**

I targeted grade 8 to 10 equivalent secondary school student for the quantitative part of the study. Having the capital city as selected research site it increases the scope to get respondent from different religion, ethnicity, and social background. I selected the participants for the qualitative parts from the quantitative part by filtering the required sample number from their cyberbullying experience. The teachers for the qualitative part of this region are generally more trained as they have better access to training and other facilities residing and working in the capital. In addition to that, it provides scope to get participants from different school type such as public and private school that is not available in every part of the country.

### **3.4 Sampling Procedure**

Since the total number of the students of grade 8, 9 and 10 from secondary schools of Dhaka Megacity is unknown and the information is unavailable at the ministry and board's website, I used Cochran's formula to find out optimal sample size for the unknown population which is  $n_0 = Z^2pq/e^2$ .

Here,  $n_0$  = sample size

$Z$  =  $Z$  value for confidence level

$p$  = population proportion



$q = 1-p$  and,

$e =$  margin of error.

Considering 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error and 50% or 0.5 population proportion to ensure maximum variability or the wide variety of the participants the optimal sample size would be,

$$\Rightarrow n_0 = Z^2 pq / e^2.$$

$$\Rightarrow n_0 = \{(1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5)\} / (0.05)^2$$

$$\Rightarrow n_0 = 0.9604 / 0.0025$$

$$\Rightarrow n_0 = 384.16 \text{ or } 384.16$$

Considering the nearest 10<sup>th</sup> of the value of  $n_0$  or sample size for the study is 380. I decided to discard any incomplete or incorrect input from the sample size.

For the qualitative part, I selected 8 participants from the quantitative part following their highest to lower victimization and offence scores maintaining equal gender distribution as found in the quantitative result. The criteria of the selection for role in cyberbullying will be a) offender (often addressed as perpetrator) and b) victim. 4 teachers each of whom is from different secondary schools based in Dhaka megacity have been decided to be selected conveniently for conducting FGDs on their perception of cyberbullying based on the quantitative results. Equal gender distribution and government and non-government school distribution is maintained for selecting teachers and the criteria considered for the selection are a) teachers of grade 8, 9 and 10 in secondary schools based in Dhaka megacity and b) conducted online classes regularly during the lockdown due to covid-19.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

I developed the quantitative tool based on the tool used by Hinduja and Patchin, (2006) and Li, (2006) by combining both of the tool in light of the context of Bangladesh. Then, I made the

questionnaire available for the targeted population both online and offline. With the help of my network, the form has been circulated online publicly for participation from the targeted population. I have also sent the questionnaire to several school via email for circulating among their students. It has been selected due to scope for wider distribution within the targeted research site. I have also circulated the offline questionnaire in the middle of the data collection process as the responses rate online was lower than expectation due to several obstacles. I designed the qualitative tool of the study around the quantitative findings and SDT as per the need. Then, I conducted the interview and FGDs directly with the selected participants using online communication tools mainly mobile phone and zoom meeting. The interviews and FGD have been recorded for data storing and analysis purpose. The interview provides scope for one-to-one discussion for detailed information of the participants henceforth to understand details perception of students on the relationship between social hierarchy, dominance, and power with cyberbullying it has been selected. The FGD of the teachers helped to understand the similar perception from their point of view. It has been selected to understand the combined interpretation of cyberbullying from group of teachers from the comparable group of school.

### **3.6 Role of the Researcher**

I first piloted the survey tool through creating a google form version of the tool among 10 grade 8-10 students of 2 schools of Dhaka city. Based on the feedback from the participants I then modified and improved the tool for contextualization mostly in language usage for removing any unclear terminologies and jargons. From September 10 to 15, 2021, I conducted the pilot test of the questionnaire and finalized it. From November 01, 2021, I have made the tool available and constantly communicated it in several social media groups and platforms as well as emailed school authorities for circulation among their students. However, due to school closure, school reopening preparation during November to December, restriction to access school during secondary school certificate exam, and winter vacation the responses through the

online form was extremely low beyond expectation. So, In January 2022, I have recruited three data collectors to collect data offline and circulate the online questionnaire in their known secondary school related groups on social network sites. Finally, both the offline and online data collection has been stopped on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2022 after reaching 280 responses and by projecting that reaching 380 will take longer time and considering that 280 respondents will help to generalize the result. From May 2022 to 26 July 2022, I conducted the interview with the students and teachers based on their availability within this timeframe. In the qualitative part, I used the lens of the theory selected primarily for interpreting the bullying behavior based on group based social hierarchy due to indications of literatures on the power dynamics in cyberbullying behavior. It helped me to understand both parties' perception and put in unique position to compare and contrast between the two. I have constantly pulled myself from any possible biasness to be neutral in the data collection process and interpretation to maintain integrity of the research.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

I used variety scale and summary to interpret the prevalence of cyberbullying score (victimization and offence) as suggested by the Hinduja and Patchin (2006). I have used descriptive statistics to interpret and present prevalence and several perceptions of the respondents in quantitative part. The qualitative data have been analyzed through thematic analysis using CAQDAS. At the beginning, right after collecting the primary quantitative data I converted the Google sheet-based data into Microsoft Excel Data. I conducted the basic descriptive analysis using Microsoft excel. However, for the analysis of general cyberbullying victimization and aggression behavior and segregating it into gender-based behavior analysis cross tabulation and t-test analysis I have used IBM SPSS Statistics software version 25. After completing analysis of quantitative data, I created a codebook based on the literature and research question for analyzing the qualitative data. The codebook consisted of code

categorized under specific themes derived from the research questions and theoretical framework and I have chosen a deductive approach to design that. Then, I transferred the qualitative interview to the latest version of the CAQDAS software by QSR International named Nvivo. There I organized the findings under prespecified codes according to codebook and analyzed them under specific theme to find the answers to the research questions.

### **3.8 Ethical Issues and Concerns**

I have circulated the quantitative data collection tool online for participants self-administration and participation based on willingness. The process of data collection also maintained the confidentiality of the participants by not collecting names or such nominal information. However, due to the issues of collecting data from children the tool also has asks permission from their parents by collecting only their phone number. It also helped in communicating with the students for interview after completion of the survey. However, I faced difficulties to collect data from the students at few prominent schools where students specifically mentioned that their parents are not allowing them to participate in the online survey. So, I took support from the administration of the school regards to this issue respecting the concerns of the parents and their rights not to disclose their information.

### **3.9 Credibility and Rigor**

I, the author of this study has been a professional teacher and studied education research methodology during the coursework of postgraduate degree that provided me with the knowledge required to conduct this research involving children. In addition to that, the I have participated in a three-month advanced research methodology course at IER, Dhaka University conducted by the prominent education faculties of the country that strengthened my knowledge. I have also worked as research assistant professional and participated in quantitative and qualitative research that provided extensive methodical knowledge of research conduction. The

research tool and design of the research has been constructed based on my knowledge and skills combined from academic and professional background. Moreover, I have followed procedures to further furnish the tool and the study by taking experts' opinion. On top of these, my professional training in child safeguarding and ethical research conduction involving children enhanced my capacity to work with children directly.

### **3.10 Limitations of the study**

The main limitation of the study was access to the school during covid-19 time and even during post-covid-19 time due to government's decision that students will participate school for lower contact hours. In addition, during the first phase of the data collection through online method, less responses have been collected due to the ongoing school tests. Moreover, the topic is a twisted social phenomenon influenced by several factors and many other interrelated issues came up during data collection that needed detailed concentration and extensive study to effectively present into findings and discussion. The study aimed to collect the real time data of students experiences during covid-19 about their daily interaction in academic arenas followed by extensive data analysis for both quantitative and most especially qualitative to extract the common phenomena echoed by the majority of the group while also putting emphasize on individual experiences. The overall data collection, analysis and re-analysis, comparing to answer the research questions took place before, during and after pandemic while the post-pandemic situation has also been discussed in this paper which delayed the progression of the thesis.

## Chapter 4

### Results

In this chapter I would discuss the findings from both of my quantitative and qualitative data analysis. First, I would illustrate and discuss the quantitative information that I have found through the use of both online and offline questionnaire. The qualitative findings would be discussed after depicting the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis as a means of extending and supporting the quantitative part.

#### 4.1 Demographic Information of the Respondents

The online questionnaire has been live for 173 days from November 2021 to April 2022. After reaching a total 280 responders both online and offline the quantitative data collection process has been stopped. During data cleaning process significant number of responses have been discarded due to incomplete information and participation from wrong geographical location. The distribution of participants in online and offline and the number of discarded participants has been shown below,

| Medium of Responses | Total Responses | Discarded Responses | Net Responses |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Online Tool         | 120             | 1                   | 119           |
| Offline Tool        | 160             | 84                  | 76            |
| Total               | 280             | 85                  | 195           |

*Table 1: Distribution of Respondents in Online and Offline Survey*

Table 1 refers that a total 280 students' responses have been collected of which 85 responses have been discarded primary due to two reasons a) incomplete information, and b) participant was outside of the intended research site. The rest 195 responses have been considered for data analysis. It could be observed that the majority of the discarded responses are from offline medium. The gender distribution of the quantitative responders is almost equal at male to female ratio of 51:49. Male responders has been slightly higher than the female at 99

participants out of 195. Out of 195 students who have responded in the survey highest responders are from autonomous schools at 43%. Students from non-government schools accounted for 75 and only 37 government school students have participated.

| In-depth Interview Participants | Categorization of Participants |         | Gender |      | Types of School |           |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|--------|------|-----------------|-----------|
|                                 | Perpetrator                    | Victims | Female | Male | Govt.           | Non-govt. |
| Students                        | 4                              | 4       | 4      | 4    | 4               | 4         |
| Teachers                        | 3                              |         | 2      | 1    | 2               | 1         |
| Total                           | 11                             |         |        |      |                 |           |

*Table 2: Distribution of Participants in In-depth Interview and Focused Group Discussion*

Table 2 indicates that a total 8 student participants have been selected for the interview based on higher score of being a perpetrator and victim through self-reported questionnaire. Among them 4 are male and 4 are female. In each group, half of the participants were from government school while the other half were from non-government school. The teachers have been selected via purposive sampling and gender balance as well as government and non-government school representation have been maintained during selection. However, one participant did not show up in the interview so there was total three participants of which two were female and one were male and only the male participant was from non-government school.

| Grade    | Participants Per Grade | Age of the Participants | Frequency of Age (in Number) |
|----------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Grade 8  | 43                     | 13                      | 24                           |
| Grade 9  | 16                     | 14                      | 18                           |
| Grade 10 | 136                    | 15                      | 27                           |
|          |                        | 16                      | 59                           |
|          |                        | 17                      | 32                           |
|          |                        | 18                      | 35                           |

*Table 3: Grade and Age-wise Distribution of Participants*

Table 3 depicts those highest responses in survey is from grade 10 students at 70% and on the other hand students from grade 9 participated the lowest. Among them, highest 30% participants are 16 years old followed by the students of 18 years old. The lowest participation

by age is the students of 14 years old at only 9%. Among all participants, 112 students have sometimes participated the online classes that took places online from their school during the school closure because of covid-19 followed by 75 students who have been very regular to the class. On the other hand, 8 students, out of these 195 have never participated any online classes during that time.

## 4.2 Quantitative Findings

I have presented the quantitative findings of the primary data collection in this segment by illustrating the prevalence of cyberbullying, online presence, time spent online, platforms used and then describing the experience of the participants.

| Victimization Experience Frequency | Once  | A Few Times | Many Time |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------------|-----------|
| Percentage                         | 5.6%  | 22.1%       | 4.7%      |
| Offensive Behavior Frequency       | Once  | A Few Times | Many Time |
| Percentage                         | 10.3% | 4.1%        | 3.1%      |

Table 4: Percentage of Cyberbullying Behavior Based on Response Frequency (Never has been Eliminated)

Out of all participants, 5.6% participants responded that they have been bullied “once” in their lifetimes, 22.1% responded to be victimized by bullying “a few times” in their lifetime and 4.7% reported that they have been victim of bullying “many times” in their lifetime. In contrast to the victimization, 10.3% participants out of all self-reported that they have cyberbullied others at least “once”, 4.1% self-reported to have cyberbullied others at least “a few times” and 3.1% self-reported to have cyberbullied others “many times” in their lifetime. Of the total 43 participants from grade 8, 41.9% participants responded that in their lifetimes, they have been bullied at different level (at least once to many times) and 25.6% self-reported that they have bullied other at different level (at least once to many times). Out of 16 participants of grade 9, 56.2% responded that they have been bullied at different level while 43.8% bullied others, in their lifetime. Among 136 respondents of grade 10, 47.1% responded that they have been



bullied at different levels and on the other hand, 14.8% self-reported that they have bullied others until this point of their lifetime. Among all these participants, losing interest to learn in school and feeling unsafe due to being victimization of bullying have been reported by at least “once” by 4.1% participants, “a few times” by 4.1% and “many times” by 1.1%.

The experience of cyberbullying at grade level has decreased sharply in terms of grade level distribution. In grade 8, for victimization experience, 7% of the respondents have experienced at least “once”, 9% experienced “a few times” and 2% experienced “many times”. On the other hand, in terms of cyberbullying offence, 7% of the respondents cyberbullied others respectively at least “once” and “a few times” and only 2% cyberbullied others “many times”. In grade 9, 50% of the respondents experienced cyberbullying at least “once” and 44% cyberbullied others for at least “once”. No data have been found for other responses. In grade 10, for cyberbullying victimization, 12% experienced “once”, 3% experienced “a few times” and only 1% experienced “many times”. In contrast to victimization, 7% cyberbullied others for at least “once” and 5% cyberbullied others respectively for “a few times” and “many times”.

T-test for equality of means has been performed to understand the cyberbullying victimization and offensive behavior gender difference. The result indicated that for victimization of cyberbullying, there was significant differences ( $t(df) = 156.4, p = 0.00$ ) in score for male group ( $M = 3.27, SD = 4.2$ ) and female ( $M = 1.33, SD = 2.4$ ). The magnitude of the difference in the means (mean difference = 1.93, 95% *CI*: .971 to 2.908) was significant indicating that male participants experience more cyberbullying victimization than female. Similar result has been observed of male participants being involved in cyberbullying offensive behavior as the result shows that there was significant difference ( $t(df) = 117.3, p = 0.01$ ) in score for male group ( $M = 0.97, SD = 2.2$ ) and female ( $M = 0.17, SD = 0.68$ ). The magnitude of difference in the means (means difference = 0.80; 95% *CI*: 0.349 to 1.257) was significant meaning that male participants were involved in cyberbullying offensive behavior than female, however, that is

not at very significant level. (Note: in both cases Levene's Test result was not statistically significant hence equal variance not assumed to show the equality of means test result).

Participants have been asked to self-report about their cyberbullying victimization and offensive behavior in 12 categories of behavior. Among them three of the behavior has been modified and adopted based on the intergroup relationship hierarchy.

| Cyberbullying Behavior<br>during School Closure due<br>to Covid-19 | Cyberbullying<br>Victimization |                  |                    | Cyberbullying Offence |                  |                    |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
|  | Male<br>(n=99)                 | Female<br>(n=96) | Overall<br>(n=195) | Male<br>(n=99)        | Female<br>(n=96) | Overall<br>(n=195) |
|  | Any behavior                   | 17.2%            | 7.3%               | 12.3%                 | 3.0%             | 3.1%               |
| Posting mean or hurtful<br>comments online                         | 14.1%                          | 7.3%             | 10.8%              | 1.0%                  | 0.0%             | 0.5%               |
| Publishing mean or hurtful<br>pictures online                      | 2.0%                           | 0.0%             | 1.0%               | 0.0%                  | 0.0%             | 0.0%               |
| Publishing mean or hurtful<br>videos online                        | 0.0%                           | 0.0%             | 0.0%               | 1.0%                  | 0.0%             | 0.5%               |
| Creating mean or hurtful<br>webpage or fake ID                     | 2.0%                           | 0.0%             | 1.0%               | 0.1%                  | 0.0%             | 0.5%               |
| Pretending to be another<br>person online                          | 2.0%                           | 1.0%             | 1.5%               | 1.0%                  | 0.0%             | 0.5%               |
| Spreading rumors online  | 12.1%                          | 1.0%             | 6.7%               | 3.0%                  | 0.0%             | 1.5%               |

|  |       |       |       |      |      |      |
|--|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| Threatening via phone call or text message   | 3.0%  | 1.0%  | 2.1%  | 1.0% | 0.0% | 0.5% |
| Threatening online   | 15.2% | 1.0%  | 8.2%  | 1.0% | 0.0% | 0.5% |
| Posting mean or hurtful comments online about physical appearance/ color/ weight/ height       | 23.2% | 10.4% | 16.9% | 3.0% | 0.0% | 1.5% |
| Posting sexually harassing comments online due to gender difference (male/female/other gender) | 6.1%  | 3.1%  | 4.6%  | 1.0% | 0.0% | 0.5% |
| Posting mean or hurtful comments online about someone's religious beliefs/ identity            | 2.0%  | 2.0%  | 2.1%  | 1.0% | 0.0% | 0.5% |

*Table 5: General Cyberbullying Victimization and Aggression by Behavior (%)*

Table 4 shows the percentage of the participation of the participant in cyberbullying behavior both victimization and offensive based on the gender group. Over 12% (n=195) of the participants have experienced to be victim of cyberbullying. Within that, male participants tend to experience victimization at over 17% (n=99) while female participants experience victimization at over 7% (n=96). On the other hand, the difference between female and male involved in offensive behavior is almost similar at overall more than 3% (n=195) of the participants have cyberbullied others. In specific cyberbullying behavior victimization happens most for posting mean or hurtful comments online, spreading rumors online, threatening online

and hurtful comments about the physical appearance. The data shows that the highest level of victimization takes place about posting mean or hurtful comments about physical appearance, skin color, weight, and height at overall 16.9% (n=195) and the victimization among male is over 23% (n=99) and over 10% (n=96) for female. Sexually harassing cyberbullying follows these behaviors at nearly 5% (n=195). On the other hand, spreading rumors online and posting mean or hurtful comments about physical appearance, skin color, weight and height are more prevalent cyberbullying offensive behavior at nearly 2% (n-195) where male’s participation in offensive behavior is higher than the female participants.

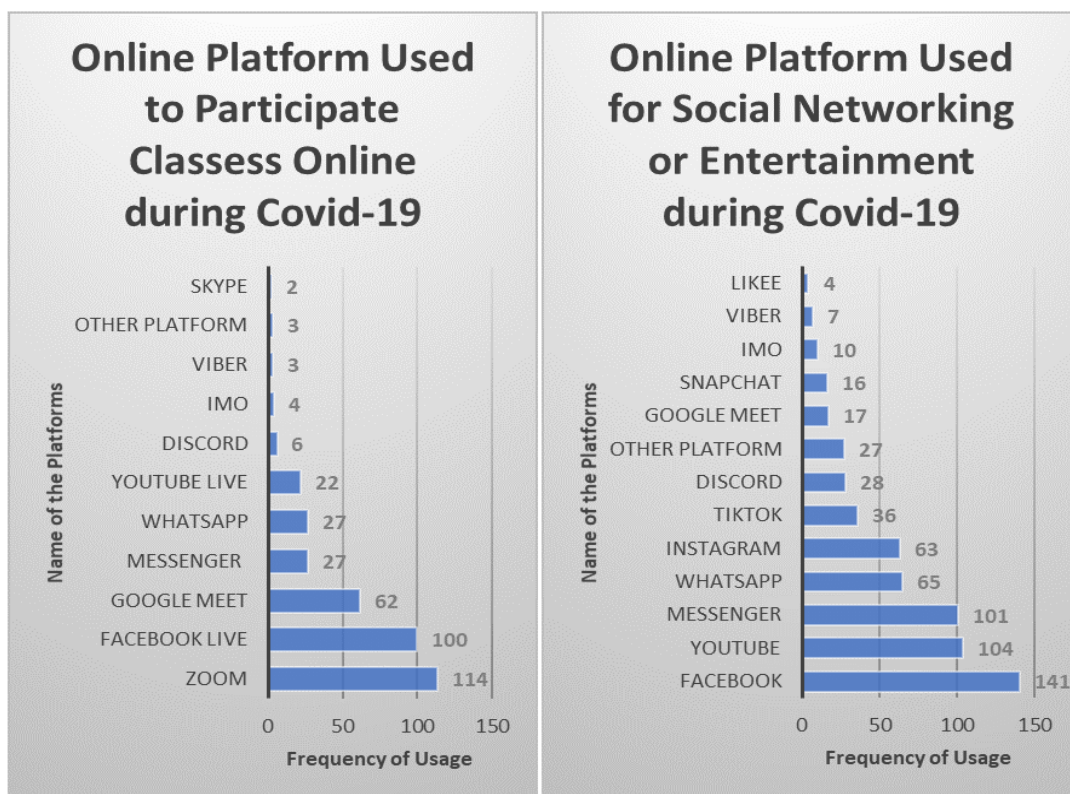


Figure 3: Online Platforms Used to Participate Classes and Online Platforms Used for Social Networking or Entertainment

Figure 3 illustrates the usage of online platforms for classes, social networking, or entertainment during the school closure time due to covid-19. On the left side of the figure, zoom have been mentioned most by the participants to be used as online platform to participate class followed by Facebook (using live feature) and Google Meet. Skype has been mentioned

lowest to be used for classes along with other lowest used platforms such as Viber, IMO and Discord. Messenger, WhatsApp, and YouTube Live have been used almost at similar level but with average frequency. On the other hand, Facebook remains the most popular platforms for social networking and entertainment followed by YouTube and Messenger having short difference in usage frequency. Likee is the least popular platforms for this objective. Viber and IMO carry almost similar status with Likee. WhatsApp and Instagram have average popularity after the top three in that area while Discord and Google Meet also has almost similar popularity.

| Platform(s)   | Number of Time Platform(s) Mentioned by Participants (Victimization) | Percentage | Number of Time Platforms Mentioned by Participants (Offence) | Percentage |
|---|--|------------|--|------------|
| I have never been bullied/ bullied others on any online platform    | 107  | 33%        | 128  | 59%        |
| On Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp                                | 49   | 21%        | 35   | 16%        |
| On Instagram and Snapchat   | 12   | 5%         | 1  | 1%         |
| On multiplayer games such as PUBG, Warcraft, Call of Duty, DOTA etc | 7  | 3%         | 5  | 2%         |
| On Tiktok and Likee   | 14   | 6%         | 10   | 5%         |
| On Viber and IMO  | 3  | 1%         | 1  | 1%         |
| On YouTube  | 11   | 5%         | 13   | 6%         |

|  |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|----|---|----|
| On Zoom, Google Meet or Discord or application used for online classes | 10 | 4% | 3 | 1% |
| Via cell phone (phone call, voice message or text message)             | 6  | 3% | 4 | 2% |
| Via e-mail (including picture or video)                                | 2  | 1% | 7 | 3% |
| Other Platforms  | 10 | 4% | 9 | 4% |

*Table 6: Medium of Cyberbullying Victimization and Offence*

The participants have been instructed to select the topmost three relevant platforms where they have been victimized to cyberbullying or cyberbullied others. Total 231 responses in victimization category and 216 responses in offence category has been found. Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp have been remained the top places for both victimization and cyberbullying others respectively mentioned 21% and 16% times among all platforms. Tiktok, Likee, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube have been mentioned followed by the top three apps to be platforms for victimization with relatively same percentage. On the other hand, YouTube, Tiktok and Likee has been mentioned the prominent platforms for cyberbullying offence after the top three apps as seen in the table 6.

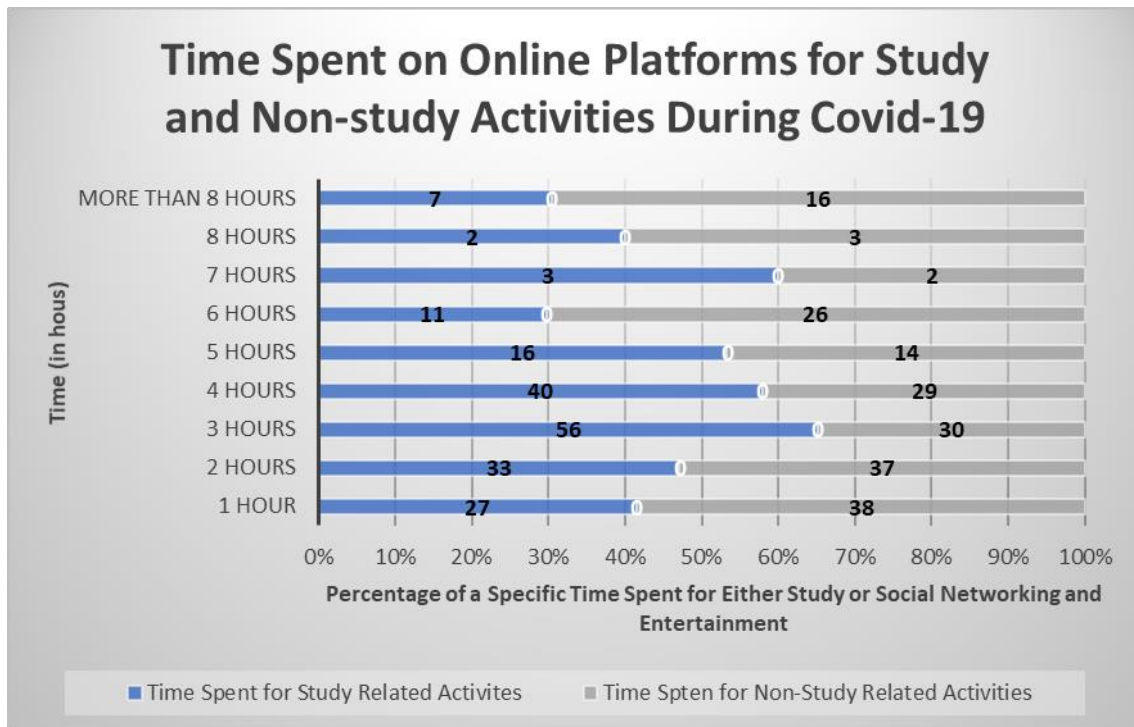


Figure 4: Percentage of Time Spent Online for Study and Non-study Activities During Covid-19

The above figures show the hours spent by the participants on online platforms for study, and social networking and entertainment. Percentage of students spending one, two, four and five hours online for study and non-study activities are almost equal with an average difference of 10 percentage point. However, the difference tends to go higher at three hours level where almost 56% students spent that time for study and the other 30% spend that for social networking. The difference of time spent online for social networking and entertainment in contrast to study sharply increase at six hours and more than eight hours level where the difference is on an average 40 percentage point. The difference at seven- and eight-hours level is negligible.

| Victimization Score Range | Average Time Spent Online for Study | Average Time Spent Online Outside of Study |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 0-5                       | 3 hours 20 minutes                  | 3 hours 30 minutes                         |
| 6-10                      | 3 hours 34 minutes                  | 4 hours 20 minutes                         |
| 11-15                     | 3 hours 30 minutes                  | 5 hours 30 minutes                         |
| 16-20                     | 3 hours                             | 6 hours                                    |

| Offending Score Range | Average Time Spent Online for Study | Average Time Spent Online Outside of Study |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 0-5                   | 3 hours 25 minutes                  | 3 hours 45 minutes                         |
| 6-10                  | 2 hours 15 minutes                  | 2 hours 45 minutes                         |
| 11-15                 | N/A                                 | N/A  |
| 16-20                 | 4 hours                             | 3 hours                                    |

*Table 7: Comparison of Self-Reported Cyberbullying Offence and Victimization Score against Time Spent Online for Study and Non-Study Activities*

Table 7 compared the self-reported cyberbullying offence and victimization score against the time spent online for study related activities and non-study related activities during covid-19 time. Respondents scoring lower victimization scores to moderate victimization score spend on an average 3 hours 30 minutes online for study related activities while time spent for non-study related activities varies from 3 hours to 5 hours. The highest scoring victims spent 3 hours for study related activities but a spiking 6 hours for non-study related activities. On the other hand, the lowest scoring self-reported offenders spend in general 2 to 3 hours online for studies and similar for non-study related activities. Surprisingly the highest self-reported offenders spent less hours online for non-study related activities rather than study related activities. The opposite trends in time spent for study related and non-study related activities by each group provides an unclear information about the relationship of time spent online and cyberbullying behaviors. For the offence score range 11-15 no responses have been found.

In the third part of the survey tool participants have been asked about their perception of why other people bully and how they perceive the cyberbullying as well as their reactions towards several online behaviors and cyberbullying behaviors. Among the 196 participants a majority of the participants think that others cyberbully because they think it is fun (25%) followed by thinking it as a “cool” act in front of others and out of jealousy of the victim at respectively 16% and 15%. Being mean towards others, boredom and family problems have been identified as lowest perceived reason for showing offensive cyberbullying behavior. 11% of the respondents think cyberbullying is a coping mechanism for bullies to cope with issues of their



life and equally 8% of the respondents believe being angry and feeling insecure are the other reasons for cyberbullying. 6% respondents expressed other opinion among which “no opinion” and ‘I don’t know” were prominent. However, one participant wrote in the open-ended segment that those who cyberbullies has “mentality problem” and another participant responded, “I think they want to take any revenge for personal problems or other problems.”

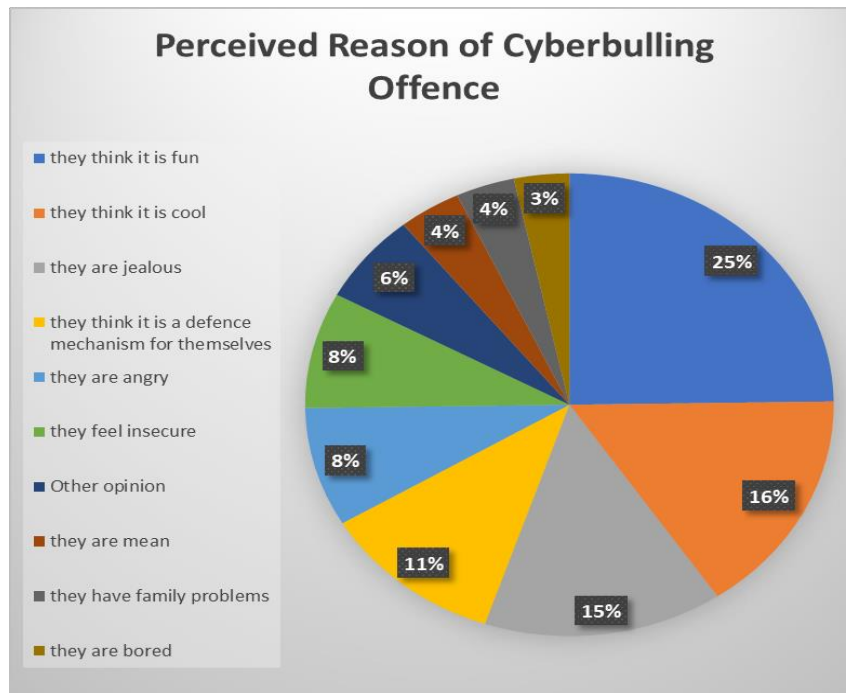


Figure 5: Perceived Reason of Cyberbullying Offence

When asked about the feelings towards the victim of cyberbullying, 16% participants think that it is bad, but they cannot do anything about it while 58% think that it is to severe problem, and it needs to be stopped. However, 7% of the participants think that the victims of the cyberbullying deserve it. Among 19% of the participants who expressed other opinion, majority wrote “no opinion” while one respondent wrote “its funny”. 28.6% (n=195) respondents think that cyberbullying is a normal part of online world and there is nothing do about it. 43.8% of the respondents think what happens online should remain online and 33.2% thinks that adults should stay out of this on the other hand, with a sharp high rise 94.4% think that if anyone badly victimized by cyberbullying then and adult should be informed. Moreover,

93.9% respondents expressed that if personal identify can be kept safe then they would report if they witnessed any victimization of cyberbullying. 23.4% participants believe that they have the right to say anything online even if it violates anyone's right and secrecy. Finally, 94.4% participants willing to work for a kind and respectful online world.

### **4.3 Qualitative Findings**

Based on the qualitative data and findings, I have categorized the results in three broader themes to deeply understand cyberbullying prevalence and perception. The categories are as below,

- Knowledge, experience and reporting of cyberbullying
- Social dominance in cyberbullying behavior
- School, family, and society's role in cyberbullying

#### **4.3.1 Knowledge, experience and reporting of cyberbullying**

To understand the knowledge of students as well as teachers about cyberbullying I have discussed with participants about cyberbullying definition in their opinion, acceptance of cyberbullying, it's impact on students, teachers and education, their knowledge of cyberbullying reporting mechanism and reporting behavior.

*“If anyone faces any harassment for harasses others on any online sites, it is cyberbullying”*; (In-depth Interview, Participant B3, 19 June 2022).

Based on the answers I have found that the differences in the understanding of cyberbullying impacts participants perceptions and shape their experience and normalizing behavior of cyberbullying as well as reporting any incidents. Majority of the participants perceive cyberbullying as harassment in online spaces while few others see it as conflict, argument, discomfoting others, and exaggeration of fun. There are no major differences in the defining

process of the participants from all three categories. All of the participants' defining process mainly evolved around underpinning cyberbullying as only cyber harassment and also included distress, harms, and inflicting fear.

The experience of cyberbullying incidents and choice of responses to cyberbullying as well as choosing role in cyberbullying also interrelated to the defining process. Experiences of cyberbullying incidents described by the participants entailed street fights, depression, attention seeking behavior and even suicide. It has also been found that often traditional bullying take place in school and then shift towards online spaces as cyberbullying or vice-versa especially during covid-19 time. While exploring the types of cyberbullying experiences, participants discussed in detail about perpetrators flaming victim by using slang or verbal abuse. In several examples, teachers have also shared about obscene language usage by stranger in online classes that disturbs the teaching learning practices and not only inflicted fear in the mind of students as well as teachers. Text war mostly takes places among peers as a result of relationship problem or power imbalance or probable fear of losing control over individual or groups by individual or groups leading to street fight using political power or gang culture and as brought by the participants mostly takes place on instant messenger apps. One participant also mentioned about facing leaked personal information and abuse about the choice of lifestyle of her and her friends on Instagram and the incidents took place opening different fake profile indicating that the perpetrator might be a known person and continuously cyberstalk that particular group of victims. Several participants mention that intimate relationship during the adolescent period mostly leads to leaking personal information and even sensitive audio-visual materials falls under the criminal laws' jurisdiction within the national system. The only participant with autism spectrum mentioned experience of forced exclusion from participating in social acts and being member of groups. All student participants stated their experience of happy slapping or intentional cyberbullying for the sole purpose of having fun with the victim

by leaking their information which teacher participants have also experienced. Sexting has been found relatively low in comparison to other form of cyberbullying but pertinent in case of infatuation towards a person for forming intimate relationship or out of pure curiosity due to developmental stages of adolescence as described by teachers.

Often victims of cyberbullying are considering friends cyberbullying as either fun or normal which leads to continuous perpetrating behavior by the cyberbullies with friends as well as others. Perception of considering friends' cyberbullying as "okay" also contribute to normalizing cyberbullying behavior as wells as refrain victims from reporting. Almost half of the participants, however, argued that even though some perpetrators cyberbully their friends for fun it should not be considered as normal since that leads to hurting, distressed feelings, insecurity or instill fear in the mind of victim as the ultimate objective of cyberbullying.

*"In friendship it is (cyberbullying) normal but outside of friendship it is not normal";*  
(In-depth Interview, Participant V3, 19 June 2022).

Participants with high level of cyberbullying behavior score have strongly argued against the acceptance of cyberbullying from moral perspectives while tried to justify in subtle ways with logic such is cyberbullying can be used as a tool in order to bring a "bad person" to the "good path" or the victim have to tell that he or she is being hurt by the perpetrator's action otherwise how would the perpetrator know. On the other hand, victims argued against the acceptance of cyberbullying from the perspective of being oppressed or their agony as they have been tormented going through the victimization experience.

*"Cyberbullying can be fun for the bully, but it hurts who faces it";* (In-depth Interview, Participant V1, 17 June 2022).

Both bully and victim participants created a perception of acceptance and normalizing cyberbullying by friends while only one educator stated that students would have fun in their

experiential process of friendship that might fall under cyberbullying, but it is role of teachers, school, and education system to provide knowledge of drawing fine line between fun and bullying.

*“This culture of bullying first starts with fun. Adolescents likes to do everything extreme or more at this stage of life as there are less controls in their life. At this point if we ask them not to do such fun even that is not acceptable. If a child always keeps talking seriously and only exchange information during adolescents period it hampers proper socialization. So, we also need to allow them to have fun. But we, family, society, and schools have to understand when to take any behavior seriously.”*; (In-depth Interview, Participant T3, 26 July 2022).

Half of the total participants also agreed to the point that often the perpetrator does not have idea that they are cyberbullying which also leads to another way of normalizing the behavior instead of acting while it has been found that almost all of the participants has wrongly defined cyberbullying which also contribute to the normalizing cyberbullying. Teacher participants echoed in line with the participants with high victimization score and stated that it not only impact students in negative ways such as developing depressions, inferiority complex, low self-esteem and suicidal tendency but also impact teachers and disturb the overall teaching-learning experience online or offline and make both distance and face-to-face teaching learning process unsafe. Several victims indicated that the difference of age, gender, teachers, and schools’ disinterest in dealing with such issues or to accepts cyberbullying behavior of certain groups based on different dynamics (such as “boys would do such fun, it is normal”) also normalize the cyberbullying which teachers have also partially agreed to that. Lack of knowledge of reporting mechanism, platforms and complicated process of reporting also contribute to less reporting and accepting victimization of cyberbullying as “fate” or due to the “helplessness” creating a perfect environment for the social disease to grow and spread.

Majority of the interview participants from self-reported cyberbully category focused on others' experiences and agreed that it has negative impact while the victims spoke based on their personal experiences and similar experiences of peers and the negative impact they have been through. All the victims have experienced psychological issues they defined as frustration or depression consecutively leading to develop low self-respect as they could not protest, or their protest did not result positively. Extreme level of insecurity has been shown by the victims who have been cyberbullied due to their gender or physical features which teachers have also mentioned as they have experienced among their students who have been victimized with similar issues. Female victims experienced emotional violence at home as their family considered them to be blamed for their victimization while male victims mostly avoid sharing these with families. In both cases victims shared their feeling of loneliness and unsupported affecting their ability to socialize properly or to act properly towards accomplishing their academic achievements.

*“I have informed my own family when I have been cyberbullied, but I did not get any support from my family. Instead, I have been told not to use Facebook or to befriend with boys while those who have cyberbullied me while I do not have any communication or connection with them. My family is thinking that I am friends with those boys, this is also a reason of me getting cyberbullied.”*; (In-depth Interview, Participant V1, 17 June 2022).

However, strong resilience among the participants victims in the interview has been found as often they do not get support or cannot report. Male victims faced real life physical violence by perpetrators when they protested or reactively responded to the cyberbullying. Male cyberbullies drawn on impact via others experiences and shared about incidents cyberbullying resulted in street fights among gangs, taking drugs and committing suicide by victims creating both personal wellbeing concerns and social problems while female cyberbullies did not

stretched on real life example rather discussed from a superficial level of impact on overall education and societal system. All participants of the teachers have agreed to the mentioned problems with several real-life examples and expressed that collectively it creates an educational, psychological, and social problem that would go beyond control if not kept on a tight leash in time. However, it is notable to mention that the participants from the self-reported victim category have unambiguously mentioned about the fear of active participation in school environment, teaching-learning environment both in online and offline settings, lack of willingness to participate in co-curricular activities, decreased educational achievements and concerned about their online presence due to the impact of their victimization experience and lack of supportive environments.

All the teacher participants of the study reported that they have student affairs or reporting body that deals with any disciplinary issues but there is no dedicated wing related to cyber problems or bullying. Higher differences have been observed in terms of reporting mechanism between private and autonomous school and public schools. Private schools with affluent money supplies have better reporting mechanism and case management system but the public schools' disciplinary body is less functioning. Even though there are mechanism most of the cases of cyberbullying comes to the teachers who are popular and more interactive with their students and all the teachers have dealt with several cases mostly personally rather than through the reporting committee. Apart from conflict, jealousy, power establishment or unhealthy competition based cyberbullying cases often the teachers found that cyberbullying behavior derived from family and relationship based problem and mental or emotional issues. All the teacher mentioned facing difficulties with dealing cases involving parents and parents' complete unwillingness and even fear of taking professional counselling support if needed due to social stigma around mental health problems. However, the private and autonomous schools' parent community is a bit more flexible to take such support in comparison to the public school

system. It is important to note that most of the teachers expressed that the secondary school system tries best to hide such issues and no initiatives are in place to aware students rather schools focus more on the academic achievements. A participant has also stated that the overall education system of our country is not students friendly hence such adolescence age-based issues are not being reveled properly to be addressed.

All the student participants specified that they do not know any existing reporting mechanism within their schools or in national legal framework. Majority of them even informed that they have heard about the national helplines and emergency support system for the first time when I have mentioned about those. Some of them expressed that any reporting and supporting mechanism within the national system must be cumbersome, threat to their privacy and would not listen to them. As a result, their first point of contact for reporting is mostly teachers who they respect and think trustworthy or to a friend they can rely on and in extreme cases to their family. It is noteworthy that none of the student participants are willing to go to family first place when facing cyberbullying problems unless it is serious even though most of them mentioned that family support is the most important factor to get support. It is interesting that the participants from cyberbully category are more willing to report in case of victimization experience while the participants from victim category expressed, they are not willing to report. It is also partly due to their previous experience of reporting and getting no result. The cyberbully participants would mostly report if the perpetrator were an unknown person and only support a victim if they are their friends but in case of others they would act as disengaged onlookers and even followers. Victim participants has also expressed similar opinion as some of them put that supporting a victim is not easy task, but they would defend only if the victim were their friend otherwise, they would also act as disengaged onlookers. In case of a friend being a cyberbully most of them would remain disengaged onlookers. All the student participants except one mentioned that school could be a big influencing factor in reducing



cyberbullying if they take proper steps and engaged legal support system and family in the process. In a nutshell, the lack of awareness of national helplines or support system, proper reporting mechanism in the schools, and family engagement pushed students not to report and deal with victimization experiences by themselves impacting them every way possible.

*“I have told my teachers many times, but they did nothing about it. I have told my mother, she told me to ignore these. I do not know any other way to report. If I have known maybe I would have reported and I believe that they would have listened to me”;*  
(In-depth Interview, Participant V4, 19 June 2022).

### **4.3.2 Social dominance in cyberbullying behavior**

As part of understanding one of the main research questions I have asked all participants that how social hierarchies based on individual and socio-cultural differences, institutional discrimination influence cyberbullying behavior to create culture of hegemonic control where cyberbullies can easily harm or distress or inflict fear in the mind of victim and a cycle of cyberbullying continues. The findings of the influence of social hierarchies are described based on the social dominance theory.

#### **4.3.2.1 Aggregated Individual Discrimination**

In this part, I have discussed with participants about the bases of social hierarchies that are age, gender, and arbitrary sets to understand the hierarchical oppression, in this case cyberbullying, through the intergroup relationship based on the aforementioned bases among the participants.

##### **4.3.2.1.1 Age**

More than half of the participants during the interview agreed that age plays as a crucial influencing factor in creating hierarchy that influence cyberbullying behavior while some of the participants are somewhat on the fence about age's influence on cyberbullying. Rest few

disagrees that age can play a big factor in the cyberbullying. Half of the cyberbullies and victims believe that those who are senior in terms of age cyberbully their juniors. The bullies even justified that they would continue to do the same if any seniors of them cyberbully them. However, the other half of the students stated that seniority and juniority in terms of age are somewhat an influencing factor in cyberbullying behavior but often the changes in behavior and curiosity during the adolescence age also influence many to cyberbully others to which half of the teachers have also agreed.

These participants also mentioned that bullying and cyberbullying often happens among same age people but with the backdrop of covid-19 and increased usage of digital devices now even juniors can cyberbully seniors by exploiting the scope of anonymity in the virtual world.

“If a senior person cyberbullies juniors sometimes, they might try to justify that behavior because they are senior. *Right now, after covid-19, people of all age-gender are online, so age does not matter to cyberbully others and even juniors can cyberbully seniors.*”; (In-depth Interview, Participant V2, 18 June 2022).

Teachers also brought noteworthy observations that the context where the cyberbullying is taking place is also an important factor. In boys only schools, power establishment between seniors and juniors is vital hence any disturbance of that power hierarchy by juniors would be seriously handled by seniors and bullying, cyberbullying and violence anything would be adopted to address that. On the other hand, in girls only schools, age centered cyberbullying is not common. A thought-provoking observation has been brought by a victim participant that sometimes political muscle powers could overturn this age-based power hierarchy where if juniors have connection with local political parties will not stand back to oppress seniors by using their political, muscle and gang-based power.

*“If seniors cyberbullied juniors, they would try to justify their behaviors as they are seniors but now after covid-19 people of all age are online so anyone can cyberbully anyone.”*, (In-depth Interview, Participant V2, 18 June 2022).

#### **4.3.2.1.2 Gender**

Majority of the participants stated that gender is not a much influencing factors and if it is influencing factor it depends on the situation. On the other hand, number of participants who believe that gender is influencing factor is close to the participants who disagrees and according to their opinion since the society they live in is predominantly patriarchal girls mostly gets cyberbullied by boys. On the other hand, the group disagreeing to this stated that the complex settings of cyberspace create ground for any gender to cyberbully opposite gender due to the opportunity of being anonymous and not doing it face to face. The degree and willingness to cyberbully others also varies based on boy to boy, girl to girl and boy to girl or vice versa. However, in terms of traditional bullying, boys bully girls most as the participants put.

*“It exists among both gender but maybe the ratio is different. However, boys often take cyberbullying to extreme level to become a hero and prove themselves powerful in front of others.”*; (In-depth Interview, Participant T1, 26 July 2022)

However, within the binary gender concepts all participants agrees that girls face victimization most due to the social stereotype against girls and one participant even put that society accepted that boys would do such fun during growing age. One cyberbullies even emphasized on that by endorsing the typical notion of defining “ideal girl” while normalizing such behaviors of boys. However, bringing twist to this point, one teacher pointed out that it should not only be considered based on typical gender power hierarchy of male over female but also from a bottom-up (girl to boy) approach and horizontal perspectives (boy to boy) as boys are also facing severe cyberbullying.

Moving from binary gender concept, almost half of the participants agreed that if anyone shows any characteristics of the gender opposite from their biological gender, they would be cyberbullied by both girls and boys regardless of biological gender similarity or difference. Half of the cyberbullies shared real-life example and their own participation in cyberbullying a victim who has shown gender characteristics opposite of their biological gender. All of the teacher participants have agreed to this by citing incidents from their professional experiences and blamed the social stereotypes and stigmas against LGBTQ+ community. One teacher at a top-notch school of the country stated that in her school such cyberbullying case are even pushing some victims to such devastating state that it could be considered as crime against the perpetrator. Summing up both the binary and non-binary gender based cyberbullying behavior influenced by the patriarchal nature of the social settings one victim expressed that if the notion of the gender-based hierarchy is disregarded from the scene then everyone would participate equally in cyberbullying regardless of gender difference.

*“I am just thinking that if the society had not been patriarchal then maybe girls would have also equally cyberbullied boys as there is no power difference in gender.”*; (In-depth Interview, Participant V1, 17 June 2022).

#### **4.3.2.1.3 Arbitrary Attributes**

As the arbitrary attributes I have selected to explore physical features (color, height and weight), religious identity and other dominant subjective hierarchy such as cultural, financial class difference and belonging to so-called good or bad school in terms of reputation.

Most of the participants agreed that in our social setting physical features such as having dark or fair skin tone, being fat or thin and too tall or short put someone in the risk of being cyberbullied and perpetrator use these against the victims. Half of the rest of the participants disagreed, and the rest half did not express their opinion in regard to this. A particular finding

in this area is that often physical features and gender both are concomitantly used to cyberbully a victim and often such victimization starts at real life and move to the virtual world as cyberbullying. One of the participants from the cyberbully category mentioned about such cyberbullying but justified that “it does not sound like cyberbullying” while another bully stated her active participation in cyberbullying a boy by calling “gay” due to the fairer skin color of the victim in comparison to girls. Most of the victim participants have experience of cyberbullying due to physical features that included being fat, too tall and having stuttering issues.

However, one male victim share that some might use gender to cyberbully others for fun, but it is not a influencing factor, normalizing and providing predictive information that with given chance the victim would chose the dominating group to bully the opposite gender. Half of the teachers shared that they have received such complaints from their students and its very common. However, interestingly they have mentioned that in this arbitrary attribute, girls tend to cyberbully each other specially for skin tone and body shape while boys have less complexities due to such issues as there is social acceptance that dark skin tone of boys are okay. In boys’ school the victimization is around height or weight issues and mostly if a boy is physically weaker or feminine in comparison to the masculine traits accepted from a man. The only participants in the study who possibly has autism spectrum and stuttering issue has put it this way.

*“Lots of my classmates tell me why I stutter so much, and they call me mad every day for this.”; (In-depth Interview, Participant V4, 19 June 2022).*

Moving on to the religious identity influencing cyberbullying behavior, all of the participants except one from cyberbully group agreed that religious identity influence cyberbullying behavior. The other participant did not provide any opinion on this issue. All the student

participants have described about witnessing religious conflict on both virtual and offline settings but mostly such conflicts take place on cyberspace derived from cyberbullying and then moved to the real-life conflicts. One of the cyberbullies even explained his own process of cyberbullying people from other religion ignoring the fact that it hurts the victim while another described local slur generally used to belittle minorities.

*“People from one religion tell others why you have this or that in your religion. People fight over this. I have also done this with a friend, but I have not quarreled rather I have proceeded normally. I think it does not hurt. What happens, happens directly. He has to tell me directly if he is hurt. It is my religion and my choice. Otherwise, how would I know!”*; (In-depth Interview, Participant B2, 18 June 2022).

Fascinatingly, all the high perpetrator scorer tried to normalize or in few cases protested against such debate and insults to other religion people and used own religion beliefs to defend that. A victim has also entailed personal experience of being involved in such cyberbullying indicating to the change of group-based hierarchy. The other victims have been bystander and direct victim to such incidents.

Teacher participants were expressively vigilant while expressing their opinion as this is sensitive issue and agreed that it is a common cyberbullying related conflicts they have found and even dealt with. They have also stretched that often cyberbullying behavior among students around religious identities are influenced by elders, families and religious malpractices and conflict instigate due to unawareness of the words chosen during conversation. Even though one teacher experienced similar issue personally due to religious identity and observed same among students at other schools his current workplace is free of such issues. As the participant put, that particular school does not follow national curriculum which includes different religions’ books for students rather follow a single subject called “Moral and Ethics” for all

students. Mentioning to some contemporary communal conflicts, several participants of the study stretched that cyberbullying cases related to religious identity not only put the minority religious group in risk but also majority religious group in harms as often these events turn into communal riots as this specific sub-continent has long history of such conflicts.

#### **4.3.2.1.4 Social and Cultural Differences**

In terms of social and cultural differences I have considered the indigenous identity or ethnic minority, economic background, and school reputation to examine. The findings in these three areas are represented below separately.

Out of all the student participants with self-reported victim and perpetrator, majority believes that ethnic minority identity plays a big role in being cyberbullying. However, most of this started as bullying in school and later on carry forwarded to online space too. Uprising of vlogging and social media influencing is increasing the cyberbullying towards indigenous communities as claimed by responders. While responders from the self-reported victim group were either sharing experience of witnessing their peers being cyberbullied (and bullying) or explaining probable reasons for being victim due to ethnic minority, the self-reported cyberbullies were using demeaning terminologies towards people with ethnic minority identity. It has been mentioned that there are differences between “normal Bengalis” and indigenous communities.

*“We are normal Bengalis, but their features are different from us which indicates that they are that type of thing.”; (In-depth Interview, Participant B1)*

*“We usually take rice, meats and fishes but they usually eat bamboo shoots and maybe it is their main food, so we tell them- ewww, you eat bamboo! How could bamboo be eaten!”; (In-depth Interview, Participant B4, 19 June 2022)*

Even though student participants have indicated that the ethnic minority could be an influential factor in creating cyberbullying experiences teachers did not shed lights on that rather discussed about the differences in the social system and how that could influence a child's subconscious mind to create a possible bully.

Economic background or financial solvency of a student's family has been considered as another factor within the social and cultural differences. Interestingly, majority of all the participants highly believe that economic background could be a reason of cyberbullying among peers. Most of the participants agreed that those who has a better economic condition usually cyberbully those from weaker economic condition for showing off or just to mock as they are sure that their poor peer will not be able to do anything as poor people does not have "power". However, one participant disagreed to this notion and stated that the opposite can happen if anyone from poor economic background tries to scam their rich peers for money. Participants also expressed that it tends to happen more within so called friend circle or a group of friends. In case there are any plans that involves money and often the friend/s with financial barriers disagree to take part they get mocked.

Teachers have stretched how the economic background could influence not only cyberbullying behaviors but also overall behaviors of students. One teacher participant from a top elite K-12 schools of the country reflected his time in a low resourced school where students did not differentiate among themselves based on financial strength while students from his current elite school does that significantly. Similar opinion has been echoed by another teacher whose school, fascinatingly, has different shifts for students from different economic background. All the teachers somewhat indicated that the culture of growing up in rich families and easy access to technology made the differences between so-called high-class society's children's cyberbullying behaviors due to economic background while usually the poor students have better discipline and manners.



Since economic background and ability to study in well reputed school is correlated, it has been considered as the other factor in this group. Only a few of the participants agreed that the reputation of the school could be a persuasive factor in cyberbullying behavior. In such cases students from well reputed schools will not go along with the students from not so well reputed students as it does not “go with their standards”. Those from the better school tries to belittle others and mostly it takes place on social media sites and often among people not known to each other.

While discussing on the social and cultural differences issues some significant insights have been brought by the participants that in their opinion influence cyberbullying behavior. One participant reflected that cinemas or package drama that glorifies the masculine negative characters influence adolescents to adopt those characteristics and often perpetrator tries to pursue those in their personal life encouraging them in bullying behavior.

*“In Bollywood movies villains are doing style, beating people and ruling others. Heroes are masculine and many people follows that. For instance, a movie called KGF has been released few days back and many students started for follow the lead character’s role trying to dominate others like that hero. People watch these and then get inspired by these masculinities and violence that impact their behaviors highly and inspires bullying behavior.”; (In-depth Interview, Participant B2, 18 June 2022).*

Another participant also indicates the differences between urban and rural students and how “city boys” mock their rural counterparts especially if a student coming to a city-based school from rural areas.

While reflecting on the overall situation, teachers discussed that the availability of the technologies to children from rich families in early stages without proper supervision let them absorb the negative sides of internet and social medias. Family values and parenting at early

stages could be impacting factors in shaping the cyberbullying behaviors during this time as they put. Moreover, teachers have also indicated how curriculum and contents being taught in the schools could also be an impacting factor such as textbook poem or stories that subconsciously instill bullying, unhealthy competitive behavior, passive aggressiveness in children's mindset.

#### **4.3.2.2 Institutional Discrimination**

Institutional discrimination primarily focuses how social structure, belief system, cultural practices, ideologies, and mythologies helped in making the ground for cyberbullying. I will first describe the findings related to the impact of overall social class differences, then belief system and societal structure and finally ideologies and mythologies on cyberbullying behaviors.

Participants categorized the class differences mainly based on economic values hence the findings in this section overlaps with the economic background of the previous section. Majority of the participants believes that the social differences create possible grounds for cyberbullying, and it is somehow connected with power imbalance due to social class differences. As it has already been described from participants perspectives that economic differences, ethnic identity differences and even cultural differences that differentiate the social class cause cyberbullying. As one participant described it,

*“The whole thing is around power establishment, and the main fact is ‘I want to be the top’ mindset. To be that everyone tries to belittle each other to rise above one another.”*; (In-depth Interview, Participant B4, 19 June 2022).

Power imbalance in the society creates inequality and that has the strength to leads to such hegemonic behaviors. However, opposite might happen if there is no power imbalance.

*“If the inequality had not been here, maybe the influencing factors to cyberbully others would not been in our society.”; (In-depth Interview, Participant V1, 17 June 2022).*

Our social beliefs also help in creating class differences and social structure that encourage cyberbullying behaviors. Most of the participants agrees that belief system and social structure influence such characteristics among adolescents. This belief system might vary from person to person or from groups to groups. Participants discussed moral values, so called good and bad in the eyes of society, gender stereotypes, so called tradition and so on while discussing the societal structure. Cyberbullying could be acceptable in moral judgement of many (namely perpetrators) as it is seen as a tool to bring people on good path. However, no definition of such moral judgement has been found in the statements given by the participants. On the other hand, society define “good and bad” in their own terms and belief influence it a lot. For instance, one participant reflected that having a lot of friends means someone is “bad” in their teacher’s eye. Believing in gender stereotypes automatically put women in a state that any changes from the “expected behavior” or “tradition” leads to become prey of bullying as well as cyberbullying. Also differences among groups created by social beliefs or changes that are not in accordance with “tradition” creates in equality that leads to power imbalance causing one to belittle another in the form of cyberbullying as discussed by a teacher. Similar reflection has been given by students.

*“If we see something changed or different on social media, we cannot accept it and starts to cyberbully like “why it would be like this, why here, you are not good, you can’t do it, it is not in accordance with our tradition.”; (In-depth Interview, Participant V2, 18 June 2022).*

However, one participant believe that it is not social structure or belief system that creates ground for cyberbullying behavior but the process of bringing up a child influence him or her to be a perpetrator in future.

Ideologies and mythologies have been observed as somehow overlapped or interconnected as one can get formed by another in the discussion of participants. While student participants mostly could not reflect a lot on these teacher participants debated it strongly. The folklore stories or fairy tales mostly shown way to be richer and powerful soon or girls to be rescued by boys. If a farmer's son does not become king by marrying king's daughter, he won't be respected and remain as farmer's son always and such folklores belittle people based on profession, economic background, society and even gender as discussed by participants. Children read such folklore, fairy tales and mythologies and subconsciously inherit such stereotypes. Participants blamed mediaeval and early modern literature in Bangladesh to create contents around such materialistic ideologies this shaped the society a lot. These contents later on created belief system that influences social structure.

*“We have a common phrase that “he who studies, rides cars and horse”. This creates scope to bully others based on their social status”;* (In-depth Interview, Participant, T1, 26 July 2022).

Such ideologies also help to create gender stereotypes such as boys are treated as gold since gold in any form is still valuable while girls are not like that, and any distortion create opposite opinion for them. Society is a complex structure itself and the system within it influence cyberbullying.

*“These ongoing stereotypes, social beliefs, and ideologies are causing cyberbullying a lot I believe”;* (In-depth Interview, Participant V2, 18 June 2022)

### **4.3.3 Role of Family, School and Society in Hegemonic Control through Cyberbullying**

People individual discrimination depending on group-based hierarchies totals into institutional discrimination that provides morally legal foundation to cyberbullying behaviors. Perpetrators uses threatening to instill fear in the mindset of the victim through cyberbullying and also controls the ideologies that establish dominance over other socially constructed group to sustain the hegemonic control. In this chapter, I will present how hegemonic control is established through instilling fear and controlling discourse in addition to the role family, school and society in establishing dominant groups' hegemonic control over dominated groups through cyberbullying.

As the participants described mythologies, folklores and mediaeval literature categorized people based on wealth, gender or the so-called socially constructed good and bad that differs from society to society which helps dominant groups to dominate the less powerful group. Often in folklore and mythologies women have been represented as weak and helpless group that needs men's help to stand strong. Gender stereotypes are strong among most of the literary works and influences by society's high gender biasness and are still in practice as stated by the teacher participants and also some of the female student participants. Also, the idea of good and bad in a society gets shaped by socially constructed definition that stays in favor of the group that are powerful. For instance, in modern times school ranking is a factor in cyberbullying behavior where students from so called good schools cyberbully students from so called bad schools and often the good schools are easily accessible by specific dominant group of people such as rich people. As one participants pointed out, if people cannot differentiate the actual good and bad among the socially constructed beliefs then many aspects of social system influence cyberbullying. Moreover, the participants have discussed that social

inequality, structure, so called high class and low class based on economic condition, categorization of people supports the structure of domination.

*“It depends on social structure and how we are bringing them (children) up, what we are teaching them and showing them provokes them to cyberbully others.”*; (In-depth Interview, Participant T2, 26 July 2022)

Traditionally these ideologies are controlled by dominant group as a mechanism to control the other groups and maintain social hierarchy. They have also added that our society has less awareness about such problems as the state or government does not have higher involvement in increasing people’s awareness through massive campaign, communication, using media, school, curriculum and so on. The practice of spreading rumor is another cultural issue discussed by participants helps in cyberbullying and increased access to internet and technology made it easier. Even an example of committing suicide due to gossiping has been given by one participant.

Instilling fear into victims’ mindset to establish power remains the most prominent objective of cyberbullying behaviors as per the respondents. All the participants agreed on that while describing different process of inflicting the fear. Based on the self-reported cyberbullies statements, bullies use personal information or arm power or political power to dominate the victims to control them to get them either do something or just for the sake of fun by provoking them. They have also mentioned that sometimes it is done to blackmail the victims, put them through mental distress or to torment them to feel them stranded. When the cyberbullying is happening inside a friend’s group, one participant expressed that personal information are at stake as the bully knows the weakness of the victim. It often even happens within family if the perpetrator has issues with family members, they take toll on them too. On the other hand, sometimes, family as part of society believes that these are normal part of growing up and does

not support the victim much contributing to creating a fertile environment for cyberbullying. Almost all participants have agreed that family has a strong positive role in that.

*“I told my mother, but she told me to ignore these.”*; (In-depth Interview, Participant V4, 19 June 2022).

While considering the role of family in such cases participants indicated that most of the time family does not get involved due to their ignorance about cyberbullying and its impact on victim. Even if the parents get to know there are culture of denial of such issues because the complainer is a child and often victims get the blame. A participant has provided example of personal experience that her parents blamed her while she was getting fat-shammed in online classes and protested against it. That leads a victim to become indifferent or to adopt path of self-harm.

*“When I am a victim, and my family does not stand with me it is difficult for me to fight against it (cyberbullying).”*; (In-depth Interview, Participant B4, 19 June 2022).

Moreover, parenting style and family issues has also been pointed out as a major contributor to cyberbullying environment. Authoritarian parents naturally bully their own child and in return the child might adopt the cyberbullying behavior as a distraction mechanism or become an easy victim. A teacher has stated that even if they request students’ family to get counselling help, parents generally ignores it due to social taboo about taking professional counselling support for mental wellbeing. One participant brought a crucial point that often cyberbullies do not bully alone rather form group or gang to target victims and cyberbully them continuously. Most of these gang also continue to practice bullying in real life and get sustained either by using their muscle power or link to local political power and a growing culture in the country. According to self-reported cyberbullies group often such cyberbullying continues to take place in real life in forms of threat or violence.

The real-life threat issues have also been supported by the self-reported victim group partakers as it is easier way for the perpetrators to establish power or “rule cyberspace”. Moreover, one participant added that it discourages a victim to lead normal life or to participate in usual activities in daily life specially in academic settings. Shockingly, one participant with very high self-reported victim score expressed that suffering from cyberbullying for long time without any proper support might create indifference in victim’s mindset which normalize the cyberbullying and the perpetrator look for other victims to get the fun out of it.

*“If a victim suffers from cyberbullying for a long time, then they grow indifferent to it.”; (In-depth Interview, Participant V2, 18 June 2022).*

However, the teacher participants brought some interesting insights about this power establishments and differences based on academic settings based on their own experience of dealing with the problem. All of them agreed that establishing power through cyberbullying is prominent among boys or in boys only school while in girls only school or among girls it is mostly because of inferiority complex or mental distress. On the other hand, in co-education space male perpetrators efforts to establish power is a gender centric phenomenon. Another participant added that due to the anonymity of the online space perpetrators even cyberbully teachers to show off their powers to their peers. In general, the perpetrators try their best to insert fear in victim mind to control their behavior creates several mental and physical issues for the victims.

*“Cyberbullying creates frustration, fear, inferiority, loneliness and even lack of self-identity among victims. I think this happen because of that power practice through cyberbullying.”; (In-depth Interview, Participant T2, 26 July 2022).*

However, interestingly while helping her child for the interview, a caregiver of one participant who has probable autism spectrum disorder expressed that the victim should get respect



because he is the heir of his parent's wealth. However, the same participant mentioned that poor people do not have power in comparison to the rich, so they get cyberbullied.

Discussing about the role of schools and teachers in creating supportive environment for cyberbullying, majority of the student participants claimed that their teachers or school does not discuss the problem of cyberbullying at all. A few who have mentioned that it has been discussed in school are due to teachers' involvement in cyberbullying related project or while teaching small cyberbullying content in the ICT course for the sake of exam and even sometimes it gets skipped as an unimportant topic. Even when there was serious incident in school due to cyberbullying school authority tried to mitigate the problem but did not discuss it further or arranged any awareness campaign in the school. Interestingly, teacher participants strongly stated that many school especially those are for elite group has mechanism to deal with such issues but in sharp contrast to that all the self-reported victim participants stated that school does not even care about that while one participant with both high perpetrator and victimization score indicated to the carelessness of schools in regard to that leading victim to adopt cyberbullying behavior to counterattack the perpetrator.

*“School or teachers actually does not care about these things. Our school authority told us that they do not care what happen outside. I complained to the school when I have become a victim, but they did not take any action. But they could have, by creating an anti-bullying group in school.”; (In-depth Interview, Participant B2, 18 June 2022).*

However, a participant in defense of teachers mentioned that the class time in school is very low and teachers does not have scope to focus on social issues due to the pressure of finishing up the syllabus as there are too many exams. Teacher participants also stretched out on this adding that teachers have a lot of administrative responsibilities, especially in government school, in addition to teaching refraining them from conducting such extra session. Moreover,

these contemporary challenges that impact school setting are not part of formal teacher training. Consequently, teachers have less knowledge about such complicated issues and do not know how to deal with these. Anyways, as expressed by the respondents, controlling ideologies helps to create an environment of hierarchies. In that settings, socially constructed groups who are higher in the hierarchical chain will dominate those in the lower portion exercising their power or advantage of hierarchy by instilling fear or threatening.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed the findings of this study against the findings of other research, social dominance theory and in the context of Bangladesh as well as online schooling during covid-19 in Bangladesh. Later on, recommendations to prevent cyberbullying to protect adolescent in online space, limitations of the study and future scope of research in lights of the findings have been accommodated.

#### **5.1 Discussion**

The major objective of this study is to find out the prevalence of cyberbullying among the secondary schools in Dhaka during covid-19 and the perception of students and teachers about cyberbullying and its linkage between social hierarchies. The first primary research question will seek a) the numerical information about cyberbullying prevalence among secondary school students and b) the extent of online presence's influence on cyberbullying behavior during covid-19 period. The other primary question will confer the perception of teachers and students on cyberbullying in terms a) linkage between cyberbullying behavior and social hierarchies and b) the role of family, school, and society in establishing hegemonic control through cyberbullying. I will discuss the quantitative findings at the beginning and then elaborate the participant's perception through debating qualitative findings. At the end of this chapter, I will provide my recommendations to prevent cyberbullying based on findings and literature review.

In this part I have synthesized the answer of the first primary research question in light of the quantitative results further explained and extended slightly with the help of qualitative findings.

Even though the global efforts to observe the cyberbullying prevalence has been increased in recent times, Bangladeshi context has been lagging behind due to lack of strong evidences and mostly been projected based on global information. Based on the findings of this study, the key findings emerged combining their experience of victimization and offence “a few times” and ‘many times” that overall, 26.8% (n=195) secondary school going children in Bangladesh faced cyberbullying while 7.2% (n=195) have cyberbullied others in their lifetime. Moreover, an overall 12.3% have been victimized while overall 3.1% cyberbullied others through any forms of behavior during covid-19 period. Gender segregated victimization data shows that 17.2% (n=99) of the secondary school going male children have been victim of cyberbullying and on the other hand 7.3% (n=96) secondary school going female children were victim during covid-19. The result indicates that boys are more prone to become the victim of cyberbullying behavior confirming the results of Mallik and Redwan (2020). In contrast to that, both boys and girls are almost equal in terms of offending others through cyberbullying behaviors during that time at roughly 3%, however, boys scored slightly higher in this portion. Out of three grades respondents from grade 9 have the highest victimization and offending experience.

The results confirm the existence of cyberbullying felony in Bangladesh highly and the overall victimization and offending results fall within the range of north American context ranging from 10% to 35% of either cyberbullying or being victim of cyberbullying (Hinduja and Patchin, 2015; Mitzner, 2011). The prevalence of cyberbullying found through this study is higher than the European context (Bevilacqua et al., 2017; Blaya, 2013) and lower than most Asian countries, African, and Latin American context even though Bangladesh has economic and cultural similarities with many countries in these regions. However, it has almost similar results towards it’s South Asian counterparts India and Pakistan (Wright et al., 2015; Hasse et al., 2016). This could be as a result of economic and cultural similarities of this region.

Fascinatingly, the data of this study do not completely in line with the findings of Monni and Sultana (2016) that focuses on the victimization of adolescents' girls only at 90% (n=50). Though the author of that study illustrated only male respondents as perpetrator, finding of this research shows that female respondents equally commit cyberbullying offence. This implies that gender biasness in sampling might leads to misrepresentative results of cyberbullying behavior. T-test for equality of means to understand gender segregated victimization and offence trends also resulted in significant magnitude of difference in the means for the male group is higher than the female group of the respondents where MD = 1.93 (95% CI, 0.971 to 2.908) indicate that the male students are more prone to victimization and similarly the magnitude of differences in the means for the male group is slightly higher than the female group of the respondents indicating that the male students are slightly more prone to get involved in cyberbullying offence.

Findings shows that almost 41% of the respondents think that the cyberbullying is done as fun or being cool and likewise 43.8% respondents want cyberbullying and similar incidents to stays online rather than bringing to real life and 28.6% thinks it is normal part of online world. As per this, it could be concluded that the normalization of cyberbullying as part of growing up could lead to adopt cyberbullying behavior more where knowingly or unknowingly adolescent children might support cyberbullying behavior. 11% believe it is done as a defense mechanism and very few think it is due to family issues of the offenders which resembles the findings of Sarker and Shahid (2019). However, this study finds two more prominent interesting reasons for cyberbullying behavior which are jealousy and anger issues indicating that children have less social emotional intelligence could also be a contributing factor towards cyberbullying offence.

58% of the respondents considered that cyberbullying is a severe issue and needs to be addressed while only 16% agreed to the negative impact but expressed helplessness about

doing anything. In comparison to this, 94.4% thinks that if the victim is badly hurt adults needs to be involved and a spiking 94% expressed that they would even report if their identity were kept hidden. It refers that the respondents are not aware whether their identity in the reporting mechanism will remain safe or not but if remain safe most of them are willing to upstand against cyberbullying otherwise remain as a bystander. Only 7% think that the victim deserves cyberbullying and 23.4% thinks that they should have full freedom of speech on online platforms referring their chance of being an witness or supported during cyberbullying incidents. However, spiking 94.4% respondents' willingness in participating to create a safer online world refers that it is best to involve adolescents in national and international strategies of making safer online world.

Based on the self-reported victimization score ranges found by using the tool developed by Hinduja and Patchin (2006), it has been identified that the average time spend by those with the lowest to highest score spends on an average three hours to three and a half hours in virtual space for study related activities such as participating in class, private tuition service and group work. Interestingly, the time spent online outside of the study related activities gets increased during the covid-19 (Farhana et al., 2020; Mkhize and Gopal, 2021; UNICEF, 2019a). Alongside this, the victimization scores increase as the time outside of study increased. It has been found that the highest scorer with victimization experiences spend a whopping six hours online while those with the lowest scores spends roughly three and a half hours. I speculate based on this finding that the higher the online presence outside of study related activities the higher the probability of getting cyberbullied. On the other hand, based on the offending score it has been observed that the lowest offence scores use almost similar time online for both the study and non-study related activities at roughly two to three and a half hours though the time spent online for out of study related activities is slightly higher. Contrary to that, those with the

highest offending score spend slightly higher time for study related activities at four hours than the non-study related activities at three hours. Though it's a bit unclear why the trends get changed oppositely in terms of offence, I assume that those who cyberbully their peers use both their time spent online for study and non-study related activities.

As the findings illustrate that during covid-19 the overall cyberbullying victimization score is 12.3% for any given offensive behavior while the overall victimization during lifetime is 26.8% and the overall offensive score is 3.1% during covid-19 period while the overall offensive score for lifetime is 7.2% (in both cases n=195), it confirms the result found by Vaillancourt et al., (2021) in Canada and Patchin, (2021) in the US that the cyberbullying victimization as well as offence during covid-19 was lower than the previous experience confirming the similar victimization and offending results. A thought-provoking finding is that this result again stands in dissimilarity against the result of European context as found by Lobe, (2021) raising a question related to similarity of results between Bangladesh and North American region. Further analysis on the form of offensive cyberbullying behavior it has been found that highest 16.9% victim faced offensive comments about their physical appearance followed by 10.8% mean comments, 8.2% threats and 6.7% rumors. On the other hand, highest 1.5% offenders affronted posting invasive comments regarding physical appearance and spread rumors online followed by same 0.5% for mean comments, posting hurtful photos or videos, creating fake id, threatening online, and posting sexually harassing comments and by hurting religious belief or social identity as predicted in the work of World Childhood Foundation, (2020). It can be argued according to this that the perpetrators use almost all forms of offensive behaviors and on the other side, victims get hurt mostly by few prominent offensive behaviors.

The top platforms used for study related activities during covid-19 are zoom, Facebook live, google meet, Messenger, WhatsApp and YouTube Live while the top platforms used for non-study related activities are Facebook, YouTube, Messenger, WhatsApp, Instagram and Tiktok.

This implies that these platforms are associated with the most cyberbullying victimization and offending behaviors. The findings exemplify that Facebook, Messenger and WhatsApp remains the top in victimization reported by 21% respondents followed by Tiktok and Likee at 6% and Instagram, Snapchat and Youtube at 5%. In terms of platforms used by perpetrators, Facebook, Messenger and Whatsapp remains high at 16% followed by Youtube at 6% and Tiktok and Likee at 5%. Relating this with the times spent online for study and non-study related activities it can be reasoned that Facebook, Messenger, YouTube, WhatsApp used for study and non-study related activities are more used platforms for bullying. Moreover, as per 4% victims, online meeting platforms Zoom, Google Meet or Discord frequently used for online class have been used to cyberbully them while only 1% perpetrator reported that they have used these platforms. This explains about the trends of similar time used by perpetrator for study and non-study activities for cyberbullying their peers. They use these common platforms for both types of activities and uses their time there to bully the victims.

In this part, I have discussed the perception of students and teachers on cyberbullying behavior's relationship with the social dominance and how family, school and society sustain that resulting into hegemonic control through forming institutional discrimination.

Despite the ongoing discussion about cyberbullying in media and social media platforms most of the participants perceives cyberbullying as only harassment in online spaces while underpinning it to conflict, argument, discomforting others and exaggeration of fun. Nobody was able to pinpoint the repetitive pattern for cyberbullying and consider one time act as cyberbullying equivalent to the finding of Jeffrey and Stuart (2019) but also stretched on the problem of happening it repetitively as argued by Corcoran et al., (2015). The most intriguing



factor about defining the cyberbullying is that it also shapes participants' experiences related to cyberbullying, normalizing it and willingness to report. The distortion in defining cyberbullying in spite it is a contemporary phenomenon could be linked to the vague defining process of cyberbullying in media and social media platforms. Lack of existence of organized campaigning against cyberbullying led to develop different definition of cyberbullying among the participants. I have found similar result as shown by Hasse et al., (2009) about the common complexity of the anonymity of the perpetrator in virtual space as well as how fast it can cause harm.

Through analyzing the experiences of the participants victimization and offending behavior, I have found that all nine types of cyberbullying as defined by Newey and Magson, (2010) exists among the secondary school going children in Dhaka megacity. Among them most common types of cyberbullying are happy slapping, flaming, harassment, identity theft, outing, ostracism, and misinformation derived due to the relationship problem, jealousy issues or as aftermath of traditional fight in the school or academic setting as found by other major studies discussed in the literature review. Cyberstalking remains next in line while sexting is the less frequent form. It can thus be suggested that the root of the cyberbullying is to harass or belittle others due to power issues across the discourse. A cautious note here for discussing the cyberbullying experience is that it is very much interrelated with the traditional forms of bullying and one of these can take place as an aftermath of another. There are future research scopes to find out the relationship between types of cyberbullying and traditional bullying.

The study confirms the findings of Camp, (2016) on the notion of social acceptance of cyberbullying and normalizing it as part of growing up has been found both in the quantitative and qualitative findings. The first steps of normalizing cyberbullying start with accepting it within friends as fun, morally supporting it as a disciplinary process and discriminating among people based on socially constructed ideologies and stereotypes. It has been observed that the

self-reported perpetrator was in favor of moral acceptance of cyberbullying to some extent with a high probability of them becoming bystander, disengaged onlookers or even followers in line with the result found by Olweus, (1993). Intriguingly, they have discussed the moral values highly from social and religious perspectives about preventing the cyberbullying. This phenomenon of displaying higher moral values but accepting something that does not have moral grounds is weird and needs further attention. However, with a small sampling chosen for this study caution must be applied in interpreting this further. In addition to these common gender stereotyping, social and cultural practices, religious values, traditional norms and so on have been identified as a process of socially accepting and normalizing cyberbullying. Moreover, negligence of school and education system. Legal frameworks, family and society made it hard for the victims to seek support where they become indifferent or disengaged onlookers or choose to cause self-harm (Olweus, 1993). The normalization of cyberbullying and such different role due to normalization created a nurturing environment for cyberbullying to spread like cancer. I would discuss the role of family, school and society in the next research question while how socially constructed ideologies supports cyberbullying will be discussed below.

One of the primary researches focus of this study was to understand the linkage between social dominance and cyberbullying behaviors. As I have found in the explanation of cyberbullying behavior, its process and acceptance described by the participants has strong correlation with power, I will stretch further to understand this idea. In the aggregated part of the social dominance in cyberbullying behavior I have selected age, gender, arbitrary attributes (physical features, religious identity and school reputation) and social and cultural difference. Age has been found as an important motivating factor influencing cyberbullying due to so called seniority and juniority differentiated by the age where seniors have the effective controlling role to inflict fears in the juniors' mind through cyberbullying closely linked with many studies

(Bartrini and Brooks, 1999; Hawley 1999; Sisema et al., 2009). However, I have also found that age could be temporary fact since due to the advantage of anonymity even juniors can cyberbully their seniors or teachers. A fascinating issue is that developmental stage of adolescent's curiosity can also lead to cyberbullying just to get the fun of it put age as a blurry backdrop for cyberbullying. Nevertheless, age should be interpreted closely as strong correlation of age with cyberbullying has been observed in the statements of participants in academic setting where in boys only school or co-education school power of seniors is important but in girls only school it does not play an important role.

Gender, on the other hand, has not been directly associated with cyberbullying behavior at individual level but strongly connected as an influencing factor in the socially constructed beliefs due to the predominant patriarchal structure. Even though cyberspace allow girls to bully boys through faking profile or anonymity, traditionally male plays significant role in cyberbullying girls in forms of harassing, sexting and spreading rumors with the advantage of acceptance of such behavior by boys due to patriarchy. Social stereotyping around the binary gender concept helps this behavior. Finally, it could be argued that even though gender has strong manipulating relationship with cyberbullying behavior it can happen both vertically and horizontally and cannot be linked against one gender as none from the binary gender group is less in terms of bullying a person having opposite gender traits than their biological gender or if from LGBTQ+ community. The possible explanation of this phenomenon could be translated that gender-based cyberbullying are actually associated with the group powerful or in control depending on the context of the behavior and providing scope to increase pluralistic ignorance again confirming the demonstration of power as motivating factor for bullying in accord with the results argued by Hinde, (1994); Juvonen and Schacter, (2017); Sandstorm et al., (2013); Slmivalli et al., (2005); and, Sisema et al., 2009.

Physical appearance (color complexion, height, weight etc.) disabilities and different sexual orientation provide advantage for cyberbullying as discussed by Pearce et al., (2002) and son et al., (2012) and this study's findings confirmed that. Social beliefs around the different physical features against some preset standards are generally used to cyberbully those who do not fit into the standardized group, and it happens concurrently with traditional bullying. Important aspect about this is that perpetrator justified this in accord to the social beliefs and normalized such behaviors by characterizing it as fun. Gender is also an intertwined prominent factor in defining such physical appearance where girls prioritized against beauty standards and boys focus on typical masculine features created by the so-called modern society. It is crucial to interpret this phenomenon in light of the glorification of beauty standards evolved in the modern cyberspace that itself impact mental health of adolescents and combining it into cyberbullying behavior can be devastated (Kholmogorova et al., 2017).

Putting religious identity into scenario brings another level of power-based conflicts that not only impact cyberspace but can be translated into real life violence. It has been clearly observed through explanation that how majority religious belief can dominate minority religious belief followers just because of the power it holds. However, interestingly due to the lack of immediate face-to-face conflict even minor religious belief follower can utilized cyberbullying to avenge any insults and the topic is so sensitive especially in terms of the sub-continental area where this study took place even the educators were afraid to be opened about this. This could be explained further studying the basic moral and ethical values put by the dominant religions and how the inherent peaceful messages get cognitively, socially, and politically distorted by one's surrounding to be used in the power practice to dominate each other's through social hierarchy.

Other differences such as ethnic minority generally creates a power dynamic with the majority groups where the minority groups get discriminated socially and culturally. In Bangladesh even

the official terminologies used for the minority groups helped to create that power conflict and in addition to that, physical appearance, religious beliefs and cultural practices of minority groups put them in risk of being cyberbullied that is surprisingly even promoted in some national curriculum influenced books. Racial issues in Bangladesh are not commonly studied as in western countries but I firmly believe that the Eastern version of critical race theory should be put in evaluating these types of hierarchy that influence children from the early age and inspire to bully as well as cyberbully their peers with racial slangs just because of cultural differences. On the other hand, economic background is a common inducing factor for cyberbullying. Financial solvency is associated to have power in current society that is used in cyberbullying to mock the victim since the poor do not have the individual or collective power to fight back. Such type of social hierarchy is more influenced by capitalistic behaviour where material possession of the perpetrator is valued than the humanist possession of the victims. Moreover, a person getting access to technologies, social and economic advantage of being economically solvent at early age and family settings influence them to adopt such behaviours if values are not instilled at that age.

Similar dominating social hierarchy found for the reputation of the school that has been defined by the typical good school and bad school ranking but found that most of the so called good schooled are either privately financed or accessible by specific group of people positioned on the higher ladders of the social hierarchy automatically giving them the advantage to belittle the lower group. The recent craze of school ranking worsens this. The perplexing fact is that the role of a perpetrator gets changes based on these social, and cultural group. A victim in his own academic setting for another different influencing factor could turn into a perpetrator if residing in a powerful social group. Amazingly it put cyberbullying as a complex issue to analyse through singular lens of theoretical knowledge. Rather it needs a lens that can assess

these different contexts and how the roles of the same perpetrator and victim can change oppositely.

One of the most prominent objectives of this study is to find out how social hierarchies create institutional discrimination over dominated groups through the control of ideologies, mythologies, culture, and social structure. It is crucial to understand the role of family, school and the society that get structured by the first two elements in creating the discourse of institutional discrimination. As discussed by Till Van, (2001) in his classic theological book on Calvinistic culture of Christianity, which itself tries to prove Christianity as the greatest of religious belief creating scope for dominating other religions through controlling religious belief discourse, family is the tiniest unit of the social structure and value system within it influence the culture of man. Likewise, role of family in cyberbullying behavior, if questioned, found positive in most of the scenarios. Family in the speech of victims found to be ignorant of cyberbullying through undervaluing the role of children in internet usage. In most cases of this study parents choose to ignore the fact that their children have been victimized or found to be guilty of cyberbullying and even blaming the victim confirming the findings of Dehue et al., (2008) in Netherland. Unfamiliarity of such issues due to lack of knowledge, accepting cyberbullying as normal part of socialization or typical conflict of children and even confirming to the social beliefs of stereotyping around gender role, age, economic and cultural differences by family plays the reassuring role in creating cyberbullying opportunities as found in the study of Liau et a., (2008). I have found that not only parents ignore or blame the victim often authoritarian family members bully their children that makes them vulnerable to victimization or to adopt similar perpetrator behavior online corroborating the findings of Dehue et al., (2008) greatly. The restrictive role of family is increasing the cyberbullying behaviors greatly consistent with the point made by Mesch, (2009).

School on the other hand, being an important social institution highly plays bystander role to cyberbullying incidents as found in this study. As discussed, priorly, often cyberbullying play's complementary role of school-based bullying during the absence of school and education institution blames the role of family mostly in such issues in line with the findings of Cassidy et al., (2009) and Brown et al., (2006). Contrary to the expectation based on this literature, some educators on their own tries to resolve the issues despite institutional negligence but when discussed with families of the perpetrators or victims about professional counselling support denial emerged due to social taboo. Academic institutions' indifference to this gruesome problem helped perpetrators to get immunization against their actions. However, it is vital to point out here that low contact hour or scope to discuss such issues in classroom, lack of knowledge of educators on such complex behavior, inexistence of institutional policies, extra administrative pressures hinder teachers to deal with bullying and cyberbullying and they tend to put it on families' shoulder instead. Consequently, whatever actions are taken mostly reactive rather than proactively preventive in line with the research result by Johnson, (2012). Moreover, schools and its staffs often found to be in the perpetrator role making it more problematic to address.

Societal structure, values, norms, belief encourages social discrimination, predominantly in favor of different powerful groups. Family and school being two most prominent social institution follows those structure and choose to avoid cyberbullying problems differently. As these two institutions combinedly plays the major role to deal with issues of school going children, their confirming nature towards socially constructed and controlled ideologies and beliefs impact cyberbullying behavior positively. Though the academic institutions can play primary role in busting the stereotypes it has been found to be supportive through silently witnessing or promoting those social practices in questions through educators, curriculum, or institution itself. Folklore and literature of various ages are included in the national curriculum

that rather promotes stereotypes around group based social hierarchies in the forms of gender biasness, ageism, racial remarks around ethnic minority, professional roles, economic condition, and other cultural differences. Teachers growing up with the same narratives of biasness also transfers those into their disciple's mindset knowingly or unknowingly fertilizing such hierarchies resulting into cyberbullying. Besides societal inequalities, growth of political or muscle power through gang culture translating cyberbullying into real life threats made it more difficult for institutions to challenge this problem through actions. Moreover, the legal frameworks of Bangladesh does not consider cyberbullying directly as criminal offence and even if there are some sort of legal structure exists to take support turning cyberbullying into cybercrime, lack of massive promotion of those support system, complex process of legal actions, less attention of the judicial system, fear of complexities of legal process, gap between academic settings and legal supports and child unfriendliness of the judicial system makes it difficult for the children to take support. In addition to that, even family and schools are afraid to takes legal actions due to these. The negligence of legal system in successfully creating bridge between cyberbullying and criminal offence immunize perpetrators in a sense.

Going back to the conceptual framework of the study the circle of oppression consists of these dominant and dominated groups based on age, gender, religion, physical appearances, social class and background and so on. whether the upper level or lower level of such social hierarchies sustained temporarily or permanently it creates psychological distance from one group to another group. This distance allows agency of controlling over the lower group by the upper group as discussed by Fiske et al., (2016) and also shown in the circle of oppression in the conceptual framework. The intergroup based psychological distance alongside the pre-established societal inequality and inequity helps to form strong institutional discrimination by accumulating aggregated individual discrimination and controlling discourses of ideologies to increase that distance. The ideologies and beliefs are dispersed and imposed by the social



institutions such as family, school, economic, political, and judicial system through social structure. Such social structure reinforces the dominance of dominant groups and power of social division cannot be put outside of discussing an atheoretical topic like cyberbullying that is sustained by power dynamics existing in the societal system found in this study. Legitimising control of ideologies are more effectual in controlling less powerful group rather than coercing dominance directly. As long as society would foster such social inequalities through institutional discrimination, perpetrators will always evade consequence as they can easily inflict harm intentional and reputedly in the mind of victim based on these hierarchies creating perfect environment for cyberbullying to grow as conceptualized in the framework and found through evidence. This will sustain any multifaceted social offense for instance cyberbullying destructively impacting millions of children and even adults establishing a hegemonic control of powerful groups over less powerful only comparable to Gramsci's analysis of cultural hegemony through political philosophy lens (Gramsci & Buttigieg, 2011). That impacts entails short term and long-term mental, physical and societal problems and as happening within academic environment making academic institutions unsafe, unwelcoming and ineffective for school going children creating an obscene blurry threat to the rights of education of children. Hence, I want to further stretch through my analysis that cyberbullying even though considered as an atheoretical academic issue by many researchers should be evaluated under the macro lens of social power that helps in creating group-based dominance via intergroup relationship resulting into cyberbullying. Moreover, differentiated theories to find such specific relationship of cyberbullying behaviour could also be used based on the requirement rather than just looking to it through generalization without going deep to the roots of the problem. The reformation of society should hereafter start from its core institutions family and school to address the root causes of this problem. Furthermore, pragmatic policies targeting institutional, cultural, and political reformation needs to be considered.

## 5.2 Conclusion

This research aimed to understand the prevalence of the cyberbullying behaviors among the secondary grade students of Dhaka alongside the relationship between their time spent online and cyberbullying behavior. Moreover, their perception of cyberbullying from an intergroup based social hierarchy and how the family, school and society help in sustaining the cyberbullying. Depending on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the findings, I can conclude that the prevalence of cyberbullying among secondary schools is relevant with the global findings and their high time spent online has a strong positive relation with high cyberbullying behavior especially for the cases of victimization. The results also indicates that, power driven by intergroup bases social hierarchies leads to social discrimination that influence cyberbullying behavior. In addition to that, groups that are in powerful control the social ideologies, mythologies and belief system to sustain the discrimination and family, school and society as a whole has very positive role supporting such structure.

I intended to find significant cyberbullying prevalence through the quantitative part of the study which has been resulted positively confirming existing literature along with new findings of interesting similarities of the cyberbullying prevalence to the north American region that draws attraction to further analysis of the reason. The generalization of the relationship between time spent online and cyberbullying behavior has been limited due to unclear relationship with time spent online to offensive behavior through the victimization resulted strongly positive opening new opportunities for future research. I have also brought new perspective about secondary school going children's willingness about reporting cyberbullying behavior given their safety net and perception about creating a kinder virtual world despite their degree of involvement in the cyberbullying behavior. This will provide policymakers with a new fresh lens of designing rules and regulation involving students to prevent cyberbullying.

The social dominance theory provided me with a greater sense of seeing adolescent world through power perspectives and I have found that these intergroup based social hierarchies are highly influencing in provoking cyberbullying behavior. Not only the power but I have also found that family and school being the important pillar of social structure sustain those group-based power psychologies. Then these institutions also help in structuring the social beliefs, norms and society as a whole forming a vicious institutional discrimination creating scope for powerful groups to impose hegemonic control over the less powerful group. This not only sustain the social discrimination but also creates an unsafe learning environment for children specially in this era of digital revolution in education. Though in academia it has been claimed by many that cyberbullying is an atheoretical issue I, in contrary to that belief, argue that it could be a theoretical issue only if pinpointed with the right theories based on the perspective of the author who is trying to look into it.

In order to address this issue, I recommend that not to take piecemeal basis strategies. Rather, I suggest undertaking comprehensive strategies around children including family, school, social organizations, medias, legal bodies. In those strategies, cyberbullying is not accepted as a normal trait rather a reportable offense where government plays significant role to eradicate it from the society ensuring the rights of children as the stewards of the child rights. In those strategies, government will provide intervention from micro level to macro level and with both the short-term and long-term intervention cyberbullying as well as other social offence will be minimized creating an equal and just Bangladesh that will be model for many other countries to follow.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the research, I propose the below immediate actions to be taken to prevent cyberbullying and any such school-based violence.

- The government should start creating awareness campaign against cyberbullying using mass media, providing immediate support for victims and forming child-friendly justice system.
- Central academic administration needs to be reformed to involve teachers, parents, students in raising awareness against such issues while establishing mechanism for reporting and victim support through counseling.
- Curriculum should be enhanced by including moral and ethical knowledge either through separate subject or utilization of hidden curriculum where issues such as cyberbullying would be discussed thoroughly.
- Children's safety in virtual space, family and society has to be ensure and the stewardship of government as the protector of children rights needs to be ensured.
- The government should take necessary steps in social reformation and as part of that reduce the gap between academic institutions and legal system to integrate and implement legal procedures against cyberbullying

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## Appendices

### Appendix A. Quantitative Tool

#### Quantitative Tool

#### Cyberbullying Prevalence and Perception Survey- 2022

Dear,

Greetings! I hope you are well in this tiring pandemic time are very happy to have schools opened. Schools have been closed for more than a year now and during that time we took online classes, chatted with friends, and stayed in touch. We couldn't go out due to the lockdown, fear of pandemic or even if went out, we needed to maintain social distance, wear masks, sanitize our hands. Our screen time with digital devices increased in that time, so did our digital experience and behavior. This survey is designed to understand some aspects of that digital behavior and experience that many of us have often seen in real life, known as bullying. When bullying happens online, it calls cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is when someone willfully and repeatedly makes fun of another person or deliberately and repeatedly picks on another person or deliberately and repeatedly posts something online about another person that they don't like; using online platforms such as e-mail (Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail etc.), text message, social network sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Messenger, WhatsApp, TikTok, Viber, Snapchat, IMO etc.) online meeting applications (Zoom, google meet, Microsoft team, skype etc.), blogs, or any other online platforms. Some examples of cyberbullying behaviour are posting rude, vulgar, offensive, or hurtful comments, threats, spreading rumours, mean pictures, or videos posted or circulated online to hurt someone, creating a fake profile of another person deliberately, intentionally excluding a person from an online group etc. But remember, it must be wilful (not accidental), repeatedly (not once but repeatedly) and to hurt someone using online platforms.

If you are a student of grade 8, 9 and 10 from the Dhaka megacity, you are cordially invited to fill this survey form. It might take 15-20 minutes of your time but will help me a lot to understand cyberbullying. The data of this survey will solely be used for academic purpose and no information will be shared without your explicit permission. So, your personal information will remain highly confidential. You have the freedom to leave the survey at any point if you are not willing to participate. Please take permission of your parents before participating in this survey and provide the phone number of any of your parent as a means of their consent to let you participate in this survey. The survey has three sections, and you will find instructions in each section for filling up all the questions. While completing the survey, please remember your experience of school closure time in the last 1 year due to the covid-19.

Sincerely,

Md. Tanvir Rahman Bhuiyan

BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University

**Part 1: Personal Information**

Please tick on the appropriate box or write in the blank space for the questions in this section. If any of your answer is other from the options, then write specifically in the given area beside the option "other".

|   |  |                                 |                                      |                                    |                             |                             |                                   |   |    |
|---|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|----|
| 1. What is your gender?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Male  | <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |                                    |                             |                             |                                   |   |    |
| 2. What school you are studying in? (Please write the full name of your school in small letters)  |  |                                 |                                      |                                    |                             |                             |                                   |   |    |
| 3. Which grade are you studying in?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 8   |                                 |                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9   |                             |                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 10 |   |    |
| 4. How old are you?   | <input type="checkbox"/> 13  | <input type="checkbox"/> 14     | <input type="checkbox"/> 15          | <input type="checkbox"/> 16        | <input type="checkbox"/> 17 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 |                                   |   |    |
| 5. Have you participated regularly in your school's online class during the school closure due to covid-19?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Always  |                                 |                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |                             |                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Never    |   |    |
| 6. Which online platform you have used primarily to participate the online classes during school closure due to covid-19?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook live <input type="checkbox"/> YouTube live <input type="checkbox"/> Zoom <input type="checkbox"/> Google Meet <input type="checkbox"/> Skype <input type="checkbox"/> Messenger <input type="checkbox"/> WhatsApp <input type="checkbox"/> IMO <input type="checkbox"/> Viber <input type="checkbox"/> Discord <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |                                 |                                      |                                    |                             |                             |                                   |   |    |
| 7. During the school closure due to covid-19, usually how many hours you have spent online for study?   | 1  | 2                               | 3                                    | 4                                  | 5                           | 6                           | 7                                 | 8 | 8+ |
| 8. During the school closure due to covid-19, which platforms you have used primarily outside of your study for social networking or fun?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> Messenger <input type="checkbox"/> WhatsApp <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram <input type="checkbox"/> Tiktok <input type="checkbox"/> IMO <input type="checkbox"/> Viber <input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat <input type="checkbox"/> Likee <input type="checkbox"/> YouTube <input type="checkbox"/> Discord <input type="checkbox"/> Google meet <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |                                 |                                      |                                    |                             |                             |                                   |   |    |
| 9. During the school closure due to covid-19, usually how many hours you have spent online outside of your study?   | 1  | 2                               | 3                                    | 4                                  | 5                           | 6                           | 7                                 | 8 | 8+ |
| 10. Please provide the name and phone number of any of your parent as the evidence of their consent for you to participate in this survey. (Write the name of your father or mother and then write the phone number using hyphen (-) sign i:e: Tanvir Rahman - 01847327217) | Name _____ of father/mother: _____   |                                 |                                      |                                    | Phone Number: _____         |                             |                                   |   |    |

|   |                              |                             |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>11. If it is required to interview you to know your opinion about the contents of this survey, are you willing to participate in that?</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

## Part 2: Cyberbullying Experience Information

Think about your online experience of study-related and non-study related activities during the last 1 year due to the covid-19 while going through this part of the survey. Read every statement and select any one of the four options which are more relevant to the statement.

Please remember that “**cyberbullying is when someone repeatedly harasses, mistreats or makes fun of another person (on purpose to hurt them) online or while using cell phones or other electronic devices**”.

| Item  | Never | Once | A few times | Many times |
|---|-------|------|-------------|------------|
| 1. In my lifetime, I have seen other people being cyberbullied.   |       |      |             |            |
| 2. In my lifetime, I have been victim of cyberbullying.   |       |      |             |            |
| 3. In my lifetime, I have been cyberbullied in a way that affected my interest in learning in school environment and made me feel unsafe.   |       |      |             |            |
| 4. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I have been cyberbullied.  |       |      |             |            |
| 5. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), someone posted mean or hurtful comments about me online.   |       |      |             |            |
| 6. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), someone posted mean or hurtful pictures of mine online.  |       |      |             |            |
| 7. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), someone posted a mean or hurtful video of mine online.   |       |      |             |            |
| 8. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), someone created a mean or hurtful web page about me such as Facebook page or fake profile on Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok or on such platforms. |       |      |             |            |
| 9. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), someone pretended to be me by opening or not opening a fake ID or page which was mean or hurtful for me.                                       |       |      |             |            |
| 10. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), someone has spread rumours about me.  |       |      |             |            |
| 11. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), someone threatened to hurt me via phone call or text messages.  |       |      |             |            |
| 12. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), someone threatened to hurt me online.   |       |      |             |            |

|  |   |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 13. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), someone posted or used mean comments online about my colour such as dark/ fair, physical build such as fat/skinny or tall/short/ excessively tall.                   |   |  |  |  |
| 14. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), someone used bad words or comments or gestures online about me ins a sexually harassing way due to my gender or gender difference such as male/female/ other gender. |   |  |  |  |
| 15. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), someone posted mean names or comments about my religion.   |   |  |  |  |
| 16. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I have been cyberbullied in these online platforms or environments...  | Via e-mail (including picture or video).                            |  |  |  |
|  | Via cell phone (phone call, voice message or text message)          |  |  |  |
|  | On Facebook, Messenger and WhatsApp                                 |  |  |  |
|  | On Viber and IMO  |  |  |  |
|  | On YouTube  |  |  |  |
|  | On Tiktok and Likee   |  |  |  |
|  | On Instagram and Snapchat   |  |  |  |
|  | On Zoom, google meet or application used for online classes         |  |  |  |
|  | On multiplayer games such as PUBG, Warcraft, Call of Duty, DOTA etc |  |  |  |
| Other Platforms  |   |  |  |  |
| 17. In my lifetime, I have cyberbullied others.  |   |  |  |  |
| 18. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I have cyberbullied others.  |   |  |  |  |
| 19. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I posted mean or hurtful comments about someone online.  |   |  |  |  |
| 20. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I posted a mean or hurtful picture online of someone.  |   |  |  |  |
| 21. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I posted a mean or hurtful video online of someone.  |   |  |  |  |
| 22. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I spread rumours about someone online.   |   |  |  |  |
| 23. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I threatened to hurt someone online.   |   |  |  |  |
| 24. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I threatened to hurt someone through a cell phone text message.  |   |  |  |  |
| 25. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I created a mean or hurtful web page about someone.  |   |  |  |  |
| 26. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I pretended to be someone else online and acted in a way that was mean or hurtful to them.   |   |  |  |  |
| 27. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I posted mean names or comments online about someone's race or colour or physical appearance.  |   |  |  |  |



|   |   |  |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| 28. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I posted mean names, comments, or gestures about someone with a sexual meaning. |   |  |  |  |
| 29. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I posted mean names or comments online about someone's religion.                |   |  |  |  |
| 30. In the last 1 year (during the school closure due to the covid-19), I have cyberbullied others in these online platforms or environments...         | Via e-mail (including picture or video).                            |  |  |  |
|   | Via cell phone (phone call, voice message or text message)          |  |  |  |
|   | On Facebook, Messenger and WhatsApp                                 |  |  |  |
|   | On Viber and IMO  |  |  |  |
|   | On YouTube  |  |  |  |
|   | On Tiktok and Likee   |  |  |  |
|   | On Instagram and Snapchat   |  |  |  |
|   | On Zoom, google meet or application used for online classes         |  |  |  |
|   | On multiplayer games such as PUBG, Warcraft, Call of Duty, DOTA etc |  |  |  |
| Other Platforms   |   |  |  |  |

### Part 3: Perception of Cyberbullying

In this part, you will find ten items. For the first 3 questions, select the relevant reasons or answers you agree with. For the rest of the 7 statements, select any one of the four options given for each statement that is relevant to that statement.

- Why do you think people cyberbully others? Because ..... (Select three best reasons you agree with)
  - they think it is cool
  - they feel insecure
  - they are angry
  - they are jealous
  - they think it is fun
  - they are mean
  - they are bored
  - they think it is a defense mechanism
  - they have family problems
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- What is your feeling about people being cyberbullied? (Select the top reason you agree with).
  - they deserve it
  - it's too bad, but there is nothing we can do about it
  - it's a severe problem, and we need to stop it.
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- I know of someone who have been cyberbullied badly.
  - Yes
  - No

| Item   | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 4. Cyberbullying is a normal part of the online world. There is nothing anyone can do to stop it.                          |                |       |          |                   |
| 5. What happens online should stay online.   |                |       |          |                   |
| 6. If someone is being hurt by cyberbullying, it is crucial to tell a responsible adult.                                   |                |       |          |                   |
| 7. If my identity could be kept secret, I would report it to the appropriate authorities in case anyone gets cyberbullied. |                |       |          |                   |
| 8. I have the right to say whatever I want online, even if it hurts someone or violates anyone's privacy.                  |                |       |          |                   |
| 9. Adults should stay out of what happens among us online.   |                |       |          |                   |
| 10. I want to create a compassionate and more respectful online world.   |                |       |          |                   |

## Appendix B. Qualitative Tool

### Qualitative Tool

#### Cyberbullying Prevalence and Perception Interview- 2022

##### Students Part:

Q1. What do you know about cyberbullying?

Q2. Do you think that cyberbullying is normal? If yes/no, why?

Q3. What is your perception of cyberbullying?

Q4. What are influences cyberbullying behavior?

- Do you think age is an influential factor in the cyberbullying experience?
- Do you think gender is an influential factor in the cyberbullying experience?
- Do you think people's physical appearance (skin color dark/fair, short/tall, fat/skinny) can be influential for cyberbullying?
- Do you think religious identity is an influential factor in the cyberbullying experience?
- Any other social class influence cyberbullying experience?

Q5. Do you think our societal beliefs, structure, class difference, myth, ideologies, etc. support cyberbullying?

Q6. Why do some people cyberbully others/ why do they choose to cyberbully? Do they want to control the victim's behavior/ instill fear?

Q7. Do you think cyberbullies have other problems that encourage them to choose to cyberbully others to cope with those problems?

Q8. What should victims do if facing cyberbullying?

Q9. If you are cyberbullied, do you know where to take support?

Q10. If you see a friend or someone is cyberbullying others based on the definition, we have provided what would you do?

Q11. Have your teachers or parents ever talked about that with you? Does your school authority ever do anything to make students aware of cyberbullying?

Q12. In your opinion, what can be done to prevent cyberbullying?

### **Teachers Part:**

Q1. What do you know about cyberbullying?

Q2. Do you think that your students would define cyberbullying in the same way?

Q3. What is your perception of cyberbullying?

Q4. What are influences cyberbullying behavior?

- Do you think age/grade is an influential factor in the cyberbullying experience?
- Do you think gender is an influential factor in the cyberbullying experience?
- Do you think people's physical appearance (skin color dark/fair, short/tall, fat/skinny) can be influential for cyberbullying?
- Do you think religious identity is an influential factor in the cyberbullying experience?
- Any other social class influence cyberbullying experience?

Q5. What impact can cyberbullying have on a victim?

Q6. Have you ever reported any incidents of cyberbullying from any of your students?

Q7. Do you think that teachers should not become involved in cyberbullying students?

Q8. Does your school have an anti-bullying or anti-cyberbullying strategy/ policy?

Q9. Do you know about the national laws/policies/frameworks/ legal procedures/ or any helpline about reporting cyberbullying issues?

Q10. How would a school/teacher support a victim of cyberbullying?

Q11. How would schools/teachers prevent cyberbullying?

Q12. In your opinion, what can be done to prevent cyberbullying?