**THE IMPACT OF CYBERBULLYING ON MENTAL HEALTH OF BSCS STUDENTS**

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

**1.1 Background of the Study**

In today’s digital age, online interactions are now a part of everyday students life. While technology enhances communication and learning, it also presents risks such as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying refers to the use of digital platforms including social media, messaging apps, and any online platforms, to harass, intimidate, or embarrass others. Unlike face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying can occur anytime and anywhere, making it difficult for victims to escape.

For BSCS (Bachelor of Science in Computer Science) students, online engagement is frequent due to academic requirements and social interactions. However, increased screen time exposes students leads to potential cyber harassment, which can have severe psychological and academic consequences. Studies suggest that cyberbullying leads to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and even withdrawal from academic activities.

Understanding the prevalence and effects of cyberbullying in BSCS is crucial in identifying solutions that promote a safer digital environment for students. This research aims to analyze the psychological, social, and academic impacts of cyberbullying and suggest preventive measures to mitigate its effects.

**1.2 Problem Statement**

This study seeks to address the following key questions:

1. What is the prevalence of cyberbullying among BSCS students?

2. What are the common forms of cyberbullying that students experience?

3. How does cyberbullying impact the mental health and academic performance of BSCS students?

4. What are the coping mechanisms used by students who experience cyberbullying?

5. What preventive measures can be implemented to minimize cyberbullying in BSCS?

**1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to analyze the effects of cyberbullying on BSCS students. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Determine the prevalence of cyberbullying among students.

2. Identify the most common forms of cyberbullying within the section.

3. Assess the psychological and emotional impact of cyberbullying on affected students.

4. Evaluate the academic consequences of cyberbullying incidents.

5. Explore coping strategies used by students to handle cyberbullying.

6. Propose solutions that the university can implement to create a safer digital environment for students.

**1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for various stakeholders, including:

* **Students of BSCS –** Helps them understand the risks of cyberbullying and develop strategies to protect themselves.
* **Professors and School Administrators –** Provides insights into the effects of cyberbullying and guides them in implementing policies that protect students.
* **Parents and Guardians –** Educates them on recognizing signs of cyberbullying and supporting their children effectively.

**1.5 Scope and Limitations**

This study focuses on BSCS students and examines the psychological, social, and academic impacts of cyberbullying. It explores the common platforms where cyberbullying occurs, the experiences of students, and their coping mechanisms.

However, this study has some limitations:

* It does not cover face-to-face bullying or other forms of harassment outside digital platforms.
* The findings are limited to BSCS students and may not represent the experiences of other sections or universities.
* The study relies on self-reported data, which may have subjective biases.

**1.6 Definition of Terms**

To ensure clarity, the following key terms are defined:

**Cyberbullying –** The act of using digital platforms to harass, threaten, or embarrass individuals.

**Online Harassment –** Persistent and unwanted online behavior intended to disturb or harm a person.

**Anxiety and Depression –** Psychological conditions that may result from cyberbullying, leading to stress, sadness, and emotional distress.

**Academic Performance –** The level of achievement students demonstrate in their coursework, which may be affected by cyberbullying.

**Coping Mechanisms –** Strategies used by individuals to manage stress and emotional difficulties caused by cyberbullying.

**Digital Environment –** The online space where students interact, including social media, academic platforms, and messaging apps.

CHAPTER II

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

**2.1 REVIEW OF RELEVANT THEORIES AND MODELS**

The rapid growth of digital platforms and increased engagement in online activities have raised concerns about the effects of cyberbullying, especially among students in technology-related disciplines like Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (BSCS). As digital environments become central to their social, academic, and professional lives, understanding how cyberbullying impacts their mental health is essential.The Social Cognitive theory has been particularly useful in understanding how BSCS students—who are often highly engaged with online communities—can be affected by both direct victimization and exposure to cyberbullying in their social or academic circles. The theory suggests that vicarious experiences, where students observe others being cyberbullied, may lead to increased fear, stress, and anxiety. The rise of social media has contributed to increased exposure to cyberbullying and social comparison among BSCS students. FoMO theory explains that students may feel left out or excluded when they witness others participating in enjoyable activities or being accepted into social groups, intensifying feelings of loneliness and depression (Rozgonjuk, D. et al., 2020). The study Beccerra, D. (2017) say it is important to analyze how individuals use these technologies for positive and negative social contact.

**2.2 SYNTHESIS OF THE RELATED STUDIES**

The impact of cyberbullying on the mental health of students has grown significantly, particularly in relation to students pursuing technology-related disciplines like Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (BSCS). The unique nature of this group—due to their high engagement with digital technologies—positions them as both vulnerable to cyberbullying and resilient in certain aspects.

**Prevalence and Nature of Cyberbullying:** The prevalence and nature of cyberbullying among Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (BSCS) students can be influenced by various factors, including their age, digital literacy, and frequent engagement with online platforms.

**Psychological Effects of Cyberbullying:** A central theme across studies is the negative mental health outcomes associated with cyberbullying among BSCS students. Research has shown that cyberbullying contributes significantly to anxiety, depression, stress, and social isolation.

**Social Isolation and Academic Performance:** One of the most profound effects of cyberbullying on BSCS students is social isolation. Many studies have indicated that victims of cyberbullying often withdraw from both online and offline social interactions. This is especially problematic for BSCS students, who typically rely on digital platforms for academic collaboration and social engagement.

**Coping Mechanisms and Resilience:** The studies highlight that coping mechanisms play a crucial role in moderating the psychological impact of cyberbullying. BSCS students who employ active coping strategies, such as seeking social support or reporting the bullying, are more likely to manage the emotional distress caused by cyberbullying effectively. Conversely, those who engage in avoidance coping (e.g., withdrawing, ignoring the bullying) often experience more severe mental health issues.

**Institutional Support and Intervention:** Many studies emphasize the importance of institutional support in mitigating the effects of cyberbullying. Universities and colleges have begun to recognize the need for proactive measures, including mental health services, peer support programs, and cyberbullying prevention campaigns.

**2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This conceptual framework is built on understanding the relationship between cyberbullying experiences and the mental health outcomes of BSCS students, focusing on the factors that influence the severity of these effects. It incorporates key variables such as the nature of cyberbullying, coping mechanisms, social and academic contexts, and institutional support. The framework also highlights how these factors interact to affect students' psychological well-being, academic performance, and social functioning.

Cyberbullying in the context of BSCS students can take many forms, including but not limited to:

* **Online Harassment:** Persistent teasing, mocking, or aggressive comments about academic abilities or personal traits.
* **Social Exclusion:** Intentional exclusion from online discussions or group projects.
* **Doxxing:** Posting personal or sensitive information about a student online without consent.
* **Impersonation:** Creating fake profiles to spread rumors or damage the student’s reputation.
* **Coping Mechanisms (Moderating Variable):** Coping mechanisms are vital in determining the mental health impact of cyberbullying. Students’ ability to cope with the stress and emotional turmoil caused by cyberbullying can either mitigate or exacerbate the effects.
* **Adaptive Coping:** Active coping strategies, such as seeking support from peers, family, or mental health professionals, as well as engaging in positive stress management techniques.
* **Maladaptive Coping:** Avoidance, withdrawal, or self-isolation in response to cyberbullying. This type of coping can increase stress and emotional distress.
* **Social and Academic Contexts (Intervening Variables):** The broader social and academic environments of BSCS students play a crucial role in the impact of cyberbullying. Factors such as peer relationships, academic pressures, and social media use all influence the experience of cyberbullying and its consequences.
* **Peer Support:** Positive peer interactions can act as a buffer against the psychological effects of cyberbullying.
* **Academic Pressure:** BSCS students often experience high academic expectations. The combination of academic stress and cyberbullying can amplify mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and burnout.
* **Social Media Use:** Since BSCS students are frequent users of social media, the constant exposure to online interactions, including bullying, can increase the severity of cyberbullying’s impact on their mental health.
* **Institutional Support and Interventions (Moderating Variable):** Support from universities and institutions is critical in addressing the mental health effects of cyberbullying. Effective support systems can buffer the psychological damage caused by bullying and assist students in recovery.
* **Mental Health Services:** Access to counseling, mental health programs, and campus wellness centers is vital in helping students cope with cyberbullying’s effects.
* **Cyberbullying Policies:** Clear policies and reporting systems for cyberbullying within educational institutions can help reduce the prevalence of bullying and provide victims with the tools to seek help.
* **Peer Support Programs:** Programs that foster peer-to-peer support networks can help reduce isolation and offer emotional aid.
* **Mental Health Outcomes (Dependent Variable):** The ultimate outcome of cyberbullying, influenced by the factors outlined above, is the mental health of BSCS students. The mental health impacts of cyberbullying include:
* **Emotional Distress:** This can manifest as anxiety, depression, stress, and social withdrawal.
* **Cognitive Effects:** A reduction in self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and decreased academic motivation.
* **Academic Performance:** A decrease in academic engagement, lower grades, and increased absenteeism due to the psychological toll of cyberbullying.
* **Social Isolation:** Victims of cyberbullying may withdraw from social interactions, both online and offline, leading to feelings of loneliness and further exacerbating mental health problems.

**CONCEPTUAL PATHWAY**

The conceptual pathway in this framework is as follows:

* Cyberbullying Experiences (e.g., harassment, exclusion, impersonation) lead to emotional distress and social isolation among BSCS students.
* The degree of the mental health impact is moderated by coping mechanisms. Students who engage in adaptive coping strategies (e.g., seeking help) may experience less severe mental health consequences, while those who use maladaptive coping strategies (e.g., avoidance) may face greater psychological distress.
* Social and academic contexts, such as peer support and academic pressure, further influence the severity of the cyberbullying’s impact. Positive peer relationships and academic support systems can buffer the effects of cyberbullying.
* Institutional support in the form of counseling services, clear anti-cyberbullying policies, and peer support programs can also serve as a moderating factor, helping to reduce the mental health impacts of cyberbullying.
* Ultimately, the mental health outcomes (e.g., depression, anxiety, academic disengagement) will depend on the interplay of these factors.

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CHAPTER III

**METHODOLOGY**

**3.1 Research Design**

The descriptive-correlational research design will be used in this study. The descriptive component will identify the prevalence and extent of cyberbullying cases among BSCS students. The correlational component will investigate the correlation between cyberbullying experiences and the mental health outcomes (e.g., anxiety, depression, and academic performance) of the respondents. This study design is suitable since it enables the researchers to investigate both the prevalence and effects of cyberbullying and identify patterns and associations between main variables.

**3.2 Participants and Sampling**

The population of this research is Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (BSCS) students enrolled in DEBESMSCAT for the current school year. Purposive sampling will be utilized by the study to target particularly BSCS students, since they are the most likely group to be subjected to cyberbullying because of their extensive use of the internet.

The sample size in total will be based on the number of BSCS students enrolled, but the researchers are hoping to obtain at least 60-80% of the total student to make the results valid and reliable.

**3.3 Data Collection Methods**

The structured survey questionnaire with four sections will be the main data collection:

* **Demographic Profile -** Gathers data on the age, gender, year level, and usage frequency of the internet and social media of the respondents.
* **Cyberbullying Experience Scale –** Assesses the nature and frequency of cyberbullying experiences of the students, including online harassment, social exclusion, impersonation, and doxxing.
* **Mental Health Assessment Scale –** Assesses psychological impacts like symptoms of anxiety, depression, stress, and social withdrawal.
* **Coping Mechanisms Inventory –** Measures the way students deal with cyberbullying incidents, both adaptive and maladaptive coping.

The questionnaires will be administered either in paper format. Data collection will take about one to two weeks.

**3.4 Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis will be done using both descriptive and inferential statistics:

* Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) will describe the demographics, prevalence, and types of cyberbullying exposed to.
* Pearson correlation coefficient will be utilized to analyze the association between cyberbullying frequency/severity and mental health outcomes (e.g., anxiety and depression levels, stress level).
* Independent t-tests or ANOVA can be used to contrast mental health outcomes by demographic characteristics like gender or year level.

**3.5 Ethical Considerations**

The following measures will be followed in order to guarantee ethical integrity and safe participation:

* **Informed Consent –** Participants will be provided with a consent form indicating the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study.
* **Confidentiality and Anonymity –** Data will be handled in utmost confidentiality, and no personally identifiable information will be revealed in the study findings.
* **Right to Withdraw –** Participants are free to withdraw at any point during the study without any penalties.
* **Reduction of Risk –** As the issue can be sensitive, members will be guaranteed that their well-being is of primary concern. Any member who feels uncomfortable or distressed will be directed to the guidance and counseling center of the university.

**3.6 Instrumentation**

This research will employ a survey questionnaire constructed by the researchers. It consists of four sections: (1) student information, (2) cyberbullying experience, (3) mental health impacts, and (4) coping mechanisms. The questionnaire will be pilot-tested using expert review and tested with some students to ensure that the questions are understandable and easy to respond to.