

# Cyber Bullying: A Socio-Psychological Approach

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## ABSTRACT

*Cyber bullying is being one of the most demonic practices, prevailing since centuries is undoubtedly worthy of being subjected to an extensive and critical study as well as analysis. The research primarily aimed at the nature, effects and consequences of cyber bullying on social sites with a keener eye on the roles of students, adults and respective authorities involved. Besides, the research also aimed at highlighting the bleak demarcation between the essential interaction and undesirable cyber bullying, keeping in mind the permanent changes that are experienced by the psyche of the victim. The research aimed to analyze the different kinds of effects that are subjected to post cyber bullying. The research tried to mark the major reasons behind the continuance of cyber bullying on Social sites. The research also elucidated upon the roles of anti-ragging authorities on social sites and their effectiveness. The research further attempted to enlighten the modern aspects of cyber bullying and coherent ragging, such as bullying occurs unidentifiably. Besides, the research also garnered the various effects in permanence which amalgamates with an individual's upbringing. The research also aimed at proposing suggestive measures through the analysis of the collected input in curbing the menace of cyber bullying. The research will be in the form of empirical study which included students, adults and all the probable affected elements in the society. The tool used for data collected was a set of questions clustered in a questionnaire form which was applicable on students as well as respective authorities regarding the same.*

**Keywords:** *Cyber bullying, cyber stalking.*

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## 1.0 Introduction

According to Belsey "cyberbullying involves the use of information repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others". In 2006, Harris Interactive Inc. created a study on cyberbullying. The study found that 43% of the 824 high school-aged students surveyed had been cyberbullied in the past year.

The American Life Project on cyberbullying conducted a similar study in 2006. It found that one out of three teens have experienced online harassment. It also found that the most prevalent form of cyberbullying was making private information public; which included text messages and pictures. The findings also indicated that girls are more likely to be part of cyberbullying than boys. Young girls, between the age of 15 and 17, they are the most likely to be involved in some form of cyberbullying..

Cyberbullying is different from traditional bullying due to the anonymity that the New Media can provide. Cyberbullies do not have to own actions due to the anonymity. According to Willard (2006) here are different forms of cyberbullying. These forms include flaming, harassment, denigration, cyberstalking, and cyber threats.

It is more likely than other forms of bullying which go unreported to parents and administrators.

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This is due to the feeling of the victim that they needed to learn to deal with these things themselves and also being afraid that if they tell their parents, their internet privileges will be taken away. It has been found that 90% of victims don't tell adults about cyberbullying incidents due to reasons. Victims of cyberbullying may experience stress, low self-esteem, and depression. It has been found that cyberbullying can also have extreme repercussions such as suicide and violence.

### Statement of problem

***“We have got to dispel this myth that bullying is just a normal rite of passage.”***

- Barak Obama

(Bullying and Cyber Bullying Prevention Conference, March 10, 2011)

Interaction is one of the most mandatory keystones in the modern day world. Today, interaction within peers, seniors, or peoples is something that cannot be ignored. But, as they say every rose is undesirably followed with the existence of thorns. Similarly over the passing years, interaction has taken several improvised and different forms including one that involves the portrayal of domination by the privileged or not so vulnerable section of peoples within the society or institution over the Social Media. This practice has been termed as cyber bullying.

Cyber Bullying, in the modern day world has wide-reaching implications and is just limited to social sites. It is highly to be a discussed topic in various institutions such as universities and other workplaces with more than just a handful of demonic effects. Hence, it would be extremely negligent on our part to under rate its' presence in various corners of the surroundings. From its origin, an effort to disrupt the shackles between different subjects in the world, it has taken an evident turn in the course of events, more often causing traumatizing effects on the victims. The aspect of the perpetrator is something which is more often ignored by people is also a critical one as it poses a permanent effect on them as well with threads of long-lasting aggression in various circumstances. The present research aims at finding all such effects on the victim.

Apart from the apparent positive aspects of interaction what needs to be kept in mind is the critical point from where it turns into cyber bullying. Often we categorise involvement in cyber bullying as a stressful experience for both individuals who bully and those victimized, serving as a lubricant for a diathesis–stress link between cyber bullying psychosocial difficulties. Against this backdrop, it is important to chalk out the all the possible substantive changes which can be observed in the associated parties of cyber bullying which the research shall elucidate upon. Besides, the authorities involved in curbing such practice i.e, anti-cyber bullying or anti-bullying authorities should be extremely vigilant and clear in their minds regarding their roles in such scenes. Earlier reports and surveys have often suggested that these authorities are complacent in their actions and take cyber bullying and their subsequent actions too lightly. The present research shall also take into account the opinions of the subjects regarding these authorities and efficacy in their roles.

The present research shall also elucidate upon the most eminent obstacles in the way of cyber bullying cases being reported by the victims. Often, it has been observed that the individuals going through the practice are hesitant in reporting or even talking about these instances. The reason behind such reluctance or hesitance can arise from various stems and to identify such pertinent sources shall remain an object of study in this research.

Moreover, identical to the emergence of cyber bullying from general interaction there has been another substantive germination from cyber bullying i.e, bullying. Bullying can in no way posed inferior on the grounds of its existence in the virtual world. In the modern world, the scope of cyber interaction is limitless hence bullying in such platforms is highly probable. Cyber bullying is a tailor made example of the ever-increasing avenue of cyber crimes, worldwide. The research shall aim at illumination this less talked about issue and try enhancing the awareness regarding the same. Besides,

the research shall also reserve a substantial scope for the suggestive measures from its subjects on how to curb the devastating practice of cyber bullying through the mode of questionnaire. The suggestions shall be composed of proposals from all the possible prospects involved in the practice i.e, not merely victims but the perpetrators and even the authorities regarding the same.

## 2.0 Literature Review

**According to an article in the NASP (2007)**, a poll was conducted by the Fight Crime they found that more than 13 million children aged 6 to 17 were victims of cyberbullying. The poll also found that one-third of teens were reported being cyberbullied. Forms of cyberbullying go beyond name calling and enter the world of cyber threats.

**According to Willard (2006)**, there are six main forms of cyberbullying: flaming, harassment, denigration, cyberstalking and cyber treat. Flaming is online fights using electronic messages with vulgar languages. Harassment includes repeatedly sending insulting messages through the Internet. Denigration is "dissing" someone online which can include posting rumours about a person that could damage their reputation. Cyberstalking is repeated, intense harassment that includes threats which creates a significant amount of fear in the victim. Lastly, cyber threats are defined as distressing material that makes it sound like harming someone.

**In confronting cyber-bullying (2009)**, Sheriff shares additional concerns related to cyberbullying. These are an infinite audience, homophobic harassment and permanence of expression.

## 3.0 Research Objectives

The following research shall elucidate upon some major keystones with primary objectives taken into consideration:-

- To figure out the significant effects cyber bullying poses on the victims.
- To find the most significant reason behind the continuance of such a practice.
- To figure out whether the anti- cyber bullying authorities are efficient in curbing the practice.
- To find the most eminent obstacle for cases being reported by victims of cyber bullying.
- To analyse the awareness regarding cyber bullying in present times.

## 4.0 METHODOLOGY

It is Quantitative research on cyber bullying as there is no strict act against it and how much of this is being faced by the teenage universe. The research is empirical in nature and the target population is of 50 individuals. The sample comprises of students of Trinity Institute of Professional Studies, Delhi. Besides, the sample also consists of employees in various government and private workplaces. The mode of data collection is a set of questions compiled in a questionnaire. Hence, the sampling used can be categorized as convenience sampling.

### 4.1 Participants

The research constituted mainly of participants below the age of 30 years who generally are students. There were however a few participants above the age of 30 years who were not necessarily students rather employees.

### 4.2 Measuring tools

The questionnaire consists of sixteen questions in totality with six of them being a YES/NO. The other questions are also multiple choice questions with provided options inclusive of basic and

intricate questions regarding the issue of cyber bullying. The questionnaire is attached with the research.

### 4.3 Research Design

The design of the research was primarily in the form of questionnaire and descriptive in nature which comprised of questions attempting to cover all the possible and critical cornerstones regarding the issue of cyber bullying. The questions were framed to analyze the possible forms, outcomes, and suggestive measures associated with the issue of cyber bullying. Subsequently, after the collection of data the analyzation of input via questionnaire takes place with appropriate conclusions drawn from the choices and opinions of the subjects.

### 4.4 Procedure

The questionnaire has been prepared by researcher alone. An attempt has been made to cover all the aspects and dilemmas regarding the issue of cyber bullying in the preparation of the questionnaire and the subsequent data collection by framing questions from almost all the possible cornerstones. The researcher focused on creating a healthy rapport with the individuals involved in the sample for non-coercive collection of data. The subjects were given clear instructions to fill the questionnaire without any hesitance and in a completely honest manner with the freedom to pursue their choices regarding their options.

### 5.0 Data Interpretation

The questionnaire constituted of sixteen questions regarding the issue of cyber bullying. The questions primarily consisted of issues such as the nature of cyber bullying, effects, reason behind the continuance of the practice, the effective role of anti-cyber bullying authorities, impediments in the reporting of such cases and the awareness regarding bullying.

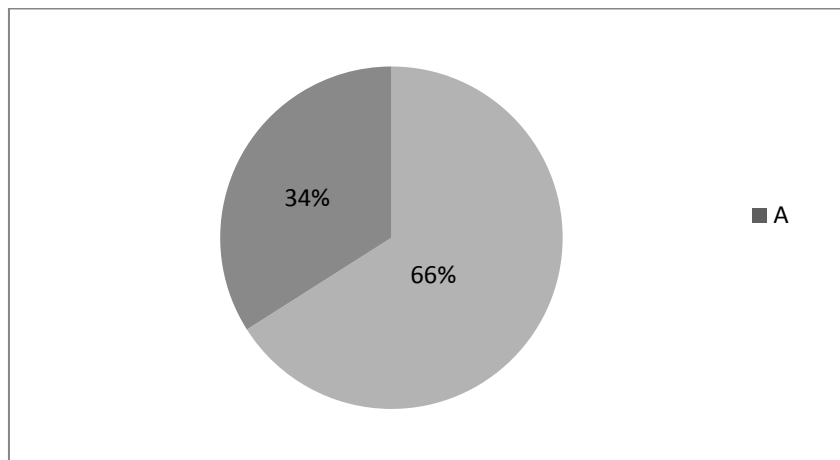
#### Question 1 - What is your present age?

- In this question the researcher tried to analyze the age of the individuals in the sample size to figure out the extent of people getting affected by cyber bullying.
- The options given in questionnaire are as follows:-
  - A. Below 20 years
  - B. Age 20-30 years.
  - C. Above 30 years.
- The researcher inferred that among the 50 subjects:-
  - A. 7 of them being below 20.
  - B. 33 of them being in the age-group of 20- 30.
  - C. 10 of them being above the age of 30.

#### Question 2 – According to you what is cyber bullying?

- In this question the researcher attempted to figure out the opinion of its subjects about bullying and the desirable course of action against it.
- The options provided in the questionnaire are as follows :
  - A. It is one of the ancient practices which are inevitable to an interactive society.
  - B. It is a suppressive practice which needs to be curbed.
  - C. It is a trivial issue which does not require substantive attention.

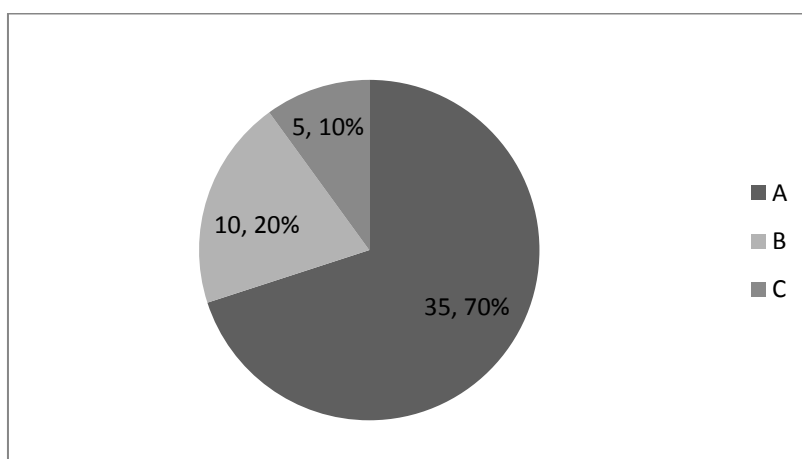
**Figure -1 depicting the meaning of Cyber Bullying**



**Question 3 – Have you ever been bullied?**

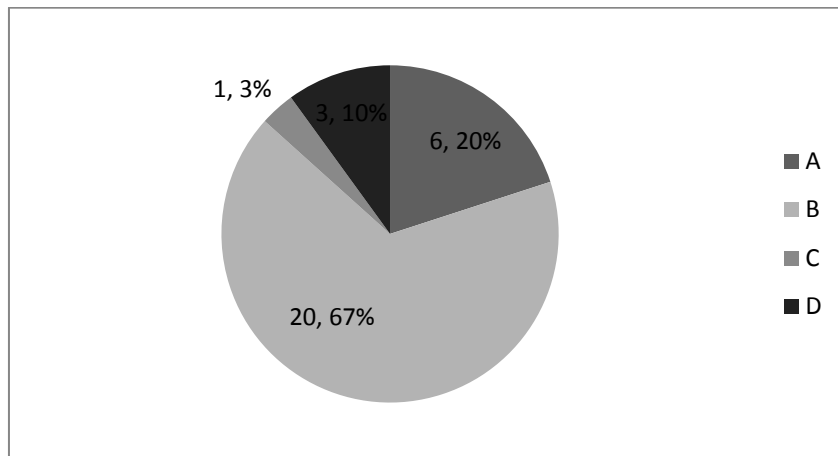
- In this question, the researcher tried to analyze the ratio or number of its subjects been bullied over time.
- The options provided to the subjects were:-
  - A.** Yes.
  - B.** No.
  - C.** Maybe.

**Figure – 2 depicting no. Of people were bullied**

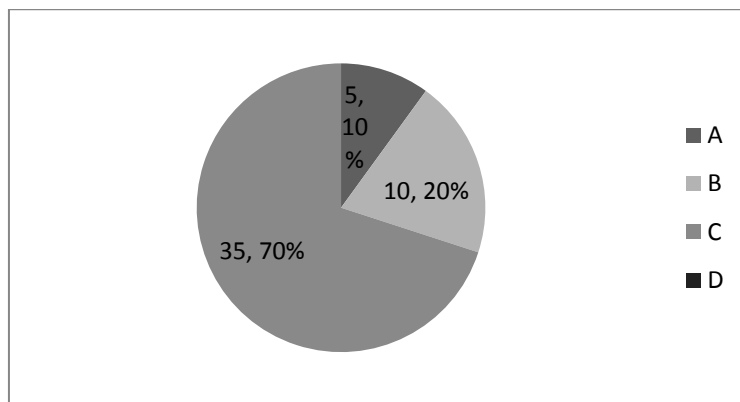


**Question 4 – If ye, on which platform did you get bullied?**

- In this question, the researcher tried to figure out that on which platform exactly did his subjects' got bullied? (social networking platform)
- The options provided in the questionnaire were (Sample size – 30 because of the fact that 10 of them in the previous question had opined that they had not got bullied):-
  - A.** Twitter
  - B.** Facebook
  - C.** Instagram
  - D.** Other.

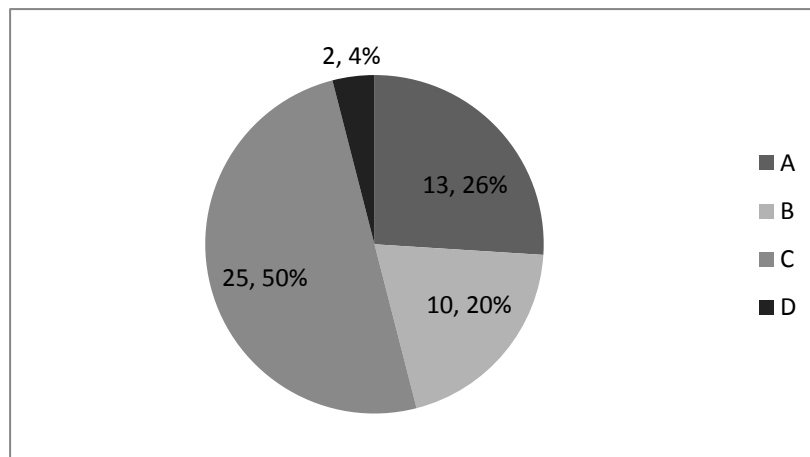
**Figure -3 depicting Social Network Platforms likely to get bullied****Question 5 – Do you know about RituKohli’s case?**

- In this question the researcher tried to analyze the number of its subjects know about a cyber bullying case that took place in the past.
- The options provided to the subjects were :-
  - A. Yes.
  - B. Maybe.
  - C. No Idea.

**Figure – 4 depicting RituKohli’s case awareness****Question 6 - According to you what effects does cyber bullying have on the victim?**

- In this question the researcher has tried to analyse the primary effects that are posed on the victim in the practice of cyber bullying.
- The researcher had provided the subjects with five options for the question :-
  - A. Traumatizing.
  - B. Breaking the social shackles of interaction.
  - C. May have both the effects.
  - D. Not worth mentioning.

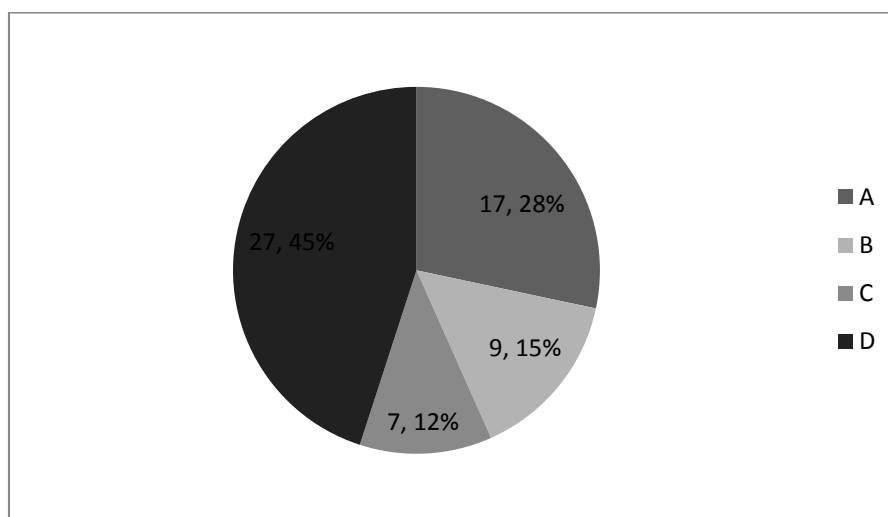
**Figure -5 depicting the effects of cyber bullying on the victim**



**Question 7- According to you what is the most probable and significant reason for the continuance of such a practice?**

- In the present question the researcher tries to figure out the prime reasons for the continuance of cyber bullying.
- The researcher provides three major options to its subjects-
  - A. Portrayal of domination.
  - B. Taking advantage of the vulnerability of the victim.
  - C. Conveyance of the implied rules and regulations of the respective institution or society.
  - D. Just because they had been bullied too by their seniors.

**Figure -1 depicting the continuance of cyber bullying.**

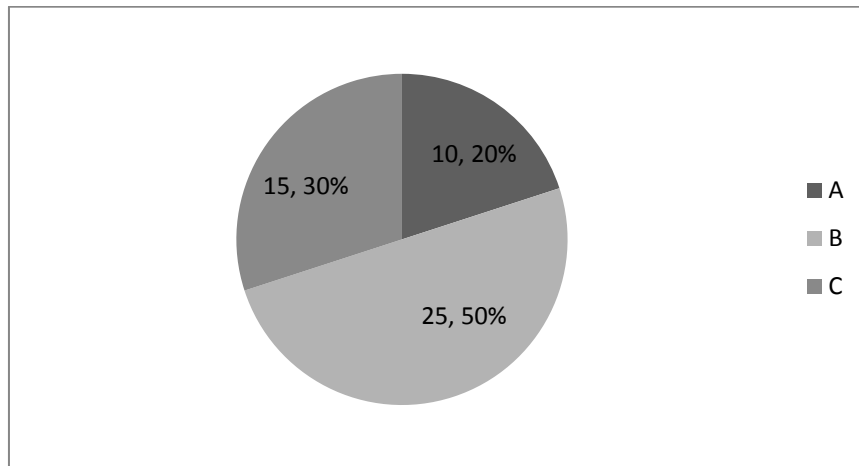


**Question 8- Keeping the positive and negative aspects of interaction, do you think cyber bullying or for that matter bullying should continue?**

- In this question the researcher attempts to analyze the opinion of his subjects regarding the continuance of cyber bullying.
- The researcher provided three options in the following case:
  - A. Yes because it helps in the enhancement of interactive skills of the fresher

- B. No, because it has severe effects on the psyche of the victim as well as the attitude of the oppressor
- C. It is very difficult to eradicate such practices from the society due to its roots and multiple forms

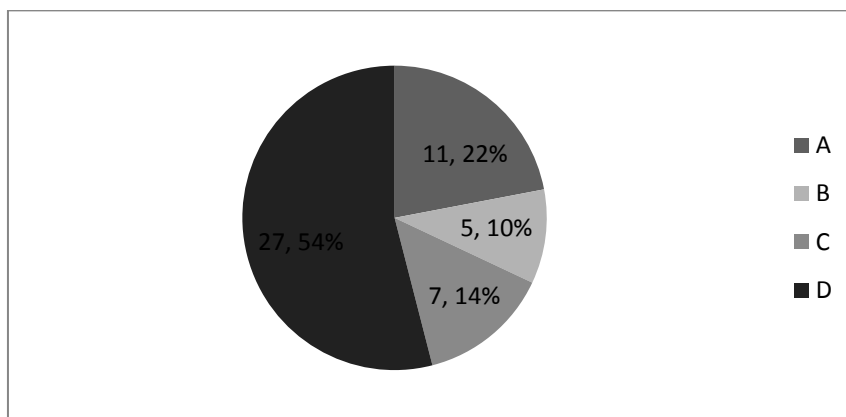
**Figure – 7 depicting cyber bullying and bullying should continue or not**



**Question 9- What are the substantive changes according to you which can be observed in the victims of cyber bullying?**

- In this question the researcher aims at the prime observances in the victims psyche post cyber bullying.
- The researcher provided three major options in this scenario i.e.,
  - A. Withdrawal symptoms or depressive characteristics.
  - B. Evolution of delinquent activities.
  - C. General tendencies of rebellion, deviance or frustration.
  - D. All of the above.

**Figure -8 depicting the changes on the victim of cyber bullying.**



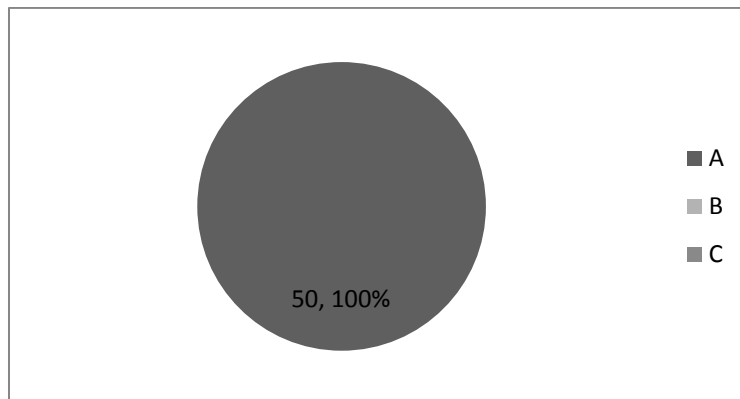
**Question 10- Have you heard about Boy's Locker Room case?**

- In this question the researcher tried to analyze the number of its subjects knows about a cyber bullying case that took place recently.
- The options provided to the subjects were :-



- A. Yes.
- B. Maybe.
- C. No Idea.

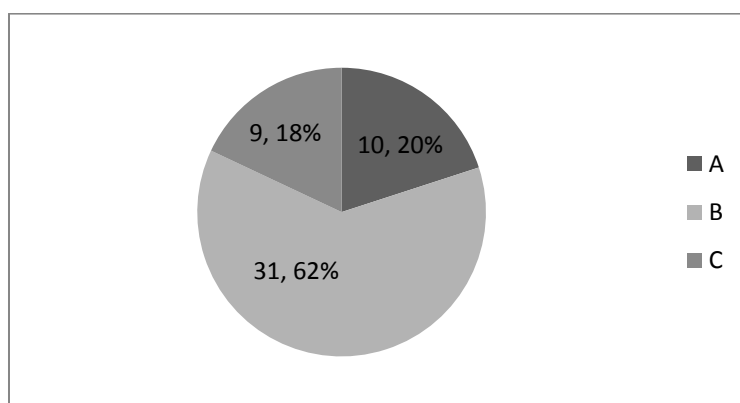
**Figure – 9 depicting the awareness of Boy’s Locker Room case**



**Question 11- Were/ Are the anti-ragging authorities in your institutions efficient in curbing the practice (cyber bullying)?**

- In this question the researcher tries to elucidate upon the implementation of the anti-bullying authorities in their roles.
- The question provides three options i.e,
  - A. Yes.
  - B. No.
  - C. Can't tell

**Figure – 10 depicting the efficiency of authorities of cyber bullying**

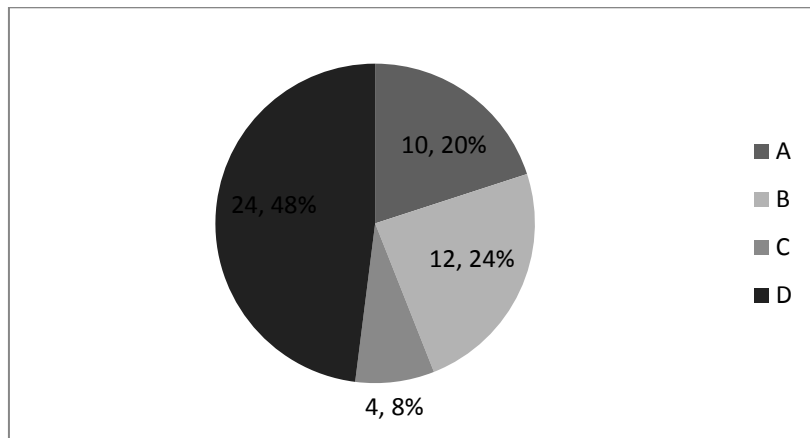


**Question 12- According to you, what is most eminent obstacle for cases being reported by victims of cyber bullying?**

- In this question the researcher attempts to figure out the most critical keystone in the way of reporting of cyber bullying cases.
- The researcher supplied the subjects with three major categories:-
  - A. Hesitance
  - B. Fear of repercussions
  - C. Degradation of manhood.

**D.** All of the above.

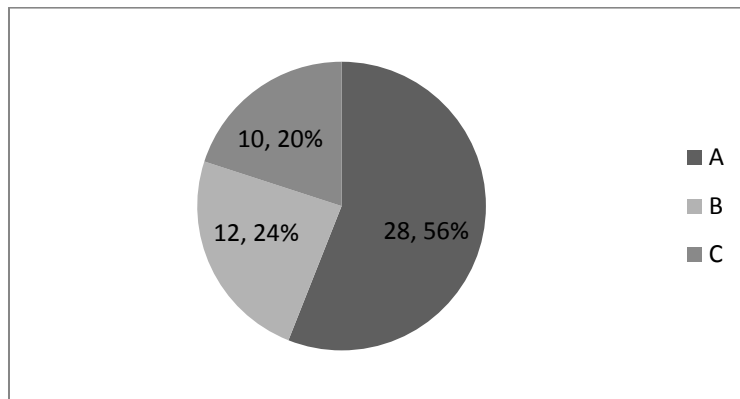
**Figure - 11 depicting the obstacle for reporting cyber bullying by the victim**



**Question 13- According to you is cyber bullying as grave as bullying?**

- In this question the researcher tries to mark the intensity of the issue of bullying.
- There were three options provided to the subjects i.e.,
  - A.** Yes.
  - B.** No.
  - C.** No idea.

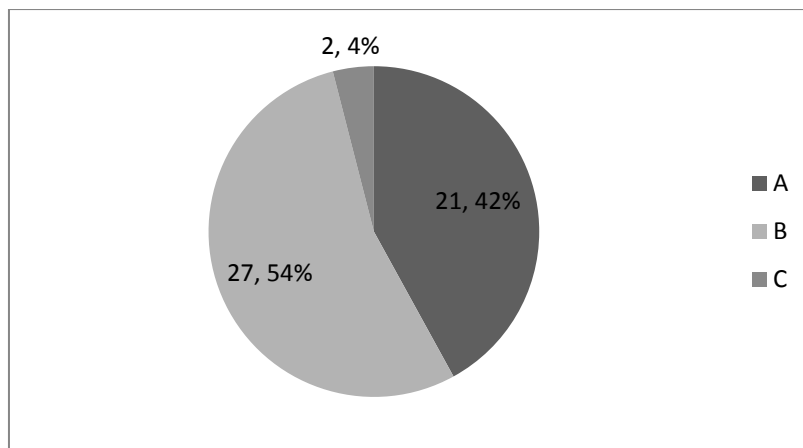
**Figure – 12 depicting is cyber bullying graved as bullying?**



**Question 14- Is there proper and sufficient awareness among the youth regarding the issue of cyber bullying?**

- In this question the researcher attempts to illuminate the awareness of cyber bullying among the youth.
- There were primarily three options provided i.e.,
  - A.** Yes.
  - B.** No.
  - C.** Other.

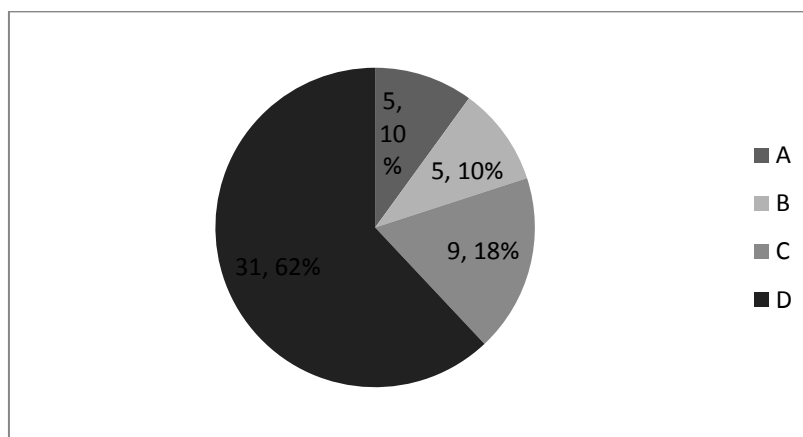
**Figure – 13 depicting the awareness of cyber bullying in youth.**



**Question 15- Would you like to propose some suggestive measures from the point of victim/bully/authorities to curb the practice of cyber bullying completely?**

- In this question the researcher tries to gather suggestive measures from the subjects concerned regarding the curbing of cyber bullying.
- Henceforth, the options provided to the subjects were as follows:-
  - A. The victim should observe zero percent tolerance towards bullying and report to the relevant authorities instantly.
  - B. The bully should be counselled first and on repeating should be punished.
  - C. The respective anti-bullying authorities need to be more vigilant and effective.
  - D. All of the above.

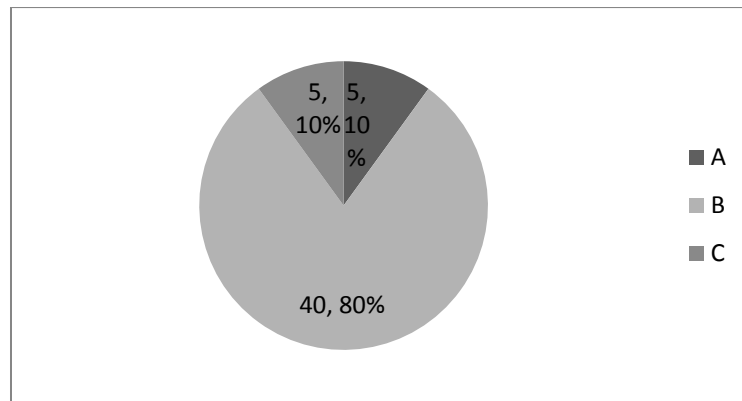
**Figure – 14 depicting suggestive measures of cyber bullying**



**Question 16– Do you think media works well in covering the cyber bullying issues?**

- In this question the researcher tried to analyze the number of its subjects knows about cyber bullying shown by media.
- The options provided to the subjects were :-
  - A. Yes.
  - B. No.
  - C. Maybe.

**Figure – 15 depicting that media covers the cyber bullying issue or not**



## 6.0 Discussion

In furtherance to the input collected in the form of data which can be observed from the above-mentioned results, the researcher had opined to discuss the output obtained through the questionnaire. Firstly, the author observed that among the three **age groups** as mentioned, individuals had been bullied or were subjected to cyber bullying in their short or long continuing term of life. **Majority of the subjects had been bullied** i.e. (Q.3-25/50) whereas a few of them were not sure about the incident and whether it amounted to cyber bullying or not. The dominant half of the subjects were in the age group of 20 to 30 years, which symbolized the allegiance of today's youth with the practice of cyber bullying in some or the other way.(Q.1) The fact that individuals below the age of 20years had also been subjected to cyber bullying clearly portrays that even before individuals enter into any college/university for their graduation, they are within the magnetic arena of cyber bullying and also bullying, it was observed that **majority of the individuals got bullied on Facebook. (Q.4-20/30)** The second-most being Twitter, where cyber bullying had taken place. Another comparatively new finding was the issuing of bullying over the non-social networking sites. Surprisingly, some of them had been bullied without any social networking sites which is comparatively a contemporary form of cyber bullying yet has unfortunately started showing its colours in the initial years of its discovery.

According to the researcher's observation, almost all the subjects were not aware of RituKohli's case of cyber bullying. (Q.5-25/50) and also according to the researcher's observation a dominant number of them believed that this suppressive practice needs to be curbed with immediate effect. (Q.2-33/50) This is truly a positive observation and a tailor made approach which may lead to the abolishing of the practice from its roots. However another prime response was the opinion that **the issue is of trivial nature** and does not require substantive attention. (17/50) This is evidently a fabric of suspicion as this is one of the most prevalent views regarding cyber bullying which needs eradication for it being one of the impetuses behind the continual of such a practice. **Baldry, A. C. (2003)** reiterated that the people over the world need to put into their head, that such **practices cannot be overlooked** at any cost irrespective of the place or age at which they take place in a person's life.

On the touchstone of the effects that bullying poses, majority of the subjects agreed that it may have **traumatizing as well as breaking the social shackles of interaction of the individual. (Q.6- 25/50)** However, it can be inferred that the trauma has more weight than the non-traumatizing part. In many cases, across the nations it has been observed that the scars of cyber bullying are pretty permanent and evident in nature owing to the tender or growing age of the individual when they are subjected to cyber bullying. It should be always kept in mind that such **an interaction should be healthy in nature and without any portrayal of dominance on the vulnerable.** This can be categorized as a healthy interaction without the ingredients of bullying and continued.

Another keystone of cyber bullying is the **reason for its continuance** in the modern day world in spite of the fact that people are aware of the unhealthy consequences of such a practice. In this scenario, majority of the people opted for the reason that just because they had been bullied by their seniors. (Q.7- 27/50) This in turn is an issue of concern as it signifies that people are not considering cyber bullying as one of the undesirable and insensitive practice in the institutions. Secondly, subjects also believed that the impetus is constituted by the **portrayal of domination and taking advantage of the vulnerability of the victim**. Consequently, this can be termed as highly insensitive as it abashes one's self esteem and is a grave threat to the morality of a society or institution apart from the evident health issues regarding the same. Besides, another point of view as per the subjects regarding the continuance of the practice is the conveyance of the implied rules and regulations of the respective institution or society.

Subsequently, it is highly pertinent that the changes brought about in the victims of cyber bullying are **multidimensional**. As per the provided questionnaire some of the stalwart transformations (may be temporary) can be the observance of **withdrawal symptoms or depressive characteristics, evolution of delinquency, general tendencies of rebellion**, deviance or for that matter all of them. (Q.9) It was inferred from Hymel, S., & Bonanno, R. (2014) that withdrawal symptoms or lessening of the social interaction are some of the major observations in the victims of cyber bullying as it degrades the self-esteem and self-respect to an irretrievable extent in many instances whereas the evolution of deviant or delinquent traits are also sometimes the end products of cyber bullying both from the aspect of victim, perpetrator or the bystander for that matter. Besides, due to excessive suppression the victim may also develop the tendency of uncontrollable outbursts in short period of time, which in long term may germinate into frequent and irrational rebellion on his/her part. Hence, the subjects as per the graphical representation in question 9, choosing all of the above as possible outcomes are pretty righteous on the point of occurrence of probabilities regarding cyber bullying. (Q.9- D, 27/50)

According to the researcher's observation, almost all the subjects were aware of Boy's Locker Room case of cyber bullying. (Q.10 A, 50/50). Besides, **the role of the anti-bullying or ragging authorities** plays an instrumental hand in the practice of cyber bullying. Many a times as observed, these practices continue because of the non-functional or ineffective anti-bullying and cyber bullying authorities. From the graphical representation of question 11, it is clear that most of the subjects aren't sure about the functioning of such authorities or aren't satisfied with their performance. (Q.11- B, 31/50) This inefficiency in turn not only fuels such practices but also encourages them with the viability of fearlessness on the point of the perpetrator. Moreover, it may also result in the **non-reporting of such cases to the respective authorities due to the lack of trust and competency in them**. Hence, proper functioning of these authorities is of utmost importance because of the essential supervision and vigilance required in the long-term goal of curbing cyber bullying and bullying. In furtherance, from the above discussion it is relevant to carry on with the significant obstacle that victims face in the reporting of such cases. The obstacle generally comprises **of a fusion of hesitance, fear of repercussions and apparent degradation of manhood**. As per the graphical representation in question 12, it is evident that most of the subjects chose all of the above as their choice. (Q.12- D, 24/50) The major choice is apparently only little doubtful primarily because it has been observed that individuals do fear the repercussions following such complain as it not only spoils their reputation in their respective institutions but they are also subjected to brutal and insensitive remarks regarding their mental strength to face such situations by their peers or colleagues.

One of the contemporary forms of cyber bullying which has emerged as pretty injurious yet not evident is the issue of **bullying**. With the arrival of social networking and digitalisation, and content shared by individuals cyber bullying is demonic and disruptive. The records available on these platforms are often long-lasting and can be equated to an individual's reputation. It is undoubtedly a

double headed weapon as it not only **harms the reputation of the victim but also the perpetrator**. Hence, that it is hard to notice because of the major reason that it is subjected to minimal vigilance, these instances are extremely hard to notice and are generally persistent in nature. In the question 13 of the questionnaire the researcher aimed at finding whether its subjects regarded such a form of bullying as **equally grave as the primary form of cyber bullying**.

Amongst the subjects who had the idea of cyber bullying categorized it as an equally threatening demon as bullying itself. (Q.13, A- 28/50) However, a substantive segment of the subjects either didn't have the idea of bullying or didn't consider it to be a grave enough issue which is a pretty disturbing finding. (Q.13, B&C- 22/50) The subsequent question deals with the awareness among the youth regarding the issue of cyber bullying. As per the inputs received and the graphical representation in question 14 of the questionnaire, majority of the subjects responded with a **not satisfactory awareness** choice which is indeed a critical issue as awareness related to such a growing problem is of utmost importance especially keeping in mind its exponential growth and evident repercussions. (Q.14, B – 27/50). It is advisory from the observations that concrete measures should be taken in the course of awareness among individuals regarding the issue of cyber bullying. The author concludes his cluster of questions and discussions for the same by asking for suggestive measures from his subjects with a view of curbing the practice of cyber bullying. There were several choices provided to the subjects regarding the same i.e., the victim should observe **zero percent tolerance** towards cyber bullying and report to the relevant authorities instantly, **counselling and punishment of the perpetrator, more vigilance** on the part of the anti-bullying and cyber bullying authorities and all of the above. Most of the subjects chose all of the above-mentioned choices which is indeed an apparently righteous option keeping in mind the graveness of the issue of bullying and its traumatic impact. (Q.15, D – 31/50) The issue of cyber bullying needs to be taken care of not only from the prospect of the victim but also from all the possible dimensions i.e., perpetrator, by-stander etc. According to the researcher's observation, almost majority people think that media is not up to the mark in turning up with cyber bullying cases. (Q.16, B-40/50) From the inputs received through the questionnaire it is highly recommended that the issue of cyber bullying needs to be brought at an end owing to the terrible consequences associated with it and the insensitiveness in the act itself for the betterment of the society, and ultimately prevent this form of distortion in the psychological framework of an individual.

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