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Cross-Cultural Examination of Cyberbullying and Cybervictimization among University Students in India and Africa: Gender, Platform, and Behavioral Disparities

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Abstract: ***This study investigated the prevalence, forms, and demographic correlates of cyberbullying and cybervictimization among university students in India and Africa, aiming to provide cross-cultural insights into these pervasive online phenomena. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was employed, collecting self-reported data from 133 university students (75 males, 58 females) aged 17-30 years from Gujarat University, India, using electronic questionnaires including the Revised Cyberbullying Inventory (RCBI) and RCBI-II. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics via SPSS. WhatsApp emerged as the most popular social media platform across both populations, while Facebook was identified as a primary platform for cyberbullying behaviours among African students, with a wider range of platforms (including Share Chat) used in India. Common cyberbullying tactics included online insults, harassment, spreading rumours, impersonation, and exclusion. Notably, "stealing nicknames/screen names" and "taking personal information" were more frequently reported by African students. Gender disparities were observed, with Indian females reporting a higher prevalence of cyberbullying experiences, contrasting with a potential higher prevalence among African male students. Correlations between cyberbullying perpetration and victimization were identified, suggesting a dynamic interplay between roles. Despite the issue's presence, a significant portion of the student sample reported not experiencing or participating in cyberbullying. The findings underscore the critical need for culturally sensitive and platform-specific prevention and intervention strategies. They highlight that a nuanced understanding of local online behaviours and gender dynamics is essential for developing effective measures to foster safer digital environments for diverse student populations.***

Keywords: ***Cyberbullying, Cybervictimization, India, Africa, University Students, Social Media, Cross-cultural, Gender Differences.***

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Digital Landscape and Emerging Challenges for Youth

The pervasive integration of digital technologies has fundamentally reshaped human interaction and thought processes, bridging a critical gap between traditional psychology and the complexities of the digital world.[1] While digital platforms facilitate communication, transactions, and information sharing, they also present a complex terrain of dangers, with cyberbullying emerging as a prominent threat to student well-being.[1] Cyberbullying is defined as the repeated use of electronic communication to harass, intimidate, or exclude a victim, often anonymously and with a potentially vast audience reach, leaving victims feeling isolated, helpless, and under constant attack.[1] These experiences can lead to significant emotional consequences, including anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation, highlighting the severe psychological impact.[1]

The characterization of cyberbullying as an "epidemic of cyber-psychological behavior" [1] elevates the issue from individual misconduct to a widespread public health concern. Such a framing implies rapid spread, significant harm to a population, and a pressing need for systemic, large-scale interventions. This perspective shifts the responsibility beyond individual users or even educational institutions, suggesting a broader societal imperative for prevention and mitigation strategies, akin to public health campaigns for physical diseases. This viewpoint is crucial for advocating policy changes and resource allocation at national and international levels, emphasizing the urgency and scale of the problem.

B. Conceptualizing Cyberbullying and Cybervictimization

The terms "cyberbullying" and "cybervictimization" represent the intersection of the virtual world and established concepts of harm, with the term "bully" historically signifying power dynamics dating back to 1530s literature.[1] Cybervictimization describes the experience of being on the receiving end of such digital aggression.[1] These phenomena are universal, yet they manifest with cultural variations across ethics, morality, and tradition.[1] The rise of social media has ushered in a new era of "social media crime," encompassing online harassment, stalking, identity theft, and specifically cyberbullying and cybervictimization. The anonymity and ease of access inherent in these platforms facilitate harmful activity and complicate the tracking of perpetrators.[1] Cyberbullying and cybervictimization are interconnected, forming "two sides of the same coin," where the act of inflicting harm directly corresponds to the experience of enduring it.[1] Forms of cyberbullying include harassment, exclusion, doxing, emotional manipulation, flaming, identity theft, impersonation, trolling, cyberstalking, and specific contexts like gaming or educational settings.[1]

Social media platforms play an amplifying role in power imbalances and reputation damage. The features of social media, such as anonymity, wide audience reach, and ease of content sharing, actively intensify the negative effects of bullying. This means that interventions cannot solely focus on individual behavior but must also consider the design and moderation policies of the platforms themselves. The public nature of these platforms transforms private torment into public humiliation, making escape difficult for victims and potentially increasing their psychological distress.[1]

C. Rationale for a Cross-Cultural Study in India and Africa

This study specifically addresses cyberbullying and cybervictimization among students at Gujarat University, with a particular focus on both Indian and African student populations.[1] Understanding the motivations of cyberbullies and the experiences of victims from diverse cultural backgrounds, through the analysis of biological and psychological factors, is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies.[1] Online environments are essential for students' academic journeys, serving as virtual spaces for connection, collaboration, and information access.[1] The study focuses on commonly utilized digital platforms by students, including WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Share Chat, YouTube, Google, Telegram, LinkedIn, Messenger, Threads, and X.[1]

The study's unique design, focusing on both Indian and African students within the same university (Gujarat University), offers a significant methodological advantage. Unlike studies comparing populations across different institutions or countries, this approach helps to control for potential confounding variables related to institutional environment, academic pressures, or local socioeconomic conditions.

This allows for a clearer examination of how cultural background (Indian versus African) might specifically influence cyberbullying experiences, tactics, and responses, thereby strengthening the validity of the cross-cultural comparisons.

D. Study Aims and Objectives

The overarching aim of this study was to comprehensively understand the concept of cyberbullying, its consequences, and the various modes through which both cyberbullying and cybervictimization manifest.[1] Building upon this aim, the specific objectives of the present study were threefold:

- To determine the level of cyberbullying and cybervictimization among college students from India and Africa at Gujarat University.[1]
- To assess the popularity and prevalence of cyberbullying behaviors within these specific student populations.[1]
- To investigate gender differences in the measurement and experience of cyberbullying and cybervictimization among the studied groups.[1]

It is important to note a discrepancy in the stated objectives and the sample population. While the objectives initially mention "the level of cyber bullying and cyber victimization among adults" [1], the methodology clearly defines the sample as "students" aged "17 to 30 years".[1] This contradiction necessitates a careful qualification of conclusions, as the study's findings cannot be generalized to the broader adult population but are specifically applicable to young adults within a university setting. This highlights the importance of precision in research design and reporting.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Development*

Cyberbullying has been identified as a significant concern in India, categorized as electronic communication harming reputation, privacy, or mental health.[1] Shivashankar and Prakash (2018) highlighted the need for a specific Indian perspective on defining cyberbullying, distinguishing it from cyberstalking, and exploring legal remedies.[1] The field of victimology offers a framework to analyze the long-term consequences of cyberbullying, including its effects on self-esteem, social interactions, and academic performance.[1] Rudi (2022) explored the process of becoming a cybervictim, emphasizing that victimization is not inherent but influenced by various factors and conditions. This research delves into perpetrator-victim relationships, the dynamics at play, and the manifestation of psychological trauma across different stages (primary, secondary, and tertiary damages). It also investigates factors influencing reporting decisions and victim-specific vulnerabilities, drawing from traditional victimology.[1]

The work by Rudi (2022) emphasizes that victimization is a dynamic process influenced by various conditions, rather than a static state. This perspective, when combined with findings that prior victimization can predict cyberbullying offending [1], points to a crucial dynamic: individuals can transition between victim and perpetrator roles. This moves beyond a simplistic binary understanding of "bully" and "victim" to a more complex, fluid model. The implication is that interventions should not solely target "bullies" or "victims" but address the underlying psychological and social factors that can lead to this overlap, such as unresolved trauma or learned aggressive behaviors.

B. *Global and Regional Prevalence of Cyberbullying*

Mohammad Khalid (2022) conducted a study on cyberbullying among students in India and Afghanistan, focusing on the correlation with ethnocentrism, underscoring the importance of legal and psychological interventions.[1] An assessment of cyberbullying among Gujarat University students by Khalid Khawrin (2022) found significant correlations with daily internet surfing, age, and gender differences.[1] A study by Shampa Gupta et al. (2023) reported an alarming incidence of cyberbullying among Indian college medical students, with over 60.6% experiencing it. This research also linked victimization to adverse mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety, stress, diminished self-esteem) and explored coping mechanisms.[1] Global statistics from 2023-2024 indicate India (38%) as one of the top countries where parents reported the most cyberbullying, alongside Brazil (29%) and the U.S. (26%).[1]

The statistic showing India as a top country for reported cyberbullying (38%) [1], when combined with Gupta et al.'s finding of over 60% prevalence among Indian medical students [1], underscores that cyberbullying is not a peripheral issue but a substantial public health and psychological concern within India. This context provides a strong rationale for the current study's focus on Indian students and reinforces the need for culturally specific research and interventions, moving beyond generalized global trends.

C. *Gender Dynamics in Traditional vs. Cyberbullying*

Beckman (2013) highlighted the complexities of bullying in the digital age, noting how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has reshaped social interactions. Their work emphasized the importance of understanding differences and similarities between traditional and cyberbullying for effective intervention.[1] Beckman et al. (2013) analyzed data from over 2,900 Swedish adolescents, revealing that girls were more vulnerable to cybervictimization and more involved in cyberbullying overall, while boys tended to dominate traditional bullying roles. This suggests a discrepant gender pattern in the digital realm compared to offline bullying.[1]

The consistent finding across Beckman's work [1] that girls are more involved in cyberbullying and cybervictimization compared to their roles in traditional bullying represents a significant shift in aggression patterns. This suggests that the digital environment, with its features like anonymity, indirect communication, and relational aggression, may be more conducive to forms of bullying that align with female social dynamics, whereas traditional bullying often involves more overt physical or direct confrontation. This implies a need to understand the psychological mechanisms, such as social comparison, relational aggression, and anonymity effects, that mediate these gendered behaviors in online spaces.

D. *Predictive Factors for Cyberbullying Perpetration*

Güllü et al. (2023) investigated the intentions behind cyberbullying, focusing on three variables: weak school commitment, deviant peers, and cyberbullying victimization-strain. Their findings from U.S. middle schools indicated that students with weak school connections, deviant peers, and prior victimization were more likely to become cyberbullies. This research supported social bonding theory, differential association, and general strain theories.[1]

The findings from Güllü et al. [1] are crucial as they move beyond simple correlations to identify predictive factors for perpetration, particularly the "victimization-strain" element. This suggests a potential cycle where experiencing cyberbullying can lead to perpetrating it, possibly as a coping mechanism, a form of retaliation, or through learned behaviour, as posited by social learning theory. The inclusion of "deviant peers" further emphasizes the social contagion aspect. This understanding highlights that effective interventions must consider not just the immediate act, but the broader social and psychological context that predisposes individuals to become perpetrators, including their own experiences of victimization.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

A. *Study Design and Ethical Considerations*

This study employed a quantitative research design, relying on self-reported primary data.[1] Questionnaires were administered electronically via Google Forms to maximize accessibility for participants.[1] Informed consent was obtained electronically prior to participation, ensuring participants understood the research goals and their rights.[1] Participation was voluntary and anonymous; participants were not required to provide their names, and each questionnaire was assigned a serial number to maintain confidentiality.[1] Participants were explicitly informed that they could withdraw from the questionnaire at any time.[1]

The reliance on self-reported data is a common methodological choice in psychological research, especially for sensitive topics like cyberbullying. This approach provides direct access to individuals' experiences and perceptions. However, it is important to critically acknowledge the inherent limitations: potential for social desirability bias (where participants might underreport perpetration or overreport victimization), recall bias (particularly for events recalled over a 12-month period), and subjective interpretation of questions. These factors necessitate cautious interpretation of prevalence rates and correlations and underscore the value of triangulating data with other methods in future research.

B. *Participants and Sample Selection*

Participants for this study were university students, both male and female, aged 17 to 30 years, residing in Ahmedabad, and specifically enrolled at Gujarat University.[1] A total of 133 participants were included in the study.[1] The sample comprised 75 males and 58 females.[1] The country distribution was relatively balanced, with 64 Indian participants and 69 African participants.[1] While the overall age range was 17-30 years, the highest response count for Indian students was at age 22, whereas for African students, ages 25 and 27 had the highest counts.[1]

The educational fields of the participants showed a notable disparity. Most Indian participants (60 out of 64) were from Forensic Science. African participants, conversely, represented a wider array of educational fields, with the "other" category having the highest number (13), followed by BBA/MBA (10), Cyber Security (8), and Animation (6), among others.[1] This stark difference in educational backgrounds, particularly the overwhelming majority of Indian participants being from Forensic Science, is a significant confounding variable. Students in such a field might possess higher digital literacy, greater awareness of cybercrime, or different attitudes towards online behaviour compared to students from diverse disciplines. This could potentially influence their likelihood of experiencing or perpetrating cyberbullying, or their willingness to report. This demographic imbalance could partially explain observed differences between Indian and African students, making it challenging to attribute all variations solely to national or cultural factors.

C. *Research Tools*

The study utilized standardized questionnaires, employing a closed-ended format with pre-defined response choices, a well-established method in assessment research.[1] The primary instruments included:

1) Cyberbullying and Cybervictimization Questionnaire: A 48-item instrument designed to assess both cyberbullying (perpetration: "THEY DID IT") and cybervictimization (experience: "IT HAPPENED TO THEM") over the preceding 12 months. It covered a broad range of online platforms including mobile phones, emails, websites, social networking sites, text messages, and online gaming platforms.[1]

2) Revised Cyberbullying Inventory (RCBI): An adopted 28-item tool developed by Topcu & Erdur-Baker (2010), utilizing a four-point Likert scale. It comprised two 14-item subscales: a "Bully scale" and a "Victim scale." Respondents recalled behaviors over the last twelve months, covering aggressive email, mobile phone calls, social networking, and general computer usage.[1]

3) Revised Cyberbullying Inventory II (RCBI-II): A standardized 10-item inventory by Topcua & ErdurBakerb (2018), where each item was scored twice ("I did it" for perpetration, "It happened to me" for victimization) on a four-point Likert scale (0=never to 3=more than three times). Items were prefixed with "On the internet...".[1]

The description mentions three distinct questionnaires: a "48-item questionnaire," the "RCBI (28-item)," and the "RCBI-II (10-item)".[1] The precise manner in which these instruments were used in conjunction remains unclear. It is not specified whether all three were administered, if one was a subset of another, or if there was a primary instrument. The literature review mentions the RCBI-II specifically for a sample of 130 students.[1] This lack of clarity on instrument integration and potential overlap or redundancy could introduce measurement inconsistencies, thereby impacting the replicability and internal validity of the study, as it is unclear precisely what behaviors were measured by which instrument and how composite scores were derived.

D. Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

Data were collected from March 2024 to April 2024 during students' break times in various locations, such as classrooms and open areas of each institution.[1] Participants were given a maximum of 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire, with full written and verbal instructions provided.[1]

The instruction that participants had "a maximum of 5 minutes to fill up the questionnaire" [1] for instruments described as 48-item or even 10-item (scored twice) on sensitive topics like cyberbullying raises significant concerns about data quality. It is highly improbable for participants to provide thoughtful, accurate, and comprehensive responses to such a questionnaire in such a short timeframe, especially when recalling behaviors over the past 12 months. This time constraint likely led to rushed responses, potentially increasing random error or even systematic bias (e.g., participants quickly selecting "never" or "once" to finish). This methodological detail casts doubt on the reliability and validity of the self-reported data, making the findings potentially less robust.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.[1] The analysis involved a two-step process: descriptive statistics were used to summarize key characteristics such as central tendencies, variability, and distribution, often presented with visual aids like frequency tables, histograms, or bar charts.[1] Building upon this, inferential statistics were employed to draw conclusions about population trends and test research hypotheses.[1]

IV. RESULTS

A. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Sample

The study included a total of 133 participants, whose ages ranged from 17 to 30 years.[1] For Indian students, the age of 22 showed the highest response count, while for African students, ages 25 and 27 had the highest counts.[1]

Table 4: Participants Age Range

Participants' age range	Indian count	African count	Total
20	1	3	4
21	6	5	11
22	29	7	36
23	15	5	20
24	7	8	15
25	3	12	15
26	1	10	11
27	0	12	12
28	1	3	4
29	1	4	5
Total	64	69	133
Note: Ages 0, 18, 19, 30 had zero counts and are omitted for brevity. [1]			

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This table is valuable because age is a key demographic variable and an independent variable in the study.[1] Understanding the age distribution within each national group is fundamental for interpreting any age-related findings and for assessing the generalizability of results to other student populations. It also highlights the specific age ranges that are most represented in each country's sample, which can inform future targeted research or interventions.

Of the 64 Indian participants, 33 (51.56%) were male and 31 (48.43%) were female. Among the 69 African participants, 41 (59.42%) were male and 28 (40.57%) were female.[1] This indicates a higher proportion of males in the African sample and a more balanced gender distribution in the Indian sample.

Table 5: Gender Distribution by Country

		INDIAN	AFRICAN	TOTAL
GENDER	Male	33	41	74
	Percentage	51.56%	59.42%	
	Female	31	28	59
	Percentage	48.43%	40.57%	
TOTAL		64	69	133
Note: Total counts for Male and Female are derived from the sum of Indian and African counts. [1]				

Export to Sheets

Gender is a primary independent variable and a central focus of the study's objectives and hypotheses.[1] This table directly presents the gender breakdown for each country, allowing for direct comparison and providing the foundational data for discussing gender disparities in cyberbullying experiences. The observed imbalance (more African males, more Indian females) is a crucial demographic detail that needs to be considered when interpreting gender-specific findings.

The daily internet surfing habits of all participants indicated that the largest proportion (38%) reported surfing the internet for 3-5 hours per day. The least reported usage (4%) was for 9-12 hours per day.[1] Internet surfing time is listed as an independent variable [1] and is directly relevant to exposure to online environments where cyberbullying occurs. This data provides essential context on the digital engagement levels of the student population, which can be correlated with the prevalence and forms of cyberbullying. It helps to characterize the typical online habits of the sample.

The educational fields of the participants showed a notable concentration among Indian students, with the majority (60 out of 64) from Forensic Science. African participants were more diverse, with the "other" category having the highest number (13), followed by BBA/MBA (10), Cyber Security (8), and Animation (6).[1]

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of the Educational Fields of the Participants

Educational Fields	Number of Indians	Number of Africans	TOTAL
Forensic Science	60	2	62
Cyber Security	3	8	11
Animation	0	6	6
Toxicology	0	1	1
Zoology	0	2	2
M.Sc. chemistry	1	2	3
Statistic	0	3	3
Mass communication	0	1	1
Mechanical	0	1	1
Food and nutrition	0	4	4
BBA/MBA	0	10	10
MCA	0	1	1
IT	0	5	5
IIS	0	2	2
Computer	0	1	1
Physics	0	1	1
BA political science	0	1	1
Engineering	0	2	2

Business	0	2	2
Commerce	0	1	1
other	0	13	13
Total	**64**	**69**	**133**

Export to Sheets

While not a direct hypothesis variable, the educational field is a significant demographic characteristic that could act as a confounding factor.[1] The concentration of Indian students in Forensic Science might influence their awareness or reporting of cyberbullying. Including this table provides transparency about the sample composition and allows for a more nuanced interpretation of observed differences between the two national groups.

Regarding social media platform usage, WhatsApp was the most popular platform for both Indian (63 users) and African (64 users) students, totaling 127 users. Instagram was the second most popular (121 users total), followed by Facebook (96 users total). Share Chat was least used by Indian students (5 users), while "other apps" were least used by African students (14 users).[1]

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics on Social Media of the Participants

Social Media Name	Indian social media user	African social media user	Total
Facebook	40	56	96
WhatsApp	63	64	127
Snapchat	49	44	93
Instagram	60	61	121
YouTube	53	43	96
Google	55	48	103
LinkedIn	41	40	81
Messenger	23	39	62
Telegram	52	47	99
Threads	7	24	31
Share Chat	5	15	20
X	15	36	51
Other	12	14	26

Export to Sheets

Social media platforms are the primary medium for cyberbullying.[1] This table directly illustrates the popularity of different platforms in each country, which is critical for understanding the specific online environments where cyberbullying behaviors are most likely to occur. This data is essential for developing platform-specific prevention strategies and for interpreting findings related to platform-specific cyberbullying tactics.

B. Prevalence and Forms of Cyberbullying and Cybervictimization

The study identified common cyberbullying tactics reported by students in both countries, including online insults and harassment, spreading rumors or false information, impersonation, and exclusion from online groups or activities.[1] Figures 9, 10, 15, and 16 consistently suggest that a significant portion of students in the sample reported

not experiencing cyberbullying or *not* participating in it. However, the issue remains present, with some students reporting online threats, impersonation, and social media harassment.[1]

Among African students, "stealing nicknames/screen names" and "taking personal information" were more commonly reported compared to Indian students.[1] Facebook emerged as the primary platform for harmful cyberbullying behaviors among African students. Figure 7 specifically highlights stealing personal information (computer files, emails, pictures, Facebook info), taking computer nicknames or screen names, and insulting online via platforms like chat rooms, Facebook, and X, with Facebook showing a significantly higher prevalence.[1] Figure 11 further details various cyberbullying behaviors among African students, including spreading rumors, posting embarrassing photos/videos, harassing/threatening messages, impersonation, exclusion, stealing personal information, cyberstalking, and creating fake accounts.[1]

For Indian students, a wider range of platforms, including Share Chat, were reported for cyberbullying.[1] Figure 13 reveals a coexisting increase in cyberbullying (e.g., sending threatening or hurtful emails) and cybervictimization (e.g., threats in online forums like Facebook or X) among Indian students.[1] Figure 15 illustrates the frequency of diverse cyber victim experiences among Indian students across various online platforms, reinforcing that the majority were not targeted.[1] Figure 16 shows the frequency of cyberbullying behaviors among Indian students, indicating a smaller percentage actively involved in tactics like blocking or removing others' comments.[1]

Generally, Figure 8 suggests a correlation between frequent sharing of personal information online and increased exposure to social media bullying.[1] Figure 12 illustrates a coexisting increase in both cyberbullying and cybervictimization over time, specifically noting bullying behaviors involving impersonating other genders and victimization through unauthorized email access via stolen credentials.[1] Figure 14 depicts a rise in both the creation of humiliating websites and the compromise of online accounts to post humiliating content without consent.[1]

The finding that "stealing nicknames/screen names" and "taking personal information" are more common among African students [1], while Facebook is a primary platform for harmful behavior in Africa [1], suggests a deep interaction between cultural online practices and platform affordances. If online identities or community status, often represented by nicknames or screen names, hold particular significance in African online social structures, then attacking these elements becomes a potent form of bullying. Similarly, if Facebook is the dominant online space, its features, such as privacy settings or ease of impersonation, might facilitate specific types of attacks. This implies that effective prevention requires understanding not just the general forms of cyberbullying but their culturally inflected manifestations and platform-specific vulnerabilities.

C. Hypothesis Outcomes

The study tested four hypotheses, with the following outcomes:

H0: There will be no significant difference in the level of Cyberbullying and Cyber victimization of adults. This hypothesis could not be definitively concluded for adults as the study exclusively included students (aged 17-30).[1] However, within the student sample, the study suggested similar overall levels of cyberbullying across India and Africa. A potential gender disparity was identified: Indian females appeared to report experiencing more cyberbullying, while African males reported more.[1] This finding of nuanced gender disparities points to the influence of cultural context on reporting and experience. The observation that Indian females reported more cyberbullying while African males reported more [1] is a critical cross-cultural gender difference. This suggests that cultural norms regarding gender roles, acceptable online behaviors, and willingness to disclose victimization might significantly influence who experiences or reports cyberbullying. For example, if male online interactions in Africa are more competitive or aggressive, or if reporting victimization is less stigmatized for males in that context, this could explain the observation. Conversely, if Indian cultural norms make it more acceptable for females to discuss emotional distress or relational aggression, their reporting might be higher. This calls for deeper qualitative exploration into the socio-cultural factors.

H1: Countries' adults (India and Africa) will be significantly different in their Cyberbullying and Cyber victimization experiences. This hypothesis, while framed for "adults," was implicitly addressed for the student population. The summary indicated that H1 "hinted at cultural influences on cyberbullying based on regional variations in tactics among students (e.g., stealing nicknames in Africa)".[1] This suggests that unique cultural, social, and technological factors in each country likely play a substantial role in shaping cyberbullying experiences.

H2: There is a significant difference in the types of cyberbullying experienced by students across different countries and internet usage patterns. This hypothesis was "partially supported".[1] Students in both countries experienced common cyberbullying tactics, but also showed distinct regional differences, such as the higher prevalence of "stealing nicknames in Africa".[1] This implies that cultural differences, access to technology, and online behavior patterns significantly influence the specific forms of cyberbullying encountered.

H3: There will be a significant difference in responses for both countries (Indian & Africa) students. This hypothesis anticipates discernible differences in how Indian and African students respond to cyberbullying and victimization.[1] If supported, it suggests that factors such as cultural norms, reporting behavior, and coping mechanisms differ significantly between the two countries, leading to varied responses to cyberbullying incidents among students.[1] While the provided snippets do not explicitly state the direct outcome of H3 beyond its statement, the observed gender differences and platform specificities (as discussed in relation to H0 and H2) provide indirect support for varied responses.

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Figures 12 and 13 [1] illustrate a "coexisting increase" or "consistent increase" in both cyberbullying behavior and cybervictimization. While the study acknowledges it cannot establish causation, this strong correlation [1] reinforces the concept of a "victim-perpetrator overlap" found in the literature.[1] This suggests a dynamic, rather than static, relationship between roles in online aggression. Individuals who are victimized may, under certain circumstances, become perpetrators, and vice versa. This has profound implications for intervention strategies, which should aim to break this cycle by addressing the underlying psychological and social factors that contribute to both roles.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Interpretation of Findings in Context

This study provides valuable empirical insights into the complex dynamics of cyberbullying and cybervictimization among university students in India and Africa, contributing to the growing body of cross-cultural cyberpsychology research. The findings largely align with previous research indicating the pervasive nature of cyberbullying globally [1] and its significant psychological impact.[1] The observation that a "significant portion of students haven't experienced cyberbullying or participated in it" [1] offers a counter-narrative to the "epidemic" framing introduced earlier. This suggests that while the potential for harm is widespread, actual exposure or engagement might be concentrated within specific vulnerable subgroups or online contexts. This calls for a more nuanced understanding of "prevalence" and suggests that future research should also focus on identifying and bolstering protective factors and resilience among the non-affected majority, rather than solely focusing on risk and pathology.

B. Elaboration on Gender and Platform-Specific Disparities

The observed gender disparities, with Indian females reporting more cyberbullying experiences and African males showing a potential higher prevalence of cyberbullying [1], underscore the cultural specificity of online behaviors. This contrasts with some Western studies [1] that often show girls as more susceptible to cybervictimization, suggesting that gender roles, societal norms, and online social dynamics may vary significantly across cultures, influencing both perpetration and reporting. The distinct roles of social media platforms, with Facebook emerging as a primary site for cyberbullying in Africa and a wider range of platforms (including Share Chat) used in India [1], highlight the necessity of localized, platform-specific interventions. This aligns with the idea that the "digital word presents a complex terrain of dangers" [1] that necessitates tailored responses. The higher prevalence of "stealing nicknames/screen names" and "taking personal information" among African students [1] further emphasizes this cultural-technological interaction. This could reflect the cultural significance of online identity or community in specific African contexts, making these forms of digital aggression particularly impactful.

The results demonstrate that gender differences in cyberbullying are not universal but culturally mediated (Indian females versus African males) [1], and that specific tactics are platform-dependent and regionally distinct (Facebook in Africa, nickname stealing).[1] This synthesis of findings leads to a broader understanding: cyberbullying is not a monolithic phenomenon. Its manifestation is deeply intertwined with the cultural context (e.g., gender roles, social norms), the specific technological affordances of dominant platforms, and how these elements interact. This complex interplay means that generic "cyber safety" advice is insufficient; interventions must be highly nuanced, culturally informed, and technologically specific.

C. Implications for Prevention and Intervention Strategies

The findings strongly advocate for the development of culturally-sensitive prevention programs that acknowledge and address the unique manifestations of cyberbullying in different regions. For instance, interventions in Africa might need to prioritize education on identity protection and Facebook-specific safety measures, while Indian programs might require a broader multi-platform approach. Addressing the observed correlations between cyberbullying behavior and victimization [1], which supports the victim-perpetrator overlap [1], suggests that interventions should not solely target perpetrators or victims in isolation. Programs should aim to break the cycle by providing support for victims to prevent them from becoming perpetrators and by addressing underlying psychological distress or social learning factors. Universities, as key stakeholders, have a crucial role in fostering safer online environments, especially given the diverse educational backgrounds of their students. Tailored awareness campaigns and support services are essential.

The data reveals specific gender patterns, platform preferences, and common tactics unique to each region.[1] This necessitates a shift from generic cyberbullying awareness campaigns to highly targeted, socio-ecological interventions. A socio-ecological model considers individual, relational, community, and societal factors.

This means interventions should involve not just individual students (e.g., digital literacy), but also peer groups, university policies, and collaborations with social media platforms, all designed with cultural context in mind. For example, if male students in Africa are more involved, interventions might need to address specific norms of masculinity or online gaming culture.

D. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations warrant consideration when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the study's findings are limited to university students aged 17-30 at Gujarat University and cannot be generalized to broader adult populations or other educational settings.[1] Second, the cross-sectional design allows for the identification of correlations but cannot establish causation between variables. Therefore, conclusions about cause-and-effect relationships between cyberbullying behaviors and victimization or their psychological impacts should be drawn with caution.[1] Third, reliance on self-reported questionnaires is subject to potential biases, including social desirability bias (underreporting undesirable behaviors or overreporting desirable ones) and recall bias (inaccuracies in remembering past events over a 12-month period).[1]

Furthermore, the methodological ambiguity surrounding the use of multiple cyberbullying inventories (a 48-item questionnaire, RCBI, and RCBI-II) without clear justification for their combined use or how data from potentially different scales were integrated introduces a degree of methodological ambiguity that could affect data consistency and validity. The very short 5-minute maximum completion time for the questionnaire [1] raises significant concerns about the quality, thoughtfulness, and accuracy of participant responses, especially given the sensitive nature and number of items. This time constraint likely led to rushed responses, potentially increasing random error or even systematic bias. Lastly, the disproportionate representation of Forensic Science students in the Indian sample compared to the diverse fields in the African sample [1] could act as a confounding variable. Their specialized knowledge might influence their awareness, reporting, or online behaviors related to cyberbullying, potentially affecting observed differences between the two national groups.

E. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should endeavor to conduct longitudinal studies to establish causal relationships between cyberbullying, victimization, and psychological outcomes, and to track the evolution of online behaviors over time. Employing mixed-methods approaches, combining quantitative data with qualitative research (e.g., in-depth interviews, focus groups), would provide a richer understanding of cultural nuances, motivations of perpetrators, coping mechanisms of victims, and the subjective experiences of cyberbullying, particularly regarding the observed gender differences. Expanding research to include broader adult populations and diverse educational institutions beyond a single university would enhance generalizability. Investigations into the effectiveness of culturally-tailored and platform-specific interventions in mitigating cyberbullying and promoting positive online behaviors are also warranted. Finally, exploring the psychological impact of specific cyberbullying tactics (e.g., identity theft versus verbal insults) in different cultural contexts could provide further valuable insights.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable, empirically driven insights into the multifaceted nature of cyberbullying and cybervictimization among university students in India and Africa. It highlights significant cross-cultural variations in the prevalence of certain tactics, the platforms utilized for harmful behaviors, and gender-specific patterns of involvement and victimization. The findings underscore the critical necessity of moving beyond generic approaches to cyberbullying prevention and intervention. Effective strategies must be culturally sensitive, acknowledging unique social norms and communication styles, and platform-specific, targeting the dominant online environments where these behaviors manifest. The observed correlations between perpetration and victimization reinforce the dynamic nature of these roles, suggesting that holistic interventions addressing both sides of the coin are crucial. While a significant portion of students remain unaffected, the persistent presence of cyberbullying necessitates continued vigilance and proactive measures. Ultimately, this research contributes to a more nuanced, global understanding of cyberpsychological phenomena, emphasizing the complex interplay of individual, social, cultural, and technological factors in shaping online aggression and victimization in diverse contexts.

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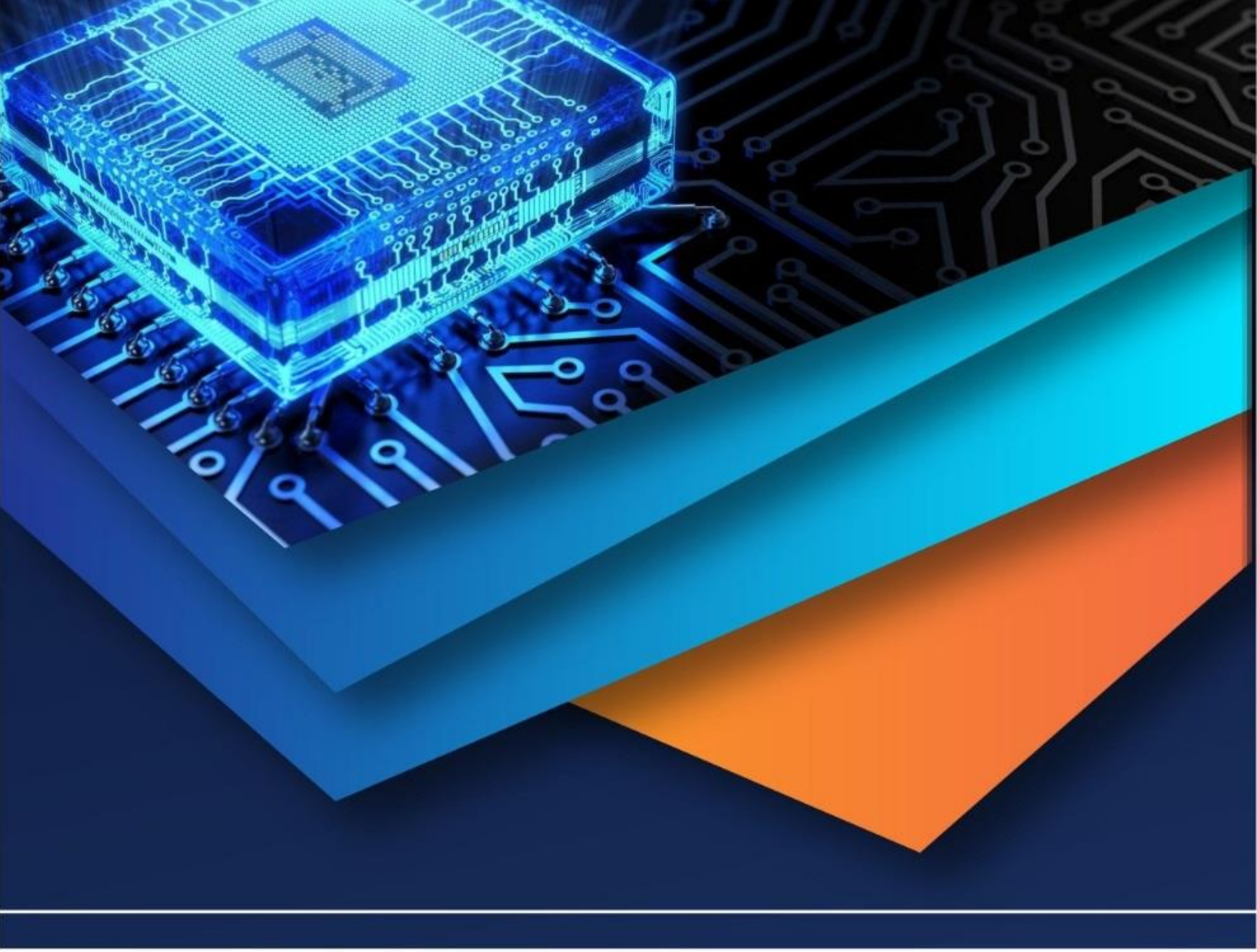

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