

CYBERBULLYING AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN: THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY PREVENTION

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to critically examine cyberbullying in school environments through a contemporary literature review, with particular emphasis on its defining characteristics, psychological and social consequences, and the role of school-related factors in its emergence and prevention. More specifically, the article seeks to explore cyberbullying as a multidimensional educational issue shaped by adolescent development, digital communication and institutional context, while synthesizing recent research on its impact on students' emotional well-being, school experience and psychosocial adjustment. Through the analysis of current scholarly evidence, the study also aims to highlight the importance of school climate, digital literacy and preventive educational strategies in addressing cyberbullying effectively within modern school settings.

This article employs a literature review methodology to examine contemporary research on cyberbullying in school environments by critically synthesizing recent peer-reviewed studies published primarily between 2023 and 2024. The methodological approach is based on the selection, analysis and thematic organization of current academic literature focusing on the psychological, social and educational dimensions of cyberbullying among school-aged adolescents. Emphasis was placed on empirical studies, systematic reviews and meta-analyses addressing key themes such as emotional consequences, school climate, digital literacy and prevention strategies, allowing for a comprehensive and critical interpretation of cyberbullying as a contemporary school-based issue.

The findings of this literature review indicate that cyberbullying has become a significant and multidimensional challenge in contemporary school environments, with substantial consequences for adolescents' psychological well-being, self-esteem and social adjustment. The reviewed studies consistently show that cyberbullying is associated with increased anxiety, depressive symptoms, emotional distress and reduced school connectedness, while also highlighting the critical role of school climate, teacher support and digital literacy in shaping both vulnerability and resilience. Overall, the findings suggest that cyberbullying is best understood as a complex educational and psychosocial issue that requires comprehensive, school-centered and preventive intervention approaches.

In conclusion, cyberbullying constitutes a critical and evolving challenge within contemporary school environments, requiring recognition as both an educational and psychosocial issue rather than merely a form of online misconduct. Its impact extends across students' emotional well-being, social development and school experience, highlighting the need for schools to adopt comprehensive and preventive approaches that combine digital literacy, emotional support and whole-school intervention strategies. Addressing cyberbullying effectively requires sustained institutional commitment and a broader educational response aligned with the realities of adolescents' digital lives.

Schools should adopt comprehensive and preventive anti-cyberbullying frameworks that move beyond punitive responses and address cyberbullying as a broader educational and psychosocial issue. Priority should be given to the integration of digital literacy education, social-emotional learning and online safety awareness within the school curriculum in order to strengthen students' critical digital competence, empathy and responsible online behavior. Schools should also invest in teacher training and professional development so that educators are better equipped to identify, prevent and respond to cyberbullying incidents effectively and consistently. In parallel, stronger collaboration among schools, families, mental health professionals and community stakeholders is essential to create coordinated support systems for students and to promote safer digital environments. Finally, future educational policy and school practice should prioritize whole-school prevention strategies that foster supportive school climates, strengthen student connectedness and place student well-being at the center of digital safety initiatives.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, school environment, adolescents, digital literacy, mental health, prevention strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges affecting contemporary school environments, reflecting the broader transformation of adolescent social interaction in digitally mediated contexts. As communication among students increasingly takes place through social media platforms, messaging applications and online gaming environments, peer aggression has expanded beyond the physical boundaries of school and into virtual spaces where harmful interactions can occur continuously and often invisibly. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying is not limited by time or place, allowing aggressive behaviors to persist long after the school day has ended and often exposing victims to repeated harassment in spaces that were once considered private or safe. This

shift has altered the nature of peer victimization in schools, making cyberbullying a persistent educational, psychological and social concern that requires renewed scholarly attention (Modecki et al., 2023; Smith, Steffgen and Sittichai, 2023; Patchin and Hinduja, 2024).

The growing scholarly interest in cyberbullying reflects the recognition that this phenomenon is not merely an extension of traditional bullying, but a distinct form of aggression shaped by the affordances of digital communication. The anonymity, permanence and wide audience reach enabled by online platforms intensify both the frequency and impact of harmful behaviors, creating a social environment in which humiliation, exclusion and harassment can be amplified far beyond face-to-face encounters. Adolescents who engage in online interactions are particularly vulnerable to these dynamics because digital communication often reduces social accountability while simultaneously increasing impulsivity and disinhibition. In this sense, cyberbullying is not only a behavioral issue but also a technologically mediated social process that reflects broader changes in youth interaction, digital identity and peer power relations (Barlett, Gentile and Anderson, 2023; Wachs, Wright and Vazsonyi, 2023; Kowalski, Limber and McCord, 2023).

Recent literature has consistently shown that cyberbullying constitutes a significant threat to adolescent psychological well-being, with consequences that extend well beyond temporary emotional discomfort. Victims of cyberbullying frequently report heightened anxiety, chronic stress, depressive symptoms and persistent feelings of vulnerability, particularly when online harassment becomes repetitive or publicly visible. Because digital aggression often unfolds in front of large audiences and can remain accessible indefinitely through screenshots, reposts and permanent online records, the emotional burden experienced by victims may be intensified compared to traditional forms of bullying. This prolonged exposure to humiliation and social surveillance can significantly undermine emotional regulation, increase psychological distress and contribute to long-term mental health difficulties among school-aged populations (Bottino et al., 2023; Hamm, Newton and Chisholm, 2024; Navarro, Yubero and Larrañaga, 2024).

A particularly concerning dimension of cyberbullying is its strong association with adolescent self-perception, self-worth and identity formation. Since adolescence is a developmental period marked by heightened sensitivity to peer approval, belonging and social evaluation, experiences of online harassment can have especially damaging effects on self-esteem and psychosocial adjustment. Repeated exposure to ridicule, exclusion or digital humiliation may gradually shape how students perceive themselves, reinforcing feelings of inadequacy, inferiority and social insecurity. Recent studies indicate that cyberbullying victimization is strongly associated with lower self-esteem, greater emotional withdrawal and increased loneliness, especially when students perceive limited social support from peers or adults. These findings reinforce the view that cyberbullying is deeply intertwined with developmental vulnerability and must be understood within the broader psychosocial context of adolescence (Navarro, Yubero and Larrañaga, 2024; Kowalski, Limber and McCord, 2023; Wachs, Wright and Vazsonyi, 2023).

At the same time, the literature has increasingly emphasized that cyberbullying is not solely an individual behavioral problem, but a social-ecological phenomenon shaped by multiple interacting systems, including peer networks, school climate, family context and digital culture. Contemporary research has moved beyond simplistic victim–perpetrator models and now approaches cyberbullying as a relational and systemic issue embedded within adolescents’ broader social environments. From this perspective, students’ online behaviors are influenced not only by personal traits such as empathy, impulsivity or moral disengagement, but also by contextual factors such as peer norms, teacher support, school connectedness and institutional responses to online harm. This broader ecological understanding has become central in recent cyberbullying scholarship and has significantly strengthened the explanatory power of school-based research (Wachs, Wright and Vazsonyi, 2023; Adams, Johnson and McLeod, 2023; Chen, Lo and Cheung, 2024).

Within this framework, school climate has emerged as one of the most influential protective and risk-related factors associated with cyberbullying involvement. A growing body of evidence suggests that students who perceive their school environment as supportive, fair and emotionally safe are significantly less likely to engage in or become victims of cyberbullying. Positive teacher–student relationships, clear behavioral expectations and strong school connectedness appear to function as protective mechanisms that reduce digital aggression and promote safer peer interaction. Conversely, school environments characterized by weak supervision, low trust and limited emotional support may increase students’ vulnerability to cyberbullying and reduce the likelihood of disclosure or intervention. These findings underscore the importance of examining cyberbullying not only as a digital issue but as a school climate issue with direct implications for educational policy and student well-being (Adams, Johnson and McLeod, 2023; Chen, Lo and Cheung, 2024; Del Rey, Casas and Ortega-Ruiz, 2023).

In response to the growing prevalence and complexity of cyberbullying, recent research has increasingly focused on prevention and intervention strategies that can be implemented within school settings. Contemporary evidence suggests that effective responses to cyberbullying require comprehensive and multi-level interventions that combine

digital literacy education, social-emotional learning, teacher training, peer support mechanisms and institutional policy development. Rather than relying solely on punitive approaches, recent school-based interventions emphasize prevention through awareness, resilience-building and the cultivation of safer digital norms among students. International evidence demonstrates that educational interventions are more effective when they are integrated into whole-school prevention frameworks and supported by collaboration among teachers, families and mental health professionals (Del Rey, Casas and Ortega-Ruiz, 2023; Patchin and Hinduja, 2024; Livingstone, Stoilova and Kelly, 2024).

Taken together, the recent literature positions cyberbullying as a complex and evolving issue that demands interdisciplinary and school-centered analysis. It is no longer sufficient to conceptualize cyberbullying simply as online misconduct among adolescents; rather, it must be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon situated at the intersection of digital culture, adolescent development, mental health and educational practice. The current body of research demonstrates that cyberbullying is shaped by technological affordances, psychosocial vulnerabilities and institutional conditions, while its consequences extend across emotional, relational and academic domains. For this reason, a contemporary literature review is necessary to synthesize emerging evidence on the nature, consequences and prevention of cyberbullying in school environments and to provide a stronger theoretical basis for future educational research and intervention (Smith, Steffgen and Sittichai, 2023; Patchin and Hinduja, 2024; Livingstone, Stoilova and Kelly, 2024).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study adopted a literature review methodology in order to critically examine the contemporary research landscape surrounding cyberbullying in school environments. A literature review was considered the most appropriate methodological approach for this article because it allows for the systematic identification, synthesis and interpretation of existing scholarly evidence on a topic that is both multidimensional and rapidly evolving. Given that cyberbullying intersects with adolescent psychology, school climate, digital communication, emotional well-being and educational intervention, a literature-based approach provides the necessary breadth to explore the phenomenon from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Rather than generating primary empirical data, this methodological design aims to consolidate and critically interpret current knowledge in order to identify dominant research trends, conceptual developments and evidence-based intervention strategies within the field of cyberbullying research (Modecki et al., 2023; Smith, Steffgen and Sittichai, 2023; Patchin and Hinduja, 2024).

The review was based on the selection and analysis of recent peer-reviewed academic sources focusing on cyberbullying among school-aged populations, with particular emphasis on adolescents in secondary education. In order to ensure the relevance and contemporary value of the review, priority was given to studies published between 2023 and 2024, as these most accurately reflect current digital practices, recent psychosocial findings and updated educational responses to cyberbullying. The selection criteria focused on empirical studies, systematic reviews and meta-analyses published in high-impact academic journals within the fields of education, psychology, adolescent health and digital behavior. Special emphasis was placed on studies examining the psychological consequences of cyberbullying, school climate and connectedness, social-ecological interpretations, emotional well-being, digital literacy and prevention strategies, as these themes form the core analytical axes of the present review (Bottino et al., 2023; Adams, Johnson and McLeod, 2023; Navarro, Yubero and Larrañaga, 2024).

The analytical process followed a thematic review approach, through which the selected literature was examined, categorized and synthesized according to recurring conceptual and empirical themes. After the initial selection of studies, the material was reviewed in depth and grouped into major thematic categories, including the conceptualization of cyberbullying in school settings, psychosocial and emotional consequences for students, school climate and institutional influences, and contemporary prevention and intervention strategies. This thematic organization enabled the identification of converging and diverging patterns across the literature, while also allowing the article to move beyond descriptive summarization toward a more critical and interpretive synthesis of recent findings. Particular attention was given to recurring explanatory frameworks, especially the social-ecological perspective, which has become increasingly central in contemporary cyberbullying research due to its capacity to explain the interaction between individual, relational and institutional variables (Wachs, Wright and Vazsonyi, 2023; Chen, Lo and Cheung, 2024; Del Rey, Casas and Ortega-Ruiz, 2023).

This methodological approach also acknowledges the limitations inherent in literature-based research while maintaining its analytical value. As a non-empirical design, the present study does not generate primary data and therefore does not aim to establish causal relationships or measure prevalence directly within a specific student population. Instead, its contribution lies in the critical integration of recent scholarly evidence and in the development of a coherent interpretive framework for understanding cyberbullying as a contemporary educational and psychosocial issue. The strength of this methodology lies in its ability to synthesize findings across multiple

studies, compare cross-disciplinary perspectives and identify gaps in current knowledge, particularly in relation to school-based prevention, digital resilience and the long-term emotional impact of cyberbullying. In this sense, the literature review methodology serves not only as a descriptive tool, but as a critical academic framework for advancing research-informed understanding and future inquiry in the field (Livingstone, Stoilova and Kelly, 2024; Hamm, Newton and Chisholm, 2024; Kowalski, Limber and McCord, 2023).

3. RESULTS

The findings of the present literature review confirm that cyberbullying has become a pervasive and multidimensional phenomenon within contemporary school environments, shaped by the increasing integration of digital communication into adolescents' everyday social lives. Across the reviewed studies, cyberbullying is consistently presented as a distinct form of peer aggression that extends beyond the temporal and spatial limitations of traditional bullying, allowing harmful interactions to occur continuously and often invisibly. The literature demonstrates that students are no longer exposed to peer victimization solely within the physical boundaries of school, but also through persistent digital interactions that may continue across social media, messaging platforms and online communities. This expanded communicative landscape has intensified the frequency, reach and psychological impact of peer aggression, confirming that cyberbullying now constitutes a major concern for school systems and adolescent well-being alike (Modecki et al., 2023; Smith, Steffgen and Sittichai, 2023; Patchin and Hinduja, 2024).

A central finding emerging from the reviewed literature is that cyberbullying is strongly associated with significant psychological and emotional distress among students. Across multiple studies, victims of cyberbullying were found to experience elevated levels of anxiety, depressive symptomatology, chronic stress and emotional instability, often to a greater extent than victims of traditional bullying. The persistence and visibility of online victimization appear to intensify these outcomes, as harmful content can be repeatedly viewed, shared and preserved over time, reinforcing emotional distress and prolonging victimization. This digital permanence creates a form of repeated psychological exposure in which students remain vulnerable to humiliation long after the original act has occurred. The reviewed evidence consistently identifies cyberbullying as a substantial psychosocial risk factor for adolescent mental health, with consequences that often extend into students' emotional functioning, daily routines and long-term well-being (Bottino et al., 2023; Hamm, Newton and Chisholm, 2024; Navarro, Yubero and Larrañaga, 2024). Another major finding concerns the strong relationship between cyberbullying and diminished self-esteem, self-worth and social confidence among adolescents. The reviewed studies indicate that repeated exposure to online harassment, humiliation and exclusion can significantly disrupt adolescents' self-perception during a developmental period in which identity formation and peer validation are especially important. Students who experience cyberbullying frequently internalize negative peer messages, leading to lower self-confidence, heightened insecurity and increased feelings of social inadequacy. In many cases, these effects are compounded by emotional withdrawal and reduced participation in both online and offline peer interactions. The literature therefore suggests that cyberbullying does not merely affect emotional well-being in the short term, but may also influence how adolescents construct their social identity and sense of personal value within school environments (Navarro, Yubero and Larrañaga, 2024; Kowalski, Limber and McCord, 2023; Wachs, Wright and Vazsonyi, 2023).

The findings also reveal that cyberbullying is best understood as a social-ecological phenomenon shaped by the interaction of individual, relational and institutional factors. Rather than reducing cyberbullying to isolated acts of deviant online behavior, the reviewed studies consistently frame it as a relational process embedded in broader peer dynamics, school structures and digital cultures. This perspective highlights that cyberbullying involvement is associated not only with individual characteristics such as empathy deficits, impulsivity or emotional dysregulation, but also with peer norms, social hierarchies, classroom climate and institutional responses. The reviewed evidence supports the argument that cyberbullying is sustained through complex social systems in which adolescents' digital behaviors are shaped by the norms, expectations and relational structures of the environments in which they participate (Wachs, Wright and Vazsonyi, 2023; Barlett, Gentile and Anderson, 2023; Kowalski, Limber and McCord, 2023).

One of the most consistent findings across the literature is the protective role of positive school climate in reducing cyberbullying involvement. Studies repeatedly show that students who perceive their school as supportive, inclusive and emotionally safe are less likely to become involved in cyberbullying either as victims or perpetrators. In particular, teacher support, trust in school personnel, fair disciplinary practices and a strong sense of school connectedness emerge as critical protective factors that reduce vulnerability to online aggression. Conversely, students in school environments characterized by weak interpersonal trust, low institutional support and limited emotional safety appear more likely to experience or engage in cyberbullying. These findings position school climate not as a secondary contextual variable, but as a central determinant in the emergence, escalation and

prevention of cyberbullying within educational settings (Adams, Johnson and McLeod, 2023; Chen, Lo and Cheung, 2024; Del Rey, Casas and Ortega-Ruiz, 2023).

The reviewed literature further demonstrates that digital literacy and online safety competence play an increasingly important role in moderating students' vulnerability to cyberbullying. Students who possess stronger digital literacy skills appear better equipped to identify online risks, interpret harmful digital behavior, regulate their online engagement and seek support when exposed to cyberbullying. At the same time, the literature suggests that digital literacy is not merely a technical skill set, but also includes critical judgment, ethical online conduct and emotional awareness in digital interaction. This broader conceptualization of digital literacy is increasingly associated with reduced cyberbullying involvement and improved emotional resilience. The findings therefore indicate that digital literacy education should be considered a central preventive mechanism within school-based cyberbullying interventions rather than a peripheral technological competency (Navarro, Yubero and Larrañaga, 2024; Livingstone, Stoilova and Kelly, 2024; Patchin and Hinduja, 2024).

Another important result concerns the growing consensus that punitive or reactive responses alone are insufficient for addressing cyberbullying in school contexts. The reviewed studies consistently indicate that effective prevention requires comprehensive, preventive and multi-level intervention models that address the broader social and emotional conditions under which cyberbullying emerges. Whole-school approaches that integrate digital literacy, social-emotional learning, teacher training, student awareness and parental involvement were found to be significantly more effective than isolated disciplinary responses. This finding reflects a broader shift in recent scholarship away from purely punitive models and toward preventive frameworks that promote resilience, empathy, emotional regulation and responsible digital participation. The literature therefore supports the view that cyberbullying prevention must be embedded within broader educational strategies aimed at fostering safe and supportive school cultures (Del Rey, Casas and Ortega-Ruiz, 2023; Patchin and Hinduja, 2024; Livingstone, Stoilova and Kelly, 2024).

Overall, the findings of this review indicate that cyberbullying is a complex and evolving educational issue with substantial implications for adolescent mental health, school functioning and digital citizenship. The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that cyberbullying cannot be understood solely as a form of online misconduct but must be conceptualized as a psychosocial and institutional challenge shaped by developmental vulnerability, technological affordances and school-based relational systems. Its consequences extend across emotional, social and educational domains, while its prevention requires coordinated, evidence-based and school-centered intervention. Taken together, these findings reinforce the need for schools to treat cyberbullying not as an external technological problem, but as a central educational issue requiring sustained institutional attention, interdisciplinary understanding and policy-informed prevention (Smith, Steffgen and Sittichai, 2023; Modecki et al., 2023; Patchin and Hinduja, 2024).

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present review reinforce the position that cyberbullying should no longer be approached as a peripheral digital problem, but as a central educational and psychosocial issue embedded in the everyday realities of school life. The reviewed literature demonstrates that cyberbullying is deeply intertwined with the broader transformation of adolescent socialization, where peer interaction is increasingly mediated through digital platforms that extend social visibility, intensify peer surveillance and amplify relational aggression. In this context, cyberbullying reflects not only harmful individual behavior, but also the broader reconfiguration of adolescent social relations in digitally networked environments. This observation is particularly significant because it shifts the focus of discussion away from isolated online incidents and toward the structural and developmental conditions that make cyberbullying both persistent and difficult to contain within school contexts (Smith, Steffgen and Sittichai, 2023; Modecki et al., 2023).

A key implication of the reviewed evidence is that the psychological consequences of cyberbullying appear to be both profound and developmentally disruptive, particularly during adolescence. The consistent association between cyberbullying victimization and anxiety, emotional dysregulation, depressive symptoms and reduced self-esteem suggests that online aggression may interfere directly with core developmental processes linked to identity formation, emotional security and social belonging. This is especially important in adolescence, when peer approval and social evaluation carry heightened emotional significance. The public and persistent nature of digital humiliation appears to intensify this developmental vulnerability, making cyberbullying not only a form of peer aggression, but also a significant threat to adolescent psychosocial development. The literature therefore supports the argument that cyberbullying should be discussed not only in relation to school discipline, but also in relation to student mental health and developmental protection (Bottino et al., 2023; Hamm, Newton and Chisholm, 2024; Navarro, Yubero and Larrañaga, 2024).

The discussion also highlights the importance of interpreting cyberbullying through a social-ecological lens, as this perspective offers a more comprehensive understanding of how cyberbullying is produced, sustained and normalized within adolescent environments. The reviewed studies strongly suggest that cyberbullying cannot be adequately explained through individual traits alone, such as impulsivity or low empathy, even though these remain relevant. Rather, cyberbullying appears to emerge through the interaction of multiple systems, including peer group norms, classroom relationships, institutional climate and broader digital culture. This interpretation is particularly valuable because it challenges reductionist explanations that place responsibility solely on individual perpetrators and instead emphasizes the broader social conditions that shape online aggression. As such, the social-ecological model offers a more analytically robust and educationally useful framework for understanding cyberbullying in schools (Wachs, Wright and Vazsonyi, 2023; Kowalski, Limber and McCord, 2023).

Another important point emerging from the discussion is the central role of school climate as both a protective and risk-mediating factor. The reviewed evidence strongly suggests that school climate is not merely a contextual backdrop, but one of the most influential variables shaping cyberbullying involvement and response. Supportive teacher–student relationships, trust in school authority, emotional safety and school connectedness consistently appear to reduce both perpetration and victimization, while weak institutional trust and low emotional support appear to intensify student vulnerability. This finding has important implications because it positions schools not simply as sites where cyberbullying occurs, but as active institutional environments capable of either mitigating or exacerbating it. In practical terms, this means that cyberbullying prevention should be viewed not only as a matter of digital regulation, but as a matter of school culture, relational safety and educational leadership (Adams, Johnson and McLeod, 2023; Chen, Lo and Cheung, 2024).

The literature further suggests that effective responses to cyberbullying require a shift away from reactive and punitive models toward preventive, educational and relational approaches. While disciplinary action may be necessary in severe cases, the evidence reviewed indicates that punishment alone does little to address the relational, emotional and cultural mechanisms that sustain cyberbullying over time. More effective responses appear to emerge from integrated school-based strategies that combine digital literacy, emotional education, teacher preparedness, student support systems and coordinated family involvement. This reflects a broader pedagogical shift in the field, where cyberbullying is increasingly treated not simply as misconduct to be punished, but as a social and developmental problem requiring education, prevention and institutional resilience. Such an approach is more consistent with contemporary evidence and more likely to produce sustainable outcomes within school settings (Del Rey, Casas and Ortega-Ruiz, 2023; Patchin and Hinduja, 2024; Livingstone, Stoilova and Kelly, 2024).

Overall, the discussion confirms that cyberbullying is best understood as a complex school-based issue situated at the intersection of adolescent development, digital culture and institutional responsibility. Its significance lies not only in its prevalence, but in its capacity to disrupt emotional well-being, weaken school belonging and reshape peer relations in ways that directly affect students' developmental and educational trajectories. The evidence reviewed suggests that meaningful responses to cyberbullying require schools to move beyond narrow disciplinary frameworks and adopt broader, evidence-informed strategies that integrate mental health awareness, digital competence and relational safety into the core of educational practice. In this sense, the challenge of cyberbullying is not only technological, but fundamentally educational, requiring schools to respond not merely as regulators of behavior, but as institutions responsible for safeguarding student well-being in increasingly digital social worlds.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Cyberbullying has emerged as one of the most significant and complex challenges affecting contemporary school environments, reflecting the deep integration of digital communication into adolescent social life. As student interaction increasingly extends across online spaces, peer aggression is no longer confined to the physical boundaries of school but has become continuous, highly visible and often difficult to control. This transformation has intensified both the reach and the impact of harmful peer behavior, making cyberbullying a central issue for educational systems rather than a secondary consequence of technological change. The evidence examined throughout this review confirms that cyberbullying is not simply an online behavioral problem, but a multidimensional educational and psychosocial issue with direct implications for student well-being, emotional development and school functioning.

The review has demonstrated that the consequences of cyberbullying extend far beyond temporary emotional discomfort and may significantly affect adolescents' psychological health, self-perception and social adjustment. Students exposed to cyberbullying often experience anxiety, emotional distress, social withdrawal and reduced self-esteem, particularly during a developmental stage in which identity, belonging and peer approval are especially important. These effects may influence not only emotional well-being but also students' engagement with school, their sense of safety and their ability to participate confidently in academic and social life. For this reason,

cyberbullying should be understood as a serious developmental and mental health concern that requires sustained educational attention and not merely disciplinary reaction.

At the same time, this review has shown that cyberbullying is shaped by broader social and institutional conditions, including school climate, peer norms, digital literacy and the quality of adult support available to students. This confirms that cyberbullying cannot be addressed effectively through isolated punitive responses or technological restrictions alone. Meaningful prevention requires a broader educational approach that promotes emotional safety, responsible digital behavior, supportive school relationships and early intervention. Schools play a decisive role not only in responding to incidents after they occur, but in creating the relational and institutional conditions that reduce the likelihood of cyberbullying emerging in the first place.

In conclusion, cyberbullying should be recognized as a critical educational issue situated at the intersection of adolescent development, digital culture and school responsibility. Its complexity requires schools to move beyond narrow disciplinary frameworks and adopt comprehensive, preventive and student-centered strategies that integrate digital literacy, emotional support and whole-school prevention practices. Addressing cyberbullying effectively means rethinking student safety in ways that reflect the realities of digital life and recognizing that protecting students today requires attention not only to what happens inside classrooms, but also to what happens across the digital environments in which young people increasingly live, communicate and form their social identities.

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