

# Cyber Bullying Victimization of Elementary School Students and their Reflections on the Victimization

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**Abstract**—With the use of developing technology, mostly in communication and entertainment, students spend considerable time on the Internet. In addition to the advantages provided by the Internet, social isolation brings problems such as addiction. This is one of the problems of the virtual violence. Cyber bullying is the common name of the intensities which students are exposed on the Internet. The purpose of this study designed as a qualitative research is to find out the cyber bullying varieties and its effects on elementary school students. The participants of this research are 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students of a primary school and 24 students agreed to participate in the study. The students were asked to fill an interview with semi-structured open-ended questions. According to the results obtained in the research, the most important statements determined by the participants are breaking passwords on social networking sites, slang insult to blasphemy and taking friendship offers from unfamiliar people. According to participants from the research, the most used techniques to prevent themselves from cyber bullying are to complain to the site administrator, closing accounts on social networking sites and countercharging. Also, suggestions were presented according to the findings.

**Keywords**—Bullying, cyber-bullying, elementary, peer-relationship, virtual victimization.

## I. INTRODUCTION

WITH the technological developments, the Internet became the part of our life. The Internet has lots of benefits as well as many threats for elementary school students. Students interact with the Internet both at school and in their home [8]. Students are able to use the Internet effectively to increase their success in lessons if they know how to use it appropriately. On the other hand, lots of dangers are waiting for the students in virtual environment as well as in real life. They are exposed to virtual victimization in the Internet environment as much as the peer bullying at schools. Cyber bullying is defined as a kind of bullying that involves intentional and hostile behavior attempted to give harm to others by a group or an individual using information and communication technology [1], [3]-[7], [9]. It is possible to encounter lots of cyber bullying methods such as stealing personal information on the Internet and using them as a threat, password stealing, nicknaming and redirecting to

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inappropriate websites. These challenges affect elementary school students' psychology negatively as they are still at the age of growth when they are virtually victimized. The negative effects created in their psychology affect their success negatively in lessons and cause them to have difficulty in relationships with their friends [8]. The students who are virtually victimized show a reserved, isolated and unconfident personality. It should be aimed to pull the students through virtually victimization with minimal effects.

### A. The Importance of the Study

Cyber bullying issue which has frequently been studied for last 10 years appeared with the involvement of Internet in every area of our lives. Peer victimization among the students is moved to virtual platform in present conditions. The Ministry of National Education also started several studies and delivered various brochures to inform the teenagers to be more [4]. The cyber bullying encountered in Turkey may lead teenagers to irremediable results. After the threat and insult on the Internet, the suicide and death of a Turkish student living with his family in Melbourne, Australia brought cyber bullying issue on the agenda [4]. Different negative examples show that cyber bullying creates a big threat for elementary school students whose moral developments are in progress. The research is important in revealing the difficulties that students experienced in virtual environments.

### B. The Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to analyze the cyber bullying victimization of elementary school students, types of cyber bullying they encountered and their feelings after exposure to bullying, friendship relations and measures in the Internet environment. Answers to the following questions were sought for this purpose.

1. What are the types of cyber bullying that students encountered?
2. Which methods are preferred by the students exposed to cyber bullying to get rid of cyber bullying?
3. What feelings do the students have when they are exposed to cyber bullying?
4. What precautions in friendship relations do the students exposed to cyber bullying take after their victimization?
5. What are the measures taken by students to feel safe on the Internet?

## II. METHODOLOGY

In this part of the study, the information related to research method, participants, data collection tool and data analysis is included.

### A. Research Model

This research dealing with the types of cyber bullying that the elementary school students exposed, their feelings, measurements taken by them was implemented in accordance with qualitative research method. In the research, the case study design which is one of the qualitative designs was used. The study case is within the framework of their life, and in cases where the precise lines of the boundaries between content that is not clear and that there are multiple cases of evidence or data source used is an empirical research method [10].

### B. Participants

In the research to provide convenience, sampling method is used and it is sampled with easily accessible sampling method. Easily accessible sampling method is selecting samples from a universe accessible [10]. The researchers included eight voluntary students from every 6-7-8 grade classes from an elementary school. An open ended interview form was implemented on 24 students. The permission was taken from students and families about their participation.

### C. Data Collection Tool

For research data collection, semi-structured open-ended interview question form named "Cyber Bullying Victimization Conditions of Elementary School Students and Measures Taken by Students" is used as a data collection tool in this qualitative research and applied to the participants. The researchers explained cyber bullying in the way that students could understand but they avoided manipulating them. The researchers' prior experiences and views of other field experts working on education technologies were utilized in preparing the interview form. The draft questions that were prepared were presented to experts to evaluate, and after the necessary changes were made, its final form was given. The questions in the semi-structured open-ended interview form are as follows:

1. What are the types of cyber bullying that you encounter on the Internet?
2. What kind of ways do you apply if you faced with an uncomfortable situation on the Internet?
3. Which precaution do you apply on the Internet?

### D. The Data Interpretation Process and Analysis

Content analysis technique that is often used for data analysis in qualitative research was utilized. Content analysis is practiced by creating unspecified themes and any sub-themes in corporate sense [10]. As there is not enough institutional support about types of cyber bullying, the methods students preferred, measures taken by them and their feelings, content analysis method was preferred in the research. For content analysis, the necessary sequence of actions such as indexing the data obtained from students, creating codes from indexes, obtaining themes from codes, defining the themes and interpretation of the findings in accordance with these themes were followed respectively [10]. The researchers controlled the themes as the themes were created. Findings were separated as titles by being coded from the themes and the findings were presented.

## III. FINDINGS

Findings obtained from the research were given in line with research goals.

### A. The Cases of Students Exposed to Cyber Bullying and Types of Cyber Bullying that the Students Exposed

In semi-structured open-ended interview question form, it is firstly asked if they were exposed to cyber bullying and if the answer is "yes", then they are asked about what types of cyber bullying they are exposed. The number of students exposed to cyber bullying is given in Table I.

TABLE I  
EXPOSURE TO CYBER BULLYING

Scale	f	%
<i>I am a victim of cyber bullying</i>	19	79.2
<i>I am not a victim of cyber bullying</i>	5	20.8
Total	24	100

As it is seen in Table I, 79.16% of students who attend to the research indicated that they exposed to the cyber-bullying on the Internet. Only 20.84% participants indicated that they are not exposed to cyber bullying. As the research shows, a major group of participants are exposed to the cyber bullying in their lives. The types of cyber bullying exposure are given in Table II.

TABLE II  
TYPES OF CYBER BULLYING EXPOSURE

Theme	f	%
<i>Stolen password on social networking sites</i>	7	33.3
<i>Swear</i>	7	33.3
<i>Fake accounts about the user</i>	2	9.5
<i>Annoying ads</i>	2	9.5
<i>Publication of photographs without permission</i>	1	4.8
<i>Negative reviews on social network areas(gossip)</i>	1	4.8
<i>Friendship offer from unknown people</i>	1	4.8
Total	21	100

As it is seen in Table II, 33.3% of the participants exposed to cyber bullying indicated that they had undergone virtual victimization as their passwords were broken in social networking sites. 33.3% of the students were exposed to slang/insult/curse, 4.8% of the students were proposed for friendship from unknown people, 9.5% of the students indicated that fake accounts were registered on their names, 4.8% of the students were exposed to rumor, 9.5% of the students were exposed to bad adverts and 4.8% of the students indicated that their photos were published on virtual environment without their permission.

Some of the student responses related to cyber bullying are as follows;

*"Stealing my Facebook account."*

*"Swearing me on virtual environment."*

*"Writing bad words to my friends using my account on the Internet."*

### B. Measures Taken by Student Exposed to Cyber Bullying

In the interview form, it is asked to elementary school students what measures they take when they are exposed to uncomfortable situations on virtual environment. The measures taken by elementary school students to prevent cyber bullying that they are exposed are shown in Table III.

TABLE III  
METHODS OF RELIEF

Theme	f	%
To complain to the site administrator	8	40.0
Contact to the experts	3	15.0
Inactivated accounts	4	20.0
Answering back / Counterattack	2	10.0
Get away	1	5.0
Counseling to friend	1	5.0
Describes the situation to the family	1	5.0
Total	20	100

When Table III is examined, it is seen that vast majority of the students participated in the research complained to the site administrator when they encountered cyber bullying in virtual environment. Another method is to close their personal pages on social networks in virtual environment. One of the other methods mostly employed is their desire to consult an expert. Retaliation, attacking to cyber bullying with cyber bullying is another method that follows these methods.

The responses related to the measures taken by students may be sampled in accordance with the themes as follows;

*"I attack the person who attacks me."* (Response / Counterattack)

*"I report to web-site administrator."*(Complaining to site administrator)

*"... I report that person to my family."* (Reporting to family)

TABLE IV

ANALYSIS OF VARIABLE ACCORDING TO SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Theme	f	%
Set up antivirus program	7	29.1
Change the password regularly	4	16.7
Anything	5	20.8
Blocking recognize people	1	4.2
Not share password	3	12.5
Use known web-sites	2	8.3
Not share personal information on web-sites	1	4.2
Not use Internet	1	4.2
Total	24	100

As seen from Table IV, many students in the research prefer to use antivirus programs to prevent themselves from bullying. On the other hands, lots of students also said that they do not do anything to prevent themselves on the Internet. Only one student in the research prefers not to use Internet against to cyber-attacks.

Some of the answers from students can be seen below;

*"I am setting up antivirus program to my computer"*

*"I don't use Internet web-sites"*

*"I do not do anything for prevent myself"*

TABLE V  
FEELINGS WHEN THEY ENCOUNTER WITH CYBER BULLYING

Theme	f	%
Angry	15	65.2
Upset, injured	5	21.7
Feeling of revenge	2	8.7
Cool	1	4.4
Total	23	100

As can be seen from Table V, there is a significant difference in students' feelings against to the cyber bullying. The significant parts of students in research feel themselves angry against to the cyber-attacks. The other major part of students feels themselves injured if they are exposed to cyber-attacks. Few of students in the research want to take revenge of themselves from cyber-bullies.

Some of the answers from students can be seen below;

*"I feel myself very angry."*

*"I feel myself injured."*

*"I want to do same thing to the person who attack to me."*

TABLE VI  
ATTITUDE IN PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Theme	f	%
Seclude oneself	5	20.0
Not share anything with friends	2	8.0
Interrogate	4	16.0
Provide friends take precaution	6	24.0
Unchanging on peer relations	6	24.0
Blocking friends from the accounts	2	8.0
Total	25	100

As can be seen from Table VI, students take different preventions in their peer relations after cyber bullied. Most students in the research prefer to distance in their friends' relationships. Other significant part of students prefer to explain what they live on the Internet and provide their friends to take precaution for cyber bullying. On the other hand, most past of students do not change anything on their peer relations.

Some of the answers from students can be seen below;

*"I don't share anything with my friends."*

*"There can be no changes on my relations with friends because my friends do not attack me on the Internet."*

*"I keep my friends distance from myself."*

## IV. DISCUSSION

Information technology usage exposes different problems for students. Cyber-bullying is one of the major problems for students who use the Internet actively. Cyber-bullying happens through electronic mail accounts, instant messages, social web-sites, chat rooms or blogs. These activisms realized because people can easily keep their identifications on cyber environment [2]. According to the research, most of the students are exposed to cyber-bullying. The significant parts of students encounter with fake accounts on the social network area, abused by swear or they encounter with people who steal their accounts on the Internet. The research showed that

students dealt with cyber bullies by attacking with the same way, preferring to complain cyber bullies to the experts such as site-admins or sharing their problems with their families and friends. In addition, research shows that students are affected from cyber-bullying psychologically. They feel themselves upset, angry, humbled or abused. They do not want to be abused by people who they do not know as sharing their private information with everybody. Only a minor part of students are not affected from cyber-bullying and they keep themselves cool.

As a result, the research shows that a minor part of students know what they can do against to the cyber bullying. Most of the students use wrong ways while preventing themselves such as attacking like a cyber-bully or swearing like a cyber -bully and doing nothing about abusing. The research shows that students should be informed about the dangers on the Internet and they should be more conscious against to the cyber bullying.

## V. SUGGESTIONS

According to the research results, only a minor part of the students are conscious about the dangers on the Internet. The students, who are aware of the dangers on the Internet, can use wrong ways while protecting themselves. So that, cyber bullying is a big problem today and students should be more conscious about it. It can be provided by teachers, families or school guidance services. Also, some animations can be prepared for students to show the dangerous face of cyber environment and the prevention ways from cyber-attacks. The families should also prevent their children from the danger parts of the Internet by using preventing programs on their computers. The information technology lessons in primary schools can include a unit about cyber-bullying in the curriculum. With this unit, children can be more active learners about the dangers on the Internet. As a result, instead of limiting children's Internet use, families or teachers should be more conscious about the Internet usage and they should help them use the Internet in a health way at school and at home.

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