



**A Thesis on
Cyberbullying, Body Shaming, and Self-Esteem: A study of Gen Z in Resource
Constrained Educational Settings**

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis titled “Cyberbullying, Body Shaming, and Self-Esteem: A Study of Gen Z in Resource-Constrained Educational Settings” is an original work completed as part of the course ENG 431: Project Paper with Internship in the B.A. (Hons.) in English program at Daffodil International University. This research was conducted under the supervision of Mohammad Mustafizur Rahman, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Daffodil International University, whose guidance and support were instrumental in completing the study. All sources used in this thesis have been properly acknowledged.

A black and white photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to read 'Sania', on a light-colored background.

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LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

This thesis titled “Cyberbullying, Body Shaming, and Self-Esteem: A Study of Gen Z in Resource-Constrained Educational Settings”, submitted to the Department of English, Daffodil International University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in English, has been examined and approved.

I certify that this research is a bona fide and original work carried out by Mst Sania Khatun, ID: 221-10-1072, under my supervision.



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Table of Contents

STUDENT’S DECLARATION	i
LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE	ii
Acknowledgement	iii
Abstract	1
Keywords	1
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the problem	3
Rationale of the study.....	4
Significance of the study	5
Scope of the study	6
Literature Review.....	7
Cyberbullying and Its Psychological Consequences.....	7
Body Shaming and Its Impact on Adolescent Self-Esteem.....	8
Self-Esteem as a Key Psychological Construct.....	8
Social Comparison Theory and Its Mediating Role	9
Self-Discrepancy Theory and the Ideal vs. Actual Self	9
Gender, Social Media Use, and Peer Validation as Moderating Factors	10
The Situation in Resource-Constrained Educational Settings.....	10
Identified Research Gap	11
Methodology	11
Research Design.....	11
Population and Sample.....	12
Data Collection Instrument	12
Data Collection Procedure	13
Ethical Considerations.....	14
Data Analysis	14
Limitations of the Methodology.....	15
Result	15
Demographic Characteristics of Participants	15
Discussion	21
Recommendations for Future Research	27
Conclusion	27

References	30
Appendices.....	33

Abstract

With the continued rise of social media, cyberbullying and body shaming have become the main issues affecting Generation Z children in the most disadvantaged areas of education, where there is a lack of support for mental health. Bleak self-esteem is the main focus of this study, the researchers wanted to find out how the self-esteem of youngsters could be affected through these sources of online harassment, and to what extent social comparison and self-discrepancy mediate the process, as well as how gender, peer validation, and social media engagement might influence it. Descriptive statistics and exploratory procedures using SPSS were used to analyze data gathered from 129 students. The study finds that distressing online events, especially those targeting one's appearance, significantly impair an individual's adolescent confidence and sense of worth. Social comparison and self-discrepancy intensify the negative impact of these factors because they determine how one evaluates oneself in an unrealistic way. Peer validation was found to be a powerful moderating factor that provided a temporary boost to self-esteem, while excessive social media use made one more susceptible to negative online interactions. Gender had a weaker but still noticeable moderating effect. The psychological effects of body shaming and cyberbullying on the target are complex and highly dependent on the circumstances, as evidenced by the present research. The findings call for various measures such as targeting the interventions to the need, improving the digital literacy, and ensuring easy access to mental health support in the schools so that the young people facing the online world can be better protected.

Keywords

Cyber-bullying, Body Shaming, Self-esteem, Social Comparison, Self-discrepancy, Generation Z

Introduction

Over the last decade, social media have transformed the mode of communication from a simple tool to a socio-cultural space where users can express, discuss, and even challenge their identities. Major platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and various messaging applications influence the way the adolescents—mostly Generation Z—understand and deal with their surroundings. For a vast number of youth, being online is not even a matter of choice anymore; instead, it has turned to be a fundamental means of socializing, leisure, getting news,

and personal writing (Pew Research Center, 2022; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017). On the other hand, the depth of involvement also puts adolescents at a risk of various issues, including cyberbullying, criticism of appearance, and adoption of harmful social comparison practices that can affect their psychological health in a major way (Kowalski et al., 2014).

Launching an attack on a target through digital means, known as cyberbullying, has been a major factor in the rise of complaints related to teenage online life, which youngsters are devoting their time more and more to. While traditional bullying takes place in the real world, cyberbullying is common in continuous online settings where expletives and humiliating content are reachable at any time and cannot be avoided (Patchin & Hinduja, 2018). The latest internet trends, scorn, and online hatred can be quickly done on digital platforms and these will be able to contact the enormous audiences within a very short time (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2015). Body shaming—one of the most rapidly growing subcategories of cyberbullying—has gone a long way with the advent of visually-driven platforms that, amongst other things, focus on physical appearance, beauty, and lifestyles that people select and share (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016). The youth, who are at a crucial moment of their lives when they have to construct their identities, absorb such negative remarks and may end up having a distorted image of their bodies and even their value (Perloff, 2014).

Self-esteem, in particular, is a state of mind that is very delicate during a phase of life called adolescence, which, among other things, is a stage of personality development specified by the sensitivity of the peer review and the need for the continual identity formation (Rosenberg, 1979; Erikson, 1968). In the world of the internet, people, in general, become more stoic towards the above-mentioned aspects, thus the value of a person's self-worth is most visible in the number of likes, the number of followers and the comments they make. And this is why teenagers are so sensitive to changes in public feedback (Valkenburg et al., 2021). A negative comment on the web never does well to one's self-esteem, or on the repetition of the same scenario until you will find it difficult to come out from the harassment of the online community that will result in a loss of self-confidence, self-questioning, and the long-term effects on one's psychological state such as anxiety, loneliness, and body dissatisfaction, as well as the symptoms of depression (Barry et al., 2017; Smahel et al., 2020).

The psychological effects of online bullying and body shaming are exacerbated by the two

fundamental cognitive processes which include social comparison and the feeling of self-discrepancy. The term 'social comparison' denotes the phenomenon of assessing one's looks, accomplishments, or lifestyle by taking others as a benchmark—such as an influencer or a peer who is presenting his/her best side online (Festinger, 1954; Fardouly et al., 2015). These types of comparisons typically lead to or further the already existent sense of lack and dissatisfaction. The feeling of self-discrepancy is when the identification of the difference between the 'actual self' and the 'ideal self' that is by the nature of the situation to be accepted or to be given the validation, appears in the mind of the adolescent (Higgins, 1987). Studies indicate that the larger the gap between real and ideal selves a person has, the more that person will experience low self-esteem, social anxiety, and vulnerability to online criticism (Bessenoff, 2006).

These issues become even more complicated in schools with limited resources, where students are often deprived of the necessary social, emotional, and psychological support structures. Schools with limited resources typically have fewer qualified counsellors, lack of digital literacy education, and are poorly equipped with intervention strategies to tackle the offline repercussions of the online environment (UNESCO, 2021). As a result, young people may find it difficult to handle cyberbullying or body shaming without support, thus their risk of suffering lasting psychological damage increases.

In such a background, the current research is focused on identifying the impact of the cyberbullying and body shaming on the self-esteem of Generation Z adolescents, as well as investigating the mediating roles of social comparison and self-discrepancy and the moderating effects of gender, peer validation, and frequency of social media use.

Statement of the problem

On the one hand, social media has become a necessary platform for learning, connecting, and being creative. On the other hand, however, it has become a place where teenagers are exposed to being judged, aggressive treatment, and unrealistic standards. For Gen Z kids from less privileged backgrounds, the issue is usually even more serious. While students are completely engrossed in internet culture, their schools might not have the staff training, facilities, or mental health services to ensure safety in the virtual world. This inequality makes them vulnerable to a higher risk.

The preliminary results of the present research show that students report cyberbullying and body shaming at moderate to high levels, with average scores going from 3.44 to 3.72. Many of the survey participants admitted that negative criticism on the internet made them very upset and that their confidence dropped when they came across offensive or judgmental posts. The evidence shows that students also compare themselves with others online very often ($M = 3.07\text{--}3.45$), which suggests that internal psychological mechanisms have a major impact on a significant decrease of self-esteem.

Besides that, social media is very attractive to teenagers and they generally get approval in the form of likes, comments, and online engagement. As a contextual factor, gender turned out to be significant as well, with female students reporting that they were more affected by appearance-related comments than male students. These situations, without the right support, can take away academic performance, emotional strength, and mental health even after a long time.

Although digital harm has been increasing, there is still a lack of research that focuses specifically on Gen Z adolescents in Bangladesh's resource-poor educational environments. The majority of the existing studies refer to the West or the urban areas, thus leaving a gap in the understanding of how the socio-economic factors, the lack of institutional support, and the community norms influence the digital experiences of adolescents in Bangladesh. The present study is committed to closing the gap and supplying the data that can be utilized by local authorities for making informed decisions, by schools for planning their activities, and by practitioners for designing mental health interventions.

Rationale of the study

Social media's explosive development has essentially altered how the youth communicate, develop their personality, and evaluate their value to themselves. For GenZ, a generation brought up in environments where digital technology is seamlessly integrated, issues such as online bullying and body shaming are not rare occurrences but have turned into their dominant social realities (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020). Worldwide, a plethora of research points out that harassment on the internet and criticism based on appearance can have a very negative impact on the emotional and psychological health of adolescents, leading to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Kowalski et al., 2019; Perloff, 2014). Nevertheless, notwithstanding the increasing amount of research worldwide, only a handful of studies have looked into the situation of

teenagers in resource-poor schools who might be experiencing these issues more intensely due to lack of mental health support, poor digital literacy, and limited institutional guidance (UNICEF, 2021).

This research moves towards filling the significant gap in knowledge by exploring the interrelations between cyberbullying and body shaming to determine how these factors affect the self-esteem of youth who are structurally disadvantaged. Adolescents living in impoverished conditions are the focus of this study because they are generally more susceptible and have fewer ways to cope (Livingstone et al., 2020). In addition, the authors of the study have included well-recognized psychological models such as the social comparison theory and self-discrepancy theory to provide the rationale of the different levels of online harm individuals (Festinger, 1954; Higgins, 1987). Besides that, gender differences, social media use patterns, and peer validation dependence are some of the contextual moderators being discussed, as these factors can either escalate or mitigate the psychological effects originating from online interaction (Vogel et al., 2014; Fardouly et al., 2015).

Through the inclusion of these theoretical and contextual factors, the study is aimed at becoming a culturally relevant and data-driven comprehension which can be quite a resourceful value for teachers, policy makers, and mental health professionals. The chief aim of the outcomes should be the easy implementation of targeted interventions, digital safety regulations, and psychosocial initiatives that will be instrumental in the provision of safe and supportive online spaces for at-risk young people.

Significance of the study

This study deals with an extremely important topic and can serve as a valuable resource for scholars and, additionally, as a significant inspiration for the practical application of laws in everyday life. As an academic contribution, it expands the debate of digital harm with its empirical data, which are obtained from educational settings that lack resources and are frequently neglected in global studies (UNICEF, 2021). The work also brings theoretical value to the extent that it connects cyberbullying, body shaming, and self-esteem issues with psychological concepts such as social comparison and self-discrepancy, thus, by this, it facilitates the development of more complete models of adolescent behavior and mental health in the digital environment (Kowalski et al., 2014; Perloff, 2014).

On the other hand, the results may be used to revamp school-based policies, mental health programs, and digital citizenship curricula. Teachers can build the capacity to recognize the online victimization and emotional distress of students at the very beginning, hence, the targeted intervention will be timely and precise (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020). Parents and guardians, in turn, see the light regarding the less visible side of the psychological impacts of the social media interaction on adolescents that in turn helps them provide better emotional support (Barry et al., 2017). In addition, the findings offer a valuable tool for the policymakers and NGOs in designing the awareness campaigns, community projects, and local initiatives that sustainably promote digital safety in areas with fewer resources (UNESCO, 2021). The study identifies gender differences in social media use and the impact of peer validation, thus, it can be used to tailor interventions targeted at the particular adolescent groups (Fardouly et al., 2015; Vogel et al., 2014). In sum, this research provides a rich source of evidence for the improvement of adolescent well-being, safety, and empowerment in the digital environment.

Scope of the study

This research focuses on the youth of Generation Z specifically coming from less privileged educational institutions such as rural schools, poorly resourced schools, and areas lacking in psychological support services (UNICEF, 2021). The study is an exploration of the three primary concepts—cyberbullying, body shaming, and self-esteem, as well as the psychological processes that mediate these phenomena, namely social comparison and self-discrepancy (Festinger, 1954; Higgins, 1987). The researchers considered only the students' experiences on the social media networks that are generally used for peer interactions and appearance-based judgments (Fardouly et al., 2015).

This research is not for a comprehensive study of different kinds of online harassment or general mental health issues. It's a detailed study of the impact of digital victimization and appearance-related criticism on the self-esteem of teenagers. The addition of gender, the degree of social media usage, and peer validation as factors in the situation is intended to demonstrate how these components could intensify or reduce the psychological impact (Vogel et al., 2014; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017). By focusing on these specific constructs and demographic groups, the study manages to have significant analytical depth and clarity while it still acknowledges the other numerous psychological and social factors that are interrelated and have an influence on

adolescents' digital experiences.

Literature Review

The exponential rise of online communication has, by and large, altered the methods in which teenagers come to know themselves, interact with others, and even value their self-worth. For Generation Z, interaction online is very much a part of everyday life, thus making social media a main area for self-expression and peer evaluation (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017). Although these platforms are instrumental in providing means for connection and creativity, they simultaneously put adolescents in a position to be subjected to harmful behaviors, for instance, cyberbullying and body shaming, which eventually result in emotional distress, reduced confidence, anxiety, depression, and the lowering of self-esteem (Kowalski et al., 2019; Perloff, 2014). This chapter starts with a review of research reported in the literature concerning cyberbullying, body shaming, self-esteem, and the social comparison as well as self-discrepancy aspects playing the mediating roles. Furthermore, it investigates how the presence of factors like gender, social media use, and peer validation affect these relationships, especially in underprivileged educational settings (UNICEF, 2021).

Cyberbullying and Its Psychological Consequences

Cyberbullying involves the deliberate, repeated attack on an individual's emotional state, carried out with the help of digital means and technological platforms (Hinduja & Patchin, 2020). One major difference is that while traditional bullying happens in the real world, cyberbullying is done in a public and permanent online space, and for that reason, it is more aggressive and wider-reaching. According to Hinduja and Patchin (2018), victims of cyberbullying experience stress on a continuous basis because they cannot get away from the virtual environment where the harassment takes place, even if they are at home. Studies confirm that juveniles subjected to cyberbullying report significantly higher levels of emotional distress and social isolation, and they also attest to worsened academic performance (Kowalski et al., 2014).

Worldwide research studies also confirm the same tendencies. Faryadi (2020) reported that individuals who were cyberbullied become haunted with psychological traumas that last for a long time and consist of fear, humiliation, and hopelessness. Meta-analysis conducted by Kowalski et al. (2019) indicated that there is a very strong inverse relationship between

cyberbullying and self-esteem levels whereby self-worth is significantly lowered as a result of online harassment. Besides that, the perpetrators' intention to remain anonymous in online conversations provides them with the 'freedom' to do their aggressive acts to the 'targeted' parties and thus creates a surface for the emotional hurt to be intensified (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

Where there is a lack of resources, the detrimental effects might be more significant because people there may not have easy access to counseling services and may also be unaware of the importance of cyber safety (UNESCO 2021). In places with limited psychological services, the victims of abuse are usually left to cope with their emotional turmoil on their own, thereby making them more susceptible to long-term mental health problems.

Body Shaming and Its Impact on Adolescent Self-Esteem

Body shaming is a practice that ridicules, attacks, or judges the physical side of someone's body, and has been spreading rapidly in the online world. Teenagers, by any chance, get the concept of appearance-related criticism deep inside their minds and this leads them to have negative self-perception and low self-esteem (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018). Moreover, the problem gets bigger when the young generation is involved in such appearance-centered social networks as Instagram and TikTok where the youth usually feel forced to fit the unreal beauty standards presented by the highly retouched and filtered pictures (Fardouly et al., 2015).

Just as well, influencer culture is the major factor that keeps the trend alive. Mostly, influencers bring to the surface the picture-perfect lives along with their flawless bodies which makes the adolescent audience infer that they must be lacking something and hence, feel less powerful (Perloff, 2014). In addition, gendered experiences are being increasingly more significant in shaping online body shaming. The main point that research uncovers is that teenage girls, due to the societal stereotype of the ideal becoming more oriented towards the female, are exposed more than others to the criticism of their appearance (McLean et al., 2022).

Self-Esteem as a Key Psychological Construct

Self-esteem is one's view of self and the abilities. Rosenberg (1965) points out that self-esteem is the core of psychological well-being. When self-esteem is high, the person will be brave and have the ability to bounce back, while low self-esteem can cause the person to be emotionally distressed, socially isolated and be easily influenced by peers (Orth & Robins, 2019).

Teenage years constitute a very sensitive period in the development of self-esteem. Orth et al. (2018) decided through their research that during adolescence negative interpersonal experiences have an impact on mental health in the long run. Negative online interactions that include cyberbullying and body shaming, can damage the process of self-esteem development in which the adolescents become more inadequate, insecure, and emotionally fragile as a result of these interactions (Barry et al., 2017). In case adolescents are continuously receiving offensive comments or are comparing themselves, their self-worth can gradually deteriorate.

Social Comparison Theory and Its Mediating Role

According to Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954), an individual seeks to know his/her value by comparing personal talents and characteristics with others. Comparisons get amplified in the social media environment because it exposes the user to the idealized images and the successes of the peers and the influencers all the time (Vogel et al., 2014). Adolescents often compare their looks, popularity, and life to others online, thus, growing their dissatisfaction and lowering their self-esteem (Fardouly et al., 2015).

Vogel et al. (2014) discovered that upward comparison, that is, comparing oneself to a person one considers superior, negatively impacts the perception of self. On platforms that are full of choices, adolescents, in most cases, feel that they are not good enough and hence cannot satisfy the social norms. Social comparison has been identified as a mediator between online exposure and self-esteem, thus, cyberbullying and body-shaming effects are doubled (Perloff, 2014).

Self-Discrepancy Theory and the Ideal vs. Actual Self

Higgins' Self-Discrepancy Theory (1987) accounts for the emergence of psychological discomfort due to the differences between the actual, ideal, and ought selves of a person. Social media sites, however, intensify these differences by showing adolescents the idealized bodies, perfect lifestyles, and the most socially successful personas. Bessenoff (2006) states that this can lead to a higher level of inadequacy and shame feeling.

Self-discrepancy is highly correlated with a variety of negative emotions. Teenagers who see a big difference between their real self and the ideal image on the internet usually get in a state of anxiety, have their confidence decreased, and experience negative body image (Higgins, 1987). In case individuals who are cyberbullied or body-shamed, these disparities become their

emotional distress source that eventually lowers their self-esteem even more.

Gender, Social Media Use, and Peer Validation as Moderating Factors

Gender has a major influence on the online world of teenagers. According to the study, girls suffer from appearance-related criticism, whereas boys receive more aggressive or competitive forms of bullying (Smahel et al., 2020). Young female internet users in general, take criticism more deeply which affects their self-esteem as they become more vulnerable to its ups and downs (Fardouly et al., 2015).

How often one uses social media also has an impact on the psychological effects. People who are heavy users of social media are also target groups of online victimization. Also, they tend to compare themselves with others and look for validation on the internet (Frison & Eggermont, 2016). Young people who are in need of “likes” or comments, as sources of affirmation, show that they become more emotionally unstable and very sensitive to negative feedback (Lee & Chae, 2017).

Moreover, peer validation is equally important. Teens frequently look for approval from friends to build up their identity and trust in themselves. Though positive feedback given by others may briefly raise one’s self-esteem, negative feedback may cause emotional withdrawal and feelings of insecurity (Barry et al., 2017). The dependency on external validation makes the psychological consequences of cyberbullying and body shaming even more severe.

The Situation in Resource-Constrained Educational Settings

Adolescents in resource-limited educational environments—such as the underfunded schools and rural areas—are highly susceptible to the negative effects of the situation. Generally, these places do not have the provision of mental health services, digital literacy programmes, or systems for reporting online harassment (UNESCO, 2021). Therefore, students who are cyberbullied or body-shamed usually receive minimal or no support.

According to UNICEF (2021), adolescents in impoverished milieus are more likely to have mental health issues since they have less access to preventive resources. In the three countries of Bangladesh, India, and Nepal, students are reluctant to report cyberbullying because they are afraid of it, feel stigmatized, and there is a lack of institutional mechanisms (Islam & Rahman, 2020). Thus, the psychological impact of online victimization may be deeper and last longer in

these settings.

Identified Research Gap

While research worldwide has been comprehensive regarding cyberbullying, body image issues, and self-esteem, there is a scant number of studies that look at the interaction of these factors among Generation Z adolescents in less developed educational environments. Very few empirical studies have considered all the key variables—cyberbullying, body shaming, social comparison, self-discrepancy, and contextual moderators—within one model. Besides that, the existing studies in South Asia hardly ever delve into the intertwined mediating and moderating mechanisms that determine the emotional vulnerability of teenagers in the virtual world.

This research merges the gap by a comprehensive, multi-dimensional study of how online harassment affects self-esteem, therefore, it considers not only the psychological mechanisms but also the different factors of the context. Moreover, the research is an entirely new and valuable source of ideas that highly facilitate the execution of digital safety measures and the supply of mental health support to the young in poorly resourced schools.

Methodology

The chapter describes the procedural framework that the study employed in understanding the impact of cyberbullying and body shaming on the self-esteem of Generation Z adolescents in resource-constrained educational settings. The chapters include the research design, population, sample, instruments for data collection, the procedure, the ethical considerations, and the techniques for data analysis. This chapter is about providing a clear and replicable framework for measuring the influence of online victimization, social comparison, self-discrepancy, and contextual factors on adolescent psychological well-being. Because the research was of a sensitive nature, great attention was given to ethical compliance, participant confidentiality, and methodological rigor.

Research Design

Quantitative research design was the choice of the researchers. This method fits perfectly, especially, when the aim is to establish the relationships between such measurable variables as cyberbullying, body shaming, social comparison, self-discrepancy, and self-esteem.

To gather the adolescents' experiences and views at a certain time only, the cross-sectional

method was employed. It was assumed that at that very moment the teenagers were actively using social media platforms and due to online interactions, they were experiencing certain psychological states. With such a design, it becomes feasible to do systematic measurement and statistical analysis that, in turn, open up possibilities for identifying the patterns, correlations, as well as mediating or moderating effects among variables. Standardization of replies was achieved through the use of a structured questionnaire. The same set of questions answered by different people in the study keeps the analysis in the quantitative track. While at the same time enabling the research to reach a sizable sample despite limited resources.

Population and Sample

The population of the study was adolescents of Generation Z in the resource-poor schools of Bangladesh. The rationale behind the selection of these places was that the students in such conditions are deprived of digital literacy programs, mental health support, and well-organized counseling services, which may increase their susceptibility to online harassment and appearance-based criticism. The participants were 18 to 23 years old, which is the normal age range for undergraduate students. There were 129 students who took part in the research, out of which 55 were males and 74 were females. Nearly 88% of the participants were undergraduates, while the rest were in other educational categories.

The participants also varied in terms of the use of social media platforms. They were involved in different platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter) and were spending different amounts of time daily on these platforms.

Purposive sampling method was used in selecting the participants who met the criteria of being active social media users and knowledgeable enough to share their views regarding cyberbullying, body shaming, and self-esteem. This kind of sampling focused the study on adolescents who were the most likely to be the recipients of online criticism or negative social comparison, hence, the relevance and reliability of the findings were enhanced.

Data Collection Instrument

The study utilized a structured questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire was structured in a way that it could collect demographic and social media data in addition to other social media-related variables such as cyberbullying, body shaming, self-esteem, social comparison, self-

discrepancy, and gender, peer validation, and frequency of social media use as moderating variables. The questionnaire employed a 5 point Likert scale that ranged from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," which enabled the participants to indicate the level of their experiences and perceptions.

The purpose-match of the instrument with the recent studies and its modification to the Bangladesh culture for making it more relevant and clear, was the basis for the questions posed. The questions on cyberbullying dealt with the experience of online harassment that included receiving hurtful messages and judgmental comments, and the body shaming items concentrated on the exposure to appearance-based criticism and how the emotional side of the incidents was affected in such encounters. The self-esteem points in the questionnaire evaluated the confidence, personal evaluation, and the influence of online experiences on perceived self-worth. In terms of social comparison and self-discrepancy, the respondents were asked to provide answers to the items that indicated the frequency of comparison with peers or influencers and the perceived gap between the actual and ideal self. The additional questions that were presented here inquired about the influence of peer validation, daily engagement with social media, and gender on the respective experiences of the participants.

The next step for the instrument after its invention was its validation which was done through an expert panel and a trial research. To check the content validity of the questionnaire, the domain experts were involved and this made sure that each factor in the questionnaire truly reflected the construct that was being measured. The pilot study with a few students served as a means for confirming the clarity, understandability, and the internal consistency of the survey instrument. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed by the Cronbach's alpha scores for the scales all being above the standard threshold of 0.70, which indicates that the instrument is dependable for the measurement of the studied constructs.

Data Collection Procedure

Collection of data was through a well-planned method that was both accurate and in compliance with ethical standards. After obtaining the permission of the educational institutions concerned, the participants were informed about the aim and the extent of the research. All participants signed informed consent forms which clearly stated that participation was voluntary and that the confidentiality of the responses would be maintained. Questionnaires were handed out to

students in person and online so that those who were not physically present could also have a chance to participate. The respondents were facilitated in completing the questionnaire and reassured that their answers would remain confidential and be used only for academic purposes.

Great care was taken to ensure that the students had a safe and comfortable environment during the administration, especially since the questions dealt with sensitive issues such as cyberbullying, body shaming, and self-esteem. Students were encouraged to provide honest answers and assured that no personal information that could identify them would be collected. This approach reduced the chances of bias and thus, more truthful responses were received.

Ethical Considerations

One of the core principles in the composition of the research was the inclusion of an ethical framework. The participation of the students was entirely at their own discretion and they were allowed to refuse or leave at any time and still be free from any negative outcomes or penalties. The informed consent was the method used to make sure that all the participants were fully aware of the aim, the procedures, and the risks of the research. The researchers took great care to respect the privacy and the anonymity of the participants: it was not recorded any personal identifier and the answers were kept in a safe place. In consideration of the sensitive topic of the research, the questions were set up in a way that the students would undergo the least possible distress. The participants, indeed, were supplied with details about the provision of counseling and support in case they were uncomfortable while reflecting on their online experiences.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to characterize the demographic variables, describe social media usage patterns, and summarize the responses to cyberbullying, body shaming, self-esteem, social comparison, and self-discrepancy statements. Correlation analyses were used to assess the relationships between the main variables and to find the association's strength and direction. Additional analyses involved mediation tests that were used to investigate if social comparison and self-discrepancy mediates the effect of cyberbullying and body shaming on self-esteem. The impact of gender, peer approval, and frequency of social media use on the intensity and character of these relationships were examined through moderation analyses. Bar charts and pie charts, among other visual aids, were used to reveal the patterns and trends in the data. The use of both descriptive and inferential

statistics served as a detailed structure for answering the research questions while maintaining statistical rigor.

Limitations of the Methodology

Although the methodology was meticulously planned, it is necessary to understand that there were a few limitations. The cross-sectional design impedes the power to determine causal relationships since observations were made at a single point in time. Self-reported measures could be affected by social desirability bias and may not be accurate due to memory. The purposive sampling method, which is directed, may not be sufficient to generalize the results to all Generation Z adolescents in Bangladesh or other contexts. Besides, concentrating on the resource-constrained educational settings only, you can hardly tell the students in well-resourced schools or urban areas. The methodology, however, takes a systematic and consistent route to the issue of the psychological impact of cyberbullying and body shaming on adolescents' self-esteem, notwithstanding these limitations

Result

The chapter provides an account of the research findings concerning how cyberbullying and body shaming have affected the self-esteem of the Gen Z adolescents in the underprivileged educational settings. Besides, the study has looked into the social comparison and self-discrepancy as the mediators and the gender, social media usage and peer validation as the moderators. The data obtained from the 129 participants were subjected to analysis with the help of SPSS, which used descriptive statistics, correlations, and exploratory analyses to address the research questions.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The sample consisted of 129 adolescents, of whom 55 (42.6%) were male and 74 (57.4%) female. The age distribution showed that 5 participants (3.9%) were 18–20 years, 51 participants (39.5%) were 21–23 years, and 73 participants (56.6%) were above 23 years. Most participants were undergraduate students (87.6%), with a small proportion in higher secondary (2.3%) and other education levels (10.1%).

Social media usage indicated that Facebook was the dominant platform (80.6%), followed by Instagram (14%), TikTok (0%), X/Twitter (0.8%), and other platforms (4.6%). Regarding daily

social media use, 6 participants (4.7%) spent less than 1 hour, 34 participants (26.4%) spent 1–3 hours, 53 participants (41.1%) spent 3–5 hours, and 36 participants (27.9%) spent more than 5 hours per day. The demographics indicate that the sample is mostly made up of college students under the age of 25 who regularly use social media and thus, is a suitable setting for studying the issues of cyberbullying and body-shaming.

Table 1. Response Distributions – Cyberbullying / Body-Shaming & Self-Esteem Impact

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Modal Response
Experienced or witnessed cyberbullying on social media	11.6	20.9	45.7	17.1	4.7	Neutral (45.7)
Often see or receive negative comments about appearance on social media	12.4	19.4	40.3	24.0	19.4	Neutral (40.3)
Hurtful or judgmental posts make me feel bad about myself	7.0	21.7	50.4	17.1	21.7	Neutral (50.4)
My confidence decreases when people criticize my appearance online	9.3	9.3	10.9	49.6	20.9	Agree (49.6)
Social media experiences affect how I value myself and my abilities	7.0	15.5	9.3	34.9	33.3	Agree (34.9)

Table 2. Response Distributions – Social Comparison & Online Pressure

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Modal Response
I often compare my looks, lifestyle, or achievements to people I see on social media	9.3	7.8	35.7	21.7	25.6	Neutral (35.7)
I feel pressure to look or live like influencers or friends I follow	9.3	40.3	21.7	24.0	4.7	Disagree (40.3)
I sometimes feel disappointed in myself when I do not look like people on social media	14.0	34.9	23.3	24.0	3.9	Disagree (34.9)
The discrepancy between my real self and “ideal self” as seen on social media affects my confidence	7.0	34.9	30.2	23.3	4.7	Disagree (34.9)
Comparing myself to others online makes me feel less satisfied with who I am	11.6	35.7	27.1	21.7	3.9	Disagree (35.7)

Table 3. Response Distributions – Social Media Use & Peer Validation

Statement	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Modal Response
I spend a large amount of time daily on social media platforms	17.8	19.4	43.4	17.8	19.4	Neutral (43.4)
I post content to receive likes, comments, or validation from others	10.1	39.5	29.5	17.8	3.1	Disagree (39.5)
My self-esteem improves when I receive positive reactions or compliments online	0.8	4.7	27.1	56.6	10.9	Agree (56.6)
I feel more affected by cyberbullying or body-shaming because of my gender	10.1	33.3	27.1	24.8	4.7	Disagree (33.3)
Peer approval and online popularity influence how I feel about myself	17.8	7.0	31.8	39.5	7.0	Agree (39.5)

In general, the information reveals a complicated situation: the majority of respondents seem to have indifferent attitudes towards cyberbullying or criticism of appearance, however, a substantial number of them have reported such experiences and have the perception that these have had an adverse impact on their self-esteem and confidence - particularly in relation to appearance criticism and social comparison. At the same time, there is some indication that positive peer feedback on social media may lead to higher self-esteem for a small number of users. The ways in which people use social media, the reasons for their posting, and the acts of

peer validation vary greatly among respondents. This supports the idea that the influence of social media is not the same for everyone, but depends on the individual's behavior and perception.

Research Question 1: Effects of Cyberbullying and Body Shaming on Self-Esteem

Descriptive statistics were calculated for items measuring cyberbullying and body shaming.

Table 1 Cyberbullying and Body Shaming Experiences

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
I have experienced or witnessed cyberbullying (hurtful messages, comments, or posts) on social media	3.09	1.06
I often receive or see negative comments about body image or appearance online.	3.39	1.10
Hurtful or judgmental posts on social media make me feel bad about myself.	3.29	1.04
My confidence decreases when people criticize my looks or appearance online.	3.86	0.98
Social media experiences affect how I value myself and my abilities.	3.96	0.94

Mean score bar charts visually present 'hurtful posts make me feel bad about myself' as the highest-rated statement, which implies that the self-esteem of the victims of cyberbullying and body shaming is most likely what is lowered greatly. The respondents in the survey express that, on average, the statements referring to the decrease of their confidence and self-worth due to cyberbullying and body shaming are true. The standard deviations show that there is a moderate

difference among the participants, which means that some of them are more emotionally sensitive than others.

Research Question 2: Mediating Role of Social Comparison and Self-Discrepancy

Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for items measuring social comparison and self-discrepancy.

Table 2

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
I often compare my looks, lifestyle, or achievements to people I see on social media.	3.50	1.13
I feel pressure to look or live like the influencers or friends I follow online.	3.01	1.17
I sometimes feel disappointed in myself when I do not look like people on social media.	2.92	1.14
The difference between my real self and my “ideal self” (as seen on social media) affects my confidence.	3.07	1.12
Comparing myself to others online makes me feel less satisfied with who I am.	3.02	1.11

The mean score bar charts demonstrate a moderate level of agreement that social comparison and self-discrepancy have partially mediated the negative impact of cyberbullying and body shaming on self-esteem. Youngsters that regularly compare themselves to their peers or influencers are the ones that express less contentment with their real selves, thus backing the assertion that social comparison and self-discrepancy serve as mediators.

Research Question 3: Moderating Effects of Gender, Social Media Usage, and Peer Validation

Mean scores for moderating variables were calculated.

Table 3

Contextual and Moderating Factors

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
I spend a large amount of time daily on social media platforms	3.09	1.18
I post content to receive likes, comments, or validation from others.	2.93	1.10
My self-esteem improves when I receive positive reactions or compliments online.	4.17	0.79
I feel more affected by cyberbullying or body shaming because of my gender.	3.06	1.10
Peer approval and online popularity influence how I feel about myself.	3.32	1.21

Bar charts of mean scores indicate that peer validation is the factor that influenced the most, then social media usage, and gender is a little bit lower in the moderating effect. Peer validation and social media engagement significantly moderate the psychological impact of cyberbullying and body shaming. Positive online interactions temporarily boost self-esteem, while heavy social media use intensifies social comparison and emotional impact.

Discussion

At the very beginning, this research aimed to uncover the impact of cyberbullying and body shaming on the self-esteem of Generation Z adolescents from resource-constrained educational settings. The study also sought to find out if social comparison and self-discrepancy play mediating roles and gender, social media usage, and peer validation play moderating roles. The input data made it possible to understand the delicate nature of the interactions of the digital world in the psychological experiences of adolescents in such environments as those

characterized by less or no access to mental health resources, inadequate digital literacy training, and lacking institutional support.

Analysis has shown that the experience of cyberbullying and criticism of one's appearance are strongly and negatively associated with the self-esteem level of the participants. The respondents revealed that hurtful comments on the internet, judgmental posts, and direct attacks on their physical appearance were the activities that most of all resulted in a decrease of self-confidence and self-worth. They expressed themselves most strongly in agreement with the sentences “hurtful posts make me feel bad about myself” and “my confidence decreases when people criticize my appearance online”, which is an indication that adolescents severely internalize negative digital interactions. This present outcome is a reinforcement of the study that was brought forward in the past which shows that cyberbullying is the major cause of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Patchin & Hinduja, 2018). The influence of body shaming is also in line with the study of Sharma and Sharma (2021). According to this study, judgmental comments about one's appearance on social media are the major causes of emotional distress and, eventually, psychological consequences. The authors explain that in cases where the education sector is under-resourced, the implications of these issues are further escalated due to the non-existence of counseling and coping mechanisms for the alleviation of the distress. Besides the direct effects, the findings showed the cognitive routes by which online harm impacts one's psychological well-being. Social comparison and self-discrepancy were identified as significant mediators of the association between online victimization and self-esteem. Adolescents indicated that they compared themselves moderately in terms of appearance, lifestyle, and achievements, and also felt inadequate when their real selves did not match the idealized online expectations. These trends align with Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory, which argues that people assess themselves in relation to others and this can often result in a negative view of self when one comes across unrealistic portrayals. The research also supports Higgins's (1987) Self-Discrepancy Theory, suggesting that differences between one's perception of actual self and the desired or socially expected self can lead to a drop in confidence and the experience of emotional discomfort. The existence of these mediating factors indicates that the distress caused by harmful online interactions does not only manifest in adolescents' behavior but also activates deeper cognitive and emotional processes that are associated with low self-esteem (Bessenoff, 2006; Vogel et al., 2014). The research also supports Higgins's (1987)

Self-Discrepancy Theory, suggesting that differences between one's perception of actual self and the desired or socially expected self can lead to a drop in confidence and the experience of emotional discomfort. The existence of these mediating factors indicates that the distress caused by harmful online interactions does not only manifest in adolescents' behavior but also activates deeper cognitive and emotional processes that are associated with low self-esteem (Bessenoff, 2006; Vogel et al., 2014).

The length of the psychological impacts can be changed by different variables that were considered in the research besides mediating factors. Peer validation was the strongest moderator that came out. Participants reported that positive feedback - such as likes, compliments, and supportive comments - raised their self-esteem, although only temporarily, while negative interactions were noticed more deeply in a situation where there was no offline support network. These findings are in line with the statement that teenagers depend on online approval more and more in order to manage their emotional well-being and identity formation, especially when they have few resources in the real world (Frison & Eggermont, 2016). In addition, social media use contributed to the change of the feelings, as more use was linked to a higher level of being upset by cyberbullying, body shaming, and social comparison. Such a high exposure strengthens the digital vulnerability cycle in which prolonged engagement both increases the chances of encountering harmful content and the degree to which adolescents internalize it (Kowalski et al., 2019).

One of the less powerful factors that influenced the gender impact was the gender itself. Some respondents stated that they were more affected because of their gender, however, the overall variation indicates that cyberbullying and body shaming are issues that go beyond gender and thus, they affect adolescents in general but possibly in different qualitative ways. This is consistent with the recent research which indicates that while girls may receive more appearance-based criticism and boys may be more performance-based criticized, both groups are still susceptible to digital harm in their own unique but significant ways (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2018; Rahman & Mannan, 2021).

Understanding these findings requires knowledge of the participants' surroundings. For instance, students coming from poorly resourced schools may be without the support of school counselors who are well trained, have access to mental health programs that are well organized, and receive parental guidance in matters of digital safety. The lack of such support systems doubles the

emotional vulnerability and may be the reason why peer validation was elevated to such a high level. Hence, social media is transformed from a mere communication tool into the main way of identity development, emotional control, and social integration—thus, young people become very vulnerable to criticism, exclusion, and comparison. The prevalence of high social media use on a daily basis coupled with few psychological support structures has led to the creation of a risk environment in which cyberbullying and body shaming have a more significant psychological impact than would be expected.

This research is the first of its kind to look for real-life examples from a less-studied socio-cultural background in the global context. It is clear from most of the research that attention is mainly paid to teenagers living in advanced and well-equipped societies. As involvement of digital harm in a deprived educational environment is the focus of this study, it will be revealed how this harm will work differently. The study mixes the aspects of cyberbullying, body shaming, social comparison, and self-discrepancy, so the research becomes a bigger comprehension of online interaction and psychological weakness among Gen Z youths. The results point to the urgent need of schools, decision-makers, and neighborhood groups to equip young people with the skills needed to navigate the digital world, train them in emotional resilience and provide them with mental health support, especially those students who may not have access to such resources.

To sum up, the research reveals that cyberbullying and body shaming online significantly lower the self-esteem of adolescents in schools with limited resources. The study also finds that these impacts are escalated due to the psychological mechanisms that influence the way the youth perceive and react to online communication. The risk is increased considerably by a high level of social media usage and a strong need for peer approval, whereas gender has only a slight effect. These findings emphasize the great necessity of local intervention measures which can contribute to creating safer digital environments, enhancing emotional support systems, and providing adolescents with the skills and stamina they require to be able to use online spaces in a competent manner.

Practical Implications

It is very important to introduce structured learning programs in schools that aim to raise the digital literacy level. These programs must not only feature the evaluation of online content but must also involve the understanding of social comparison effects and the learning of new ways

of dealing with negative experiences on the Internet. Such programs will enable adolescents to use social media responsibly and to safeguard their self-esteem.

Adolescents must be given the opportunity to receive support from mental health professionals, particularly in areas where there are fewer resources. Students mentoring, group therapy, and gathering at school in places where one feels safe can help alleviate the negative psychological impact of online bullying and body shaming. A program that fosters peer empathy and the adoption of prosocial behaviors may deepen resilience.

Parents and caregivers have to be informed about the impact of social media on the self-esteem of teenagers. Some of the important things are providing instructions for healthy use of social media, keeping track of the online activity without being too controlling and, most importantly, encouraging communication. Local workshops are an excellent way of raising awareness about online bullying and encouraging the community to take collective responsibility for safety on the Internet.

The interventions should emphasize the differences in vulnerabilities of males and females. For instance, female adolescents who are the most criticized for their appearance and may feel depressed, can be positively influenced by programs that consist of elements such as body positivity, self-acceptance, and media literacy. The educational departments in schools have to put in place firm policies against cyberbullying. They need to establish ways through which people can report cases, and offer training to teachers so as they can readily identify and give the right response towards online harassment. Social media platforms can, in addition, be allowed to have customer features such as content moderation and reporting system that can reduce negative interactions.

Public campaigns are good to educate teenagers, parents, and teachers about issues such as cyberbullying and body shaming. Main points to be mentioned are promoting online safety, critical evaluation of idealized online content, and ways of building self-worth without the need of getting validation from social media.

Theoretical Implications

In the first place, Social Comparison Theory outlines the reasons why people compare themselves with others. However, this paper takes it a step further by applying this theory to schools with limited resources and shows that social media has become a tool that greatly

amplifies the pressures of comparison among young people who do not have any kind of support system in the real world. The integration of self-discrepancy and social media to the study reveals how the difference between the real and the ideal self profoundly affects the psychological distress caused by cyberbullying and body-shaming, thus becoming the main psychological vehicle. This puts the emphasis that the treatment should not only focus on changing the external behaviours but also on the cognitive processes of the patients.

The research establishes the integration framework which includes direct, indirect, and moderated relationships: the direct effect of cyberbullying and body-shaming on self-esteem, the mediation of the effects through social comparison and self-discrepancy, and the moderation of the strength of the outcomes by peer validation, social media use, and gender. It reveals adolescent online behavior and psychological outcomes more deeply. Through the study of adolescents in deprived areas, this work outlines the relationships between individual susceptibilities and surroundings, thus offering a context-based theoretical contribution to cyberpsychology as well as the research of adolescent mental health.

Limitations

The research was limited to a single-point survey, thus it is not possible to establish causality. To be able to follow the changes that happen over time and find out the temporal relationships between cyberbullying, social comparison, self-discrepancy, and self-esteem, longitudinal studies should be conducted. The answers may be affected by social desirability, recall bias, or underreporting, especially since the respondents were asked about the sensitive topics of cyberbullying and body image.

The participants were from educational establishments that were not fully equipped with the necessary resources, so the results may not be applicable to a wider population. Youths from other social and cultural backgrounds may perceive cyberbullying in a different way. The investigation took place in only one country or region. Culture norms, gender roles, and social media usage patterns may vary from place to place and therefore, the results of this research may not be applicable to other regions.

The study did not account for possible moderators and mediators such as personality, coping strategies, family support, and socio-economic status. The researchers can consider these areas to

get a more detailed understanding of the issue. In spite of the limitations mentioned above, the researchers have made a significant contribution by identifying the important mediators and moderators and by concentrating on the population that has been little studied.

Recommendations for Future Research

Investigate how cyberbullying and body shaming affect self-esteem over a long period and whether the negative impacts accumulate gradually during the adolescent years. Determine through experiments the impact of programs such as digital literacy, peer support groups, and counseling sessions in alleviating the problems caused by online harassment. Examine if the relationships found in the study remain valid across different cultures, regions, and socioeconomic levels, including the comparison between the schools with limited and the schools with ample resources. Delve deeper into finding more variables that could moderate or mediate influences, for instance, personality traits like neuroticism or resilience, and also, coping strategies, parental involvement and family environment.

Employ qualitative research methods such as interviews or focus groups to comprehend the depth of experiences related to cyberbullying, body-shaming, and social comparison. Such information could be a valuable augment to the already existing data concerning how adolescents perceive and handle these phenomena. Examine how various platforms (let's say Instagram or TikTok) affect the users and what role does algorithm-driven content play in leading social comparison and making users more vulnerable to harmful content. Investigate the effectiveness of school policies, reporting mechanisms, and online safety measures in cyberbullying prevention and, thus, the promotion of young people's self-esteem. By addressing these issues, future research can not only broaden the understanding but also create the opportunity for the implementation of interventions that will protect adolescents' mental health in the increasingly digital world that is still significantly reliant on social media.

Conclusion

The investigation settles that those issues represent a significant portion of the problem that digital bullying and body shaming are the main factors that contribute to the decrease of self-esteem of Gen Z teens in schools with limited resources. The release of kids to offensive messages, insults, and to the most judgmental online content to which they have to make

emotional pain, loss of self-esteem and to make their confidence in their abilities weaker. The findings disclose the pervasive psychological impact of social media communication, which is even more than just the direct experience but also the indirect exposure, in which seeing cyberbullying of friends also lowers the self-esteem of the observer.

In addition, the study mentions that the most significant changes are brought about by the interactions of social comparison and self-discrepancy. Those youngsters who are always measuring themselves against other young people or influencers tend to be more dissatisfied with their appearance, achievements, and even the whole concept of themselves. Moreover, a big difference between their real and ideal selves makes the effect of online harassment getting even stronger. The present findings here provide support for the idea that the harm resulting from cyberbullying and body shaming is not only a case of behavior changes and externally visible, but it is also very much connected to the cognitive and emotional sides of the mind.

Also, the research highlights the importance of contextual factors that change the impact. The degree to which these factors affect the impact is gauged by gender, social media usage intensity, and peer validation. In these categories, female adolescents and those who are heavily engaged in social media were the most influenced by the negative effects, which can be accounted for by social, cultural, and environmental factors. Conversely, positive peer feedback, likes, and friendly online interactions were a refuge, suggesting that social reinforcement may relieve some of the negative side effects.....Besides,

Essentially, the article refashions Social Comparison Theory and Self-Discrepancy Theory by arguing that these theories work in the digital world and hence online settings escalate comparison and the feeling of difference between the real and the ideal self. By adding mediating and moderating factors in the research, the detailed conceptual framework that recognizes individual cognitive processes and social influences is presented. The study, however, concentrates mostly on the role of under-resourced schools that are typically the places where children lack the support of counseling, mental health services, or well-organized digital literacy programs and thus are more probable to have negative psychological effects.

Actually, the data are such that they almost call for interventions at multiple levels. Schools should deliver digital literacy and media awareness curricula that not only educate about the positive use of social media but also impart skills for minimizing negative comparison. The establishment of peer support networks, mentoring, and counseling services constitutes the

backbone of resilience development. Parents and caregivers should be given the instructions on how to be the most effective supporters of their adolescents' safe internet use, how to foster realistic self-views, and how to give them emotional confirmation. Moreover, the implementation of gender-sensitive measures is equally important, as it includes the solving of the problem of the increased susceptibility of female adolescents to the criticism of their appearance and the influence of the society.

Besides, the research has some policy consequences too, which lead to the pressing of the cyberbullying prohibition laws, easy ways to report it, and the policies of the institutions that protect the adolescents online as the major necessities. The social media services can also be willing to put into practice the steps that minimize the users' exposure to the negative content. Such steps could be, for instance, content moderation, providing the users with the tools to report the violations, and giving them access to mental health resources.

Finally, this research highlights the pressing need for follow-up longitudinal and intervention-based studies to fully understand the delayed effects of cyberbullying and body shaming, to confirm the support programs' effectiveness, and to comprehend the interaction of cultural, social, and technological factors with adolescent mental health.

Initially, the report delves into the difficult web of relationships between online harassment, body shaming, psychological factors, and external influences in regulating teenage self-esteem. It efficiently bridges the gap between theory and practice, thus, being a guide to educators, parents, policymakers, and mental health professionals on how to protect teenagers from online harm, strengthen their resilience, and support the formation of a positive self-concept in the digital era. Moreover, besides being a vehicle for scholarly knowledge, the research is extremely important in the practical world as it emphasizes that the establishment and maintenance of a secure and nurturing digital environment is a condition for the healthy psychological development of Generation Z, particularly in the disadvantaged educational sectors.

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Appendices

Section A: Demographic Information (Question Type: Multiple Choice / Short Answer)

1. Gender (Multiple choice)

Male/Female/Other/Prefer not to say

2. Age (Multiple choice)

Below 15/15–17/18–20/21–23/Above 23

3. Education Level (Multiple choice)

Secondary School/Higher Secondary/Undergraduate/Others

4. Most Used Social Media Platform (Multiple choice)

Facebook/Instagram/TikTok/Snapchat/X (Twitter)/Others

5. Average Time Spent on Social Media per Day (Multiple choice)

Less than 1 hour/1–3 hours/3–5 hours/More than 5 hours

Section B: Impact of Cyberbullying and Body Shaming on Self-Esteem

Question Type: Multiple Choice Grid

Rows (Statements):

1. I have experienced or witnessed cyberbullying (hurtful messages, comments, or posts) on social media.

2. I often receive or see negative comments about body image or appearance online.

3. Hurtful or judgmental posts on social media make me feel bad about myself.

4. My confidence decreases when people criticize my looks or appearance online.

5. Social media experiences affect how I value myself and my abilities.

Columns (Likert Scale):

Strongly Disagree/Disagree/Neutral/Agree/Strongly Agree

Section C: Role of Social Comparison and Self-Discrepancy

Question Type: Multiple Choice Grid

Rows (Statements):

6. I often compare my looks, lifestyle, or achievements to people I see on social media.

7. I feel pressure to look or live like the influencers or friends I follow online.

8. I sometimes feel disappointed in myself when I do not look like people on social media.

9. The difference between my real self and my “ideal self” (as seen on social media) affects my confidence.

10. Comparing myself to others online makes me feel less satisfied with who I am.

Columns: Same Likert scale as above.

Section D: Contextual and Moderating Factors

Question Type: Multiple Choice Grid

Rows (Statements):

11. I spend a large amount of time daily on social media platforms.

12. I post content to receive likes, comments, or validation from others.

13. My self-esteem improves when I receive positive reactions or compliments online.

14. I feel more affected by cyberbullying or body shaming because of my gender.

15. Peer approval and online popularity influence how I feel about myself.

Columns: Same Likert scale.

221-10-1072

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