



## CYBERBULLYING RESEARCH ON YOUTH POPULATION IN SERBIA

Bojan Veljković, Sandra Dukić, Mina Mihajlović,  
Zorica Kaludjerovic, Momcilo Todorovic, Christos Alexopoulos\*

The Academy of Applied Preschool Teaching and Health Studies, Krusevac, Department Cuprija, Cuprija, Serbia

**Abstract.** *With the advent of the Internet and social networks, we are increasingly encountering the term “Cyberbullying” – electronic violence, harassment through digital technologies, mobile phones, correspondence platforms and the like. It is a behavior that is repeated with the intention of intimidating, embarrassing and humiliating a certain person. Live abuse and cyberbullying can often go hand in hand, with cyberbullying leaving a digital footprint that can be helpful in stopping it. The Cyberbullying survey was conducted in April 2022 on 150 respondents of both sexes, aged 16-25 in Serbia, with an online Questionnaire containing 16 questions with offered answers. The results of the research indicate that 90% of the respondents have heard about violence on social networks, over 30% stated that they have experienced some kind of violence on social networks. It was determined that women are more exposed to cyber violence, most often by the opposite sex, most often on Instagram (24.7%) and Facebook (19.3%), and a larger number of respondents report violence to friends rather than parents. The negative consequences that cyber violence has left on the victim are mostly emotional (30%). The largest number of respondents (85.3%) believe that the best form of protection is blocking and reporting a person who is trying to commit violence. The results of the research confirmed our hypothesis about the significant prevalence of violence on social networks, the complexity of its manifestation and the impact on the mental and emotional state of victims. Further research of this social phenomenon on a larger sample is necessary in order to create prevention and protection measures as successfully as possible.*

**Keywords:** *social networks, electronic violence, internet, research*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The number of internet users is increasing day by day and the internet has become an integral part of the lives of all people, both young and old, regardless of gender, age, level of education and socio-economic status. The most common form of communication among young people today is the Internet. A significant segment of the Internet today is represented by social networks. They enable the creation of your own account, and the individual chooses the list of users with whom he will get in touch, share his content, but also follow the posts of other users. For adolescents, social networks are not only a way of communication, but also an opportunity to socialize, build a personal identity, a means of expressing opinions and feelings. As young people have a desire to expand the circle of friends in that period, in this way they are enabled to communicate with unknown people, and very often they get in touch with them. This is one of the bigger problems that the Internet brings, because in that way young people are exposed to risks and dangers, without even being aware of it [1].

Violence on the Internet is a repetitive behavior that aims to frighten, embarrass, anger the attacked person, and is caused by the use of digital technologies and can take place via mobile phones, social networks, gaming platforms and messaging applications [2]. It is very possible that online violence and live violence occur at

the same time, but online violence leaves a digital record that can serve as evidence when stopping it [3]. Young people do not have a sufficiently developed awareness that such behaviors could take hold and leave long-term negative consequences to the individual as well as to society as a whole [3]. Regardless of the time of exposure to electronic violence, there are always consequences for the victim because information on the Internet such as photographs and video clips spreads at high speed and reaches a large number of people. Motives for e-violence can come from a variety of sources (boredom, the desire to harass others), and very often include revenge, fear, jealousy, justice, attracting the attention of a victimized person or others.

Violence on social networks is mainly the theft of passwords and accounts by hackers, who use their skills for negative purposes. It mainly affects the younger population, as their negligence leads to a breach of their security [4], recording and distributing images, messages and materials of sexual content, changing or stealing passwords, sending viruses,... [5].

Cyber-violence is one of the most prevalent problems in schools and numerous studies show significant relationships between cyberbullying and psychological health, especially mental health and behavioral problems [6]. For this reason, we conducted a survey on the youth population in Serbia to determine the presence of this phenomenon and to show the most common forms of violence on social networks in order

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\* [hristos.note3@gmail.com](mailto:hristos.note3@gmail.com)

to point out the possible dangers and ways to solve them so that electronic violence does not occur.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

An online questionnaire designed for research purposes was used to research cyberbullying on the youth population in Serbia. Starting from the research variables, we received answers to the questions of who (according to gender) is the most frequent victim of cyber violence, what are the factors that influence a person to be susceptible to cyber violence and how important education is to prevent this type of violence. Within the goal set in this way, special attention is paid to determining the presence of depression, suicidal thoughts, anxiety disorders, feelings of shame and injury, as well as feelings of sadness and anxiety. The research was conducted in April 2022 on 150 respondents of both sexes, aged 16-25 in Serbia. The questionnaire contains 16 closed-ended questions. Participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous, and all data were used for research purposes.

3. RESULTS

The survey results indicate that 90% of respondents have heard of violence on social media. Over 30% stated that they had experienced some kind of violence on social networks, and the forms to which they were most often exposed were: sending viruses (25.3%), harassing phone calls (19.3%), changing or stealing passwords (16.7%), posting harassing, offensive or threatening messages (13.3%) and recording and distributing images, messages and sexual content (7.3%). According to the research, it was determined that women are more exposed to cyber violence, most often by the opposite sex. When asked on which social network they most often experienced cyber violence, the respondents answered that it was Instagram (24.7%) and Facebook (19.3%), and a larger number of respondents reported violence to friends rather than parents. Based on the research, it was determined that the negative consequences that cyber violence left on the victim are mostly emotional (30%). The largest number of respondents (85.3%) believe that the best form of protection against cyber violence is blocking and reporting a person who is trying to commit violence.

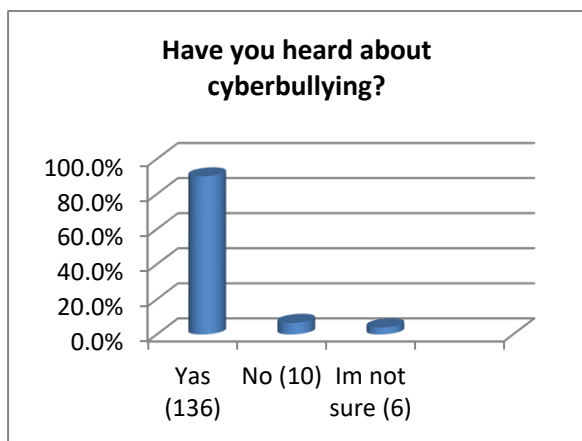


Figure 1. Knowledge of the term “Cyberbullying”

When asked “Have you heard of cyberbullying”, a number of respondents said they were familiar with the term (Figure 1).

The results of the analysis of data from 150 respondents who are Internet users show that it is women who are more exposed to cyber violence, most often by the opposite gender (Figure 2).

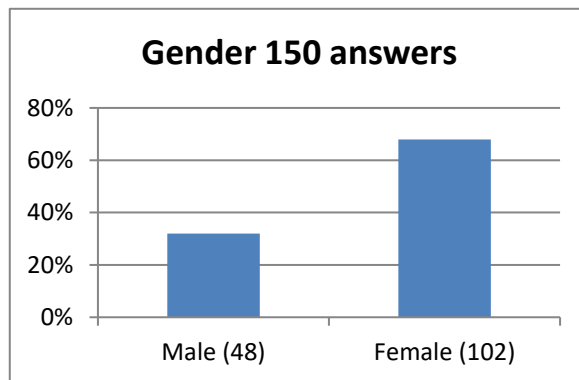


Figure 2. Percentage of exposure of men and women to cyberbullying

The results indicate that it is necessary to organize educational programs and workshops for parents, because they are often less computer literate than their children. Only when parents are provided with enough information will they be able to help their children in an appropriate way and provide appropriate support.

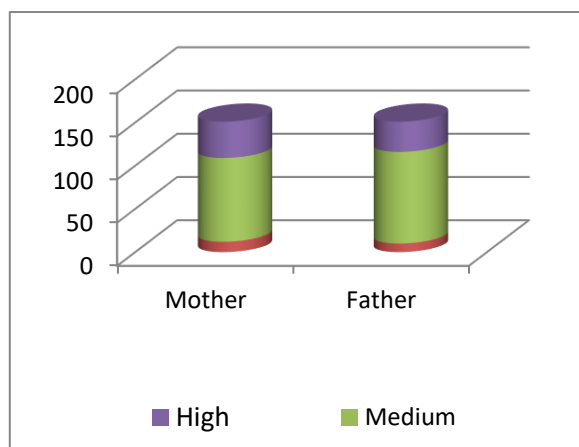


Figure 3. Education of parents

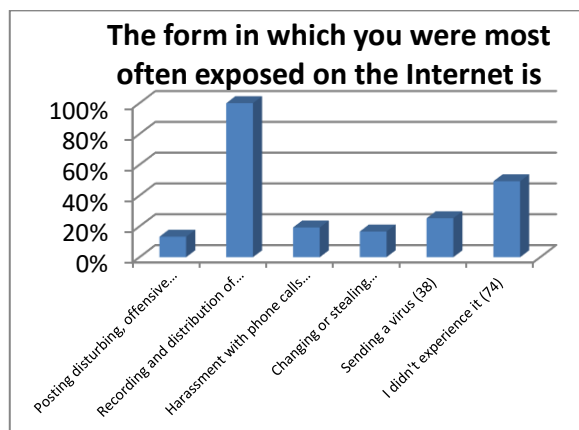


Figure 4. The most common forms of cyberbullying

The most common forms of online violence to which respondents were exposed are presented in Figure 4.

According to the answers in the survey, the negative consequences that online violence left on the respondents was mostly in the emotional sphere, which was pointed out by 30% of them (Figure 5).

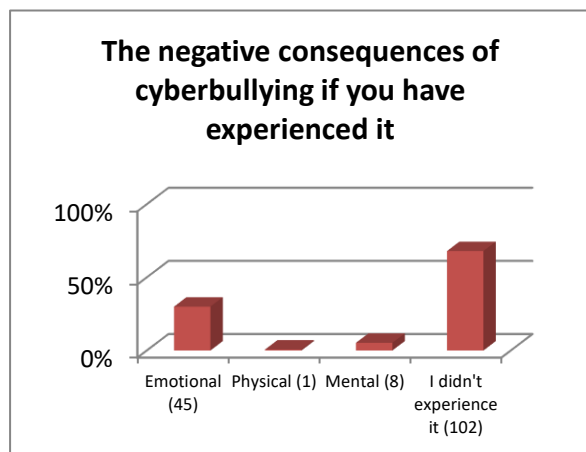


Figure 5. Negative consequences of cyber violence

Social networks users, which are mostly children and young people, do not know that it is necessary to protect their personal data so that later this data could not be misused. Figure 6 shows some of the ways young people react when they realize they are the target of cyber violence.

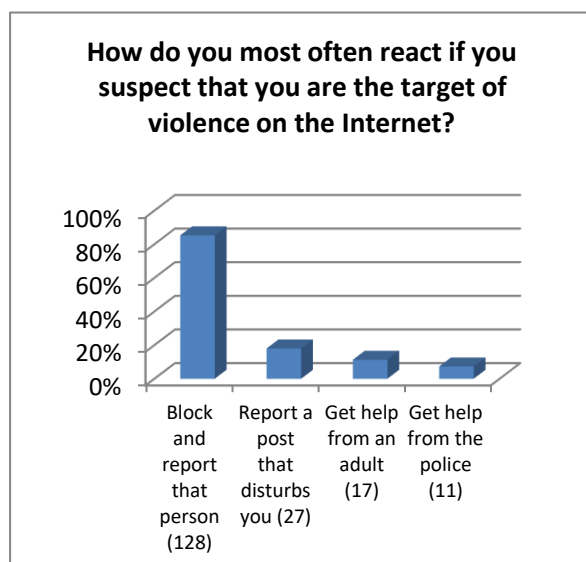


Figure 6. Ways of reacting to protect against violence on the Internet

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Access to the Internet and social networks has contributed to the increasing presence of violence on social networks in the world. Spending time on social networks has almost taken the way of life of young people [7]. Young people are most exposed to violence due to the extent to which they use social networks, as well as their recklessness to adequately protect themselves and their privacy. Personal information

such as username, password, address and telephone number should never be posted on social media. If disturbing messages occur, ignoring them and not reacting can sometimes help, but it is useful to save messages if they need to be presented to the police as evidence [8]. The problem with young people today is that they want to present themselves as socially attractive and use social networks to present their peers in a negative sense [9]. The negative consequences of expressing one's own attitudes are more lasting on social networks than in a real context. Young people do not have a developed awareness of the importance of privacy. In this case, there are two types of mistakes, and they are: the mistake of trust and the mistake of naivety. Both types of errors are characterized by failure to take measures to protect privacy [10]. Awareness-raising should be encouraged for both young people and adults so that online violence does not occur, and in the event that online violence occurs, they should know what to do next. make sure that the whole situation would not take off and leave negative consequences both for the individual and for the environment in which he lives [11].

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Due to the growing prevalence of violence on the Internet and social networks, it is necessary to study it both at the professional and scientific level. Given the many opportunities that the Internet offers as well as the available research on this topic, the entire population can afford the necessary data, thanks to which they can improve their own security on the Internet and protect their privacy. In the world, this type of violence is given more importance and more serious approaches, so these researches are much more numerous and extensive in relation to our area.

Due to the extremely fast pace of technological development, a large number of young people are left to fend for themselves and at the same time people are more susceptible to the dangers of the Internet due to lack of information and sometimes inability of young people to deal with possible problems. challenges.

It is necessary to develop awareness of how much violence on social networks is present among young people today and that it is necessary for young people to be informed about all the dangers that the Internet offers. We must keep in mind that the virtual world is just as dangerous as the real world, it is even more dangerous because the traces on it are remembered longer. Therefore, we should be careful when choosing the content we publish and people with whom we communicate via social networks.

Based on the results of the research, we can conclude that cyberbullying is very common in our area among the young population and that most young people are familiar with the concept of cyberbullying and the consequences that violence can cause. The results of this research represent a solid basis for further research into this negative sociopsychological phenomenon.

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