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Abstract

In this study, the effects of cyber bullying on psychological and cognitive development in adolescents are investigated. The sample of the study consists of 300 high school student adolescents from different institutions in Orange County 2018-2019 academic years. In this study, demographic data forms the Scale of Cyber bullying and brief Symptom Inventory are used as data collection instruments. Piaget's cognitive development and Erikson's theory of psychosocial development are used to work around the topic and analyze the findings. The results of the study showed that there are significant relationships between cyber bullying and psychosocial development in adolescence. These results are discussed in light of relevant literature and at the end of the paper, some recommendations are made as well.

*Keywords*: Cyber bullying, Psychosocial Development, adolescents, Cognitive.

“The Effects of cyber bullying on cognitive and psychological development in adolescence”

During the adolescence period, relationships among youngsters become more of an issue and these relationships have an important place in cognitive and psychosocial development of youngsters. Relationships that people make on internet are not always positive and good. Sometimes these friendships have a deep negative affect on youngsters. An adolescence’s exposure to bullying from his/her peers harms their emotional, cognitive and psychosocial development. Instead of utilizing the internet for the purpose of learning, people have changed it to be a necessity and a primary mode of communication. It has created harmful dynamic for social connections. Also, cyberbullying includes action taken through communication platforms with the purpose of hurting other people. The purpose of this study is to inspect how cyberbullying has a negative impact on the cognitive and psychological growth of adolescents.

According to Ericson theory of psychosocial development, the first five stages occur till the age of eighteen then the rest of three happen up to adulthood. Erikson has a belief that there is room for a person’s cognitive and psychosocial development throughout their life, yet he emphasizes on adolescents’ development. The lifespan development area of a person is different depending on the age i.e. from childbirth to adulthood. This theory indicates that the successful growth of a personality is achieved from the completion of each development stage.

Other theory that is taken under consideration for this study is Piaget's cognitive development. His theory suggests that children go through four different stages of mental development i.e. Sensorimotor stage: birth to 2 years, Preoperational stage: ages 2 to 7, Concrete operational stage: ages 7 to 11, Formal operational stage: ages 12 and up. Piaget's theory of cognitive development helped us understand better about adolescent’s intellectual growth. It suggested that children are not merely passive receivers of knowledge. In fact they are continuously exploring and experimenting while they learn how the world works.

**Related Research**

According to the studies, cyber bullying leads to victimization of the young people. There is the existence of a relationship between cyberbullying and depression, anxiety, slow learning, and lack of creative skills among adolescents. Being a cyber victim causes the person to have psychosocial function deficiency. (Josh, 2017) Non-social people and those who experience anxiety try and avoid social relations and use cyber platforms and express themselves in this way. This causes them to be a potential contender of cyber bullying. Also, being exposed to cyberbullying causes a rise in nonfunctional behaviors.

Cyber Bullying has many forms, starting from verbal taunts and threats to exclusion, humiliation, and spreading rumors, electronic harassment using e-mails, texts or different online social media platforms. Social and verbal bullying are the most common forms that students experience at schools at some point in their life. A famous researcher Vallencourt Trinh found that 31% of the bullying reported in 2012 at a high school in Orange county America was by the students till the age of 14. They were all bullied by their peers over internet. (Sari, 2018). That bullying leads up to much serious concerns i.e. the same victims of cyber bullying were socially and verbally bullied as well. In almost every educational institution, students learn the rule that physical harm to others is prohibited, but cyber bullying are more difficult to identify and address. Which leads to a number of functional disorders in children i.e. negative affect on the memory, struggling with problem solving, and decision-making, etc.

Cyberbullying leads to externalizing medical problems of teenagers. When we look at the child who has experienced cyberbullying, he/she is most likely to be involved in criminal activities, drug abuse and sexual behaviors. For example, consuming alcohol, indulged in early age sex, carrying guns in schools among others. As compared to other fellow kids, cyberbullying victims more likely involve in these immoral activities. These kind of practices affect the learning skills and academic growth of the adolescent and also has a negative effect on their overall health growth.

Cyberbullying also leads to problematic behaviors in adolescents. Teenagers who are offenders of cyber bullying are mostly to be involved in problem behaviors including illegal deeds, aggression and an amplified proactive action. Negative sentiments from adolescents like fear, unhappiness, frustration, anger, embracement, depression and sadness are connected with cyber bullying. Cyberbullying poses a great risk to adolescents hereafter damaging their cognitive and psychosocial development. (Hymel, 2015)

Adults count on adolescents to talk about and report bullying, especially at home, in their social circle, schools and classrooms. This way more and more people will get the courage to speak up about it and prevent it in future. But still youth are unwilling to report bullying, given valid fears of negative consequences or unproductive adult responses. A strong and positive relationship between teachers and students, parents and their kids is proved to enhance the probability of student reporting the bullying but with age, adolescence’s willingness to report bullying declines greatly.

**Research Method**

In this case, the correlation or descriptive method is used. Survey is conducted to inspect the relationship between the cyberbullying and psychosocial development in adolescents. Population of the study consisted of 364 students in three high schools located in Orange County, America. . 125 students (34.8%) were at 7th grade, 103 students (27.7%) were at 6th grade and 130 students (37.3%) were at 9th grade; 180 (47.9%) of them were male and 190 (52.2%) of them were female students. The range of age of the students was 11 to 16 years. After getting an official permit from the local Ministry of Education and from the schools’ administration, students were asked for their consent to help us in conducting this study. The affects of cyberbullying among adolescents in cyberspace were measured in this research. Also, the affects that cyberbullying has on the psychosocial and cognitive development of an adolescent were gathered through numerical data using this study.

 Research study also involves observing how the social health growth of an adolescent is affected by cyberbullying. Furthermore, the target population for this survey included of both males and females. The questioners were used to gather data and information from the population. It was both structured and unstructured. Raw data was collected and saved for further study to come up with more accurate and correct results. Also, to attain an understanding of the population of this research study, frequency propagation of demographic data was utilized.

Apparently, a great amount of communication occurs through internet among the youth therefore increases the chances of cyberbullying incidents. A lot of people believe d that this is a very crucial topic for discussion and must be addressed on all levels. Moreover, this study established the relationship between the two elements i.e. cyber bullying and youth’s development. The findings of this research study change the personal morals and attitude of an individual. Their whole personality is greatly affected because they feel alone and distressed when bullied online. It causes low self-esteem and in some cases, leads to the person indulging into unethical activities. (Cathrine cappadocia, 2013)

**Conclusion**

Conclusively, regarding this research study, it upsets the lifespan development idea of Erikson psychosocial theory and Piaget's cognitive development. Reason being, all the stages that are mentioned in these theory must be complete proficiently. They include blame and resourcefulness, trust and mistrust, disgrace and autonomy, confusion and realization of identity, loneliness and understanding, inaction and generativity, hopelessness and ego integrity. Completion of all these stages leads to the better possibilities of solving problems among individuals. Erikson states these problems as psychosocial in nature because they involve an adolescent’s psychosocial and cognitive needs. Cyberbullying has a negative influence on the psychosocial growth of adolescents by victimization, making wrong choices and affecting their personalities. Therefore, this conclusion sums up to the fact that the adolescents’ personality is greatly affected by cyberbullying therefore leading to low self-esteem.  The research study established the relationship between cyberbullying and the adolescence development. Hence, the results indicate that cyberbullying is a global public health issue among adolescents.

Psychology profession can use these research findings of this study in a professional capacity to help cyberbullying victims. They can do it through counseling or therapy that might help the adolescent to overcome their distresses. The rate of suicide attempts and dishonesty among the youths can be reduce to a great extent.

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