

Cyberbullying: Impact and Solutions in the Context of Janakpurdham

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Submitted: 04/12/2025

Revised: 16/02/2026

Published: 26/02/2026

Abstract

Cyberbullying has emerged as a serious social and educational concern in Nepal with the rapid expansion of digital technology and social media use. In Janakpurdham, a growing urban and educational center, increased access to smartphones and the internet has exposed students and young people to various forms of online harassment, including abusive messaging, impersonation, defamation, and non-consensual sharing of digital content. This study examines the nature, impacts, and underlying causes of cyberbullying in the context of Janakpurdham, with particular emphasis on psychological, academic, and social consequences. Using a qualitative descriptive approach based on secondary literature, legal analysis, and contextual observation, the study reviews Nepal's existing legal framework—especially the Electronic Transactions Act, 2063 and the Muluki Criminal Code, 2074—and evaluates the role of local institutions, schools, and community organizations in addressing cyberbullying. The findings reveal that limited digital literacy, cultural stigma, and lack of awareness of legal remedies contribute to underreporting and prolonged victimization. The study concludes that effective prevention and response require an integrated approach combining digital education, technological tools, legal enforcement, and community engagement. Strengthening institutional coordination and promoting responsible digital behavior are essential for creating safer online environments in Janakpurdham and similar urban settings in Nepal.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Digital safety, Janakpurdham, Nepal, Social Media, Youth, Cyber Law

Introduction

The expansion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Nepal has dramatically changed how people especially youth communicate and interact. In cities like Janakpurdham, increasing access to affordable smartphones and faster internet has led to high usage of social platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube. While this connectivity offers educational and social benefits, it also creates opportunities for misuse of digital communication, notably cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying refers to intentional, repeated harmful behaviors conducted through digital means to intimidate, harass, humiliate, or harm individuals. These behaviors may include abusive messaging, defamation, impersonation, and non-consensual sharing of personal content. Cyberbullying is distinguished from traditional bullying by its **anonymity, wide reach, permanence, and lack of spatial limitations** (Hinduja & Patchin, 2019). Victims often experience ongoing distress as digital content can resurface long after the initial event.

In Janakpurdham, cultural emphasis on reputation and social harmony intensifies the emotional effects of cyberbullying. Students may avoid reporting incidents due to stigma, fear of family reaction, or lack of knowledge about legal remedies. Given the lack of empirical local studies, this paper seeks to fill this gap by investigating cyberbullying in Janakpurdham and recommending context-specific responses.

Objectives of the Study

This study pursues the following objectives:

- To identify prevalent forms of cyberbullying in Janakpurdham.
- To analyze the psychological, academic, and social impacts of cyberbullying on individuals.
- To evaluate the role of local institutions and interventions in addressing cyberbullying.
- To propose comprehensive, context-specific solutions suitable for Janakpurdham's educational, legal, technological, and social environments.

Literature Review

Cyberbullying has been widely studied across disciplines such as psychology, education, sociology, and information technology. Existing literature provides a conceptual foundation for understanding the nature, impacts, and prevention of cyberbullying, though localized studies in Nepal remain limited. This section reviews global, regional, and national studies relevant to cyberbullying and highlights research gaps addressed by the present study.

1. Concept and Forms of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is commonly defined as intentional and repeated harm inflicted through electronic devices such as mobile phones, computers, and social media platforms (Hinduja & Patchin, 2019). Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying does not require physical proximity and can occur at any time, often anonymously. Kowalski et al. (2014) classify cyberbullying into various forms, including harassment, denigration, impersonation and exclusion, cyber stalking, and outing. These forms frequently overlap and intensify the victim's experience due to the rapid spread and permanence of online content.

Smith et al. (2018) emphasize that the anonymity provided by digital platforms increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior, as perpetrators feel less accountable for their actions. This characteristic is particularly concerning in developing digital environments where regulation and monitoring are limited.

2. Psychological and Emotional Impact

A significant body of research links cyberbullying to negative mental health outcomes. Victims often experience anxiety, depression, loneliness, stress, and reduced self-esteem (Kowalski et al., 2019). In severe cases, cyberbullying has been associated with self-harm and suicidal ideation, particularly among adolescents (Hamm et al., 2015).

Livingstone and Smith (2014) argue that cyberbullying is especially harmful because victims may feel unable to escape the abuse, as digital devices are part of everyday life. The constant accessibility of online platforms means that harassment can follow victims into their homes, intensifying emotional distress.

3. Educational and Social Consequences

Research consistently shows that cyberbullying negatively affects academic engagement and performance. Victims often display reduced concentration, school avoidance, absenteeism, and declining academic achievement (UNESCO, 2020). Peer relationships also suffer, as victims may withdraw socially due to fear of further harassment or public humiliation.

In collectivist societies, where social reputation plays a central role, the social consequences of cyberbullying can be even more severe. UNICEF (2021) notes that in such contexts, online harassment often extends into offline discrimination, compounding the victim's isolation.

4. Cyberbullying in Developing and South Asian Contexts

Studies conducted in South Asia highlight unique cultural dimensions of cyberbullying. Poudel and Choi (2020) report that limited digital literacy, weak institutional support, and cultural stigma discourage victims from reporting incidents. Gender-based cyberbullying is particularly prevalent, with girls facing higher risks of online harassment related to appearance, behavior, and morality.

Research further suggests that parents and teachers in developing countries often lack adequate knowledge of digital platforms, reducing their ability to guide or protect young users (UNICEF, 2021). This gap increases vulnerability among students and adolescents.

5. Nepalese Context and Legal Perspectives

In Nepal, scholarly work on cyberbullying remains limited, though awareness is growing. Acharya(2022) notes that increased internet access among Nepalese youth has not been matched with sufficient digital citizenship education. As a result, many young users are unaware of ethical online behavior and legal consequences.

From a legal perspective, the *Electronic Transactions Act, 2063* criminalizes online harassment, defamation, and the publication of illegal digital content. However, studies by Nepalese legal researchers indicate that the law is outdated and inadequately enforced, particularly outside major urban centers (NJA Nepal, 2022). The *Muluki Criminal Code, 2074* also provides provisions against harassment and defamation, but public awareness of these legal remedies remains low.

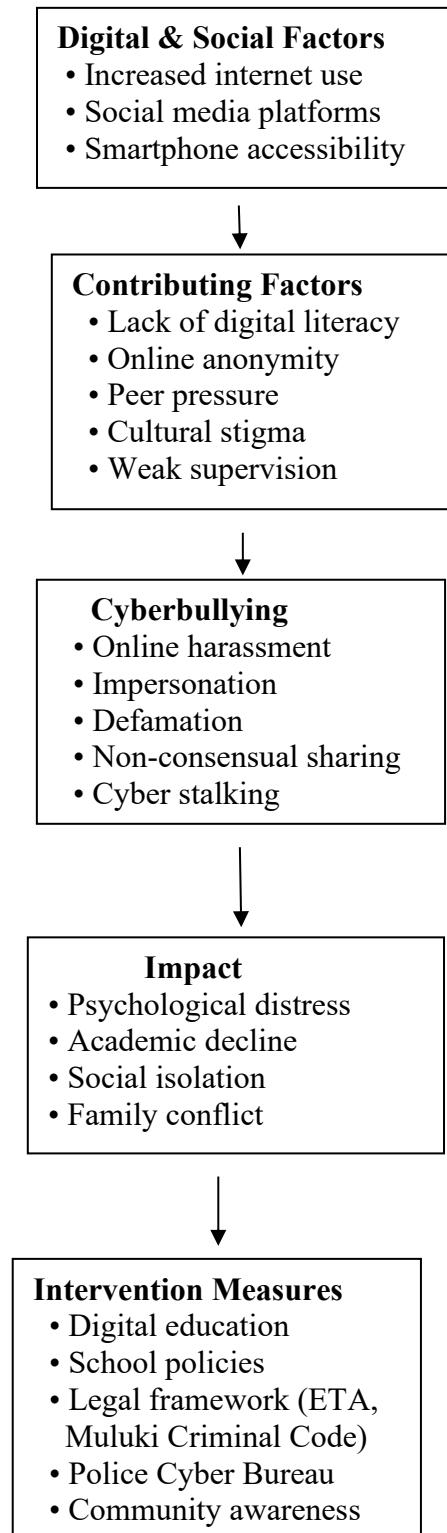
6. Role of Educational Institutions and Community Organizations

Several studies emphasize the importance of schools and community organizations in preventing cyberbullying. Hinduja and Patchin (2019) argue that digital citizenship education and clear institutional policies significantly reduce cyberbullying incidents. In Nepal, organizations such as Samriddhi Foundation Nepal have initiated cyber safety awareness programs targeting adolescents and teachers. However, these initiatives are often project-based and lack long-term sustainability. The convergence of digital network behavior, computational modelling, and regional policy assessment shows how statistical and numerical frameworks are becoming more and more useful for diagnosing virtual and real-world results. Social media platforms are essential tools for monitoring user sentiment and feedback loops in digital ecosystems, which strategically influence organizational decision-making and product development frameworks (Chaudhary et al., 2023a; Sahani & Shah, 2024). However, algorithmic polarization and malicious automation are posing a growing threat to the integrity of these digital spaces. While combining predictive logistic regression with numerical algorithms provides strong computational backbones for identifying and isolating automated bot networks (Chaudhary et al., 2023b; Sahani & Mandal, 2023), dynamical systems modelling shows how specialized numerical integration techniques can trace the formation of online echo chambers (Sahani & Sah, 2021). These precise quantitative modelling techniques are essential for assessing the structural effectiveness of localized public initiatives outside of virtual networks. For example, using numerical analysis to evaluate cultural inclusion policies reveals quantifiable effects on reducing student dropout rates in rural schools (Sahani, 2019), and more comprehensive macro-level numerical evaluations of Nepal's national educational frameworks show a direct correlation between regional socioeconomic mobility and focused academic interventions (Upadhyay et al., 2025). When taken as a whole, this corpus of work highlights how rigorous statistical and mathematical modelling bridges the gap between solving systemic social problems and analyzing intricate online behavioral dynamics.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between **causes of cyberbullying**, its **impacts**, and **intervention strategies** within the socio-legal context of Janakpur, Nepal.

Figure 1: “Conceptual Framework of Cyberbullying in the Context of Janakpurdham”



The framework begins with **digital and social factors**, such as increased internet penetration and widespread use of social media in Janakpurdham. These factors, when combined with **contributing factors** like lack of digital literacy, anonymity, peer pressure, and cultural silence, lead to various forms of **cyberbullying**.

Cyberbullying then produces multiple **negative impacts**, including psychological stress, academic problems, social withdrawal, and strained family relationships. To address these impacts, the framework highlights **intervention measures**, which include educational initiatives, technological tools, legal enforcement under Nepalese laws (*Electronic Transactions Act, 2063* and *Muluki Criminal Code, 2074*), involvement of the Nepal Police Cyber Bureau, and community-based awareness programs.

This framework demonstrates that cyberbullying is not caused by a single factor but is the result of interacting social, technological, and cultural elements, requiring coordinated multi-sector solution.

Legal Framework in Nepal

1. Electronic Transactions Act, 2063

The *Electronic Transactions Act, 2063 (2008)* is Nepal's primary cybercrime legislation. Section 47 prohibits the publication of indecent, defamatory, or abusive material online, including harassment and cyberbullying behaviors. Offenders may face **up to five years' imprisonment and fines up to NPR 100,000** (*Electronic Transactions Act, 2063, Section 47*) ([The Annapurna Express](#)).

2. Muluki Criminal Code, 2074

The *Muluki Criminal Code* addresses cyber-related offenses like online defamation, threats, and digital privacy breaches. While not a dedicated cybercrime statute, its provisions reinforce protections for victims by penalizing harassment and privacy invasion, helping law enforcement address cyberbullying cases more comprehensively ([Legal Victory Associates](#)).

3. Institutional Mechanisms

Nepal Police's **Cyber Bureau** operates as the investigative authority for cybercrime in the country, including cases of harassment and online abuse. Complaints can be filed directly at the bureau, local police stations, or district courts with supporting digital evidence like screenshots and URLs ([Tech Aware Nepal](#)).

4. Emerging Policy Debates

Recent legislative proposals such as the *Information Technology and Cyber security Bill, 2082* aim to modernize cyber laws, but rights advocates caution about potential conflicts with freedom of expression and digital rights, highlighting the complexity of governing cyberspace in a culturally diverse society ([The Kathmandu Post](#)).

Data and Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employs a **qualitative descriptive design**, synthesizing secondary literature and legal analysis and situating findings within the lived context of Janakpurdham.

2. Data Sources

Data were collected from:

- Academic research on cyberbullying;
- Nepal legal texts and policy documents;
- Online news, reports from digital rights organizations, and awareness campaigns;
- Local educational and awareness initiatives implemented in community contexts like Janakpurdham (e.g., Samriddhi Foundation Nepal's cyber safety programs) (Samriddhi Foundation Nepal).

3. Analytical Approach

Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns in impacts, risk factors, legal responses, and institutional challenges. Although primary fieldwork was not conducted, contextual observations and case examples were included to enhance relevance.

Analysis and Discussion

1. Forms of Cyberbullying in Janakpurdham

In Janakpurdham, common cyberbullying behaviors mirror global patterns but exhibit local features shaped by socio-cultural norms:

- **Harassment via messaging platforms (WhatsApp, Messenger)**
- **Mockery and group exclusion on social networks**
- **Sharing private photos or personal information without consent**
- **Online impersonation and false profiles targeting students**
- **Spread of rumors and defamatory content**

These manifestations create reputational harm in socially interconnected communities.

2. Psychological Impact

Victims frequently report anxiety, sleep disturbances, and social withdrawal. Given the cultural importance of honor and family reputation, cyberbullying can have compounded effects: victims fear community judgment even outside the digital sphere. Anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem are common outcomes, consistent with findings in international research on digital harassment (Kowalski et al., 2019).

3. Academic and Social Consequences

Cyberbullying disrupts academic engagement. Students may avoid digital learning environments or reduce participation in class due to fear of further exposure or online ridicule. At the social level, victims often isolate themselves from peer networks, weakening community ties and fostering distrust.

4. Legal Awareness and Reporting Challenges

Despite the existence of legal protections, many residents of Janakpurdham lack awareness of these mechanisms. Cultural stigma and low digital literacy contribute to underreporting. The Cyber Bureau's processes, while established, remain underutilized due to lack of local outreach and awareness.

5. Role of Local Institutions

Institutions like **Samriddhi Foundation Nepal** collaborate with schools and police to deliver cyber safety programs that educate teenagers about online risks and legal consequences (Samriddhi Foundation Nepal, 2024) ([Samriddhi Foundation Nepal](#)). However, such programs are not widespread and often depend on individual organizational initiatives rather than systemic support from municipal governance or provincial education authorities.

Solutions and Best Practices

1. Educational Initiatives in Schools

- **Digital citizenship curricula** should be integrated into secondary education to build understanding of online rights and responsibilities.

- Workshops on recognizing, reporting, and responding to cyberbullying should become standard across Janakpurdham schools.

2. Community Awareness and Digital Literacy

Public awareness campaigns via local radio, newspapers, community radio stations, and student clubs can promote safe online behavior and familiarize citizens with legal remedies.

3. Technology-Driven Reporting Tools

Mobile apps and school-based reporting platforms can make it easier for victims to lodge complaints confidentially. Partnerships with local IT colleges or university computer science departments could support development of localized tools.

4. Strengthening Legal Enforcement

Local police stations should be equipped and trained to support cybercrime complaints effectively, incorporating digital forensics and evidence preservation. Collaboration with the Cyber Bureau can bridge resource gaps.

5. Multi-Sector Collaboration

Municipality authorities, educational institutions (e.g., University Campus, RJU), and NGOs should establish a **cyber safety task force** that regularly reviews cases, promotes digital well-being, and maintains community support frameworks.

Conclusion

Cyberbullying has emerged as a significant challenge in the digital age, particularly in growing urban centers like Janakpurdham where internet access and social media usage are rapidly increasing. This study examined the impacts, causes, and potential solutions to cyberbullying within the local socio-cultural and legal context of Janakpurdham. The findings indicate that cyberbullying is a multifaceted problem influenced by technological accessibility, lack of digital literacy, cultural stigma, and insufficient awareness of legal remedies.

The study highlights that the impacts of cyberbullying extend beyond online spaces, affecting victims' psychological well-being, academic performance, and social relationships. Emotional distress, anxiety, loss of self-confidence, and academic disengagement were identified as common consequences, particularly among students and young people. These impacts are often intensified by underreporting, as victims fear social judgment or are unaware of available support mechanisms.

The analysis further reveals that although Nepal has legal provisions under the *Electronic Transactions Act, 2063* and the *Muluki Criminal Code, 2074*, their effectiveness in addressing cyberbullying in Janakpurdham is limited by weak enforcement and low public awareness. Educational institutions and local organizations have a crucial role in prevention; however, the absence of systematic digital citizenship education and institutional policies reduces their capacity to respond effectively.

In conclusion, addressing cyberbullying in Janakpurdham requires a coordinated and holistic approach involving legal enforcement, digital education, technological interventions, and community engagement. Strengthening collaboration among schools, law enforcement agencies, policymakers, parents, and civil society organizations is essential to promote responsible online behavior and ensure safer digital environments. Future research should incorporate primary data through surveys or interviews to provide deeper empirical insights and support evidence-based policy formulation in Nepal.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of cyberbullying impact and existing preventive measures in Janakpurdham, the following recommendations are proposed to address and reduce cyberbullying effectively:

1. Strengthening Digital Literacy Education

Educational institutions in Janakpurdham should incorporate **digital literacy and cyber safety education** into school and college curricula. Students need to learn responsible online behavior, privacy protection, and the consequences of cyberbullying. Awareness programs, workshops, and seminars can help students understand the ethical use of digital platforms.

2. Increasing Awareness of Cyber Laws

Many people in Nepal are unaware of legal provisions against cybercrime under the **Electronic Transactions Act, 2063** and the **Muluki Criminal Code, 2074**. Government agencies, schools, and civil society organizations should conduct public awareness campaigns so that victims know how to report cyberbullying and seek legal protection.

3. Strengthening Institutional Support Systems

Schools, colleges, and universities in Janakpurdham should establish **anti-cyberbullying policies** and reporting mechanisms. Counseling services and student support centers can help victims deal with emotional and psychological stress caused by cyber harassment.

4. Role of Law Enforcement and Cyber Units

Law enforcement agencies such as the **Nepal Police Cyber Bureau** should enhance monitoring and response mechanisms for cyberbullying cases. Quick reporting systems, helplines, and digital complaint platforms can encourage victims to report incidents without fear.

5. Community and Parental Engagement

Parents and community leaders should actively guide young people in safe internet practices. Awareness programs organized by community organizations and local authorities in **Janakpurdham** can help families understand cyber risks and support victims effectively.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who supported and guided me throughout this work. Special appreciation goes to **Suresh Kumar Sahani** for his valuable encouragement, dedication, and continuous support. His insightful suggestions and motivation greatly contributed to the successful completion of this work.

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