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Cyberbullying and Legal Remedies for Students and Teenagers

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Students and teenagers who are heavily engaged in online communities are increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying, a growing menace in the digital era. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying occurs in the virtual realm through social media, messaging platforms, gaming networks, and other digital spaces, making it persistent, far-reaching, and often anonymous. It can lead to severe psychological, emotional, and academic consequences, including anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and even suicidal tendencies. This article explores the multifaceted nature of cyberbullying by examining its various forms, underlying causes, and the psychological toll it takes on young individuals. It delves into the legal ramifications and evaluates both the Indian and international legal frameworks aimed at curbing this digital abuse. The study further investigates the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders such as parents, educators, social media companies, and law enforcement agencies. In conclusion, the article proposes practical solutions to strengthen existing laws, enhance preventive mechanisms, and foster a safer, more responsible digital ecosystem for minors and young users.

Keywords: *cyberbullying, teenagers, online communities, psychological impact, legal frameworks.*

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, the internet has revolutionised social interaction, education, and communication, especially for students and teenagers who use digital technology the most.¹ The digital era provides unprecedented educational and recreational opportunities, but it has also brought forth new types of harm, most notably cyberbullying.² The use of electronic communication to harass someone, usually by sending intimidating or threatening messages, is known as cyberbullying.³ Cyberbullying transcends physical bounds and continues to exist in digital environments around the clock, in contrast to traditional bullying, which is frequently limited to schools or neighbourhoods. In addition to the victims' psychological well-being, this ongoing harassment has an impact on their academic achievement, social conduct, and long-term emotional stability.⁴ Teenage cyberbullying occurrences have increased in India, as they have in many other nations, particularly in the post-COVID-19 digital education era.⁵ The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) found that more than 37% of Indian teenagers were the victims of online abuse in 2021.⁶ Despite this concerning trend, many students are ignorant of their legal rights and remedies. Through the provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the Information Technology Act, 2000, the Indian legal system has attempted to address this threat. However, there are still significant issues with the lack of a stand-alone cyberbullying law and the sluggish institutional reforms. To manage cases effectively, courts and law enforcement organisations frequently lack the necessary resources and technical training.⁷

UNDERSTANDING CYBERBULLYING

A type of digital harassment known as “cyberbullying” occurs when someone is intimidated, threatened, or denigrated via electronic communication, usually via social media, messaging apps, emails, and online forums.⁸ Teenagers and adolescents are especially vulnerable since they

¹ Sameer Hinduja and Justin Patchin, ‘Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Suicide’ (2010) 14(3) Archives of Suicide Research <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13811118.2010.494133>> accessed 20 May 2025

² *Ibid*

³ Emily Bazelon, *Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy* (Random House 2014)

⁴ Sameer Hinduja and Justin W Patchin, ‘Cyberbullying: Identification, Prevention, and Response’ (*Cyberbullying Research Center*, 2020) <<https://cyberbullying.org/Cyberbullying-Identification-Prevention-Response-2020.pdf>> accessed 20 May 2025

⁵ *Shreya Singhal v Union of India* (2015) 12 SCC 73

⁶ Internet and Mobile Association of India, *Digital in India 2021 Report* (2022)

⁷ Indian Penal Code 1860

⁸ Hinduja (n 4)

utilise digital platforms extensively and cannot frequently react appropriately to the harassment they encounter online.

Sending disrespectful messages, spreading untrue stories, posting private or embarrassing images or videos without permission, and purposefully removing someone from an online community are just a few of the damaging actions that fall under the umbrella term “cyberbullying.”⁹ Cyberbullying, in contrast to conventional bullying, may happen around the clock and quickly reach a large audience. Because its effects transcend time, location, and physical limits, it is particularly challenging to control and more emotionally harmful to the victim.¹⁰ The anonymity aspect of cyberbullying is one of its distinguishing features. Fake profiles are frequently used by offenders to conceal their identity, making it more difficult to track them down and bring charges against them.¹¹ Because digital content is durable, damaging statements, images, or videos may be permanently available online, causing the victim to experience ongoing trauma.¹² Teens who are cyberbullied frequently suffer from severe mental health conditions like sadness, anxiety, low self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts.¹³ Many victims experience social isolation as a result of their fear of peer judgment or revenge, which exacerbates the psychological harm.¹⁴ Recognising that cyberbullying is more than an online argument is essential to understanding it. This significant social issue has legal, emotional, and educational aspects. Legal reform, computer literacy instruction, family supervision, school intervention, and mental health support networks are all necessary to properly address it.¹⁵

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Cyberbullying puts victims under a lot of social and psychological strain, particularly teens and students who are still developing emotionally and cognitively. Cyberbullying, in contrast to traditional forms of bullying, exposes victims 24/7 by infiltrating their personal spaces via social media and mobile devices.¹⁶ Psychologically, victims of cyberbullying frequently suffer from

⁹ National Crime Records Bureau, *Crime in India 2022: Statistics* (2023)

¹⁰ Sonia Livingstone and Leslie Haddon, *EU Kids Online: Final Report* (2009)

¹¹ Information Technology Act 2000

¹² Hinduja (n 4)

¹³ Charisse L Nixon, ‘Current perspectives: the impact of cyberbullying on adolescent health’ (2014) 5 *Adolescent health, medicine and therapeutic* <<https://doi.org/10.2147/AHMT.S36456>> accessed 20 May 2025

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ ‘Guidelines on School Safety and Security’ (*Department of School Education & Literacy*, 01 October 2021) <https://dse.education.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-10/guidelines_sss.pdf> accessed 20 May 2025

¹⁶ Hinduja (n 4)

extreme emotional distress, such as irritation, fear, melancholy, and worry. Long-term mental health conditions like eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even suicidal thoughts can result from the ongoing feeling of danger and humiliation.¹⁷

According to studies, teenagers who are bullied online are three times as likely to think about suicide and twice as likely to self-harm¹⁸. The effects go beyond psychological well-being. Sleep issues, concentration problems, and deteriorating academic performance are possible outcomes for victims. They become less able to handle everyday social expectations, which frequently leads to social disengagement and loneliness.¹⁹ Socially, cyberbullying changes the victim's public profile and connections with others. Especially when bullying entails betrayal or public mockery, many victims lose faith in their friends or classmates. Students may avoid school, extracurricular activities, and even online interactions due to the embarrassment of being publicly shamed online, further isolating them.²⁰ School environments are also affected by the knock-on effects of cyberbullying. Because they may become distracted or change their classmates' perceptions of school safety and inclusivity, students who experience cyberbullying frequently contribute to a bad school climate.²¹ The early warning signs are often missed by parents and teachers, which delays action. Furthermore, the pain is exacerbated by the permanent nature of digital content. It can be challenging for victims to move on after sharing damaging messages, photos, or videos because they can be viewed, downloaded, and shared again and again.²² Legal action is not enough to address the psychological and social effects of cyberbullying. To promote digital empathy, resilience, and mental health, it advocates for inclusive educational policies, peer support networks, counselling services, and awareness campaigns.²³

LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN INDIA

Cyberbullying is not expressly defined or made a separate crime in India by any specific legislation. However, some current laws' provisions work together to provide victims, particularly students and teenagers, with protection and remedies against various types of

¹⁷ Nixon (n 13)

¹⁸ 'Mental health of adolescents' (WHO, 10 October 2024) <<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>> accessed 30 May 2025

¹⁹ Livingstone (n 10)

²⁰ Hinduja (n 4)

²¹ *Ibid*

²² Information Technology Act 2000, s 67

²³ Guidelines on School Safety and Security (n 15)

internet abuse. These include clauses found in the Indian Penal Code of 1860, the Information Technology Act of 2000, and government-issued directives.

Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act): The IT Act is India's principal legislation for cybercrime. Although it does not use the term "cyberbullying" directly, several of its sections are invoked in cyberbullying cases:

- **Section 66A** (struck down in *Shreya Singhal v Union of India*) once criminalised sending offensive messages via communication services²⁴.
- **Section 66C** penalises identity theft, which is common in impersonation-related cyberbullying²⁵.
- **Section 66D** punishes cheating by personation using computer resources, often seen in fake profiles and scam incidents²⁶.
- **Section 67** prohibits publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form²⁷.
- **Section 69A** empowers the government to block public access to harmful online content in the interest of public order²⁸.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: In cases where the cyberbully is a minor, the **Juvenile Justice Act** comes into play, aiming for reformative justice over punitive action.²⁹ When the cyberbully is a minor, the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**, comes into effect. The Act adopts a reformative rather than a punitive approach. Children in conflict with the law are placed in observation homes, given counselling, and rehabilitated through community service and education. Section 15 of the Act allows for differential treatment for minors aged 16 to 18 depending on the nature and gravity of the offence. For severe cases involving stalking, identity theft, or transmission of obscene content, the Juvenile Justice Board assesses whether the child should be tried as an adult.

²⁴ *Shreya Singhal v Union of India* (2015) 5 SCC 1

²⁵ Information Technology Act 2000, s 66C

²⁶ Information Technology Act 2000, s 66D

²⁷ Information Technology Act 2000, s 67

²⁸ Information Technology Act 2000, s 69A

²⁹ Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012: When cyberbullying involves the transmission of sexually explicit material targeting minors, the POCSO Act is invoked to safeguard children from sexual exploitation.³⁰

National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal: This online tool, which was started by the Ministry of Home Affairs, enables victims, including minors and students, to report cybercrimes anonymously and obtain legal assistance.³¹ Even with these protections in place, compliance is nevertheless difficult because of a lack of knowledge, digital literacy, and cyber-forensic skills. A comprehensive law that specifically targets cyberbullying, establishes preventive guidelines for educational institutions, and guarantees prompt compensation for young victims is desperately needed.

Role of Educational Institutions and School Guidelines: The **Ministry of Education**, in collaboration with NCERT and CBSE, has issued advisory guidelines for schools to address online abuse:

- Setting up anti-bullying committees.
- Appointing counsellors and digital safety officers.
- Incorporating cyber safety in school curricula.
- Encouraging students to report without fear of retaliation.

Schools are expected to act as first responders in such situations. Failure to address complaints could amount to negligence and lead to institutional liability.

Reporting Mechanisms and Digital Platforms: The Government of India has developed several mechanisms to make cybercrime reporting accessible:

National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (<https://cybercrime.gov.in>): This portal allows individuals, including minors and their guardians, to report online abuse confidentially. It has a dedicated section for crimes against children.

Childline 1098: A 24x7 helpline to provide immediate assistance to children in distress, including victims of cyberbullying.

³⁰ Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012

³¹ *Ibid*

IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021: These guidelines mandate social media platforms to remove objectionable content within 24 hours of receiving a complaint, especially when it concerns child users.

CHALLENGES IN LEGAL ENFORCEMENT

Although India has a legal framework that addresses cyberbullying-related behaviour, including the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the Information Technology Act, 2000, properly executing these rules is still very difficult. Due to institutional, procedural, and sociocultural constraints, students and teenagers, the most vulnerable group, frequently encounter numerous obstacles while attempting to obtain justice.

Lack of Specific Legislation: There isn't a separate law in India that clearly defines and punishes cyberbullying. There is currently no one legal provision that covers all facets of cyberbullying, particularly as it relates to minors, while existing laws handle similar offences like identity theft, defamation, and cyberstalking.³² This absence undermines prosecuting efforts and creates uncertainty in the interpretation of the law.

Low Digital Literacy and Awareness: Many victims, especially teenagers, are unaware of their legal rights and the process for reporting cyber offences. Schools, colleges, and even parents are often ill-informed about existing cyber laws, leading to underreporting.³³ The **National Crime Records Bureau** has reported a significant gap between incidents experienced and those officially registered.³⁴

Anonymity of Offenders: False personas or temporary accounts are commonly used for anonymous cyberbullying. Many Indian state police agencies still lack the sophisticated cyber-forensic capabilities needed to track down offenders. Furthermore, jurisdictional concerns or data privacy policies originating from outside India frequently cause social media businesses to delay their collaboration.

³² Information Technology Act 2000

³³ Sameer Hinduja and Justin W Patchin, *Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying* (2nd edn, Corwin Press 2014)

³⁴ National Crime Records Bureau, *Crime in India Report 2022 (2023)*

Victim Hesitancy and Social Stigma: Victims, especially students in school and college, frequently choose not to come forward out of fear of shame, parental anger, or reprisals. The legal system appears daunting or unapproachable due to the psychological toll and a lack of institutional support.³⁵

Delays in Legal Proceedings: Even when a case is reported, the legal process is slow, and cybercrime cells are overburdened. The procedural delays in investigation, filing of charge sheets, and trial discourage victims from pursuing justice.³⁶

Inadequate School Policies: Strong anti-cyberbullying policies and qualified counsellors are lacking at many educational institutions. The persistence of such behaviour in school ecosystems is facilitated by the lack of institutional procedures to handle and escalate complaints of digital abuse.³⁷ Legal reform, technology investment in digital policing, public awareness campaigns, and training for law enforcement and educators to establish a child-sensitive and tech-literate justice system are all necessary to address these enforcement problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A multifaceted approach is necessary to handle the intricate and dynamic problem of cyberbullying, particularly as it concerns kids and teenagers. Even though the current legislative frameworks offer some relief, institutional changes, preventative measures, and social education are still desperately needed to guarantee that young internet users are adequately protected. The following suggestions are offered to improve India's reaction to cyberbullying.

Enactment of Specific Cyberbullying Legislation: There is currently no law in India that specifically and unambiguously defines and punishes cyberbullying among kids. The Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the Information Technology Act, 2000, both have general laws that don't always address the particular aspects of cyberbullying that affect teenagers and students. Thus, a specific Cyberbullying (Prevention) Act must be passed that explains the different forms of cyberbullying, such as sexualized bullying, doxing, harassment, and impersonation.

³⁵ Hinuja (n 4)

³⁶ Ameen Jauhar et al., 'Participatory Approaches in AI and Development and Governance' (Centre for Responsible AI and Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, 17 April 2024) <https://vidhilegalpolicy.in/research/participatory-ai-approaches-in-ai-development-and-governance/> accessed 30 May 2025

³⁷ *Cyber Safety Handbook for Students and Schools* (Ministry of Education 2023)

Introduces juvenile offenders to age-appropriate punishments and rehabilitation programs. Offers victim-centred benefits like compensation, required counselling, and anonymity³⁸

Mandatory Cyber Safety Education in Schools: At the moment, India lacks a law that clearly and precisely defines and penalises cyberbullying among children. Both the Information Technology Act of 2000 and the Indian Penal Code of 1860 contain general provisions that don't always address the specifics of cyberbullying that impact adolescents and teenagers. Therefore, it is necessary to pass a particular Cyberbullying (Prevention) Act that describes the various types of cyberbullying, including impersonation, doxing, sexualized bullying, and harassment. Proposes age-appropriate sanctions and rehabilitation initiatives for young offenders. Provides victim-centred benefits such as mandatory therapy, compensation, and anonymity.³⁹

Strengthening Grievance Redressal Mechanisms: The intricacy of reporting procedures frequently presents a challenge for parents and victims. Redressal can be expedited via a centralised online complaint portal created especially for kids. This ought to be connected with already-existing hotlines, such as the Ministry of Home Affairs, Cyber Crime Portal and the 1098 Childline.

Complainants' anonymity must be maintained while response times are shortened. Analysis of the gathered data is necessary to spot trends and direct policy decisions.

Parental and Community Involvement: Parents must be actively involved in cyber safety education at home. There should be awareness campaigns at community levels about the signs of cyberbullying and how to intervene supportively. Digital parenting workshops could be introduced through:⁴⁰

- Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs);
- Local panchayats and municipal bodies;
- Online platforms such as Diksha or MyGov.

Platform Accountability and Algorithmic Regulation: The main places where cyberbullying occurs are social media and messaging apps. Thus, it is imperative that the Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code, 2021, be rigorously adhered to.

³⁸ Information Technology Act 2000

³⁹ Guidelines on School Safety and Security (n 15)

⁴⁰ United Nations Children's Fund, *Ending Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse* (2021)

Particular suggestions consist of requiring the removal of offensive material that affects children more quickly. Combining human supervision with AI-based moderation technologies. Requiring platforms to submit reports on bullying accusations that are transparent.⁴¹

Psychological Support and Rehabilitation: Victims of cyberbullying should have **access to free psychological counselling** through school counsellors or government schemes like **MANAS (Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System)**. Similarly, child perpetrators should be offered rehabilitation, not just punishment. The government must fund mental health services for youth in collaboration with NGOs. Online platforms can offer in-app referrals to helplines and resources for both victims and offenders.

CASE STUDIES

In India, the problem of cyberbullying among teenagers and students has drawn more attention from the legal system as well as from academic and governmental circles. The following case studies, which are based on actual court rulings, media coverage, and administrative actions, help put the real-world difficulties, psychological effects, and legal repercussions of cyberbullying in perspective. These instances show how families, schools, courts, and law enforcement agencies negotiate the intricate network of cyberbullying directed at children.

Case Study 1: The Kerala Obscene Video Circulation Case: In *Karthik S v State of Kerala*, the Kerala High Court dealt with a case involving the digital circulation of an obscene video of a 17-year-old girl by a group of male students.⁴² The girl was subjected to blackmail and public humiliation after the clip went viral on social media. The perpetrators were classmates who used peer pressure, emotional manipulation, and technology to harass the victim. Charges under Sections 66E and 67 of the IT Act, along with Sections 354C⁴³ and 509⁴⁴ of the IPC, and relevant provisions of the POCSO Act were invoked. The High Court observed that **digital abuse, especially against minors, cannot be trivialised as “juvenile mischief”** and stressed the importance of swift investigation and psychological counselling for both victims and

⁴¹ Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021

⁴² *Karthik S v State of Kerala* 2020 (SCC) OnLine Ker 4035

⁴³ Indian Penal Code 1860, s 354C

⁴⁴ Indian Penal Code 1860, s 509

accused minors. The case reinforced the need for educational institutions to implement anti-cyberbullying policies.

Case Study 2: The Gurugram School Bullying Incident: A well-known instance of cyberbullying surfaced from a prestigious private school in Gurugram in 2022. A 14-year-old girl was the subject of a WhatsApp group of pupils who shared derogatory comments and altered photos. She later had suicidal thoughts and was admitted to the hospital. Sections 507 and 509 of the IPC, as well as Sections 66D and 67 of the IT Act², were used to register the case after the girl's parents filed a First Information Report.⁴⁵ Following the school's initial attempt to minimise the tragedy, the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) intervened in response to public outcry and ordered the school to update its cyber safety procedures. Institutional indifference and the pressing necessity for internal grievance redressal procedures in schools were highlighted by this instance.

Case Study 3: The Boys Locker Room Case: One of the most widely discussed cyberbullying cases in India is the “**Bois Locker Room**” incident from 2020, where a private Instagram group comprising teenage boys from Delhi schools shared obscene images of girls and discussed rape fantasies. The case sparked national outrage and prompted the Delhi Police Cyber Cell to investigate offences under Sections 354A, 354C, 509, and 500 of the IPC; Sections 66E and 67 of the IT Act; and Sections of the POCSO Act. Several minors were interrogated, and digital devices were seized. While the case brought attention to toxic masculinity, peer validation of violence, and lack of digital etiquette, it also raised **privacy concerns** and the **mental health implications** of intense online scrutiny for teenagers. A Juvenile Justice Board took cognisance and recommended counselling and parental involvement for all children involved. The case catalysed discussions on gender sensitivity and responsible digital behaviour in schools across India.

Case Study 4: Cyberbullying of a Teen LGBTQ+ Student in Bengaluru: A 16-year-old Bengaluru LGBTQ student reported being harassed by classmates who posted memes disparaging their gender identification on social media sites like Instagram and Telegram in 2021. Unrelenting name-calling, outings, and the dissemination of manipulated content were all

⁴⁵ 'Duo molests minor girl, one held' *Hindustan Times* (05 July 2024)
<<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/gurugram-news/duo-molests-minor-girl-one-held-101720116727095.html>> accessed 30 May 2025

experienced by the teenager. Sections 504 and 505 of the IPC (insult with intent to cause breach of peace), Section 66A of the IT Act (which was knocked down but was misquoted), and Sections 66C and 67 were the grounds for the FIR. The victim's attorney petitioned the Karnataka High Court for the prompt removal of offending content and mental health counselling, as police conducted a preliminary inquiry.⁴⁶

Case Study 5: Maharashtra Boy's Death due to Cyberbullying: A 15-year-old Nashik boy who had been cyberbullied on TikTok committed suicide in 2019. Videos mocking the boy's speech problem were posted by his friends and went viral. Parents complained, but the school did not look into it, and the local police originally wrote the matter off as unimportant. A probe was started under IPC Sections 306 (abetting suicide), 509, and IT Act Sections 66 and 67 following media attention. To combat cyberbullying, the Maharashtra Child Rights Commission also intervened and suggested statewide school-level changes.⁴⁷ The fatal results of unrestrained cyberbullying, the lack of preventive measures in schools, and the societal stigma associated with young boys' mental health were all highlighted in this unfortunate example.

LESSONS FROM CASE STUDIES

Across these diverse cases, several patterns emerge that highlight systemic gaps in India's response to cyberbullying:

Delayed Response: Law enforcement and school authorities often react only after media coverage or public pressure.

Victim Blaming: Many victims are discouraged from pursuing legal remedies due to institutional apathy or fear of social backlash.

Lack of Awareness: Misapplication of struck-down laws like Section 66A and inadequate cybercrime training among police officers are common.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ Chandrashekhar Pandey, 'Cyberbullying in India: A growing concern for parents and educators' *Times of India* (21 May 2023) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/cyberbullying-in-india-a-growing-concern-for-parents-and-educators/>> accessed 30 May 2025

Mental Health Neglect: Victims rarely receive psychological support from schools or state institutions, despite severe trauma.

Need for Integrated Remedies: A blend of legal action, counselling, parental involvement, and digital literacy education is essential to holistically address cyberbullying.

CONCLUSION

One of the most serious issues facing teens and kids in today's culture is cyberbullying, a sneaky form of harassment that occurs in the digital era. Although technology has transformed communication, education, and entertainment, it has also produced unregulated environments where kids and teenagers are frequently the targets of serious emotional and psychological abuse. Despite being intangible, the virtual world has real-world effects; it frequently causes loneliness, anxiety, despair, poor academic performance, self-harm, and, in the worst situations, suicide. There has never been a greater pressing need for strong institutional safeguards, legal protection, and public awareness due to the increased vulnerability of minors.

Despite its complexity, India's current legal system does not have a single, comprehensive law that fully handles the various facets of cyberbullying. Rather, remedies are dispersed throughout the Indian Penal Code, 1860, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and the Information Technology Act, 2000. Even if these rules are strong when taken alone, they fall short when it comes to addressing the complex issue of cyberbullying among children. Notwithstanding the existence of these rights, victims frequently face a variety of challenges, from insufficient support networks and computer illiteracy to police indifference and procedural hold-ups.

The lack of a specific legislative framework that defines, classifies, and criminalises cyberbullying is a clear flaw. As a result, law enforcement officers frequently rely on broader provisions like stalking, identity theft, or obscenity, which may not encompass the full extent of online abuse. Furthermore, victims, parents, and educators frequently fail to report such occurrences due to a lack of knowledge, which further normalises the culture of digital violence. The non-traceability of offenders, particularly when anonymity is preserved through VPNs, phoney accounts, or foreign-hosted platforms, taints investigations even when they are reported.

Case law and real-life incidents, such as the *Boys Locker Room* controversy, the *Kerala video circulation case*, and the *TikTok tragedy in Nashik*, have illustrated the grim consequences of unchecked cyberbullying. These cases have also highlighted institutional failures, particularly within educational institutions, which often exhibit reluctance in acknowledging such issues for fear of reputational damage. Schools, which are ideally supposed to function as safe spaces, sometimes become arenas of silent suffering, especially when cyberbullying is carried out by peers known to the victim.

In analysing the psychological and social ramifications, it becomes evident that cyberbullying is not just a legal issue but a **developmental, educational, and mental health crisis**. The adolescent mind, still in the process of formation, is particularly ill-equipped to deal with relentless online attacks. Shame, fear, and helplessness frequently prevent victims from speaking up, while bullies, often minors themselves, engage in such behaviour either due to peer pressure, thrill-seeking, or internalised aggression. Without adequate counselling, both the victim and the perpetrator are left to navigate the complex aftermath alone.

The need of the hour is a **multidimensional approach** that integrates legal reform, educational policy, digital literacy, parental guidance, and psychological support.