The Factors of Cyberbullying among the Basic Stage Students in the City of Al-Ain: A study on a Sample of Parents in The City of Al-Ain

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This study aimed at identifying the factors of cyberbullying among the basic stage students in the City of Al-Ain from the perspective of their parents. The study used the descriptive analytical approach in order to achieve the study objectives. The study sample consisted of 129 parents of the basic stage students who were chosen in the random way of sampling. The researcher used the electronic questionnaire as a tool for collecting data from the sample individuals, which consisted of two parts; the first part included the demographic data, and the second part consisted of 17 questions about the subject matter. The results revealed that the main reasons leading to cyberbullying are: lack of parental control; the negative impact of media on children; the low level of commitment to manners and values in our society; the prevalence of violence; and the cyberbullying, where the bully could be a victim of another bully. The results also emphasised that cyberbullying could be the reason for many psychological problems, such as depression, stress and anxiety as well as social problems, such as alienation and lack of social relationships, and in addition to academic problems, such as low academic achievement among students. Based on the results, the authors recommend: to enhance the role of the family and school in instilling good manners in our children; to insert different activities in the school curriculum to distract their attention from the bad content of the social communication methods; to invest the children's free time in developing their talent, practicing sports and different activities; and to keep them as far as possible from the virtual world.

Keywords: *Basic stage students, cyberbullying, the City of Al-Ain.*

Introduction

The technological developments have led to radical changes in the concepts of communication and the social domain, in that new concepts have begun to emerge in different domains, such as art, culture, education, media, communication, and recreation as well as the various domains of human groups, including the delinquency. The advent of the internet led to the emergence of new deviant manifestations among the youth, where the old methods of delinquency appeared in new forms.

Children constitute the largest percentage of those using the internet and its applications. This is due to the extended freedom of choice and access to virtual societies that help them to express their thinking method more freely and use the different possible media to transfer that to others. It includes the methods of harassment and aggression that the youth practice using with their peers via mobile phones and electronic mail, which is currently known as cyberbullying (Abu Douh, 2017).

Buffy and Dianne (2009) defined cyberbullying as "the distant annoyance and harassment using the methods of electronic communications by the bully, with the aim of creating an anxious and stressful atmosphere for the victim". The electronic bullying is different from the normal way of bullying, in that it is not governed by a certain time or place, and there is a lesser degree of responsibility on the bully in comparison with the normal way of bullying (Yot-Domínguez et al., 2019). The available methods of cyberbullying enable the security agencies from determining the characters and sites of the electronic bullying victims, which makes them more exposed to be targeted (Trolley et al., 2006).

The percentage of cyberbullying increases constantly with the emergence of social media networks as well as the bad usage of them, such as "Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp and Snapchat". This is in addition to their rapid prevalence between all the categories of the society, especially among the adolescent who use them, since they have digital skills that were acquired during their early employment of technology in early childhood. The majority of the new psychological studies join between the phenomenon of severe depression among adolescents and cyberbullying (Baldry et al., 2019). Causing harm to adolescents via the internet has become easier, in that the majority of adolescents and even children have smart phones that include all the modern applications (Karam, 2017).

We should educate our children about the risks of using the internet and teach them what to do in case they are exposed to an electronic problem, regardless of its nature, and the methods that they should use in response, since the new generation interacts with technology as quickly as it is actually developing. Therefore, we should provide them with the cultural programs that would reduce the opportunity of being a victim of cyberbullying.

The risks of cyberbullying surpasses that of the usual way of bullying. Often, the bully is anonymous to the victim, and the bullying material sometimes exists on information networking sites and the data is widely prevalent beyond the borders of time and place; indicating that the Cyberbullying is endless.

Several studies have shown that cyberbullying could be worse than the usual form of bullying. Those studies suggested that about 43 per cent of children are exposed to intimidation via the internet; that one child out of four children was exposed to cyberbullying more than once; 70 per cent of students experienced frequent bullying via the internet; and 80 per cent of the adolescents used the mobile phone regularly, making it the most common vehicle for cyberbullying (Al-Sheikhi, 2019). The results revealed that 68 per cent of adolescents agree that cyberbullying is considered as a dangerous problem; 81 per cent think that getting rid of digital bullying is easier than the usual or traditional bullying which takes place face to face; while 90 per cent of the adolescents who saw or read bullying messages while surfing the internet suggested that they neglected them; and about 84 per cent asked the bully to stop (Karam, 2017).

Cyberbullying is a new phenomenon and which people throughout the world suffer from its implications. Those interested in the educational issues, were interested in studying this phenomenon as it represented a major reason for the academic decline among students. It could also stimulate some students to hate the academic courses and drop out of schools (Rachmatan, 2019). The phenomenon of severe violence among students and practicing the various types of violence against each other via the electronic media networks is considered as one of the negative phenomena in the Arabic society in general and the Emirate society. This is due to the impact on the personality and performance of students, either at school or at home. The students will have a constant feeling of fear and anxiety which would, in turn, be reflected in their academic achievement and they would withdraw from participating in the school activities. Therefore, they wouldn't be able to utilise the educational programs and thus, they could drop out of the school and do dangerous criminal activities which would, in turn, affect their future life (Bahnasai & Hassan, 2015). Accordingly, we can cite the problem of this research in attempting to explore this phenomenon and identify the factors which affect cyberbullying. That is why, the main objective of the study is represented by identifying the factors of cyberbullying among the basic stage students in the City of Al-Ain.

Literature Review

Bullying, with its social, verbal or physical patterns towards others, is considered as one of the problems that have negative consequences and effects on the bully or the victim of bullying, and the school environment or the society as a whole, in that school bullying affects the social, psychological and security structure of the school society (Maqrani, 2017).

Al-Amar (2016) conducted a study to detect the relationship between cyberbullying and internet addiction among the male and female students of applied teaching. The study sample consisted of 140 male and female students from the students of applied teaching in the state of Kuwait. The study results showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between cyberbullying and internet addiction among the male and female students of applied teaching in the state of Kuwait, and that there are statistically significant differences in the internet addiction attributed to the variable of gender, in favour of males (Abu Douh, 2017).

Other study results showed that the children whose age ranged between 8–16 years old recognised these threats more than the parents themselves. About 16 per cent of the children expressed their concerns that they may be more exposed to cyberbullying via the internet as compared to being exposed to bullying in real life. Meanwhile, half of the children in the study sample expressed similar concerns about being exposed to bullying in the virtual world and the real world. The study results showed that only 4 per cent of the children emphasised that they were exposed to cyberbullying in comparison to 12 per cent who said that they were exposed to bullying in the real world (Abid, 2018).

Several studies (Schneider et al., 2018) suggested that the percentage of committing suicide increased among the students, especially those who were victims of cyberbullying. The studies also (Lenhart et al., 2007) suggested that adolescents use the internet daily and continuously, especially the social media networks, in that the students who use these sites are exposed to personal attacks and harassment on a daily basis, and that the negative emotions that the adolescent students have are transmitted to school.

This problem is extremely relevant and even the Ministry of Education in the United Arab Emirates aims to solve this question. The Ministry, with the cooperation with the educational directorates, is interested in providing safety and security to all the students from the various teaching stages in the country (Abid, 2018). Since cyberbullying is an offence, serious criminal penalties and fines for cybercrime are provided for in the UAE, Europe, and America (Shestak et al., 2019).

Cyberbullying provokes other conflicts for the Arab world aspects. The social media networks have enhanced the ability of women to establish social relationships outside the traditional domains. Therefore, these methods have contributed to liberating women from the familial and societal constraints, in that we can say that the social media networks, with their diverse effects, satisfy the ambitions of feminists in the Arab societies (Mahmoud, 2011). Undoubtedly, the modern communication methods have led to serious changes in creating personality, in that they enable individuals to obtain information and express their opinions and ideas, which represented an additional component that wasn't possible in the past.

Methods and Materials

This study used the descriptive statistical approach. Therefore, the random way of sampling was used in order to collect data via the questionnaire.

The Study Population and Sample

The study population consisted of all the parents of the basic stage students in the City of Al-Ain during the academic year of 2019/2020. The study sample consisted of a number of parents of the basic stage students, where the electronic questionnaire was distributed to the sample individuals in order to collect data using the random sampling method.

The study instrument is the questionnaire which consisted of 17 questions, where the first section consisted of primary data about gender, age and the number of children, followed by the short and open-ended questions in order to collect data from the study sample individuals.

A detailed list of the questions is provided as follows:

1. Indicate your gender.
2. How old are you?
3. Which of the following social media networks do your children use? i.e. YouTube, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook.
4. Do you recognise the concept of cyberbullying?
5. How much time do your children spend surfing the internet per day?
6. How much time do your children spend surfing the internet during the weekend?
7. What is the main reason for the children's usage for the internet?
8. Do you monitor your children's usage for the internet?
9. Do you determine certain conditions with regard to your children's usage for the internet?
10. In your opinion, which of these methods are more commonly used in cyberbullying?
11. Have your children ever been exposed to any types of cyberbullying?
12. How will you act if one of your children was exposed to cyberbullying?
13. Has anybody ever discussed with you the methods through which you and your children can be safe when using the internet?
14. If the answer is yes, who talked to you about cyberbullying?
15. In your opinion, what are the main reasons and factors that led to cyberbullying?
16. In your opinion, what are the problems caused by cyberbullying to the students?
17. In your opinion, how can we reduce cyberbullying?

Collecting Data

The questionnaire was prepared electronically in order to collect data. After distributing the questionnaires, the data was collected and analysed using the statistical tables.

The Human Limits

The parents of the basic stage students in the City of Al-Ain.

The Temporal Limits

March – September, 2019.

The Objective Limits

The factors of cyberbullying among the basic stage students in the City of Al-Ain.

Results and Discussion

We obtained the following results of the questionnaire:

Table 1: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	114	89%
Male	15	11%
Total	129	100%

Table 1 shows that the majority of the study sample individuals are females, at about 89 per cent, while the males comprised 11 per cent, indicating that the responses of the female parents are more than the male parents. Given that the questionnaire was completed electronically via a Google search engine by both males and females, it is obvious that mothers are more cooperative than fathers in completing the questionnaire electronically, since fathers are busy in doing their work or they could be less interested in this topic.

Table 2: Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20–30	38	30%
31–40	67	52%
41–50	21	16%
51+	3	2%
Total	129	100%

Based on Table 2, we can see that the ages of the majority of the sample individuals ranged between 31–40 years old, with a percentage of 52 per cent. This was followed by 20–30 years old at 30 per cent, 41–50 years old at 16 percent, and those aged 51 and over consisted of about 2 per cent, indicating that the majority of the sample individuals are middle aged.

As we can see from Figure 1, 90 per cent of the children use YouTube more than any other social communication method, followed by WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. YouTube is considered as an international program for disseminating personal, cultural and educational videos.

Figure 1. Results of Question Three
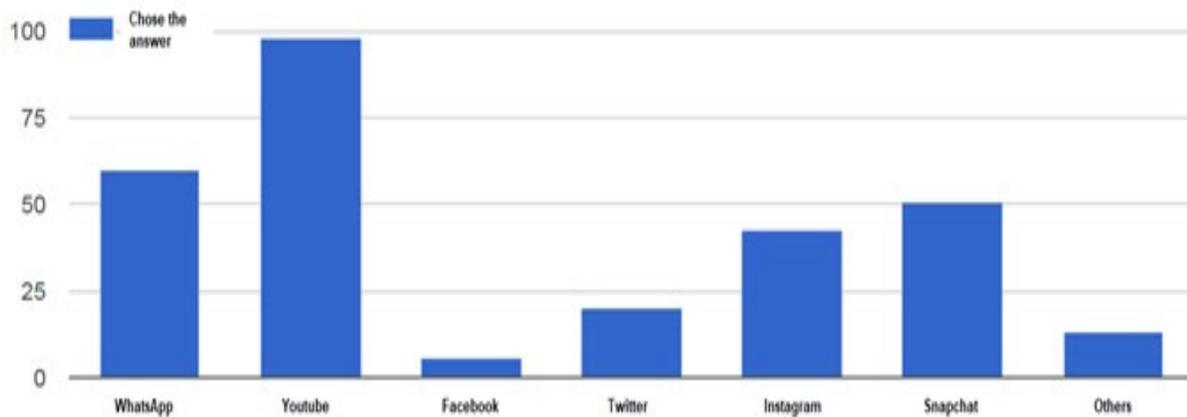
Answering question four, 83 per cent of the sample individuals understood the concept of cyberbullying, while those with no knowledge comprised 17 per cent. This could provide an impression that the majority of people are knowledgeable about the concept of cyberbullying due to the prevalence of using the digital technology in the Emirates society.

Table 3: Results of Question Five

Number of hours	Frequency	Percentage
Less than an hour	29	23%
1–2 hours	50	39%
3–4 hours	40	31%
5–6 hours	6	5%
More than 6 hours	3	2%
Total	128	100%

The results from Table 3 show that parents are able to determine the surfing hours for their children and educate them regarding the disadvantages of spending a long time surfing the internet. If we assumed that the average time of surfing the internet is 3–4 hours per day for the students who have homework to do, it is a long period of time. It would be better to make use of this time in doing their school homework.

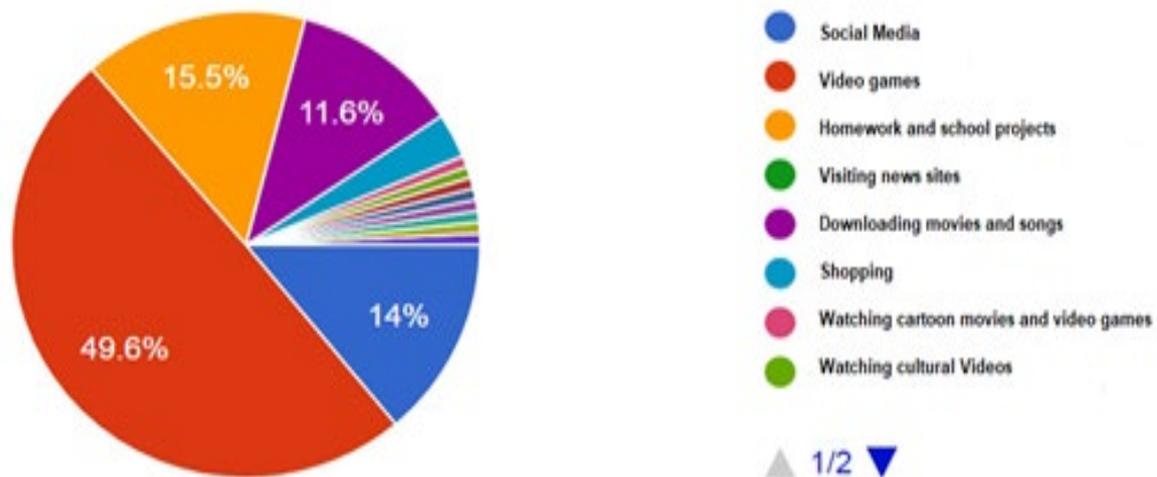**Table 4:** Results of Question Six

Number of hours	Frequency	Percentage
Less than three hours	50	39%
3–6 hours	53	41%
7–10 hours	23	18%
More than 10 hours	3	2%
Total	129	100%

This shows that there is a relatively high usage for the internet during the weekend in comparison with the other days of the week. The usage should not surpass two hours per day due to the negative effects of the devices on them. We can see that the time of using the internet during the week is acceptable, considering that it is difficult to prevent the students from their routine usage of the internet during this stage.

According to answers of question seven (Figure 2), 50 per cent of the sample individuals suggest that the main reason for using the internet is playing electronic games. A further 16 per cent notice that their children use the internet for completing their homework and school projects; 14 per cent notice that their children use the internet for accessing social communication sites; 12 per cent for downloading videos and songs; while 5 per cent use the internet for shopping; and only 2 per cent for accessing news sites and other purposes. Therefore, it is clear that a high percentage of children (50 per cent) use the internet for playing electronic games, indicating that that they are addicted to playing these games which would, in turn, affect their behaviours and psychological state in regard to dealing with others.

Figure 2. Results of Question Seven

129 responses

The results of question eight show that 91 per cent of the parents monitor their children's usage of the internet, while only 9 per cent do not. However, we do believe that the parents' monitoring of their children's usage of the internet isn't enough by itself, in that they should also recognise the programs that their children are using and whether they may cause harm to their mental and psychological health in the future.

Table 5: Answers about the conditions of children's usage of the internet

Conditions	Frequency	Percentage
Determining usage hours	67	53%
Using the internet during the weekend	20	16%
Not using the internet in the bedroom	11	9%
Knowing the passwords	16	13%
Nothing	11	9%
Total	127	100%

Based on Table 5, we can see that the majority of the sample individuals determined the usage hours, suggesting that they care about their children and the disadvantages of their continuous usage of it. It is necessary that parents monitor their children's usage for the internet in the early stages, since it will be difficult to control them in the future.

Table 6: Results of Question Ten

| Methods	Frequency	Percentage
WhatsApp	34	27%
YouTube	31	25%
Twitter	6	5%
Instagram	17	14%
Snap chat	34	27%
Others (electronic games)	2	2%
Total	124	100%

Reviewing the results of Table 6, we can see that Snapchat and WhatsApp are the most used applications in cyberbullying, at about 27 per cent. This indicates that the characteristics of videotaping and chatting using SnapChat and WhatsApp could be used in a negative manner, such as cyberbullying by disseminating rumours and abusing others.

The findings of question eleven show that 91 per cent of the parents stated that their children were not exposed to cyberbullying, while only nine per cent were. It indicates that the parents should be more aware of this phenomenon and the way of dealing with it.

Figure 3 shows that the majority of the sample individuals will consult a social worker when one of their children is exposed to cyberbullying, followed by confronting the bully and informing the teacher. This informs us about the extent to which the parents are aware about the importance of social workers in dealing with the cases of cyberbullying experienced by the students of today. The technological developments of this era bring about so many problems. Therefore, the specialists should be informed about them and educate parents about the best methods for dealing with them.

Figure 3. Results of Question Twelve

112 responses
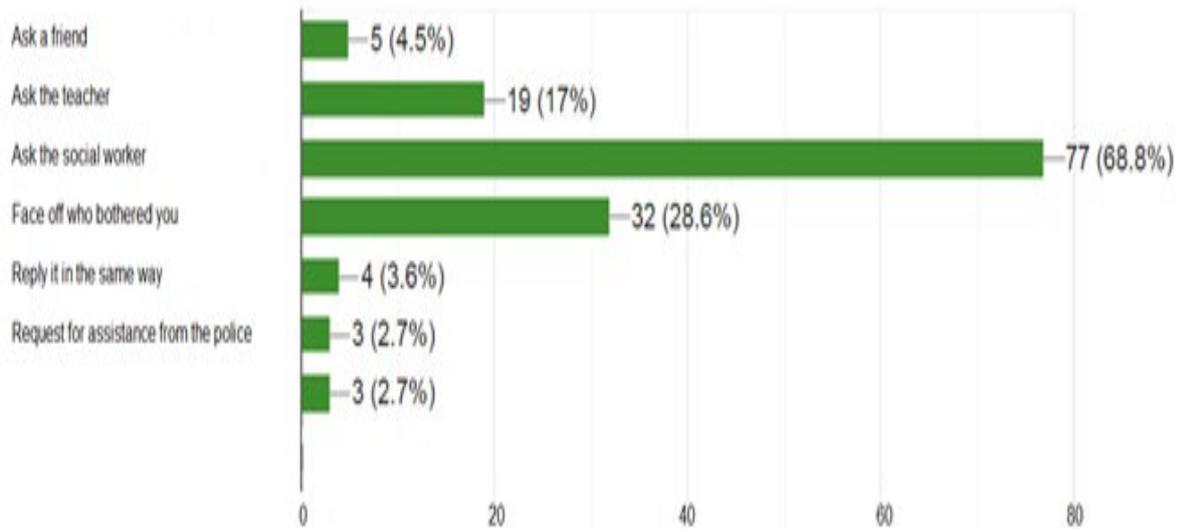
It's important to highlight that 57 per cent of the sample individuals have previously discussed with others the methods through which they and their children can be safe when using the internet (question thirteen). Therefore, there should be more interest in educating people about the methods through which they can be safe when using the internet.

**Table 7:** Results of Question Fourteen

	Frequency	Percentage
Siblings	22	36%
Teachers	20	33%
Friends	12	23%
Others (society police)	5	9%
Total	59	100%

Table 7 shows that the source of knowledge of the sample individuals about cyberbullying is from siblings at about 36 per cent, teachers with a percentage of 33 per cent, friends with a percentage of 23 per cent, and other sources with a percentage of 9 per cent, where the other resources are related to the courses of social support centres and society police. The government needs to develop a new direction of social policy responsible for cyberbullying.

Figure 4 shows that the main reasons and factors that led to cyberbullying from the sample individuals are represented by the lack of parental control, followed by the negative impact of

media on children, the absence of ethics and values in our society, the prevalence of violence, and finally, that the bully could be a victim of another bully.

Figure 4. Results of Question Fifteen

128 responses
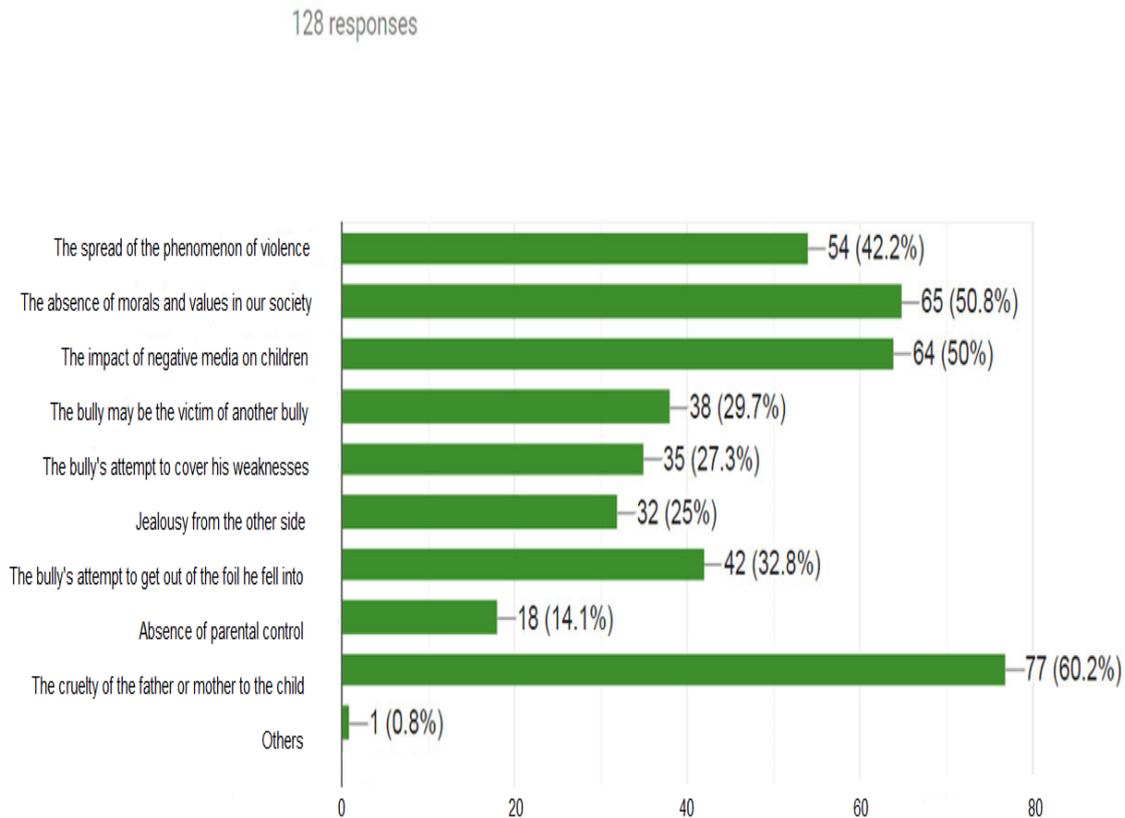
Based on figure 5, the most common problems caused by cyberbullying are represented by psychological problems, such as depression, fear, stress and anxiety. This is followed by social problems, such as isolation and lack of relationships, and finally, academic problems, such as distraction, participation in the classroom activities and the low academic achievement.

Figure 5. Results from Question Sixteen

126 responses
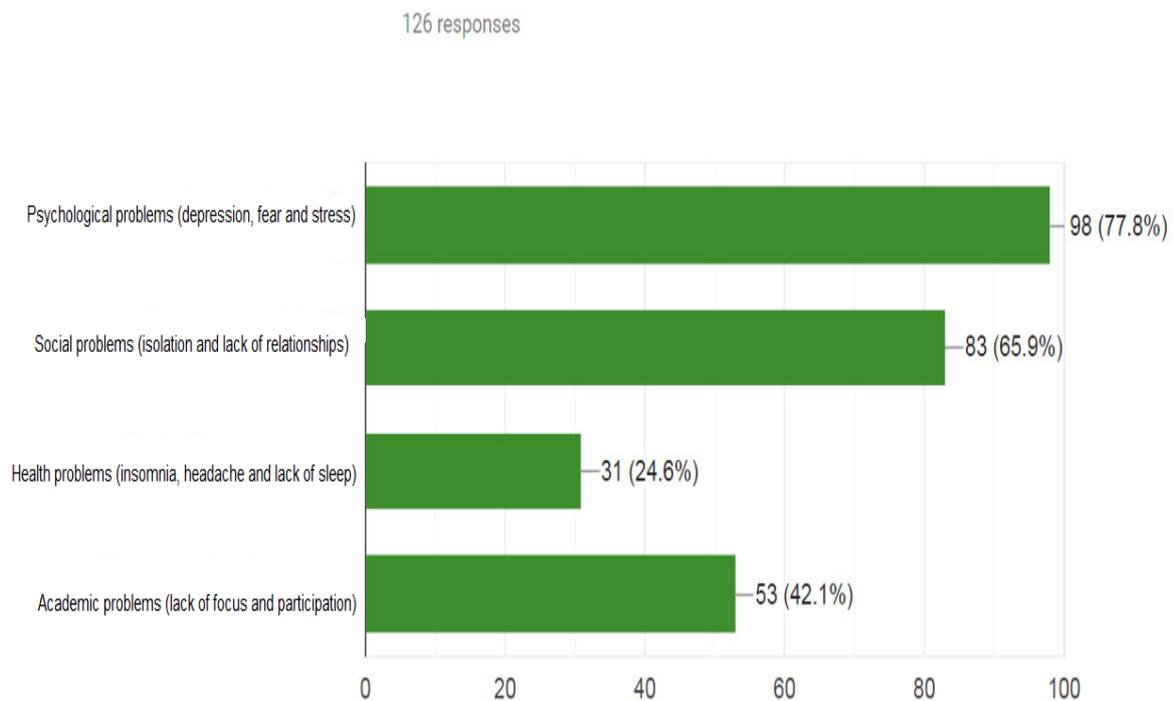
The ways for reducing cyberbullying from the perspective of the sample individuals (question seventeen) are represented by communicating with parents and telling them when one is exposed to any harm by the internet; not sharing data and life details with others; keeping the suspicious messages closed; blocking anyone who threatens you; protecting the passwords of accounts and devices; as well as not storing on the internet the things that we would not like to share.

According to the results, we can provide the following recommendations:
1. To enhance the role of the family and school in instilling good manners in our children, as well as to insert different activities in the school curriculum in order to distract their attention from the bad content of the social communication methods.
2. To invest the children's free time in developing their talent, practicing sports and different activities, as well as keep them as far as possible from the virtual world.
3. To highlight the importance of the family role in accommodating children and making them accustomed to self-confidence and constructive dialogue in order to not become victims of bullying.

4. To conduct more educational courses by the society police, the institutions of family development and social support for teachers and parents in order to demonstrate cyberbullying as well as the way of dealing with the bully and the victim of cyberbullying.
5. To develop treatment and counselling programs for the victims of cyberbullying.
6. To conduct intensive studies in this domain and seeking support of them by the various authorities and institutions for the purpose of identifying their causes and factors and thus, attempting to deal with them.

Conclusion

The main reasons leading to cyberbullying are represented by a lack of parental control; the negative impact of media on children; a lack of commitment to ethics and values in our society; and the prevalence of violence as well as cyberbullying, where the bully himself could be a victim of another bullying individual. The prevalence of cyberbullying in the communication process related to electronic games is attributed to a majority of the age categories, including young people, who are still immature. In order not to be a victim for such an act, parents should educate their children and guide them not to practice cyberbullying or be affected by it.

Cyberbullying could be a reason for many psychological problems, such as depression, stress and anxiety, as well as social problems, such as alienation and lack of social relationships, in addition to academic problems, such as low academic achievement and distraction among students.

The methods to reduce the cases of cyberbullying are represented by committing with the parents and telling them as soon as the child is exposed to cyberbullying via the internet; not sharing our data and life details with others; keeping the suspected messages closed; blocking anyone who threatens you; protecting the passwords of accounts and devices; and not sharing your personal data and family affairs via the internet.

The study's value lies in the importance of the topic that it is addressing, since it is considered as one of the educational developments that has resulted from the evolution of communication methods.

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