

Impact of Screen Time and Cyberbullying on Depression in Adolescents

Shengyuan Huang

Shanghai Starriver Bilingual School, Shanghai, 200000, China

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Depression, Screen Time.

Abstract: Teenagers' increasing use of the internet has led to a number of problems, such as excessive screen time and cyberbullying, which are both closely linked to psychological conditions. This study investigates the connection between adolescent depression, screen time, and cyberbullying. Overuse of screens, especially Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD), has been shown to have long-term reciprocal impacts on anxiety and depressive symptoms. Age and gender disparities also affect how severe these consequences are, underscoring the necessity of specialised therapies. Adolescents' mental health is severely impacted by cyberbullying, which is defined by negative online conduct and can result in depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, and even suicide thoughts. One protective component that has been found to lessen the detrimental impacts of cyberbullying is social support, especially from parents. Reducing screen time, encouraging outdoor activities, improving online moral literacy, and building stronger peer and family support networks are all important, according to this study. To address these expanding problems and enhance adolescents' mental health, targeted preventative and intervention techniques are crucial.

1 INTRODUCTION

With the popularity of the Internet, the issues of adolescent mental health are becoming more prevalent in society. This not only causes people physical problems like obesity, poor eyesight and rarefaction of bone, but also mental issues. Online platforms and technological devices offer connectivity and convenience, but excessive usage of them has had unforeseen detrimental effects. These issues highlight a growing societal concern: the mental health crisis among adolescents exacerbated by modern digital lifestyles. Overuse of screens has been connected to both mental and physical health problems, including obesity, blurred eyesight, and sleep disruptions. Another consequence of digital communication is cyberbullying, which has grown to be a widespread problem that endangers the wellbeing of adolescents. In contrast to traditional bullying, cyberbullying persists, spreads harmful content extensively, and penetrates private locations. Emotional pain, loneliness, and low self-esteem are common among victims of cyberbullying, and these symptoms can worsen into depression, social disengagement, and suicide thoughts. This article aims to evaluate the relationship of screen time and

cyberbully in relationship to depression. This study is essential for guiding educational initiatives and public health policies meant to lessen the detrimental impacts of excessive screen usage and cyberbullying on mental health. By pinpointing the main causes of adolescent depression, it provides a basis for developing more potent preventative and support plans that take into account the particular difficulties presented by the digital age.

2 INTRODUCTION TO THE KEY CONCEPTS

Screen time: Screen time is the amount of time spent on electric devices with a screen involving smartphone, computer, television, etc.

Cyberbully: Bullying using digital gadgets is referred to as cyberbullying. Sending, publishing, or disseminating hurtful, malicious, or deceptive content about another person is considered cyberbullying. As a result, victims could suffer from long time psychological and physical issues like sleeping disorder, depression or even suicide.

Depression: Depression is a mental state which usually exhibits low mood and aversion to life. It

influences about 280 million people, which is about 3.5% of the population in the world (Jeong et al., 2019). Depression can alter a person's thoughts, behavior and feelings. When it comes to individuals, they could suffer from anorexia, feeling depressed and insomnia.

3 THE EFFECT OF SCREEN TIME ON DEPRESSION IN ADOLESCENTS

The sample size was 820 8 and 12 years students. This is a 10-months cross sectional study. Conclusion: There was a clear positive relationship between IGD, and negative emotions... This is cross section. The research design is cross-sectional pattern and is not dynamic without long-term follow up (Rajan et al., 2024).

399 primary school pupils participated in the research. The cross-lagged analysis showed that baseline depression predicted IGD severity at 12 months, and vice versa (Sarvan et al., 2025). The follow-up time is too short though it is a longitudinal study and it lack the ratio of gender. Gender differences may lead to differences in the effect of IGD on depression.

In another study, the participants are students from grades 4–9 in Chinese primary and secondary schools. The results reveal that gender and age differences exist (Xie & Tang, 2024). Depression scale and gaming addiction were shown to be positively and statistically significantly correlated.

It is evident that some adolescents undergoing cancer treatment exhibit high levels of digital gaming addiction, depression, and anxiety. It has small sample size and is not dynamic. It cannot reveal the motion and not keep up with the changes (Hu et al., 2021).

4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CYBERBULLYING AND DEPRESSION

With a total of more than 100,000 people and 74 effect sizes, this study examined 57 empirical studies from 17 different nations (Han & Zhao, 2024). Meta analysis shows that victimisation of cyberbullying among adolescents was positively correlated with depression. Another study revealed impact of cyberbullying as well (Sun et al., 2025).

Additionally, the influence of avoidance coping mechanisms on depression was stronger as face consciousness rose, hence moderating the mediation.

In order to lessen the influence of cyberbullying on depressive symptoms in this susceptible group, our findings give important insights into how and when cyberbullying impacts teenage depression. They may also provide direction for preventative and therapeutic efforts.

In the third study, results demonstrate a strong inverse correlation between late-adolescent cyberbullying behaviours and cyber moral literacy (CML) (Reed et al., 2016).

(1) CML promoted cyberbullying; (2) moral disengagement plays a partially mediating role the relationship; (3) guilt plays a moderating role the association between CML and cyberbullying. Research has shown that enhancing one's online moral literacy can successfully stop cyberbullying. Furthermore, individual factors also affect the efficiency of online literacy. Though other cognitive and physiological elements might potentially be involved, the impact of emotional factors is the main focus of current research.

In the fourth study, the study included Chinese and 445 American graders (Wright, 2024).

Both Chinese and American adolescents' self-harm, depression, subjective health complaints, and cyberbullying victimisation were found to be negatively correlated with high levels of perceived parental social support, with the effects being more noticeable for Chinese adolescents. On the other hand, American teenagers and their perceptions of friend support showed the opposite trends. This study emphasises how crucial it is to provide customised interventions to lower the prevalence of cyberbullying across various teenage populations.

More longitudinal methods should be used in future studies to identify temporal patterns and investigate the contributions of other factors including socioeconomic status and peer and parent attachment styles. Additional research should also be conducted to find the connection between depression and cyberbullying.

5 DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

Cyberbullying can seriously affect the physical and mental health of teenagers, from the beginning of sadness, frustration, loneliness, pressure, gradually to depression, self-esteem, helplessness, social anxiety

and other negative emotional experience. If allowed to develop, bullied teenagers may also produce suicidal ideation, suicidal behavior, resulting in serious consequences. Cyberbullying was associated with moderate to severe depressive symptoms, substance use, ideation and suicide attempts.

There are overall four major influences of depression in life. First, the damage of mental health. Depressed patients often feel deep sadness, despair and helplessness, continuous depression makes them unable to enjoy life, seriously affecting their mental health. Patients may have psychological symptoms such as inferiority, self-blame, anxiety and panic, and their mental health level is significantly reduced. Second, it can create social barriers. People with depression often show avoidance of social activities, lack of interest in social participation, and feel lonely and alienated from others. This social disorder not only increases the patients' sense of loneliness and loss, but also affects their normal communication and interaction with others, and has a negative impact on social relations. Third, depression has caused major troubles to the work and study of patients. Patients may have problems such as inattention, decision-making difficulties, memory loss and work efficiency, resulting in poor work performance and lagging academic progress. Fourth, the quality of life will decline inevitably. Depression seriously affects the quality of life of patients, sustained painful emotions and loss of interest in life, making it difficult for patients to enjoy the good things in life, and feel hopeless and hopeless, this decline in quality of life will further increase their pain and deterioration of the condition (Varghese & Pistole, 2017).

Overall conclusion of the current study is adolescents are suffering from mental issue caused by internet is a global problem. The negative effect on mental health can lead to depression. Manifestations of depression are insomnia, lose interest in social and study and even suicide. Spending too much time on the Internet is harmful, it can interfere with children's sleeping, eating, socializing (Xue et al., 2023). This could cause them to be self-closing and finally leads to mental issues like depression and anxiety. Cyberbullying may also be the one to blame. If adolescents experienced cyberbullying, it may leave them with psychological trauma, and they might 'cannot relief for a long time. If meanwhile they lack help and are isolated, they may become sensitive, doubt themselves and unwilling to communicate with others. Response measures are to limit screen time, promote outdoor activities and encourage them to communicate with their friends and family members. In this way, it could enhance

children's overall health. The Internet is not an outlaw place. When surfing on the Internet, people should think independently and not follow the trend. Individuals should help the bullied and bring the bullies to justice

It is crucial to take proactive steps to lessen the impacts of screen time and online bullying on teenage depression, given the rising concerns about these issues. Teenagers are especially susceptible to the detrimental effects of excessive screen usage and cyberbullying, which have both been connected to an increase in symptoms of depression. Here are some recommendations, with a focus on evidence-based therapy techniques, for reducing teen depression.

Overuse of screens, particularly social media, can exacerbate anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, and loneliness. Limiting screen time is crucial for parents and other carers to avoid depression. Setting explicit limits on screen time has been shown to enhance sleep quality and encourage teenagers to participate in more stimulating, healthy activities like sports, reading, and face-to-face interaction. Children and teenagers should not spend more than two hours a day using screens for leisure, according to the American Academy of Paediatrics. Promoting outdoor recreation or pastimes can aid in lowering the dangers of excessive screen use.

Promoting digital literacy is essential given the prevalence of cyberbullying and its detrimental impact on teenage mental health. Teens should be taught how to use social media in a responsible manner, how to protect themselves online, and how to recognise the potential damage of online bullying. Programs that teach teenagers about the warning signs of cyberbullying, the value of self-care, and how to report negative behaviour can be facilitated by parents and schools. Teens may take charge of their online experiences and steer clear of circumstances that could cause them to feel depression if there is open conversation about the dangers of online interactions.

One of the best treatment approaches for treating teenage depression is cognitive behavioural therapy(CBT). It focusses on recognising and combating harmful thinking patterns as well as creating coping strategies to control feelings and actions. CBT may help adolescents who are experiencing depression as a result of excessive screen usage or cyberbullying by addressing the underlying cognitive biases that fuel their emotional misery. Teenagers who use CBT can improve their coping mechanisms, develop resilience, and reframe their views.

6 CONCLUSION

According to the study's findings, adolescents' mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, are greatly exacerbated by both inappropriate electronic device use and cyberbullying. Overuse of screens is linked to negative psychological and physical consequences, including disturbed sleep cycles, decreased physical activity, and heightened social isolation, all of which worsen mental health conditions. It has been discovered that Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD), a particular type of excessive screen time, has a strong correlation with anxiety and depression. This suggests that the severity of IGD and depressive symptoms are correlated in both directions. Notably, age and gender disparities affect IGD's impact and prevalence, calling for focused intervention techniques.

Another significant factor that has a significant effect on teenagers' mental health is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying victims frequently suffer from depression, social anxiety, loneliness, and low self-esteem. These feelings can worsen into severe depressive symptoms and even thoughts of suicide. Research indicates a strong positive correlation between depression and being a victim of cyberbullying, with coping mechanisms and face consciousness acting as moderators. Teenagers who have little social support—especially from family—are more susceptible to the harmful impacts of cyberbullying, which emphasises how important parental participation is in reducing its effects. To address these problems, preventative and intervention strategies are crucial. Teenagers' mental health can be enhanced by methods to cut back on excessive screen time, such as encouraging outside activities and restricting access to electronic devices. Improving online moral literacy, cultivating empathy, and offering sufficient social support from peers and parents are all helpful strategies for combating cyberbullying. Awareness campaigns that inform teenagers about the dangers of cyberbullying and the significance of getting assistance should be put in place by communities and schools. Furthermore, treatments that are specifically designed to meet the requirements of various groups—taking into account factors like gender, age, and cultural differences—can be as effective as possible.

REFERENCES

- H. Jeong, H. W. Yim, S. Y. Lee, H. K. Lee, M. N. Potenza, S. J. Jo, H. J. Son. Reciprocal relationship between depression and Internet gaming disorder in children: A 12-month follow-up of the iCURE study using cross-lagged path analysis. *J. Behav. Addict.* 8(4), 725-732 (2019)
- K. P. Reed, R. L. Cooper, W. R. Nugent, K. Russell. Cyberbullying: A literature review of its relationship to adolescent depression and current intervention strategies. *J. Hum. Behav. Soc. Environ.* 26(1), 37-45 (2016)
- M. E. Varghese, M. C. Pistole. College student cyberbullying: Self - esteem, depression, loneliness, and attachment. *J. Coll. Couns.* 20(1), 7-21 (2017)
- M. F. Wright. The Associations among Cyberbullying Victimization and Chinese and American Adolescents' Mental Health Issues: The Protective Role of Perceived Parental and Friend Support. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health.* 21(8), 1069 (2024)
- R. E. Rajan, S. Gunasekaran, V. Duraisamy, B. M. Mathew, T. M. Vinolia, P. D. Gainneos. Internet gaming disorder: The prevalence and associated gaming behavior, anxiety, and depression among 8-12-year-old children of private schools in Salem city, India. *J. Indian. Soc. Pedod. Prev. Dent.* 42(2), 98-103 (2024)
- S. Han, L. Zhao. Relationship between cyberbullying victimization and depression in middle school students: the mediating role of coping strategies and the moderating role of face consciousness. *BMC. Psychol.* 12(1), 785 (2024)
- S. Sarvan, P. Bekar, M. Erkul, E. Efe. The Relationship Between Digital Game Addiction and Levels of Anxiety and Depression in Adolescents Receiving Cancer Treatment. *Cancer. Nurs.* 48(1), 12-18 (2025)
- Xue, Y., Xue, B., Zheng, X., Shi, L., Liang, P., Xiao, S., ... & Zhang, C. Associations between Internet addiction and psychological problems among adolescents: description and possible explanations. *Frontiers in Psychology.* 14, 1097331 (2023).
- Y. Hu, Y. Bai, Y. Pan, S. Li. Cyberbullying victimization and depression among adolescents: A meta-analysis. *Psychiatry. Res.* 305, 114198 (2021)
- Y. X. Sun, C. H. Cao, Z. J. Tang, F. M. Huang, X. B. Zhong, I. H. Chen. Moral disengagement as mediator and guilt as moderator between cyber moral literacy and cyberbullying among late adolescents. *Sci. Rep.* 15(1), 43 (2025)
- Y. Xie, L. Tang. The symptom network of internet gaming addiction, depression, and anxiety among children and adolescents. *Sci. Rep.* 14(1), 29732 (2024)