

Cyberbullying in focus: A photovoice inquiry

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Abstract

Aim: This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of junior high school students who have experienced cyberbullying in public high schools in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Using a participatory Photovoice approach, the study sought to foreground students' perspectives and translate their insights into context-sensitive school-based recommendations.

Methodology: Twelve junior high school students participated in a Photovoice process, capturing photographs that represented their experiences and engaging in semi-structured interviews guided by the SHOWED framework. Data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis with collaborative validation to ensure credibility and participant-centered interpretation.

Results: Four major themes emerged: (1) Invisible Sufferings, reflecting hidden emotional distress; (2) Overlooking the Signs: "It's Just Online Stuff," highlighting normalization and dismissal of online harassment by school authorities; (3) Pillars of Strength, emphasizing family and peer support; and (4) Building Bridges Towards Resolution and Healing, underscoring the importance of creating safer online spaces and promotion of moral responsibility in digital interactions.

Conclusion: The findings indicated that students' experiences of cyberbullying involved hidden emotional distress, overlooked incidents, and reliance on supportive networks. The development of a youth formation program, "Kabataang Clicktibo: Click to Protect", guided by multi-level support and ethical digital practices, can empower students, enhance reporting mechanisms, and foster resilience and responsible online behavior.

Keywords: *cyberbullying, experiences, empowerment, junior high school, photovoice, reflections, youth formation program*

INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying had emerged as a significant global concern affecting adolescents' emotional well-being, social relationships, and academic engagement. With the rapid expansion of digital technologies and social media platforms, young people had become increasingly exposed to online interactions that involved harassment, humiliation, and social exclusion. Empirical studies indicated that cyberbullying victimization was associated with negative psychological outcomes such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and decreased academic participation among adolescents (Agustini et al., 2024; Arif et al., 2024). Furthermore, the widespread use of digital communication technologies had intensified adolescents' exposure to online environments where cyberbullying and other forms of digital aggression frequently occurred, making it a growing concern for the psychological well-being of young users (Barragán Martín et al., 2021).

Despite efforts to strengthen child protection policies, challenges such as underreporting, limited awareness of reporting mechanisms, and disparities in digital literacy continued to hinder effective prevention and intervention (Englander, 2021; Han et al., 2021).

Although attention to cyberbullying in the Philippines had increased, several gaps remained in the literature. Most existing studies focused on senior high school or college populations, leaving junior high school students underrepresented despite their increasing exposure to digital environments. Additionally, many studies relied on quantitative approaches that measured prevalence and statistical relationships but offered limited insight into the

lived experiences, emotional responses, and coping strategies of victims. There was also limited use of participatory and visual research methodologies that enabled adolescents to actively express and interpret their experiences within their social contexts. To address these gaps, this study employed a participatory photovoice approach to explore the lived experiences of junior high school students who had experienced cyberbullying, using participant-generated photographs and narratives to document their emotional struggles, coping strategies, and reflections on school and family support systems.

This study made several significant contributions to the field of cyberbullying research. First, in terms of theoretical contribution, it expanded existing understandings of cyberbullying by examining adolescents' lived experiences and meaning-making processes through a qualitative lens, providing deeper insight into how cyberbullying was perceived and internalized by junior high school students. Second, in terms of methodological contribution, this study demonstrated the applicability of the Photovoice approach in investigating cyberbullying within the Philippine educational context, highlighting its value as a participatory and visual method that empowered students to express their experiences beyond traditional survey-based approaches. Third, in terms of contribution to qualitative cyberbullying scholarship, this study offered context-specific insights into the experiences of Filipino learners, thereby enriching the limited body of qualitative research on cyberbullying in Philippine schools and informing the development of culturally responsive interventions and youth formation programs (Wright, 2024; Shao et al., 2024).

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Global Upsurge in Cyberbullying Cases

The reviewed literature indicated that cyberbullying had become a global concern affecting adolescents' psychological well-being, social relationships, and academic performance. Increased use of digital platforms exposed students to various forms of online harassment, which were associated with emotional distress, anxiety, and depression. The expansion of online communication during and after the COVID-19 pandemic further intensified cyberbullying incidents worldwide. Researchers therefore emphasized the importance of implementing preventive strategies, digital literacy programs, and mental health support systems to address cyberbullying effectively (Agustiningih et al., 2024; Arif et al., 2024; Barragán Martín et al., 2021).

Unmasking Cyberbullying Cases in the Philippines

Studies conducted in the Philippine context showed that cyberbullying commonly occurred among high school students due to the widespread use of social media platforms. These experiences negatively affected students' emotional well-being, academic engagement, and social relationships. Gender differences were also observed, with female students reporting stronger psychological impacts. Despite existing school initiatives addressing bullying and cyberbullying, challenges such as underreporting and limited digital literacy remained prevalent. These findings highlighted the need for culturally responsive interventions that addressed the experiences of Filipino adolescents (Agustiningih et al., 2024; Jin, 2025; Han et al., 2021).

Forms of Cyberbullying

The literature identified several forms of cyberbullying, including trolling, flaming, cyberstalking, phishing, blackmail, and image-based abuse. These behaviors occurred through online platforms where anonymity and rapid communication intensified their harmful effects. Studies indicated that repeated exposure to these forms of online aggression contributed to psychological and emotional consequences such as depression, anxiety, and social isolation. Understanding these different manifestations of cyberbullying was therefore considered essential in developing effective prevention strategies and school policies (Öztürk et al., 2025).

Legal Framework and Policies

Research showed that governments and educational institutions implemented legal frameworks and policies aimed at addressing cyberbullying and protecting students from online harassment. These initiatives sought to promote safe learning environments and responsible digital behavior among students. However, studies also suggested that the effectiveness of these policies depended on proper implementation, monitoring, and collaboration among stakeholders. Limitations such as weak enforcement and limited awareness continued to affect the success of anti-cyberbullying initiatives (Barragán Martín et al., 2021; Wright, 2024).

Cyberbullying Prevention and Intervention Programs in the Philippines

The reviewed studies emphasized the importance of school-based prevention and intervention programs in addressing cyberbullying. Effective strategies included digital literacy education, peer support initiatives, counseling services, and parental involvement. These approaches encouraged responsible online behavior and empowered students to report cyberbullying incidents. Collaboration among students, educators, parents, and communities was considered essential in creating safer digital environments and reducing cyberbullying cases (Kustanti et al., 2024; Hendry et al., 2023).

Challenges and Limitations of Cyberbullying in the Philippines

Despite increasing awareness and policy initiatives, several challenges continued to hinder effective responses to cyberbullying. Rapid technological advancements, underreporting of incidents, and differences in digital literacy contributed to the persistence of cyberbullying cases. Cultural attitudes and variations in access to digital resources also influenced how cyberbullying was perceived and addressed in different contexts. These challenges highlighted the need for comprehensive and evidence-based strategies to address the issue effectively (Marpatmawati et al., 2024; Shao et al., 2024).

Synthesis

Overall, the literature demonstrated that cyberbullying had significant psychological, social, and academic consequences for adolescents. While numerous studies examined its prevalence and effects, much of the existing research relied primarily on quantitative approaches, which limited a deeper understanding of students' lived experiences. This gap highlighted the need for qualitative research methods that explored adolescents' perspectives more comprehensively. Consequently, the present study utilized a participatory photovoice approach to capture students' experiences and provide insights that could inform culturally relevant cyberbullying prevention strategies (Agustiningasih et al., 2024; Öztürk et al., 2025; Wright, 2024).

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 Cyberbullying Experiences

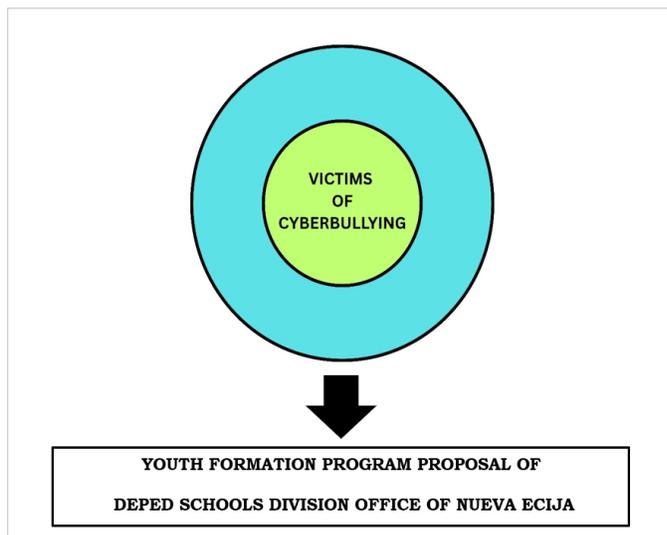
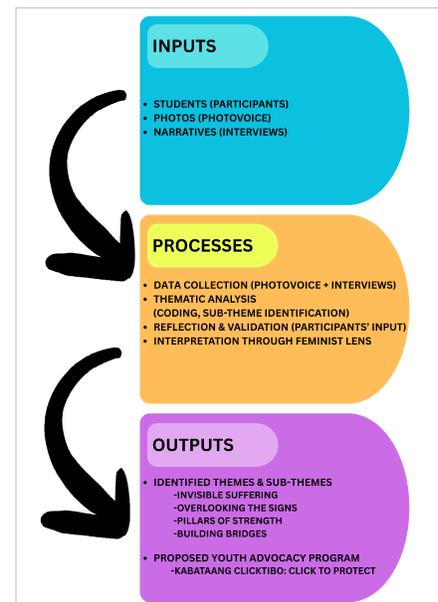


Figure 2 Simulation of the Study



This study was anchored on Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura's (1977) and the photovoice participatory approach by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris (1997), which helped explain how students

understood and expressed their cyberbullying experiences. Social Learning Theory suggested that behaviors were learned through observation, interaction, and social influence within one's environment, including digital spaces. In the context of cyberbullying, students could develop responses, coping mechanisms, and perceptions based on what they observed and experienced in online interactions. Through the photovoice method, participants documented their lived experiences using photographs and narratives, allowing them to reflect on the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of cyberbullying while actively participating in the research process.

The conceptual framework illustrated how students' documented cyberbullying experiences were analyzed and transformed into insights that informed the development of a youth formation program. By examining the themes that emerged from participants' visual and narrative accounts, the study identified key issues affecting students' well-being and online behavior. These insights served as the basis for designing interventions that promoted empathy, resilience, digital responsibility, and peer support within the school community. Through this participatory and reflective process, the framework demonstrated how student voices could guide the creation of meaningful programs aimed at fostering a safer and more supportive school environment.

Note that Figure 1 illustrated the continuous cycle of cyberbullying experiences, while Figure 2 demonstrated how these experiences were translated into practical interventions, linking student perspectives to actionable programs, school policies, and community initiatives. Collectively, this framework emphasized the participatory, context-sensitive, and transformative approach of the study, showing how student voices could drive meaningful solutions to cyberbullying in schools.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the lived experiences of junior high school students who have experienced cyberbullying and the meanings they attribute to these experiences through a participatory Photovoice approach. Although cyberbullying has been widely recognized as a serious issue affecting adolescents' emotional well-being, peer relationships, and academic engagement, the rapid expansion of social media and digital communication has made students increasingly vulnerable to online harassment that often occurs beyond the immediate reach of school supervision. In the Philippine context, despite the presence of policies such as the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 and school-based child protection programs, cyberbullying incidents continue to occur and are frequently underreported, minimized, or dismissed as "just online issues," leaving many victims unsupported. Existing studies have largely focused on the prevalence and statistical effects of cyberbullying using quantitative approaches, leaving limited qualitative evidence that captures how students personally experience, interpret, and cope with these incidents in their daily lives. Moreover, junior high school students remain underrepresented in the literature despite their increasing engagement in digital spaces where cyberbullying commonly occurs. Without a deeper understanding of students' lived realities, schools may struggle to design responsive and effective interventions. Addressing this gap has become increasingly urgent as cyberbullying continues to affect students' psychological safety and school experiences. This study therefore sought to generate context-sensitive insights that may inform the development of a youth formation program aimed at promoting safer digital interactions and strengthening support systems for students in school communities.

Research Objectives

General Objective:

To explore the lived experiences of junior high school students who were confirmed victims of cyberbullying using a participatory Photovoice approach and to utilize the insights gained in developing a youth formation program that addresses cyberbullying in schools.

Specific Objectives:

1. To describe the lived experiences of junior high school students who were victims of cyberbullying as expressed through the photographs they captured.
2. To examine the personal, social, and emotional impacts of cyberbullying based on the participants' narratives and reflections.

3. To identify the meanings and insights that students attribute to their cyberbullying experiences and how these may inform programs or interventions in schools.

Research Questions

1. What lived experiences of cyberbullying do junior high school students express through the photographs they captured?
2. How do students describe the personal, social, and emotional impacts of their cyberbullying experiences?
3. What meanings do students attribute to their experiences, and how can these insights inform programs or interventions to address cyberbullying in schools?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using the Photovoice method to explore the lived experiences of junior high school students who were confirmed victims of cyberbullying. Photovoice, developed by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris, is a participatory research approach that enables participants to document and communicate their experiences through photographs and guided reflection. The researchers applied this design by asking participants to capture photographs representing their cyberbullying experiences using their mobile phones. These photographs were then discussed during semi-structured interviews guided by the SHOWED framework, allowing participants to describe, interpret, and reflect on the meaning behind their images.

The Photovoice method was considered appropriate for this study because it enabled participants to express their experiences both visually and verbally, providing deeper insights into the emotional and social impacts of cyberbullying. By combining participant-generated photographs with reflective interviews, the approach produced rich qualitative data while empowering students to share their perspectives. This design supported the objective of understanding students' lived experiences and generating insights that could inform the development of a youth formation program addressing cyberbullying in schools.

Population and Sampling

The study involved twelve (12) junior high school students from public schools in Nueva Ecija, Philippines, who were confirmed victims of cyberbullying. Since the research aimed to explore lived experiences rather than produce generalizable results, participants were selected based on their ability to provide rich and relevant insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

Sampling Technique. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who could provide rich and relevant insights into the phenomenon under investigation. The selection was based on specific inclusion criteria: participants had to be currently enrolled junior high school students, aged 13 to 15 years, and confirmed victims of cyberbullying based on reports validated by school guidance counselors. This sampling method allowed the researchers to intentionally select individuals with direct experiences related to the research objectives, which is consistent with qualitative research principles that prioritize depth of understanding.

Participants. The study involved twelve (12) junior high school students from public schools in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The participants consisted of one male and eleven female students, representing Grades 8 to 10 and aged 13 to 15 years. These students were selected because they had experienced cyberbullying and were able to meaningfully share and reflect on their experiences through the Photovoice process.

Instruments

The researchers utilized a researcher-developed Photovoice guide to collect participants' lived experiences of cyberbullying. Participants used their mobile phones to capture photographs that represented situations, emotions, or experiences related to cyberbullying. These photographs served as visual prompts during the interviews.

A semi-structured interview guide based on the SHOWED framework was used to facilitate participants' reflections on their photographs. The framework included the following guiding questions: What do you See here? What is really Happening? How does this relate to Our lives? Why does this situation exist? How can this image Educate others? and What can we Do about it?

To ensure clarity and relevance, the instrument underwent expert validation by five specialists, including one expert in language and linguistics and four experts in qualitative research methodology. Minor revisions were made based on their recommendations, such as refining ambiguous questions, improving reflective prompts, and standardizing instructions for participants.

Data Collection

Data were collected during the second semester of the academic year from junior high school students in selected public schools in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The process began with an orientation session in which participants were introduced to the Photovoice procedure and instructed on how to capture photographs representing their experiences with cyberbullying using their mobile phones. Participants were given time to take photographs that reflected situations, emotions, or contexts related to their experiences.

After the photo documentation phase, the researchers conducted individual semi-structured interviews with each participant. The interviews were held either face-to-face in the school guidance offices or online, depending on the availability of the participants. Each interview lasted approximately 40 to 60 minutes and was guided by the SHOWED framework to help participants explain and reflect on the meaning of their photographs. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate documentation of participants' narratives.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis guided by Photovoice procedures and anchored in the SHOWED framework. The analysis began with data familiarization, wherein the researchers repeatedly reviewed the participants' photographs and interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of their narratives and identify significant statements related to cyberbullying experiences.

Subsequently, meaningful segments of the transcripts were coded based on both explicit and implicit meanings expressed by the participants, including descriptions of cyberbullying incidents, emotional responses, coping strategies, and perceived impacts on their lives. The initial codes were then organized into preliminary categories, leading to the development of emerging themes that reflected shared and divergent experiences across participants.

The researchers reviewed and refined the themes by comparing them with the coded data and corresponding photographs to ensure consistency, accuracy, and alignment with participants' perspectives. Contrasting viewpoints were retained to capture the diversity of experiences. The themes were then clearly defined and, where applicable, validated collaboratively with participants to enhance credibility. Finally, the themes were synthesized into a coherent analytical narrative supported by verbatim excerpts and selected photographic evidence. An audit trail of coding decisions and theme development was maintained to ensure transparency and rigor throughout the analysis process.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Prior to the conduct of the research, permission to implement the study was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent and the administrators of the participating public schools in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Since the participants were minors, parental informed consent and participant assent were secured before participation. The participants and their parents or guardians were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants and identifying details in photographs were blurred or removed when necessary. All collected materials, including photographs, audio recordings, and transcripts, were securely stored and accessible only to the researchers. Participants were also allowed to decline answering questions or withdraw any photograph or statement they felt uncomfortable sharing, and school guidance counselors were available to provide psychosocial support when needed.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The presentation of results was guided by the study's research questions and the thematic patterns that emerged from participants' photographs, captions, and interview narratives. Using the Photovoice approach, participants visually and verbally expressed their lived experiences as victims of cyberbullying. Through systematic coding and thematic analysis, recurring ideas and emotional patterns were identified and organized into themes and subthemes that captured the psychological, social, and contextual dimensions of their experiences.

Participants' photographs served as symbolic representations of their emotions and realities, while interview narratives provided deeper explanations of the meanings behind these visual images. The integration of visual and textual data enabled the researchers to examine how cyberbullying shaped adolescents' perceptions of

self, relationships, and coping mechanisms. The discussion of each finding is presented immediately after the results to provide interpretation and connection with existing literature.

Theme 1: *Invisible Sufferings*

This theme represented the hidden emotional struggles experienced by participants as victims of cyberbullying. The photographs and narratives revealed that many participants carried emotional pain that remained largely unnoticed by peers, teachers, and even family members. Their visual representations illustrated how cyberbullying affected their sense of identity, emotional expression, and social support.

Sub-themes:

1.1 Distorted Self-Image

Participants described how repeated cyberbullying negatively influenced their perception of self-worth. One participant captured an image of her reflection in a broken mirror, symbolizing the fragmentation of her self-image caused by hurtful online comments.

Participant 1: "... When I keep seeing negative words like 'you're not accepted,' 'you're ugly,' or 'you'll never succeed,' sometimes I almost start to believe them. I lose sight of my true worth because their words fill my mind with self-doubt and insecurity..."

The participants' experiences demonstrated how cyberbullying could undermine adolescents' self-esteem and identity development. Research has shown that repeated exposure to negative online interactions can distort adolescents' self-concept and increase emotional insecurity. Victims often internalize harmful messages, which may lead to self-doubt and psychological distress (Wright, 2024; Shao et al., 2024). From a feminist perspective, such experiences also reflect how power dynamics in online environments can marginalize vulnerable individuals by attacking their identity and self-worth.

1.2. Pretending and the Mask of Normalcy

Another pattern that emerged from the narratives was participants' tendency to conceal their emotional struggles. One participant captured an image of himself wearing a facemask, symbolizing the emotional barrier he created to hide his distress from others.

Participant 6: "...Because of my lack of courage, I try to hide myself to avoid being ridiculed by others. It breaks my confidence and makes it hard for me to speak up."

Emotional concealment has been identified as a common coping mechanism among victims of cyberbullying. Adolescents often suppress their emotions to avoid further humiliation or social stigma, which can intensify internal psychological distress. Studies have shown that victims frequently hesitate to express their struggles due to fear of judgment or retaliation, leading to prolonged emotional suffering (Wright, 2024). This silence may also reflect broader social dynamics in which victims feel disempowered to challenge harmful online behavior.

1.3 Family Dysfunction and Lack of Support

Family circumstances also emerged as an important factor influencing participants' experiences of cyberbullying. One participant photographed individuals standing apart from one another to represent emotional separation within her family.

Participant 5: "...This picture of people separated, looking sad and seemingly alone, reminds me of how I felt when I was being bullied. I was often teased for not having a father."

Family relationships play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' ability to cope with cyberbullying. Research has indicated that supportive family environments help buffer the negative psychological effects of online harassment. Conversely, limited emotional support or family instability may increase adolescents' vulnerability to emotional distress and depressive symptoms (Shao et al., 2024). These findings suggest that family support systems are critical in helping victims recover from cyberbullying experiences.

Theme 2: Overlooking the Signs: "It's Just Online stuff"

This theme highlighted participants' experiences of having their cyberbullying situations minimized or dismissed by peers and authority figures. Participants revealed that harmful online behaviors were often perceived as insignificant because they occurred in digital spaces. Such attitudes contributed to the normalization of cyberbullying and left victims feeling unsupported.

2.1. Mental and Behavioral Impacts on Victims

Participants described the emotional consequences of cyberbullying through symbolic photographs. One participant used the image of a flickering light to represent emotional instability caused by persistent online harassment.

Participant 2: "It's like the light in our house- flickering and uncertain."

The metaphor illustrated how cyberbullying disrupted participants' emotional stability.

Previous studies have shown that cyberbullying victimization is strongly associated with anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion among adolescents. Continuous exposure to harmful online interactions may create feelings of insecurity and psychological strain, which can affect both emotional well-being and social functioning (Englander, 2021; Han et al., 2021).

2.2. Institutional Blind Spots and Educators' Limitations

Participants also expressed frustration over perceived gaps in school responses to cyberbullying incidents.

Participant 7: "...For me, because they have so many students to handle, Ma'am, and a pile of work every day, sometimes they deliberately ignore students who are being bullied, even when it's obvious what's happening to people like us. Most of the time, they just turn a blind eye because it would mean extra work for them..."

Participants believed that limited awareness and workload constraints prevented educators from responding effectively.

These findings reflected challenges faced by schools in addressing cyberbullying. Research has suggested that limited teacher training, lack of institutional policies, and insufficient awareness may hinder effective intervention. When cyberbullying incidents are ignored, victims may feel abandoned while perpetrators may interpret the lack of response as implicit approval of their actions (Cao et al., 2023).

2.3 Impulsive Behavior of Perpetrators

Participants also reflected on possible reasons behind perpetrators' actions, noting that personal struggles sometimes influenced aggressive online behavior.

Participant 5: "...I was bullied online by a classmate who, at that time, admitted that they were carrying unresolved trauma from their family, on top of their envy toward me. They said their problems at home started when they were a child, and even now, they haven't fully processed it. It's possible that their bad behavior became a way to release the resentment they couldn't show at home. And, unfortunately, I became the target of it..."

Research has indicated that adolescents who experience emotional distress, family conflict, or unresolved trauma may engage in impulsive aggressive behaviors online. Cyberbullying may therefore reflect deeper emotional or social struggles experienced by perpetrators (Cao et al., 2023). Understanding these underlying factors may help educators develop more comprehensive intervention strategies.

Theme 3: Pillars of Strength

Despite their experiences of cyberbullying, participants identified sources of resilience that helped them cope with emotional challenges. Two primary sources of strength emerged from their narratives: faith and family support.

3.1. Turning to Faith for Comfort

Several participants described turning to faith as a coping mechanism during difficult moments.

Participant 6: *"Believing that there is light at the end gives the courage to face life with joy. Faith provides a strong foundation to keep dreaming and to rise again in life."*

Spirituality and faith have been recognized as important psychological coping mechanisms. Studies suggest that spiritual beliefs can provide adolescents with emotional comfort, meaning, and hope during challenging situations, thereby supporting resilience and emotional recovery (Wright, 2024).

3.2. Family Support System as an Anchor of Strength

Participants emphasized the significance of emotional support from family members.

Participant 3 : *"...Life isn't measured by wealth, grand achievements, or even temporary happiness. It's measured by the presence of someone who stays by your side through every stage of life, someone who, no matter what happens, will never leave you, like my parents..."*

Supportive family relationships have been identified as a protective factor against the negative effects of cyberbullying. Adolescents who receive emotional reassurance from parents or guardians are more likely to maintain positive self-esteem and develop resilience despite experiencing online harassment (Shao et al., 2024).

Theme 4: Building Bridges Towards Resolution and Healing

The final theme reflected participants' insights on possible strategies to address cyberbullying and promote safer digital environments.

4.1 Be a Digital Ally

Participants emphasized the importance of speaking up and advocating against cyberbullying.

Participant 8: *"...I want to be an inspiration for change and encourage policymakers in the education sector to implement stricter policies and guidelines against cyberbullying, and to create a safer environment both inside and outside schools. May this serve as a call to our community to promote a culture of kindness, understanding, and accountability..."*

Encouraging students to act as digital allies has been recognized as an effective approach to reducing cyberbullying. When bystanders actively support victims and report harmful behaviors, it can help create a culture of accountability and mutual respect in digital spaces.

4.2 Restoring Respect and Morality Online

Participants also highlighted the need to promote empathy and respect in online interactions.

Participant 12:" *"...In a corner of the house, we often see a rag. It's used to clean dirt, but after being used, it's just left on the floor, dirty and seemingly worthless..."*

Therefore, these narratives point out the need for programs that promote empathy, respect, and social-emotional learning have been shown to improve peer relationships and reduce bullying behaviors in school settings. Such initiatives can help cultivate responsible digital citizenship and foster healthier online environments (Chu et al., 2025).

Integration of Findings

Across all themes, participants' narratives, photographs, and questionnaire reflections revealed the complex emotional, social, and ethical dimensions of cyberbullying among adolescents. The findings showed that experiences of online harassment produced feelings of fear, isolation, and emotional distress, while coping strategies were shaped by personal resilience, faith, and support from family members. However, participants also highlighted gaps

in institutional responses, particularly the limited accessibility of guidance services and reporting mechanisms within schools.

These insights informed the development of the advocacy program "Kabataang Clicktibo: Click to Protect," which emphasizes student-centered reporting systems, strengthened guidance support at the district level, and the promotion of responsible online behavior among learners. The triangulation of photographs, participant narratives, and questionnaire responses enhanced the credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of the findings by ensuring that multiple sources of data supported the identified themes.

Conclusions

The findings of this study demonstrated that students who experienced cyberbullying faced significant emotional, psychological, and social challenges. Despite the negative impacts of online harassment, participants showed resilience by relying on faith, family support, and personal coping strategies. Teachers and school authorities were often unable to provide sufficient assistance, highlighting the need for more proactive and supportive institutional interventions. Participants also expressed a strong desire to promote positive change, emphasizing ethical online behavior, reporting mechanisms, and digital allyship. The study affirmed that multi-level support systems, including family, peers, and district-level guidance were essential in fostering emotional recovery, resilience, and empowerment among adolescent victims of cyberbullying. By providing in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences, coping strategies, and advocacy perspectives, this study contributes to qualitative research on cyberbullying, offering practical lessons for schools, families, and policymakers in promoting safe and ethical digital environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, schools may consider strengthening reporting systems and guidance programs to support victims of cyberbullying and ensure timely intervention. School administrators and teachers may actively involve student representatives in discussions and decision-making processes to incorporate learners' perspectives. Parents and families may be encouraged to monitor online activities and provide consistent emotional support to their children. Educational policymakers, including the Department of Education, may implement and enforce child protection programs, develop accessible digital platforms for reporting, and promote awareness campaigns emphasizing ethical online behavior. Future researchers may conduct quantitative studies on the prevalence and effects of cyberbullying, explore diverse populations, and validate qualitative findings to enhance evidence-based interventions and policy development.

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