

# EXPERIENCE OF CYBERBULLYING AND PRACTICES TO COPE WITH IT AMONG HIGHSCHOOL STUDENTS IN HANOI

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**Abstract:** This cross-sectional study investigated the prevalence, types, and coping strategies associated with cyberbullying among adolescents in Hanoi, Vietnam. This demographic is particularly vulnerable as Vietnamese adolescents lack access to adequate support resources. Using respondent-driven sampling to provide a safe and confidential platform for discussing a sensitive topic, data was collected through self-administered online surveys based on the cyberbullying measurement scale and coping strategy framework developed by Patchin and Hinduja. A total of 253 students aged 13–18 from public schools participated in the study. Results revealed that 51.4% of participants had experienced at least one of six forms of cyberbullying, and 77.9% had witnessed others being cyberbullied. These behaviors often led to emotional distress among victims, emphasizing the significant psychological impact of cyberbullying on adolescents. Additionally, the study explored coping strategies and found that students frequently lacked effective mechanisms to address cyberbullying incidents. The most common response was seeking advice from friends, reported by 40.7% of participants, while fewer students turned to parents, teachers, or professional support systems for help. This limited reliance on adults or institutional resources highlights a potential gap in support systems available to students in the effectiveness or accessibility of current support systems. These findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive educational interventions aimed at raising awareness about cyberbullying and equipping students with practical tools to manage and respond to such incidents effectively. Schools and policymakers should prioritize the development of programs that foster digital resilience, enhance peer support networks, and encourage the involvement of trusted adults to create a safer online environment for adolescents. Initiatives like peer mentoring programs can empower adolescents to support one another, fostering a safer and more connected online environment. Keywords: adolescent, cyberbullying, coping skills, Vietnam Themes: Public Health & social media, access to mass media and emerging technologies, school and student health.

**Keyword:** cyberbullying, coping skills, Public Health, school and student health

## Introduction

Cyberbullying has emerged as a significant challenge for students, particularly in the digital era, where online interactions play a central role in daily life. Unlike traditional forms of bullying, cyberbullying occurs in virtual spaces—social media, messaging applications, and online platforms—allowing harmful interactions to persist beyond school hours and into students' personal lives. This form of harassment can lead to severe emotional distress, academic difficulties, and, in extreme cases, mental health disorders such as depression or even suicidal ideation. In recent years, school violence has taken on new forms, with cyberbullying becoming one of the most prevalent issues among adolescents. Despite its growing impact, there remains a need for a deeper understanding of how students experience and respond to online harassment. Effective intervention strategies require insights into both the prevalence of cyberbullying and the coping mechanisms employed by students to navigate these challenges. This study examines the prevalence of cyberbullying among 8th to 12th graders in public schools in Hanoi, Vietnam, and explores the coping strategies they adopt in response. By shedding light

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on these issues, our research aims to contribute to the development of more effective support systems in schools and communities, ultimately fostering a safer online environment for young people.

## **Methodology**

To conduct this study, we collected data from 253 students aged 13 to 18 using a respondent-driven sampling approach. This cross-sectional study was carried out through an e-survey, using Google Forms, allowing us to gather insights efficiently. The survey was initially shared with a group of seed respondents, who were then encouraged to invite others to participate. This process continued iteratively until the sample reached the desired size. Instead of selecting participants from a pre-existing list, or in other words, a sampling frame, this method relies on individuals recruiting others from their social network. It begins with a small group of people chosen through convenience sampling, known as "seeds." These initial participants then invite others they know to join the study. This recruitment process continues, with each new participant bringing in more people, until the study reaches the required sample size or meets a specific data quality threshold. This approach is often used in research involving hard-to-reach populations, where traditional sampling methods may not be effective.

To measure cyberbullying experiences, we used Patchin and Hinduja's scale, while coping strategies were assessed using Hana Machackova's 2013 scale. These validated tools provided a reliable framework for understanding both the impact of cyberbullying and how students respond to it. Patchin and Hinduja's Scale Patchin and Hinduja's scale is a measure developed by researchers Justin W. Patchin and Sameer Hinduja to assess experiences with cyberbullying - both as a victim and a perpetrator - and its relationship to self-esteem. Their work, often cited in cyberbullying research, includes surveys designed to quantify how often individuals experience or engage in cyberbullying behaviours.

## **Results and Discussion**

The collected data have been analyzed and presented in the accompanying visualizations. These findings offer key insights into the prevalence of cyberbullying among 8th to 12th graders, highlighting the extent to which students encounter online harassment. Furthermore, the results shed light on the coping strategies used by affected individuals, providing a deeper understanding of the mechanisms students use to navigate cyberbullying experiences.

Grades (See Figure 1)

The graph represents the percentage of people who participated in the survey, categorized by their grade level.

- The majority of respondents were 10th graders (36.8%), followed by 8th graders (27.7%).
- 9th graders (16.2%) and 11th graders (15%) had similar participation rates, though lower than 8th and 10th graders.
- Very few 12th graders (1.6%) took the survey, making them the least represented group.

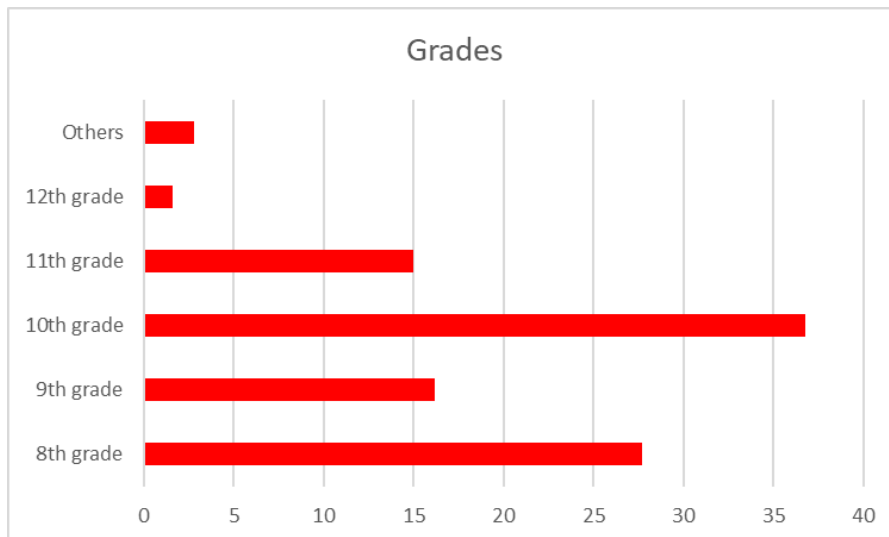


Figure 1: Distribution of grades in the survey

This distribution suggests that younger students, particularly those in 8th and 10th grade, were more engaged in the survey compared to upper-grade students, especially seniors, who had the lowest participation.

#### Internet Access (See Figure 2)

82.2% of respondents access the internet primarily through mobile phones, showing that mobile devices are the dominant method for connecting to the internet. A smaller percentage, 15.8%, use PCs for internet access, suggesting that traditional computers are less commonly used for online activities among this group. Only 2% reported using other devices, indicating that mobile phones and PCs are the primary means of access.

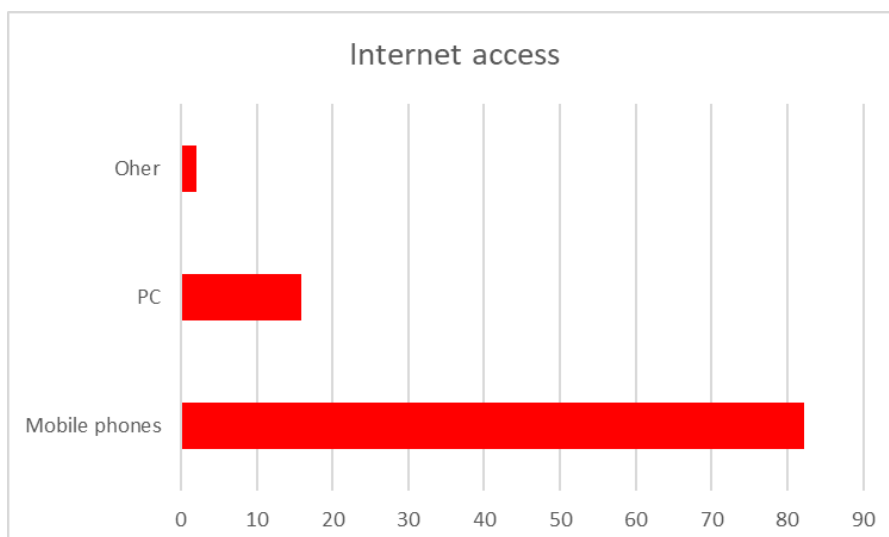


Figure 2: Distribution of internet usages

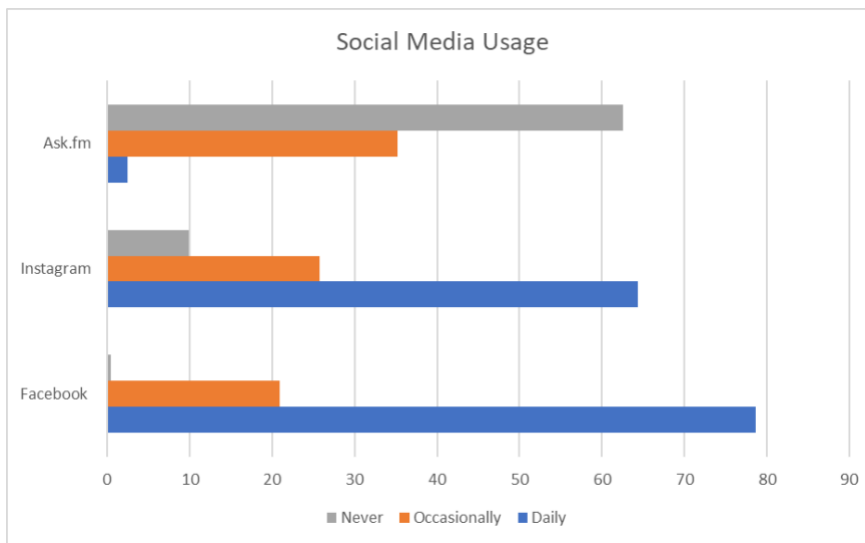


Figure 3: Distribution of social media usages

#### Social Media Usage (See Figure 3)

- Facebook (78.7%) and Instagram (64.4%) are the most used platforms, with the majority accessing them daily.
- Ask.fm is rarely used daily, with only 2.4% logging in daily.
- Instagram (25.7%) and Facebook (20.9%) also see occasional use, while Ask.fm (35.2%) has a significant occasional user base.
- A large portion of respondents never use Ask.fm (62.5%), while Facebook (0.4%) and Instagram (9.9%) have very few non-users.
- In short, Facebook and Instagram dominate daily use, while Ask.fm is less popular overall.

#### Daily Usage (See Figure 4)

- 47% of respondents use the internet for more than 3 hours daily, indicating heavy usage.
- 45.8% spend 1-3 hours online daily, showing moderate usage.
- A small percentage, 7.1%, spend less than 1 hour online daily, suggesting minimal internet engagement.
- Generally, most respondents spend between 1-3 hours or over 3 hours online each day.

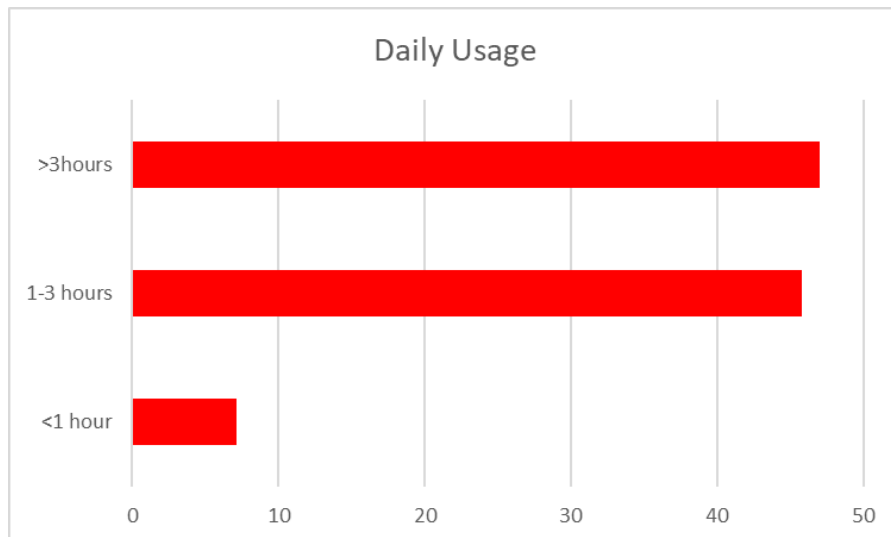


Figure 4: Distribution of daily usages

#### Cyberbullying Statistics (See Figure 5)

- 77.9% observed bullying, meaning the majority of respondents have witnessed some form of bullying, either online or offline. This shows that cyberbullying is a widespread issue, and many are aware of it, even if they are not personally involved.
- 51.4% experienced bullying themselves, indicating that more than half of the participants have been directly affected by bullying. This reflects the significant impact of cyberbullying on individuals.
- 17.4% often experienced bullying, which suggests that a smaller, yet still notable, portion of the participants face frequent bullying. This group likely endures a more intense or persistent form of cyberbullying compared to those who may only encounter it occasionally.
- A large percentage of respondents witness bullying, but a smaller percentage experience it themselves. This could imply that while cyberbullying is common, not everyone is a target.
- The fact that 51.4% have experienced bullying shows a substantial impact, with 17.4% enduring frequent bullying, which raises concerns about the severity of the problem for these individuals.
- The gap between those who observed bullying (77.9%) and those who experienced it (51.4%) might suggest that many people are aware of the problem but might not always recognize or acknowledge their own experiences of bullying.

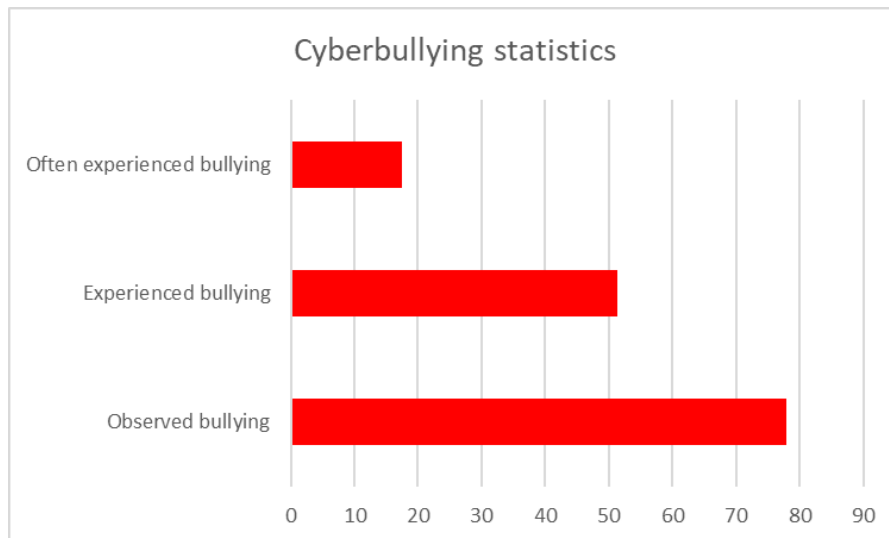


Figure 5: Cyberbullying statistics

These statistics highlight the prevalence of cyberbullying and the personal toll it takes. While many people witness bullying, a significant portion of respondents are victims themselves, with a concerning percentage experiencing it on a regular basis. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions and support systems to address and reduce both the visibility and the frequency of cyberbullying.

#### Coping Method (See Figure 6)

This data represents the different ways respondents cope with cyberbullying and the percentage of people who reported using each method.

Let's talk about the most common coping methods.

- Seeking advice from friends (40.7%) was the most frequently used coping strategy, showing that many individuals rely on peer support.
- Blocking the cyberbully (39%) was also a highly common response, indicating that many prefer to cut off the source of harm.
- Contacting administrators (36.6%) and deleting the cyberbully's contact information (36.6%) were also popular actions, suggesting that many try to remove or report the problem.
- Advice from parents (35.8%) and ignoring the situation (32.5%) were also used frequently, showing a mix of proactive and passive coping strategies.

But what about the less common coping methods?

- Retaliation was very rare—only 0.8% retaliated by phone and 2.4% retaliated in real life, indicating that most respondents do not respond with aggression.

- Only 12.2% saved evidence for potential retaliation, suggesting that few think ahead about documenting incidents.
- Some deleted their own profile (26%), indicating a feeling of helplessness or a desire to escape the situation.

How do people perceive cyberbullying?

- 24.4% believed cyberbullying doesn't hurt them, suggesting some level of emotional resilience.
- 13.8% considered it "normal", and 13% saw it as just a typical part of being online, which may indicate desensitization.
- 10.6% dismissed it as "unreal", meaning they don't see online bullying as a real-world issue.

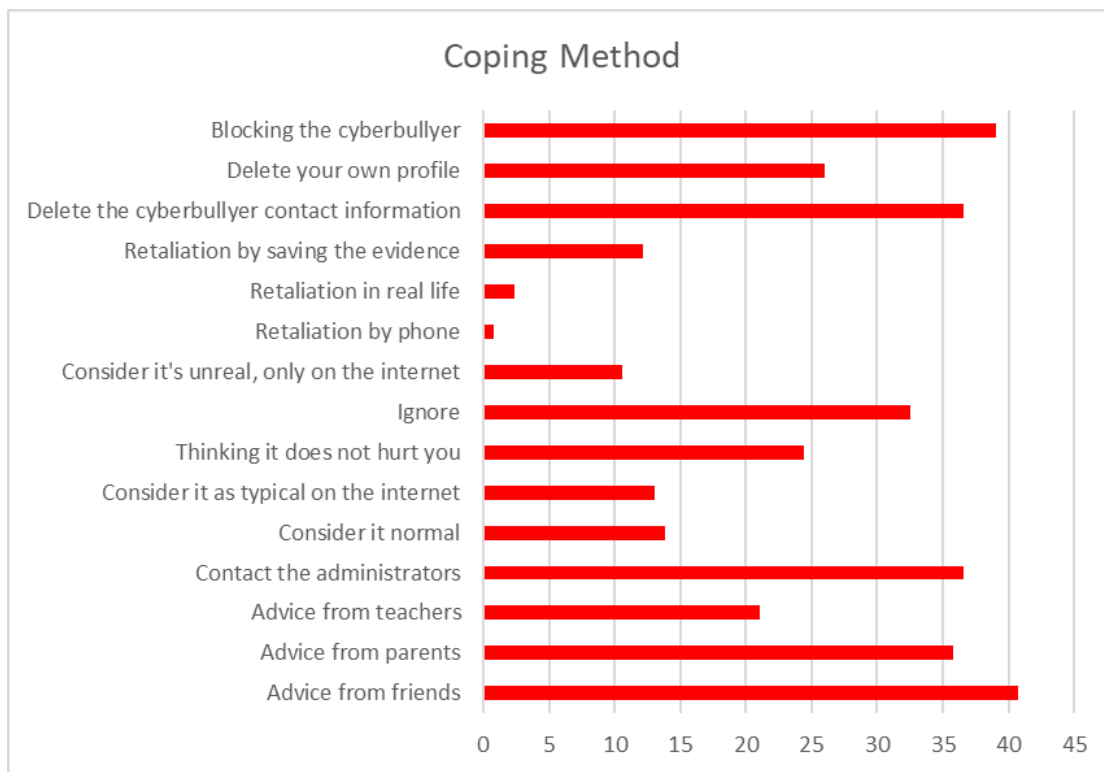


Figure 6: Coping with cyberbullying

The findings reveal several notable patterns in students' responses to cyberbullying. The majority of respondents adopt proactive coping mechanisms, such as seeking support from friends, parents, or website administrators, or taking direct action by blocking or deleting contacts. Avoidance strategies, including ignoring the harassment or deleting social media profiles, are also frequently utilized. Notably, only a small proportion of respondents choose to retaliate, suggesting that aggressive responses are not widely perceived as effective. Additionally, some individuals downplay or normalize cyberbullying, which may indicate a lack of awareness regarding its potential impact. These insights

highlight the need for greater education and intervention strategies to address cyberbullying more effectively.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, our research highlights that students aged 13 to 18 in Hanoi have a very high rate of internet usage, which increases their exposure to cyberbullying. The findings confirm that cyberbullying is a widespread issue in schools, affecting a significant number of students. However, the ways students handle cyberbullying are often ineffective. Only 35.8% choose to talk to their parents, and 39% resort to blocking the bully. This indicates a need for stronger support systems, better awareness, and more effective intervention strategies to help students navigate and respond to online harassment in healthier ways. These insights emphasize the urgency of developing improved prevention and coping mechanisms within schools, families, and communities to protect students from the harmful effects of cyberbullying.

### **Declaration of Interest Statement**

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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