



Prevalence And Level Of Cyber Bullying Among Nursing Students At Selected Nursing College, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

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Introduction:

In this current digital era, Internet and online applications had become essential aspects of our society. It contributes to copious advantages and also posing treats to individuals across all age groups. Among these dangers, cyber stalking and cyber harassment stand out. Cyber stalking, for instance, involves the utilization of the Internet, email, or other electronic communication means to pursue and intimidate another person. Similarly, cyber harassment and cyber bullying are often used interchangeably, with cyber bullying referring to the repetitive and deliberate use of various technologies like cell phones, pagers, email, instant messaging, and websites by individuals or groups with the intent to harm others.^{1,2} The characteristics of cyber bullying are aggression, intentional acts, repetition over time, and electronic communication, either by groups or individuals, cyber bullying transcends physical spaces, impacting victims in various settings like school, home, and public areas. Additionally, it manifests through diverse cyber attacks including flaming, harassment, cyber stalking, denigration, impersonation, exclusion, and outing, which further differentiates it from traditional bullying.^{3,4}

Cyber bullying is prevalent across various electronic platforms, including email, text messages, chat rooms, role-playing games, social media, and blogs. The landscape of these electronic mediums is rapidly evolving, with their popularity also shifting swiftly. Recent studies highlight the extensive use of mobile devices among college students: 99.5% reported owning a Smartphone, and 95% use some form of social media app on their device. The majority, about 97%, use their mobile devices daily for texting, while 92% engage in daily emailing. Research indicates that the most frequent methods of cyber bullying among college students involve instant messaging, social networking, text messaging, chat rooms, email, and blogging. This widespread use and the evolving nature of electronic mediums facilitate various forms of cyber bullying, making it a pervasive issue in modern communication.⁵

Recent studies reveal that an overwhelming majority of college students, about 99.5%, own a Smartphone. Additionally, significant portions, ranging from 88% to 90%, are active on various social media platforms. This widespread use of technology and social media among college students underscores the potential for increased exposure to cyber bullying in this demographic, highlighting the need for more focused research to understand and address the issue in higher education settings.⁶ Research also had revealed that college students are highly engaged in digital communication, with 99.6% of participants in one study reporting frequent texting and 98.4% regularly using email. This high level of proficiency in online activities among college students is further underscored by the substantial amount of time they spend on the internet. Studies have found that participants report internet usage ranging from 1 to 6 hours daily. This extensive engagement with online platforms highlights the integral role that digital communication plays in the lives of college students, making them a key demographic for understanding patterns of internet use, including the prevalence and impact of online behaviors such as cyberbullying.⁷ The reported prevalence of cyber bullying among college students, based on self-reports, is approximately 20%. However, determining the exact prevalence of cyber bullying presents challenges due to the diverse methodologies and reporting criteria used in different studies. These variations include differences in the time frames for reporting victimization, such as whether incidents were experienced in the past month, past six months, past year, or at any time. This inconsistency in reporting periods makes direct comparisons of prevalence rates more complex. Additionally,

the challenge of accurately gauging the prevalence of cyber bullying in college-aged demographics is compounded by the relative scarcity of data specifically targeting this group. This lack of comprehensive data underscores the need for more standardized and focused research to understand the true extent of cyber bullying among college students.⁷

A research study findings revealed an alarming overall prevalence of cyber bullying, standing at 42.8%, with males experiencing slightly higher rates compared to females. Moreover, a substantial 26.3% of the participants reported significant adverse effects on their academic performance as a direct consequence of cyber bullying. Troublingly, approximately 20% of all participants contemplated leaving their schools, 19.7% contemplated discontinuing their internet usage, and 21.1% even contemplated self-harm as a result of the distressing consequences of cyber bullying. This study underscores the crucial interconnections between the frequency of harassment, its detrimental impact on academic performance, and the experience of being a victim of cyberbullying.⁸

Another study findings unveiled the prevalence of cyber bullying and victimization as common issues among university students, with rates standing at 57% and 68%, respectively, the results further indicated that the levels of cyber bullying and victimization exhibited variations based on gender and income level. Notably, "negative consequences of the Internet" and "social comfort," emerged as predictors of cyber bullying and victimization prevalence.⁹

In today's digital age, cyberspace has emerged as a dominant platform for interpersonal interactions. This shift has given rise to cyber bullying, a concerning issue that affects individuals of all ages. Current research on cyber bullying has predominantly focused on middle and high school demographics, leaving a gap in understanding its prevalence among college students. However, with the rapid increase in technology use among college students, this area is gaining attention. It is crucial to assess the extent to which nursing students, who are training to become healthcare professionals, may be exposed to or engaged in cyber bullying behaviors. Understanding the prevalence of cyber bullying within this specific academic context is essential to develop targeted prevention and intervention strategies. Moreover, nursing students are expected to uphold ethical standards, demonstrate empathy, and provide compassionate patient care. Experiencing or perpetrating cyber bullying can have adverse effects on their mental well-being, personal development, and their ability to fulfill their future professional roles effectively. Therefore, investigating the prevalence of cyber bullying among nursing students at selected nursing college not only relevant for their personal welfare but also for the overall quality of healthcare they will deliver in their careers.

Statement of the problem: A cross-sectional study to determine the prevalence and level of cyber bullying among nursing students at selected nursing college, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.

Objectives of the study:

1. To determine the Prevalence of Cyber bullying among nursing students.
2. To assess the level of cyber bullying among nursing students.
1. To find out association between level of cyber bullying with demographic variables of nursing students.

Material & Methods:

The present study, adopted a quantitative approach following a cross-sectional survey design to determine the prevalence and level of cyber bullying among nursing students. The study was conducted at Combined (PG) Institute of medical science and research (CISMR), Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India. The target population for this study was nursing students studying in B.Sc. Nursing, and the accessible population was B.Sc. Nursing students studying at Nursing colleges, Uttarakhand. The sample consists of 110 nursing students from first and second semester's studying B.Sc. Nursing course at . The sample was selected from CISMR, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, and were selected using non-probability purposive sampling technique. The sample were selected based on the sampling criteria, nursing students willing to participate in the study and who were using mobile phone. The data was collected using Socio-demographic Profile and Mobile Phone Usage; self-structured Likert scale to assess the prevalence and levels of cyber bullying. The tools were developed by the researchers and validated by the experts in the field of nursing and medicine. The reliability of the tool was r=0.78. The pilot study was carried out to find the reliability and feasibility of developed tools. Data was collected after obtaining the permission institutional ethical committee of Combined (P.G.) Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (CISMR), Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Anonymity and confidentiality of subjects was maintained and Informed consent was obtained from the nursing students. The analytical scrutiny of the amassed data was executed by employing both descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

Results of the study:

Section A: Description of Socio-demographic characteristics of nursing students.

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic profile of the nursing students. In terms of age distribution, the majority of the participants (86.4%) fell into the age range of 17-19 years, while a smaller proportion (13.6%)

were aged between 20-22 years. The mean age of the participants was 19.07 years with a standard deviation of 0.84, indicating that the majority of the students were in the early stages of their undergraduate nursing program. Regarding the gender, predominance of females, with 85.5% of the participants were identified as female, and the remaining 14.5% as male. This gender imbalance is consistent with the broader gender distribution trends in the nursing profession, which has historically been characterized by a higher representation of females. According to the habitat, a significant majority (80.9%) of the participants hailed from urban areas, while a smaller proportion (19.1%) resided in rural areas. This disparity in habitat distribution may have implications for the students' exposure to healthcare facilities, educational resources, and lifestyle factors, which could potentially influence their nursing education and experiences. With respect to the class/course category, 50% enrolled in first semester B.Sc. Nursing, remaining 50% in second semester B.Sc. Nursing. This balanced distribution is important for ensuring that the study captures a representative sample of students at different stages of their nursing education, which may have varying needs and experiences. In terms of family structure, 65.5% of the participants came from nuclear families, while 34.5% belonged to joint families. This distinction may have implications for the support systems available to the students and their overall family dynamics, which can influence their academic and professional pursuits. Finally, the participants' family income levels were categorized into four groups. A small proportion (15.5%) reported a monthly family income of less than Rs 20,000, while larger segments reported incomes ranging from Rs 20,000 to Rs 40,000. Notably, 36.4% of the participants had a family income between Rs 30,001 and Rs 40,000, and 20.9% reported family incomes exceeding Rs 40,000 per month. These income categories provide insights into the economic background of the students and may be relevant when exploring the financial factors that could impact their education and career aspirations.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of socio-demographic characteristics of nursing students (N-110)

Sl. No.	Socio-demographic characteristics	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Age (Years)		
	17-19	95	86.4
	20-22	15	13.6
	Mean±SD	19.07±0.84	
2	Gender		
	Female	94	85.5
	Male	16	14.5
3	Habitat		
	Urban	89	80.9
	Rural	21	19.1
4.	Class/Course		
	First semester/B.Sc. Nursing	55	50%
	Second semester/B.Sc. Nursing	55	50%
5.	Type of family		
	Nuclear	72	65.5
	Joint	38	34.5
6.	Family income per month		
	<20000 Rs.	17	15.3
	20000-30000 Rs.	30	27.3
	30001-40000 Rs.	40	36.4
	>40000 Rs.	23	20.9

Section B: Description of pattern of mobile phone usage among nursing students.

Table 2 illustrates the patterns of mobile phone usage among nursing students. The table reveals that a majority (60.0%) of the students reported using their mobile phones "very often" in the hostel, indicating that mobile phones play a prominent role in their daily activities while residing in the hostel. This frequent use suggests that mobile phones serve as a primary means of communication, information access, and entertainment for these students. Regarding the use of social media platforms, an overwhelming majority (90.0%) of the participants reported that they use social sites. Among the students who use social sites, the most popular platforms were Instagram (39.1%) and Facebook (12.7%). A substantial portion (19.1%) of the participants reported using both Facebook and Instagram, highlighting the multi-platform nature of their social media engagement. Additionally, 10.0% of the participants reported using other social media platforms not specified in the table. In terms of chat applications, Whatsapp was the most commonly used app, with 37.3% of students indicating its use, followed closely by Messenger (30.9%) and Twitter (31.8%). This distribution suggests that instant messaging and social communication are prominent features of their mobile phone usage patterns. The table also provides information about internet video call usage, with 80.0% of participants reporting that they use internet video calls "very often." This finding indicates that video calls are a prevalent mode of communication among the students, which may be important for

maintaining social connections and engaging in remote learning activities. Finally, the table presents data on the amount of time students spend on the internet per day. A significant proportion of students (46.4%) reported spending more than 4 hours per day on the internet, while 33.6% spent 3-4 hours, and 20.0% spent 1-2 hours. This high level of internet usage suggests that students are actively engaged in online activities, which may include academic research, social networking, and entertainment.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of Pattern of mobile phone usage among nursing students (N-110)

Sl. No.	Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Use of mobile phones in hostel		
	Very often	66	60
	Sometime	44	40
2	Use of social site		
	Yes	99	90
	No	11	10
3	Name of the social site		
	Facebook	14	12.7
	Instagram	43	39.1
	Snapchat	21	19.1
	Both Facebook & Instagram	21	19.1
	All	11	10
4.	Using apps for chatting		
	Whatsapp	41	37.3
	Messenger	34	30.9
	Twitter	35	31.8
5.	Use internet video call		
	Very often	88	80
	Sometime	22	20
6.	Spending time on internet per day		
	1-2 hours	22	20
	3-4 hours	37	33.6
	>4 hours	51	46.4

Section C: Prevalence of Cyber bullying among nursing students.

Figure 1 illustrates the prevalence of cyber bullying among nursing students. According to the table, 32% of the nursing students in the study reported experiencing cyber bullying, while a majority of 68% indicated that they had not encountered cyber bullying. These findings suggest that a significant proportion of nursing students have had direct experiences with cyber bullying, which can manifest in various forms, such as online harassment, verbal abuse, or social media-based bullying. The same has been illustrated in the figure 3.

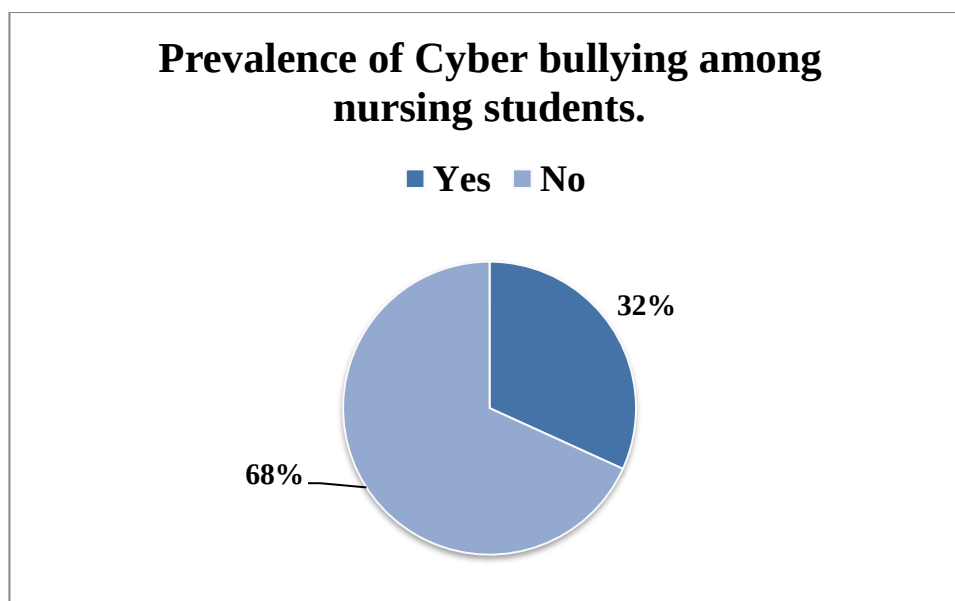


Figure 1 Prevalence of Cyber bullying among nursing students

Section D: Percentage distribution of levels of cyber bullying among nursing students.

Figure 2 depicts the level of cyber bullying experienced by nursing students, as result revealed that the majority of nursing students (68.2%) reported that they had not experienced any cyber bullying, indicating the absence of such incidents in their online interactions. This group is categorized as "No Cyber bullying." Among the participants who did report experiencing cyber bullying, 22.7% indicated that they had encountered mild levels of cyber bullying. These individuals may have experienced relatively less severe forms of online harassment or negative interactions. A smaller proportion of participants, 9.1%, reported encountering moderate levels of cyber bullying. This category suggests that these students had experienced more pronounced and potentially distressing instances of cyber bullying.

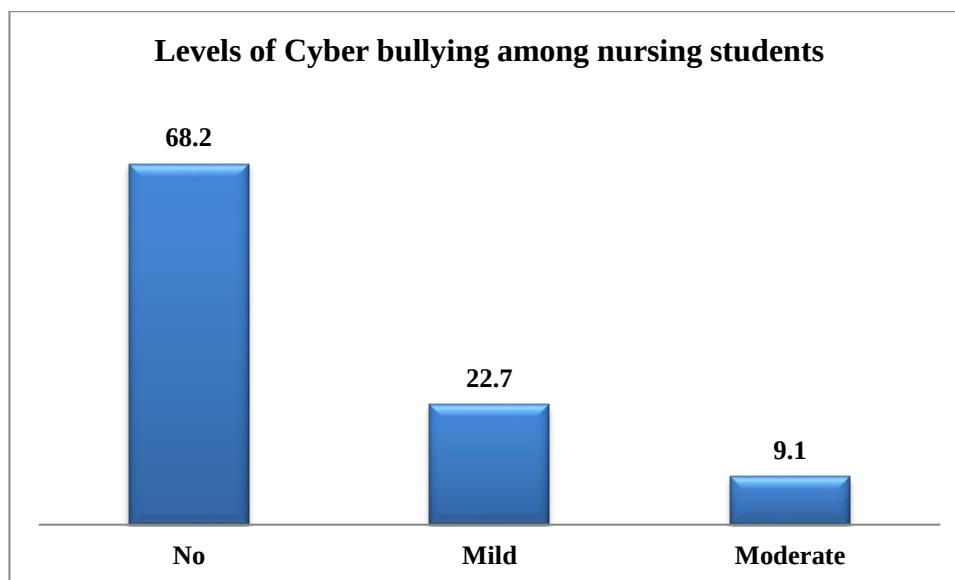


Figure 2 levels of cyber bullying among nursing students

Section E: Association between levels of cyber bullying with social-demographic characteristics of nursing students.

Table 3 depicts that the association between the level of cyber bullying with socio-demographic characteristics of nursing students. The findings indicated that there were no statistically significant associations at the 0.05 significance level. Specifically, age, gender, habitat, class/course, type of family, and family income were assessed for their relationship with the level of cyber bullying (No Cyber bullying, Mild, Moderate), and none of these variables exhibited statistically significant associations. These findings suggest that the socio-demographic characteristics of the nursing students in this study did not play a significant role in determining the severity of cyber bullying.

Table 3: Association between levels of cyber bullying with social-demographic characteristics of nursing students (N-110)

Sl. No.	Socio-demographic characteristics	Levels of cyber bullying			χ^2	df	value
		No	Mild	Moderate			
1.	Age (Years)						
	17-19	66	21	8	0.63	2	0.68
	20-22	9	4	2			
2	Gender						
	Female	61	24	9	3.43	2	0.17
	Male	14	1	1			
3	Habitat						
	Urban	62	18	9	1.97	2	0.43
	Rural	13	7	1			
4.	Class/Course						
	First semester/B.Sc. Nursing	38	13	4	0.45	2	0.91
	Second semester/B.Sc. Nursing	37	12	6			
5.	Type of family						
	Nuclear	46	19	7	1.88	2	0.39
	Joint	29	6	3			
6.	Family income per month						
	<20000 Rs.	13	4	0	9.71	6	0.17
	20000-30000 Rs.	21	8	1			

	30001-40000 Rs.	25	11	4			
	>40000 Rs.	16	2	5			

Section F: Association between the levels of cyber bullying with pattern of mobile phone usage among nursing students.

The association between the level of cyber bullying and the pattern of mobile phone usage among nursing students, as explored in Table 3, did not reveal any statistically significant associations at the 0.05 significance level. Various variables related to mobile phone usage, including the frequency of mobile phone use in hostels, use of social sites, specific social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat), using apps for chatting (Whatsapp, Messenger, Twitter), use of internet video calls, and Spending time on internet per day, were assessed for their relationship with the level of cyber bullying (No, Mild, Moderate). However, none of these variables exhibited statistically significant associations with the levels of cyber bullying. In conclusion, the study did not find significant evidence to suggest that specific patterns of mobile phone use were associated with the severity of cyber bullying experienced by nursing students in the sample.

Table 3: Association between levels of cyber bullying with pattern of mobile phone usage among of nursing students (N-110)

Sl. No.	Socio-demographic characteristics	Levels of cyber bullying			χ^2	df	value
		No	Mild	Moderate			
1.	Use of mobile phones in hostel						
	Very often	42	16	8	2.33	2	0.32
	Sometime	33	9	2			
2	Use of social site						
	Yes	68	22	9	0.15	2	0.88
	No	7	3	1			
3	Use of the social site						
	Facebook	6	6	2	7.57	8	0.39
	Instagram	31	10	2			
	Snapchat	15	3	3			
	Both Facebook & Instagram	16	3	2			
	All	7	3	1			
4.	Using apps for chatting						
	Whatsapp	28	9	4	0.31	4	0.99
	Messenger	24	7	3			
	Twitter	23	9	3			
5.	Use internet video call						
	Very often	58	21	9	1.21	2	0.69
	Sometime	17	4	1			
6.	Spending time on internet per day						
	1-2 hours	17	4	1	2.68	4	0.68
	3-4 hours	27	7	3			
	>4 hours	31	14	6			

Discussion:

The current study provides a comprehensive analysis of the prevalence of cyber bullying among nursing students. A noteworthy finding is that 31.8% of these students reported experiencing cyber bullying, while a significant majority, 68.2%, reported no such encounters, thereby categorizing them under "No Cyber bullying." This disparity raises critical questions about the factors contributing to the vulnerability or resilience of these students to cyber bullying.

Interestingly, among those who experienced cyber bullying, 22.7% faced mild levels, suggesting encounters with less severe forms of online harassment, while 9.1% experienced moderate levels of cyber bullying. This variation in the intensity of cyber bullying experiences echoes the findings of Deep R et al. (2022)¹⁰, which highlighted that most victims knew their bullies, with different forms of cyber bullying ranging from exclusion to more severe acts like cyber-stalking and outing. Similarly, the work of Ceetakoru DM et al. (2022)¹¹ revealed that a significant proportion of both male and female students had been victims, with some admitting to being perpetrators themselves.

Moreover, the study by Zhu C et al. (2021)¹² not only identified varying rates of victimization but also underscored the importance of protective factors like empathy, emotional intelligence, and positive familial and educational environments in mitigating cyber bullying risks. This is further corroborated by Bharati M et al. (2021)¹³, who found that the most common form of cyber bullying was through harmful text messages.

The present study's results also interestingly show no statistically significant associations between cyber bullying and various socio-demographic factors like age, gender, habitat, class/course, family type, and income. This lack of correlation extends to variables related to mobile phone usage, such as frequency of use, engagement on social media platforms, and use of communication apps, suggesting that the occurrence of cyber bullying transcends these demographic and behavioral boundaries.

In contrast, the findings of Bhat AA et al. (2021)¹⁴ provide a different perspective, highlighting significant correlations between bullying behaviors and psychological aspects like reduced self-efficacy and the adoption of dysfunctional coping strategies among nursing students. This suggests that the impact of cyber bullying may extend beyond immediate emotional distress to influence broader aspects of students' mental health and coping mechanisms.

This study sheds light on the complex nature of cyber bullying among nursing students, suggesting that while a significant number of students do not experience cyber bullying, those who do face varying levels of severity. The absence of strong correlations with socio-demographic and mobile usage variables points towards a more intricate interplay of factors influencing cyber bullying. It underscores the need for holistic approaches in addressing cyber bullying, considering psychological aspects and the importance of fostering supportive environments at home and educational institutions.

Limitations

1. The study focuses exclusively on B.Sc. Nursing students at CISM, Dehradun.
2. The findings may not be generalizable to nursing students in other regions, institutions, or different educational or cultural contexts.
2. The reliance on self-reported data can introduce biases, such as underreporting or over reporting of cyber bullying incidents due to personal perceptions, memory recall issues, or a desire to conform to social desirability.
3. Utilizing non-random, purposive sampling may lead to selection bias. The participants chosen based on certain criteria or availability might not represent the broader population of nursing students, which can impact the study's validity.
4. Given the sensitive nature of cyber bullying, participants may have hesitated to disclose true experiences or may have been influenced by their current emotional state, leading to response bias in the data collected.
5. The cross-sectional nature of the study limits its ability to establish causality or observe changes over time. It captures a snapshot of the cyber bullying situation at a single point in time, which may not accurately represent long-term trends or the dynamic nature of cyber bullying.

Recommendations

1. Replication of the Study: Conduct the same study with a larger sample size and in diverse settings to generalize the findings more broadly.
2. Comparative Research: Undertake a comparative study to explore differences in cyber bullying between rural and urban adult populations.
3. Comparative Studies: Conduct studies comparing cyber bullying experiences among nursing students with students from other healthcare professions or academic disciplines. This can help in understanding if and how experiences of cyber bullying differ across fields.
4. Longitudinal Research Design: Future studies should consider using a longitudinal design to track changes in cyber bullying experiences over time. This approach can provide insights into how cyber bullying evolves during the course of a nursing student's education and its long-term effects.
5. Broader Geographic Scope: Expanding the research to include nursing students from different regions, countries, or diverse cultural backgrounds can enhance the generalizability of the findings and offer a more comprehensive understanding of cyber bullying in various nursing education contexts.
6. Incorporate Qualitative Methods: Utilizing qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, can provide deeper insights into the personal experiences, perceptions, and impacts of cyber bullying on nursing students, which quantitative data alone may not fully capture.
7. Examine Intervention Strategies: Future research should explore the effectiveness of various intervention strategies in preventing or mitigating cyber bullying among nursing students. This can help in developing practical solutions and policies to address the issue.
8. Investigate Underlying Factors: Further studies should investigate the underlying factors contributing to cyber bullying, such as psychological, social, or institutional factors. Understanding these can aid in developing targeted prevention and intervention strategies.
9. Evaluate Reporting Mechanisms and Support Systems: Assess the effectiveness of existing reporting mechanisms and support systems within educational institutions for dealing with cyber bullying. Research in this area can provide valuable feedback for improving these systems.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are significant in the context of understanding the digital challenges faced by young adults in educational environments. This study's results demonstrate a notable prevalence of cyber bullying among the nursing students surveyed, with many reporting experiences of mild cyber bullying. The identification of different levels of cyber bullying from mild to severe is critical in understanding the varied

impacts on students' mental health and academic performance. This study sheds light on the pressing issue of cyber bullying among nursing students, urging stakeholders in education and healthcare to acknowledge and address this growing concern. It calls for a collaborative effort to create educational spaces that are not only academically stimulating but also psychologically safe, thereby enhancing the overall well-being and professional readiness of future nurses.

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