

A Model to Manifest the Inadequacy of Awareness in Cyberbullying Among the Adolescents and to Accent Its Dire Need

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Abstract

Cyberbullying can be technologically expressed as the use of electronic communication to bully or threaten a person. It was identified that this has become a social debacle. Hence the research study was directed to identify the exact mean of cyberbullying, the reasons that lead to this cause, and how to prevent the victims getting exposed to this social dilemma. In Sri Lanka this subject was not majorly focused as a social issue, therefore the study was focused on the adolescents within the Sri Lankan context, as they are the major group of active users in social media. To identify the specific factors, previous research articles written by academicians were adopted throughout the study. The objective was to introduce a model that can be introduced as a mode of bringing awareness on the misuse of social media among adolescents. This study was based on qualitative techniques. Secondary and primary data were analysed through grounded theory and thematic analysis. The primary sources included an open-ended questionnaire and an in-depth interview while the secondary sources include the reviews of past literature. The Interviews conducted with Sri Lanka Computer emergency Readiness Team supported upon many findings of the study. With results gained from the interviews, it was clear that many adolescents were exposed to cyberbullying but somehow, they were unaware of the situations that they were exposed. As per the findings, a model was built that can be adopted to eliminate the malpractice amongst the social media users with proper awareness on the concept of cyberbullying. The level of awareness required in terms of Sri Lankan legal framework, the psychological instability residing among the minds of adolescents, and the technological illiteracy rate amongst the social media users are based for the identified model as the base of root causes in the study.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Adolescents, Electronic Communication, Technological Illiteracy, Legal Framework, Psychology

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Introduction

Cyberbullying can be identified as the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature (Ariyadasa, 2019). As a result of the anonymity that the internet may offer, cyberbullying varies from standard bullying. As a result of the anonymity, cyberbullies do not have to take responsibility for their acts, and cyberbullying is often outside of the legal jurisdiction and most of the people in the society are unaware that cyberbullying is subject to several laws and regulations. There are some forms of cyber bullying as harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, trickery, exclusion, cyberstalking, and cyber threats. Cyberbullying could be threatening to one's life in different ways. According to (Nixon, 2014) getting victimized to cyberbullying might result in self-empathy, anger and thoughts of suicide among the victims which will ultimately cost the life of those victims.

“Cyberbullying refers to the willful use of the internet as a technological medium through which harm or discomfort is intentionally and repeatedly inflicted, targeting a specific person or group of persons” (Maryville University, 2021) The main concern that surfaced when addressing this issue is that in Sri Lanka this subject is not identified as an issue in the eyes of public that needs addressing. The mere existence of this dilemma is in the shadows as it is generally accepted by society. This research is conducted through a qualitative approach. Moreover, when addressing this conflict of knowledge gap our focus was on the adolescents ranging in the age of 12 to 22 years of age who fall on both the receiving end and acts as the creators who confront this daily. In addition, the interest is to study and explore various methods and solutions that can be implemented to overcome this cyber related social dilemma through innovative and practical strategies.

Research Problem

Most of the published research on cyberbullying reports data from Europe, Australia, and North America. Comparatively, there is a dearth of published studies using samples from Asia in general. Compared to physical and verbal bullying, indirect bullying such as social exclusion and gossiping, is characterized by the absence of direct confrontation, and due to its hidden nature, it provides more anonymity to the perpetrator like the anonymity provided to cyberbullies by online platforms. Indirect bullying has been linked to cognitive empathy (Tirza H J Van Noorden, 2014).

“Current cyberbullying studies highlighted issues such as the high volume of cyberbullying incidents in school, increased personal information

disclosure on social media, peer influences and the safety of the school environment for both bully and victim. Studies focusing on cyberbullying risk factors raised debates on factors such as whether males or females are most likely to be victims/cyberbullies (Alim, 2016).”

According to the articles and the published papers referred, it was identified that there is a gap in Sri Lankan society with regard to awareness of social media usage and cyberbullying. The Sri Lankans lack attention to the misuse of social media and the effects of cyberbullying. Mostly this topic was not touched at local levels for research ideas and that has led towards lack of attention on cyber usage and bullying. In Sri Lankan context the study will be conducted by trying to create a trend of bringing awareness among adolescents to reduce the gap that has arisen based on cyberbullying among adolescents.

Objectives

The objective of the study is to identify what constitutes in terms of cyberbullying within the Sri Lankan community and to develop a model that can be used as an advantage with the activities involved in raising awareness among adolescents. As per the study three specific objectives were revolved targeting one main objective as to build a model.

To examine ethical and safe practices in terms of usage of social media.

To identify the current practices of cyberbullying and the reasons leading to the existence

To analyse the root causes leading to this dilemma and identify the ways to eliminate the debacle.

Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Evidence

Level of Cyberbullying

In general, cyberbullying can be defined as an intentional or repeatedly inflicted harm on any party via the use of electronic media or the internet. It is known to take various forms of harassment which may include of threats, rumors, harmful or untruthful content or to the extent of impersonating someone which could ultimately lead towards another party, for being affected hurtful or harmful. This could also be in the form of stealing one’s identity, which is in the representation of catfishing where in people, may be lured into false relationships under unknown circumstances. (Fazlulhaq, 2021) This situation is not uncommon in Sri Lanka.

According to certain sources (Sunday Times, 2021) it states that women suffer from harassment through the internet overall about 400 cases had been reported during the last year which includes blackmail, sale of videos, sharing of obscene photos, editing content and posting on social media and revenge pornography. Also, the Executive Director of Women in Need (WIN) stated "Online harassment is a new form of gender-based violence". It was also added that "This is a growing trend with females aged between 15 to 45 years - from Advanced level or university students to young unmarried and married women being harassed by strangers, former male friends or ex-husbands". The sources indicated that the majority of its victims retreat to silence due to lack of knowledge on how to report or make a complaint while other reasons include fear of losing dignity or exposure of personal content (Sunday Times, 2021).

Since it was identified that cyberbullying takes different phases, unknown to the individual in literary context, they were indirectly getting exposed to cyberbullying while they were using social media. This situation is reportedly higher which can be noticed while conducting the data collection. Even more, while going through the social media platforms, it was quite clear that people are unaware of the bullying that they undergo even without their knowledge and awareness.

Inactiveness of the Sri Lankan Legal Framework on Cybercrimes

A Standard Operation Procedure was introduced for the local police stations to handle cyber related cases while educating and training the police force to understand the conflict and address appropriately. Yet it came to a standstill because of the COVID 19 pandemic. The above mentioned standard procedure was initially introduced by the bodies Women In Need, Police Cyber Crimes Unit, Children and Women's Bureau, the Criminal Investigation Department, Sri Lanka Computer Emergency Readiness Team (SLCERT) and Telecommunication Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka. Local police stations will conduct a series of comprehensive training for officers in charge, who are based in the Western province, as most police stations or women's and children's desks possess the proper procedure to handle cyber-bullying cases (Sunday Times, 2021). Even still not much of the public are aware about this standard procedure that is established to handle cyber related cases.

It is also stated that currently Sri Lanka is groping in the dark, as it is certainly a new area. The current laws and regulations that are already in place are inadequate to tackle the day-to-day crimes that are different to another

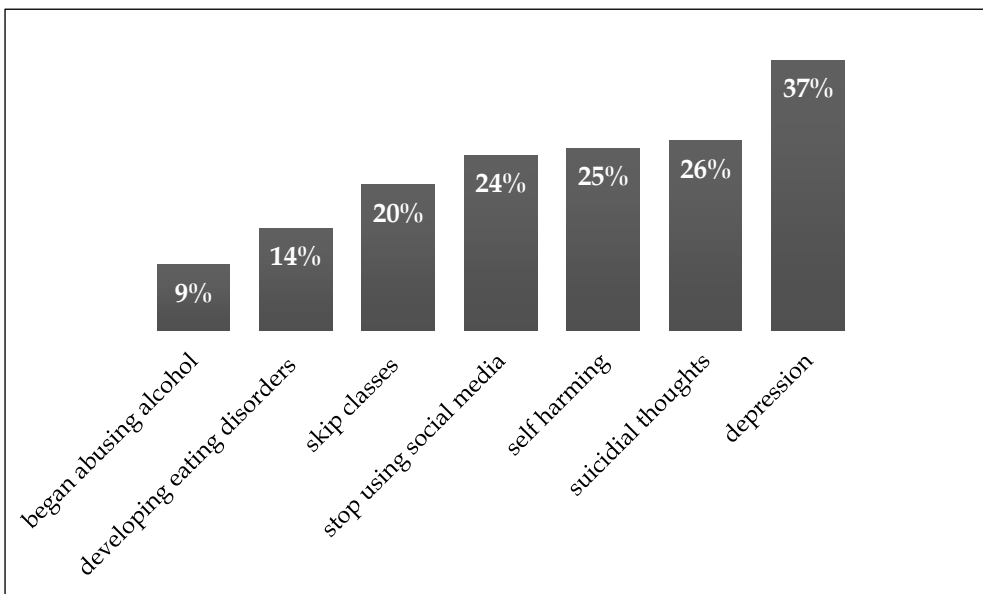
emerging due to technological advancements. Which is why the female parliamentarians of Sri Lanka had requested a parliamentary committee to specially focus on this aspect and investigate it in the long run so that it leads to highlighting of laws and regulations to curb harassment on the internet (Sunday Times, 2021).

A study clearly states that the legislatures and the governments in Sri Lanka is consistent with several problems in defining cyberbullying and cyber harassments. According to the UN Special Representative of Secretary General, bullying leads to a high percentage of children causing health compromises, mental wellbeing, and continuous consequences towards their adulthood. Criminal Investigations Department which is a law enforcement authority in Sri Lanka has a high number of complaints regarding suffering due to cyberbullying crimes among the university students. This is valuable evidence that proves that law enforcement authorities are receiving an increased number of complaints about cyberbullying crimes. The same study mentions about several Acts in legislature with their code names and these could be used on some occasions where the actions are needed against cyberbullying (Ariyadasa, 2019).

Psychology of the User

Since most of the teenagers tend to spend more time on the internet involved with their day-to-day activities will also have an impact on their performance on their social life and on their health as well. The Federal Bureau of Investigation categorises distribution of illegal content, theft, information damage, various forms of fraud, anti-competitive attacks and many other illegal aspects as cyber terrorism which means crimes committed through computers using the internet technology. The researchers (Ali, 2016) have indicated four categories that can possibly influence adolescents. The first category is content risks including being confronted with sensual/violent/racist/hate material pornography and many other challenging contents where many teenagers have accepted the fact that they have done it with proper consciousness (Patti M. Valkenburg, 2017).

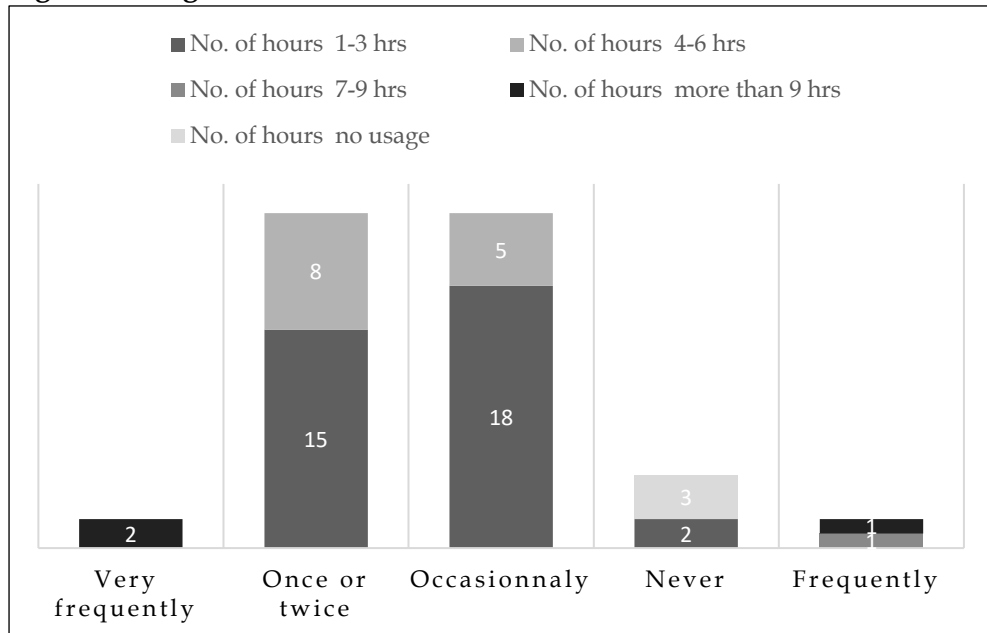
Figure 1: Effect of Cyberbullying



Source: Allison (2019).

As of the above graph which is visible in Figure 1, according to the study conducted by (Allison T Dovi, 2019) many issues that kids suffer are based on the psychological imbalance. About 37% are going through depression which is an ultimate cause for cyberbullying. Then the thoughts of suicide, self-harming and stopping the usage of social media are resulted within the ranges of 24-26%. While 9% of the kids in the above graph get addicted to alcohol, causes negative effects on the lives.

More victims do not intend to share their cyberbullying experience to either friends or parents. A study shows that a lesser number of students who were affected by cyberbullying share their problem to others for seeking assistance. Another study by (Alim, 2016) shows that the exposure to cyberbullying can increase with the high usage of internet for more hours.

Figure 2: Usage of Internet in Terms of Hours

Source: Ali (2016).

The Technology Illiteracy

The study conducted by (Ali, 2016) was taken into account to identify the factors related to technological illiteracy is based in a school from Oman. Generally, teenagers' tend to use the internet for various purposes. As the number of teenagers who use internet increases the number of risks involving them will gradually increase as a result. Since the internet has become a part or tool of life it will also have negative results which affects the normal life of a human being such as harassment, adult content abuse, bullying, interpersonal abuse, and many other negativities will result in the misuse of the internet. This is mainly due to lack of knowledge in terms of how to use technology for betterment and avoid its negativity (Ali, 2016).

From the survey carried out by (Ali, 2016) in Oman regarding the data gained in terms of intervention matters of cyberbullying the paper states that the most preferred intervention strategy that the educators will follow is talking to the victim and solving the problem also while notifying or letting the school security staff know about the matter is the least preferred strategy that the educators would follow. The researchers have stated that according to the information gathered through the questionnaire the educators have incorrect or inadequate information or the idea regarding cyberbullying. The paper states that the making sexual noises while calling, hacking someone's profile, and harming their status, making fun of the students who have

obsolete technology tools are within the most common cyberbullying activities that are being reported. As the paper states, the data gathered from the questionnaire indicates that most of the educators have no proper idea on how to intervene in such situations and have no proper idea regarding the subject. Overall, with that amount of information that the educators possess they are incapable of identifying the bully, the victim and also to analysing and evaluate the situation (Melike Kavuk Kalender, 2018).

There are many examples in previous studies that prove the misuse of means of social media. Higher amounts of percentages were concluded that respondents of cyberbullying were exposed through email, messages, and chat rooms. This fact was also proved in a study which was conducted by National Children's Home (NCH).

Methodology

The research philosophy carried was positivism because it was expected to understand a social activity which is prominently visible among the Sri Lankan society. The research is conducted through an inductive approach. And whereas the methodology adopted is qualitative analysis using in-depth interviews and the questionnaire. As a strategy, grounded theory was adopted. and the time horizon is longitudinal. As for the population sample the questionnaire was supported with 384 participants who forwarded their opinion on the concept of cyberbullying and related criteria. An online survey was distributed among the adolescents within the age of 12-22 years. And whereas 14 in-depth interviews were conducted among the adolescents within the age of 12-22 years, which lasted for around 20 minutes per interview. The collected data was analysed through thematic analysis. For the thematic analysis, the interviews conducted were converted to transcripts. With the use of those transcripts specific codes were generated. Then using those codes the specific data were categorised. And thereafter the categorised data were separated unto the exact quotes needed. Using the extracted quotes the analysis was conducted to come up with the model.

Results and Discussion

Cyberbullying is a common social phenomenon that is identified amongst the community. Most of the times, there is a higher chance of adolescents with the use of mobiles and social media, being a victim of cyberbullying in the modern environment. When describing the context of cyberbullying, the harassment that takes place over digital devices like mobile phone, laptop, computer over the use of the internet can be taken as a proper definition.

Cyberbullying might take place through Short Message Services (SMS), text messages, social media, or any other digital platforms. It consists mostly of negative, harmful, mean ideas about an individual or a group of individuals.

“Are you aware of cyberbullying?”

This was the question that was regularly raised towards the interviewees by the research team. Out of 13 interviewees 11 mentioned that they are not aware of the concept of cyberbullying.

“Not a big idea” or “I have not heard of cyberbullying” were the majority replies received when the question was raised on cyberbullying.

Among all the interviewees the first interviewee, a male adolescent of age 19, living in the Sabaragamuwa province shared his personal experience on cyberbullying.

“I just posted a photo of myself on a mirror. We call it a mirror selfie. But my friends started to say that I have become posh and it’s kind of funny and stuff. I didn’t see anything bad on that photo to be honest. Even worse they took a screenshot of that photo and started commenting on WhatsApp”

Based on this reply, it could be seen in Sri Lankan social context cyberbullying is overshadowed by the mindset of people. Many might not know that they were going through cyberbullying. Interesting fact is that the above interviewee who shared his personal experience was not aware that he was being bullied through cyberspace. When he was inquired whether he has gone through cyberbullying, his reply was “No, I haven’t”, however when he was explained about the context of cyberbullying, he implied that he has been a victim. Among the interviews that were conducted, it was possible to identify different forms of cyberbullying that exist in Sri Lanka.

Negative Comments

As a number of studies have implied, posting negative comments on social media is a form of bullying, result in a high range of damages to those who are undergoing the scenarios. The interviewees majorly indicated that the majority have undergone negative commenting.

“Since you took the example of Facebook, yes, I have been through such situations such as harsh and harmful comments been posted.”

This was the response received from the fourth interviewee who is a fourteen-year-old male adolescent, living in the North Central province.

Along this demonstration, it could be seen that negative comments and posts are taking a major turn in cyberbullying among the Sri Lankan community. The adolescents within the age of 12-22 believe that it is a common incident, and it should be ignored when negative comments are made.

“It’s a common thing to post comments on each and every photo we post.”

This was the response received from the seventh interviewee, a female of seventeen years living in the Uva province. Based on her opinion, who is a representative of the adolescent community, it can be visualized that the society experiences negative commenting most of the times on social media.

Fake Profiling

Apart from the negative comments creating fake profiles and pretending to be someone else is commonly seen in Sri Lanka. When 7,646,000 accounts are indicated as Facebook users is 35.8% of the entire population. The majority were identified as male users consisting 64% population (Napolean Cat, 2018)

Even though these stats are recovered, the interviews helped to arrive at an idea that most of the users are having a fake profile.

“There were around 4 times I was caught on fake profiles that were made using my photos. But I could take them down by reporting them. They use different names but upload my photos.”

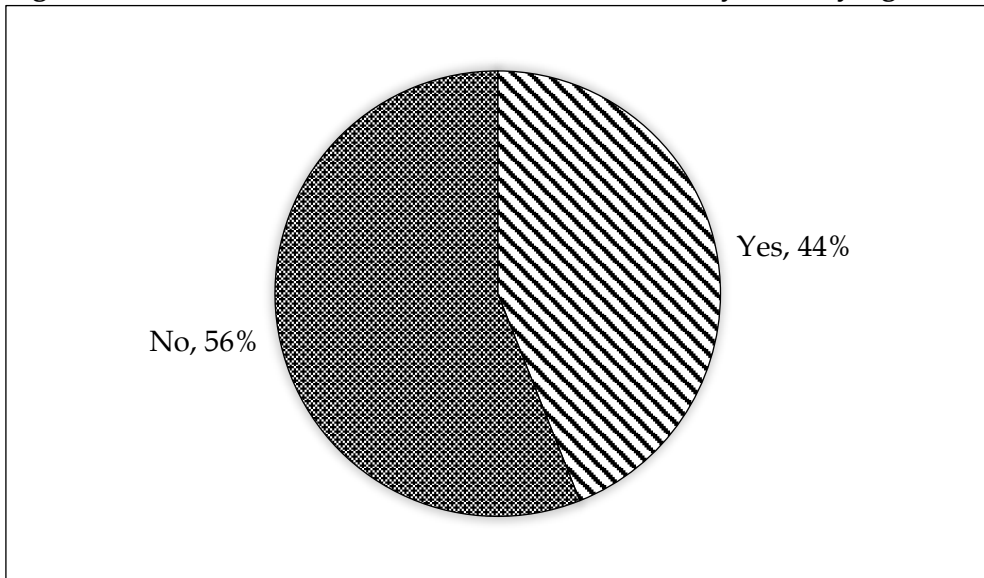
This was a statement given by the second interviewee, who is a 17-year-old female from the Central province. Here she mentions that she has experienced fake profiling around four times using her own photographs. As per the expression, it could be said that fake profiling is taken as a usual issue, and she has ignored the matter. As for a reaction, she has only made a report to Facebook to block the account.

“I reported the accounts and got them disabled. Other than that, I didn’t do anything for them as I can’t find the people behind it”.

With that, it is easy to grasp the situation with the understanding that fake profiling is taking place as a general matter among Sri Lankan society especially among the adolescents.

When the respondents were inquired whether they are aware of cyberbullying, 206 participants out of 384 total participants responded mentioning that they are unaware of cyberbullying.

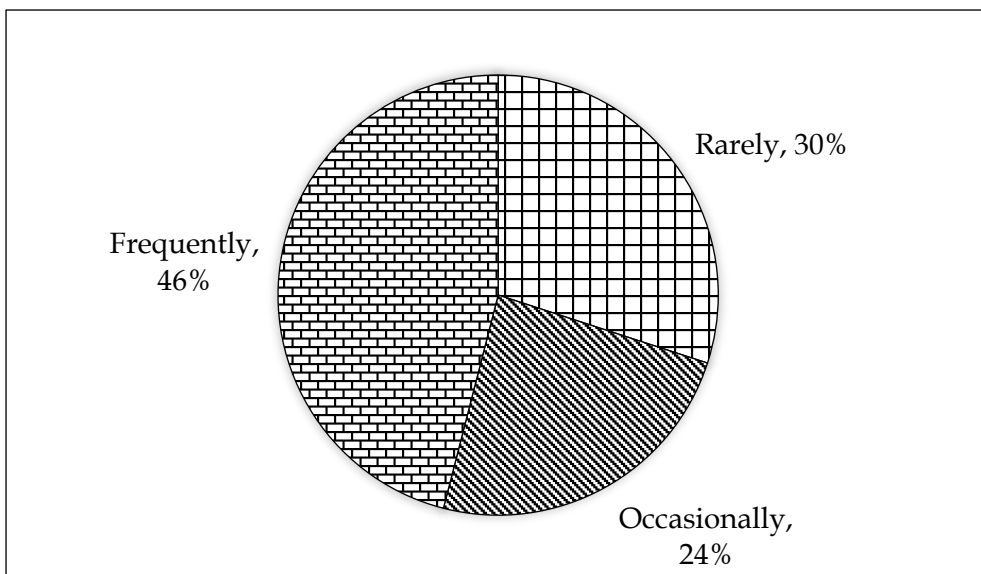
Figure 3: Whether the Adolescents are Aware about Cyberbullying



Source: Authors' demonstration.

The above pie chart (Figure 3) is a depiction of the results gained from the questionnaire based on the topic of awareness on cyberbullying. Furthermore, when the respondents were inquired about how often they witness offensive content on social media their replies indicating the majority witness negative actions frequently on social media channels. 177 replies were mentioning that they usually witness offensive content frequently. While 93 respondents mentioned that they see offensive content occasionally. The rest of 114 might have witnessed, but because of their unawareness, they might not know that the content is offensive. The below image clearly represents the respective percentages of the results obtained on the time of witnessing offensive content.

Figure 4: How Often the Adolescents Witness Cyberbullying



Source: Authors' demonstration.

Unawareness on the Legal Framework of Sri Lanka

The question that was raised for the interviewees in terms of legal framework was,

“Are you aware of any law that is active for the recognition of cyberbullying?”

The most prominent reply was received by the eighth interviewee who was a male of 20 years old living in the Southern province forwarded the following reply.

“Not that I know of. And I think majority of my peers would second my answer”

The respective answer was approved by the rest of the interviewees mentioning that they are unaware of any acting law to prevent cyberbullying.

According to Shaw, cyber security awareness is the "Degree of users' comprehension of the importance of information security and their obligations and actions to exercise sufficient levels of information security control to secure the organisation's data and networks" (Colombo Telegraph, 2020).

The level of awareness varies from person to person which can take the form of low, medium, or high level of awareness. Hence the industry of Information Technology has skyrocketed along with new innovations and findings the cyber threats that could result by the new innovations and the findings have also drastically increased. Moreover, these cyber threats have also evolved with the ability to adapt and stand resistant towards all prevention and precautionary measures that have been taken. From transnational to organised crimes, from stealing minor data and information to conspiring against governments and nations this conflict has escalated.

When focusing on Sri Lanka a few legal frameworks are in place even though it is doubtful as to which extent they are being practiced. At present the Computer Crimes Act N0.24 of 2007, Right to Information Act No.12 of 2016, Telecommunications Act No.25 of 1991 can be considered some of the legislations in place in this regard at present in Sri Lanka. It is stated that in the year 2019 the former government brought forward a special bill to enhance cyber security even though it was not included in the Sri Lankan legal regime.

The main intention of this was to “implement a national cyber security strategy, establish a digital infrastructure protection agency, empower CERT, establish a proper institutional framework, protect critical infrastructure within Sri Lanka and to provide for matters or incidents related to computer related technology” (SLCERT, 2019).

In Sri Lanka, SLCERT is known as the national center for cyber security. It is a fact that not many are aware of this authority. It is no doubt that even though the majority of the population of Sri Lanka use the internet and social media, only a few knows how to manage cyber threats due to lack of awareness in terms of legal frameworks in place.

Furthermore, SLCERT conducted a survey in the year 2017 to reveal how many youths disclose their personal information through social media. It was found that 92% of the population reveal their identity, 72% reveal their personal photos, 47% reveal their contact information and 25% show their relationship status. This depicts how grave the danger is if the Sri Lankan youth if not educated on how to use social media safely and how not be a victim of cyberbullying or any threats: further if confronted with such an issue how to address it in terms of law and authorities.

To prove the above findings, from secondary material, the statement made by the ninth interviewee, a male of 22 years living in the Sabaragamuwa province mentioned his opinion on scamming.

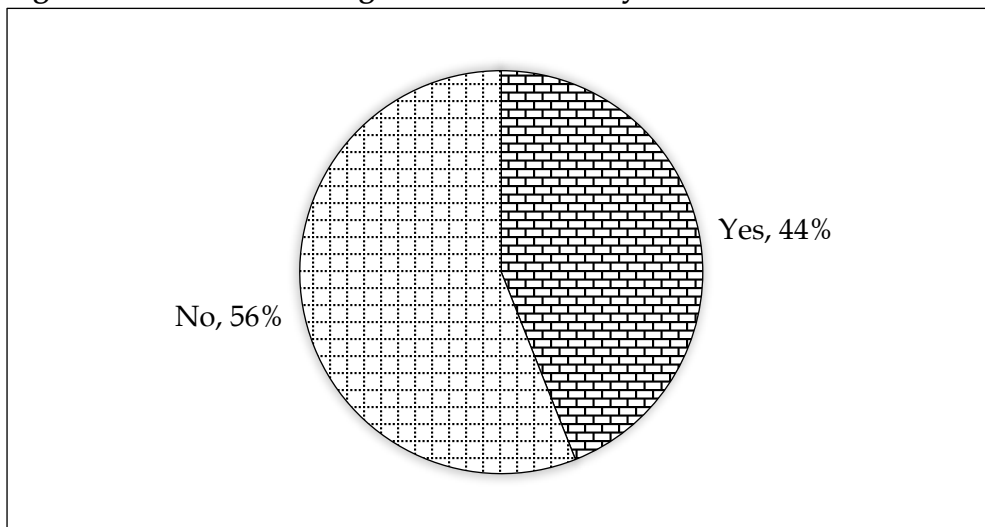
“I have had encountered scams. I found few years ago that someone has made a profile under my name and messaged to some females” when he was inquired whether he has taken any action against it, he replied that

“Let it pass and not care. It’s nothing serious. If we take it seriously it might be a disaster.”

The statement shows the level of awareness the current adolescent carries in terms of understanding the legal activeness within Sri Lanka in terms of cyber security. The findings have supported the study by indicating that the majority of cyber users are unaware of the legal actions that can be taken to protect their privacy.

When the questionnaire raised the matter whether the respondents were aware about any legal justification made for cyber harassment, 215 respondents replied that they are unaware about any legal justification done by Sri Lankan authorities. But 169 responded that they are aware about some sort of justifications handled by legal parties in Sri Lanka. The below attached image (Figure 5) will clearly show the difference in the percentages.

Figure 5: Awareness on Legal Activeness on Cyber Harassment



Source: Authors' demonstration.

Psychological Instability of The Users

The victims of cyberbullying regularly experience issues and sentiments such as dissatisfaction, stress, pitifulness, harm, and anger on the circumstances that have happened to the individual. As a result of cyberbullying the victims have had attempts on taking their own life. Furthermore, suicidal thoughts have occurred to them due to the impact and the weight that they have been confronted with respect to the occurrence. Moreover, the victims tend to avoid peers and the public and break off going to places which made them upbeat or cheerful due to the impact of being a victim of cyberbullying (Allison M. Schenk, 2012) It was discovered that even a minor act of cyberbullying has the possibility to have a substantial impact on a teenager's psychological mentality.

“I was really sad, and I avoided the public and friends as well and with the sadness I was angry when it happened to me. But as a female I can't do anything more regarding this matter also.” was the statement given by the second interviewee a female of seventeen years who is from the central province, when the question “what did you feel when the situation occurred to you” was raised.

She is a person who uses online platforms with the purpose of connecting with her friends through the internet and she spends her leisure time surfing on online platforms from 4-6 hours a day, her response was acceptable.

Depression and Low Self-esteem

The following remark clearly reveals mental discomfort, which is sadness according to her statement, as well as low self-esteem, which has caused the interviewee to avoid the public. It is vital to understand a teenager who corners himself or herself because of cyberbullying which could easily result in depression. The repercussions of cyberbullying on psychological health are a concern for a variety of reasons. The eventual result of such severe negative effects on psychological health on teenagers, or in fact any human being, might be suicide.

Cyberbullying has been tied to serious psychological problems in teenagers, including depression, mental discomfort, poor self-esteem, and low academic performance. In addition, it is a matter that has gained attention of the society and is a growing problem in educational environments which has disrupted the good fortune, mental hygiene of the teenage learners in the society (Çelik, 2012)

The above-mentioned statement was well elaborated by the fourth interviewee who is a 14-year-old male living in north central province.

“I broke down (depressed), sad, hate and anger was also present even though I was down, sometimes I didn’t want to attend to the school and extra classes because I couldn’t concentrate properly all the time”.

If the statement or the reply given by the interviewee is further discussed it can be clearly seen the well mixed emotions, as stated above by the teenager who has had sadness, hatred and anger at the same time which can be identified because of being a victim. Furthermore, the interviewee has stated that due to lack of concentration which has caused from the related situation that he did not want to attend school and the extra classes which demonstrates the impact of cyberbullying on the perspective of academics of that individual.

The mental wellbeing is exceptionally much vital to a teenager or any human being for their existence. These deliberate actions of cyber bullies have caused the victims in countless ways, they tend to get a handle on the mental prosperity of the victim which might annihilate the ordinary existence of an individual. Being depressed over a certain matter leads to various kinds of end results that would mark negative milestones on one’s life and has an impact on their future as well.

When considering the situation of the respective interviewee it might have turned into a massive disaster if he was further bullied. None of the victims identify their mixed emotions and psychological differentiation on anger, sadness, humility, or any other until they are pressured upon a certain point of life. In this case, it could be seen that the above-mentioned male respondent has already given up hope up to a certain extent because of cyber harassment.

Anger and Emotional Distress

With the anger and other emotional distresses of a victim the revenge or the vengeance is a key component that the consideration should be given to. The idea of getting back to the preparator in any manner can be included as a negative impact on the victim’s life. As stated in the research study, which was read as a secondary material, both the victims and the preparators of cyberbullying have a potential of four times higher than the ordinary human being to commit a crime in the future (Çelik, 2012).

The above stated statement which is extracted from the research article have the possibility to be true when the victim's side is reflected. Several interviewees had the idea of getting back to the preparator when it was raised by the team.

"What would be your response if you face such a situation" was raised as a form of inquiry, and the replies were significantly similar.

"I might do something bad for the person as well" was the reply from a 22-year-old male who lives in the Western province.

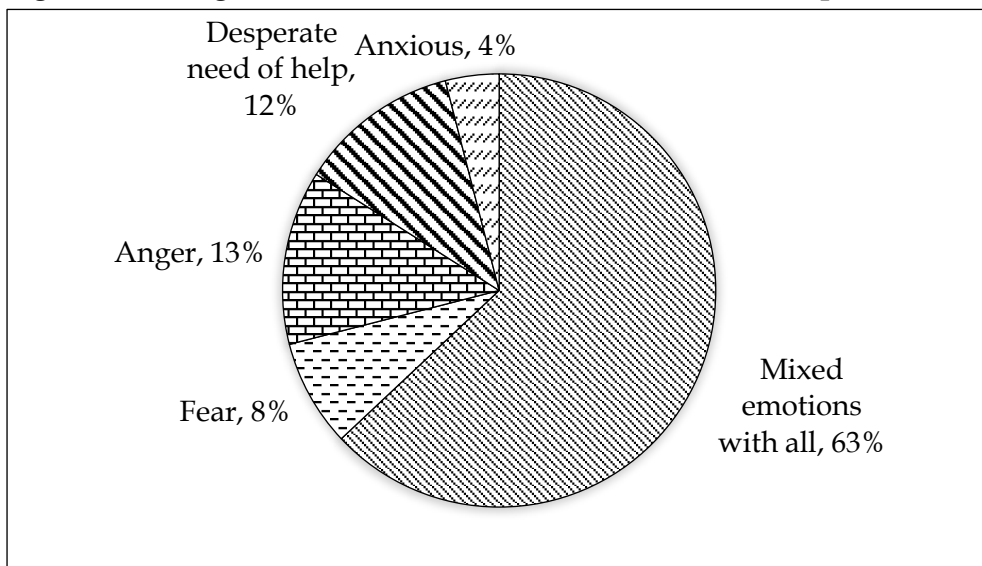
"I might feel sad, And I might feel angry also. There is a good chance that I might go and kill that person" was the reply from a 17-year-old male living in western province.

It is clear that he has emotions that might extend towards the expense of a life because of the emotions. Even though the victims are experiencing emotional discomfort and it may have occupied the individual in a variety of ways, it is apparent that hatred could accompany the individuals as well.

With the need for vengeance, there is a high likelihood that both parties will wind themselves in an unpleasant or dreadful scenario. This situation should be emphasized and proved to the teenagers that pursuing vengeance can devastate one's life, and that vengeance is not the solution to eliminating hatred for the responsible preparators. To eliminate the above-mentioned issue, which is seeking vengeance, effective teenage awareness should be implemented.

According to the results obtained from the questionnaire it was easy to clarify the resolution that the victims of cyberbullying are undergoing a psychological trauma causing on different levels of fear, anger, and anxiousness along with their feeling for desperate need of help. It was asked from the respondents to let their emotions on the topic of expressing their opinion if they were to face an incident of cyber harassment. The below results (Fig 6) were obtained from the inquiry. Out of all the respondents, the majority have mentioned that they will be having a mixed set of emotions with fear, anger and anxiousness.

Figure 6: Feelings of a Victim as Per the Results from the Respondents



Source: Authors' demonstration.

Technological Illiteracy Among the Users

Technology is the tool to conquer the current world. If you want to rule the world and survive among this competitive world, technology is the key towards every door. Each door will open if citizens are excelled in technology. But there are situations where technology holds the biggest threat to the world, yet in the twenty first century survival can be established with technology. The best example to justify the statement can be taken based on the Coronavirus pandemic. Those who are updated with technology didn't have any issue with carrying out their regular work activities, but those who had difficulties were lagging in their lives during the past year. This is the best example so far on expressing the power of technology over the human race.

When Sri Lanka is taken as a consideration of understanding technological literacy, it should be cleared on a few important facts. It was mentioned that in Sri Lanka technology literacy rate is around 30%. And on the contrary the digital literacy rate is recorded as 46% (Amarasekara, 2021).

When compared with other countries, Sri Lanka has a low rate of literacy in terms of technology. According to the interviews we could find this issue in many cases. One major issue we could find was most of the people were using social media platforms to spend their leisure time.

When the interviewees were inquired about their reason for using social media, they were only responding based on entertainment and their studying purposes.

“Only for entertainment and studies sometimes.”

This was the reply given by the sixth interviewee who 17-year-old male. As per his view, he is using social media to spend his leisure time. But when he was asked whether he is aware of any other forms or advantages that he can gain through using social media, he responded that he is not familiar with other activities. This is mainly because many of the adolescents are not aware of the advantages that they can gain through social media. Sometimes technological literacy on social media is highlighted based on different scenarios according to the responses given by the adolescents. The major reason for this illiteracy and the main leading factor towards technological illiteracy can be identified.

School System

In Sri Lanka, the schools never allowed the children to use mobile devices, or any of the social media platforms.

“The schools probate us to use devices considering that technology is unnecessary”

This was a response received from the fourth interviewee who is a seventeen-year-old female, living in western province. Since she is a school student, it was easy to discuss her opinion on the school system where she clearly indicated that the schools consider technology to be unnecessary. The students were not allowed to use any of the social media platforms. But with the pandemic the tables turned unexpectedly where social media became necessary. Those students who didn't have the devices, and the social media platforms were exempted from the earning activities because they are unable to keep a connection with the schools.

As such, it was clear that the school system should have a change where they should be the ones to put forward the initiative in teaching the students on the social media platforms and how they should be protective on those platforms. Technological illiteracy of the students leads them towards being a victim and a bully. It should be prevented from the schools as a starting point of putting a stable foundation for the future generation. The Sri Lankan school system should have a turnover by adopting a new curriculum to

educate students on technology and social media in a highly secured and stable way.

Even more to prove that there should be a stable foundation from schools on technological illiteracy another statement can be used. When the interviewees were asked how long they use social media per day, the replies were interesting. "Around 4 hours for a day. I honestly don't know the time limit because whenever I feel free, I use social media." This was a reply from the second interviewee who is a 17-year-old female from the Central province. Just because of her sense of freedom, she keeps using social media for hours. As a school student she should focus more on her studies. Based on her level of technological illiteracy, she thinks the unplanned level of using social media is acceptable. But as responsible citizens, there should be a limit on the duration of using social media. This information can be passed on through the school system, if a proper campaign is established for the betterment of those students.

"We do not have proper knowledge with regard to this matter so we can't rule out whether we are facing cyberbullying or not. We were not allowed to use mobiles up until last years. Teachers started to shout when we use mobiles, and parents' panic. It happened with mine. Because of these issues adolescents don't have proper knowledge on what are the bad things they face on social media."

This statement was made by the fifth interviewee, who is a 22-year-old male living in Western province. As per his statement, it is clear that the schools were prohibiting students to use the social media platforms and that caused the level of illiteracy that is present within the current Sri Lankan society.

Posting Personal Information

Apart from the above identified factors, the interviews conducted, supported to identify that many of the interviewees were posting their personal information online.

"I just posted a photo of myself on a mirror. We call it a mirror selfie. But my friends started to say that I have become posh and it's kind of funny and stuff"

It is clear that because of the photos that were posted online, this interviewee was exposed to be a victim of cyberbullying. This was a male of 19 years old living in Sabaragamuwa province. Based on his experience he admitted that his photos which he took in front of the mirror triggered the audience to bully

him continuously resulting in a situation of being cyber bullied. That clearly shows that if the adolescents post their personal information on social media platforms in an unnecessary way, they are having a threat of getting exposed to cyberbullying. Specifically, in the Sri Lankan community this issue is a common fact that can be seen while using social media. Through social media platforms, personal information might attract bullies which will eventually turn out to be a serious issue in life. In consideration to all the interviews conducted and the data analysed, it was possible to come to a conclusion that the majority were bullied because of their illiteracy on how to handle social media properly.

Conclusion

In Sri Lanka cyberbullying at a higher rate is a concern because there are many open causes that lead towards cyberbullying. With the findings it was identified that many were being bullied online, by people unknown to them. At the initial stage when respondents were asked whether they have gone through cyberbullying the response was negative but with the detailed explanation on the context of cyberbullying, they accepted that they have gone through at least one of cyber harassment incident.

Furthermore, feedbacks on feelings of adolescents as witnesses in different bullying scenarios were obtained. Majority of the respondents in the questionnaire mentioned that they would probably go towards an adult or a teacher to inform the incident and seek help. But in the interviews, most of the interviewees said that they won't share their experience because it is unpleasant and it could lead to receive unwanted attention. Rather than this they would keep it to themselves. It was clear that the respondents were not aware about the possible measures to be taken against cyberbullying. And it was proven that the rate of cyber harassment gradually rises with the ignorance of the adolescents, by making them undergo even more serious cases.

When the perspective of a bully was received with the opinion of the adolescents, they raised their opinion that some of the bullies might be victimizing some innocent individual, with various reasons. The bullies might be carrying a thought of being more powerful than the targeted individual. With that though the bully might harass the other to make the victim feel helpless and humiliated. Also, the respondents mentioned that the bullies might have a sense of pleasure through cyberbullying. When an individual is victimized, the bully might have felt that he or she has achieved success and that feeling of success is achieved through cyber harassment.

When the respondents were asked whether they are aware about the legal actions to be taken against cyberbullying they indicated that the majority of them are unaware of it. But some indicated the support that can be taken from the crimes department of police and the SLCERT.

The first specific objective was focused on examining ethical and safe practices in terms of usage of social media. A thorough investigation on the previous research conducted was given and it was possible to identify that there is specific three principles of ethics in terms of ethical and safe practices of using social media. They were identified as authenticity, transparency, and communication. When using social media, the users would be authentic, they should post true information about their true selves. On the other hand, lying about the personality is a damage that will eventually result in cyber harassment. On the other hand, the users should be transparent. They should express their goal of using social media clearly and precisely. No hidden agenda should be kept when using social media. Apart from the above mentioned two aspects, communication is a must. The users should mutually communicate with the audience as an honest person. Lack of communication and falsifying information is having consequences. Those were the identified ethical principles that can be followed when using social media. And for safe practices, adolescents should be provided with awareness on how social media can be used for finding career opportunities, how the personal information should be kept safe and private, how investment should be done safely through social media are identified along the achievement of the objective.

The second objective is focused on identifying the current practices of cyberbullying and the reasons that lead towards the existence of those practices. The current practices that were identified vary from typical harassment online towards, cyber stalking, impersonating, exclusion, fraping, masquerading, trolling, and flaming. The mostly performed act of cyberbullying is harassment, trolling and cyber stalking as per the results obtained from the interviews. When the reasons that lead towards those current practices were focused, it could be seen that the most prominent reason is the technological illiteracy of the adolescents. Many of the users were prohibited to use social media when they were schooling and that made them weak and illiterate on technological applications. Apart from this the psychology of the users are also affecting current practices that exist in terms of cyberbullying within Sri Lanka.

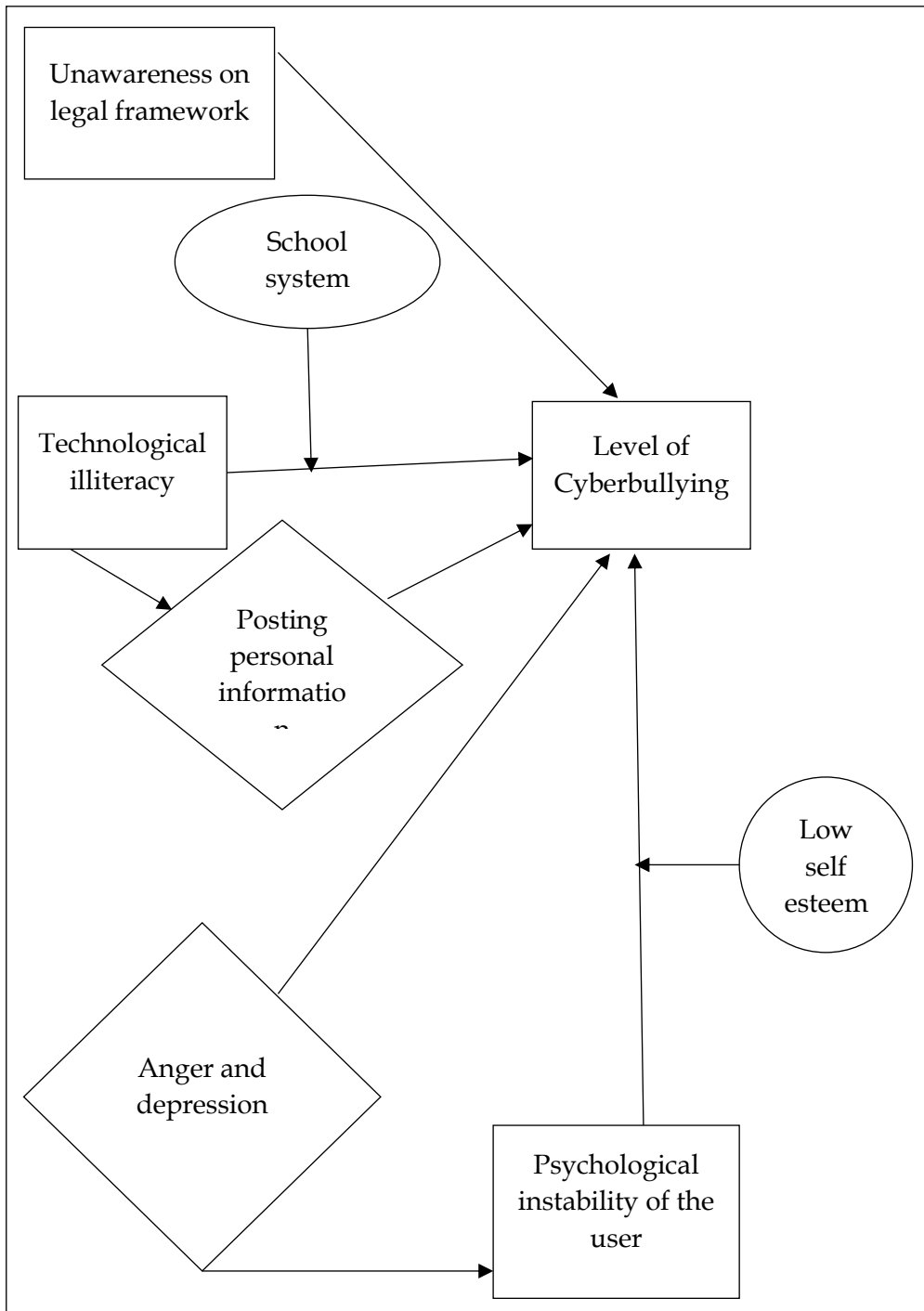
The third objective was to analyse the root causes that lead towards the context of cyberbullying and to identify ways that can be adopted within the society to eliminate the debacle. Based on the findings the root causes were analysed in further variables. When the impact of technological illiteracy is taken it was identified that the school system and the amount of personal information posted are making an effect on the level of cyberbullying. The school system appears to be a moderating variable of the analysed root causes, while the posting personal information tends to act as a mediating variable. Then the unawareness of the legal framework is also resulting in the level of cyberbullying that exists within the society. Apart from the above mentioned two root causes, the psychological instability of the user about two important psychological factors are affecting the level of cyberbullying. The low self-esteem carried by the individuals act as a moderating variable while the anger and the depression act as the mediating variable that causes towards cyberbullying.

Based on the above findings as a conclusion, the below model was developed as a pathway to raise awareness among adolescents and social media users. When explaining the model, first the understanding should be given on the identified variables which are the level of cyberbullying, unawareness of the legal framework, technological illiteracy and psychological instability of the users can be highlighted. Accordingly, the level of cyberbullying is gradually affected and increases with the unawareness of legal framework. When the cyber users are unaware of the legal applications within Sri Lanka which can be applied in a situation of cyber harassment, majority of the victims are getting exposed to critical ways of cyberbullying. The cyber bullies can use the situation as an advantage and then victimize innocent citizens because of the unawareness of the legal framework. Then the technological illiteracy among the Sri Lankan community is also majorly affecting the level of cyberbullying. Because of the technological illiteracy among the cyber users, they post their personal information like what they generally do in their day to day life, what they wear, where they go and every little detail, which will expose those cyber users towards cyberbullying in a crucial level. Apart from that the technological illiteracy is based on the school system which is practicing within Sri Lankan community. The Schools prohibit the adolescents to use mobile devices and social media which will eventually raise the curiosity of these adolescents. The curiosity will lead them to test the applications in secretly where that background will gradually lead towards cyber harassment. Because of the unawareness and lack of knowledge as well as the undying curiosity, the adolescents will test the applications which will lead them to get bullied. As such, it can be said that the technological illiteracy among the Sri Lankan community is leading

towards higher rates of cyberbullying. The other factor is the psychological instability of the users. The psychology can be categorised under two criteria as low self-esteem and anger and depression. When the adolescents have low self-esteem about themselves, they tend to think that they are weak and they are left alone. Whenever the adolescents are getting exposed to cyber threats, they try to keep the situation by themselves with the thought that the society might judge them. The low self-esteem is a result of the psychological instability of the users, which is resulting towards the level of cyberbullying among the Sri Lankan community. Most of times, the responses received could be revised and can be concluded that female population within the age of 12-22 were having low self-esteem with the exposure of cyber threats. The anger and depression which is also a psychological factor directly result in the increase of cyberbullying. Majority of the victims are getting depressed from cyber harassment and that thought of depression is turned out to be the anger which is directed towards bullying some other person. As such anger and depression occur together and result the level of cyberbullying within the Sri Lankan community.

In other ways this model can be used to minimize the level of cyberbullying among the Sri Lankan community as well. With proper understanding and awareness about the active legal framework to support cyber harassment will eventually result in decreasing the level of cyberbullying. With proper awareness the adolescents can be informed about the active law and they can seek support of legal facilities whenever necessary without suffering from cyberbullying. Then the schools can be used as the foundation to put forward a stable framework to raise knowledge on the technology within the society. With proper foundation from the schools, the adolescents can be provided with awareness on how they should properly use the technology and which information they should post while using the available media. As such, with proper technological literacy the adolescents can be encouraged to get away from cyberbullying. With proper understanding on the psychology of the user's cyberbullying level can be minimized. The self-respect and self-esteem among the users can be raised with a proper campaign. If the users understand the worth of self-actualization, then the level of cyberbullying can be eventually demolished from the society.

Figure 7: Conceptualization Model Built With Identified Variables



Source: Authors' demonstration.

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