MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF CYBERBULLYING INCIDENTS: ANALYSIS OF NEWS REPORTING

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Abstract:

The study aims to understand how instances of cyberbullying are reported in the news. The study covers the following aspects, tone and frame of coverage, language and imagery chosen, protection of the identity, inclusion of authority opinion, etc. The outcomes of the study will create a basis for creating reporting guidelines to assure victims, bystanders, and potential victims. Additionally, it will highlight the role of media in shaping public perception and the importance of responsible journalism. By analyzing these factors, the study seeks to promote ethical reporting practices and enhance support for those affected by cyberbullying.

Keywords: cyberbullying, reporting, news analysis, responsible journalism

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Introduction:

In reporting cyber-related crimes, including cyberbullying, the media plays a great role in the general public, influencing awareness and understanding of such issues. Through coverage of cyberbullying incidents, print media can shed light on the prevalence and types of cyberbullying experienced by individuals, such as online harassment and impersonation.[1]

The tone and frame of the reporting add further value from the citizen's point of view. Media framing is crucial because it shapes how information is presented to the public, influencing how people perceive and understand complex issues [2] Different frames used by the media can lead to varying interpretations of the same issue, impacting how individuals form opinions and attitudes towards social problems. [2]

To understand the tone and frame of the reporting textual analysis is considered a good starting point. Textual analysis methods such as term and concept extraction, text link analysis, and sentiment analysis are valuable for understanding and addressing cyberbullying issues [3] Properly addressing cyberbullying incidents would positively impact the social consequences for the victims. Victims of cyberbullying often experience social isolation as they may withdraw from social interactions both online and offline to avoid further harassment, which can negatively impact their social development and relationships [4]

Understanding factors impacting coverage is also an important part because media's focus on high-profile incidents, especially those leading to suicides, may limit the public's understanding of the broader issue of cyberbullying and its various dimensions [5]

Research Methodology:

Content Analysis:

For the research, 4 major instances of cyberbullying were chosen. Based on the coverage and a pilot study conducted to figure out the most remembered incidents. Cases chosen:

1. TikTok Vs YouTube controversy (2020)
2. The Bois Locker Room Incident (2020)
3. Zaira Wasim Incident (2019)
4. Girl commits suicide over morphed pictures (2014)

Criteria for analysis:

Type of Cyberbullying	Harassment
	Threats
	Doxxing (revealing personal information)
	Cyberstalking
	Impersonation
	Spreading Rumors
	Exclusion
	Other (specify)

Media Representation

Tone of Coverage	Positive
	Negative
	Neutral
Frames Used	Victim-blaming
	Perpetrator-focused
	Supportive of Victim
	Call for Action/Change
	Other (specify)
Language and Imagery	Use of sensational language
	Use of empathetic/supportive language
	Use of images (describe the nature of images used)
Protection of victims identity	Yes
	No
Perpetrator Identity	Yes

	No
Presence of contextual information	Yes
	No
Content about raising awareness	Yes
	No
Inclusion of information regarding resources.	Yes
	No
Inclusion of Multiple Perspectives.	Statement from authorities
	Statement from experts
	Statement from either of the parties involved.

Case1:   Tik   Tok   Vs   YouTube   controversy   (2020)

- Incident Description
  - The article discusses the escalating conflict between content creators on TikTok and YouTube, primarily sparked by roast videos and inflammatory content exchanges.
- Location
  - Digital platforms (YouTube, TikTok, social media)
- Type of Cyberbullying
  - Harassment
  - Spreading Rumors
  - Exclusion
  - Other: Derogatory and offensive content
- Media Representation
  - Tone of Coverage: Neutral
  - Frames Used: -
    - Victim-blaming: No
    - Perpetrator-focused: Yes
    - Supportive of Victim: Not explicitly
  - Call for Action/Change: Yes, advocating for policy formulation and privacy laws
- Language and Imagery:
  - Use of sensational language: Mild, focused on describing the conflict and its implications.
  - Use of empathetic/supportive language: Limited

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- ○ Use of images: Thumbnails from YouTube videos were mentioned but not described in detail.
- Protection of Victim's Identity: No, specific individuals involved were named.
- Perpetrator Identity: Yes, various content creators on TikTok and YouTube were named.
- Presence of Contextual Information: Yes, discusses socio-cultural contexts and the broader implications of the conflict.
- Content about Raising Awareness: Yes, addresses societal issues such as casteism, classism, and content quality online.
- Inclusion of Information Regarding Resources: No specific resources were mentioned.
- Inclusion of Multiple Perspectives:
  - ○ Statement from authorities: Not explicitly mentioned in the article.
  - ○ Statement from experts: No direct quotes, but societal implications were discussed.
  - ○ Statement from either party involved: Statements were summarized from content creators' actions and videos.

Case 2: Bois Locker Room

- Incident Description:
  - ○ A group named "Bois Locker Room" on Instagram, allegedly comprising young schoolboys from Delhi, shared images of underage girls and engaged in lewd discussions, including jokes about sexual assault and rape. Screenshots of these chats were widely circulated on social media platforms.
- Type of Cyberbullying:
  - ○ Harassment
  - ○ Threats
  - ○ Spreading Rumors
  - ○ Other: Sharing inappropriate images and lewd comments
- Media Representation:
  - ○ Tone of Coverage: Negative
  - ○ Frames Used:
    - ■ Victim-blaming: No, focus on condemning the perpetrators
    - ■ Perpetrator-focused: Yes, highlighting actions and consequences
    - ■ Supportive of Victim: Advocates for the victims but primarily focused on condemning the perpetrators
- Call for Action/Change: Strong call for legal action and societal change
- Language and Imagery:
  - ○ Use of sensational language: Moderate, focusing on the severity of the issue.
  - ○ Use of empathetic/supportive language: Limited to statements from activists and psychologists.
  - ○ Use of images: Includes generic illustrations related to cyberbullying and social media use.
  - ○ Protection of Victim's Identity: No, details of victims (underage girls) were shared in screenshots.

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- Perpetrator Identity: Yes, details about the group members were discussed, including their actions and consequences.
- Presence of Contextual Information: Yes, societal and psychological factors influencing such behavior were discussed, including the impact of lockdown on children's online activities.
- Content about Raising Awareness: Yes, the article raises awareness about cyberbullying, social media safety, and the need for parental supervision.
- Inclusion of Information Regarding Resources: No specific resources were mentioned in the article.
- Inclusion of Multiple Perspectives:
  - Statement from authorities: Yes, Delhi Women's Commission and police statements were included.
  - Statement from experts: Yes, perspectives from cyber experts and psychologists were included.
  - Statement from either party involved: Limited, mostly based on statements from investigators and authorities.

Case 3: Zaira Wasim Controversy

- Incident Description:
  - Zaira Wasim, a Kashmiri Muslim actress, announced her decision to quit Bollywood citing reasons related to her faith. This sparked debates and reactions across India, highlighting issues of Islamophobia and cultural norms.
- Type of Cyberbullying:
  - Harassment (through social media reactions)
  - Spreading Rumors (about her reasons for quitting)
  - Other: Criticism and trolling based on religious beliefs
- Media Representation:
  - Tone of Coverage: Negative (criticism and debates)
  - Frames Used:
    - Victim-blaming: No, focus on societal and industry norms
    - Perpetrator-focused: Yes, discussions on societal reactions
    - Supportive of Victim: Mixed reactions, some support, but predominantly criticism
    - Call for Action/Change: Calls for societal introspection rather than specific actions
- Language and Imagery:
  - Use of sensational language: Moderate, emphasizing controversies and societal implications.
  - Use of empathetic/supportive language: Limited, more critical and analytical.
  - Use of images: Likely accompanying images of Zaira Wasim and Bollywood scenes, not detailed in the article.
- Protection of Victim's Identity: Identity was not protected as her decision was widely discussed and criticized.
- Perpetrator Identity: Yes, various critics and commentators were named, including

Bollywood figures and journalists.

- Presence of Contextual Information: Yes, extensive discussion on the societal and cultural factors influencing reactions to Zaira Wasim's decision.

- Content about Raising Awareness: Yes, raises awareness about Islamophobia, gender roles, and freedom of religious expression in India.
- Inclusion of Information Regarding Resources: No specific resources were mentioned in the article.
- Inclusion of Multiple Perspectives:
    - Statement from authorities: No direct quotes, but societal reactions were discussed.
    - Statement from experts: Opinions from scholars and journalists were included.
    - Statement from either party involved: Statements from Zaira Wasim were quoted indirectly.

Case 4: Girl kills self over Facebook harassment

- Incident Description:
- A 17-year-old schoolgirl committed suicide after a morphed picture of her was uploaded on a social networking site by her friend, leading to cyberbullying and harassment.
- Type of Cyberbullying:
    - Harassment
    - Doxxing (posting personal information)
    - Impersonation (creating a fake profile)
- Media Representation:
    - Tone of Coverage: Negative (focus on tragic outcome and legal actions)
    - Frames Used:
        - Victim-blaming: Absence of victim-blaming in the article
        - Perpetrator-focused: Yes, details on arrests and actions taken against perpetrators
        - Supportive of Victim: Supportive, urging victims to seek help and highlighting legal and psychological support available
- Language and Imagery:
    - Use of sensational language: Moderate, describing the tragic event and legal actions.
    - Use of empathetic/supportive language: Empathetic towards the victim and family's plight.
    - Use of images: No description provided in the article.
- Protection of Victim's Identity: Identity of the victim was not explicitly protected in the article.
- Perpetrator Identity: Yes, names and details of the arrested individuals were provided.
- Presence of Contextual Information: Yes, detailed account of the incident, police actions, and advice for victims.
- Content about Raising Awareness: Yes, raises awareness about the dangers of

cyberbullying and the importance of seeking help.

- Inclusion of Information Regarding Resources: Yes, information about legal help and psychological counseling offered by authorities.
- Inclusion of Multiple Perspectives:
  - Statement from authorities: Yes, quotes from police officers urging victims to seek help.
  - Statement from experts: No specific quotes from experts in the article.
  - Statement from either party involved: Quotes from police and family members were included.

Conclusion:

Based on the content analysis of the four cyberbullying cases- TikTok vs YouTube controversy, Bois Locker Room incident, the Zaira Wasim controversy, and the case of the girl who killed herself over Facebook harassment. The following conclusions can be drawn from media representation of cyberbullying cases.

Tones and frames:

The media predominantly uses a negative tone when reporting on cyberbullying incidents. The emphasis for the majority of the time is on the severity of the consequences. Open calls for action are also present in the representation. In cases like the Bois Locker Room and the girl's suicide, the coverage is critical of perpetrators and supportive of victims, whereas in less traumatizing cases, the victim support is more subtle.

Victim-blaming:

There is a complete absence of victim-blaming in the articles analyzed, this will add to the confidence of future victims in reporting. Instead, the focus remains on condemning perpetrators' actions and advocating for support systems for victims. The overall absence is a great boost for reporting instances.

Perpetrator-focused Reporting:

Media coverage tends to focus on detailing the actions and consequences of perpetrators, providing names and specific details about those involved in cyberbullying incidents.

Expert and authority involvement:

The inclusion of the expert and authority opinions needs to be more consistent for the welfare of the victims and bystanders; it would enhance the depth of understanding and recommendations for addressing cyberbullying.

Suggestions:

Need for a reporting policy:

There is a need for policy formulation to properly address cyberbullying instances. Including proactive measures to educate and protect potential victims.

Importance of educational initiatives:

Media coverage highlights the importance of education and awareness campaigns aimed at promoting safe online behavior and seeking appropriate support. An increased coverage would also add value to the coverage.

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