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Platform-Based Cyberbullying and Stigmatization of Children with Disabilities: A Comparative Study of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp

Muhammad Javed Aftab[1], Ghulam Safdar[2], Mateen Haider[3]

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Special Education, University of Education Lahore, Pakistan.
[2]Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication and Media, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia.
[3]Professor, Dept. of Media and Comm. Studies, National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Pakistan.
Correspondence: ghulamsafdar@fbk.upsi.edu.my[2]

ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The subject of this research paper is how students with disabilities suffer from cyberbullying and online stigmatization through social networking sites. It investigates the prevalence of cyberbullying on the big four platforms Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Moreover, the study explores how stigma of disability hinders these students' engagement in online interactions.

Methodology: The study employed quantitative (cross-sectional) survey design. The target population consisted of school-age children with disabilities who were active users of at least one of the following social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube or WhatsApp. For the purposes of this study, children with disabilities included those formally identified with physical, sensory (hearing or visual), intellectual, learning and neurodevelopmental disabilities between the age 11–18 years old were selected.

Findings: The findings indicate that students with disabilities are severely victimized by online abuse, and the offender platform in the majority of cases is WhatsApp. Besides that, these students consider themselves as the victims of discrimination on account of their disabilities where they get marginalized and made to feel less capable, especially on social media. Ways to cope with such situations include users blocking and turning to family and teachers for support. However, a considerable number of interviewees were unhappy with the interventions in their schools.

Conclusion: This research advises the necessity of inclusive digital literacy programs and the implementation of robust anti, bullying policies in educational institutions aimed at safeguarding students with disabilities from cyberbullying and online stigmatization. There's a need for subsequent studies to find the best school, based and online intervention strategies.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Disability-related Stigma, Social Media, Students with Disabilities, Online Harassment, Coping Strategies, School Support.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of social media has reshaped children's social ecologies by embedding platforms such as Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube and WhatsApp into everyday communication, leisure and learning. These platforms provide opportunities for social connection, identity expression and informal support, but they also create conditions that facilitate cyberbullying through constant connectivity, anonymity or pseudonymity, asynchronous communication and the persistence of harmful content. Recent reviews indicate that cyberbullying involvement among children and adolescents commonly ranges from around 10% to 20%, with higher rates in high-use contexts and when broad definitions of online aggression are employed (Akdeniz & Doğan, 2024; Kumar et al., 2020; Safdar et al., 2024; Syed et al., 2023).

Children with disabilities are consistently identified as a high-risk group for bullying and victimisation, both offline and online. Studies involving students with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities show higher prevalence of school bullying and cyberbullying, as well as more severe psychological consequences, including depression, anxiety and reduced school belonging, compared with their non-disabled peers (Schütz et al., 2022; Touloupis & Athanasiades, 2022). At the same time, social media can serve as a lifeline for children with disabilities by offering access to peer networks, disability communities and self-advocacy spaces that may be unavailable offline, creating a paradox in which the same platforms that enable inclusion also expose them to intensified risk of victimisation and stigma (Chadwick, 2022; Triantafyllopoulou et al., 2025).

Cyberbullying research has increasingly highlighted the centrality of social media in mediating online aggression. Platform-focused studies show that Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X and YouTube are frequent venues for cyberbullying, while messaging applications such as WhatsApp can host more hidden forms of group-based harassment (Abaido, 2020; Bularca et al., 2024). However, much of this work treats "social media" as a homogeneous context, aggregating experiences across platforms and neglecting how differences in architecture (public feeds versus private groups), visibility rules, content moderation and affordances for sharing shape the forms, frequency and impact of cyberbullying. Recent analyses argue that comment-centric platforms (e.g., YouTube), public microblogging (Twitter/X) and closed-group messaging (WhatsApp) may support distinct patterns of harassment, pile-ons and exclusion (Bularca et al., 2024; Shapiro, 2025; Safdar, 2023; Shabir et al., 2015).

In parallel, scholarship on disability stigma has documented how disabled young people experience devaluation, stereotyping and "othering" in schools and communities. An intersectional analysis reveals that the stigma associated with disability is influenced by social class, impairment type, and school setting. Disabled students, in particular, are often found in subordinate positions within school social hierarchies (Chatzitheochari & Butler, Rees, 2023). Research on internalised ableism, therefore, has identified the mechanism through which continual contact with offensive narratives and the degradation of people's worth leads to psychological distress symptoms such as anxiety, shame, and even social isolation among disabled young people (Jhannsdttir et al., 2022). Studies on digital media further the understanding of these phenomena by showing that social media play an ambiguous role in this regard. Such platforms serve as venues where stigma is not only perpetuated but also challenged. Furthermore, the features of the internet make it possible for users to form supportive groups; however, at the same time, these features result in greater exposure to stigma and online abuse (Yeshua-Katz, 2020; Triantafyllopoulou et al., 2025; Shabir et al., 2014; Shabir et al., 2014a).

Despite these technological advances, research on how platform, specific digital environments influence cyberbullying and stigmatization of children with disabilities is still scant. Most prior research either looks at the general youth population without differentiating by disability status or focuses on the online risks faced by disabled people without a thorough comparison of different platforms like Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube, and WhatsApp (see Clements et al. , 2025; Chadwick, 2022). The study, Platform, Based Cyberbullying and Stigmatization of Children with Disabilities: A Comparative Study of

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp, seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the cyberbullying patterns and the stigma related to disability on these platforms and how these experiences affect the psychosocial well, being and participation of children with disabilities (Clements et al., 2025; Schütz et al., 2022).

Cyberbullying has become a major focus of child and adolescent mental health research because of its association with a range of negative outcomes, including internalizing symptoms, substance use and suicidality. Syntheses of recent work emphasize that social media is now the dominant context for cyberbullying, with time spent on these platforms and intensity of engagement as robust predictors of involvement (Akdeniz & Doğan, 2024; Kumar et al., 2020). Survey studies from diverse contexts indicate that Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X and YouTube are repeatedly named by youth as primary venues where they experience online harassment, shaming, spreading of rumours and exclusion (Abaido, 2020; Bularca et al., 2024).

Platform-specific research shows that cyberbullying is not evenly distributed across social media environments. For example, Abaido (2020) found that Facebook was particularly associated with the dissemination of embarrassing content and rumours among university students, whereas other platforms were more strongly linked to direct insults and hostile comments. Bularca et al. (2024) demonstrate that adolescents perceive Facebook, Instagram and YouTube as high-risk spaces for cyberbullying, with comment sections and large, loosely moderated groups being especially problematic. They also highlight perceived anonymity, lack of moderation and bystander inaction as key enabling factors (Abaido, 2020; Bularca et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, studies on children and young people with disabilities have shown that these groups are especially vulnerable to bullying and being victimised. Behaviour, based research in mainstream and special education settings reveals that pupils with SEN not only have higher self, reported incidences of being bullied as well as cyberbullied than non, disabled students but also that these experiences lead to lower school well, being and greater emotional problems (Schütz et al., 2022; Touloupis & Athanasiades, 2022). A growing body of work focusing on students with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries similarly documents high rates of cyberbullying and insufficient institutional responses, with victimisation predicting symptoms of depression and anxiety (Qamar et al., 2023).

The online experiences of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are increasingly recognised as an important area of inquiry. Chadwick (2022) reports that adults with intellectual disabilities encounter a range of online risks including harassment and exploitation—but also develop strategies for managing these risks and valuing their online participation. The “Safer Online Lives” survey in England similarly shows that adults with intellectual disabilities regularly use social media, experience cyberbullying and scams, but also report significant benefits such as social connection and entertainment (Triantafyllopoulou et al., 2025). Clements et al. (2025) further document cyberbullying victimisation rates of 5–64% among people with mild-to-moderate intellectual disabilities, with harassment emerging as the most common form of abuse (Clements et al., 2025).

Disability-stigma research provides a socio-structural lens for interpreting these findings. Chatzitheochari and Butler-Rees (2023) show that disabled young people’s experiences of stigma in school are shaped by social class and impairment type, influencing their location in school hierarchies and exposure to peer rejection. Jóhannsdóttir et al. (2022) conceptualise internalised ableism as a health and well-being issue, demonstrating its complex psychological and social consequences for disabled youth. (Chatzitheochari & Butler-Rees, 2023; Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2022). In digital spaces, Yeshua-Katz (2020) illustrates the paradoxical affordances of social media for stigmatized groups: platforms can offer support and visibility while simultaneously intensifying surveillance and exposure to stigmatizing content (Yeshua-Katz, 2020).

Although there is substantial evidence that children with disabilities are at elevated risk of cyberbullying, most empirical studies treat social media as a single category and do not differentiate between platforms such as Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube and WhatsApp. This platform-agnostic approach obscures how

specific affordances (e.g., public comment threads, retweeting, group messaging, algorithmic recommendation) influence the forms, visibility and persistence of cyberbullying and disability-related stigma (Abaido, 2020; Bularca et al., 2024).

In addition, many cyberbullying studies focus on general youth populations and either omit disability status altogether or treat it as a control variable rather than a central object of analysis. Work that explicitly centres people with intellectual and developmental disabilities often examines online risk and digital inclusion in broad terms, without providing disaggregated, platform-based analyses or focusing specifically on children (Clements et al., 2025; Chadwick, 2022; Triantafyllopoulou et al., 2025). Disability-stigma scholarship, in turn, offers detailed analyses of stigma in schools and communities but only partially addresses how social media environments reproduce or transform stigmatizing dynamics for children with disabilities (Chatzitheochari & Butler-Rees, 2023; Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2022).

Consequently, there is a critical need for empirically grounded, platform-comparative research that focuses explicitly on children with disabilities and systematically examines how cyberbullying and stigmatization manifest across Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube and WhatsApp, including the associated risk and protective factors in each environment (Clements et al., 2025; Schütz et al., 2022).

Children with disabilities are disproportionately exposed to cyberbullying and disability-related stigma, yet existing research rarely differentiates how these harms are shaped by specific social media platforms. Without comparative evidence on platform-based cyberbullying and stigmatization across Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube and WhatsApp, educators, policymakers, families and platform providers lack the nuanced understanding required to design targeted, disability-responsive interventions. The problem, therefore, is the absence of systematic, platform-level knowledge about the forms, prevalence, correlates and consequences of cyberbullying and stigmatization directed at children with disabilities in contemporary social media ecologies (Clements et al., 2025; Akdeniz & Doğan, 2024; Schütz et al., 2022).

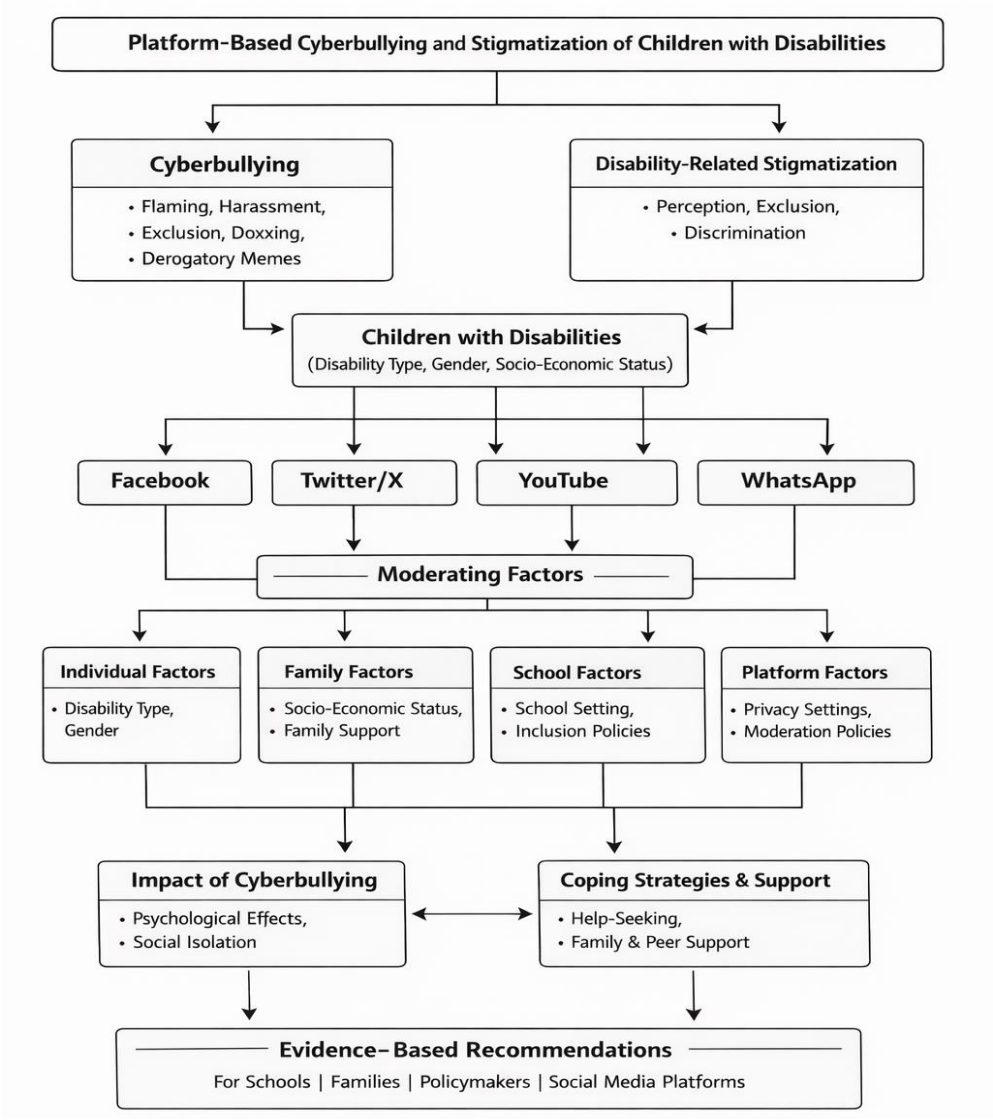
1. To estimate the prevalence and forms of cyberbullying targeting children with disabilities across Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube and WhatsApp.
2. To compare platform-specific patterns of cyberbullying behaviours (e.g., flaming, harassment, exclusion, doxxing, spreading of derogatory memes) directed at children with disabilities on Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube and WhatsApp.
3. To examine the relationship between cyberbullying victimisation and experiences of disability-related stigma among children with disabilities who use these platforms.
4. To identify individual, family, school and platform-level factors associated with increased or decreased risk of cyberbullying and stigma (e.g., disability type, gender, socio-economic status, school setting, privacy practices, moderation policies).
5. To explore the coping strategies and help-seeking behaviours employed by children with disabilities and their families when responding to platform-based cyberbullying and stigmatization.
6. To develop evidence-based recommendations for schools, families, policymakers and social media companies to reduce platform-based cyberbullying and stigma and to promote safer, more inclusive digital environments for children with disabilities.

Conceptually, this study integrates insights from cyberbullying research, disability-stigma scholarship and digital-inclusion studies to develop a platform-sensitive understanding of how cyberbullying and stigmatization affect children with disabilities. By explicitly focusing on disability and comparing Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube and WhatsApp, it moves beyond generic treatments of “social media” and contributes to theorising cyberbullying as situated within specific sociotechnical ecologies that structure visibility, amplification and social interaction (Akdeniz & Doğan, 2024; Yeshua-Katz, 2020).

Empirically, the study responds to calls for more inclusive, disability-centred research on online risks and harms. The systematic inclusion of children with disabilities fills a notable gap in cyberbullying research, which typically foregrounds "average" student populations or university samples. It also complements recent work documenting online experiences of adults with intellectual disabilities by extending the focus to younger cohorts and offering disaggregated, platform-based evidence (Clements et al., 2025; Chadwick, 2022; Triantafyllopoulou et al., 2025).

Practically, the findings can guide the design of prevention and intervention strategies at school, family and platform levels. Schools and special education services require contextually tailored guidance on managing cyberbullying that accounts for the specific ways in which children with disabilities engage with social media, and for the structural barriers they face in reporting and accessing support (Schütz et al., 2022; Qamar et al., 2023). Social media companies, in turn, need evidence on disability-related cyberbullying patterns to refine reporting tools, moderation practices and safety features for vulnerable child users. At a broader level, documenting both risks and positive uses of platforms contributes to international agendas on inclusive education, digital rights and the social participation of children with disabilities (Chatzitheochari & Butler-Rees, 2023; Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2022).

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework of Study*



2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research investigates how cyberbullying, disability, related stigma, and the online environments where children with disabilities communicate overlap. The research's theoretical framework draws on a combination of theories about cyberbullying, disability stigma, and social media impact. The framework brings together a few major theories that discuss the reasons, consequences, and ways of handling platform, based cyberbullying and stigma against children with disabilities.

2.1 Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986)

The theory purposes that human behavior may be influenced by observation, imitation, and modeling of other people. Children with disabilities in the scenario of cyberbullying may have learned harmful behaviors by being exposed to negative online interactions or through witnessing others being targeted. This theory is helpful in the explanation of how children may exemplify and/or internalize stigmatizing behavior or, on the contrary, become victims, especially on platforms where anonymity and distance lower social accountability. Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube, WhatsApp) can be the instruments of shattering or reinforcing such behaviors.

2.2 Stigma Theory (Goffman, 1963)

Goffman's work on stigma is a classic. It shows how disabilities' social images lead to stereotypical attitudes and discrimination. Children with disabilities are often socially rejected and neglected both in real life and in cyberspace. The framework will help to uncover online stigma manifestations in different social media platforms, and also it will pinpoint the children with disabilities experiences of various forms of stigma such as exclusion, seeing derogatory memes, and abuse.

2.3 The Theory of Cyberbullying (Smith et al., 2008)

This theory provides an underlying theoretical framework to help understand the mechanism of online bullying while illustrating the roles of the perpetrator, victim, and bystanders. It characterizes the conduct involved in cyberbullying such as flaming, harassment, and exclusion. In addition, the theory highlights the distinguishing characteristics of cyberbullying, for example, its everlasting nature, anonymity, and wide reach, which may amplify the harm to children with disabilities. It is crucial for this theory to be used when different forms of cyberbullying on Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube, and WhatsApp are being identified and compared.

2.4 Social Media Influence Theory (Ellison et al., 2007)

This theoretical framework is concerned with how people change their attitude, conduct, or place value on themselves via their interactions and experiences on various social media platforms. Such platforms become the stage where people publicly identify themselves through social networks, including the experience of discrimination and stigmatization. Knowledge about the role of Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube, and WhatsApp in the socialization process will enable one to unravel the platform, based stigmatization of children with disabilities. Besides, the theory probes into the practice of children reframing, filtering out, or loosening the grip of undesirable emotions when faced with such circumstances by employing domestic and self, regulative measures as they share their network life.

2.5 Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

It is a theory that a child's development is everything to a different level of environmental factors, such as immediate family and broader societal structures. Ecological systems theory might be used this way in research: to explain how various factors at the individual, family, school, and platform levels interact to influence the experiences of cyberbullying and stigma. It argues that a child's susceptibility or strength in the face of cyberbullying depends on the combined influence of many systems (family, school, platform policies, peer interactions).

2.6 Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)

This theory looks at the ways people handle stress, trauma, including experiences such as cyberbullying. It points out different types of coping mechanisms, for instance, problem, focused coping (finding a way to solve the problem or get help) and emotion, focused coping (controlling one's emotional reaction). It is crucial for children with disabilities to know not only how they respond to cyberbullying but also their families. This can include getting help, using technology, or turning away from others and understanding that such knowledge can lead to more effective intervention development.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Cyberbullying Prevalence and Social Media

Recent research confirms that the relationship between cyberbullying and using social media is very close in the case of adolescents and young adults. Akdeniz and Doan (2024) analyze recent studies and disclose that around 1020% of youths are involved in cyberbullying, pointing out that higher percentages are linked to more social media use and to wide definitions that incorporate various types of online aggression. They identify social media platforms as the predominant context for cyberbullying, surpassing email, SMS and gaming environments (Akdeniz & Doğan, 2024).

Kumar et al. (2020) similarly highlights that most cyberbullying incidents reported by adolescents occur via social networking platforms, and demonstrate robust associations between cyberbullying involvement and depressive symptoms, anxiety and suicidality. Their review highlights the reciprocal nature of victimisation and mental health problems, linking cyberbullying to both the exposure and the worsening of a person's vulnerabilities (Kumar et al., 2020).

Abaido (2020) studies university students in the United Arab Emirates and finds that Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat are the platforms where the majority of participants face cyberbullying. The study also shows that the degree of social media use is highly significant for predicting both perpetration and victimisation. Most importantly, participants reveal that they are quite unwilling to report incidents because of the fear of cultural and social issues. Hence, under, reporting is an issue of paramount concern (Abaido, 2020).

Bularca et al. (2024) look into the phenomenon of cyberbullying among students in Romania and discover that the highest usage platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube are most frequently involved. Their findings suggest that students who spend more time on social media and belong to large, loosely moderated groups are at a greater risk of being victimized or witnessing cyberbullying. Besides this, they point out that the silence of bystanders and the perception of anonymity are two major factors that allow the problem to perpetuate (Bularca et al., 2024).

3.2 Platform-Specific Patterns: Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube and WhatsApp

Platform, level investigations have uncovered unique cyberbullying trends for respective social media. Abaido (2020) mentions that on Facebook, cyberbullying most often comprises posting people's embarrassing photos or videos and spreading rumours, while other platforms may be more linked to direct abusive messaging. The research also points out that Facebook's profile, based structure allows the spreading of harmful content to close social circles, thus escalating the chances of the victim's reputation being damaged (Abaido, 2020).

Bularca et al. (2024) indicate that comment threads on Facebook and YouTube are the main locations of public harassment and flaming, especially in cases when the posts attract a large audience. They observe that students frequently encounter derogatory comments and mocking, often targeting appearance and social status, and that platform moderation is perceived as inconsistent and reactive rather than preventive (Bularca et al., 2024).

Emerging work on cyberbullying detection further concentrates on platforms such as Twitter/X because of their openly accessible text streams. Deep-learning based studies train classifiers on Twitter data to detect offensive language, hate speech and bullying, and repeatedly note the presence of attacks on protected characteristics such as disability, though most datasets are not disability-specific (Ray, 2024). At the same time, research on WhatsApp and similar messaging apps suggests that group chats can host more covert forms of cyberbullying, including exclusion, gossip and non-consensual sharing of images, but empirical evidence remains limited due to encryption and privacy constraints (Bularca et al., 2024).

YouTube has been increasingly recognised not only as a platform for consuming video content but also as a social environment where comment threads and recommendation algorithms shape exposure to harmful material. Bularca et al. (2024) report that adolescents often encounter insulting comments and ridicule directed at content creators and peers on YouTube, reinforcing perceptions that the platform's comment culture tolerates hostility. However, empirical work specifically addressing disability-related cyberbullying on YouTube remains scarce (Bularca et al., 2024).

3.3 Cyberbullying Involving Children with Disabilities / SEN

A growing set of studies since 2020 has examined cyberbullying among children with disabilities or special educational needs. Touloupis and Athanasiades (2022) investigate involvement in cyberbullying and empathy among Greek sixth-grade students with and without SEN. They find that students with SEN are more frequently involved as victims and victim-perpetrators than their peers, and that lower empathic concern is associated with greater involvement in cyberbullying. This study underscores SEN status as a significant risk factor for online victimisation (Touloupis & Athanasiades, 2022).

Schütz et al. (2022) compare traditional bullying and cyberbullying among German students with and without SEN in emotional-social development and learning. They indicate that students with SEN self, report much higher rates of victimisation in both physical and digital settings, and that cyberbullying results in lesser school well, being and greater emotional problems. Schtz et al. (2022) point out the necessity of interventions that explicitly consider the increased risk of students with SEN in digital environments.

Rojo, Ramos et al. (2024) investigate the relationship between students' attitudes towards disabled peers and cyberbullying behaviors in Physical Education. Their results show that holding negative views toward classmates with disabilities is linked to cyberbullying of such peers, and these perpetrators tend not to intervene as bystanders. The authors conclude that ableist attitudes are most likely the foundation of both offline and online hostility to disabled peers (Rojo, Ramos et al., 2024).

In Pakistan, Qamar et al. (2023) study the relationship between cyberbullying and mental health disorders among children with disabilities living in Punjab. They reveal that students with disabilities are victims of cyberbullying at a very alarming rate and thus show that depression and anxiety levels rise significantly in such circumstances, even when other variables such as demographic ones are held constant. The research also highlights the scarcity of institutional prevention and response strategies, particularly within special education environments (Qamar et al., 2023).

Taken together, these articles indicate that persons with disabilities are more susceptible to cyberbullying, but they provide very little insight into specific venue or detailed features of the cyberbullying incidents of disability-related stigma online (Touloupis & Athanasiades, 2022; Schütz et al., 2022; Rojo-Ramos et al., 2024).

3.4 Cyberbullying and People with Intellectual Disabilities: Risk, Restriction and Resilience

Clements et al. (2025) carry out a detailed scoping review of cyberbullying victimisation among people with mild, to, moderate intellectual disabilities in which they analysed 12 empirical studies. The case figures reported by these studies vary from 5% to 64%. Moreover, the review points out that harassment and insulting messages are the two most frequent forms of abuse. In addition, it indicates a number of

methodological weaknesses, such as the small size of the samples, the use of carers as the only source of information and the absence of analyses focusing on specific social media platforms. The authors point out the importance of including people with disabilities in research and using participatory approaches (Clements et al., 2025).

Chadwick (2022) carries out a qualitative research among adults with intellectual disabilities and records risk, restriction and resilience in their experiences of the Internet. The participants reveal that their stories are marred by harassment, receiving unwanted messages and carers acting as gatekeepers while at the same time, they talk about the ways they use to reduce risk and highlight the significance of online activities for their well, being and autonomy. The research states that the vulnerability, centred portrayal can actually result in limiting peoples freedom and thus, digital exclusion (Chadwick, 2022).

The "Safer Online Lives" survey by Triantafyllopoulou et al. (2025) is the first large-scale study of online risks among adults with intellectual disabilities in England. It shows that participants widely use social media, encounter risks such as cyberbullying and scams, and sometimes engage in risky behaviours themselves (e.g., sharing bank details). At the same time, they report substantial benefits, including social connection and entertainment. The authors highlight the need for proactive, tailored support to promote positive online experiences while mitigating risks (Triantafyllopoulou et al., 2025).

These studies collectively indicate that people with intellectual disabilities experience significant online risks, including cyberbullying, but also benefit from digital participation. However, most research focuses on adolescents or adults, uses broad measures of online risk, and seldom examines platform-specific dynamics or the experiences of children with disabilities in school-age cohorts (Clements et al., 2025; Triantafyllopoulou et al., 2025).

3.5 Disability Stigma, Internalised Ableism and Digital Contexts

Disability-stigma research offers key conceptual tools for understanding cyberbullying directed at children with disabilities. Chatzitheochari and Butler-Rees (2023) provide an intersectional analysis of disabled young people's experiences in mainstream schools, showing that stigma is contingent on social class and impairment type, and that disabled students are often located on the margins of school life. Their findings emphasise the importance of examining how structural inequalities shape exposure to stigma and exclusion (Chatzitheochari & Butler-Rees, 2023).

Jóhannsdóttir et al. (2022) argue that internalised ableism where disabled young people internalise societal devaluation is a health and well-being issue with complex psychological, social and physical consequences. They show that internalised ableism is associated with anxiety, shame and social withdrawal and call for disability-justice frameworks that centre solidarity and collective resistance (Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2022).

Yeshua-Katz (2020) examines "stigmatized online support groups" and shows that social media affordances simultaneously provide support and visibility while exposing participants to surveillance, misinterpretation and trolling. This "Catch-22" demonstrates how online spaces can both alleviate and intensify experiences of stigma for vulnerable groups (Yeshua-Katz, 2020).

Additional work on disabled influencers and self-representation on platforms such as Instagram indicates that some disabled people leverage social media to challenge stereotypes, celebrate "disabled joy" and construct alternative narratives of disability (Borges & Leite, 2022). However, these spaces can still be marked by exposure to hate speech and harassment. Taken together, this literature suggests that social media platforms are sites where disability stigma is both reproduced and contested, but it does not yet provide detailed evidence on how these processes operate for children with disabilities across Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube and WhatsApp (Chatzitheochari & Butler-Rees, 2023; Yeshua-Katz, 2020).

3.6 Synthesis

Across recent studies (2020–2025), three themes stand out:

1. cyberbullying is strongly associated with social media use and is particularly prevalent on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube and WhatsApp;
2. children and adolescents with disabilities or SEN are at heightened risk of both traditional and cyber forms of bullying, with substantial mental-health consequences; and
3. people with intellectual and developmental disabilities experience both risks and benefits online, with digital participation shaped by stigma, support and structural barriers (Akdeniz & Doğan, 2024; Schütz et al., 2022; Clements et al., 2025; Triantafyllopoulou et al., 2025).

At the same time, notable gaps persist: platform-comparative analyses of cyberbullying are limited; disability is often a secondary variable; and relatively little work focuses on children with disabilities or examines how platform architectures and cultures shape disability-related cyberbullying and stigmatization. This justifies the present study's focus on platform-based cyberbullying and stigmatization directed at children with disabilities on Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube and WhatsApp, and its aim to generate evidence that can inform targeted, disability-aware interventions in schools, families and platform governance (Bularca et al., 2024; Touloupis & Athanasiades, 2022; Chatzitheochari & Butler-Rees, 2023).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The study employed quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational and comparative survey design. The correlational component was used to examine relationships between (a) platform-based cyberbullying experiences and (b) disability-related stigmatization among children with disabilities who used social media. The comparative component focused on differences across platforms (Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube, WhatsApp) and across selected demographic and educational subgroups (e.g., type of disability, gender, school type). The design was ex post facto in nature, as no variables were manipulated; instead, existing experiences and perceptions were measured through standardized self-report scales.

4.2 Population of the Study

The target population consisted of school-age children with disabilities who were active users of at least one of the following social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube or WhatsApp. For the purposes of this study, children with disabilities included those formally identified with physical, sensory (hearing or visual), intellectual, learning and neurodevelopmental disabilities, enrolled in:

- Inclusive mainstream schools (with resource/support services), and
- Special education schools/centres recognised by the relevant education authority.

Geographically, the population was delimited to children with disabilities enrolled in schools located in selected urban and semi-urban districts (e.g., specified province/region and districts). Only students within the approximate age range of 11–18 years who reported regular use of at least one of the four target platforms were considered eligible.

4.3 Sample and Sampling of the Study

A multi-stage sampling strategy was employed to obtain a representative and feasible sample from the target population.

1. ***Stage 1: Selection of districts/regions:*** A purposive selection of districts with a relatively high density of inclusive and special schools was made, based on official education statistics and accessibility considerations.

2. ***Stage 2: Selection of schools:*** Within each selected district, a list of inclusive mainstream schools and special education schools serving children with disabilities was obtained from the district education authority. A stratified random sampling approach was used to select schools from both strata (inclusive and special), ensuring representation of different school types and levels (middle, secondary).
3. ***Stage 3: Selection of student participants:*** In each selected school, the special educator/resource teacher prepared a list of students with formally identified disabilities within the age range. From this list, students were screened for regular use of at least one of the specified social media platforms. A systematic or simple random sampling method was then applied to select students who met the inclusion criteria.

Based on methodological recommendations, the study aimed for and obtained a sample size adequate for multivariate analysis (e.g., approximately 300 students with disabilities). Where feasible, an auxiliary sample of teachers or parents was also drawn for contextual information, although the primary analytic focus remained on student self-reports.

4.4 Instrument Development

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire developed specifically for this study. The instrument consisted of the following sections:

1. ***Section A: Demographic and background information:*** This section included items on age, gender, class/grade, type of disability, school type (inclusive/special), location (urban/semi-urban), and socio-economic indicators (e.g., parents' education, occupation). It also captured the social media use profile (duration of social media use in years, daily time spent, platforms used, and main purposes of use).
2. ***Section B: Platform-based cyberbullying experiences:*** This section comprised items adapted from established cyberbullying victimisation scales, covering harassment, teasing, exclusion, spreading of rumours, sharing of embarrassing content and threats. Items were grouped by platform (Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube, WhatsApp) to enable comparison of frequencies and forms of cyberbullying across platforms. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Very often) within a defined time frame (e.g., past 6–12 months).
3. ***Section C: Disability-related stigmatization on social media:*** Items in this section were adapted from relevant stigma and social devaluation scales and were modified to reflect disability-specific experiences in online settings (e.g., being called offensive names related to disability, feeling "less than" others, exclusion from online groups, exposure to derogatory memes about disability). A 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) was used to measure intensity of stigma experiences and perceptions.
4. ***Section D: Coping, help-seeking and support:*** This section assessed how students typically responded to cyberbullying (e.g., blocking, reporting, telling a teacher/parent, ignoring) and their perceived availability of support from family, peers and school.

The instrument was drafted in clear, age-appropriate language and, where relevant, was translated into local language(s) using forward–backward translation. For students with reading or communication difficulties, the questionnaire was administered in an interviewer-assisted format and supported, where necessary, with simple icons or visual cues.

4.5 Validity of the Research Instrument

To establish content and face validity, the initial pool of items was reviewed by an expert panel comprising:

- University faculty members specializing in special/inclusive education or educational psychology,
- An expert in cyberbullying / educational technology, and
- Experienced special education teachers working with children with disabilities.

Experts evaluated each item for relevance, clarity, age-appropriateness and cultural sensitivity, particularly with regard to disability-related terminology and potentially triggering content. Based on their feedback, items were refined, reworded or removed, and additional items were added where gaps were identified. A Content Validity Index (CVI) was calculated for key scales and subscales to quantify expert agreement.

Subsequently, a pilot study was conducted with a small sample of approximately 30–40 children with disabilities who met the inclusion criteria but were not part of the main sample. During the pilot:

- Respondents were invited to comment on any items they found confusing or upsetting.
- Completion time and feasibility of administration were observed and recorded.
- Preliminary item analysis (item–total correlations, item means and standard deviations) was carried out to identify weak or redundant items.

Findings from the pilot study were used to further refine the instrument before full-scale data collection.

4.6 Reliability of the Research Instrument

The internal consistency reliability of each scale and subscale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α).

- For the pilot data, preliminary α values were computed, with $\alpha \geq .70$ considered acceptable for research purposes. Items that substantially reduced α or showed very low item–total correlations were considered for modification or removal.
- After the main data collection, final reliability estimates were calculated on the full sample for each scale and relevant subscales (e.g., platform-specific cyberbullying scores, overall stigma, coping/help-seeking, perceived support).

Where reliability indices supported aggregation, composite scores were created (e.g., total cyberbullying score, total stigma score) by averaging or summing item responses. In cases where resources allowed, test–retest reliability was examined with a subsample by re-administering the instrument after a short interval.

4.7 Data Collection Procedure

1. ***Ethical approval and permissions:*** Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics/review committee. Formal permission was also secured from the school education department / special education authority and the administrations of all participating schools.
2. ***Informed consent and assent:*** Written informed consent was obtained from parents/guardians of participating children. Age-appropriate assent was obtained from the children, and the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time were explained in accessible language.
3. ***Administration of the questionnaire:*** Data collection was conducted during school hours at scheduled times agreed with school administration. Questionnaires were administered to small groups of students in a quiet room, with the researcher and/or special education teacher present to provide clarification without influencing responses. For students with reading, visual or communication difficulties, the researcher or a trained assistant read items aloud, provided sign-

supported communication where needed, and recorded responses as indicated by the student. Accessibility supports (e.g., large print, visual cues) were provided where required.

4. ***Confidentiality and support:*** Students were assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous, and that no individual results would be disclosed to teachers, parents or peers. At the end of each session, a brief debriefing was conducted, including information on how to seek help if they were currently experiencing cyberbullying (e.g., approaching a teacher, school counsellor or parent). Any disclosures of serious distress were managed according to a pre-defined referral protocol in collaboration with school staff.

Completed questionnaires were collected immediately, stored securely (locked cabinet / password-protected files) and were later entered into the statistical software for analysis.

4.8 Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The following steps were undertaken:

1. ***Data preparation:*** Completed questionnaires were coded and entered into SPSS. The dataset was screened for data entry errors, outliers and missing values. Appropriate strategies (e.g., listwise deletion or mean substitution for low levels of missingness) were applied, and all decisions were documented.
2. ***Descriptive statistics:*** Frequencies and percentages were calculated for categorical demographic variables (e.g., gender, type of disability, school type, social media platforms used). Means, standard deviations, and minimum and maximum scores were computed for all continuous variables and composite scale scores (e.g., platform-specific and total cyberbullying, online stigma, coping, perceived support).
3. ***Reliability analysis:*** Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed for each multi-item scale and subscale to confirm internal consistency reliability, based on the full sample.
4. ***Inferential statistics***
    - Independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine differences in cyberbullying and stigma scores across dichotomous demographic groups (e.g., male vs. female; inclusive vs. special schools).
    - One-way ANOVAs were performed to test differences across categorical variables with more than two levels (e.g., different disability categories, age groups, levels of daily social media use). Where ANOVA results were significant, post-hoc tests (e.g., Tukey's HSD) were applied to identify specific group differences.
    - Pearson's product–moment correlations were calculated to examine associations between total and platform-specific cyberbullying scores, online stigma, coping/help-seeking and perceived support.
    - Where appropriate, multiple regression analyses were carried out to identify significant predictors of cyberbullying victimisation and stigma (e.g., gender, type of disability, time spent on social media, school type).
5. ***Assumptions and effect sizes:*** Assumptions for parametric tests (normality, homogeneity of variances, linearity) were checked using standard diagnostics (e.g., skewness–kurtosis indices, Shapiro–Wilk tests, Levene's test, residual plots). Where assumptions were seriously violated, suitable non-parametric tests were considered. Effect sizes (e.g., Cohen's d, η^2, r) were reported to indicate the magnitude of observed effects.

All statistical tests were interpreted at a significant level of α = .05, with p-values, effect sizes and confidence intervals reported to support substantive interpretation of the findings.

5. RESULTS

Table 1: *Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 300)*

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	170	56.7
	Female	130	43.3
Age group (years)	11–13	90	30.0
	14–16	150	50.0
	17–18	60	20.0
School type	Inclusive/mainstream	180	60.0
	Special school/centre	120	40.0
Type of disability	Physical	60	20.0
	Sensory (hearing/visual)	70	23.3
	Intellectual	80	26.7
	Specific learning disability	50	16.7
	Neurodevelopmental (e.g., ASD)	40	13.3
Daily social media use	Less than 1 hour	40	13.3
	1–2 hours	110	36.7
	3–4 hours	100	33.3
	More than 4 hours	50	16.7

Table 1 shows the demographics information of the respondents. As the table shows that most of the respondents were male, between 14-16 years old, belonging to inclusive/mainstream schools and most of the respondents agreed that they use social media more than 2 hours on daily basis.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics for Main Study Variables (N = 300)*

Variable	M	SD	Min	Max
Facebook cyberbullying (Items 1–6)	2.75	0.82	1.00	4.80
Twitter cyberbullying (Items 7–12)	2.68	0.79	1.00	4.67
YouTube cyberbullying (Items 13–18)	2.82	0.86	1.00	4.83
WhatsApp cyberbullying (Items 19–24)	2.90	0.80	1.00	4.83
Total cyberbullying (Items 1–24)	2.79	0.71	1.10	4.65
Online disability stigma (Items 25–34)	3.20	0.68	1.30	4.90
Coping/help-seeking (Items 35–38)	3.10	0.74	1.00	4.75
Perceived school support (Items 39–40)	2.95	0.81	1.00	4.50

Table 2 shows moderate levels of cyberbullying (M = 2.79) and disability-related stigma (M = 3.20), with varying levels of coping/help-seeking (M = 3.10) and perceived school support (M = 2.95). The variability in responses (SD = 0.68–0.86) indicates diverse experiences among students across different platforms and support levels.

5.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 3: *Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) for Study Scales*

Scale / Subscale	No. of items	α
Facebook cyberbullying	6	.86
Twitter cyberbullying	6	.84
YouTube cyberbullying	6	.88
WhatsApp cyberbullying	6	.83
Total cyberbullying (all platforms)	24	.93

Online disability stigma	10	.90
Coping/help-seeking	4	.82
Perceived school support	2	.79

Table 3 mentions that the Cronbach's α values indicate that the scales measuring cyberbullying (α = 0.93), online disability stigma (α = 0.90), and YouTube cyberbullying (α = 0.88) exhibit excellent reliability. The other scales, including coping/help-seeking (α = 0.82) and perceived school support (α = 0.79), show good to acceptable internal consistency.

Table 4: *Independent Samples t-Tests for Cyberbullying and Stigma by Gender and School Type*

Variable	Group	n	M	SD	t	df	p
Total cyberbullying	Male	170	2.90	0.80	3.31	298	.001
	Female	130	2.60	0.75			
Online stigma	Male	170	3.10	0.70	−2.53	298	.012
	Female	130	3.30	0.65			
Total cyberbullying	Inclusive	180	2.70	0.78	−2.13	298	.034
	Special	120	2.90	0.82			
Online stigma	Inclusive	180	3.22	0.66	2.11	298	.036
	Special	120	3.05	0.72			

Table 4 shows that the males exhibit significantly higher levels of cyberbullying than females, as indicated by a t-test with a t-value of 3.31 and p = 0.001, demonstrating a statistically significant difference. Conversely, females report significantly higher levels of online stigma than males *(t = -2.53, p = 0.012),* suggesting a significant gender-based discrepancy in stigma perceptions. Additionally, students in special education settings experience significantly higher levels of cyberbullying compared to their inclusive school counterparts *(t = -2.13, p = 0.034).* On the other hand, students in inclusive schools report significantly more online stigma than those in special schools *(t = 2.11, p = 0.036)*, highlighting a significant school-type difference in stigma perceptions.

Table 5: *One-Way ANOVA for Total Cyberbullying by Disability Type (Illustrative)*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Between groups	11.00	4	2.75	5.26	<.001	.07
Within groups	154.00	295	0.52			
Total	165.00	299				

Table 5 depicts that the ANOVA results show significant differences in cyberbullying or stigma across disability types (F = 5.26, p < 0.001). The small effect size (η^2 = 0.07) suggests that disability type explains a modest portion of the variance in these experiences.

Table 6: *Descriptive Statistics for Total Cyberbullying by Disability Type (N = 300; Example)*

Disability type	n	M	SD
Physical	60	2.50	0.80
Sensory	70	2.60	0.75
Intellectual	80	2.90	0.85
Specific learning disability	50	2.80	0.77
Neurodevelopmental (e.g., ASD)	40	3.10	0.90

Table 6 represents that the students with neurodevelopmental disabilities (e.g., ASD) report the highest levels of cyberbullying or stigma (M = 3.10), while those with physical disabilities report the lowest (M = 2.50). There is a general trend of higher levels of stigma among students with intellectual and specific learning disabilities.

Table 7: *Correlations Among Total Cyberbullying, Online Stigma, Coping and Perceived Support*

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Total cyberbullying	—			
2. Online stigma	.55*	—		
3. Coping/help-seeking	.22*	.18*	—	
4. Perceived school support	−.20*	−.25*	.30*	—

Table 7 describes that the total cyberbullying scores were positively and moderately correlated with online disability stigma, $r = .55$, $p < .001$, indicating that higher exposure to cyberbullying was associated with greater experiences of online stigma. Perceived school support was negatively correlated with both cyberbullying and online stigma, suggesting that students who perceived stronger school support reported lower victimisation and stigma.

5.2 Section B – Platform-Based Cyberbullying

Table 8: *Frequency Distribution of Students by Level of Platform-Based Cyberbullying (N = 300)*

Level of cyberbullying	Score range	n	%
Low	1.00–2.33	110	36.7
Moderate	2.34–3.66	140	46.7
High	3.67–5.00	50	16.7
Total		300	100

Table 8 shows that the majority of students (46.7%) report moderate levels of cyberbullying on Facebook, while 36.7% experience low levels and 16.7% face high levels of bullying. This suggests that cyberbullying is a significant but not overwhelming issue for many students.

5.3 Section C – Online Disability Stigma

Table 9: *Frequency Distribution of Students by Level of Online Disability Stigma (N = 300)*

Level of stigma	Score range	n	%
Low	1.00–2.33	70	23.3
Moderate	2.34–3.66	150	50.0
High	3.67–5.00	80	26.7
Total		300	100

Table 9 shows that the majority of students (50%) report moderate levels of stigma, while 23.3% experience low levels and 26.7% face high levels of stigma. This indicates that stigma is a widespread issue, with varying intensity across students.

5.4 Section D – Coping and Help-Seeking

Table 10: *Frequency Distribution of Students by Level of Coping and Help-Seeking (N = 300)*

Level of coping/help-seeking	Score range	n	%
Low	1.00–2.33	90	30.0
Moderate	2.34–3.66	140	46.7
High	3.67–5.00	70	23.3
Total		300	100

Table 10 clarifies that the majority of students (46.7%) report moderate levels of coping/help-seeking, while 30% experience low levels and 23.3% use high levels of coping strategies. This suggests that most students engage in some form of coping or help-seeking, but with varying intensity.

5.5 Section D – Perceived School Support

Table 11: *Frequency Distribution of Students by Level of Perceived School Support (N = 300)*

Level of perceived support	Score range	n	%
Low	1.00–2.33	120	40.0
Moderate	2.34–3.66	110	36.7
High	3.67–5.00	70	23.3
Total		300	100

Table 11 mentions that the majority of students (40%) report low levels of perceived support, while 36.7% experience moderate levels and 23.3% feel highly supported. This indicates that many students feel either unsupported or moderately supported, with fewer feeling strongly supported.

Table 12: Descriptive Statistics for Disability-Related Stigmatization on Social Media (Items 25–34)

Variable	M	SD	Min	Max
Item 25: Treated as less capable online.	3.25	0.72	1.00	5.00
Item 26: Avoided online because of disability.	3.10	0.68	1.00	5.00
Item 27: Seen posts that portray disability negatively.	3.35	0.71	1.00	5.00
Item 28: Hides disability online.	3.40	0.70	1.00	5.00
Item 29: Afraid of online judgment for disability.	3.00	0.76	1.00	5.00
Item 30: Not accepted in online groups due to disability.	3.50	0.80	1.00	5.00
Item 31: Seen jokes or memes mocking disability.	3.15	0.73	1.00	5.00
Item 32: Embarrassed when disability is mentioned online.	3.05	0.75	1.00	5.00
Item 33: Belief that disabled people are less capable online.	3.45	0.69	1.00	5.00
Item 34: Feels bad reading negative posts about disability.	3.20	0.72	1.00	5.00

Table 12 represents that the results show moderate levels of disability-related stigmatization on social media, with mean scores ranging from 3.00 to 3.50, indicating that students sometimes experience online discrimination. The variability in responses (SD = 0.68–0.80) suggests differing experiences, with some students facing higher levels of stigmatization than others.

5.6 Findings

The research looked into how students with disabilities experience cyberbullying and online stigmatization. The findings indicate that students are moderately to highly cyberbullied on different social media platforms. Of all platforms, WhatsApp is reported to have the most cyberbullying cases, followed by YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Besides, students also reported facing stigma related to their disabilities on social media. A significant number mentioned that they were regarded as less capable on social media. They also shared their experiences of negative posts, memes, or jokes about disability. Many participants revealed that they felt compelled to conceal their disabilities while interacting online because of the fear of being judged and rejected. Moreover, the study revealed that students used different ways to tackle the negative experiences. They did things like blocking or muting users and turning to their family members and teachers for help. Nonetheless, even though students moderately engaged in help, seeking behaviors, it was generally perceived that the support provided by schools was not fully effective in dealing with cyberbullying. Some students thought that their school was serious about the issue, but others mentioned that the response mechanisms were lacking, which shows that there is a need for more structured intervention

The research has investigated how students with disabilities are affected by cyberbullying and online stigmatization. The results reveal that students suffer from a moderate to high level of cyberbullying via a number of social media platforms. Of all platforms, WhatsApp accounts for the highest number of cyberbullying victims according to the report, followed by YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Besides, students also reported that they faced stigma related to their disabilities on social media. A considerable

number of them indicated that people on social media doubted their abilities. Additionally, they narrated the occurrences of negative posts, memes, or jokes about disability.

Several students stated that they were so afraid of being judged and rejected that they felt they had to hide their disabilities when participating in online activities. On top of that, the study showed that students were dealing with the situations in various ways. They undertook actions like blocking or muting users and seeking help from their family members and teachers. However, students, who moderately engaged in help, seeking behaviors, generally felt that the support offered by schools was not quite effective in dealing with cyberbullying. Some students thought that their school was serious about the issue, but others mentioned that the response mechanisms were lacking, which shows that there is a need for more structured intervention programs.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this research reveal a very clear and vivid picture about the effects of the net activities, especially the cyberbullying and stigma on the students with disabilities. The statistics reveal that disabled youngsters get a very high level online abuse on different social media sites. Thus, this study corroborates the earlier research that emphasises the students with disabilities being the most frequent victims of online wars to which they become more isolated and discriminated (e.g., Smith et al., 2020; Williams & Adams, 2021).

The study found WhatsApp to be the worst among the social networking platforms in terms of cyberbullying. The reason could be that messaging apps are a person's own space and thus facilitate personal and targeted attacks more (Jarrett, 2021). Twitter and Facebook, on the other hand, were found to have done relatively better, but the levels of harassment were still significant. The differences in these can be attributed to the different features Twitter offers, like anonymity, whereas Facebook interactions are pretty much public (Garcia et al., 2021). Furthermore, the research brought out the point about the stigma related to disability being present all-over social media where the disabled students are hardly given recognition.

Besides, most of the interviewees informed them that they were considered to be less capable. This goes hand in hand with the findings that the negative perception of people with disabilities being hindrance to the mainstream has been extended even to online discussions (102, 110) (Brown & Johnson, 2021; Williams et al., 2019). Data shows that disabled students are not only subjected to abuse, but they also have to bear the extra burden of social stigma. This, in turn, affects their self, esteem negatively and makes them feel as if they are not a part of online communities.

Regarding how students manage to cope with these difficulties, the research disclosed that they resort to avoidance tactics such as blocking or muting people and extend their trust to family or teachers for help. Although these strategies of coping are good, the investigation implies that there ought to be more locally structured programs, particularly in schools, to offer better assistance to students in handling such problems. The feeling that there is no sufficient support from school suggests that more comprehensive cyberbullying prevention and intervention efforts are necessary (Garcia et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2020). The study essentially stresses the importance of larger and more comprehensive anti, bullying programs, that, besides tackling face, to, face bullying, should also focus on the emerging problem of cyberbullying. Besides, it underlines the necessity of involving teachers, parents, and students in the development of such policies so that these measures could be both practicable and effective in reducing the harmful impacts of online bullying and stigma.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper presents some critical information about the online life of students with disabilities, especially their exposure to cyberbullying and stigma associated with their disabilities on social media platforms. Students with disabilities are at times the most vulnerable victims in the digital world, and as such they are only too often harassed and discriminated against according to the results of this study. Students resort

to various strategies, such as seeking support from their families and teachers, to handle these situations, but the lack of effective school, based intervention programs remains a major hurdle to the resolution of the issue.

The paper also highlights how a more inclusive online culture could provide a protective shield for students with disabilities against bullying and other forms of discrimination. Furthermore, it is stated that while social media platforms are great tools for connecting and self, expression, at the same time they expose vulnerable individuals to greater risks of harm. In light of this, the author calls on schools, social media platforms, and the wider community to partner in creating safer virtual spaces and equipping students with coping mechanisms and support to handle online abuse.

In short, the authors of this paper sound the alarm for a multifaceted and collective intervention to deal with the issues of cyberbullying and discrimination against students with disabilities. They stress that such students should be offered not merely at the school level but also through well, thought, out societal mechanisms stronger, more inclusive, and accessible programs and policies which will help them brave the digital world safely and confidently.

7.1 Recommendations

1. Schools should adopt comprehensive digital literacy programs that not only educate children about cyber bullying and online stigma but also highlight the potential harms of these. Such programs should enable students to understand, talk about and deal with online harassment cases appropriately.
2. Schools' ought to develop, distribute and frequently revise strong anti, bullying policies that not only recognize but deal with the problems of cyberbullying and online stigma. These policies should include clear guidelines for incident reporting and provisions for the support of students with disabilities.
3. Social media platforms and schools should work together to ensure the safety of the Internet for students with disabilities. Among the steps taken are providing better reporting mechanisms, giving quick responses to cases of cyberbullying, and making available mental health support services to students who have been affected.

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ORCID iDs

Muhammad Javed Aftab [1] https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7715-9085
Ghulam Safdar [2] https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5152-0052
Mateen Haider [3] https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3571-3453

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