

Original Research Article

Family Preventive Programs and Their Role in Combating Cyberbullying: A Field Study in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

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The use of digital technologies which increases during all types of adolescence is associated with an equivalent increase in cyber bullying, both psychological and social consequences. Background: This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of universal preventive programs focused on families to prevent cyberbullying over 6 months among adolescents in the United Arab Emirates. Research design: Quantitative, descriptive-correlational Methods: Parents and adolescents framework selection from different schools in the UAE; a representative sample of 350 responded to a structured questionnaire that measured autonomous four Dimensions of family preventive programs (a) awareness of risk associations achieved through an electronic device, (b) parental monitoring, (c) family communication, and (d) Digital sociocultural guidance. The results reveal a statistically significant negative effect of family preventive programs on cyberbullying. It was found that parental monitoring and digital education had the strongest effects, while family communication and awareness of digital risks provided additional

Keywords: Adolescents, Cyberbullying, Family Preventive Programs, United Arab Emirates

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the world has seen significant changes brought about by the increased use of the internet and social networking sites. These changes have greatly affected how people interact with each other, especially when it comes to the younger generation of children and adolescents. However, apart from offering many advantages in learning and communications, technology also poses various challenges for modern societies. In particular, one of the major issues associated with digital transformation is cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020; Kowalski et al., 2022).

Cyberbullying can be described as an aggressive act that is perpetrated against another person through a digital platform, such as social networking sites, electronic mail, or mobile applications, for the purpose of insulting, harming, intimidating, and generally affecting

the victim psychologically. Research has shown that cyberbullying is a serious social and psychological problem for adolescents as a result of the various adverse effects it creates, such as anxiety, 抑郁 The increasing use of smartphones and social media among adolescents has further amplified both exposure to and engagement in cyberbullying behaviors. Consequently, this phenomenon has become a major challenge for educational and social institutions. Recent systematic reviews indicate that although the prevalence of cyberbullying varies across societies, it remains a global issue with serious psychological and social implications (Martínez-López et al., 2026; Chen, 2024).

In this regard, the function of the family has become particularly important as an agent of socialization for

adolescents. Indeed, the family plays an important role in fostering adolescents' digital behavior and raising their awareness about online threats. It should be noted that some studies point out the significance of parents' monitoring and good communication within the family as key protective factors, which help decrease the probability of engaging adolescents in cyberbullying (Wang et al., 2025; Xu et al., 2025)

At the same time, other scientists associate digital transformation with mental disorders among teenagers as well as stress and lack of family conversations (Alomosh et al., 2025).

Furthermore, based on the results of the studies, it can be said that family cohesion and social support in the family setting are very helpful regarding preventing adolescents from participating in cyberbullying activities. Family unity increases the sense of confidence in children and offers psychological support (Xiao et al., 2025; Shao et al., 2024)

Thus, the implementation of preventive actions within the family can be considered vital concerning teaching parents and their children digital literacy.

Research Problem

In spite of increased worldwide concerns about the phenomenon of cyberbullying, research proves the steady growth of cyberbullying among youth due to rapid development of information technology and widespread use of social media (Tozzo et al., 2022; Martínez-López et al., 2026). In addition, research proved that lack of parental control and insufficient communication within the family raise the risks of cyberbullying among adolescents (Grama et al., 2024; Shao et al., 2024). However, family prevention programs seem to lag behind the scope of the problem (Wang & Jiang, 2023; Tozzo et al., 2022)

Moreover, studies have noted that positive parenting, involving guidance and supervision of young individuals, helps to prevent cyberbullying (Al-Maghribi, 2023; Jad Al-Karim, 2023)

The stated information allows stating the research problem in one general question:

What influence do family prevention programs exert on cyberbullying rates among children in the UAE?

Research Hypotheses

Main Hypothesis (H0)

Family preventive programs have no statistically significant effect on cyberbullying reduction.

Sub-Hypotheses

1. Family awareness of the risks of digital technology has no statistically significant effect on cyberbullying reduction.

2. Parental monitoring of internet use has no statistically significant effect on cyberbullying reduction.

3. Communication in the family with children has no statistically significant effect on cyberbullying reduction.

4. Educational assistance regarding the safety of using new technologies has no statistically significant effect on cyberbullying reduction.

Literature Review

Cyberbullying Concept

According to Patchin and Hinduja (2020), cyberbullying refers to the practice of using modern technology platforms, like the Internet and social media, as tools for bullying others by exhibiting aggressive behavior towards them, with the intent of causing mental or social distress to the victims or ruining their reputations. Cyberbullying is among the fast-emerging phenomena among teens because of its serious impacts such as depression, anxiety, and poor academic performance (Kowalski et al., 2022; Tozzo et al., 2022).

Previous research studies have revealed that cyberbullying behavior correlates with certain psychological or social variables including parental upbringing styles and degree of support received from the family. For example, Xu et al. (2025) indicated that high parental psychological control was connected with cyberbullying behavior, as well as higher rates of moral disengagement and psychological distress were associated with greater likelihood of becoming a cyberbully. Ortega et al. (2023) also highlighted that social support and parents' supervision play a key role in preventing digital aggression and dealing with cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying amongst the secondary school students in the Arab context is linked to high levels of stress and anxiety, and the lack of parental supervision together with inadequate family communication makes the issue worse. According to Ali and Abdulqader (2023), excessive use of technology in the form of digital applications without any parental supervision results in being exposed to cyberbullying.

Family Preventive Programs

Definition of Family Preventive Programs

Family preventive programs are described as a series of educational measures carried out by parents aimed at increasing children's awareness of the potential dangers related to using the Internet and ensuring safe and responsible usage of technology. Specifically, they involve monitoring, raising awareness, communicating effectively, and educating (Wang and Jiang, 2023).

Numerous studies highlight the efficacy of such programs when it comes to reducing cyberbullying along

with its psychological and social consequences. For example, Yosep et al. (2023) state that improving parents' digital parenting skills is an important factor contributing to the prevention of cyberbullying and minimizing its effects on children. In addition, according to Uludaşdemir et al. (2025), increased awareness of the risks related to the use of the Internet allows parents to properly educate their children regarding the safe usage of technology and reduces their participation in cyberbullying activities.

At the same time, other scientists associate digital transformation with mental disorders among teenagers as well as stress and lack of family conversations (Alomosh et al., 2025).

Finally, Kochel et al. (2024) emphasize that combining family education programs with interactive workshops designed specifically for children significantly decreases the level of digital aggression among them and fosters their self-control skills.

Dimensions of Family Preventive Programs

Awareness of Digital Risks

The aspect centers on raising children's awareness of possible risks of using the internet, with cyberbullying being an integral part of it. According to Wang et al. (2025), family-based awareness decreases the probability of adolescents' participation in online aggression. Also, Martínez et al. (2023) found that interactive digital family programs increase risk perception and lower online aggression through social networks.

Parental Monitoring

Parental monitoring consists of observing children's internet usage and responding to the signs of dangerous online behavior by children. According to Xu et al. (2025), parental monitoring lowers both exposure to and participation in cyberbullying. Furthermore, Rahman et al. (2024) suggested that balanced parental monitoring not only ensures protection against online dangers but also preserves children's privacy.

Family Communication

Family communication concerns regular conversations between parents and children about the proper use of the internet. Shao et al. (2024) discovered that family communication prevents teenagers from becoming victims of cyberbullying. Moreover, Al-Qudah and Al-Tahat (2023) found that discussing online threats with children enables them to cope with cyberbullying and

reduces their anxiety

Digital Educational for Guidance

Digital education for guidance refers to guiding children on ethical conduct and proper use of the internet. In their study, Yosep et al. (2023) observed that family-based digital guidance minimizes cyberbullying effects and encourages safe internet usage. Likewise, Ahmed and El-Sayed (2024) noted that children who are educated about digital ethics in the family setting behave responsibly and avoid internet disputes.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical research design to investigate the role of family preventive programs in reducing cyberbullying among adolescents. This approach is appropriate as it allows for examining relationships between variables and assessing the predictive power of family-related factors on cyberbullying behaviors.

Population of the Study

The study population consists of adolescents enrolled in secondary schools, representing a critical age group that is highly exposed to digital environments and, consequently, to cyberbullying risks.

Sample of the Study

A stratified random sample was selected to ensure representation across different demographic characteristics. The final sample included participants from diverse backgrounds, ensuring variability in exposure to family preventive practices.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on previous literature. The instrument consisted of two main sections:

- Family preventive programs:
 - Digital risk awareness
 - Parental monitoring
 - Family communication
 - Digital educational guidance
- Cyberbullying scale

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale

Table 1. Regression Analysis of the Impact of Family Preventive Programs on Cyberbullying

Variable	R	R ²	F	Sig. F	B	Beta	t	Sig. t
Family Preventive Programs	0.557	0.310	94.85	0.000	-0.62	-0.56	-9.74	0.000

Table 2. Regression Analysis of the Impact of Digital Risk Awareness on Cyberbullying

Variable	R	R ²	F	Sig. F	B	Beta	t	Sig. t
Digital Risk Awareness	0.482	0.232	68.21	0.000	-0.54	-0.48	-8.26	0.000

Table 3. Regression Analysis of the Impact of Parental Monitoring on Cyberbullying

Variable	R	R ²	F	Sig. F	B	Beta	t	Sig. t
Parental Monitoring	0.517	0.267	79.54	0.000	-0.59	-0.52	-8.92	0.000

Table 4. Regression Analysis of the Impact of Family Communication on Cyberbullying

Variable	R	R ²	F	Sig. F	B	Beta	t	Sig. t
Family Communication	0.451	0.203	57.33	0.000	-0.48	-0.45	-7.57	0.000

Table 5. Regression Analysis of the Impact of Digital Educational Guidance on Cyberbullying

Variable	R	R ²	F	Sig. F	B	Beta	t	Sig. t
Digital Educational Guidance	0.503	0.253	73.64	0.000	-0.57	-0.50	-8.58	0.000

ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review, ensuring clarity and relevance of the items. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which indicated acceptable internal consistency for all study variables.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS. The following statistical techniques were applied:

- Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations)
- Linear regression analysis to test hypotheses

RESULTS

Main Hypothesis Testing

The results in Table 1 indicate a statistically significant relationship between family preventive programs and cyberbullying. The model explains 31% of the variance in cyberbullying ($R^2 = 0.310$). The negative regression coefficient ($B = -0.62$) suggests that stronger family

preventive programs are associated with lower levels of cyberbullying. The effect is statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Sub-Hypotheses Testing

Digital Risk Awareness

It can be seen that digital risk awareness has a significant negative effect on cyberbullying. This is shown by the percentage explained which accounts for 23.2% variance, meaning increased awareness decreases the level of cyberbullying. Table 2

Parental Monitoring

Parental monitoring has a significant negative effect on cyberbullying and accounts for 26.7% variance, showing its importance in preventing cyberbullying. 4.2.3 Family Communication. Table 3

The family communication variable plays a vital role in minimizing cyberbullying by accounting for 20.3% of the variance in it. 4.2.4 Digital Educational Guidance. Table 4 Digital educational guidance has a statistically significant effect on reducing cyberbullying, explaining 25.3% of the variance. Table 5

DISCUSSION

The current research study was conducted with the objective of understanding the influence of family preventive programs on cyberbullying amongst adolescents. The results have shown a statistically significant inverse correlation between family preventive programs and cyberbullying. Therefore, the more active the participation of families in the prevention process, the lower would be the level of cyberbullying. This can be explained by the essential importance of the family as one of the main socializing institutions.

These results are in line with the results obtained by Ahmed and El-Sayed (2024), who stressed the need for digital literacy and parental supervision in order to minimize cyberbullying. The results also coincide with the conclusion made by Kowalski et al. (2022), where it was highlighted that various family-related aspects were crucial when dealing with cyberbullying among young people. In this case, such similarities might be due to the role of the family as an essential prevention environment.

As for the sub-dimensions, it should be said that the digital risk awareness showed a significant negative influence on cyberbullying. This result corresponds to the results obtained by Wang and Jiang (2023), where the authors discussed the necessity to develop digital literacy to increase awareness and reduce risks for adolescents. It is similar to Uludaşdemir et al. (2025), which showed that the increase in parents' awareness about the risks related to cyberbullying led to the improvement of their children's online behavior.

Finally, when considering the parental monitoring dimension, the results of the study showed its significant influence on cyberbullying. In turn, this result agrees with the research by Rahman et al. (2024), where the importance of monitoring was proved, while it was concluded that balanced monitoring leads to better results for adolescents. It is supported by the results of Xu et al. (2025), where the positive effects of monitoring were described. At the same time, the results slightly differ from other studies, where excessive control was mentioned negatively.

Results relating to the role of family communication in mitigating cyberbullying were significantly positive. These results are in line with those obtained by Al-Qudah and Al-Tahat (2023). According to these authors, parent-child communication plays an essential role in controlling the risks associated with digital devices. Moreover, these results can be compared to those by Shao et al. (2024). These scholars discovered that family support and communication act as moderators of cyberbullying. The conformity of the research implies that good family relationships allow children to find help in cases of any problems while being online.

As for digital educational guidance, there was evidence of its positive effects on mitigating cyberbullying in the sample. These findings agree with those presented

by Martínez et al. (2023). These researchers managed to prove that families' participation in educational digital initiatives is one of the ways to reduce cyberbullying. Moreover, these results resonate with those by Yosep et al. (2023). These authors stressed the significance of parental education in the context of cyberbullying.

However, some distinctions can be found in comparison of the current results with some regional studies. For instance, some Arab researches have shown different levels of effectiveness of family intervention, which can be associated with cultural differences, digital literacy, or parental involvement. It is possible to assume that effectiveness of family interventions in the sphere of prevention of cyberbullying may be influenced by some contextual elements such as socio-cultural context and level of digital literacy.

Continuous media awareness campaigns for members of society regarding the need to comply with instructions issued by official authorities to prevent cyberbullying, which may affect the quality of life in society and disrupt procedures for dealing with combating this phenomenon. (Alomosh et al., 2025).

In general, the results obtained from this research emphasize the point that family preventive programs, based on awareness, monitoring, communication, and guidance, represent an integral and complementary approach to addressing issues related to cyberbullying. The fact that there are similarities with many previous researches makes it possible to evaluate the credibility of the results obtained, while discrepancies emphasize the importance of considering specific cultural and social setting

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Creating Family Awareness Programs:** Conducting training sessions for parents and children on issues related to internet safety, prevention practices, and moral values for the young people through the help of schools and community centers. Such efforts will improve family awareness about the issue and promote healthy internet behavior.
2. **Smart Parental Monitoring:** Using smart monitoring applications to monitor internet behavior by teenagers in ways that do not invade their privacy but restrict their access to social networking sites at certain hours. This will allow parents to prevent negative internet behaviors without causing a strain on the relationship.
3. **Family Communication:** Having periodic conversations with adolescents to learn about what is going on and the content they are exposed to. This allows parents to detect any aggressive behaviors on part of the youth or victims of cyberbullying.
4. **Integration of Digital Educational Guidance in Schools:** The inclusion of educational guidance programs that focus on aspects such as digital responsi-

bility, respect, and proper response to cyberbullying. This will equip the students with knowledge about how to act responsibly in digital spaces.

5. Implementation of Institution Policies and Continuous Program Evaluation: Formulating prevention policies through ministries of education and schools. This involves the formulation of preventive programs, training of teachers, and constant assessment of the programs' effectiveness. This will help make sure that the program remains sustainable and effective in institutions, families, and the community.

CONCLUSION

This research examined the effect of family preventive programs on adolescents' participation in cyberbullying, paying special attention to certain dimensions, namely, digital risk awareness, parental supervision, family communication, and digital education. It was shown that family preventive programs had a statistically significant negative influence on adolescents' engagement in cyberbullying, which proves that higher family engagement plays an important role in decreasing adolescents' participation in cyberbullying. All dimensions turned out to be significant, which means that the process of cyberbullying prevention is multidimensional, and all mentioned elements work together. Parental supervision and digital education proved to be very effective measures for preventing cyberbullying, since they define how adolescents use digital tools and make their decisions on the Internet. Meanwhile, digital risk awareness and family communication are supporting and complementary aspects that help adolescents understand how they should act when using digital tools. All of the above-mentioned facts indicate that there is an important place occupied by the family institution as an active factor ensuring a safe digital environment. Considering the increase in the level of digital exposure among teenagers, family preventive measures are necessary, not just additional ones, but are indispensable in overcoming cyberbullying. Additionally, this research is significant since it gives grounds for adding new data to the existing body of knowledge, providing empirical data about the effectiveness of an integrated approach in preventive actions of family members in the social-culturally specific environment. In summary, implementing preventive measures through raising awareness, balancing supervision, developing communication, and organizing educational activities concerning online usage among adolescents is the most effective way to overcome the problem of cyberbullying..

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