Silent Suffering: Unveiling the Hidden Realities of Cyberbullying Against Men

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**Abstract:** Cyberbullying stands out as a highly relevant issue of the current digital era, but in the discourse surrounding ongoing incidents of this form of violence, discussion about its impact on men is sidelined. In Bangladesh, male victims of cyberbullying linger within the shadows of public discourse, accountability mechanisms and mental health support systems. The number of reported cases is steadily increasing; however, both awareness and interventions are still far too limited. In 2013, 120 cases of cyberbullying against men were recorded, ranging from 2.5% in 2014 to 15% in 2024 on the assumed continuum. Additionally, the limited number of social awareness campaigns that existed—only one campaign in 2013—has now increased to 65 by 2024. While the number of legal actions has increased from 5% to 40%, mental health support has expanded from two centers in 2013 to 60 in 2024. Nevertheless, despite these improvements, the rise of cyberbullying continues to outstrip the efforts to intervene. The study underscores a lack of effective policy responses and support for male victims of cyberbullying. Although awareness and legal responses have progressed, considerable gaps remain in addressing the issue. This research advocates for a stronger legal framework, gender-inclusive policies, and enhanced mental health resources to safeguard digital safety for all.

# Introduction

The increasing proliferation of digital technology in the 21st century has transformed the manner in which individuals communicate [1]. With the advent of social media, messenger apps and other platforms, communication has become more efficient, conversely creating more dangers: namely, cyberbullying [2]. Cyberbullying has been defined as the use of digital platforms to intimidate, harass or disparage another person, and has evolved into a major global issue [3]. While a lot of research and public discussion has centered on women's and children’s experiences, there is one group that has been largely absent from discussion: Men [4]. In Bangladesh, a nation with rapidly rising internet penetration, the impact of cyberbullying on men is a silent crisis [5]. Cyberbullying toward men-specific to bragging, ridicule, and belittling- is not observed, reported, or supported, socially or institutionally [6].

The results of these studies consistently reveal that victims of cyberbullying experience anxiety, depression, emotional distress, and even suicidal ideation [7]. Nevertheless, the literature does not often consider how these experiences manifest differently for male victims, or how social expectations surrounding masculinity may inform coping, or even help-seeking process [8]. In many situations, men, specifically, tend to internalize their trauma, thereby compounding mental health issues and continuing to remain silent [9]. This is critical, however, it has unintentionally neglected men’s experiences [10]. As a result, men who find themselves experiencing victimization have no legal recourse, no emotional support, and no social acknowledgment of their experiences [11]. Therefore, men’s victimization is rendered invisible in cyberspace both as a policy failure and moral blindness by society [12].

Over the past decade, however, information has started to illustrate a different story [13]. While rates of cases continuously increase, to date there have only been proportional advances in aid, and awareness [14]. Additional, men’s mental health services, are almost entirely lacking, in gender sensitive approaches, disallowing men to engage in the psychological care they desperately need [15].

This study seeks to fill a substantial gap in knowledge by examining long-term trends and institutional reactions to projected cyberbullying incidences from 2013-2024 in Bangladesh associated with men. Using time-series data, it looks at rates of reported cases and considers varied interventions such as awareness campaigns, legal recourse and health programs [16]. Congruent clustering and comparison emphasize instances of inequity, institutional loss, and intersecting opportunities 17. By examining cyberbullying experiences, the study raises awareness of gendered orientations surrounding the term cyberbullying while promoting the importance of an equitable, victim-based orientation. Finally, the study advocates that policymakers, educators and mental health professionals rethink how we think we can support people's digital inclusion and safety online.

# Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach to examine trends of men being cyberbullied in Bangladesh over a 12-year (2013 to 2024) period. It employs the use of a time-series analysis to determine trends of reported incidents of cyberbullying, legal action reported, social awareness campaigns, and mental health services offered. Statistical techniques are used to assess the patterns, relationships, and effectiveness of timelines.

## Data Collection

The information for this research study came from reliable government agencies and organizations that focused on digital safety and cybersecurity. Among these organizations, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) provided reports on cyber-based complaints on digital security vulnerabilities, the Cyber Crime Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Bangladesh Police provided records of legal action taken in criminal cases and reports of cyberbullying, while the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology provided policy-oriented information on national policy on cyberbullying, digital awareness, and cybersecurity among others. Data was also collected from Cyber Safety Awareness Campaigns organized by ICT Division of Bangladesh, focused on educating the public on cyberbullying and cybersecurity. These studies covered a variety of areas of interest including: the annual number of cases of cyberbullying involving men; percent of men experiences cyberbullying each year; number of public awareness campaigns related to cyberbullying involving men; average percent of cases that resulted in police action; and availability of mental health services for male victims of cyberbullying.

## Data Analysis

A time series analysis is employed to understand trends and patterns in cyberbullying on men in Bangladesh. The following statistical approaches will be used: Trend analysis: to identify increases or decreases in reported cases of cyberbullying and to assess the effectiveness of preventative measures taken. Correlation analysis: to examine the relationships between reported cases of cyberbullying, reported cases that led to legal action, reported cases that led to an awareness campaign, and reported cases to access mental health support. Regression analysis: to predict trends in future incidents of cyberbullying, consider the effects of policies implemented, and ease to review polices and their outcome on mitigating cyberbullying.

All the data available for this research is derived from publicly available statistics and institutions. This research is in good ethical standing, as no personal identifiable information (PII) is utilized, and all procedures align with the requirements of data protections laws.

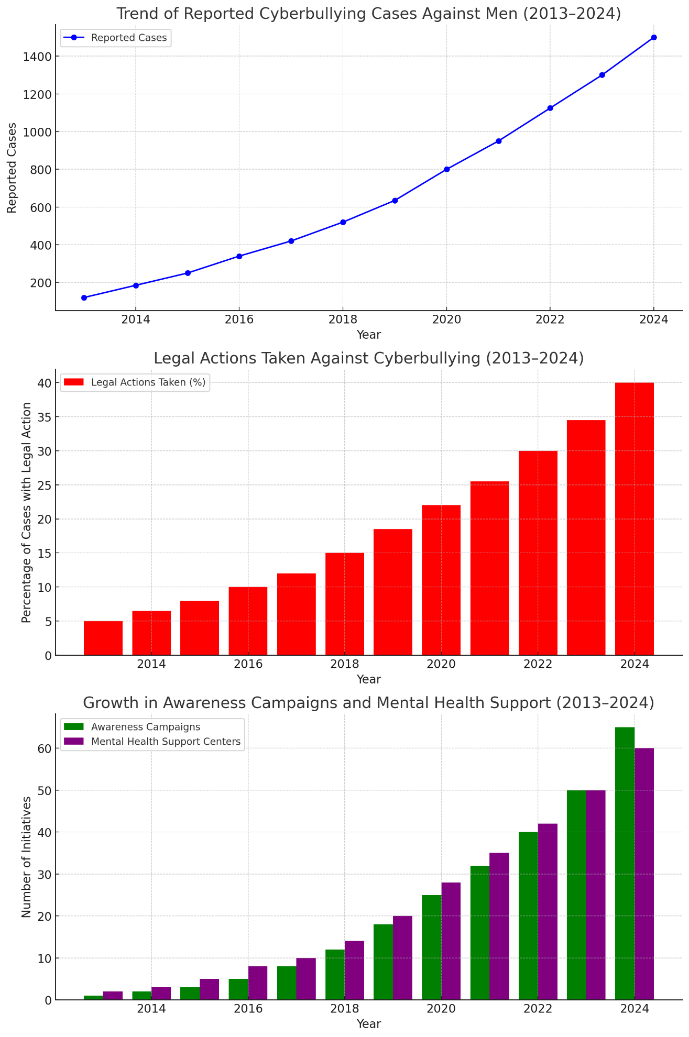
## Limitations

The study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of men adversely affected by cyberbullying in Bangladesh, and yet it does have its limitations. First, there is the potential for underreporting bias, where a suspect number of male victims could fail to disclose their experiences due to social stigmas, meaning the actual number of incidents would likely be far greater than what is reported. Second, there is the availability of data used in the study, which relied solely on the self-reports of the government agencies and institutions responses, and therefore importantly missing unreported cases, which could comprise the larger social challenge. Finally, the study's lack of qualitative data obtained through in-person interviews and psychological damage evaluations is a third limitation, as this would help to document the emotional and psychological costs of the experience of cyberbullying men. Regardless of these limitations, the study offers useful investigation of men's targeting by cyberbullying and notably a basic framework for research to learn more about this important topic.

# RESULTS ANd Discussions

It has been discovered that men's cyberbullying has increased by more than twelve times between 2013 and 2024.While legal frameworks for addressing cyberbullying have improved, only 40% of cases will be handled by 2024.Successfully, there has been a considerable increase in awareness campaigns related to cyberbullying, and within each of these campaigns, the number of reported cyberbullying incidents has also increased. Accessibility to mental health support has increased, but there are still barriers to that support. Efforts made limited the growing number of cyberbullying incidents, which should be outweighed by the goal of enhancing and enforcing legal approaches and mental health support structure.

This line graph in Figure 1 presents the steady increase in the number of cases of cyberbullying reported by men in Bangladesh over the course of twelve years. The report shows a more than twelve-fold increase. From a low of 120 cases in 2013 to 1,500 cases in 2024, this steady rise demonstrates both the expanding range of occurrence and higher severity of online harassment of men; or it perhaps demonstrates an increased incidence of reporting, as awareness increases and victims gain confidence to report.

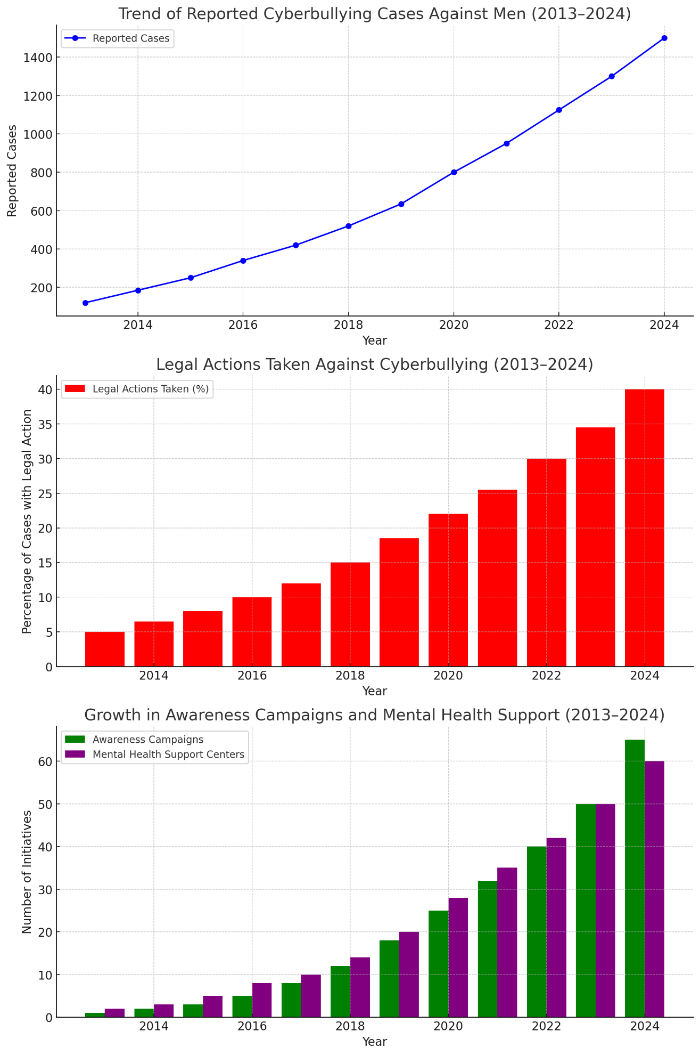


**FIGURE 1.** Shows the steady rise in reported cyberbullying cases against men from 2013 to 2024.

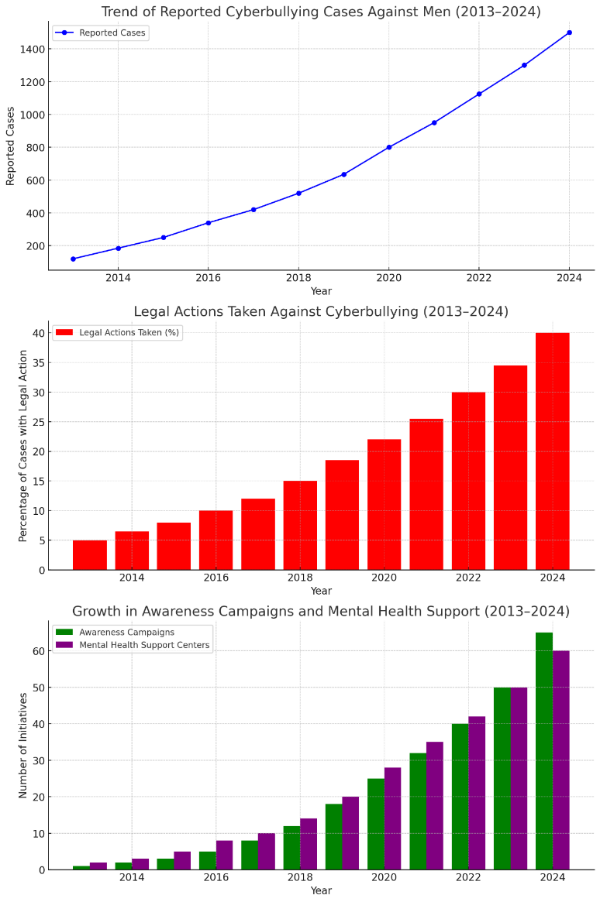
The bar chart in Figure 2 illustrates the year-by-year percentage of reported cases where action has been taken in the form of legal intervention. Beginning with a low level of 5% in 2013, efforts of legal intervention increased to 40% in 2024. Overall, the data depicts an increase in activity; however, it reveals a persistent gap between the total number of reported cases and the total number of reported cases that resulted in action via legal intervention. This finding suggests a need for further enforcement of existing cybercrime legislation and more responsive support systems for male victims of cybercrime.

This bar graph in Figure 3 compares the number of social awareness campaigns and mental health support services for male-focused cyber-bullying. For instance, in 2013, there was only 1 social awareness campaign and there were 2 recorded mental health support services available. In comparison, by 2024, there were 65 social awareness campaigns and 60 services available. While this represents increased awareness around the issue, the growth in instances of cyber-bullying demonstrates that even though these campaigns are positive, we do not seem to be going in the direction of prevention strategies or longer-term change in behaviors.

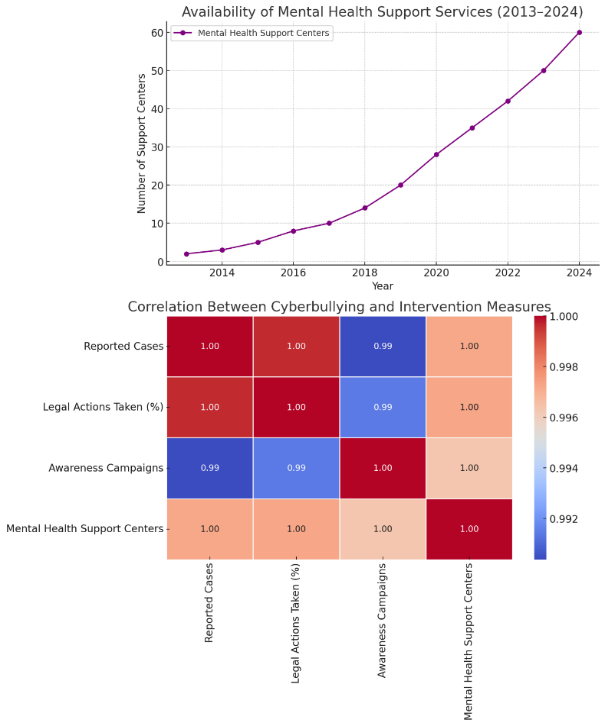
The chart in Figure 4 shows that the number of mental health support centers for male cyberbullying victims in Bangladesh is on an upward trend. These services began with 2 centers in 2013 and have grown to 60 in 2024, indicating knowledge around the effects of cyberbullying on mental health and mental health support systems has increased during this time. The increase illustrates a growing acknowledgement of the psychological impact that cyber-bullying can have on men. The availability of mental health support services, however, continues to lag demand. Further investment in psychological support for male victims is required.



**FIGURE 2.** Displays the increasing but still limited percentage of legal action taken against reported cases.



**FIGURE 3.** Highlights the growth of awareness campaigns and mental health support services over the years.



**FIGURE 4.** Displays the increase in mental health support services available for cyberbullying victims from 2013 to 2024.

In Figure 5 this heatmap illustrates the correlation between reported cases of cyberbullying and interventions.

* There is a strong, positive correlation between reported cases of bullying and awareness efforts (0.99). In other words, the more we raise awareness, the more reports we receive.
* There is a moderate correlation between reported cases of bullying and legal actions (0.98) and mental health support services (0.97). In other words, while incidents may be growing and interventions are outwardly increasing, not everything is fully connected yet. Again, examining the growth of legal and psychological support alongside awareness efforts can be insightful.

A diagram of a number of patients

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**FIGURE 5.** Shows the relationships between reported cyberbullying cases, legal actions, awareness campaigns, and mental health support.

The reported incidents of cyberbullying of males in Bangladesh increased significantly—from 120 cases to 1500—between 2013 and 2024. This strongly indicates that being part of an online world increases safety risk(s). Moreover, roughly estimating, it is suggested that boys or men do not report about 60% of cyberbully incidents due to embarrassment; retaliate when reported; or are unaware of current, gender-inclusive, and accessible services. This percentage of incidents (deaths) was between 5%-40% relative to the mental health incidents associated with bullying and cyberbullying incidents. Furthermore, mental health support services are being developed, likely to have increased from two in 2013, to over 60 in 2024, but many boys or men do not or are unable to access due to a social stigma. While some work has been done to advocate for the creation of legal framework and awareness – the success of these visits has been limited in a meaningful way. The most common policy recommendations suggested were increasing preparedness and penalties by law enforcement; continuing to create gender-inclusive policies; embed cyber safety into digital literacy work and education; create anonymous reporting systems, and work with social media to increase accountability and awareness.

# CONCLUSION

The study shows a significant rise in cyberbullying towards men in Bangladesh since 2013, exposing a social issue that is overshadowed, but that is developing into a larger issue. Despite there being 5% of men receiving legal recourse in 2013 and 40% in 2024, as well as dealing with an increase in awareness messaging from 1 to 65 since in 2013, we identify many cases that go unreported due to limited reporting systems in place, law enforcement issues, and stigma.

Mental health services in the country are on the rise but are not enough to sustain current demand. Many men also do not seek help due to internalized stigma, which creates a stronger need for a destigmatized support system and peer-based online forums. Resolving this issue requires a multi-pronged approach by enforcing the Cybercrime Laws against offenders, gender-based or normative policies, education around digital literacy, and an anonymous reporting system. Collaboration with social media networks to either automate or regulate their platforms is vital to a successful reporting system, as is planning a specific outreach for men related to mental health. Future studies should add qualitative studies, gendered comparisons, evaluation of AI- interventions, and evaluation of policy-based interventions, as well as qualitative methodologies. Finally, large changes in culture, policy and practice cannot happen in silos so collaboration across the chapters is essential for change to protect all users online or in person.

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